

This page is a 'plain English' explanation of the copyright issues at this site. This can be considered a continuation of the Terms of Service file.

### **Using public domain files at this site**

Most of the files at this site are in the public domain *in the United States*. This is because they were originally *printed in the US* and:

Their copyright has expired normally (they were published in or prior to 1922), or

They were published between 1923 and 1964 (inclusive) and the copyright was not renewed, or

They were published by the US Government.

In addition, books printed outside the US in or before 1922 are in the public domain in the US.

Books and other content become public domain in different ways in different countries. *So if you reside outside the US, you will have to use different criteria to determine if a text is in the public domain*. In some countries, this is determined by the date of death of the author. For instance, in the United Kingdom or European Union books become public domain 70 years after the death of the author. This means that some books are in the public domain in the US but not the UK. For instance, the book 'The Tarot Unveiled' was published in 1910 in England. This means that it is in the public domain in the US (it was published prior to 1922). However, the author, A.E. Waite, died in 1942. For this reason this book will not enter the public domain in the UK or the EU until 2012.

Public domain files from this site can be used for *any* purposes. **You may:**

Download, print and make copies of them for personal purposes

Email them to a friend

Use them for your class or study group

Link your website to them

Post copies of them on your website

Embed the copy at sacred-texts in a frame at your website

Use them in a paper for school

Quote them in part or entirety in print: in a book, magazine, etc.

Create derivative works: edited versions, anthologies, software products which use quotes from them, etc.

Translate them into other languages

etc. etc. etc.

**without asking anyone (including sacred-texts) for permission.** In fact, we encourage these activities. It is considered good netiquette (but not absolutely required) to identify sacred-texts as the source of the file. Therefore we request that leave any notices of attribution in the file intact, and add a link to sacred-texts if possible.

The public domain files at this site have been prepared for free distribution at great labor and expense. Public domain files prepared at sacred-texts *may* be licensed for commercial use as a way of supporting the Internet Sacred Text Archive and the production of additional etexts. These files are listed in the Bibliography. Some other public domain files at this site may have some trivial commercial-use restrictions, particularly files from Project Gutenberg. Most other public domain files at this site can be used in commercial projects without any payment. Email us if you have any questions.

Note that this doesn't restrict you from using these books for commercial use if you are willing to make your own transcription of them. We have no objection to this as we do not claim to own these works.

-----

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

Hare at sacred-texts.com. This text is in the public domain in the United States because it was published prior to January 1st, 1923.

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 homonymy 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, XXXII	On the Limit of Man's Intellect	40, 42
XXXIII to XXXVI	On the Study and the Teaching of Metaphysics	43- 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>Ofanim</i>	252
III	Further Explanation of the <i>Ḥayyot</i> and the <i>Ofanim</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>Ofanim</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

XLI	Sixth Class, Punishment of the Sinner	344
XLII	Seventh Class, Equity and Honesty	350
	p. xiii	
XLIII	Eighth Class, Sabbath and Festivals	352
XLIV	Ninth Class, Prayer, <i>Tefillin</i> , <i>Zizit</i> and <i>Mezuzah</i>	354
XLV	Tenth Class, The Temple, its Vessels and its Ministers	355
XLVI	Eleventh Class, Sacrifices	359
XLVII	Twelfth Class, Distinction between Clean and Unclean and on Purification	366
XLVIII	Thirteenth Class, Dietary Laws	370
XLIX	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 II

p. 145

### INTRODUCTION

TWENTY-FIVE of the propositions which are employed in the proof for the existence of God, or in the arguments demonstrating that God is neither corporeal nor a force connected with a material being, or that He is One, have been fully established, and their correctness is beyond doubt. Aristotle and the Peripatetics who followed him have proved each of these propositions. There is, however, one proposition which we do not accept--namely, the proposition which

affirms the Eternity of the Universe, but we will admit it for the present, because by doing so we shall be enabled clearly to demonstrate our own theory.

#### PROPOSITION I.

The existence of an infinite magnitude is impossible.

#### PROPOSITION II.

The co-existence of an infinite number of finite magnitudes is impossible.

#### PROPOSITION III.

The existence of an infinite number of causes and effects is impossible, even if these were not magnitudes: if, e.g., one Intelligence were the cause of a second, the second the cause of a third, the third the cause of a fourth, and so on, the series could not be continued *ad infinitum*.

#### PROPOSITION IV.

Four categories are subject to change:

(a.) *Substance*.--Changes which affect the substance of a thing are called genesis and destruction.

(b.) *Quantity*.--Changes in reference to quantity are increase and decrease.

(c.) *Quality*.--Changes in the qualities of things are transformations.

(d.) *Place*.--Change of place is called motion.

The term "motion" is properly applied to change of place, but is also used in a general sense of all kinds of changes.

#### PROPOSITION V.

Motion implies change and transition from potentiality to actuality.

#### PROPOSITION VI.

The motion of a thing is either essential or accidental; or it is due to an external force, or to the participation of the thing in the motion of another thing. This latter kind of motion is similar to the accidental one. An instance of essential motion may be found in the translation of a thing from one place to another. The accident of a thing, as, e.g., its black colour, is said to move when the thing itself changes its place. The upward motion of a stone, owing to a force applied to it in that direction, is an instance of a motion due to an external force. The motion of a nail in a boat may serve to illustrate motion due to the participation of a thing in the motion of another thing; for when the boat moves, the nail is said to move likewise. The same is the case with everything composed of several parts: when the thing itself moves, every part of it is likewise said to move.

p. 146

PROPOSITION VII.

Things which are changeable are, at the same time, divisible. Hence everything that moves is divisible, and consequently corporeal; but that which is indivisible cannot move, and cannot therefore be corporeal.

PROPOSITION VIII.

A thing that moves accidentally must come to rest, because it does not move of its own accord: hence accidental motion cannot continue for ever.

PROPOSITION IX.

A corporeal thing that sets another corporeal thing in motion can only effect this by setting itself in motion at the time it causes the other thing to move.

PROPOSITION X.

A thing which is said to be contained in a corporeal object must satisfy either of the two following conditions: it either exists through that object, as is the case with accidents, or it is the cause of the existence of that object; such is, e.g., its essential property. In both cases it is a force existing in a corporeal object.

PROPOSITION XI.

Among the things which exist through a material object, there are some which participate in the division of that object, and are therefore accidentally divisible, as, e.g., its colour, and all other qualities that spread throughout its parts. On the other hand, among the things which form the essential elements of an object, there are some which cannot be divided in any way, as, e.g., the soul and the intellect.

PROPOSITION XII.

A force which occupies all parts of a corporeal object is finite, that object itself being finite.

PROPOSITION XIII.

None of the several kinds of change can be continuous, except motion from place to place, provided it be circular.

PROPOSITION XIV.

Locomotion is in the natural order of the several kinds of motion the first and foremost. For genesis and corruption are preceded by transformation, which, in its turn, is preceded by the

approach of the transforming agent to the object which is to be transformed. Also, increase and decrease are impossible without previous genesis and corruption.

#### PROPOSITION XV.

Time is an accident that is related and joined to motion in such a manner that the one is never found without the other. Motion is only possible in time, and the idea of time cannot be conceived otherwise than in connexion with motion; things which do not move have no relation to time.

#### PROPOSITION XVI.

Incorporeal bodies can only be numbered when they are forces situated in a body; the several forces must then be counted together with substances

p. 147

or objects in which they exist. Hence purely spiritual beings, which are neither corporeal nor forces situated in corporeal objects, cannot be counted, except when considered as causes and effects.

#### PROPOSITION XVII.

When an object moves, there must be some agent that moves it, from without, as, e.g., in the case of a stone set in motion by the hand: or from within, e.g., when the body of a living being moves. Living beings include in themselves, at the same time, the moving agent and the thing moved: when, therefore, a living being dies, and the moving agent, the soul, has left the body, i.e., the thing moved, the body remains for some time in the same condition as before, and yet cannot move in the manner it has moved previously. The moving agent, when included in the thing moved, is hidden from, and imperceptible to, the senses. This circumstance gave rise to the belief that the body of an animal moves without the aid of a moving agent. When we therefore affirm, concerning a thing in motion, that it is its own moving agent, or, as is generally said, that it moves of its own accord, we mean to say that the force which really sets the body in motion exists in that body itself.

#### PROPOSITION XVIII.

Everything that passes over from a state of potentiality to that of actuality, is caused to do so by some external agent: because if that agent existed in the thing itself, and no obstacle prevented the transition, the thing would never be in a state of potentiality, but always in that of actuality. If, on the other hand, while the thing itself contained that agent, some obstacle existed, and at a certain time that obstacle was removed, the same cause which removed the obstacle would undoubtedly be described as the cause of the transition from potentiality to actuality, [and not the force situated within the body]. Note this.



PROPOSITION XIX.

A thing which owes its existence to certain causes has in itself merely the possibility of existence: for only if these causes exist, the thing likewise exists. It does not exist if the causes do not exist at all, or if they have ceased to exist, or if there has been a change in the relation which implies the existence of that thing as a necessary consequence of those causes.

PROPOSITION XX.

A thing which has in itself the necessity of existence cannot have for its existence any cause whatever.

PROPOSITION XXI.

A thing composed of two elements has necessarily their composition as the cause of its present existence. Its existence is therefore not necessitated by its own essence; it depends on the existence of its two component parts and their combination.

PROPOSITION XXII.

Material objects are always composed of two elements [at least], and are without exception subject to accidents. The two component elements of all bodies are substance and form. The accidents attributed to material objects are quantity, geometrical form, and position.

p. 148

PROPOSITION XXIII.

Everything that exists potentially and whose essence includes a certain state of possibility, may at some time be without actual existence.

PROPOSITION XXIV.

That which is potentially a certain thing is necessarily material, for the state of possibility is always connected with matter.

PROPOSITION XXV.

Each compound substance consists of matter and form, and requires an agent for its existence, viz., a force which sets the substance in motion, and thereby enables it to receive a certain form. The force which thus prepares the substance of a certain individual being, is called the immediate motor.

Here the necessity arises of investigating into the properties of motion, the moving agent and the thing moved. But this has already been explained sufficiently; and the opinion of Aristotle may

be expressed in the following proposition: Matter does not move of its own accord--an important proposition that led to the investigation of the Prime Motor (the first moving agent).

Of these foregoing twenty-five propositions some may be verified by means of a little reflection and the application of a few propositions capable of proof, or of axioms or theorems of almost the same force, such as have been explained by me. Others require many arguments and propositions, all of which, however, have been established by conclusive proofs partly in the Physics and its commentaries, and partly in the Metaphysics and its commentary. I have already stated that in this work it is not my intention to copy the books of the philosophers or to explain difficult problems, but simply to mention those propositions which are closely connected with our subject, and which we want for our purpose.

To the above propositions one must be added which enunciates that the universe is eternal, and which is held by Aristotle to be true, and even more acceptable than any other theory. For the present we admit it, as a hypothesis, only for the purpose of demonstrating our theory. It is the following proposition:

#### PROPOSITION XXVI

Time and motion are eternal, constant, and in actual existence.

In accordance with this proposition, Aristotle is compelled to assume that there exists actually a body with constant motion, viz., the fifth element. He therefore says that the heavens are not subject to genesis or destruction, because motion cannot be generated nor destroyed. He also holds that every motion must necessarily be preceded by another motion, either of the same or of a different kind. The belief that the locomotion of an animal is not preceded by another motion, is not true: for the animal is caused to move, after it had been in rest, by the intention to obtain those very things which bring about that locomotion. A change in its state of health, or some image, or some new idea can produce a desire to seek that which is conducive to its welfare and to avoid that which is contrary. Each of these three causes

p. 149

sets the living being in motion, and each of them is produced by various kinds of motion. Aristotle likewise asserts that everything which is created must, before its actual creation, have existed *in potentiâ*. By inferences drawn from this assertion he seeks to establish his proposition, viz., The thing that moves is finite, and its path finite; but it repeats the motion in its path an infinite number of times. This can only take place when the motion is circular, as has been stated in Proposition XIII. Hence follows also the existence of an infinite number of things which do not co-exist but follow one after the other.

Aristotle frequently attempts to establish this proposition; but I believe that he did not consider his proofs to be conclusive. It appeared to him to be the most probable and acceptable

proposition. His followers, however, and the commentators of his books, contend that it contains not only a probable but a demonstrative proof, and that it has, in fact, been fully established. On the other hand, the Mutakallemim try to prove that the proposition cannot be true, as, according to their opinion, it is impossible to conceive how an infinite number of things could even come into existence successively. They assume this impossibility as an axiom. I, however, think that this proposition is admissible, but neither demonstrative, as the commentators of Aristotle assert, nor, on the other hand, impossible, as the Mutakallemim say. We have no intention to explain here the proofs given by Aristotle, or to show our doubts concerning them, or to set forth our opinions on the creation of the universe. I here simply desire to mention those propositions which we shall require for the proof of the three principles stated above. Having thus quoted and admitted these propositions, I will now proceed to explain what may be inferred from them.

## CHAPTER I

ACCORDING to Proposition XXV., a moving agent must exist which has moved the substance of all existing transient things and enabled it to receive Form. The cause of the motion of that agent is found in the existence of another motor of the same or of a different class, the term "motion," in a general sense, being common to four categories (Prop. IV.). This series of motions is not infinite (Prop. III.); we find that it can only be continued till the motion of the fifth element is arrived at, and then it ends. The motion of the fifth element is the source of every force that moves and prepares any substance on earth for its combination with a certain form, and is connected with that force by a chain of intermediate motions. The celestial sphere [or the fifth element) performs the act of locomotion which is the first of the several kinds of motion (Prop. XIV.), and all locomotion is found to be the indirect effect of the motion of this sphere; e.g., a stone is set in motion by a stick, the stick by a man's hand, the hand by the sinews, the sinews by the muscles, the muscles by the nerves, the nerves by the natural heat of the body, and the heat of the body by its form. This is undoubtedly the immediate motive cause, but the action of this immediate cause is due to a certain design, e.g., to bring a stone into a hole by striking against it with a stick in order to prevent the draught from coming through the crevice. The motion of the air that causes the draught is the effect of the motion of

p. 150

the celestial sphere. Similarly it may be shown that the ultimate cause of all genesis and destruction can be traced to the motion of the sphere. But the motion of the sphere must likewise have been effected by an agent (Prop. XVII.) residing either without the sphere or within it; a third case being impossible. In the first case, if the motor is *without* the sphere, it must either be corporeal or incorporeal: if incorporeal, it cannot be said that the agent is without the sphere; it can only be described as *separate* from it; because an incorporeal object can only be said metaphorically to reside without a certain corporeal object. In the second case, if the agent resides within the sphere, it must be either a force distributed throughout the whole sphere so that each part of the sphere includes a part of the force, as is the case with the heat of fire; or it is an

indivisible force, e.g., the soul and the intellect (Props. X. and XI.). The agent which sets the sphere in motion must consequently be one of the following four things: a corporeal object without the sphere; an incorporeal object separate from it; a force spread throughout the whole of the sphere; or an indivisible force [within the sphere].

The first case, viz., that the moving agent of the sphere is a corporeal object without the sphere, is impossible, as will be explained. Since the moving agent is corporeal, it must itself move while setting another object in motion (Prop. IX.), and as the sixth element would likewise move when imparting motion to another body, it would be set in motion by a seventh element, which must also move. An infinite number of bodies would thus be required before the sphere could be set in motion. This is contrary to Proposition II.

The third case, viz., that the moving object be a force distributed throughout the whole body, is likewise impossible. For the sphere is corporeal, and must therefore be finite (Prop. I.); also the force it contains must be finite (Prop. XII.), since each part of the sphere contains part of the force (Prop. XI.): the latter can consequently not produce an infinite motion, such as we assumed according to Proposition XXVI., which we admitted for the present.

The fourth case is likewise impossible, viz., that the sphere is set in motion by an indivisible force residing in the sphere in the same manner as the soul resides in the body of man. For this force, though indivisible, could not be the cause of infinite motion by itself alone: because if that were the case the prime motor would have an accidental motion (Prop. VI.). But things that move accidentally must come to rest (Prop. VIII.), and then the thing comes also to rest which is set in motion. (The following may serve as a further illustration of the nature of accidental motion. When man is moved by the soul, i.e., by his form, to go from the basement of the house to the upper storey, his body moves directly, while the soul, the really efficient cause of that motion, participates in it accidentally. For through the translation of the body from the basement to the upper storey, the soul has likewise changed its place, and when no fresh impulse for the motion of the body is given by the soul, the body which has been set in motion by such impulse comes to rest, and the accidental motion of the soul is discontinued). Consequently the motion of that supposed first motor must be due to some cause which does not form part of things composed of two elements, viz., a moving agent

p. 151

and an object moved: if such a cause is present the motor in that compound sets the other element in motion; in the absence of such a cause no motion takes place. Living beings do therefore not move continually, although each of them possesses an indivisible motive element; because this element is not constantly in motion, as it would be if it produced motion of its own accord. On the contrary, the things to which the action is due are separate from the motor. The action is caused either by desire for that which is agreeable, or by aversion from that which is disagreeable, or by some image, or by some ideal when the moving being has the capacity of

conceiving it. When any of these causes are present then the motor acts; its motion is accidental, and must therefore come to an end (Prop. VIII.). If the motor of the sphere were of this kind the sphere could not move *ad infinitum*. Our opponent, however, holds that the spheres move continually *ad infinitum*: if this were the case, and it is in fact possible (Prop. XIII.), the efficient cause of the motion of the sphere must, according to the above division, be of the second kind, viz., something incorporeal and separate from the sphere.

It may thus be considered as proved that the efficient cause of the motion of the sphere, if that motion be eternal, is neither itself corporeal nor does it reside in a corporeal object; it must move neither of its own accord nor accidentally; it must be indivisible and unchangeable (Prop. VII. and Prop. V.). This Prime Motor of the sphere is God, praised be His name!

The hypothesis that there exist two Gods is inadmissible, because absolutely incorporeal beings cannot be counted (Prop. XVI.), except as cause and effect; the relation of time is not applicable to God (Prop. XV.), because motion cannot be predicated of Him.

The result of the above argument is consequently this: the sphere cannot move *ad infinitum* of its own accord; the Prime Motor is not corporeal, nor a force residing within a body; it is One, unchangeable, and in its existence independent of time. Three of our postulates are thus proved by the principal philosophers.

The philosophers employ besides another argument, based on the following proposition of Aristotle. If there be a thing composed of two elements, and the one of them is known to exist also by itself, apart from that thing, then the other element is likewise found in existence by itself separate from that compound. For if the nature of the two elements were such that they could only exist together--as, e.g., matter and form--then neither of them could in any way exist separate from the other. The fact that the one component is found also in a separate existence proves that the two elements are not indissolubly connected, and that the same must therefore be the case with the other component. Thus we infer from the existence of honey-vinegar and of honey by itself, that there exists also vinegar by itself. After having explained this proposition Aristotle continues thus: We notice many objects consisting of a *motor* and a *motum*, i.e., objects which set other things in motion, and whilst doing so are themselves set in motion by other things; such is clearly the case as regards all the middle members of a series of things in motion. We also see a thing that is moved, but does not itself move anything, viz., the last member of the series: consequently a *motor* must exist without being at the same time a *motum*, and that is the Prime Motor, which,

p. 152

not being subject to motion, is indivisible, incorporeal, and independent of time, as has been shown in the preceding argument.

*Third Philosophical Argument.*--This is taken from the words of Aristotle, though he gives it in a different form. It runs as follows: There is no doubt that many things actually exist, as, e.g., things perceived with the senses. Now there are only three cases conceivable, viz., either all these things are without beginning and without end, or all of them have beginning and end, or some are with and some without beginning and end. The first of these three cases is altogether inadmissible, since we clearly perceive objects which come into existence and are subsequently destroyed. The second case is likewise inadmissible, for if everything had but a temporary existence all things might be destroyed, and that which is enunciated of a whole class of things as possible is necessarily actual. All things must therefore come to an end, and then nothing would ever be in existence, for there would not exist any being to produce anything. Consequently nothing whatever would exist [if all things were transient]; but as we see things existing, and find ourselves in existence we conclude as follows:--Since there are undoubtedly beings of a temporary existence, there must also be an eternal being that is not subject to destruction, and whose existence is real, not merely possible.

It has been further argued that the existence of this being is necessary, either on account of itself alone or on account of some external force. In the latter case its existence and non-existence would be equally possible, because of its own properties, but its existence would be necessary on account of the external force. That force would then be the being that possesses absolute existence (Prop. XIX). It is therefore certain that there must be a being which has absolutely independent existence, and is the source of the existence of all things, whether transient or permanent, if, as Aristotle assumes, there is in existence such a thing, which is the effect of an eternal cause, and must therefore itself be eternal. This is a proof the correctness of which is not doubted, disputed, or rejected, except by those who have no knowledge of the method of proof. We further say that the existence of anything that has independent existence is not due to any cause (Prop. X.), and that such a being does not include any plurality whatever (Prop. XXI.); consequently it cannot be a body, nor a force residing in a body (Prop. XXII.). It is now clear that there must be a being with absolutely independent existence, a being whose existence cannot be attributed to any external cause, and which does not include different elements; it cannot therefore be corporeal, or a force residing in a corporeal object; this being is God.

It can easily be proved that absolutely independent existence cannot be attributed to two beings. For, if that were the case, absolutely independent existence would be a property added to the substance of both; neither of them would be absolutely independent on account of their essence, but only through a certain property, viz., that of this independent existence, which is common to both. It can besides be shown in many ways that independent existence cannot be reconciled with the principle of dualism by any means. It would make no difference, whether we imagine two beings of similar or of different properties. The reason for all this is to be sought in the absolute simplicity and in the utmost perfection of the essence of this being, which is

the only member of its species, and does not depend on any cause whatever this being has therefore nothing in common with other beings.

*Fourth Argument.*--This is likewise a well-known philosophical argument. We constantly see things passing from a state of potentiality to that of actuality, but in every such case there is for that transition of a thing an agent separate from it (Prop. XVIII). It is likewise clear that the agent has also passed from potentiality to actuality. It has at first been potential, because it could not be actual, owing to some obstacle contained in itself, or on account of the absence of a certain relation between itself and the object of its action: it became an actual agent as soon as that relation was present. Whichever cause be assumed, an agent is again necessary to remove the obstacle or to create the relation. The same can be argued respecting this last-mentioned agent that creates the relation or removes the obstacle. This series of causes cannot go on *ad infinitum*; we must at last arrive at a cause of the transition of an object from the state of potentiality to that of actuality, which is constant, and admits of no potentiality whatever. In the essence of this cause nothing exists potentially, for if its essence included any possibility of existence it would not exist at all (Prop. XXIII.); it cannot be corporeal, but it must be spiritual (Prop. XXIV.); and the immaterial being that includes no possibility whatever, but exists actually by its own essence, is God. Since He is incorporeal, as has been demonstrated, it follows that He is One (Prop. XVI).

Even if we were to admit the Eternity of the Universe, we could by any of these methods prove the existence of God; that He is One and incorporeal, and that He does not reside as a force in a corporeal object.

The following is likewise a correct method to prove the Incorporeality and the Unity of God: If there were two Gods, they would necessarily have one element in common by virtue of which they were Gods, and another element by which they were distinguished from each other and existed as two Gods; the distinguishing element would either be in both different from the property common to both--in that case both of them would consist of different elements, and neither of them would be the First Cause, or have absolutely independent existence; but their existence would depend on certain causes (Prop. XIX.)--or the distinguishing element would only in one of them be different from the element common to both: then that being could not have absolute independence.

*Another proof of the Unity of God.*--It has been demonstrated by proof that the whole existing world is one organic body, all parts of which are connected together; also, that the influences of the spheres above pervade the earthly substance and prepare it for its forms. Hence it is impossible to assume that one deity be engaged in forming one part, and another deity in forming another part of that organic body of which all parts are closely connected together. A duality could only be imagined in this way, either that at one time the one deity is active, the other at another time, or that both act simultaneously, nothing being done except by both together. The first alternative is certainly absurd for many reasons: if at the time the one deity be active the other *could* also be active, there is no reason why the one deity should then act and the other not;

if, on the other hand, it be impossible for the one deity to act when the other is at work, there must be

p. 154

some other cause [besides these deities] which [at a certain time] enables the one to act and disables the other. [Such difference would not be caused by time], since time is without change, and the object of the action likewise remains one and the same organic whole. Besides, if two deities existed in this way, both would be subject to the relations of time, since their actions would depend on time; they would also in the moment of acting pass from potentiality to actuality, and require an agent for such transition: their essence would besides include possibility [of existence]. It is equally absurd to assume that both together produce everything in existence, and that neither of them does anything alone; for when a number of forces must be united for a certain result, none of these forces acts of its own accord, and none is by itself the immediate cause of that result, but their union is the immediate cause. It has, furthermore, been proved that the action of the absolute cannot be due to an [external] cause. The union is also an act which presupposes a cause effecting that union, and if that cause be one, it is undoubtedly God: but if it also consists of a number of separate forces, a cause is required for the combination of these forces, as in the first case. Finally, one simple being must be arrived at, that is the cause of the existence of the Universe, which is one whole; it would make no difference whether we assumed that the First Cause had produced the Universe by *creatio ex nihilo*, or whether the Universe co-existed with the First Cause. It is thus clear how we can prove the Unity of God from the fact that this Universe is one whole.

*Another argument concerning the Incorporeality of God.*--Every corporeal object is composed of matter and form (Prop. XXII.); every compound of these two elements requires an agent for effecting their combination. Besides, it is evident that a body is divisible and has dimensions: a body is thus undoubtedly subject to accidents. Consequently nothing corporeal can be a unity, either because everything corporeal is divisible or because it is a compound; that is to say, it can logically be analysed into two elements; because a body can only be said to be a certain body when the distinguishing element is added to the corporeal substratum, and must therefore include two elements: but it has been proved that the Absolute admits of no dualism whatever.

Now that we have discussed these proofs, we will expound our own method in accordance with our promise.

## CHAPTER II

THE fifth essence, i.e., the heavenly spheres, must either be transient, and in this case motion would likewise be temporary, or, as our opponent assumes, it must be eternal. If the spheres are transient, then God is their Creator: for if anything comes into existence after a period of non-existence, it is self-evident that an agent exists which has effected this result. It would be absurd to contend that the thing itself effected it. If, on the other hand, the heavenly spheres be eternal,



with a regular perpetual motion, the cause of this perpetual motion, according to the Propositions enumerated in the Introduction, must be something that is neither a body, nor a force residing in a body, and that is God, praised be His name! We have thus shown that

p. 155

whether we believe in the *Creatio ex Nihilo*, or in the Eternity of the Universe, we can prove by demonstrative arguments the existence of God, i.e., an absolute Being, whose existence cannot be attributed to any cause, or admit in itself any potentiality. The theory that God is One and Incorporeal has likewise been established by proof without any reference to the theory of the Creation or the Eternity of the Universe. This has been explained by us in the third philosophical argument [in support of the Existence of God], and also in our subsequent description of the methods of the philosophers in proving the Incorporeality and the Unity of God.

We deem it now convenient to continue with the theory of the philosophers, and to give their proofs for the existence of Intelligences. We will then show that their theory in this regard is in harmony with the teaching of Scripture concerning the existence of angels. After the full treatment of angels this subject we shall return to our task and discuss the theory of *creatio ex nihilo*. For the best arguments in favour of this theory cannot be fully comprehended unless the theory of the existence of Intelligences be well understood, and also the method which I adopt in proving their existence. We must, however, first give the following note, which will introduce you into the secrets of this whole subject, both of that which we have already given and of what will yet be given.

*Note.*--It was not my intention when writing this treatise to expound natural science or discuss metaphysical systems; it was not my object to prove truths which have already been demonstrated, or describe the number and the properties of the spheres: for the books written on these subjects serve their purpose, and if in some points they are not satisfactory, I do not think that what I could say would be better than what has already been explained by others. But my intention was, as has been stated in the Introduction, to expound Biblical passages which have been impugned, and to elucidate their hidden and true sense, which is above the comprehension of the multitude. When you therefore notice that I prove the existence and number of Intelligences or the number of the spheres, with the causes of their motion, or discuss the true relation of matter and form, the meaning of Divine manifestation, or similar subjects, you must not think that I intend merely to establish a certain philosophical proposition; for these subjects have been discussed in many books, and most of them have been demonstrated by proof. I only desire to mention that which might, when well understood, serve as a means of removing some of the doubts concerning anything taught in Scripture: and indeed many difficulties will disappear when that which I am about to explain is taken into consideration. From the Introduction to this treatise you may learn that its principal object is to expound, as far as can be done, the account of the Creation (Gen. i.-iii.), and of the Divine Chariot (Ezek. i.), and to answer questions raised in respect to Prophecy and to the knowledge of God. You will

sometimes notice that I am rather explicit on truths already ascertained: some of them Natural Philosophy has established as facts: others Metaphysics has either fully demonstrated, or at least shown to be worthy of belief: others Mathematics have made plain. But you will invariably find that my exposition includes the key for the understanding of some allegorical passage of Holy Writ and its esoteric interpretation, and that I have mentioned, explained, and demonstrated the subject only because it

p. 156

further the knowledge of the "Divine Chariot," or "the Creation," or explains some principle with respect to Prophecy, or to the belief in any of the truths taught in Scripture. Now, having made this statement, we return to the subject of which we began to treat.

### CHAPTER III

THE theory of Aristotle in respect to the causes of the motion of the spheres led him to assume the existence of Intelligences. Although this theory consists of assertions which cannot be proved, yet it is the least open to doubt, and is more systematic than any other, as has been stated by Alexander in the book called *The Origin of the Universe*. It includes maxims which are identical with those taught in Scripture, and it is to a still greater extent in harmony with doctrines contained in well-known genuine Midrashim, as will be explained by me. For this reason I will cite his views and his proofs, and collect from them what coincides with the teachings of Scripture, and agrees with the doctrine held by our Sages.

### CHAPTER IV

THE enunciation that the heavenly sphere is endowed with a soul will appear reasonable to all who sufficiently reflect on it; but at first thought they may find it unintelligible or even objectionable; because they wrongly assume that when we ascribe a soul to the heavenly spheres we mean something like the soul of man, or that of an ass, or ox. We merely intend to say that the locomotion of the sphere undoubtedly leads us to assume some inherent principle by which it moves; and this principle is certainly a soul. For it would be absurd to assume that the principle of the circular motion of the spheres was like that of the rectilinear motion of a stone downward or of fire upwards, for the cause of the latter motion is a natural property and not a soul; a thing set in motion by a natural property moves only as long as it is away from the proper place of its element, but when it has again arrived there, it comes to rest; whilst the sphere continues its circular motion in its own place. It is, however, not because the sphere has a soul, that it moves in this manner; for animate beings move either by instinct or by reason. By "instinct" I mean the intention of an animal to approach something agreeable, or to retreat from something disagreeable; e.g., to approach the water it seeks because of thirst, or to retreat from the sun because of its heat. It makes no difference whether that thing really exists or is merely imaginary, since the imagination of something agreeable or of something disagreeable likewise causes the animal to move. The heavenly sphere does not move for the purpose of withdrawing from what

is bad or approaching what is good. For in the first instance it moves toward the same point from which it has moved away, and *vice versâ* it moves away from the same point towards which it has moved. Secondly, if this were the object of the motion, we should expect that the sphere would move towards a certain point, and would then rest; for if it moved for the purpose of avoiding something, and never obtained that object, the motion would be in vain. The circular motion of the sphere is consequently due to the action of

p. 157

some idea which produces this particular kind of motion; but as ideas are only possible in intellectual beings, the heavenly sphere is an intellectual being. But even a being that is endowed with the faculty of forming an idea, and possesses a soul with the faculty of moving, does not change its place on each occasion that it forms an idea: for an idea alone does not produce motion, as has been explained in [Aristotle's] *Metaphysics*. We can easily understand this, when we consider how often we form ideas of certain things, yet do not move towards them, though we are able to do so; it is only when a desire arises for the thing imagined, that we move in order to obtain it. We have thus shown that both the soul, the principle of motion, and the intellect, the source of the ideas, would not produce motion without the existence of a desire for the object of which an idea has been formed. It follows that the heavenly sphere must have a desire for the ideal which it has comprehended, and that ideal, for which it has a desire, is God, exalted be His name! When we say that God moves the spheres, we mean it in the following sense: the spheres have a desire to become similar to the ideal comprehended by them. This ideal, however, is simple in the strictest sense of the word, and not subject to any change or alteration, but constant in producing everything good, whilst the spheres are corporeal: the latter can therefore not be like this ideal in any other way, except in the production of circular motion: for this is the only action of corporeal beings that can be perpetual; it is the most simple motion of a body; there is no change in the essence of the sphere, nor in the beneficial results of its motion.

When Aristotle had arrived at this result, he further investigated the subject, and found, by proof, that there were many spheres, and that all moved in circles, but each with its peculiar motion as regards velocity and direction. He naturally argued that the ideal comprehended by the one sphere, which completes its circuit in one day, is different from that of another sphere which completes its circuit in thirty years; he thus arrived at the conclusion that there were as many ideals as there were spheres; each sphere has a desire for that ideal which is the source of its existence, and that desire is the cause of its individual motion, so that in fact the ideal sets the sphere in motion. Aristotle does not say, nor does any other authority, that there are ten or a hundred ideals: he simply states that their number agrees with that of the spheres. When, therefore, some of his contemporaries held that the number of spheres was fifty, he said, if that was true, the number of ideals must likewise be fifty. For the scholars in his time were few and possessed but imperfect learning; they thought that there must be a separate sphere for each movement, because they did not know that what appear to be several distinct movements can be explained as resulting from the inclination of one sphere as is, e.g., the case with the change in

the longitude of a star, its declination and the places of its rising and setting noticed in the circle of the horizon. This point, however, does not concern us at present: let us therefore return to our subject.

The later philosophers assumed ten Intelligences, because they counted the spheres containing stars and the all-encompassing sphere, although some of the spheres included several distinct orbits. There are altogether nine spheres, viz., the all-encompassing sphere, that of the fixed stars, and those of the seven planets: nine Intelligences correspond to the nine spheres;

p. 158

the tenth Intelligence is the Active Intellect. The existence of the latter is proved by the transition of our intellect from a state of potentiality to that of actuality, and by the same transition in the case of the forms of all transient beings. For whatever passes from potentiality into actuality, requires for that transition an external agent of the same kind as itself. Thus the builder does not build the storehouse in his capacity of workman, but in that of a person that has the form of the storehouse in his mind; and that form of the building which exists in the mind of the builder caused the transition of the potential form of the storehouse into actuality, and impressed it on the material of the building. As that which gives form to matter must itself be pure form, so the source of intellect must itself be pure intellect, and this source is the Active Intellect. The relation of the latter to the elements and their compounds is the same as that of the Intelligences to their respective spheres: and our intellect in action, which originates in the Active Intellect, and enables us to comprehend that intellect, finds a parallel in the intellect of each of the spheres which originates in the Intelligence corresponding to that sphere, and enables the sphere to comprehend that Intelligence, to form an idea of it, and to move in seeking to become similar to it. Aristotle further infers, what has already been explained, that God does not act by means of direct contact. When, e.g., He destroys anything with fire, the fire is set in motion through the movement of the spheres, and the spheres by the Intelligences: the latter, which are identical with "the angels," and act by direct influence, are consequently, each in its turn, the cause of the motion of the spheres; as however, purely spiritual beings do not differ in their essence, and are by no means discrete quantities, he (Aristotle) came to the following conclusion: God created the first Intelligence, the motive agent of the first sphere; the Intelligence which causes the second sphere to move has its source and origin in the first Intelligence, and so on: the Intelligence which sets the sphere nearest to the earth in motion is the source and origin of the Active Intellect, the last in the series of purely spiritual beings. The series of material bodies similarly begins with the uppermost sphere, and ends with the elements and their compounds. The Intelligence which moves the uppermost sphere cannot be the Absolute Being, for there is an element common to all Intelligences, namely, the property of being the motive agent of a sphere, and there is another element by which each of them is distinguished from the rest; each of the ten Intelligences includes, therefore, two elements, and consequently another being must be the First Cause.

This is the theory, and opinion of Aristotle on these questions, and his proofs, where proof is possible, are given in various works of the Aristotelian school. In short, he believes that the spheres are animated and intellectual beings, capable of fully comprehending the *principia* of their existence; that there exist purely spiritual beings (Intelligences), which do not reside in corporeal objects, and which derive existence from God; and that these form the intermediate element between God and this material world.

In the chapters which follow I will show how far the teaching of Scripture is in harmony with these views, and how far it differs from them.

p. 159

## CHAPTER V

SCRIPTURE supports the theory that the spheres are animate and intellectual, i.e., capable of comprehending things: that they are not, as ignorant persons believe, inanimate masses like fire and earth, but are, as the philosophers assert, endowed with life, and serve their Lord, whom they mightily praise and glorify; comp. "The heavens declare the glory of God," etc. (Ps. xix. 2). It is a great error to think that this is a mere figure of speech: for the verbs "to declare" and "to relate," when joined together, are, in Hebrew, only used of intellectual beings. That the Psalmist really means to describe the heavens' own doing, in other words, what the spheres actually do, and not what man thinks of them, may be best inferred from the words, "There is no speech, nor language, their voice is not heard" (ver. 4). Here he clearly shows that he describes the heavens themselves as in reality praising God, and declaring His wonders without words of lip and tongue. When man praises God in words actually uttered, he only relates the ideas which he has conceived, but these ideas form the real praise. The reason why he gives expression to these ideas is to be found in his desire to communicate them to others, or to make himself sure that he has truly conceived them. Therefore it is said, "Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still" (Ps. iv. 5). Only ignorant or obstinate persons would refuse to admit this proof taken from Scripture.

As to the opinion of our Sages, I do not see any necessity for expounding or demonstrating it. Consider only the form they gave to the blessing recited on seeing the new moon, the ideas repeatedly occurring in the prayers and the remarks in the Midrash on the following and similar passages:--"And the host of heaven worshippeth thee" (Neh. ix. 6); "When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy" (Job xxxviii. 7). In *Bereshit Rabba*, on the passage--"And the earth was empty and formless" (Gen. i. 2), our Sages remark as follows: "The words *tohu* and *bohu* mean mourning and crying; the earth mourned and cried on account of her evil lot, saying, I and the heavens were created together, and yet the beings above live for ever, and we are mortal." Our Sages, by this remark, indicate their belief that the spheres are animated beings, and not inanimate matter like the elements.

The opinion of Aristotle, that the spheres are capable of comprehension and conception, is in accordance with the words of our prophets and our theologians or Sages. The philosophers further agree that this world below is governed by influences emanating from the spheres, and that the latter comprehend and have knowledge of the things which they influence. This theory is also met with in Scripture: comp. [the stars and all the host of heaven] "which the Lord thy God hath divided unto all nations" (Deut. iv. 19), that is to say, the stars, which God appointed to be the means of governing His creatures, and not the objects of man's worship. It has therefore been stated clearly: "And to rule over the day and over the night" (Gen. i. 18). The term "ruling" here refers to the power which the spheres possess of governing the earth, in addition to the property of giving light and darkness. The latter property is the direct cause of genesis and destruction; it is described in the words, "And to divide the light from the darkness (*ibid.*). It is impossible to assume that those who rule a thing are ignorant

p. 160

of that very thing which they rule, if we take "to rule" in its proper sense. We will add another chapter on this subject.

## CHAPTER VI

As for the existence of angels, there is no necessity to cite any proof from Scripture, where the fact is frequently mentioned. The term *elohim* signifies "judges"; comp. "The cause of both parties shall come before the 'judges'" (*ha-elohim*; Exod. xxii. 8). It has been figuratively applied to angels, and to the Creator as being judge over the angels. When God says, "I am the Lord your God," the pronoun "your" refers to all mankind; but in the phrase *elohe ha-elohim*, He is described as the God of the angels, and in *adone ha-adonim*, as the Lord of the spheres and the stars, which are the masters of the rest of the corporeal creation. The nouns *elohim* and *adonim* in these phrases do not refer to human judges or masters, because these are in rank inferior to the heavenly bodies: much less do they refer to mankind in general, including masters and servants, or to objects of stone and wood worshipped by some as gods; for it is no honour or greatness to God to be superior to stone, wood, or a piece of metal. The phrases therefore admit of no other meaning than this: God is the judge over the judges; i.e., over the angels, and the Lord over the spheres.

We have already stated above that the angels are incorporeal. This agrees with the opinion of Aristotle: there is only this difference in the names employed--he uses the term "Intelligences," and we say instead "angels." His theory is that the Intelligences are intermediate beings between the Prime Cause and existing things, and that they effect the motion of the spheres, on which motion the existence of all things depends. This is also the view we meet with in all parts of Scripture: every act of God is described as being performed by angels. But "angel" means "messenger"; hence every one that is intrusted with a certain mission is an angel. Even the movements of the brute creation are sometimes due to the action of an angel, when such

movements serve the purpose of the Creator, who endowed it with the power of performing that movement; e.g., "God hath sent His angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths that they have not hurt me" (Dan. vi. 22). Another instance may be seen in the movements of Balaam's ass, described as caused by an angel. The elements are also called angels. Comp. "Who maketh winds His angels, flaming fire His ministers" (Ps. civ. 4). There is no doubt that the word "angel" is used of a messenger sent by man; e.g., "And Jacob sent angels" (Gen. xxxii. 4); of a prophet, e.g., "And an angel of the Lord came up from *Gilgal* to Bochim" (Judges ii. 1); "And He sent an angel, and hath brought us forth out of Egypt" (Num. xx. 16). It is also used of ideals, perceived by prophets in prophetic visions, and of man's animal powers, as will be explained in another place.

When we assert that Scripture teaches that God rules this world through angels, we mean such angels as are identical with the Intelligences. In some passages the plural is used of God, e.g., "Let us make man in our image" (Gen. i. 26); "Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language" (*ibid.* xi. 7). Our Sages explain this in the following manner: God, as it were, does nothing without contemplating the host above. I wonder at the

p. 161

expression "contemplating," which is the very expression used by Plato: God, as it were, "contemplates the world of ideals, and thus produces the existing beings." In other passages our Sages expressed it more decidedly: "God does nothing without consulting the host above" (the word *familia*, used in the original, is a Greek noun, and signifies "host"). On the words, "what they have already made" (Eccles. ii. 12), the following remark is made in *Bereshit Rabba* and in *Midrash Koheleth*: "It is not said 'what He has made,' but 'what they have made'; hence we infer that He, as it were, with His court, have agreed upon the form of each of the limbs of man before placing it in its position, as it is said, 'He hath made thee and established thee'" (Deut. xxxii. 6). In *Bereshit Rabba* (chap. li.) it is also stated, that wherever the term "*and the Lord*" occurred in Scripture, the Lord with His court is to be understood. These passages do not convey the idea that God spoke, thought, reflected, or that He consulted and employed the opinion of other beings, as ignorant persons have believed. How could the Creator be assisted by those whom He created! They only show that all parts of the Universe, even the limbs of animals in their actual form, are produced through angels: for natural forces and angels are identical. How bad and injurious is the blindness of ignorance! Say to a person who is believed to belong to the wise men of Israel that the Almighty sends His angel to enter the womb of a woman and to form there the foetus, he will be satisfied with the account; he will believe it, and even find in it a description of the greatness of God's might and wisdom; although he believes that the angel consists of burning fire, and is as big as a third part of the Universe, yet he considers it possible as a divine miracle. But tell him that God gave the seed a formative power which produces and shapes the limbs, and that this power is called "angel," or that all forms are the result of the influence of the Active Intellect, and that the latter is the angel, the Prince of the world, frequently mentioned by our Sages, and he will turn away; because he cannot comprehend the true greatness and power of creating forces that act in a body without being perceived by our senses. Our Sages have already

stated--for him who has understanding--that all forces that reside in a body are angels, much more the forces that are active in the Universe. The theory that each force acts only in one particular way, is expressed in *Bereshit Rabba* (chap. 1.) as follows: "One angel does not perform two things, and two angels do not perform one thing"; this is exactly the property of all forces. We may find a confirmation of the opinion that the natural and psychical forces of an individual are called angels in a statement of our Sages which is frequently quoted, and occurs originally in *Bereshit Rabba* (chap. lxxviii.): "Every day God creates a legion of angels; they sing before Him, and disappear." When, in opposition to this statement, other statements were quoted to the effect that angels are eternal--and, in fact, it has repeatedly been shown that they live permanently--the reply has been given that some angels live permanently, others perish; and this is really the case; for individual forces are transient, whilst the genera are permanent and imperishable. Again, we read (in *Bereshit Rabba*, chap. lxxxv.), in reference to the relation between Judah and Tamar: "R. Jochanan said that Judah was about to pass by [without noticing Tamar], but God caused the angel of lust, i.e., the libidinous disposition, to present himself to him." Man's disposition is here called

p. 162

an angel. Likewise we frequently meet with the phrase "the angel set over a certain thing." In *Midrash-Kohleth* (on Eccles. x. 7) the following passage occurs: "When man sleeps, his soul speaks to the angel, the angel to the cherub." The intelligent reader will find here a clear statement that man's imaginative faculty is also called "angel," and that "cherub" is used for man's intellectual faculty. How beautiful must this appear to him who understands it; how absurd to the ignorant!

We have already stated that the forms in which angels appear form part of the prophetic vision. Some prophets see angels in the form of man, e.g., "And behold three men stood by him" (Gen. xviii. 2); others perceive an angel as a fearful and terrible being, e.g., "And his countenance was as the countenance of an angel of God, very terrible" (Judges xiii. 6); others see them as fire, e.g., "And the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire" (Exod. iii. 2). In *Bereshit Rabba* (chap. 1.) the following remark occurs: "To Abraham, whose prophetic power was great, the angels appeared in the form of men; to Lot, whose power was weak, they appeared as angels." This is an important principle as regards Prophecy; it will be fully discussed when we treat of that subject (chap. xxxii. *sqq.*). Another passage in *Bereshit Rabba* (*ibid.*) runs thus: "Before the angels have accomplished their task they are called men, when they have accomplished it they are angels." Consider how clearly they say that the term "angel" signifies nothing but a certain action, and that every appearance of an angel is part of a prophetic vision, depending on the capacity of the person that perceives it.

There is nothing in the opinion of Aristotle on this subject contrary to the teaching of Scripture. The whole difference between him and ourselves is this: he believes all these beings to be eternal, co-existing with the First Cause as its necessary effect; but we believe that they have had



a beginning, that God created the Intelligences, and gave the spheres the capacity of seeking to become like them: that in creating the Intelligences and the spheres, He endowed them with their governing powers. In this point we differ from him.

In the course of this treatise we shall give his theory as well as the theory of *Creatio ex nihilo* taught in Scripture.

## CHAPTER VII

WE have already explained that the term "angel" is a homonym, and is used of the intellectual beings, the spheres, and the elements: for all these are engaged in performing a divine command. But do not imagine that the Intelligences and the spheres are like other forces which reside in bodies and act by the laws of nature without being conscious of what they do. The spheres and the Intelligences are conscious of their actions, and select by their own free will the objects of their influence, although not in the same manner as we exercise free will and rule over other things, which only concern temporary beings. I have been led to adopt this theory by certain passages in Scripture: e.g., an angel says to Lot: "For I cannot do anything," etc. (Gen. xix. 21); and telling him to deliver himself, the angel says: "Behold I have accepted thee concerning this thing" (ver. 21).

p. 163

[paragraph continues] Again: "Take heed before him, and listen to his voice," etc. (Exod. xxiii. 21). These passages show that angels are conscious of what they do, and have free will in the sphere of action intrusted to them, just as we have free will within our province, and in accordance with the power given to us with our very existence. The difference is that what we do is the lowest stage of excellence, and that our influence and actions are preceded by non-action; whilst the Intelligences and the spheres always perform that which is good, they contain nothing except what is good and perfect, as will be shown further on, and they have continually been active from the beginning.

## CHAPTER VIII

IT is one of the ancient beliefs, both among the philosophers and other people, that the motions of the spheres produced mighty and fearful sounds. They observed how little objects produced by rapid motion a loud, shrilling, and terrifying noise, and concluded that this must to a far higher degree be the case with the bodies of the sun, the moon and the stars, considering their greatness and their velocity. The Pythagoreans believed that the sounds were pleasant, and, though loud, had the same proportions to each other as the musical notes. They also explained why these mighty and tremendous sounds are not heard by us. This belief is also widespread in our nation. Thus our Sages describe the greatness of the sound produced by the sun in the daily circuit in its orbit. The same description could be given of all heavenly bodies. Aristotle, however, rejects this, and holds that they produce no sounds. You will find his opinion in the

book *The Heavens and the World* (De Cœlo). You must not find it strange that Aristotle differs here from the opinion of our Sages. The theory of the music of the spheres is connected with the theory of the motion of the stars in a fixed sphere, and our Sages have, in this astronomical question, abandoned their own theory in favour of the theory of others. Thus, it is distinctly stated, "The wise men of other nations have defeated the wise men of Israel." It is quite right that our Sages have abandoned their own theory: for speculative matters every one treats according to the results of his own study, and every one accepts that which appears to him established by proof.

## CHAPTER IX

WE have stated above that in the age of Aristotle the number of spheres was not accurately known: and that those who at present count nine spheres consider a sphere containing several rotating circles as one, a fact well known to all who have a knowledge of astronomy. We need, therefore, not reject the opinion of those who assume two spheres in accordance with the words of Scripture: "Behold the heaven and the heaven of heavens are the Lord's" (Deut. x. 14). They reckon all the spheres with stars, i.e., with all the circles in which the stars move, as one: the all-encompassing sphere in which there are no stars, is regarded by them as the second: hence they maintain that there are two spheres.

I will here introduce an explanation which is necessary for the understanding of our view on the present subject. There is a difference among

p. 164

ancient astronomers whether the spheres of Mercury and Venus are above or below the sun, because no proof can be given for the position of these two spheres. At first it was generally assumed that they were above the sun--note this well; later on Ptolemy maintained that they were below the sun; because he believed that in this manner the whole arrangement of the spheres would be most reasonable; the sun would be in the middle, having three stars below and three above itself. More recently some Andalusian scholars concluded, from certain principles laid down by Ptolemy, that Venus and Mercury were above the sun. Ibn Aflah of Seville, with whose son I was acquainted, has written a famous book on the subject; also the excellent philosopher Abu-Bekr ibn-Alzaig, one of whose pupils was my fellow-student, has treated of this subject and offered certain proofs--which we have copied--of the improbability of Venus and Mercury being above the sun. The proofs given by Abu-Bekr show only the improbability, not the impossibility. In short, whether it be so or not, the ancients placed Venus and Mercury above the sun, and had, therefore, the following five spheres: that of the moon, which is undoubtedly the nearest to us; that of the sun, which is, of course, above the former; then that of the five planets, the sphere of the fixed stars, and the outermost sphere, which does not contain any star. Consequently there are four spheres containing figures, i.e., stars, which were called figures by the ancients in their well-known works--viz., the spheres of the fixed stars, of the five planets, of the sun, and of the moon;

above these there is one sphere which is empty, without any star. This number is for me of great importance in respect to an idea which none of the philosophers clearly stated, though I was led to it by various utterances of the philosophers and of our Sages. I will now state the idea and expound it.

## CHAPTER X

IT is a well-known fact that the philosophers, when they discuss in their works the order of the Universe, assume that the existing order of things in this sublunary world of transient beings depends on forces which emanate from the spheres. We have mentioned this several times. In like manner our Sages say, "There is no single herb below without its corresponding star above, that beats upon it and commands it to grow." Comp. "Knowest thou the ordinances of heaven? Canst thou set the dominion thereof in the earth?" (Job xxxviii. 33). The term *mazzal*, literally meaning a constellation in the Zodiac, is also used of every star, as may be inferred from the following passage in the beginning of *Bereshit Rabba* (chap. x.): "While one star (*mazzal*) completes its circuit in thirty days, another completes it in thirty years." They have thus clearly expressed it, that even each individual being in this world has its corresponding star. Although the influences of the spheres extend over all beings, there is besides the influence of a particular star directed to each particular species; a fact noticed also in reference to the several forces in one organic body; for the whole Universe is like one organic body, as we have stated above. Thus the philosophers speak of the peculiar influence of the moon on the particular element water. That this is the case is proved by the increase and decrease of the water in the seas and rivers according to the

p. 165

increase and decrease of the moon; also by the rising and the falling of the seas according to the advance or return of the moon, i.e., her ascending and her descending in the several quarters of her course. This is clear to every one who has directed his attention to these phenomena. The influence of the sun's rays upon fire may easily be noticed in the increase of heat or cold on earth, according as the sun approaches the earth or recedes or is concealed from it. All this is so clear that I need not explain it further. Now it occurred to my mind that the four spheres which contain stars exercise influence upon all beings on earth that come into existence, and, in fact, are the cause of their existence: but each of the four spheres is the exclusive source of the properties of one only of the four elements, and becomes by its own motion the cause of the motion and changes of that element. Thus water is set in motion by the moon-sphere, fire by the sun-sphere, air by the other planets, which move in many and different courses with retrogressions, progressions, and stations, and therefore produce the various forms of the air with its frequent changes, contractions, and expansions: the sphere of the other stars, namely, the fixed stars, sets earth in motion; and it may be that on this account, viz., on account of the slow motion of the fixed stars, earth is but slowly set in motion to change and to combine with other elements. The particular influence which the fixed stars exercise upon earth is implied in the

saying of our Sages, that the number of the species of plants is the same as that of the individuals included in the general term "stars."

The arrangement of the Universe may therefore be assumed to be as follows: there are four spheres, four elements set in motion by them, and also four principal properties which earthly beings derive from them, as has been stated above. Furthermore, there are four causes of the motion of every sphere, namely, the following four essential elements in the sphere; its spherical shape, its soul, its intellect, by which the sphere is capable of forming ideas, and the Intelligence, which the sphere desires to imitate. Note this well. The explanation of what I said is this: the sphere could not have been continuously in motion, had it not this peculiar form; continuity of motion is only possible when the motion is circular. Rectilinear motion, even if frequently repeated in the same moment, cannot be continuous: for when a body moves successively in two opposite directions, it must pass through a moment of rest, as has been demonstrated in its proper place. The necessity of a continuous motion constantly repeated in the same path implies the necessity of a circular form. The spheres must have a soul; for only animate beings can move freely. There must be some cause for the motion, and as it does not consist in the fear of that which is injurious, or the desire of that which is profitable, it must be found in the notion which the spheres form of a certain being, and in the desire to approach that being. This formation of a notion demands, in the first place, that the spheres possess intellect; it demands further that something exists which corresponds to that notion, and which the spheres desire to approach. These are the four causes of the motion of the spheres. The following are the four principal forces directly derived from the spheres: the nature of minerals, the properties peculiar to plants, the animal faculties, and the intellect. An examination of these forces shows that they have two functions, namely, to produce things and to perpetuate them; that is to say, to preserve the species

p. 166

perpetually, and the individuals in each species for a certain time. These are also the functions ascribed to Nature, which is said to be wise, to govern the Universe, to provide, as it were, by plan for the production of living beings, and to provide also for their preservation and perpetuation. Nature creates formative faculties, which are the cause of the production of living beings, and nutritive faculties as the source of their temporal existence and preservation. It may be that by Nature the Divine Will is meant, which is the origin of these two kinds of faculties through the medium of the spheres.

As to the number four, it is strange, and demands our attention. In *Midrash Tanhuma* the following passage occurs: "How many steps were in Jacob's ladder?--Four." The question refers to the verse, "And behold a ladder set upon the earth," etc. (Gen. xxviii. 12). In all the Midrashim it is stated that there were four hosts of angels: this statement is frequently repeated. Some read in the above passage: "How many steps were in the ladder?--Seven." But all readings and all Midrashim unanimously express that the angels whom Jacob saw ascending the ladder, and

descending, were only four; two of whom were going up and two coming down. These four angels, the two that went up and the two that came down, occupied one step of the ladder, standing in one line. Hence it has been inferred that the breadth of the ladder in this vision was four-thirds of the world. For the breadth of an angel in a prophetic vision is equal to one-third of the world; comp. "And his body was like *tarshish* (two-sixths)" (Dan. x. 6); the four angels therefore occupied four-thirds of the world.--Zechariah, in describing the allegorical vision of "the four chariots that came out from between two mountains, which mountains were mountains of brass" (Zech. vi. 1), adds the explanation, "These are the four spirits of the heavens which go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth" (*ibid.* ver. 5). By these four spirits the causes are meant which produce all changes in the Universe. The term "brass" (*nehoshet*), employed here, and the phrase "burnished brass" (*nehoshet kalal*), used by Ezekiel (i. 7), are to some extent homonymous, and will be discussed further on.

The saying of our Sages, that the angel is as broad as the third part of the Universe, or, in the words of Bereshit Rabba (chap. x.), that the angel is the third part of the world, is quite clear; we have already explained it in our large work on the Holy Law. The whole creation consists of three parts, (1) the pure intelligences, or angels; (2) the bodies of the spheres; and (3) the *materia prima*, or the bodies which are below the spheres, and are subject to constant change.

In this manner may those understand the dark sayings of the prophets who desire to understand them, who awake from the sleep of forgetfulness, deliver themselves from the sea of ignorance, and raise themselves upward nearer the higher beings. But those who prefer to swim in the waters of their ignorance, and to "go down very low," need not exert the body or heart; they need only cease to move, and they will go down by the law of nature. Note and consider well all we have said.

## CHAPTER XI

WHEN a simple mathematician reads and studies these astronomical

p. 167

discussions, he believes that the form and the number of the spheres are facts established by proof. But this is not the case; for the science of astronomy does not aim at demonstrating them, although it includes subjects that can be proved; e.g., it has been proved that the path of the sun is inclined against the equator; this cannot be doubted. But it has not yet been decided whether the sphere of the sun is excentric or contains a revolving epicycle, and the astronomer does not take notice of this uncertainty, for his object is simply to find an hypothesis that would lead to a uniform and circular motion of the stars without acceleration, retardation, or change, and which is in its effects in accordance with observation. He will, besides, endeavour to find such an hypothesis which would require the least complicated motion and the least number of spheres: he will therefore prefer an hypothesis which would explain all the phenomena of the stars by means of three spheres to an hypothesis which would require four spheres. From this reason we adopt,

in reference to the circuit of the sun, the theory of excentricity, and reject the epicyclic revolution assumed by Ptolemy. When we therefore perceive that all fixed stars move in the same way uniformly, without the least difference, we conclude that they are all in one sphere. It is, however, not impossible that the stars should have each its own sphere, with a separate centre, and yet move in the same way. If this theory be accepted, a number of Intelligences must be assumed, equal to that of the stars, and therefore Scripture says in reference to them, "Is there any number of his armies?" (Job xxv. 3); for the Intelligences, the heavenly bodies, and the natural forces, are called the armies of God. Nevertheless the species of the stars can be numbered, and therefore we would still be justified in counting the spheres of the fixed stars collectively as one, just as the five spheres of the planets, together with the numerous spheres they contain, are regarded by us as one. Our object in adopting this number is, as you have noticed, to divide the influences which we can trace in the Universe according to their general character, without desiring to fix the number of the Intelligences and the spheres. All we wish to point out is this: in the first place, that the whole Creation is divided into three parts, viz. (1) the pure Intelligences; (2) the bodies of the spheres endowed with permanent forms--(the forms of these bodies do not pass from one substratum to another, nor do their substrata undergo any change whatever); and (3) the transient earthly beings, all of which consist of the same substance. Furthermore, we desire to show that the ruling power emanates from the Creator, and is received by the Intelligences according to their order: from the Intelligences part of the good and the light bestowed upon them is communicated to the spheres, and the latter, being in possession of the abundance obtained of the Intelligences, transmit forces and properties unto the beings of this transient world. We must, however, add that the part which benefits the part below it in the order described does not exist for the sole purpose of producing that benefit. For if this were the case it would lead to the paradox that the higher, better, and nobler beings existed for the sake of beings lower in rank, whilst in reality the object should be of greater importance than the means applied for attaining it. No intelligent person will admit that this is possible. The nature of the influence which one part of the Creation exercises upon another must be explained as follows: A thing perfect in a certain way is either perfect

p. 168

only in itself, without being able to communicate that perfection to another being, or it is so perfect that it is capable of imparting perfection to another being. A person may possess wealth sufficient for his own wants without being able to spare anything for another, or he may have wealth enough to benefit also other people, or even to enrich them to such an extent as would enable them to give part of their property to others. In the same manner the creative act of the Almighty in giving existence to pure Intelligences endows the first of them with the power of giving existence to another, and so on, down to the Active Intellect, the lowest of the purely spiritual beings. Besides producing other Intelligences, each Intelligence gives existence to one of the spheres, from the highest down to the lowest, which is the sphere of the moon. After the latter follows this transient world, i.e., the *materia prima*, and all that has been formed of it. In

this manner the elements receive certain properties from each sphere, and a succession of genesis and destruction is produced.

We have already mentioned that these theories are not opposed to anything taught by our Prophets or by our Sages. Our nation is wise and perfect, as has been declared by the Most High, through Moses, who made us perfect: "Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people" (Deut. iv. 6). But when wicked barbarians have deprived us of our possessions, put an end to our science and literature, and killed our wise men, we have become ignorant; this has been foretold by the prophets, when they pronounced the punishment for our sins: "The wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid" (Isa. xxix. 14). We are mixed up with other nations; we have learnt their opinions, and followed their ways and acts. The Psalmist, deploring this imitation of the actions of other nations, says, "They were mingled among the nations, and learned their works" (Ps. cvi. 35). Isaiah likewise complains that the Israelites adopted the opinions of their neighbours, and says, "And they please themselves in the children of strangers" (Isa. ii. 6); or, according to the Aramaic version of Jonathan, son of Uzziel, "And they walk in the ways of the nations." Having been brought up among persons untrained in philosophy, we are inclined to consider these philosophical opinions as foreign to our religion, just as uneducated persons find them foreign to their own notions. But, in fact, it is not so.

Since we have repeatedly spoken of the influence emanating from God and the Intelligences, we will now proceed to explain what is the true meaning of this influence, and after that I will discuss the theory of the Creation.

## CHAPTER XII

IT is clear that whenever a thing is produced, an efficient cause must exist for the production of the thing that has not existed previously. This immediate efficient cause is either corporeal or incorporeal: if corporeal, it is not the efficient cause on account of its corporeality, but on account of its being an individual corporeal object, and therefore by means of its form. I will speak of this subject later on. The immediate efficient cause of a thing may again be the effect of some cause, and so on, but not *ad infinitum*. The series of causes for a certain product must necessarily conclude with a First Cause,

p. 169

which is the true cause of that product, and whose existence is not due to another cause. The question remains, Why has this thing been produced now and not long before, since the cause has always been in existence? The answer is, that a certain relation between cause and product has been absent, if the cause be corporeal: or, that the substance has not been sufficiently prepared, if the cause be incorporeal. All this is in accordance with the teachings of natural science. We ignore for the present the question whether to assume the Eternity of the Universe, or the *Creatio ex nihilo*. We do not intend to discuss the question here.

In Physics it has been shown that a body in acting upon another body must either directly be in contact with it, or indirectly through the medium of other bodies. E.g., a body that has been heated has been in contact with fire, or the air that surrounds the body has been heated by the fire, and has communicated the heat to the body; the immediate cause of the heat in this body is the corporeal substance of the heated air. The magnet attracts iron from a distance through a certain force communicated to the air round the iron. The magnet does therefore not act at all distances, just as fire does not act at every distance, but only as long as the air between the fire and the object is affected by the fire. When the air is no longer affected by the fire which is under a piece of wax, the latter does not melt. The same is the case with magnetism. When an object that has previously not been warm has now become warm, the cause of its heat must now have been created: either some fire has been produced, or the distance of the fire from the object has been changed, and the altered relation between the fire and the object is the cause now created. In a similar manner we find the causes of all changes in the Universe to be changes in the combination of the elements that act upon each other when one body approaches another or separates from it. There are, however, changes which are not connected with the combination of the elements, but concern only the forms of the things; they require likewise an efficient cause: there must exist a force that produces the various forms. This cause is incorporeal, for that which produces form must itself be abstract form, as has been shown in its proper place. I have also indicated the proof of this theorem in previous chapters. The following may, in addition, serve to illustrate it: All combinations of the elements are subject to increase and decrease, and this change takes place gradually. It is different with forms: they do not change gradually, and are therefore without motion: they appear and disappear instantaneously, and are consequently not the result of the combination of corporeal elements. This combination merely prepares matter for receiving a certain form. The efficient cause which produces the form is indivisible, because it is of the same kind as the thing produced. Hence it may be concluded that the agent that has produced a certain form, or given it to a certain substance, must itself be an abstract form. The action of this incorporeal agent cannot depend on a certain relation to the corporeal product: being incorporeal, it cannot approach a body, or recede from it: nor can a body approach the incorporeal agent, or recede from it, because there is no relation of distance between corporeal and incorporeal beings. The reason why the action has not taken place before must be sought in the circumstance that the substance has not been prepared for the action of the abstract form.

p. 170

It is now clear that the action of bodies upon each other, according to their forms, prepares the substance for receiving the action of an incorporeal being, or Form. The existence of actions of purely incorporeal beings, in every case of change that does not originate in the mere combination of elements, is now firmly established. These actions do not depend on impact, or on a certain distance. They are termed "influence" (or "emanation"), on account of their similarity to a water-spring. The latter sends forth water in all directions, has no peculiar side for receiving or spending its contents: it springs forth on all sides, and continually waters both



neighbouring and distant places. In a similar manner incorporeal beings, in receiving power and imparting it to others, are not limited to a particular side, distance, or time. They act continually; and whenever an object is sufficiently prepared, it receives the effect of that continuous action, called "influence" (or "emanation"). God being incorporeal, and everything being the work of Him as the efficient cause, we say that the Universe has been created by the Divine influence, and that all changes in the Universe emanate from Him. In the same sense we say that He caused wisdom to emanate from Him and to come upon the prophets. In all such cases we merely wish to express that an incorporeal Being, whose action we call "influence," has produced a certain effect. The term "influence" has been considered applicable to the Creator on account of the similarity between His actions and those of a spring. There is no better way of describing the action of an incorporeal being than by this analogy; and no term can be found that would accurately describe it. For it is as difficult to form an idea of that action as to form an idea of the incorporeal being itself. As we imagine only bodies or forces residing in bodies, so we only imagine actions possible when the agent is near, at a certain distance, and on a particular side. There are therefore persons who, on learning that God is incorporeal, or that He does not approach the object of His action, believe that He gives commands to angels, and that the latter carry them out by approach or direct contact, as is the case when we produce something. These persons thus imagine also the angels as bodies. Some of them, further, believe that God commands an action in words consisting, like ours, of letters and sound, and that thereby the action is done. All this is the work of the imagination, which is, in fact, identical with "evil inclination." For all our defects in speech or in character are either the direct or the indirect work of imagination. This is not the subject of the present chapter, in which we only intended to explain the term "influence" in so far as it is applied to incorporeal beings, namely, to God and to the Intelligences or angels. But the term is also applied to the forces of the spheres in their effects upon the earth; and we speak of the "influence" of the spheres, although the spheres are corporeal, and the stars, being corporeal, only act at certain distances, i.e., at a smaller or a greater distance from the centre, or at a definite distance from each other, a circumstance which led to Astrology.

As to our assertion that Scripture applies the notion of "influence" to God, compare "They have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters" (Jer. ii. 13), i.e., the Divine influence that gives life or existence, for the two are undoubtedly identical. Further, "For with Thee is the fountain of life" (Ps. xxxvi. 10), i.e., the Divine influence that gives existence. The

p. 171

concluding words of this verse, "in Thy light we see light," express exactly what we said, namely, that by the influence of the intellect which emanates from God we become wise, by it we are guided and enabled to comprehend the Active Intellect. Note this.

CHAPTER XIII

AMONG those who believe in the existence of God, there are found three different theories as regards the question whether the Universe is eternal or not.

*First Theory.*--Those who follow the Law of Moses, our Teacher, hold that the whole Universe, i.e., everything except God, has been brought by Him into existence out of non-existence. In the beginning God alone existed, and nothing else; neither angels, nor spheres, nor the things that are contained within the spheres existed. He then produced from nothing all existing things such as they are, by His will and desire. Even time itself is among the things created; for time depends on motion, i.e., on an accident in things which move, and the things upon whose motion time depends are themselves created beings, which have passed from non-existence into existence. We say that God *existed* before the creation of the Universe, although the verb *existed* appears to imply the notion of time; we also believe that He existed an infinite space of time before the Universe was created; but in these cases we do not mean time in its true sense. We only use the term to signify something analogous or similar to time. For time is undoubtedly an accident, and, according to our opinion, one of the created accidents, like blackness and whiteness; it is not a quality, but an accident connected with motion. This must be clear to all who understand what Aristotle has said on time and its real existence.

The following remark does not form an essential part of our present research; it will nevertheless be found useful in the course of this discussion. Many scholars do not know what time really is, and men like Galen were so perplexed about it that they asked whether time has a real existence or not; the reason for this uncertainty is to be found in the circumstance that time is an accident of an accident. Accidents which are directly connected with material bodies, e.g., colour and taste, are easily understood, and correct notions are formed of them. There are, however, accidents which are connected with other accidents, e.g., the splendour of colour, or the inclination and the curvature of a line: of these it is very difficult to form a correct notion, especially when the accident which forms the substratum for the other accident is not constant but variable. Both difficulties are present in the notion of time: it is an accident of motion, which is itself an accident of a moving object; besides, it is not a fixed property; on the contrary, its true and essential condition is, not to remain in the same state for two consecutive moments. This is the source of ignorance about the nature of time.

We consider time a thing created: it comes into existence in the same manner as other accidents, and the substances which form the substratum for the accidents. For this reason, viz., because time belongs to the things created, it cannot be said that God produced the Universe *in the beginning*.

p. 172

[paragraph continues] Consider this well; for he who does not understand it is unable to refute forcible objections raised against the theory of *Creatio ex nihilo*. If you admit the existence of time before the Creation, you will be compelled to accept the theory of the Eternity of the

Universe. For time is an accident and requires a substratum. You will therefore have to assume that something [beside God] existed before this Universe was created, an assumption which it is our duty to oppose.

This is the first theory, and it is undoubtedly a fundamental principle of the Law of our teacher Moses; it is next in importance to the principle of God's unity. Do not follow any other theory. Abraham, our father, was the first that taught it, after he had established it by philosophical research. He proclaimed, therefore, "the name of the Lord the God of the Universe" (Gen. xxi. 33); and he had previously expressed this theory in the words, "The Possessor of heaven and earth" (*ibid.* xiv. 22).

*Second Theory.*--The theory of all Philosophers whose opinions and works are known to us is this: It is impossible to assume that God produced anything from nothing, or that He reduces anything to nothing; that is to say, it is impossible that an object consisting of matter and form should be produced when that matter is absolutely absent, or that it should be destroyed in such a manner that that matter be absolutely no longer in existence. To say of God that He can produce a thing from nothing or reduce a thing to nothing is, according to the opinion of these philosophers, the same as if we were to say that He could cause one substance to have at the same time two opposite properties, or produce another being like Himself, or change Himself into a body, or produce a square the diagonal of which be equal to its side, or similar impossibilities. The philosophers thus believe that it is no defect in the Supreme Being that He does not produce impossibilities, for the nature of that which is impossible is constant--it does not depend on the action of an agent, and for this reason it cannot be changed, Similarly there is, according to them, no defect in the greatness of God, when He is unable to produce a thing from nothing, because they consider this as one of the impossibilities. They therefore assume that a certain substance has coexisted with God from eternity in such a manner that neither God existed without that substance nor the latter without God. But they do not hold that the existence of that substance equals in rank that of God: for God is the cause of that existence, and the substance is in the same relation to God as the clay is to the potter, or the iron to the smith: God can do with it what He pleases; at one time He forms of it heaven and earth, at another time He forms some other thing. Those who hold this view also assume that the heavens are transient, that they came into existence, though not from nothing, and may cease to exist, although they cannot be reduced to nothing. They are transient in the same manner as the individuals among living beings which are produced from some existing substance, and are again reduced to some substance that remains in existence. The process of genesis and destruction is, in the case of the heavens, the same as in that of earthly beings.

The followers of this theory are divided into different schools, whose opinions and principles it is useless to discuss here: but what I have mentioned is common to all of them. Plato holds the same opinion. Aristotle says in

his *Physics*, that according to Plato the heavens are transient. This view is also stated in Plato's *Timaeus*. His opinion, however, does not agree with our belief: only superficial and careless persons wrongly assume that Plato has the same belief as we have. For whilst we hold that the heavens have been created from absolutely nothing, Plato believes that they have been formed out of something.--This is the second theory.

*Third Theory*.--viz., that of Aristotle, his followers, and commentators. Aristotle maintains, like the adherents of the second theory, that a corporeal object cannot be produced without a corporeal substance. He goes, however, farther, and contends that the heavens are indestructible. For he holds that the Universe in its totality has never been different, nor will it ever change: the heavens, which form the permanent element in the Universe, and are not subject to genesis and destruction, have always been so; time and motion are eternal, permanent, and have neither beginning nor end; the sublunary world, which includes the transient elements, has always been the same, because the *materia prima* is itself eternal, and merely combines successively with different forms; when one form is removed, another is assumed. This whole arrangement, therefore, both above and here below, is never disturbed or interrupted, and nothing is produced contrary to the laws or the ordinary course of Nature. He further says--though not in the same terms--that he considers it impossible for God to change His will or conceive a new desire; that God produced this Universe in its totality by His will, but not from nothing. Aristotle finds it as impossible to assume that God changes His will or conceives a new desire, as to believe that He is non-existing, or that His essence is changeable. Hence it follows that this Universe has always been the same in the past, and will be the same eternally.

This is a full account of the opinions of those who consider that the existence of God, the First Cause of the Universe, has been established by proof. But it would be quite useless to mention the opinions of those who do not recognize the existence of God, but believe that the existing state of things is the result of accidental combination and separation of the elements, and that the Universe has no Ruler or Governor. Such is the theory of Epicurus and his school, and similar philosophers, as stated by Alexander [Aphrodisiensis]; it would be superfluous to repeat their views, since the existence of God has been demonstrated whilst their theory is built upon a basis proved to be untenable. It is likewise useless to prove the correctness of the followers of the second theory in asserting that the heavens are transient, because they at the same time believe in the Eternity of the Universe, and so long as this theory is adopted, it makes no difference to us whether it is believed that the heavens are transient, and that only their substance is eternal, or the heavens are held to be indestructible, in accordance with the view of Aristotle. All who follow the Law of Moses, our Teacher, and Abraham, our Father, and all who adopt similar theories, assume that nothing is eternal except God, and that the theory of *Creatio ex nihilo* includes nothing that is impossible, whilst some thinkers even regard it as an established truth.

After having described the different theories, I will now proceed to show how Aristotle proved his theory, and what induced him to adopt it.

## CHAPTER XIV

IT is not necessary to repeat in every chapter that I write this treatise with the full knowledge of what you have studied: that I therefore need not quote the exact words of the philosophers: it will suffice to give an abstract of their views. I will, however, point out the methods which they employ, in the same manner as I have done when I discussed the theories of the Mutakallemim. No notice will be taken of the opinion of any philosopher but that of Aristotle; his opinions alone deserve to be criticized, and if our objections or doubts with regard to any of these be well founded, this must be the case in a far higher degree in respect to all other opponents of our fundamental principles.

I now proceed to describe the methods of the philosophers.

*First Method.*--According to Aristotle, motion, that is to say, motion par excellence, is eternal. For if the motion had a beginning, there must already have been some motion when it came into existence, for transition from potentiality into actuality, and from non-existence into existence, always implies motion; then that previous motion, the cause of the motion which follows, must be eternal, or else the series would have to be carried back *ad infinitum*. On the same principle he maintains that time is eternal, for time is related to and connected with motion: there is no motion except in time, and time can only be perceived by motion, as has been demonstrated by proof. By this argument Aristotle proves the eternity of the Universe.

*Second Method.*--The First Substance common to the four elements is eternal. For if it had a beginning it would have come into existence from another substance; it would further be endowed with a form, as coming into existence is nothing but receiving Form. But we mean by "First Substance" a formless substance; it can therefore not have come into existence from another substance, and must be without beginning and without end: hence it is concluded that the Universe is eternal.

*Third Method.*--The substance of the spheres contains no opposite elements: for circular motion includes no such opposite directions as are found in rectilinear motion. Whatever is destroyed, owes its destruction to the opposite elements it contains. The spheres contain no opposite elements; they are therefore indestructible, and because they are indestructible they are also without beginning. Aristotle thus assumes the axiom that everything that has had a beginning is destructible, and that everything destructible has had a beginning; that things without beginning are indestructible, and indestructible things are without beginning. Hence follows the Eternity of the Universe.

*Fourth Method.*--The actual production of a thing is preceded in time by its possibility. The actual change of a thing is likewise preceded in time by its possibility. From this proposition Aristotle derives the eternity of the circular motion of the spheres. The Aristotelians in more

recent time employ this proposition in demonstrating the Eternity of the Universe. They argue thus: When the Universe did not yet exist, its existence was either possible or necessary, or impossible. If it was necessary, the Universe could never have been non-existing; if impossible, the Universe could never have been in existence; if possible, the question arises, What was the substratum

p. 175

of that possibility? for there must be in existence something of which that possibility can be predicated. This is a forcible argument in favour of the Eternity of the Universe. Some of the later schools of the Mutakallemim imagined that they could confute this argument by objecting that the possibility rests with the agent, and not with the production. But this objection is of no force whatever: for there are two distinct possibilities, viz., the thing produced has had the possibility of being produced before this actually took place: and the agent has had the possibility of producing it before he actually did so. There are, therefore, undoubtedly two possibilities--that of the substance to receive a certain form, and that of the agent to perform a certain act.

These are the principal methods, based on the properties of the Universe, by which Aristotle proves the Eternity of the Universe. There are, however, other methods of proving the Eternity of the Universe. They are based on the notions formed of God, and philosophers after Aristotle derived them from his philosophy. Some of them employed the following argument:--

*Fifth Method.*--If God produced the Universe from nothing, He must have been a potential agent before He was an actual one, and must have passed from a state of potentiality into that of actuality--a process that is merely possible, and requires an agent for effecting it. This argument is likewise a source of great doubts, and every intelligent person must examine it in order to refute it and to expose its character.

*Sixth Method.*--An agent is active at one time and inactive at another, according as favourable or unfavourable circumstances arise. The unfavourable circumstances cause the abandonment of an intended action. The favourable ones, on the other hand, even produce a desire for an action for which there has not been a desire previously. As, however, God is not subject to accidents which could bring about a change in His will, and is not affected by obstacles and hindrances that might appear or disappear, it is impossible, they argue, to imagine that God is active at one time and inactive at another. He is, on the contrary, always active in the same manner as He is always in actual existence.

*Seventh Method.*--The actions of God are perfect; they are in no way defective, nor do they contain anything useless or superfluous. In similar terms Aristotle frequently praises Him, when he says that Nature is wise and does nothing in vain, but makes everything as perfect as possible. The philosophers therefore contend that this existing Universe is so perfect that it cannot be

improved, and must be permanent; for it is the result of God's wisdom, which is not only always present in His essence, but is identical with it.

All arguments in favour of the Eternity of the Universe are based on the above methods, and can be traced to one or other of them. The following objection is also raised against *Creatio ex nihilo*: How could God ever have been inactive without producing or creating anything in the infinite past? How could He have passed the long infinite period which preceded the Creation without producing anything, so as to commence, as it were, only yesterday, the Creation of the Universe? For even if you said, e.g., that God created previously as many successive worlds as the outermost sphere could contain grains of mustard, and that each of these worlds existed as

p. 176

many years: considering the infinite existence of God, it would be the same as if He had only yesterday commenced the Creation. For when we once admit the beginning of the existence of things after their non-existence, it makes no difference whether thousands of centuries have passed since the beginning, or only a short time. Those who defend the Eternity of the Universe find both assumptions equally improbable.

*Eighth Method.*--The following method is based on the circumstance that the theory implies a belief which is so common to all peoples and ages, and so universal, that it appears to express a real fact and not merely an hypothesis. Aristotle says that all people have evidently believed in the permanency and stability of the heavens; and thinking that these were eternal, they declared them to be the habitation of God and of the spiritual beings or angels. By thus attributing the heavens to God, they expressed their belief that the heavens are indestructible. Several other arguments of the same kind are employed by Aristotle in treating of this subject in order to support the results of his philosophical speculation by common sense.

## CHAPTER XV

IN this chapter I intend to show that Aristotle was well aware that he had not proved the Eternity of the Universe. He was not mistaken in this respect. He knew that he could not prove his theory, and that his arguments and proofs were only apparent and plausible. They are the least objectionable, according to Alexander; but, according to the same authority, Aristotle could not have considered them conclusive, after having himself taught us the rules of logic, and the means by which arguments can be refuted or confirmed.

The reason why I have introduced this subject is this: Later philosophers, disciples of Aristotle, assume that he has proved the Eternity of the Universe, and most of those who believe that they are philosophers blindly follow him in this point, and accept all his arguments as conclusive and absolute proofs. They consider it wrong to differ from Aristotle, or to think that he was ignorant or mistaken in anything. For this reason, taking their standpoint, I show that Aristotle himself did not claim to have proved the Eternity of the Universe. He says in his book *Physics* (viii., chap. i.)

as follows: "All the Physicists before us believed that motion is eternal, except Plato, who holds that motion is transient; according to his opinion the heavens are likewise transient." Now if Aristotle had conclusive proofs for his theory, he would not have considered it necessary to support it by citing the opinions of preceding Physicists, nor would he have found it necessary to point out the folly and absurdity of his opponents. For a truth, once established by proof, does neither gain force nor certainty by the consent of all scholars, nor lose by the general dissent. We further find that Aristotle, in the book *The Heavens and the World*, introduces his theory of the Eternity of the Universe in the following manner: "Let us inquire into the nature of the heavens, and see whether they are the product of something or not, destructible or not." After this statement of the problem, he proceeds to cite the views of those who hold that the heavens have had a beginning, and continues thus: "By doing this, our theory will be most plausible and acceptable in the

p. 177

opinion of profound thinkers; and it will be the more so, when, as we propose, the arguments of our opponents are first heard. For if we were to state our opinion and our arguments without mentioning those of our opponents, our words would be received less favourably. He who desires to be just must not show himself hostile to his opponent; he must have sympathy with him, and readily acknowledge any truth contained in his words; he must admit the correctness of such of his opponent's arguments as he would admit if they were in his own favour." This is the contents of the words of Aristotle. Now, I ask you, men of intelligence, can we have any complaint against him after this frank statement? Or can any one now imagine that a real proof has been given for the Eternity of the Universe? Or can Aristotle, or any one else, believe that a theorem, though fully proved, would not be acceptable unless the arguments of the opponents were fully refuted? We must also take into consideration that Aristotle describes this theory as his *opinion*, and his proofs as *arguments*. Is Aristotle ignorant of the difference between argument and proof? between opinions, which may be received more or less favourably, and truths capable of demonstration? or would rhetorical appeal to the impartiality of opponents have been required for the support of his theory if a real proof had been given? Certainly not. Aristotle only desires to show that his theory is better than those of his opponents, who hold that philosophical speculation leads to the conviction that the heavens are transient, but have never been entirely without existence; or that the heavens have had a beginning, but are indestructible; or to defend any of the other views mentioned by him. In this he is undoubtedly right; for his opinion is nearer the truth than theirs, so far as a proof can be taken from the nature of existing things: we differ from him, as will be explained. Passion, that exercises great influence in most of the different sects, must have influenced even the philosophers who wished to affirm that Aristotle demonstrated his theory by proof. Perhaps they really believe it, and assume that Aristotle himself was not aware of it, as it was only discovered after his death! My conviction is, that what Aristotle says on the Eternity of the Universe, the cause of the variety in the motion of the spheres and the order of the Intelligences, cannot be proved, and that Aristotle never intended



to prove these things. I agree with him that the ways of proving this theory have their gates closed before us, there being no foundation on which to build up the proof. His words on this subject are well known. He says, "There are things concerning which we are unable to reason, or which we find too high for us: to say why these things have a certain property is as difficult as to decide whether the Universe is eternal or not." So far Aristotle. The interpretation which Abu-nasr offers of this parallel is well known. He denies that Aristotle had any doubt about the Eternity of the Universe, and is very severe upon Galen, who maintains that this theory is still doubtful, and that no proof has been offered. According to Abu-nasr, it is clear and demonstrable by proof that the heavens are eternal, but all that is enclosed within the heavens is transient. We hold, that by none of the methods mentioned in this chapter can a theory be established, refuted, or shaken.

We have mentioned these things only because we know that the majority of those who consider themselves wise, although they know nothing of science, accept the theory of the Eternity of the Universe on the authority

p. 178

of famous scholars. They reject the words of the prophets, because the latter do not employ any scientific method by which only a few persons would be instructed who are intellectually well prepared, but simply communicate the truth as received by Divine inspiration.

In the chapters which follow we will expound the theory of the Creation in accordance with the teaching of Scripture.

## CHAPTER XVI

IN this chapter I will first expound my view on this question, and then support it by argument--not by such arguments as those of the Mutakallemim, who believe that they have proved the *Creatio ex nihilo*. I will not deceive myself, and consider dialectical methods as proofs; and the fact that a certain proposition has been proved by a dialectical argument will never induce me to accept that proposition, but, on the contrary, will weaken my faith in it, and cause me to doubt it. For when we understand the fallacy of a proof, our faith in the proposition itself is shaken. It is therefore better that a proposition which cannot be demonstrated be received as an axiom, or that one of the two opposite solutions of the problem be accepted on authority. The methods by which the Mutakallemim proved the *Creatio ex nihilo* have already been described by me, and I have exposed their weak points. As to the proofs of Aristotle and his followers for the Eternity of the Universe, they are, according to my opinion, not conclusive; they are open to strong objections, as will be explained. I intend to show that the theory of the Creation, as taught in Scripture, contains nothing that is impossible; and that all those philosophical arguments which seem to disprove our view contain weak points which make them inconclusive, and render the attacks on our view untenable. Since I am convinced of the correctness of my method, and consider either of the two theories--viz., the Eternity of the Universe, and the Creation--as

admissible, I accept the latter on the authority of Prophecy, which can teach things beyond the reach of philosophical speculation. For the belief in prophecy is, as will be shown in the course of this treatise, consistent even with the belief in the Eternity of the Universe. When I have established the admissibility of our theory, I will, by philosophical reasoning, show that our theory of the Creation is more acceptable than that of the Eternity of the Universe; and although our theory includes points open to criticism, I will show that there are much stronger reasons for the rejection of the theory of our opponents.

I will now proceed to expound the method by which the proofs given for the Eternity of the Universe can be refuted.

## CHAPTER XVII

EVERYTHING produced comes into existence from non-existence; even when the substance of a thing has been in existence, and has only changed its form, the thing itself, which has gone through the process of genesis and development, and has arrived at its final state, has now different properties from those which it possessed at the commencement of the transition from potentiality to reality, or before that time. Take, e.g., the human ovum as

p. 179

contained in the female's blood when still included in its vessels: its nature is different from what it was in the moment of conception, when it is met by the semen of the male and begins to develop: the properties of the semen in that moment are different from the properties of the living being after its birth when fully developed. It is therefore quite impossible to infer from the nature which a thing possesses after having passed through all stages of its development, what the condition of the thing has been in the moment when this process commenced; nor does the condition of a thing in this moment show what its previous condition has been. If you make this mistake, and attempt to prove the nature of a thing in potential existence by its properties when actually existing, you will fall into great confusion: you will reject evident truths and admit false opinions. Let us assume, in our above instance, that a man born without defect had after his birth been nursed by his mother only a few months; the mother then died, and the father alone brought him up in a lonely island, till he grew up, became wise, and acquired knowledge. Suppose this man has never seen a woman or any female being; he asks some person how man has come into existence, and how he has developed, and receives the following answer: "Man begins his existence in the womb of an individual of his own class, namely, in the womb of a female, which has a certain form. While in the womb he is very small; yet he has life, moves, receives nourishment, and gradually grows, till he arrives at a certain stage of development. He then leaves the womb and continues to grow till he is in the condition in which you see him." The orphan will naturally ask: "Did this person, when he lived, moved, and grew in the womb, eat and drink, and breathe with his mouth and his nostrils? Did he excrete any substance?" The answer will be, "No." Undoubtedly he will then attempt to refute the statements of that person,

and to prove their impossibility, by referring to the properties of a fully developed person, in the following manner: "When any one of us is deprived of breath for a short time he dies, and cannot move any longer: how then can we imagine that any one of us has been inclosed in a bag in the midst of a body for several months and remained alive, able to move? If any one of us would swallow a living bird, the bird would die immediately when it reached the stomach, much more so when it came to the lower part of the belly; if we should not take food or drink with our mouth, in a few days we should undoubtedly be dead: how then can man remain alive for months without taking food? If any person would take food and would not be able to excrete it, great pains and death would follow in a short time, and yet I am to believe that man has lived for months without that function! Suppose by accident a hole were formed in the belly of a person, it would prove fatal, and yet we are to believe that the navel of the foetus has been open! Why should the foetus not open the eyes, spread forth the bands and stretch out the legs, if, as you think, the limbs are all whole and perfect." This mode of reasoning would lead to the conclusion that man cannot come into existence and develop in the manner described.

If philosophers would consider this example well and reflect on it, they would find that it represents exactly the dispute between Aristotle and ourselves. We, the followers of Moses, our Teacher, and of Abraham, our Father, believe that the Universe has been produced and has developed in a

p. 180

certain manner, and that it has been created in a certain order. The Aristotelians oppose us, and found their objections on the properties which the things in the Universe possess when in actual existence and fully developed. We admit the existence of these properties, but hold that they are by no means the same as those which the things possessed in the moment of their production; and we hold that these properties themselves have come into existence from absolute non-existence. Their arguments are therefore no objection whatever to our theory: they have demonstrative force only against those who hold that the nature of things as at present in existence proves the Creation. But this is not my opinion.

I will now return to our theme, viz., to the description of the principal proofs of Aristotle, and show that they prove nothing whatever against us, since we hold that God brought the entire Universe into existence from absolute non-existence, and that He caused it to develop into the present state. Aristotle says that the *materia prima* is eternal, and by referring to the properties of transient beings he attempts to prove this statement, and to show that the *materia prima* could not possibly have been produced. He is right; we do not maintain that the *materia prima* has been produced in the same manner as man is produced from the ovum, and that it can be destroyed in the same manner as man is reduced to dust. But we believe that God created it from nothing, and that since its creation it has its own properties, viz., that all things are produced of it and again reduced to it, when they cease to exist; that it does not exist without Form; and that it is the source of all genesis and destruction. Its genesis is not like that of the things produced from it,

nor its destruction like theirs: for it has been created from nothing, and if it should please the Creator, He might reduce it to absolutely nothing. The same applies to motion. Aristotle founds some of his proofs on the fact that motion is not subject to genesis or destruction. This is correct; if we consider motion as it exists at present, we cannot imagine that in its totality it should be subject, like individual motions, to genesis and destruction. In like manner Aristotle is correct in saying that circular motion is without beginning, in so far as seeing the rotating spherical body in actual existence, we cannot conceive the idea that that rotation has ever been absent. The same argument we employ as regards the law that a state of potentiality precedes all actual genesis. This law applies to the Universe as it exists at present, when everything produced originates in another thing; but nothing perceived with our senses or comprehended in our mind can prove that a thing created from nothing must have been previously in a state of potentiality. Again, as regards the theory that the heavens contain no opposites [and are therefore indestructible], we admit its correctness; but we do not maintain that the production of the heavens has taken place in the same way as that of a horse or ass, and we do not say that they are like plants and animals, which are destructible on account of the opposite elements they contain. In short, the properties of things when fully developed contain no clue as to what have been the properties of the things before their perfection. We therefore do not reject as impossible the opinion of those who say that the heavens were produced before the earth, or the reverse, or that the heavens have existed without stars, or that certain species of animals have been in existence, and others not. For the state of the whole Universe

p. 181

when it came into existence may be compared with that of animals when their existence begins; the heart evidently precedes the testicles, the veins are in existence before the bones; although, when the animal is fully developed, none of the parts is missing which is essential to its existence. This remark is not superfluous, if the Scriptural account of the Creation be taken literally; in reality, it cannot be taken literally, as will be shown when we shall treat of this subject.

The principle laid down in the foregoing must be well understood; it is a high rampart erected round the Law, and able to resist all missiles directed against it. Aristotle, or rather his followers, may perhaps ask us how we know that the Universe has been created: and that other forces than those it has at present were acting in its Creation, since we hold that the properties of the Universe, as it exists at present, prove nothing as regards its creation? We reply, there is no necessity for this according to our plan; for we do not desire to prove the Creation, but only its possibility: and this possibility is not refuted by arguments based on the nature of the present Universe, which we do not dispute. When we have established the admissibility of our theory, we shall then show its superiority. In attempting to prove the inadmissibility of *Creatio ex nihilo*, the Aristotelians can therefore not derive any support from the nature of the Universe; they must resort to the notion our mind has formed of God. Their proofs include the three methods which I

have mentioned above, and which are based on the notion conceived of God. In the next chapter I will expose the weak points of these arguments, and show that they really prove nothing.

## CHAPTER XVIII

THE first method employed by the philosophers is this: they assume that a transition from potentiality to actuality would take place in the Deity itself, if He produced a thing only at a certain fixed time. The refutation of this argument is very easy. The argument applies only to bodies composed of substance--the element that possesses the possibility [of change]--and form; for when such a body does not act for some time, and then acts by virtue of its form, it must undoubtedly have possessed something *in potentia* that hath now become actual, and the transition can only have been effected by some external agent. As far as corporeal bodies are concerned, this has been fully proved. But that which is incorporeal and without substance does not include anything merely possible; everything it contains is always in existence. The above argument does not apply to it, and it is not impossible that such a being acts at one time and does not act at another. This does not imply a change in the incorporeal being itself nor a transition from potentiality to actuality. The Active Intellect may be taken as an illustration. According to Aristotle and his school, the Active Intellect, an incorporeal being, acts at one time and does not act at another, as has been shown by Abu-nasr in his treatise on the Intellect. He says there quite correctly as follows: "It is an evident fact that the Active Intellect does not act continually, but only at times." And yet he does not say that the Active Intellect is changeable, or passes from a state of potentiality to that of actuality, although it produces at one time something which it has not produced

p. 182

before. For there is no relation or comparison whatever between corporeal and incorporeal beings, neither in the moment of action nor in that of inaction. It is only by homonymy that the term "action" is used in reference to the forms residing in bodies, and also in reference to absolutely spiritual beings. The circumstance that a purely spiritual being does not effect at one time that which it effects at another, does not necessitate a transition from potentiality to actuality: such a transition is necessary in the case of forces connected with bodies. It might, perhaps, be objected that our argument is, to some extent, a fallacy; since it is not due to anything contained in the Active Intellect itself, but to the absence of substances sufficiently prepared for its action, that at times it does not act: it does act always when substances sufficiently prepared are present, and, when the action does not continue, it is owing to the absence of substance sufficiently prepared, and not to any change in the Intellect. I answer that it is not our intention to state the reason why God created at one time and not at another; and, in referring to the Active Intellect as a parallel, we do not mean to assert that God acts at one time and not at another, in the same manner as the Active Intellect, an absolutely spiritual being, acts intermittently. We do not make this assertion, and, if we did, the conclusion would be fallacious. What we infer, and what we are justified in inferring, is this: the Active Intellect is neither a

corporeal object nor a force residing in a body: it acts intermittently, and yet whatever the cause may be why it does not always act, we do not say that the Active Intellect has passed from a state of potentiality to that of actuality; or that it implies the possibility [of change], or that an agent must exist that causes the transition from potentiality to actuality. We have thus refuted the strong objection raised by those who believe in the Eternity of the Universe; since we believe that God is neither a corporeal body nor a force residing in a body, we need not assume that the Creation, after a period of inaction, is clue to a change in the Creator Himself.

The second method employed in proving the Eternity of the Universe is based on the theory that all wants, changes, and obstacles are absent from the Essence of God. Our refutation of this proof, which is both difficult and profound, is this. Every being that is endowed with free will and performs certain acts in reference to another being, necessarily interrupts those acts at one time or another, in consequence of some obstacles or changes. E.g., a person desires to have a house, but he does not build one, because he meets with some obstacles: he has not the material, or he has the material, but it is not prepared for the purpose on account of the absence of proper instruments; or he has material and instruments, and yet does not build a house, because he does not desire to build it; since he feels no want for a refuge. When changed circumstances, as heat or cold, impel him to seek a refuge, then he desires to build a house. Thus changed circumstances change his will, and the will, when it meets with obstacles, is not carried into effect. This, however, is only the case when the causes of the actions are external; but when the action has no other purpose whatever than to fulfil the will, then the will does not depend on the existence of favourable circumstances. The being endowed with this will need not act continually even in the absence of all obstacles, because there does not exist anything for

p. 183

the sake of which it acts, and which, in the absence of all obstacles, would necessitate the action: the act simply follows the will. But, some might ask, even if we admit the correctness of all this, is not change imputed in the fact that the will of the being exists at one time and not at another? I reply thus: The true essence of the will of a being is simply the faculty of conceiving a desire at one time and not conceiving it at another. In the case of corporeal beings, the will which aims at a certain external object changes according to obstacles and circumstances. But the will of an absolutely spiritual being which does not depend on external causes is unchangeable, and the fact that the being desires one thing one day and another thing another day, does not imply a change in the essence of that being, or necessitate the existence of an external cause [for this change in the desire]. Similarly it has been shown by us that if a being acted at one time and did not act at another, this would not involve a change in the being itself. It is now clear that the term "will" is homonymously used of man's will and of the will of God, there being no comparison whatever between God's will and that of man. The objection is refuted, and our theory is not shaken by it. This is all we desire to establish.

The third method employed in proving the Eternity of the Universe is this: whatever the wisdom of God finds necessary to produce is produced *eo ipso*; but this wisdom, being His Essence, is eternal, and that which results from His wisdom must be eternal. This is a very weak argument. As we do not understand why the wisdom of God produced nine spheres, neither more nor less, or why He fixed the number and size of the stars exactly as they are; so we cannot understand why His wisdom at a certain time caused the Universe to exist, whilst a short time before it had not been in existence. All things owe their existence to His eternal and constant wisdom, but we are utterly ignorant of the ways and methods of that wisdom, since, according to our opinion [that God has no attributes], His will is identical with His wisdom, and all His attributes are one and the same thing, namely, His Essence or Wisdom. More will be said on this question in the section on Providence. Thus this objection to our theory falls likewise to the ground.

There is no evidence for the theory of the Eternity of the Universe, neither in the fact cited by Aristotle of the general consent of the ancient peoples when they describe the heavens as the habitation of the angels and of God, nor in the apparent concurrence of Scriptural texts with this belief. These facts merely prove that the heavens lead us to believe in the existence of the Intelligences, i.e., ideals and angels, and that these lead us to believe in the existence of God; for He sets them in motion, and rules them. We will explain and show that there is no better evidence for the existence of a Creator, as we believe, than that furnished by the heavens: but also according to the opinion of the philosophers, as has been mentioned by us, they give evidence that a being exists that sets them in motion, and that this being is neither a corporeal body nor a force residing in a body.

Having proved that our theory is admissible, and not impossible, as those who defend the Eternity of the Universe assert, I will, in the chapters which follow, show that our theory is preferable from a philosophical point of view, and expose the absurdities implied in the theory of Aristotle.

p. 184

## CHAPTER XIX

IT has been shown that according to Aristotle, and according to all that defend his theory, the Universe is inseparable from God; He is the cause, and the Universe the effect; and this effect is a necessary one: and as it cannot be explained why or how God exists in this particular manner, namely, being One and incorporeal, so it cannot be asked concerning the whole Universe why or how it exists in this particular way. For it is necessary that the whole, the cause as well as the effect, exist in this particular manner, it is impossible for them not to exist, or to be different from what they actually are. This leads to the conclusion that the nature of everything remains constant, that nothing changes its nature in any way, and that such a change is impossible in any existing thing. It would also follow that the Universe is not the result of design, choice, and

desire; for if this were the case, they would have been non-existing before the design had been conceived.

We, however, hold that all things in the Universe are the result of design, and not merely of necessity; He who designed them may change them when He changes His design. But not every design is subject to change; for there are things which are impossible, and their nature cannot be altered, as will be explained. Here, in this chapter, I merely wish to show by arguments almost as forcible as real proofs, that the Universe gives evidence of design; but I will not fall into the error in which the Mutakallemim have so much distinguished themselves, namely, of ignoring the existing nature of things or assuming the existence of atoms, or the successive creation of accidents, or any of their propositions which I have tried to explain, and which are intended to establish the principle of Divine selection. You must not, however, think that they understood the principle in the same sense as we do, although they undoubtedly aimed at the same thing, and mentioned the same things which we also will mention, when they treated of Divine Selection. For they do not distinguish between selection in the case of a plant to make it red and not white, or sweet and not bitter, and determination in the case of the heavens which gave them their peculiar geometrical form and did not give them a triangular or quadrilateral shape. The Mutakallemim established the principle of determination by means of their propositions, which have been enumerated above (Part I., chap. lxxiii.). I will establish this principle only as far as necessary, and only by philosophical propositions based on the nature of things. But before I begin my argument, I will state the following facts: Matter is common to things different from each other; there must be either one external cause which endows this matter partly with one property, partly with another, or there must be as many different causes as there are different forms of the matter common to all things. This is admitted by those who assume the Eternity of the Universe. After having premised this proposition, I will proceed with the discussion of our theme from an Aristotelian point of view, in form of a dialogue.

*We.*--You have proved that all things in the sublunary world have one common substance; why then do the species of things vary? why are the individuals in each species different from each other?

p. 185

*Aristotelian.*--Because the composition of the things formed of that substance varies. For the common substance at first received four different forms, and each form was endowed with two qualities, and through these four qualities the substance was turned into the elements of which all things are formed. The composition of the elements takes place in the following manner:--First they are mixed in consequence of the motion of the spheres, and then they combine together; a cause for variation arises then in the variation of the degree of heat, cold, moisture, and dryness of the elements which form the constituent parts of the things. By these different combinations things are variously predisposed to receive different forms; and these in their turn are again prepared to receive other forms, and so on. Each generic form finds a wide sphere in its



substance both as regards quality and quantity: and the individuals of the classes vary accordingly. This is fully explained in Natural Science. It is quite correct and clear to every one that readily acknowledges the truth, and does not wish to deceive himself.

*We.*--Since the combination of the elements prepares substances and enables them to receive different forms, what has prepared the first substance and caused one part of it to receive the form of fire, another part the form of earth, and the parts between these two the forms of water and of air, since one substance is common to all? Through what has the substance of earth become more fit for the form of earth, and the substance of fire more fit for that of fire?

*Ar.*--The difference of the elements was caused by their different position for the different places prepared the same substance differently, in the following way: the portion nearest the surrounding sphere became more rarified and swifter in motion, and thus approaching the nature of that sphere, it received by this preparation the form of fire. The farther the substance is away from the surrounding sphere towards the centre, the denser, the more solid, and the less luminous it is; it becomes earth; the same is the cause of the formation of water and air. This is necessarily so: for it would be absurd to deny that each part of the substance is in a certain place; or to assume that the surface is identical with the centre, or the centre with the surface. This difference in place determined the different forms, i.e., predisposed the substance to receive different forms.

*We.*--Is the substance of the surrounding sphere, i.e., the heavens, the same as that of the elements?

*Ar.*--No; the substance is different, and the forms are different. The term "body" is homonymously used of these bodies below and of the heavens, as has been shown by modern philosophers. All this has been demonstrated by proof.

But let now the reader of this treatise hear what I have to say. Aristotle has proved that the difference of forms becomes evident by the difference of actions. Since, therefore, the motion of the elements is rectilinear, and that of the spheres circular, we infer that the substances are different. This inference is supported by Natural Science. When we further notice that substances with rectilinear motion differ in their directions, that some move upward, some downward, and that substances which move in the same direction have different velocities, we infer that their forms must be different.

p. 186

[paragraph continues] Thus we learn that there are four elements. In the same way we come to the conclusion that the substance of all the spheres is the same, since they all have circular motion. Their forms, however, are different, since one sphere moves from east to west, and another from west to east; and their motions have also different velocities. We can now put the following question to Aristotle: There is one substance common to all spheres: each one has its own peculiar form. Who thus determined and predisposed these spheres to receive different

forms? Is there above the spheres any being capable of determining this except God? I will show the profundity and the extraordinary acumen which Aristotle displayed when this question troubled him. He strove very hard to meet this objection with arguments, which, however, were not borne out by facts. Although he does not mention this objection, it is clear from his words that he endeavours to show the nature of the spheres, as he has shown that of the things in the sublunary world. Everything is, according to him, the result of a law of Nature, and not the result of the design of a being that designs as it likes, or the determination of a being that determines as it pleases. He has not carried out the idea consistently, and it will never be done. He tries indeed to find the cause why the sphere moves from east and not from west; why some spheres move with greater velocity, others with less velocity, and he finds the cause of these differences in their different positions in reference to the uppermost sphere. He further attempts to show why there are several spheres for each of the seven planets, while there is only one sphere for the large number of fixed stars. For all this he endeavours to state the reason, so as to show that the whole order is the necessary result of the laws of Nature. He has not attained his object. For as regards the things in the sublunary world, his explanations are in accordance with facts, and the relation between cause and effect is clearly shown. It can therefore be assumed that everything is the necessary result of the motions and influences of the spheres. But when he treats of the properties of the spheres, he does not clearly show the causal relation, nor does he explain the phenomena in that systematic way which the hypothesis of natural laws would demand. For let us consider the spheres: in one case a sphere with greater velocity is above a sphere with less velocity, in another case we notice the reverse; in a third case there are two spheres with equal velocities, one above the other. There are, besides, other phenomena which speak strongly against the hypothesis that all is regulated by the laws of Nature, and I will devote a special chapter to the discussion of these phenomena. In short, there is no doubt that Aristotle knew the weakness of his arguments in tracing and describing the cause of all these things, and therefore he prefaces his researches on these things as follows:--"We will now thoroughly investigate two problems, which it is our proper duty to investigate and to discuss according to our capacity, wisdom, and opinion. This our attempt must not be attributed to presumption and pride, but to our extraordinary zeal in the study of philosophy; when we attempt the highest and grandest problems, and endeavour to offer some proper solution, every one that hears it should rejoice and be pleased." So far Aristotle. This shows that he undoubtedly knew the weakness of his theory. How much weaker must it appear when we bear in mind that the science of Astronomy was not yet fully developed, and that in the days of Aristotle the motions of the

p. 187

spheres were not known so well as they are at present. I think that it was the object of Aristotle in attributing in his *Metaphysics* one Intelligence to every sphere, to assume the existence of something capable of determining the peculiar course of each sphere. Later on I will show that he has not gained anything thereby; but now I will explain the words, "according to our capacity, wisdom, and opinion," occurring in the passage which we quoted. I have not noticed that any of

the commentators explain them. The term "our opinion" refers to the principle that everything is the result of natural laws, or to the theory of the Eternity of the Universe. By "our wisdom" he meant the knowledge of that which is clear and generally accepted, viz., that the existence of every one of these things is due to a certain cause, and not to chance. By "our capacity" he meant the insufficiency of our intellect to find the causes of all these things. He only intended to trace the causes for a few of them; and so he did. For he gives an excellent reason why the sphere of the fixed stars moves slowly, while the other spheres move with greater velocity, namely, because its motion is in a different direction [from the uppermost sphere]. He further says that the more distant a sphere is from the eighth sphere the greater is its velocity. But this rule does not hold good in all cases, as I have already explained (p. 174) More forcible still is the following objection: There are spheres below the eighth that move from east to west. Of these each upper one, according to this rule, would have a greater velocity than the lower one: and the velocity of these spheres would almost equal that of the ninth sphere. But Astronomy had, in the days of Aristotle, not yet developed to the height it has reached at present.

According to our theory of the Creation, all this can easily be explained; for we say that there is a being that determines the direction and the velocity of the motion of each sphere: but we do not know the reason why the wisdom of that being gave to each sphere its peculiar property. If Aristotle had been able to state the cause of the difference in the motion of the spheres, and show that it corresponded as he thought to their relative positions, this would have been excellent, and the variety in their motions would be explained in the same way as the variety of the elements, by their relative position between the centre and the surface: but this is not the case, as I said before.

There is a phenomenon in the spheres which more clearly shows the existence of voluntary determination; it cannot be explained otherwise than by assuming that some being designed it: this phenomenon is the existence of the stars. The fact that the sphere is constantly in motion, while the stars remain stationary, indicates that the substance of the stars is different from that of the spheres. Abu-nasr has already mentioned the fact in his additions to the *Physics* of Aristotle. He says: "There is a difference between the stars and the spheres: for the spheres are transparent, the stars are opaque: and the cause of this is that there is a difference, however small it may be, between their substances and forms." So far Abu-nasr. But I do not say that there is a small difference, but a very great difference: because I do not infer it from the transparency of the spheres, but from their motions. I am convinced that there are three different kinds of substance, with three different forms, namely:--(1) Bodies which never move of their own accord; such are

p. 188

the bodies of the stars; (2) bodies which always move, such are the bodies of the spheres; (3) bodies which both move and rest, such are the elements. Now, I ask, what has united these two bodies, which, according to my opinion, differ very much from each other, though, according to Abu-nasr, only a little? Who has prepared the bodies for this union? In short, it would be strange

that, without the existence of design, one of two different bodies should be joined to the other in such a manner that it is fixed to it in a certain place but does not combine with it. It is still more difficult to explain the existence of the numerous stars in the eighth sphere; they are all spherical; some of them are large, some small; here we notice two stars apparently distant from each other one cubit; there a group of ten close together; whilst in another place there is a large space without any star. What determined that the one small part should have ten stars, and the other portion should be without any star? and the whole body of the sphere being uniform throughout, why should a particular star occupy the one place and not another? The answer to these and similar questions is very difficult, and almost impossible, if we assume that all emanates from God as the necessary result of certain permanent laws, as Aristotle holds. But if we assume that all this is the result of design, there is nothing strange or improbable: and the only question to be asked is this: What is the cause of this design? The answer to this question is that all this has been made for a certain purpose, though we do not know it; there is nothing that is done in vain, or by chance. It is well known that the veins and nerves of an individual dog or ass are not the result of chance; their magnitude is not determined by chance: nor is it by chance, but for a certain purpose, that one vein is thick, another thin: that one nerve has many branches, another has none: that one goes down straight, whilst another is bent; it is well known that all this must be just as it is. How, then, can any reasonable person imagine that the position, magnitude, and number of the stars, or the various courses of their spheres, are purposeless, or the result of chance? There is no doubt that every one of these things is necessary and in accordance with a certain design: and it is extremely improbable that these things should be the necessary result of natural laws, and not that of design.

The best proof for design in the Universe I find in the different motions of the spheres, and in the fixed position of the stars in the spheres. For this reason you find all the prophets point to the spheres and stars when they want to prove that there must exist a Divine Being. Thus Abraham reflected on the stars, as is well known; Isaiah (xl. 26) exhorts to learn from them the existence of God, and says, "Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things?" Jeremiah [calls God] "The Maker of the heavens"; Abraham calls Him "The God of the heavens" (Gen. xxiv. 7); [Moses], the chief of the Prophets, uses the phrase explained by us (Part I., chap. lxx.), "He who rideth on the heavens" (Deut. xxxiii. 26). The proof taken from the heavens is convincing: for the variety of things in the sublunary world, though their substance is one and the same, can be explained as the work of the influences of the spheres, or the result of the variety in the position of the substance in relation to the spheres, as has been shown by Aristotle. But who has determined the variety in the spheres and the stars, if not the Will of God? To say that the Intelligences have determined it

p. 189

is of no use whatever: for the Intelligences are not corporeal, and have no local relation to the spheres. Why then should the one sphere in its desire to approach the Intelligence, move eastward, and another westward? Is the one Intelligence in the east, the other in the west? or why

does one move with great velocity, another slowly? This difference is not in accordance with their distances from each other, as is well known. We must then say that the nature and essence of each sphere necessitated its motion in a certain direction, and in a certain manner, as the consequence of its desire to approach its Intelligence. Aristotle clearly expresses this opinion. We thus have returned to the part from which we started; and we ask, Since the substance of all things is the same, what made the nature of one portion different from another? Why has this sphere a desire which produces a motion different from that which the desire of another sphere produces? This must have been done by an agent capable of determining. We have thus been brought to examine two questions:--(1) Is it necessary to assume that the variety of the things in the Universe is the result of Design, and not of fixed laws of Nature, or is it not necessary? (2) Assuming that all this is the result of Design, does it follow that it has been created after not having existed, or does *Creatio ex nihilo* not follow, and has the Being which has determined all this done always so? Some of those who believe in the Eternity of the Universe hold the last opinion. I will now begin the examination of these two questions, and explain them as much as necessary in the following chapters.

## CHAPTER XX

ACCORDING to Aristotle, none of the products of Nature are due to chance. His proof is this: That which is due to chance does not reappear constantly nor frequently, but all products of Nature reappear either constantly or at least frequently. The heavens, with all that they contain, are constant; they never change, as has been explained, neither as regards their essence nor as regards their place. But in the sublunary world we find both things which are constant and things which reappear frequently [though not constantly]. Thus, e.g., the heat of fire and the downward tendency of a stone are constant properties, whilst the form and life of the individuals in each species are the same in most cases. All this is clear. If the parts of the Universe are not accidental, how can the whole Universe be considered as the result of chance? Therefore the existence of the Universe is not due to chance. The following is, in short, the objection which Aristotle raises against one of the earlier philosophers who assumed that the Universe is the result of chance, and that it came into existence by itself, without any cause. Some assume that the heavens and the whole Universe came into existence spontaneously, as well as the rotation and motion [of the spheres], which has produced the variety of things and established their present order. This opinion implies a great absurdity. They admit that animals and plants do not owe their existence or production to chance, but to a certain cause, be that cause Nature, or reason, or the like: e.g., they do not assume that everything might be formed by chance of a certain seed or semen, but that of a certain seed only an olive-tree is produced, and of a certain semen only

p. 190

a human being is developed. And yet they think that the heavens, and those bodies which appear divine among the rest of bodies, came into existence spontaneously, without the action of any

such cause as produces plants and animals. Having thus examined this theory, Aristotle then proceeds to refute it at greater length. It is therefore clear that Aristotle believes and proves that things in real existence are not accidental; they cannot be accidental, because they are essential, i.e., there is a cause which necessitates that they should be in their actual condition, and on account of that cause they are just as they in reality are. This has been proved, and it is the opinion of Aristotle. But I do not think that, according to Aristotle, the rejection of the spontaneous origin of things implies the admission of Design and Will. For as it is impossible to reconcile two opposites, so it is impossible to reconcile the two theories, that of necessary existence by causality, and that of Creation by the desire and will of a Creator. For the necessary existence assumed by Aristotle must be understood in this sense, that for everything that is not the product of work there must be a certain cause that produces it with its properties; for this cause there is another cause, and for the second a third, and so on. The series of causes ends with the Prime Cause, from which everything derives existence, since it is impossible that the series should continue *ad infinitum*. He nevertheless does not mean to say that the existence of the Universe is the necessary product of the Creator, i.e., the Prime Cause, in the same manner as the shadow is caused by a body, or heat by fire, or light by the sun. Only those who do not comprehend his words attribute such ideas to him. He uses here the term necessary in the same sense as we use the term when we say that the existence of the *intellectus* necessarily implies that of the *intellectum*, for the former is the efficient cause of the latter in so far as *intellectum*. Even Aristotle holds that the Prime Cause is the highest and most perfect Intellect; he therefore says that the First Cause is pleased, satisfied, and delighted with that which necessarily derives existence from Him, and it is impossible that He should wish it to be different. But we do not call this "design," and it has nothing in common with design. E.g., man is pleased, satisfied, and delighted that he is endowed with eyes and hands, and it is impossible that he should desire it to be otherwise, and yet the eyes and hands which a man has are not the result of his design, and it is not by his own determination that he has certain properties and is able to perform certain actions. The notion of design and determination applies only to things not yet in existence, when there is still the possibility of their being in accordance with the design or not. I do not know whether the modern Aristotelians understood his words to imply that the existence of the Universe presupposes some cause in the sense of design and determination, or whether, in opposition to him, they assumed design and determination, in the belief that this does not conflict with the theory of the Eternity of the Universe.

Having explained this, I will now proceed to examine the opinions of the modern philosophers.

## CHAPTER XXI

SOME of the recent philosophers who adhere to the theory of the Eternity of

the Universe hold that God produces the Universe, that He by His will designs and determines its existence and form: they reject, however, the theory that this act took place at one certain time, and assume that this always has been the case, and will always be so. The circumstance that we cannot imagine an agent otherwise than preceding the result of its action, they explain by the fact that this is invariably the case in all that *we* produce; because for agents of the same kind as we are, there are some moments in which they are not active, and are only agents *in potentia*; they become agents when they act. But as regards God there are no moments of non-action, or of potentiality in any respect; He is not before His work, He is always an actual agent. And as there is a great difference between His essence and ours, so is also a great difference between the relation of His work to Him and the relation of our work to us. They apply the same argument to will and determination; for there is no difference in this respect whether we say He acts, wills, designs, or determines. They further assume that change in His action or will is inadmissible. It is therefore clear that these philosophers abandoned the term "necessary result," but retained the theory of it: they perhaps sought to use a better expression, or to remove an objectionable term. For it is the same thing, whether we say in accordance with the view of Aristotle that the Universe is the result of the Prime Cause, and must be eternal as that Cause is eternal, or in accordance with these philosophers that the Universe is the result of the act, design, will, selection, and determination of God, but it has always been so, and will always be so; in the same manner as the rising of the sun undoubtedly produces the day, and yet it does not precede it. But when we speak of design we do not mean it in this sense; we mean to express by it that the Universe is not the "necessary result" of God's existence, as the effect is the necessary result of the efficient cause; in the latter case the effect cannot be separated from the cause; it cannot change unless the cause changes entirely, or at least in some respect. If we accept this explanation we easily see how absurd it is to say that the Universe is in the same relation to God as the effect is to the efficient cause, and to assume at the same time that the Universe is the result of the action and determination of God.

Having fully explained this subject, we come to the question whether the cause, which must be assumed for the variety of properties noticed in the heavenly beings, is merely an efficient cause, that must necessarily produce that variety as its effect, or whether that variety is due to a determining agent, such as we believe, in accordance with the theory of Moses our Teacher. Before I discuss this question I will first explain fully what Aristotle means by "necessary result"; after that I will show by such philosophical arguments as are free from every fallacy why I prefer the theory of *Creatio ex nihilo*. It is clear that when he says that the first Intelligence is the necessary result of the existence of God, the second Intelligence the result of the existence of the first, the third of the second [and so on], and that the spheres are the necessary result of the existence of the Intelligences, and so forth, in the well-known order which you learnt from passages dealing with it, and of which we have given a *résumé* in this part (ch. iv.)--he does not mean that the one thing was first in existence, and then the second came as the necessary result of the first; he denies that

any one of these beings has had a beginning. By "necessary result" he merely refers to the causal relation: he means to say that the first Intelligence is the cause of the existence of the second: the second of the third, and so on to the last of the Intelligences: and the same is also the case as regards the spheres and the *materia prima*: none of these preceded another, or has been in existence without the existence of that other. We say, e.g., that the necessary result of the primary qualities are roughness [and] smoothness, hardness [and] softness, porosity and solidity; and no person doubts that heat, cold, moisture, and dryness are the causes of smoothness and roughness, of hardness and softness, porosity and solidity, and similar qualities, and that the latter are the necessary result of those four primary qualities. And yet it is impossible that a body should exist with the primary qualities without the secondary ones; for the relation between the two sets of qualities is that of causality, not that of agent and its product. just in the same way the term "necessary result" is used by Aristotle in reference to the whole Universe, when he says that one portion is the result of the other, and continues the series up to the First Cause as he calls it, or first Intellect, if you prefer this term. For we all mean the same, only with this difference, that according to Aristotle everything besides that Being is the necessary result of the latter, as I have already mentioned: whilst, according to our opinion, that Being created the whole Universe with design and will, so that the Universe which had not been in existence before, has by His will come into existence. I will now begin in the following chapters my proofs for the superiority of our theory, that of *Creatio ex nihilo*.

## CHAPTER XXII

ARISTOTLE and all philosophers assume as an axiom that a simple element can only produce one simple thing, whilst a compound can produce as many things as it contains simple elements; e.g., fire combines in itself two properties, heat and dryness: it gives heat by the one property, and produces dryness by the other: an object composed of matter and form produces certain things on account of its matter, and others on account of its form, if [both matter and form] consist of several elements. In accordance with this axiom, Aristotle holds that the direct emanation from God must be one simple Intelligence, and nothing else.

A second axiom assumed by him is this: Things are not produced by other things at random; there must be some relation between cause and effect. Thus accidents are not produced by accidents promiscuously; quality cannot be the origin of quantity, nor quantity that of quality; a form cannot emanate from matter, nor matter from form.

A third axiom is this: A single agent that acts with design and will, and not merely by the force of the laws of Nature, can produce different objects.

A fourth axiom is as follows: An object, whose several elements are only connected by juxtaposition, is more properly a compound than an object whose different elements have entirely combined; e.g., bone, flesh, veins, or nerves, are more simple than the hand or the foot,



that are a combination of bone, flesh, veins, and nerves. This is very clear, and requires no further explanation.

p. 193

Having premised these axioms, I ask the following question: Aristotle holds that the first Intelligence is the cause of the second, the second of the third, and so on, till the thousandth, if we assume a series of that number. Now the first Intellect is undoubtedly simple. How then can the compound form of existing things come from such an Intellect by fixed laws of Nature, as Aristotle assumes? We admit all he said concerning the Intelligences, that the further they are away from the first, the greater is the variety of their compounds, in consequence of the larger number of the objects comprehensible by the Intelligences: but even after admitting this, the question remains, By what law of Nature did the spheres emanate from the Intelligences? What relation is there between material and immaterial beings? Suppose we admit that each sphere emanates from an Intelligence of the form mentioned; that the Intelligence, including, as it were, two elements, in so far as it comprehends itself and another thing, produces the next Intelligence by the one element, and a sphere by the other; but the question would then be, how the one simple element could produce the sphere, that contains two substances and two forms, namely, the substance and the form of the sphere, and also the substance and the form of the star fixed in that sphere. For, according to the laws of Nature, the compound can only emanate from a compound. There must therefore be one element, from which the body of the sphere emanates, and another element, from which the body of the star emanates. This would be necessary even if the substance of all stars were the same; but it is possible that the luminous stars have not the same substance as the non-luminous stars; it is besides well known that each body has its own matter and its own form. It must now be clear that this emanation could not have taken place by the force of the laws of Nature, as Aristotle contends. Nor does the difference of the motions of the spheres follow the order of their positions: and therefore it cannot be said that this difference is the result of certain laws of Nature. We have already mentioned this (ch. xix.).

There is in the properties of the spheres another circumstance that is opposed to the assumed laws of Nature; namely, if the substance of all spheres is the same, why does it not occur that the form of one sphere combines with the substance of another sphere, as is the case with things on earth, simply because their substance is fit [for such changes]? If the substance of all spheres is the same, if it is not assumed that each of them has a peculiar substance, and if, contrary to all principles, the peculiar motion of each sphere is no evidence for the special character of its substance, why then should a certain form constantly remain united with a certain substance? Again, if the stars have all one substance, by what are they distinguished from each other? is it by forms? or by accidents? Whichever be the case, the forms or the accidents would interchange, so that they would successively unite with every one of the stars, so long as their substance [being the same] admits the combinations [with every one of the forms or the accidents]. This shows that the term substance, when used of the spheres or the stars, does not mean the same as it signifies when used of the substance of earthly things, but is applied to the two synonymously.

It further shows that every one of the bodies of the spheres has its own peculiar form of existence different from that of all other

p. 194

beings. Why then is circular motion common to all spheres, and why is the fixed position of the stars in their respective spheres common to all stars? If we, however, assume design and determination of a Creator, in accordance with His incomprehensible wisdom, all these difficulties disappear. They must arise when we consider the whole Universe, not as the result of free will, but as the result of fixed laws of Nature: a theory which, on the one hand, is not in harmony with the existing order of things, and does not offer for it a sufficient reason or argument; and, on the other hand, implies many and great improbabilities. For, according to this theory God, whose perfection in every respect is recognised by all thinking persons, is in such relation to the Universe that He cannot change anything; if He wished to make the wing of a fly longer, or to reduce the number of the legs of a worm by one, He could not accomplish it. According to Aristotle, He does not try such a thing, and it is wholly impossible for Him to desire any change in the existing order of things; if He could, it would not increase His perfection: it might, on the contrary, from some point of view, diminish it.

Although I know that many partial critics will ascribe my opinion concerning the theory of Aristotle to insufficient understanding, or to intentional opposition, I will not refrain from stating in short the results of my researches, however poor my capacities may be. I hold that the theory of Aristotle is undoubtedly correct as far as the things are concerned which exist between the sphere of the moon and the centre of the earth. Only an ignorant person rejects it, or a person with preconceived opinions of his own, which he desires to maintain and to defend, and which lead him to ignore clear facts. But what Aristotle says concerning things above the sphere of the moon is, with few exceptions, mere imagination and opinion; to a still greater extent this applies to his system of Intelligences, and to some of his metaphysical views; they include great improbabilities, [promote] ideas which all nations consider as evidently corrupt, and cause views to spread which cannot be proved.

It may perhaps be asked why I have enumerated all the doubts which can be raised against the theory of Aristotle; whether by mere doubts a theory can be overthrown, or its opposite established? This is certainly not the case. But we treat this philosopher exactly as his followers tell us to do. For Alexander stated that when a theory cannot be established by proof, the two most opposite views should be compared as to the doubts entertained concerning each of them, and that view which admits of fewer doubts should be accepted. Alexander further says that this rule applies to all those opinions of Aristotle in *Metaphysics* for which he offered no proof. For those that followed Aristotle believed that his opinions are far less subject to doubt than any other opinion. We follow the same rule. Being convinced that the question whether the heavens are eternal or not cannot be decided by proof, neither in the affirmative nor in the negative, we have enumerated the objections raised to either view, and shown how the theory of the Eternity

of the Universe is subject to stronger objections, and is more apt to corrupt the notions concerning God [than the other]. Another argument can be drawn from the fact that the theory of the Creation was held by our Father Abraham, and by our Teacher Moses.

Having mentioned the method of testing the two theories by the objections

p. 195

raised against them, I find it necessary to give some further explanation of the subject.

### CHAPTER XXIII

IN comparing the objections raised against one theory with those raised against the opposite theory, in order to decide in favour of the least objectionable, we must not consider the number of the objections, but the degree of improbability and of deviation from real facts [pointed out by the objections]; for one objection may sometimes have more weight than a thousand others. But the comparison cannot be trustworthy unless the two theories be considered with the same interest, and if you are predisposed in favour of one of them, be it on account of your training or because of some advantage, you are too blind to see the truth. For that which can be demonstrated you cannot reject, however much you maybe inclined against it; but in questions like those under consideration you are apt to dispute [in consequence of your inclination). You will, however, be able to decide the question, as far as necessary, if you free yourself from passions, ignore customs, and follow only your reason. But many are the conditions which must be fulfilled. First you must know your mental capacities and your natural talents; you will find this out when you study all mathematical sciences, and are well acquainted with Logic. Secondly, you must have a thorough knowledge of Natural Science, that you may be able to understand the nature of the objections. Thirdly, you must be morally good. For if a person is voluptuous or passionate, and, loosening the reins, allows his anger to pass the just limits, it makes no difference whether he is so from nature or from habit, he will blunder and stumble in his way, he will seek the theory which is in accordance with his inclinations. I mention this lest you be deceived; for a person might some day, by some objection which he raises, shake your belief in the theory of the Creation, and then easily mislead you: you would then adopt the theory [of the Eternity of the Universe) which is contrary to the fundamental principles of our religion, and leads to "speaking words that turn away from God." You must rather have suspicion against your own reason, and accept the theory taught by two prophets who have laid the foundation for the existing order in the religious and social relations of mankind. Only demonstrative proof should be able to make you abandon the theory of the Creation: but such a proof does not exist in Nature.

You will not find it strange that I introduce into this discussion historical matter in support of the theory of the Creation, seeing that Aristotle, the greatest philosopher, in his principal works, introduces histories in support of the theory of the Eternity of the Universe. In this regard we may justly quote the saying: "Should not our perfect Law be as good as their gossip?" (B. T.

Baba batra, 115 b). When he supports his view by quoting Sabeian stories, why should we not support our view by that which Moses and Abraham said, and that which follows from their words?

I have before promised to describe in a separate chapter the strong objections which must occur to him who thinks that human wisdom comprehends fully the nature of the spheres and their motions: that these are subject to fixed laws, and capable of being comprehended as regards order and relation. I will now explain this.

p. 196

#### CHAPTER XXIV

You know of Astronomy as much as you have studied with me, and learnt from the book *Almagest*; we had not sufficient time to go beyond this. The theory that [the spheres] move regularly, and that the assumed courses of the stars are in harmony with observation, depends, as you are aware, on two hypotheses: we must assume either epicycles, or excentric spheres, or a combination of both. Now I will show that each of these two hypotheses is irregular, and totally contrary to the results of Natural Science. Let us first consider an epicycle, such as has been assumed in the spheres of the moon and the five planets, rotating on a sphere, but not round the centre of the sphere that carries it. This arrangement would necessarily produce a revolving motion; the epicycle would then revolve, and entirely change its place; but that anything in the spheres should change its place is exactly what Aristotle considers impossible. For that reason Abu-bekr ibn-Alzaig, in an astronomical treatise which he wrote, rejects the existence of epicycles. Besides this impossibility, he mentions others, showing that the theory of epicycles implies other absurd notions. I will here explain them:--(1) It is absurd to assume that the revolution of a cycle has not the centre of the Universe for its centre; for it is a fundamental principle in the order of the Universe that there are only three kinds of motion--from the centre, towards the centre, and round the centre; but an epicycle does not move away from the centre, nor towards it, nor round it. (2) Again, according to what Aristotle explains in *Natural Science*, there must be something fixed round which the motion takes place: this is the reason why the earth remains stationary. But the epicycle would move round a centre which is not stationary. I have heard that Abu-bekr discovered a system in which no epicycles occur; but excentric spheres are not excluded by him. I have not heard it from his pupils; and even if it be correct that he discovered such a system, he has not gained much by it: for excentricity is likewise as contrary as possible to the principles laid down by Aristotle. For it seems to me that an excentric sphere does not move round the centre of the Universe, but round an imaginary point distant from the centre, and therefore round a point which is not fixed. A person ignorant of astronomy might think that the motion of the excentric spheres may still be considered as taking place round something fixed, since their centre is apparently within the sphere of the moon. I would admit this if the centre were situated in the region of fire or air, although the spheres would not move round a stable point. But I will show that the amount of excentricity has, in a certain way, been

described in the Almagest; and later scholars have calculated the exact amount of excentricity in terms of radii of the earth, and have proved the result. The same measure has been used in astronomy in describing all distances and magnitudes. It has thus been shown that the point round which the sun moves lies undoubtedly beyond the sphere of the moon, and below the superficies of the sphere of Mercury. The centre for the circuit of Mars, that is, the centre of the excentric sphere of Mars, is beyond the sphere of Mercury, and below the sphere of Venus. The centre of Jupiter has the same distance; it lies between the sphere of Venus and that of Mercury, whilst the centre of Saturn lies between the spheres of Mars and Jupiter. Now, consider how improbable all this appears according to the laws of Natural Science. You will

p. 197

find it out when you consider the known distances and magnitudes of each sphere and each star, all expressed in terms of the radii of the earth. There is a uniform measure for all, and the excentricity of each sphere is not determined by units proportionate to its own magnitude.

It is still more improbable and more objectionable to assume that there are two spheres, the one within the other; that these are closely joined from all sides, and have, nevertheless, different centres. For in this case the smaller sphere might move whilst the larger be at rest; but the smaller cannot be at rest when the larger moves, and must move with the larger when the latter rotates round any other axis than that which passes through the two centres. Now we have this proposition which can be proved; and, further, the established theory that there is no vacuum, and also the assumed excentricity of the spheres; from all this it follows that in every two spheres the motion of the upper one should cause the lower sphere to move in the same way, and round the same centre. But this is not the case: the outer and the inner spheres do not move in the same way, and not round the same centre or the same axis: each of them has its peculiar motion. For this reason it has been assumed that between every two spheres there are substances different from those of the spheres. It may be very much doubted whether this is the case: for where should the centres of these intermediate substances be placed? have these substances likewise their own peculiar motion? Thabith has explained the above-mentioned theory in one of his treatises, and proved that we must assume a substance of a spherical form intermediate between one sphere and the other. All this is part of that which I have not explained to you when you studied with me, for I was afraid you might become confused and would not understand even those things which I wished to show you. But as to the inclination and the deviation assumed in respect to the latitude of the paths of Venus and Mercury, I have already clearly shown you viva voce that it is impossible to imagine material beings under such conditions. You have seen that Ptolemy has already pointed out this difficulty. He says as follows: "Let no one think that these and similar principles are improbable. If any one considers what we have here expounded in the same light as he considers things produced by skill and subtle work, he will find it improbable; but it is not right to compare human things to divine things." This is, as you know, what Ptolemy says, and I have already pointed out to you the passages by which you can verify all I said, except what I stated about the position of the centres of the excentric spheres; for I have not

heard that any one has paid attention to this question. But you will understand it when you know the length of the diameter of each sphere, and the extent of its excentricity in terms of radii of the earth, according to the facts which Kabici has established in his treatise on the distances. When you notice these distances you will confirm my words.

Consider, therefore, how many difficulties arise if we accept the theory which Aristotle expounds in Physics. For, according to that theory, there are no epicycles, and no excentric spheres, but all spheres rotate round the centre of the earth! How then can the different courses of the stars be explained? how is it possible to assume a uniform perfect rotation with the phenomena which we perceive, except by admitting one of the two hypotheses

p. 198

or both of them? The difficulty is still more apparent when we find that admitting what Ptolemy said as regards the epicycle of the moon, and its inclination towards a point different both from the centre of the Universe and from its own centre, the calculations according to these hypotheses are perfectly correct, within one minute: that their correctness is confirmed by the most accurate calculation of the time, duration, and extent of the eclipses, which is always based on these hypotheses. Furthermore, how can we reconcile, without assuming the existence of epicycles, the apparent retrogression of a star with its other motions? How can rotation or motion take place round a point which is not fixed? These are real difficulties.

I have explained to you already *vivâ voce*, that these difficulties do not concern the astronomer: for he does not profess to tell us the existing properties of the spheres, but to suggest, whether correctly or not, a theory in which the motion of the stars is circular and uniform, and yet in agreement with our observation. You know that Abu-bekr al-Zaig, in his treatise on Physics, expresses a doubt whether Aristotle knew the excentricity of the sun but ignored it, and only discussed the effect of the inclination, because he saw that the effect of the excentricity was identical with that of the inclination; or whether he did not perceive it. The truth is that he did not notice it or hear of it; the science was not perfect in his age. If he had heard of it, he would have strongly opposed it; if he had been convinced of its correctness, he would have been greatly embarrassed as regards all that he said on the question. What I said before (ch. xxii.) I will repeat now, namely, that the theory of Aristotle, in explaining the phenomena in the sublunary world, is in accordance with logical inference: here we know the causal relation between one phenomenon and another; we see how far science can investigate them, and the management of nature is clear and intelligible. But of the things in the heavens man knows nothing except a few mathematical calculations, and you see how far these go. I say in the words of the poet, "The heavens are the Lord's, but the earth He hath given to the sons of man" (Ps. cxv. 16); that is to say, God alone has a perfect and true knowledge of the heavens, their nature, their essence, their form, their motions, and their causes; but He gave man power to know the things which are under the heavens: here is man's world, here is his home, into which he has been placed, and of which he is himself a portion. This is in reality the truth. For the facts which we require in proving the existence of

heavenly beings are withheld from us: the heavens are too far from us, and too exalted in place and rank. Man's faculties are too deficient to comprehend even the general proof the heavens contain for the existence of Him who sets them in motion. It is in fact ignorance or a kind of madness to weary our minds with finding out things which are beyond our reach, without having the means of approaching them. We must content ourselves with that which is within our reach, and that which cannot be approached by logical inference let us leave to him who has been endowed with that great and divine influence, expressed in the words: "Mouth to mouth do I speak with Him" (Num. xii. 8).

This is all I can say on this question; another person may perhaps be able to establish by proof what appears doubtful to me. It is on account of my great love of truth that I have shown my embarrassment in these matters

p. 199

and I have not heard, nor do I know that any of these theories have been established by proof.

## CHAPTER XXV

WE do not reject the Eternity of the Universe, because certain passages in Scripture confirm the Creation; for such passages are not more numerous than those in which God is represented as a corporeal being; nor is it impossible or difficult to find for them a suitable interpretation. We might have explained them in the same manner as we did in respect to the Incorporeality of God. We should perhaps have had an easier task in showing that the Scriptural passages referred to are in harmony with the theory of the Eternity of the Universe if we accepted the latter, than we had in explaining the anthropomorphisms in the Bible when we rejected the idea that God is corporeal. For two reasons, however, we have not done so, and have not accepted the Eternity of the Universe. First, the Incorporeality of God has been demonstrated by proof: those passages in the Bible, which in their literal sense contain statements that can be refuted by proof, must and can be interpreted otherwise. But the Eternity of the Universe has not been proved; a mere argument in favour of a certain theory is not sufficient reason for rejecting the literal meaning of a Biblical text, and explaining it figuratively, when the opposite theory can be supported by an equally good argument.

Secondly, our belief in the Incorporeality of God is not contrary to any of the fundamental principles of our religion: it is not contrary to the words of any prophet. Only ignorant people believe that it is contrary to the teaching of Scripture: but we have shown that this is not the case: on the contrary, Scripture teaches the Incorporeality of God. If we were to accept the Eternity of the Universe as taught by Aristotle, that everything in the Universe is the result of fixed laws, that Nature does not change, and that there is nothing supernatural, we should necessarily be in opposition to the foundation of our religion, we should disbelieve all miracles and signs, and certainly reject all hopes and fears derived from Scripture, unless the miracles are also explained figuratively. The Allegorists amongst the Mohammedans have done this, and have thereby

arrived at absurd conclusions. If, however, we accepted the Eternity of the Universe in accordance with the second of the theories which we have expounded above (ch. xxiii.), and assumed, with Plato, that the heavens are likewise transient, we should not be in opposition to the fundamental principles of our religion; this theory would not imply the rejection of miracles, but, on the contrary, would admit them as possible. The Scriptural text might have been explained accordingly, and many expressions might have been found in the Bible and in other writings that would confirm and support this theory. But there is no necessity for this expedient, so long as the theory has not been proved. As there is no proof sufficient to convince us, this theory need not be taken into consideration, nor the other one; we take the text of the Bible literally, and say that it teaches us a truth which we cannot prove; and the miracles are evidence for the correctness of our view.

Accepting the Creation, we find that miracles are possible, that Revelation

p. 200

is possible, and that every difficulty in this question is removed. We might be asked, Why has God inspired a certain person and not another? Why has He revealed the Law to one particular nation, and at one particular time? why has He commanded this, and forbidden that? why has He shown through a prophet certain particular miracles? what is the object of these laws? and Why has He not made the commandments and the prohibitions part of our nature, if it was His object that we should live in accordance with them? We answer to all these questions: He willed it so; or, His wisdom decided so. Just as He created the world according to His will, at a certain time, in a certain form, and as we do not understand why His will or His wisdom decided upon that peculiar form, and upon that peculiar time, so we do not know why His will or wisdom determined any of the things mentioned in the preceding questions. But if we assume that the Universe has the present form as the result of fixed laws, there is occasion for the above questions; and these could only be answered in an objectionable way, implying denial and rejection of the Biblical texts, the correctness of which no intelligent person doubts. Owing to the absence of all proof, we reject the theory of the Eternity of the Universe; and it is for this very reason that the noblest minds spent and will spend their days in research. For if the Creation had been demonstrated by proof, even if only according to the Platonic hypothesis, all arguments of the philosophers against us would be of no avail. If, on the other hand, Aristotle had a proof for his theory, the whole teaching of Scripture would be rejected, and we should be forced to other opinions. I have thus shown that all depends on this question. Note it.

## CHAPTER XXVI

IN the famous chapters known as the Chapters of Rabbi Eliezer, I find R. Eliezer the Great saying something more extraordinary than I have ever seen in the utterances of any believer in the Law of Moses. I mean the following passage: "Whence were the heavens created? He took part of the light of His garment, stretched it like a cloth, and thus the heavens were extending



continually, as it is said: He covereth Himself with light as with a garment, He stretcheth the heavens like a curtain" (Ps. civ. 2). "Whence was the earth created? He took of the snow under the throne of glory, and threw it; according to the words: He saith to the snow, Be thou earth" (Job xxxvii. 6). These are the words given there; and I, in my surprise, ask, What was the belief of this sage? did he think that nothing can be produced from nothing, and that a substance must have existed of which the things were formed? and did he for this reason ask whence were the heavens and the earth created? What has he gained by the answer? We might ask him, Whence was the light of His garment created? or the snow under the throne of His glory? or the throne of glory itself? If the terms "the light of His garment" and "the throne of glory" mean something eternal, they must be rejected; the words would imply an admission of the Eternity of the Universe, though only in the form taught by Plato. The creation of the throne of glory is mentioned by our Sages, though in a strange way: for they say that it has been created before the creation of the Universe. Scripture, however, does not mention the creation of the throne, except in

p. 201

the words of David, "The Lord hath established his throne in the heavens" (Ps. ciii. 19), which words admit of figurative interpretation; but the eternity of the throne is distinctly described, "Thou, O Lord, dwellest for ever, thy throne for ever and ever" (Lam. v. 19). Now, if R. Eliezer had believed that the throne was eternal, so that the word "throne" expressed an attribute of God, and not something created, how could anything be produced of a mere attribute? Stranger still is his expression "of the light of His garment."

In short, it is a passage that greatly confuses the notions of all intelligent and religious persons. I am unable to explain it sufficiently. I quoted it in order that you may not be misled by it. One important thing R. Eliezer taught us here, that the substance of the heavens is different from that of the earth: that there are two different substances: the one is described as belonging to God, being the light of His garment, on account of its superiority; and the other, the earthly substance, which is distant from His splendour and light, as being the snow under the throne of His glory. This led me to explain the words, "And under his feet as the work of the whiteness of the sapphire" (Exod. xxiv. 10), as expressing that the nobles of the children of Israel comprehended in a prophetic vision the nature of the earthly *materia prima*. For, according to Onkelos, the pronoun in the phrase, "His feet," refers to "throne," as I have shown: this indicates that the whiteness under the throne signifies the earthly substance. R. Eliezer has thus repeated the same idea, and told us that there are two substances--a higher one, and a lower one; and that there is not one substance common to all things. This is an important subject, and we must not think light of the opinion which the wisest men in Israel have held on this point. It concerns an important point in explaining the existence of the Universe, and one of the mysteries of the Law. In *Bereshit Rabba* (chap. xii.) the following passage occurs: "R. Eliezer says, The things in the heavens have been created of the heavens, the things on earth of the earth." Consider how ingeniously this sage stated that all things on earth have one common substance; the heavens and

the things in them have one substance, different from the first. He also explains in the Chapters [of R. Eliezer], in addition to the preceding things, the superiority of the heavenly substance, and its proximity to God; and, on the other hand, the inferiority of the earthly substance and its position. Note it.

## CHAPTER XXVII

WE have already stated that the belief in the Creation is a fundamental principle of our religion: but we do not consider it a principle of our faith that the Universe will again be reduced to nothing. It is not contrary to the tenets of our religion to assume that the Universe will continue to exist for ever. It might be objected that everything produced is subject to destruction, as has been shown; consequently the Universe, having had a beginning, must come to an end. This axiom cannot be applied according to our views. We do not hold that the Universe came into existence, like all things in Nature, as the result of the laws of Nature. For whatever owes its existence to the action of physical laws is, according to the same laws, subject to destruction:

p. 202

the same law which caused the existence of a thing after a period of non-existence, is also the cause that the thing is not permanent: since the previous non-existence proves that the nature of that thing does not necessitate its permanent existence. According to our theory, taught in Scripture, the existence or non-existence of things depends solely on the will of God and not on fixed laws, and, therefore, it does not follow that God must destroy the Universe after having created it from nothing. It depends on His will. He may, according to His desire, or according to the decree of His wisdom, either destroy it, or allow it to exist, and it is therefore possible that He will preserve the Universe for ever, and let it exist permanently as He Himself exists. It is well known that our Sages never said that the throne of glory will perish, although they assumed that it has been created. No prophet or sage ever maintained that the throne of glory will be destroyed or annihilated: but, on the contrary, the Scriptural passages speak of its permanent existence. We are of opinion that the souls of the pious have been created, and at the same time we believe that they are immortal. Some hold, in accordance with the literal meaning of the Midrashim, that the bodies of the pious will also enjoy everlasting happiness. Their notion is like the well-known belief of certain people, that there are bodily enjoyments in Paradise. In short, reasoning leads to the conclusion that the destruction of the Universe is not a certain fact. There remains only the question as to what the prophets and our Sages say on this point; whether they affirm that the world will certainly come to an end, or not. Most people amongst us believe that such statements have been made, and that the world will at one time be destroyed. I will show you that this is not the case; and that, on the contrary, many passages in the Bible speak of the permanent existence of the Universe. Those passages which, in the literal sense, would indicate the destruction of the Universe, are undoubtedly to be understood in a figurative sense, as will be shown. If, however, those who follow the literal sense of the Scriptural texts reject our view, and assume that the ultimate certain destruction of the Universe is part of their faith, they are at liberty to do so. But

we must tell them that the belief in the destruction is not necessarily implied in the belief in the Creation; they believe it because they trust the writer, who used a figurative expression, which they take literally. Their faith, however, does not suffer by it.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

MANY of our coreligionists thought that King Solomon believed in the Eternity of the Universe. This is very strange. How can we suppose that any one that adheres to the Law of Moses, our Teacher, should accept that theory? if we were to assume that Solomon has on this point, God forbid, deviated from the Law of Moses, the question would be asked, Why did most of the Prophets and of the Sages accept it of him? Why have they not opposed him, or blamed him for holding that opinion, as he has been blamed for having married strange women, and for other things? The reason why this has been imputed to him is to be found in the following passage: "They desired to suppress the book Koheleth, because its words incline towards scepticism." It is undoubtedly true that certain passages in this book include,

p. 203

when taken literally, opinions different from those taught in the Law, and they must therefore be explained figuratively. But the theory of the Eternity of the Universe is not among those opinions, the book does not even contain any passage that implies this theory; much less a passage in which it is clearly set forth. There are, however, in the book, some passages which imply the indestructibility of the Universe, a doctrine that is true; and from the fact that the indestructibility of the Universe is taught in this book, some persons wrongly inferred that the author believed in the Eternity of the Universe. The following are the words that refer to the indestructibility of the Universe: "And the earth remaineth for ever." And those who do not agree with me as regards the above distinction [between the indestructibility and the Eternity of the Universe], are compelled to explain the term *le- 'olam* (lit., "for ever"), to mean "the time fixed for the existence of the earth." Similarly they explain the words of God, "Yet all the days of the earth" (Gen. viii. 22) to signify the days fixed for its existence. But I wonder how they would explain the words of David: "He laid the foundations of the earth, that it should not be moved for ever" (Ps. civ. 5). If they maintain here also that the term *le- 'olam va- 'ed* (lit. "for ever") does not imply perpetuity, they must come to the conclusion that God exists only for a fixed period, since the same term is employed in describing the perpetuity of God, "The Lord will reign (*le- 'olam*) for ever" (Exod. xv. 18, or Ps. x. 16). We must, however, bear in mind that *olam* only signifies perpetuity when it is combined with *ad*: it makes no difference whether *'ad* follows, as in *'olam va- 'ed*, or whether it precedes, as in *'ad 'olam*. The words of Solomon which only contain the word *le- 'olam*, have therefore less force than the words of David, who uses the term *olam va- 'ed*. David has also in other passages clearly spoken of the incorruptibility of the heavens, the perpetuity and immutability of their laws, and of all the heavenly beings. He says, "Praise ye the Lord from the heavens, etc. For He commanded, and they were created. He hath also stablished them for ever and ever; he hath made a decree which shall not pass" (Ps. cxlviii. 1-6); that is to

say, there will never be a change in the decrees which God made, or in the sources of the properties of the heavens and the earth, which the Psalmist has mentioned before. But he distinctly states that they have been created. For he says, "He hath commanded, and they were created." Jeremiah (xxxii. 35) likewise says, "He giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night," etc. "If these ordinances depart from before me, saith the Lord, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever." He thus declares, that these decrees will never be removed, although they had a beginning. We therefore find this idea, when we search for it, expressed not only by Solomon but also by others. Solomon himself has stated that these works of God, the Universe, and all that is contained in it, remain with their properties for ever, although they have been created. For he says, "Whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken away from it" (Eccles. iii. 14). He declares in these words that the world has been created by God and remains for ever. He adds the reason for it by saying, "Nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it;" for this is the reason for the perpetuity, as if he meant to say that things are changed in order to supply that

p. 204

which is wanting, or in order to take away what is superfluous. The works of God being most perfect, admitting no addition or deduction, must remain the same for ever. It is impossible that anything should exist that could cause a change in them. In the conclusion of the verse, Solomon, as it were describes the purpose of exceptions from the laws of Nature, or an excuse for changes in them, when he says, "And God doeth it (viz., He performs miracles) that men should fear before him." The words which follow, "That which hath been is now; and that which is to be hath already been, and God seeketh that which is pursued," contain the idea that God desires the perpetuity and continuity of the Universe. The fact that the works of God are perfect, admitting of no addition or diminution, has already been mentioned by Moses, the wisest of all men, in the words: "The rock, His work is perfect" (Deut. xxxii. 14). All His works or creations are most perfect, containing no defect whatever, nothing superfluous, nor anything unnecessary. Also whatever God decrees for those created things, and whatever He effects through them, is perfectly just, and is the result of His wisdom, as will be explained in some chapters of this treatise.

## CHAPTER XXIX

IF we hear a person speaking whose language we do not understand, we undoubtedly know that he speaks, but do not know what his words mean; it may even happen that we hear some words which mean one thing in the tongue of the speaker, and exactly the reverse in our language, and taking the words in the sense which they have in our language, we imagine that the speaker employed them in that sense. Suppose, e.g., an Arab hears of a Hebrew the word *abah*, he thinks that the Hebrew relates how a man despised and refused a certain thing, whilst the Hebrew in reality says that the man was pleased and satisfied with it. The very same thing happens to the

ordinary reader of the Prophets: some of their words he does not understand at all, like those to whom the prophet says (Isa. xxix. 11), "the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed"; in other passages he finds the opposite or the reverse of what the prophet meant; to this case reference is made in the words, "Ye have perverted the words of the living God" (Jer. xxiii. 36). Besides, it must be borne in mind that every prophet has his own peculiar diction, which is, as it were, his language, and it is in that language that the prophecy addressed to him is communicated to those who understand it. After this preliminary remark you will understand the metaphor frequently employed by Isaiah, and less frequently by other prophets, when they describe the ruin of a kingdom or the destruction of a great nation in phrases like the following:--"The stars have fallen," "The heavens are overthrown," "The sun is darkened," "The earth is waste, and trembles," and similar metaphors. The Arabs likewise say of a person who has met with a serious accident, "His heavens, together with his earth, have been covered"; and when they speak of the approach of a nation's prosperity, they say, "The light of the sun and moon has increased," "A new heaven and a new earth has been created," or they use similar phrases. So also the prophets, in referring to the ruin of a person, of a nation, or of a country, describe it as the result of God's great anger and wrath, whilst the prosperity

p. 205

of a nation is the result of God's pleasure and satisfaction. In the former case the prophets employ such phrases as "He came forth," "came down," "roared," "thundered," or "caused his voice to be heard": also "He commanded," "said," "did," "made," and the like, as will be shown. Sometimes the prophets use the term "mankind" instead of "the people of a certain place," whose destruction they predict: e.g., Isaiah speaking of the destruction of Israel says, "And the Lord will remove man far away" (Isa. vi. 12). So also Zephaniah (i. 3, 4), "And I will cut off man from off the earth. I will also stretch out mine hand upon Judah." Note this likewise.

Having spoken of the language of the prophets in general, I will now verify and prove my statement. When Isaiah received the divine mission to prophesy the destruction of the Babylonian empire, the death of Sennacherib and that of Nebuchadnezzar, who rose after the overthrow of Sennacherib, he commences in the following manner to describe their fall and the end of their dominion, their defeat, and such evils as are endured by all who are vanquished and compelled to flee before the victorious sword [of the enemy]: "For the stars of heaven, and the constellations thereof, shall not give their light: the sun is darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine" (xiii. 10); again, "Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the Lord of hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger" (xiii. 13). I do not think that any person is so foolish and blind, and so much in favour of the literal sense of figurative and oratorical phrases, as to assume that at the fall of the Babylonian kingdom a change took place in the nature of the stars of heaven, or in the light of the sun and moon, or that the earth moved away from its centre. For all this is merely the description of a country that has been defeated: the inhabitants undoubtedly find all light dark, and all sweet things bitter: the whole earth appears too narrow for them, and the heavens are

changed in their eyes. He speaks in a similar manner when he describes the poverty and humiliation of the people of Israel, their captivity and their defeat, the continuous misfortunes caused by the wicked Sennacherib when he ruled over all the fortified places of Judah, or the loss of the entire land of Israel when it came into the possession of Sennacherib. He says (xxiv. 17): "Fear, and the pit, and the snare, are upon thee, O inhabitant of the earth. And it shall come to pass, that he who fleeth from the noise of the fear shall fall into the pit; and he that cometh out of the midst of the pit shall be taken in the snare: for the windows from on high are open, and the foundations of the earth do shake. The earth is utterly broken down, the earth is clean dissolved, the earth is moved exceedingly. The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard." At the end of the same prophecy, when Isaiah describes how God will punish Sennacherib, destroy his mighty empire, and reduce him to disgrace, he uses the following figure (xxiv. 23): "Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of hosts shall reign," etc. This verse is beautifully explained by Jonathan, the son of Uzziel; he says that when Sennacherib will meet with his fate because of Jerusalem, the idolaters will understand that this is the work of God; they will faint and be confounded. He therefore translates the verse thus: "Those who worship the moon will be ashamed, and those who bow down to the sun will be humbled, when the kingdom of God shall reveal

p. 206

itself," etc. The prophet then pictures the peace of the children of Israel after the death of Sennacherib, the fertility and the cultivation of their land, and the increasing power of their kingdom through Hezekiah. He employs here the figure of the increase of the light of the sun and moon. When speaking of the defeated, he says that for them the light of the sun and moon will be diminished and darkened: in the same sense their light is said to increase for the victorious. We can frequently notice the correctness of this figure of speech. When great troubles befall us, our eyes become dim, and we cannot see clearly because the *spiritus visus* is made turbid by the prevailing vapours, and is weakened and diminished by great anxiety and straits of the soul: whilst in a state of gladness and comfort of the soul the *spiritus visus* becomes clear, and man feels as if the light had increased. Thus the good tidings that the people shall dwell in Zion, and in Jerusalem, and shall weep no more, etc., conclude in the following manner: "Moreover, the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the Lord bindeth up the breaches of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound" (Isa. xxx. 19, 26); that is to say, when God will raise them up again after they had fallen through the wicked Sennacherib. The phrase "as the light of seven days" signifies, according to the commentators, "very great light": for in this same sense the number "seven" is frequently used in Hebrew. I think that reference is made by this phrase to the seven days of the dedication of the temple in the reign of Solomon; for there was never a nation so great, prosperous, and happy in every respect, as Israel was at that time, and therefore the prophet says, that Israel's greatness and happiness will be the same as it was in those seven days. Speaking of wicked Edom, Israel's oppressor, Isaiah says: "Their slain also shall be cast out, and

their stink shall come up out of their carcasses, and the mountains shall be melted with their blood. And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll: and all their host shall fall down, as a leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a fig falleth from the fig-tree. For my sword shall be bathed in heaven; behold, I shall come down upon Idumea, and upon the people of my curse, to judgment," etc. (Isa. xxxiv. 3-5). Will any person who has eyes to see find in these verses any expression that is obscure, or that might lead him to think that they contain an account of what will befall the heavens? or anything but a figurative description of the ruin of the Edomites, the withdrawal of God's protection from them, their decline, and the sudden and rapid fall of their nobles? The prophet means to say that the individuals, who were like stars as regards their permanent, high, and undisturbed position, will quickly come down, as a leaf falleth from the vine, and as a fig falling from the fig-tree. This is self-evident; and there would be no need to mention it, much less to speak on it at length, had it not become necessary, owing to the fact that the common people, and even persons who are considered as distinguished scholars, quote this passage without regarding its context or its purpose, [in support of their view of the future destruction of the heavens]. They believe that Scripture describes here what will, in future, happen to the heavens, in the same manner as it informs us how the heavens have come into existence. Again, when Isaiah told the Israelites-- what afterwards became a well-known fact--that Sennacherib, with his

p. 207

allied nations and kings, would perish, and that the Israelites would be helped by God alone, he employed figurative language, and said: "See how the heavens decay and the earth withers away, and all beings on the earth die, and you are saved"; that is to say, those who have filled the earth, and have been considered, to use an hyperbole, as permanent and stable as the heavens, will quickly perish and disappear like smoke; and their famous power, that has been as stable as the earth, will be destroyed like a garment. The passage to which I refer begins: "For the Lord hath comforted Zion; He hath comforted all her waste places," etc. "Hearken unto me, my people," etc. "My righteousness is near: my salvation is gone forth," etc. It continues thus: "Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath; for the heavens shall vanish like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner; for my salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished" (Isa. li. 3-6). The restoration of the kingdom of Israel, its stability and permanence, is described as a creation of heaven and earth. For Isaiah frequently speaks of the land of a king as if it were the whole Universe, as if heaven and earth belonged to him. He therefore comforts Israel and says: "I, even I, am he that comforteth you," etc. "And I have put my words in thy mouth, and I have covered thee in the shadow of mine hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, Thou art my people" (li. 12-16). In the following verses, Isaiah declares that the dominion of Israel will continue, whilst that of the renowned and mighty people will cease: "For the mountains shall depart," etc. (liv. so). In order to express that the kingdom of the Messiah will be permanent, and that the kingdom of Israel will not be destroyed any more, he

says, "Thy sun shall no more go down," etc. (lx. 20). In metaphors like these, which are intelligible to those who understand the context, Isaiah continues to describe the details of the exile, the restoration, and the removal of all sorrow, and says figuratively as follows: "I will create new heavens and a new earth; for the first shall be forgotten, and their memory shall be blotted out." He explains this in the course of the speech, by pointing out that by the phrase, "I will create," he means that God will give them perpetual gladness and joy in place of the previous grief and mourning, which shall no longer be remembered. I will now describe the sequence of the ideas, and the order of the verses in which these ideas are contained. The prophet begins as follows: "I will mention the loving-kindnesses of the Lord," etc. (lxiii. 7). He then gives (1) an account of God's past kindness to us, concluding with the words, "And he bare them and carried them all the days of old" (ver. 9). (2) Next follows our rebellion: "But they rebelled, and vexed his holy spirit," etc. (ver. 10); (3) the dominion of our enemies over us: "Our adversaries have trodden down thy sanctuary; we are like those over whom thou hast never ruled," etc. (vers. 18, 59); (4) and the prophet's prayer on our account: "Be not wroth very sore," etc. (lxiv. 9). (5) The prophet then describes how we deserved these punishments, and how we were called to the truth but did not respond: "I offered myself to be sought of them that asked not for me," etc. (lxv. i); (6) promises mercy and pardon: "Thus saith the Lord, As the new wine is found in the cluster," etc. (ver. 8); (7) predicts evil for our oppressors: "Behold, my servant shall eat, but ye shall

p. 208

be hungry," etc. (ver. 13); (8) and moral improvement of our nation to such a degree that we shall be a blessing on the earth, and the previous troubles will be forgotten: "And he shall call his servants by another name: that he who blesseth himself in the earth, shall bless himself in the God of truth; and he that sweareth in the earth, shall swear by the God of truth; because the former troubles are forgotten, and because they are hid from mine eyes. For, behold, I create new heavens, and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people," etc. (lxv. 15-19). The whole subject must now be clear and evident; for the words, "I create new heavens, and a new earth," etc., are followed by the explanation, "I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy," etc. The prophet then adds that the seed and name of Israel will be as permanent as their faith and as the rejoicing in it, which God promised to create and to spread over the whole earth: for faith in God and rejoicing in it are two possessions which, once obtained, are never lost or changed. This is expressed in the words: "For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, remain before me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain" (lxvi. 22). But of other nations, in some instances, the seed remains, whilst the name has perished; so, e.g., many people are of the seed of the Persians or Greeks, without being known by that special name; they bear the names of other nations, of which they form part. According to my opinion,



we have here a prophecy that our religion, which gives us our special name, will remain permanently.

As these figures are frequent in Isaiah, I explained an of them. But we meet with them also in the words of other prophets. Jeremiah, in describing the destruction of Jerusalem in consequence of our sins, says (iv. 23): "I beheld the earth, and, lo, it was without form, and void," etc. Ezekiel (xxxii. 7, 8) foretells the destruction of the kingdom of Egypt, and the death of Pharaoh, through Nebuchadnezzar, in the following words: "And when I shall put thee out, I will cover the heaven, and make the stars thereof dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give her light. All the bright lights of heaven will I make dark over thee, and set darkness upon thy land, saith the Lord." Joel, the son of Pethuel (ii. 10), describes the multitude of locusts that came in his days as follows: "The earth shall quake before them: the heavens shall tremble: the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining." Amos (viii. 9, 10), speaking of the destruction of Samaria, says: "I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day; and I will turn your feasts," etc. Micah (i. 3, 4), in relating the fall of Samaria, uses the following well-known rhetorical figures: "For, behold, the Lord cometh forth out of his place, and will come down, and tread upon the high places of the earth. And the mountains shall be molten," etc. Similarly Haggai (ii. 6, 7), in describing the destruction of the kingdom of the Medes and Persians: "I will shake the heavens and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land: and I will shake all nations," etc. When [David] (Ps. lx. 4) describes how, during the expedition of Joab against the Edomites, the nation was low and weak, and how he prayed to God for His assistance, he says: "Thou

p. 209

hast made the earth to tremble; thou hast broken it: heal the breaches thereof: for it shaketh." In another instance he expresses the idea that we need not fear when we see other nations die and perish, because we rely on God's support, and not on our sword and strength, in accordance with the words: "A people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help" (Deut. xxxiii. 29); he says (Ps. xlvi. 2): "Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be shaken in the midst of the sea."

The following figurative language is employed in Scripture in referring to the death of the Egyptians in the Red Sea: "The waters saw thee; they were afraid: the depths also were troubled, etc. The voice of thy thunder was in the heaven: the lightnings lightened the world; the earth trembled and shook" (Ps. lxxvii. 17-19). "Was the Lord displeased against the rivers?" etc. (Hab. iii. 8). "There went up a smoke out of his nostrils," etc. (Ps. xviii. 9). "The earth trembled," etc. (Judges v. 4, in the Song of Deborah). There are many other instances; but those which I have not quoted can be explained in accordance with those which I have cited.

Let us now consider the words of Joel (iii. 3-5): "And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the

moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord come. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered, for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance," etc. I refer them to the defeat of Sennacherib near Jerusalem; but they may be taken as an account of the defeat of Gog and Magog near Jerusalem in the days of the Messiah, if this appears preferable, although nothing is mentioned in this passage but great slaughter, destruction, fire, and the diminution of the light of the two luminaries. You may perhaps object: How can the day of the fall of Sennacherib, according to our explanation, be called "the great and the terrible day of the Lord?" But you must know that a day of great salvation or of great distress is called "the great and terrible day of the Lord." Thus Joel (ii. 11) says of the day on which the locusts came over the land, "For the day of the Lord is great and terrible, and who can abide it?"

Our opinion, in support of which we have quoted these passages, is clearly established, namely, that no prophet or sage has ever announced the destruction of the Universe, or a change of its present condition, or a permanent change of any of its properties. When our Sages say, "The world remains six thousand years, and one thousand years it will be waste," they do not mean a complete cessation of existing things; the phrase "one thousand years it will be waste" distinctly shows that *time* will continue: besides, this is the individual opinion of one Rabbi, and in accordance with one particular theory. But on the other hand the words, "There is nothing new under the sun" (Eccles. i. 9), in the sense that no new creation takes place in any way and under any circumstances, express the general opinion of our Sages, and include a principle which every one of the doctors of the Mishnah and the Talmud recognises and makes use of in his arguments. Even those who understand the words "new heavens and a new earth" in their literal sense hold that the heavens, which will in future be formed, have already been created and are in existence, and that for this reason the present tense "remain" is used, and not the future "will remain." They support their

p. 210

view by citing the text, "There is nothing new under the sun." Do not imagine that this is opposed to our opinion. They mean, perhaps, to say that the natural laws, by which the promised future condition of Israel will be effected, have been in existence since the days of the Creation, and in that they are perfectly correct. When I, however, said that no prophet ever announced "a *permanent* change of any of its properties," I intended to except miracles. For although the rod was turned into a serpent, the water into blood, the pure and noble hand into a leprous one, without the existence of any natural cause that could effect these or similar phenomena, these changes were *not permanent*, they have not become a physical property. On the contrary, the Universe since continues its regular course. This is my opinion; this should be our belief. Our Sages, however, said very strange things as regards miracles: they are found in *Bereshit Rabba*, and in *Midrash Koheleth*, namely, that the miracles are to some extent also natural: for they say, when God created the Universe with its present physical properties, He made it part of these properties, that they should produce certain miracles at certain times, and the sign of a prophet

consisted in the fact that God told him to declare when a certain thing will take place, but the thing itself was effected according to the fixed laws of Nature. If this is really the meaning of the passage referred to, it testifies to the greatness of the author, and shows that he held it to be impossible that there should be a change in the laws of Nature, or a change in the will of God [as regards the physical properties of things] after they have once been established. He therefore assumes, e.g., that God gave the waters the property of joining together, and of flowing in a downward direction, and of separating only at the time when the Egyptians were drowned, and only in a particular place. I have already pointed out to you the source of this passage, and it only tends to oppose the hypothesis of a new creation. It is said there: R. Jonathan said, God made an agreement with the sea that it should divide before the Israelites: thus it is said, "And the sea returned to its strength when the morning appeared" (Exod. xiv. 27). R. Jeremiah, son of Elazar, said: Not only with the sea, but with all that has been created in the six days of the beginning [was the agreement made]: this is referred to in the words, "I, even my hands have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded" (Isa. xlv. 12); i.e., I have commanded the sea to divide, the fire not to hurt Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, the lions not to harm Daniel, and the fish to spit out Jonah. The same is the case with the rest of the miracles.

We have thus clearly stated and explained our opinion, that we agree with Aristotle in one half of his theory. For we believe that this Universe remains perpetually with the same properties with which the Creator has endowed it, and that none of these will ever be changed except by way of miracle in some individual instances, although the Creator has the power to change the whole Universe, to annihilate it, or to remove any of its properties. The Universe, had, however, a beginning and commencement, for when nothing was as yet in existence except God, His wisdom decreed that the Universe be brought into existence at a certain time, that it should not be annihilated or changed as regards any of its properties, except in some instances; some of these are known to us, whilst others belong to the future, and are therefore unknown to us. This is our opinion and the basis of our

p. 211

religion. The opinion of Aristotle is that the Universe, being permanent and indestructible, is also eternal and without beginning. We have already shown that this theory is based on the hypothesis that the Universe is the necessary result of causal relation, and that this hypothesis includes a certain amount of blasphemy. Having come thus far we will make in the next chapter a few remarks on passages in the first chapters of Genesis. For the primary object in this treatise has been to expound as much as possible of the Scriptural account of the Creation (*ma'aseh bereshit*), and the description of the heavenly chariot (*ma'aseh mercabah*). But let us premise two general observations.

First, the account given in Scripture of the Creation is not, as is generally believed, intended to be in all its parts literal. For if this were the case, wise men would not have kept its explanation secret, and our Sages would not have employed figurative speech [in treating of the Creation] in

order to hide its true meaning, nor would they have objected to discuss it in the presence of the common people. The literal meaning of the words might lead us to conceive corrupt ideas and to form false opinions about God, or even entirely to abandon and reject the principles of our Faith. It is therefore right to abstain and refrain from examining this subject superficially and unscientifically. We must blame the practice of some ignorant preachers and expounders of the Bible, who think that wisdom consists in knowing the explanation of words, and that greater perfection is attained by employing more words and longer speech. It is, however, right that we should examine the Scriptural texts by the intellect, after having acquired a knowledge of demonstrative science, and of the true hidden meaning of prophecies. But if one has obtained some knowledge in this matter he must not preach on it, as I stated in my Commentary on the Mishnah (Hagigah, ii. 7), and our Sages said distinctly: From the beginning of the book to this place--after the account of the sixth day of the Creation--it is "the glory of God to conceal a thing" (Prov. xxv. 2).

We have thus clearly stated our opinion. It is, however, part of the Divine plan that every one who has obtained some perfection transmit it to some other persons, as will be shown in the chapter on Prophecy. It is, therefore, impossible for a scholar to possess knowledge of these problems, whether it be through his own researches or through his master's teaching, without communicating part of that knowledge to others; it cannot be done in clear words; it must be done sparingly by way of hints. We find in the words of some of our Sages numerous hints and notes of this kind, but mixed up with the words of others and with other subjects. In treating of these mysteries, as a rule, I quote as much as contains the principal idea, and leave the rest for those who are worthy of it.

Secondly, the prophets employ homonymous terms and use words which are not meant to be understood in their ordinary signification, but are only used because of some other meaning which they admit, e.g., "a rod of an almond-tree (*shaked*)," because of the words which follow, "for I will hasten (*shaked*)" (Jer. i. 11, 12), as will be shown in the chapter on Prophecy. According to the same principle Ezekiel in the account of the Divine Chariot employs, as we have stated the term *hashmal* (Ezek. i. 4); also *regel egel* (v. 7), *nehoshet kalal* (v. 7), and similar terms; Zechariah (vi. 1) likewise

p. 212

adopts this method, and says: "And the mountains were mountains of *nehoshet* (brass)," and the like.

After these two remarks I will proceed to the chapter which I have promised.

## CHAPTER XXX

THERE is a difference between first and beginning (or principle). The latter exists in the thing of which it is the beginning, or co-exists with it; it need not precede it; e.g., the heart is the

beginning of the living being; the element is the beginning of that of which it is the basis. The term "first" is likewise applied to things of this kind; but is also employed in cases where precedence in time alone is to be expressed, and the thing which precedes is not the beginning (or the cause) of the thing that follows. E.g., we say A. was the first inhabitant of this house, after him came B; this does not imply that A is the cause of B inhabiting the house. In Hebrew, *tehillah* is used in the sense of "first"; e.g., when God first (*tehillat*) spake to Hosea (Hos. i. 1), and the "beginning" is expressed by *reshith*, derived from *rosh*, "head," the principal part of the living being as regards position. The Universe has not been created out of an element that preceded it in time, since time itself formed part of the Creation. For this reason Scripture employs the term "*bereshit*" (in a principle), in which the *beth* is a preposition denoting "in." The true explanation of the first verse of Genesis is as follows: "In [creating] a principle God created the beings above and the things below." This explanation is in accordance with the theory of the Creation. We find that some of our Sages are reported to have held the opinion that time existed before the Creation. But this report is very doubtful, because the theory that time cannot be imagined with a beginning, has been taught by Aristotle, as I showed you, and is objectionable. Those who have made this assertion have been led to it by a saying of one of our Sages in reference to the terms "one day," "a second day." Taking these terms literally, the author of that saying asked, What determined "the first day," since there was no rotating sphere, and no sun? and continues as follows: Scripture uses the term "one day"; R. Jehudah, son of R. Simon, said: "Hence we learn that the divisions of time have existed previously." R. Abahu said, "Hence we learn that God built worlds and again destroyed them." This latter exposition is still worse than the former. Consider the difficulty which these two Rabbis found in the statement that time existed before the creation of the sun. We shall undoubtedly soon remove this difficulty, unless these two Rabbis intended to infer from the Scriptural text that the divisions of time must have existed before the Creation, and thus adopted the theory of the Eternity of the Universe. But every religious man rejects this. The above saying is, in my opinion, certainly of the same character as that of R. Eliezer, "Whence were the heavens created," etc., (chap. xxvi.). In short, in these questions, do not take notice of the utterances of any person. I told you that the foundation of our faith is the belief that God created the Universe from nothing; that time did not exist previously, but was created: for it depends on the motion of the sphere, and the sphere has been created.

p. 213

You must know that the particle *et* in the phrase *et ha-shamayim ve-et ha-arez* ("the heavens and the earth") signifies "together with"; our Sages have explained the word in the same sense in many instances. Accordingly they assume that God created with the heavens everything that the heavens contain, and with the earth everything the earth includes. They further say that the simultaneous Creation of the heavens and the earth is implied in the words, "I call unto them, they stand up together" (Ps. xlviii.). Consequently, all things were created together, but were separated from each other successively. Our Sages illustrated this by the following simile: We

sow various seeds at the same time; some spring forth after one day, some after two, and some after three days, although all have been sown at the same time. According to this interpretation, which is undoubtedly correct, the difficulty is removed, which led R. Jehudah, son of R. Simon, to utter the above saying, and consisted in the doubt as to the thing by which the first day, the second, and the third were determined. In *Bereshit Rabba*, our Sages, speaking of the light created on the first day according to the Scriptural account, say as follows: these lights [of the luminaries mentioned in the Creation of the fourth day] are the same that were created on the first day, but were only fixed in their places on the fourth day. The meaning [of the first verse] has thus been clearly stated.

We must further consider that the term *erez* is a homonym, and is used in a general and a particular sense. It has a more general signification when used of everything within the sphere of the moon, i.e., of all the four elements; and is used in particular of one of them, of the lowest, viz., earth. This is evident from the passage: "And the earth was without form and void, and darkness was on the surface of the deep. And the wind of God moved upon the face of the waters." The term "earth" [mentioned here, and in the first verse] includes all the four elements, whilst further on it is said, "And God called the dry land Earth" (Gen. i. 10).

It is also important to notice that the words, "And God called a certain thing a certain name," are invariably intended to distinguish one thing from others which are called by the same common noun. I explain, therefore, the first verse in Genesis thus: In creating the principle God created the things above and those below. *Erez* in this verse denotes "the things below," or "the four elements," and in the verse, "And God called the dry land Earth" (*erez*), it signifies the element earth. This subject is now made clear.

The four elements indicated, according to our explanation, in the term *erez* "earth," in the first verse, are mentioned first after the heavens: for there are named *erez* (earth), *ruah* (air), *mayim* (water), and *hoshek* (fire). By *hoshek* the element fire is meant, nothing else; comp. "And thou hearest his words out of the midst of the fire" (Deut. iv. 36); and, "When ye heard the voice out of the midst of the *hoshek*" (darkness) (*ibid.* v. 2); again, "All *hoshek* (darkness) shall be hid in his secret places: a *fire* not blown shall consume him" (Job XX. 26). The element fire is called *hoshek* because it is not luminous, it is only transparent; for if it were luminous we should see at night the whole atmosphere in flames. The order of the four elements, according to the natural position is here described: namely, first earth, above it water, air close to water, and fire above air; for by placing

p. 214

air over water, *hoshek* (fire), which is "upon the face of the deep," is undoubtedly above air. It was here necessary to use the term *ruah elohim*, because air is described here as in motion (*merahefet*), and the motion of the air is, as a rule, ascribed to God; comp. "And there went forth a wind from the Lord" (Num. xi. 31); "Thou didst blow with thy wind" (Exod. xv. 10); "And the

Lord turned a mighty strong west wind" (*ibid.* x. 19), and the like. As the first *hoshek*, which denotes the element fire, is different from the *hoshek* mentioned further on in the sense of "darkness," the latter is explained and distinguished from the former, according to our explanation, in the words, "And darkness he called Night." This is now clear.

The phrase, "And he divided between the waters," etc., does not describe a division in space, as if the one part were merely above the other, whilst the nature of both remained the same, but a distinction as regards their nature or form. One portion of that which was first called water was made one thing by certain properties it received, and another portion received a different form, and this latter portion is that which is commonly called water and of this it is said, "And the gathering of the waters he called Seas." Scripture even indicates that the first *mayim* ("water") in the phrase, "On the face of the waters," does not refer to the waters which form the seas and that part of the element "water," having received a particular form, and being above the air, is distinguished from the other part which has received the form of ordinary water. For the words, "And he divided between the waters which are beneath the firmament and the waters which are above the firmament are similar in meaning to the phrase, "And God divided between the light and the darkness," and refer to a distinction by a separate form. The firmament itself was formed of water; and in the words of our Sages (*Bereshit Rabba*; cap. iv.), "The middle drop congealed and formed the heavens."

Here likewise Scripture says, in accordance with what I said above, "And God called the firmament Heaven" (Gen. i. 8), in order to explain the homonymity of the term *shamayim* (heaven), and to show that *shamayim* in the first verse is not the firmament which is also called *shamayim* (heaven). The difference is more clearly expressed in the words, "In the open firmament of heaven" (*ibid.* i. 20); here it is shown that "firmament" (*raki'a*) and "heaven" (*shamayim*), are two different things. In consequence of this homonymity of the term *shamayim* the term *raki'a* (firmament) is also used of the true heaven, just as the real firmament is sometimes called *shamayim* (heaven); comp. "And God set them in the *raki'a* (firmament) of the heaven" (*ibid.* i. 17).

This verse shows clearly that the stars, the sun, and the moon are not, as people believe, on the surface of the spheres, but they are fixed in the spheres, and this has been proved satisfactorily, there being no vacuum in the Universe: for it is said, "in the firmament of the heaven," and not "upon the firmament of the heaven."

It is therefore clear that there has been one common element called water, which has been afterwards distinguished by three different forms; one part forms the seas, another the firmament, and a third part is over the firmament, and all this is separate from the earth. The Scriptural text follows here a

peculiar method in order to indicate some extraordinary mysteries. It has also been declared by our Sages that the portion above the firmament is only water by name, not in reality, for they say (Babyl. Talmud, Hagigah 14b) "Four entered the paradise," etc. R. Akiba said to them, "When you come to the stores of pure marble, do not say, Water, water, for it is written, 'He that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight'" (Ps. ci. 7). Consider, if you belong to the class of thinking men, how clearly and distinctly this passage explains the subject for those who reflect on it! Understand that which has been proved by Aristotle in his book *On Meteorology*, and note whatever men of science have said on meteorological matters.

It is necessary to inquire into the reason why the declaration "that it was good" is not found in the account of the second day of the Creation. The various Midrashic sayings of our Sages on this point are well known: the best of them is the explanation that the creation of the water was not completed on that day. According to my opinion the reason is likewise clear, and is as follows: When the creation of any part of the Universe is described that is permanent, regular, and in a settled order, the phrase "that it is good" is used. But the account of the firmament, with that which is above it and is called water, is, as you see, of a very mysterious character. For if taken literally the firmament would appear at first thought to be merely an imaginary thing, as there is no other substance but the elements between us and the lowest of the heavenly spheres, and there is no water above the air; and if the firmament, with that which is over it, be supposed to be above the heavens, it would *a fortiori* seem to be unreal and uncomprehensible. But if the account be understood in a figurative sense and according to its true meaning, it is still more mysterious, since it was considered necessary to make this one of the most hidden secrets, in order to prevent the multitude from knowing it. This being the case, how could it be said [of the creation of the second day] "that it was good"? This phrase would tell us that it is perfectly clear what share the thing to which it refers takes in the permanent existence of the Universe. But what good can people find in a thing whose real nature is hidden, and whose apparent nature is not real? Why, therefore, should it be said in reference to it, "that it was good"? I must, however, give the following additional explanation. Although the result of the second day's creation forms an important element among the existing things, the firmament was not its primary object in the organization of the Universe, and therefore it could not be said "that it was good"; it was only the means for the uncovering of the earth. Note this. Our Sages have already explained that the herbs and trees, which God caused to spring forth from the ground, were caused by God to grow, after He had sent down rain upon them; and the passage beginning, "And there went up a mist from the earth" (ii. 6), refers to that which took place before the creative act, related in the words, "Let the earth bring forth grass," etc. (i. ii.). Therefore Onkelos translates it: "And there *had* gone up a mist from the earth?" It is also evident from the text itself, where it is distinctly said, "And every plant in the field before it was in the earth," etc. (ii. 5). This question is now explained.

It is well known to every philosopher that the principal causes of production and destruction, after the influence of the spheres, are light and darkness,



in so far as these are accompanied by heat and cold. For by the motion of the spheres the elements intermix, and by light and darkness their constitution changes. The first change consists in the formation of two kinds of mist; these are the first causes of meteorological phenomena, such as rain: they also caused the formation of minerals, of plants, of animals, and at last of man. It is likewise known that darkness is the natural property of all things on earth; in them light is accidental, coming from an external cause, and therefore everything remains in a state of rest in the absence of light. The Scriptural account of the Creation follows in every respect exactly the same order, without any deviation.

Note also the saying of our Sages: "When the Universe was created, all things were created with size, intellect, and beauty fully developed, i.e., everything was created perfect in magnitude and form, and endowed with the most suitable properties: the word *zibyonam* (their beauty) used here has the same meaning as *zebi*, 'glory'" (Ezek. xx. 6). Note this likewise, for it includes a principle fully established.

The following point now claims our attention. The account of the six days of creation contains, in reference to the creation of man, the statement: "Male and female created he them" (i. 27), and concludes with the words: "Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them" (ii. 1), and yet the portion which follows describes the creation of Eve from Adam, the tree of life, and the tree of knowledge, the history of the serpent and the events connected therewith, and all this as having taken place after Adam had been placed in the Garden of Eden. All our Sages agree that this took place on the sixth day, and that nothing new was created after the close of the six days. None of the things mentioned above is therefore impossible, because the laws of Nature were then not yet permanently fixed. There are, however, some utterances of our Sages on this subject [which apparently imply a different view]. I will gather them from their different sources and place them before you, and I will refer also to certain things by mere hints, just as has been done by the Sages. You must know that their words, which I am about to quote, are most perfect, most accurate, and clear to those for whom they were said. I will therefore not add long explanations, lest I make their statements plain, and I might thus become "a revealer of secrets," but I will give them in a certain order, accompanied with a few remarks, which will suffice for readers like you.

One of these utterances is this: "Adam and Eve were at first created as one being, having their backs united: they were then separated, and one half was removed and brought before Adam as Eve." The term *mi-zal'otav* (lit. "of his ribs") signifies "of his sides." The meaning of the word is proved by referring to *zel'a*, "the side" of the tabernacle (Exod. xxvi. 20), which Onkelos renders *setar* ("side"), and so also *mi-zal'otav* is rendered by him "*mi-sitrohi*" (of his sides). Note also how clearly it has been stated that Adam and Eve were two in some respects, and yet they remained one, according to the words, "Bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh" (Gen. ii. 23). The unity of the two is proved by the fact that both have the same name, for she is called *ishshah* (woman), because she was taken out of *ish* (man), also by the words, "And shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh" (ii. 24). How great is the ignorance of those who do not

see that all this necessarily includes some [other] idea [besides the literal meaning of the words]. This is now clear.

Another noteworthy Midrashic remark of our Sages is the following: "The serpent had a rider, the rider was as big as a camel, and it was the rider that enticed Eve: this rider was Samaël." Samaël is the name generally applied by our Sages to Satan. Thus they say in several places that Satan desired to entice Abraham to sin, and to abstain from binding Isaac, and he desired also to persuade Isaac not to obey his father. At the same time they also say, in reference to the same subject, viz., the *Akedah* ("the binding of Isaac"), that *Samaël* came to Abraham and said to him, "What! hast thou, being an old man, lost thy senses?" etc. This shows that Samaël and Satan are identical. There is a meaning in this name [Samaël]), as there is also in the name *naḥash* ("serpent"). In describing how the serpent came to entice Eve, our sages say: "Samaël was riding on it, and God was laughing at both the camel and its rider." It is especially of importance to notice that the serpent did not approach or address Adam, but all his attempts were directed against Eve, and it was through her that the serpent caused injury and death to Adam. The greatest hatred exists between the serpent and Eve, and between his seed and her seed; her seed being undoubtedly also the seed of man. More remarkable still is the way in which the serpent is joined to Eve, or rather his seed to her seed; the head of the one touches the heel of the other. Eve defeats the serpent by crushing its head, whilst the serpent defeats her by wounding her heel. This is likewise clear.

The following is also a remarkable passage, most absurd in its literal sense; but as an allegory it contains wonderful wisdom, and fully agrees with real facts, as will be found by those who understand all the chapters of this treatise. When the serpent came to Eve he infected her with poison; the Israelites, who stood at Mount Sinai, removed that poison; idolaters, who did not stand at Mount Sinai, have not got rid of it. Note this likewise. Again they said: "The tree of life extends over an area of five hundred years' journey, and it is from beneath it that all the waters of the creation sprang forth": and they added the explanation that this measure referred to the thickness of its body, and not to the extent of its branches, for they continue thus: "Not the extent of the branches thereof, but the stem thereof [*korato*, lit., 'its beam,' signifying here 'its stem') has a thickness of five hundred years' journey." This is now sufficiently clear. Again: "God has never shown the tree of knowledge [of good and evil] to man, nor will He ever show it." This is correct, for it must be so according to the nature of the Universe. Another noteworthy saying is this: "And the Lord God took the man, i.e., raised him, and placed him in the Garden of Eden," i.e., He gave him rest. The words "He took him," "He gave him," have no reference to position in space, but they indicate his position in rank among transient beings, and the prominent character of his existence. Remarkable and noteworthy is the great wisdom contained in the names of Adam, Cain, and Abel, and in the fact that it was Cain who slew Abel in the field, that both of them perished, although the murderer had some respite, and that the existence of mankind is due to Seth alone. Comp. "For God has appointed me another seed" (iv. 25). This has proved true.

It is also necessary to understand and consider the words, "And Adam

p. 218

gave names" (ii. 20); here it is indicated that languages are conventional, and that they are not natural, as has been assumed by some. We must also consider the four different terms employed in expressing the relations of the heavens to God, *bore* (Creator), *'oseh* (Maker), *koneh* (Possessor), and *el* (God). Comp. "God *created* the heaven and the earth" (i. 1); "In the day that God *made* the earth and the heavens" (ii. 4); "*Possessor* of heaven and earth" (xiv. 19); "*God* of the Universe" (xxi, 31); "The God of heaven and the God of the earth" (xxiv. 3). As to the verbs, *konen*, "he established," *tafaḥ*, "he spanned," and *natah*, "he stretched out," occurring in the following passages, "Which thou hast *established*" (Ps. viii. 4), "My right hand hath *spanned* the heavens" (Isa. xviii. 13), "Who *stretchest out* the heavens" (Ps. civ. 2), they are included in the term *'asah* ("he made"); the verb *yazar*, "he formed," does not occur in reference to the heavens. According to my opinion the verb *yazar* denotes to make a form, a shape, or any other accident (for form and shape are likewise accidents). It is therefore said, *yozer* or, "Who formeth the light" (Isa. xiv. 7), light being an accident; *yozer harim*, "That formeth the mountains" (Amos iv, 13), i.e., that gave them their shape. In the same sense the verb is used in the passage, "And the Lord God formed (*va-yizer*) all the beasts," etc. (Gen. ii, 7). But in reference to the Universe, viz., the heavens and the earth, which comprises the totality of the Creation, Scripture employs the verb *bara*, which we explain as denoting he produced something from nothing; also *'asah* ("he made") on account of the general forms or natural properties of the things which were given to them; *kanah*, "he possessed," because God rules over them like a master over his servants. For this reason He is also called, "The Lord of the whole earth" (Jos. iii. 11-13); *ha-adon*, "the Lord" (Exod. xx., iii. 17). But although none can be a master unless there exists something that is in his possession, this attribute cannot be considered to imply the belief in the eternal existence of a *materia prima*, since the verbs *bara*, "he created," and *'asah*, "he made," are also employed in reference to the heavens. The Creator is called the God of the heavens and the God of the Universe, on account of the relations between Him and the heavens; He governs, and they are governed; the word *elohim* does not signify "master" in the sense of "owner"; it expresses the relation between His position in the totality of existing beings, and the position of the heavens or the Universe; He is God, not they, i.e., not the heavens. Note this.

This, together with those explanations which we have given, and which we intend to give, in reference to this subject, may suffice, considering the object of this treatise and the capacity of the reader.

## CHAPTER XXXI

IT is perhaps clear why the laws concerning Sabbath are so severe, that their transgression is visited with death by stoning, and that the greatest of the prophets put a person to death for breaking the Sabbath. The commandment of the Sabbath is the third from the commandment

concerning the existence and the unity of God. For the commandment not to worship any other being is merely an explanation of the first. You know already from what I have said, that no opinions retain their vitality except those which are

p. 219

confirmed, published, and by certain actions constantly revived among the people. Therefore we are told in the Law to honour this day; in order to confirm thereby the principle of Creation which will spread in the world, when all peoples keep Sabbath on the same day. For when the question is asked, why this is done, the answer is given: "For in six days the Lord hath made," etc. (Exod. xx. 11). Two different reasons are given for this commandment, because of two different objects. In the Decalogue in Exodus, the following reason is given for distinguishing the Sabbath: "For in six days," etc. But in Deuteronomy (chap. v. 15) the reason is given: "And thou shalt remember that thou hast been a slave in the land of Egypt, etc., therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee," etc. This difference can easily be explained. In the former, the cause of the honour and distinction of the day is given; comp. "Therefore the Lord hath blessed the day of the Sabbath and sanctified it" (Exod. xx. 10), and the cause for this is, "For in six days," etc. But the fact that God has given us the law of the Sabbath and commanded us to keep it, is the consequence of our having been slaves; for then our work did not depend on our will, nor could we choose the time for it; and we could not rest. Thus God commanded us to abstain from work on the Sabbath, and to rest, for two purposes; namely, (1) That we might confirm the true theory, that of the Creation, which at once and clearly leads to the theory of the existence of God. (2) That we might remember how kind God has been in freeing us from the burden of the Egyptians.--The Sabbath is therefore a double blessing: it gives us correct notions, and also promotes the well-being of our bodies.

## CHAPTER XXXII

THERE are as many different opinions concerning Prophecy as concerning the Eternity or Non-Eternity of the Universe. For we have shown that those who assume the existence of God as proved may be divided into three classes, according to the view they take of the question, whether the Universe is eternal or not. Similarly there are three different opinions on Prophecy. I will not notice the view of the Atheist; he does not believe in the Existence of God, much less in Prophecy; but I will content myself with discussing the various opinions [on Prophecy] held by those who believe in God.

1. Among those who believe in Prophecy, and even among our coreligionists, there are some ignorant people who think as follows: God selects any person He pleases, inspires him with the spirit of Prophecy, and entrusts him with a mission. It makes no difference whether that person be wise or stupid, old or young; provided he be, to some extent, morally good. For these people have not yet gone so far as to maintain that God might also inspire a wicked person with His

spirit. They admit that this is impossible, unless God has previously caused him to improve his ways.

2. The philosophers hold that prophecy is a certain faculty of man in a state of perfection, which can only be obtained by study. Although the faculty is common to the whole race, yet it is not fully developed in each individual, either on account of the individual's defective constitution, or on account of some other external cause. This is the case with every faculty common to a class. It is only brought to a state of perfection in some individuals,

p. 220

and not in all; but it is impossible that it should not be perfect in some individual of the class; and if the perfection is of such a nature that it can only be produced by an agent, such an agent must exist. Accordingly, it is impossible that an ignorant person should be a prophet; or that a person being no prophet in the evening, should, unexpectedly on the following morning, find himself a prophet, as if prophecy were a thing that could be found unintentionally. But if a person, perfect in his intellectual and moral faculties, and also perfect, as far as possible, in his imaginative faculty, prepares himself in the manner which will be described, he must become a prophet; for prophecy is a natural faculty of man. It is impossible that a man who has the capacity for prophecy should prepare himself for it without attaining it, just as it is impossible that a person with a healthy constitution should be fed well, and yet not properly assimilate his food; and the like.

3. The third view is that which is taught in Scripture, and which forms one of the principles of our religion. It coincides with the opinion of the philosophers in all points except one. For we believe that, even if one has the capacity for prophecy, and has duly prepared himself, it may yet happen that he does not actually prophesy. It is in that case the will of God [that withholds from him the use of the faculty]. According to my opinion, this fact is as exceptional as any other miracle, and acts in the same way. For the laws of Nature demand that every one should be a prophet, who has a proper physical constitution, and has been duly prepared as regards education and training. If such a person is not a prophet, he is in the same position as a person who, like Jeroboam (1 Kings xiii.), is deprived of the use of his hand, or of his eyes, as was the case with the army of Syria, in the history of Elisha (2 Kings vi. 18). As for the principle which I laid down, that preparation and perfection of moral and rational faculties are the *sine quâ non*, our Sages say exactly the same: "The spirit of prophecy only rests upon persons who are wise, strong, and rich." We have explained these words in our Commentary on the Mishnah, and in our large work. We stated there that the Sons of the Prophets were constantly engaged in preparation. That those who have prepared themselves may still be prevented from being prophets, may be inferred from the history of Baruch, the son of Nerijah; for he followed Jeremiah, who prepared and instructed him; and yet he hoped in vain for prophecy; comp., "I am weary with my sighing, and rest have I not found." He was then told through Jeremiah, "Thus saith the Lord, Thus shalt thou say to him, Thou seekest for thee great things, do not seek" (Jer. xlv. 5). It may perhaps be

assumed that prophecy is here described as a thing "too great" for Baruch. So also the fact that "her prophets did not find visions from the Lord" (Lam. ii. 4), may be considered as the result of the exile of her prophets, as will be explained (chap. xxxvi.). There are, however, numerous passages in Scripture as well as in the writings of our Sages, which support the principle that it depends chiefly on the will of God who is to prophesy, and at what time; and that He only selects the best and the wisest. We hold that fools and ignorant people are unfit for this distinction. It is as impossible for any one of these to prophesy as it is for an ass or a frog; for prophecy is impossible without study and training; when these have created the possibility, then it depends on the will of God whether the possibility is to be turned into reality. We must not be misled by the

p. 221

words of Jeremiah (i. 5), "Before I formed thee in the womb I knew thee, and before thou camest forth from the womb I have sanctified thee"; for this is the case with all prophets; there must be a physical preparation from the beginning of their existence, as will be explained. As to the words, "For I am young" (*ibid.* ver. 6), it is well known that the pious Joseph, when he was thirty years old, is called by the Hebrew "young" (*na'ar*); also Joshua, when he was nearly sixty years old. For the statement, "and his minister Joshua, the son of Nun, was young," occurs in the account of the Golden Calf (Exod. xxxiii. 11). Moses was then eighty-one years old, he lived one hundred and twenty years; Joshua, who survived him fourteen years, lived one hundred and ten years and must consequently have been at least fifty-seven years old at the time when the Golden Calf was made, and yet he is called *na'ar*, "young." Nor must we be misled by prophecies like the following: "I will pour out my spirit over an flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy"; since it is distinctly stated what is meant by "prophesy" in this place, viz., "Your old men will dream dreams, your young men shall see visions." For we call also prophets all those who reveal something unknown by surmises, or conjectures, or correct inferences. Thus "prophets of Baal" and "of Asherah" are mentioned in Scripture. And God says, "If there arise among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams," etc. (Deut. xiii. 1). As to the revelation on Mount Sinai, all saw the great fire, and heard the fearful thunderings, that caused such an extraordinary terror; but only those of them who were duly qualified were prophetically inspired, each one according to his capacities. Therefore it is said, "Come up unto the Lord, thou and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu." Moses rose to the highest degree of prophecy, according to the words, "And Moses alone shall come near the Lord." Aaron was below him, Nadab and Abihu below Aaron, and the seventy elders below Nadab and Abihu, and the rest below the latter, each one according to his degree of perfection. Similarly our Sages wrote: Moses had his own place and Aaron his own. Since we have touched upon the revelation on Mount Sinai, we will point out in a separate chapter what may be inferred as regards the nature of that event, both from the Scriptural text, in accordance with reasonable interpretation, and from the words of our Sages.

CHAPTER XXXIII

IT is clear to me that what Moses experienced at the revelation on Mount Sinai was different from that which was experienced by all the other Israelites, for Moses alone was addressed by God, and for this reason the second person singular is used in the Ten Commandments; Moses then went down to the foot of the mount and told his fellow-men what he had heard. Comp., "I stood between the Lord and you at that time to tell you the word of the Lord" (Deut. v. 5). Again, "Moses spake, and God answered him with a loud voice" (Exod. xix. 19). In the Mechilta our Sages say distinctly that he brought to them every word as he had heard it. Furthermore, the words, "In order that the people hear when I speak with thee" (Exod. xix. 9), show that God spoke to Moses, and the people only heard the mighty sound, not distinct words. It is to the perception of this mighty sound that Scripture

p. 222

refers in the passage, "When ye hear the sound" (Deut. v. 20); again it is stated, "You heard a sound of words" (*ibid.* iv. 12), and it is not said "You heard words"; and even where the hearing of the words is mentioned, only the perception of the sound is meant. It was only Moses that heard the words, and he reported them to the people. This is apparent from Scripture, and from the utterances of our Sages in general. There is, however, an opinion of our Sages frequently expressed in the Midrashim, and found also in the Talmud, to this effect: The Israelites heard the first and the second commandments from God, i.e., they learnt the truth of the principles contained in these two commandments in the same manner as Moses, and not through Moses. For these two principles, the existence of God and His Unity, can be arrived at by means of reasoning, and whatever can be established by proof is known by the prophet in the same way as by any other person; he has no advantage in this respect. These two principles were not known through prophecy alone. Comp., "Thou hast been shown to know that," etc. (Deut. iv. 34). But the rest of the commandments are of an ethical and authoritative character, and do not contain [truths] perceived by the intellect. Notwithstanding all that has been said by our Sages on this subject, we infer from Scripture as well as from the words of our Sages, that the Israelites heard on that occasion a certain sound which Moses understood to proclaim the first two commandments, and through Moses all other Israelites learnt them when he in intelligible sounds repeated them to the people. Our Sages mention this view, and support it by the verse, "God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this" (Ps. lxii. 11). They state distinctly, in the beginning of *Midrash Hazita*, that the Israelites did not hear any other command directly from God; comp. "A loud voice, and it was not heard again" (Deut. v. 19). It was after this first sound was heard that the people were seized with the fear and terror described in Scripture, and that they said, "Behold the Lord our God has shown us, etc., and now why shall we die, etc. Come thou near," etc. Then Moses, the most distinguished of all mankind, came the second time, received successively the other commandments, and came down to the foot of the mountain to proclaim them to the people, whilst the mighty phenomena continued; they saw the fire, they heard the sounds, which were those of thunder and lightning during a storm, and the loud sound of the shofar: and all that is said of the many sounds heard at that time, e.g., in the verse, "and all the people perceived the

sounds," etc., refers to the sound of the shofar, thunder, and similar sounds. But the voice of the Lord, that is, the voice created for that purpose, which was understood to include the diverse commandments, was only heard once, as is declared in the Law, and has been clearly stated by our Sages in the places which I have indicated to you. When the people heard this voice their soul left them; and in this voice they perceived the first two commandments. It must, however, be noticed that the people did not understand the voice in the same degree as Moses did. I will point out to you this important fact, and show you that it was a matter of tradition with the nation, and well known by our Sages. For, as a rule, Onkelos renders the word *va-yedabber* by *u-mallel* ("and God spake"); this is also the case with this word in the beginning of the twentieth chapter of Exodus, but the words *ve-al yedabber immanu elohim*, "let not God speak to us"

p. 223

[paragraph continues] (Exod. xx. 19), addressed by the people to Moses, is rendered *vela yitmallel immanu min kodam adonai* ("Let not aught be spoken to us by the Lord"). Onkelos makes thus the same distinction which we made. You know that according to the Talmud Onkelos received all these excellent interpretations directly from R. Eliezer and R. Joshua, the wisest men in Israel. Note it, and remember it, for it is impossible for any person to expound the revelation on Mount Sinai more fully than our Sages have done, since it is one of the secrets of the Law. It is very difficult to have a true conception of the events, for there has never been before, nor will there ever be again, anything like it. Note it.

#### CHAPTER XXXIV

THE meaning of the Scriptural passage, "Behold I will send an angel before thee," etc. (Exod. xxiii. 20), is identical with the parallel passage in Deuteronomy which God is represented to have addressed to Moses at the revelation on Mount Sinai, namely, "I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren," etc. (Deut. xviii. 18). The words, "Beware of him, and obey his voice," etc., said in reference to the angel, prove [that this passage speaks of a prophet]. For there is no doubt that the commandment is given to the ordinary people, to whom angels do not appear with commandments and exhortations, and it is therefore unnecessary to tell them not to disobey him. The meaning of the passage quoted above is this: God informs the Israelites that He will raise up for them a prophet, to whom an angel will appear in order to speak to him, to command him, and to exhort him; he therefore cautions them not to rebel against this angel, whose word the prophet will communicate to them. Therefore it is expressly said in Deuteronomy, "Unto him ye shall hearken" (Deut. xviii. 15); "And it shall come to pass that whosoever shall not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name," etc. (*ibid.* 19). This is the explanation of the words, "for my name is in him" (Exod. xxiv. 22). The object of all this is to say to the Israelites, This great sight witnessed by you, the revelation on Mount Sinai, will not continue for ever, nor will it ever be repeated. Fire and cloud will not continually rest over the tabernacle, as they are resting now on it: but the towns will be conquered for you, peace will be secured for you in the land, and you will be informed of what you have to do, by an angel



whom I will send to your prophets; he will thus teach you what to do, and what not to do. Here a principle is laid clown which I have constantly expounded, viz., that all prophets except Moses receive the prophecy through an angel. Note it.

## CHAPTER XXXV

I HAVE already described the four points in which the prophecy of Moses our Teacher was distinguished from that of other prophets, in books accessible to every one, in the Commentary on the Mishnah (Sanhedrin x. 1) and in Mishneh-torah (S. Madd'a I. vii. 6); I have also adduced evidence for my explanation, and shown the correctness thereof. I need not repeat the subject here, nor is it included in the theme of this work. For I must tell you that whatever I say here of prophecy refers exclusively to the form of the prophecy of all prophets before and after

p. 224

[paragraph continues] Moses. But as to the prophecy of Moses I will not discuss it in this work with one single word, whether directly or indirectly, because, in my opinion, the term prophet is applied to Moses and other men homonymously. A similar distinction, I think, must be made between the miracles wrought by Moses and those wrought by other prophets, for his signs are not of the same class as the miracles of other prophets. That his prophecy was distinguished from that of all his predecessors is proved by the passage, "And I appeared to Abraham, etc., but by my name, the Lord, I was not known unto them" (Exod. vi. 3). We thus learn that his prophetic perception was different from that of the Patriarchs, and excelled it; *a fortiori* it must have excelled that of other prophets before Moses. As to the distinction of Moses' prophecy from that of succeeding prophets, it is stated as a fact, "And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face" (Deut. xxxiv. 10). It is thus clear that his prophetic perception was above that of later prophets in Israel, who are "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation," and "in whose midst is the Lord"; much more is it above that of prophets among other nations.

The general distinction between the wonders of Moses and those of other prophets is this: The wonders wrought by prophets, or for them, are witnessed by a few individuals, e.g., the wonders wrought by Elijah and Elisha; the king of Israel is therefore surprised, and asked Gehazi to describe to him the miracles wrought by Elisha: "Tell me, I pray thee, all the great things that Elisha hath done. And it came to pass as he was telling, etc. And Gehazi said: 'My lord, O king, this is the woman, and this is her son, whom Elisha restored to life'" (2 Kings viii. 4, 5). The same is the case with the signs of every other prophet, except Moses our Teacher. Scripture, therefore, declares that no prophet will ever, like Moses, do signs publicly in the presence of friend and enemy, of his followers and his opponents; this is the meaning of the words: "And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, etc., in all the signs and the wonders, etc., in the sight of all Israel." Two things are here mentioned together; namely, that there will not arise a prophet that will perceive as Moses perceived, or a prophet that will do as he did; then

it is pointed out that the signs were made in the presence of Pharaoh, all his servants and all his land, the opponents of Moses, and also in the presence of all the Israelites, his followers. Comp. "In the sight of all Israel." This is a distinction not possessed by any prophet before Moses; nor, as is correctly foretold, will it ever be possessed by another prophet. We must not be misled by the account that the light of the sun stood still certain hours for Joshua, when "he said in the sight of Israel," etc. (Josh. x. 12); for it is not said there "in the sight of *all* Israel," as is said in reference to Moses. So also the miracle of Elijah, at Mount Carmel, was witnessed only by a few people. When I said above that the sun stood still *certain hours*, I explain the words "*ka-jom tamim*" to mean "the longest possible day," because *tamim* means "perfect," and indicates that that day appeared to the people at Gibeon as their longest day in the summer. Your mind must comprehend the distinction of the prophecy and the wonders of Moses, and understand that his greatness in prophetic perception was the same as his power of producing miracles. If you further assume that we are unable fully to comprehend the nature of this greatness, you will understand

p. 225

that when I speak, in the chapters which follow this, on prophecy and the different classes of prophets, I only refer to the prophets which have not attained the high degree that Moses attained. This is what I desired to explain in this chapter.

## CHAPTER XXXVI

PROPHECY is, in truth and reality, an emanation sent forth by the Divine Being through the medium of the Active Intellect, in the first instance to man's rational faculty, and then to his imaginative faculty; it is the highest degree and greatest perfection man can attain: it consists in the most Perfect development of the imaginative faculty. Prophecy is a faculty that cannot in any way be found in a person, or acquired by man, through a culture of his mental and moral faculties: for even if these latter were as good and perfect as possible, they would be of no avail, unless they were combined with the highest natural excellence of the imaginative faculty. You know that the full development of any faculty of the body, such as the imagination, depends on the condition of the organ, by means of which the faculty acts. This must be the best possible as regards its temperament and its size, and also as regards the purity of its substance. Any defect in this respect cannot in any way be supplied or remedied by training. For when any organ is defective in its temperament, proper training can in the best case restore a healthy condition to some extent, but cannot make such an organ perfect. But if the organ is defective as regards size, position, or as regards the substance and the matter of which the organ is formed, there is no remedy. You know all this, and I need not explain it to you at length.

Part of the functions of the imaginative faculty is, as you well know, to retain impressions by the senses, to combine them, and chiefly to form images. The principal and highest function is performed when the senses are at rest and pause in their action, for then it receives, to some extent, divine inspiration in the measure as it is predisposed for this influence. This is the nature

of those dreams which prove true, and also of prophecy, the difference being one of quantity, not of quality. Thus our Sages say, that dream is the sixtieth part of prophecy: and no such comparison could be made between two things of different kinds, for we cannot say the perfection of man is so many times the perfection of a horse. In *Bereshit Rabba* (sect. xvii.) the following saying of our Sages occurs, "Dream is the *nobelet* (the unripe fruit) of prophecy." This is an excellent comparison, for the unripe fruit (*nobelet*) is really the fruit to some extent, only it has fallen from the tree before it was fully developed and ripe. In a similar manner the action of the imaginative faculty during sleep is the same as at the time when it receives a prophecy, only in the first case it is not fully developed, and has not yet reached its highest degree. But why need I quote the words of our Sages, when I can refer to the following passage of Scripture: "If there be among you a prophet, I, the Lord, will make myself known unto him in a vision, in a dream will I speak to him" (Num. xii. 6). Here the Lord tells us what the real essence of prophecy is, that it is a perfection acquired in a dream or in a vision (the original *mareh* is a noun derived from the verb *raah*); the imaginative faculty acquires such an efficiency in its action that it sees

p. 226

the thing as if it came from without, and perceives it as if through the medium of bodily senses. These two modes of prophecy, vision and dream, include all its different degrees. It is a well-known fact that the thing which engages greatly and earnestly man's attention whilst he is awake and in the full possession of his senses forms during his sleep the object of the action of his imaginative faculty. Imagination is then only influenced by the intellect in so far as it is predisposed for such influence. It would be quite useless to illustrate this by a simile, or to explain it fully, as it is clear, and every one knows it. It is like the action of the senses, the existence of which no person with common sense would ever deny. After these introductory remarks you will understand that a person must satisfy the following conditions before he can become a prophet: The substance of the brain must from the very beginning be in the most perfect condition as regards purity of matter, composition of its different parts, size and position: no part of his body must suffer from ill-health; he must in addition have studied and acquired wisdom, so that his rational faculty passes from a state of potentiality to that of actuality; his intellect must be as developed and perfect as human intellect can be; his passions pure and equally balanced; all his desires must aim at obtaining a knowledge of the hidden laws and causes that are in force in the Universe; his thoughts must be engaged in lofty matters: his attention directed to the knowledge of God, the consideration of His works, and of that which he must believe in this respect. There must be an absence of the lower desires and appetites, of the seeking after pleasure in eating, drinking, and cohabitation: and, in short, every pleasure connected with the sense of touch. (Aristotle correctly says that this sense is a disgrace to us, since we possess it only in virtue of our being animals; and it does not include any specifically human element, whilst enjoyments connected with other senses, as smell, hearing, and sight, though likewise of a material nature, may sometimes include [intellectual] pleasure, appealing to

man as man, according to Aristotle. This remark, although forming no part of our subject, is not superfluous, for the thoughts of the most renowned wise men are to a great extent affected by the pleasures of this sense, and filled with a desire for them. And yet people are surprised that these scholars do not prophesy, if prophesying be nothing but a certain degree in the natural development of man.) It is further necessary to suppress every thought or desire for unreal power and dominion; that is to say, for victory, increase of followers, acquisition of honour, and service from the people without any ulterior object. On the contrary, the multitude must be considered according to their true worth; some of them are undoubtedly like domesticated cattle, and others like wild beasts, and these only engage the mind of the perfect and distinguished man in so far as he desires to guard himself from injury, in case of contact with them, and to derive some benefit from them when necessary. A man who satisfies these conditions, whilst his fully developed imagination is in action, influenced by the Active Intellect according to his mental training,-- such a person will undoubtedly perceive nothing but things very extraordinary and divine, and see nothing but God and His angels. His knowledge will only include that which is real knowledge, and his thought will only be directed to such general principles as would tend to improve the social relations between man and man.

p. 227

We have thus described three kinds of perfection: mental perfection acquired by training, perfection of the natural constitution of the imaginative faculty, and moral perfection produced by the suppression of every thought of bodily pleasures, and of every kind of foolish or evil ambition. These qualities are, as is well known, possessed by the wise men in different degrees, and the degrees of prophetic faculty vary in accordance with this difference. Faculties of the body are, as you know, at one time weak, wearied, and corrupted, at others in a healthy state. Imagination is certainly one of the faculties of the body. You find, therefore, that prophets are deprived of the faculty of prophesying when they mourn, are angry, or are similarly affected. Our Sages say, Inspiration does not come upon a prophet when he is sad or languid. This is the reason why Jacob did not receive any revelation during the period of his mourning, when his imagination was engaged with the loss of Joseph. The same was the case with Moses, when he was in a state of depression through the multitude of his troubles, which lasted from the murmurings of the Israelites in consequence of the evil report of the spies, till the death of the warriors of that generation. He received no message of God, as he used to do, even though he did not receive prophetic inspiration through the medium of the imaginative faculty, but directly through the intellect. We have mentioned it several times that Moses did not, like other prophets, speak in similes. This will be further explained (chap. xlv.), but it is not the subject of the present chapter. There were also persons who prophesied for a certain time and then left off altogether, something occurring that caused them to discontinue prophesying. The same circumstance, prevalence of sadness and dulness, was undoubtedly the direct cause of the interruption of prophecy during the exile: for can there be any greater misfortune for man than this: to be a slave bought for money in the service of ignorant and voluptuous masters, and powerless against them

as they unite in themselves the absence of true knowledge and the force of all animal desires? Such an evil state has been prophesied to us in the words, "They shall run to and fro to seek the word of God, but shall not find it" (Amos viii. 12); "Her king and her princes are among the nations, the law is no more, her prophets also find no vision from the Lord" (Lam. ii. 9). This is a real fact, and the cause is evident; the pre-requisites [of prophecy] have been lost. In the Messianic period--may it soon commence--prophecy will therefore again be in our midst, as has been promised by God.

## CHAPTER XXXVII

IT is necessary to consider the nature of the divine influence, which enables us to think, and gives us the various degrees of intelligence. For this influence may reach a person only in a small measure, and in exactly the same proportion would then be his intellectual condition, whilst it may reach another person in such a measure that, in addition to his own perfection, he can be the means of perfection for others. The same relation may be observed throughout the whole Universe. There are some beings so perfect that they can govern other beings, but there are also beings that are only perfect in so far as they can govern themselves and cannot influence other beings. In some cases the

p. 228

influence of the [Active] Intellect reaches only the logical and not the imaginative faculty; either on account of the insufficiency of that influence, or on account of a defect in the constitution of the imaginative faculty, and the consequent inability of the latter to receive that influence: this is the condition of wise men or philosophers. If, however, the imaginative faculty is naturally in the most perfect condition, this influence may, as has been explained by us and by other philosophers, reach both his logical and his imaginative faculties: this is the case with prophets. But it happens sometimes that the influence only reaches the imaginative faculty on account of the insufficiency of the logical faculty, arising either from a natural defect, or from a neglect in training. This is the case with statesmen, lawgivers, diviners, charmers, and men that have true dreams, or do wonderful things by strange means and secret arts, though they are not wise men; all these belong to the third class. It is further necessary to understand that some persons belonging to the third class perceive scenes, dreams, and confused images, when awake, in the form of a prophetic vision. They then believe that they are prophets; they wonder that they perceive visions, and think that they have acquired wisdom without training. They fall into grave errors as regards important philosophical principles, and see a strange mixture of true and imaginary things. All this is the consequence of the strength of their imaginative faculty, and the weakness of their logical faculty, which has not developed, and has not passed from potentiality to actuality.

It is well known that the members of each class differ greatly from each other. Each of the first two classes is again subdivided, and contains two sections, namely, those who receive the

influence only as far as is necessary for their own perfection, and those who receive it in so great a measure that it suffices for their own perfection and that of others. A member of the first class, the wise men, may have his mind influenced either only so far, that he is enabled to search, to understand, to know, and to discern, without attempting to be a teacher or an author, having neither the desire nor the capacity; but he may also be influenced to such a degree that he becomes a teacher and an author. The same is the case with the second class. A person may receive a prophecy enabling him to perfect himself but not others; but he may also receive such a prophecy as would compel him to address his fellowmen, teach them, and benefit them through his perfection. It is clear that, without this second degree of perfection, no books would have been written, nor would any prophets have persuaded others to know the truth. For a scholar does not write a book with the object to teach himself what he already knows. But the characteristic of the intellect is this: what the intellect of one receives is transmitted to another, and so on, till a person is reached that can only himself be perfected by such an influence, but is unable to communicate it to others, as has been explained in some chapters of this treatise (chap. xi.). It is further the nature of this element in man that he who possesses an additional degree of that influence is compelled to address his fellowmen, under all circumstances, whether he is listened to or not, even if he injures himself thereby. Thus we find prophets that did not leave off speaking to the people until they were slain; it is this divine influence that moves them, that does not allow them to rest in any way, though they might

p. 229

bring upon themselves great evils by their action. E.g., when Jeremiah was despised, like other teachers and scholars of his age, he could not, though he desired it, withhold his prophecy, or cease from reminding the people of the truths which they rejected. Comp. "For the Word of the Lord was unto me a reproach and a mocking all day, and I said, I will not mention it, nor will I again speak in His name; but it was in mine heart as a burning fire, enclosed in my bones, and I was wearied to keep it, and did not prevail" (Jer. xx. 8, 9). This is also the meaning of the words of another prophet, "The Lord God hath spoken, who shall not prophesy?" (Amos iii. 8) Note it.

## CHAPTER XXXVIII

EVERY man possesses a certain amount of courage, otherwise he would not stir to remove anything that might injure him. This psychical force seems to me analogous to the physical force of repulsion. Energy varies like all other forces, being great in one case and small in another. There are, therefore, people who attack a lion, whilst others run away at the sight of a mouse. One attacks a whole army and fights, another is frightened and terrified by the threat of a woman. This courage requires that there be in a man's constitution a certain disposition for it. If man, in accordance with a certain view, employs it more frequently, it develops and increases, but, on the other hand, if it is employed, in accordance with the opposite view, more rarely, it will diminish. From our own youth we remember that there are different degrees of energy among boys.

The same is the case with the intuitive faculty; all possess it, but in different degrees. Man's intuitive power is especially strong in things which he has well comprehended, and in which his mind is much engaged. Thus you may yourself guess correctly that a certain person said or did a certain thing in a certain matter. Some persons are so strong and sound in their imagination and intuitive faculty that, when they assume a thing to be in existence, the reality either entirely or partly confirms their assumption. Although the causes of this assumption are numerous, and include many preceding, succeeding, and present circumstances, by means of the intuitive faculty the intellect can pass over all these causes, and draw inferences from them very quickly, almost instantaneously. This same faculty enables some persons to foretell important coming events. The prophets must have had these two forces, courage and intuition, highly developed, and these were still more strengthened when they were under the influence of the Active Intellect. Their courage was so great that, e.g., Moses, with only a staff in his hand, dared to address a great king in his desire to deliver a nation from his service. He was not frightened or terrified, because he had been told, "I will be with thee" (Exod. iii. 12). The prophets have not all the same degree of courage, but none of them have been entirely without it. Thus Jeremiah is told: "Be not afraid of them," etc. (Jer. i. 8), and Ezekiel is exhorted, "Do not fear them or their word" (Ezek. ii. 6). In the same manner, you find that all prophets possessed great courage. Again, through the excellence of their intuitive faculty, they could quickly foretell the future, but this excellence, as is well known, likewise admits of different degrees.

p. 230

The true prophets undoubtedly conceive ideas that result from premisses which human reason could not comprehend by itself; thus they tell things which men could not tell by reason and ordinary imagination alone; for [the action of the prophets' mental capacities is influenced by] the same agent that causes the perfection of the imaginative faculty, and that enables the prophet thereby to foretell a future event with such clearness as if it was a thing already perceived with the senses, and only through them conveyed to his imagination. This agent perfects the prophet's mind, and influences it in such a manner that he conceives ideas which are confirmed by reality, and are so clear to him as if he deduced them by means of syllogisms.

This should be the belief of all who choose to accept the truth. For [all things are in a certain relation to each other, and] what is noticed in one thing may be used as evidence for the existence of certain properties in another, and the knowledge of one thing leads us to the knowledge of other things. But [what we said of the extraordinary powers of our imaginative faculty] applies with special force to our intellect, which is directly influenced by the Active Intellect, and caused by it to pass from potentiality to actuality. It is through the intellect that the influence reaches the imaginative faculty. How then could the latter be so perfect as to be able to represent things not previously perceived by the senses, if the same degree of perfection were withheld from the intellect, and the latter could not comprehend things otherwise than in the usual manner, namely, by means of premiss, conclusion, and inference? This is the true characteristic of prophecy, and of the disciplines to which the preparation for prophecy must

exclusively be devoted. I spoke here of true prophets in order to exclude the third class, namely, those persons whose logical faculties are not fully developed, and who do not possess any wisdom, but are only endowed with imaginative and inventive powers. It may be that things perceived by these persons are nothing but ideas which they had before, and of which impressions were left in their imaginations together with those of other things; but whilst the impressions of other images are effaced and have disappeared, certain images alone remain, are seen and considered as new and objective, coming from without. The process is analogous to the following case: A person has with him in the house a thousand living individuals; all except one of them leave the house: when the person finds himself alone with that individual, he imagines that the latter has entered the house now, contrary to the fact that he has only not left the house. This is one of the many phenomena open to gross interpretations and dangerous errors, and many of those who believed that they were wise perished thereby.

There were, therefore, men who supported their opinion by a dream which they had, thinking that the vision during sleep was independent of what they had previously believed or heard when awake. Persons whose mental capacities are not fully developed, and who have not attained intellectual perfection, must not take any notice of these [dreams]. Those who reach that perfection may, through the influence of the divine intellect, obtain knowledge independent of that possessed by them when awake. They are true prophets, as is distinctly stated in Scripture, *ve-nabi lebab hokmah* (Ps. xc. 12), "And the true prophet possesseth a heart of wisdom." This must likewise he noticed.

p. 231

## CHAPTER XXXIX

WE have given the definition of prophecy, stated its true characteristics, and shown that the prophecy of Moses our Teacher was distinguished from that of other prophets; we will now explain that this distinction alone qualified him for the office of proclaiming the Law, a mission without a parallel in the history from Adam to Moses, or among the prophets who came after him; it is a principle in our faith that there will never be revealed another Law. Consequently we hold that there has never been, nor will there ever be, any other divine Law but that of Moses our Teacher. According to what is written in Scripture and handed down by tradition, the fact may be explained in the following way: There were prophets before Moses, as the patriarchs Shem, Eber, Noah, Methushelah, and Enoch, but of these none said to any portion of mankind that God sent him to them and commanded him to convey to them a certain message or to prohibit or to command a certain thing. Such a thing is not related in Scripture, or in authentic tradition. Divine prophecy reached them as we have explained. Men like Abraham, who received a large measure of prophetic inspiration, called their fellow-men together and led them by training and instruction to the truth which they had perceived. Thus Abraham taught, and showed by philosophical arguments that there is one God, that He has created everything that exists beside Him, and that neither the constellations nor anything in the air ought to be worshipped; he trained his fellow-



men in this belief, and won their attention by pleasant words as well as by acts of kindness. Abraham did not tell the people that God had sent him to them with the command concerning certain things which should or should not be done. Even when it was commanded that he, his sons, and his servants should be circumcised, he fulfilled that commandment, but he did not address his fellow-men prophetically on this subject. That Abraham induced his fellow-men to do what is right, telling them only his own will [and not that of God], may be learnt from the following passage of Scripture: "For I know him, because he commands his sons and his house after him, to practise righteousness and judgment" (Gen. xix. 19). Also Isaac, Jacob, Levi, Kohath, and Amram influenced their fellow-men in the same way. Our Sages, when speaking of prophets before Moses, used expressions like the following: The *bet-din* (court of justice) of Eber, the *bet-din* of Methushelah, and in the college of Methushelah; although all these were prophets, yet they taught their fellow-men in the manner of preachers, teachers, and pedagogues, but did not use such phrases as the following: "And God said to me, Speak to certain people so and so." This was the state of prophecy before Moses. But as regards Moses, you know what [God] said to him, what he said [to the people], and the words addressed to him by the whole nation: "This day we have seen that God doth talk with man, and that he liveth" (Deut. v. 21). The history of all our prophets that lived after Moses is well known to you; they performed, as it were, the function of warning the people and exhorting them to keep the Law of Moses, threatening evil to those who would neglect it, and announcing blessings to those who would submit to its guidance. This we believe will always be the case. Comp. "It is not in the heavens that one might say," etc. (*ibid.* xxx. 12); "For

p. 232

us and for our children for ever" (*ibid.* xxix. 28). It is but natural that it should be so. For if one individual of a class has reached the highest perfection possible in that class, every other individual must necessarily be less perfect, and deviate from the perfect measure either by surplus or deficiency. Take, e.g., the normal constitution of a being, it is the most proper composition possible in that class; any constitution that deviates from that norm contains something too much or too little. The same is the case with the Law. It is clear that the Law is normal in this sense; for it contains "Just statutes and judgments" (Deut. iv. 8); but "just" is here identical with "equibalanced." The statutes of the Law do not impose burdens or excesses as are implied in the service of a hermit or pilgrim, and the like; but, on the other hand, they are not so deficient as to lead to gluttony or lewdness, or to prevent, as the religious laws of the heathen nations do, the development of man's moral and intellectual faculties. We intend to discuss in this treatise the reasons of the commandments, and we shall then show, as far as necessary, the justice and wisdom of the Law, on account of which it is said: "The Law of God is perfect, refreshing the heart" (Ps. xix. 8). There are persons who believe that the Law commands much exertion and great pain, but due consideration will show them their error. Later on I will show how easy it is for the perfect to obey the Law. Comp. "What does the Lord thy God ask of thee?" etc. (Deut. x. 12); "Have I been a wilderness to Israel?" (Jer. ii. 31). But this applies only to the

noble ones; whilst wicked, violent, and pugnacious persons find it most injurious and hard that there should be any divine authority tending to subdue their passion. To low-minded, wanton, and passionate persons it appears most cruel that there should be an obstacle in their way to satisfy their carnal appetite, or that a punishment should be inflicted for their doings. Similarly every godless person imagines that it is too hard to abstain from the evil he has chosen in accordance with his inclination. We must not consider the Law easy or hard according as it appears to any wicked, low-minded, and immoral person, but as it appears to the judgment of the most perfect, who, according to the Law, are fit to be the example for all mankind. This Law alone is called divine; other laws, such as the political legislations among the Greeks, or the follies of the Sabeans, are the works of human leaders, but not of prophets, as I have explained several times.

## CHAPTER XL

IT has already been fully explained that man is naturally a social being, that by virtue of his nature he seeks to form communities; man is therefore different from other living beings that are not compelled to combine into communities. He is, as you know, the highest form in the creation, and he therefore includes the largest number of constituent elements; this is the reason why the human race contains such a great variety of individuals, that we cannot discover two persons exactly alike in any moral quality, or in external appearance. The cause of this is the variety in man's temperament, and in accidents dependent on his form; for with every physical form there are connected certain special accidents different from those which are connected with the substance. Such a variety among the individuals of a class

p. 233

does not exist in any other class of living beings; for the variety in any other species is limited; only man forms an exception; two persons maybe so different from each other in every respect that they appear to belong to two different classes. Whilst one person is so cruel that he kills his youngest child in his anger, another is too delicate and faint-hearted to kill even a fly or worm. The same is the case with most of the accidents. This great variety and the necessity of social life are essential elements in man's nature. But the well-being of society demands that there should be a leader able to regulate the actions of man; he must complete every shortcoming, remove every excess, and prescribe for the conduct of all, so that the natural variety should be counterbalanced by the uniformity of legislation, and the order of society be well established. I therefore maintain that the Law, though not a product of Nature, is nevertheless not entirely foreign to Nature. It being the will of God that our race should exist and be permanently established, He in His wisdom gave it such properties that men can acquire the capacity of ruling others. Some persons are therefore inspired with theories of legislation, such as prophets and lawgivers: others possess the power of enforcing the dictates of the former, and of compelling people to obey them, and to act accordingly. Such are kings, who accept the code of lawgivers, and [rulers] who pretend to be prophets, and accept, either entirely or partly, the teaching of the

prophets. They accept one part while rejecting another part, either because this course appears to them more convenient, or out of ambition, because it might lead people to believe that the rulers themselves had been prophetically inspired with these laws, and did not copy them from others. For when we like a certain perfection, find pleasure in it, and wish to possess it, we sometimes desire to make others believe that we possess that virtue, although we are fully aware that we do not possess it. Thus people, e.g., adorn themselves with the poems of others, and publish them as their own productions. It also occurs in the works of wise men on the various branches of Science, that an ambitious, lazy person sees an opinion expressed by another person, appropriates it, and boasts that he himself originated it. The same [ambition] occurs also with regard to the faculty of prophecy. There were men who, like Zedekiah, the son of Chenaanah (1 Kings xxii. ii, 24) boasted that they received a prophecy, and declared things which have never been prophesied. Others, like Hananiah, son of Azzur (Jer. xxviii. 1-5), claim the capacity of prophecy, and proclaim things which, no doubt, have been said by God, that is to say, that have been the subject of a divine inspiration, but not to them. They nevertheless say that they are prophets, and adorn themselves with the prophecies of others. All this can easily be ascertained and recognized. I will, however, fully explain this to you, so that no doubt be left to you on this question, and that you may have a test by which you may distinguish between the guidance of human legislation, of the divine law, and of teachings stolen from prophets. As regards those who declare that the laws proclaimed by them are their own ideas, no further test is required: the confession of the defendant makes the evidence of the witness superfluous. I only wish to instruct you about laws which are proclaimed as prophetic. Some of these are truly prophetic, originating in divine inspiration, some are of non-prophetic character, and some, though prophetic originally, are the result of plagiarism. You will find that the sole

p. 234

object of certain laws, in accordance with the intention of their author, who well considered their effect, is to establish the good order of the state and its affairs, to free it from all mischief and wrong: these laws do not deal with philosophic problems, contain no teaching for the perfecting of our logical faculties, and are not concerned about the existence of sound or unsound opinions. Their sole object is to arrange, under all circumstances, the relations of men to each other, and to secure their well-being, in accordance with the view of the author of these laws. These laws are political, and their author belongs, as has been stated above, to the third class, viz., to those who only distinguish themselves by the perfection of their imaginative faculties. You will also find laws which, in all their rules, aim, as the law just mentioned, at the improvement of the material interests of the people: but, besides, tend to improve the state of the faith of man, to create first correct notions of God, and of angels, and to lead then the people, by instruction and education, to an accurate knowledge of the Universe: this education comes from God; these laws are divine. The question which now remains to be settled is this: Is the person who proclaimed these laws the same perfect man that received them by prophetic inspiration, or a plagiarist, who has stolen these ideas from a true prophet? In order to be enabled to answer this question, we must examine

the merits of the person, obtain an accurate account of his actions, and consider his character. The best test is the rejection, abstention, and contempt of bodily pleasures: for this is the first condition of men, and *a fortiori* of prophets: they must especially disregard pleasures of the sense of touch, which, according to Aristotle, is a disgrace to us: and, above all, restrain from the pollution of sensual intercourse. Thus God exposes thereby false prophets to public shame, in order that those who really seek the truth may find it, and not err or go astray; e.g., Zedekiah, son of Maasiah, and Ahab, son of Kolaiah, boasted that they had received a prophecy. They persuaded the people to follow them, by proclaiming utterances of other prophets: but all the time they continued to seek the low pleasures of sensual intercourse, committing even adultery with the wives of their companions and followers. God exposed their falsehood as He has exposed that of other false prophets. The king of Babylon burnt them, as Jeremiah distinctly states: "And of them shall be taken up a curse by all the captivity of Judah, which are in Babylon, saying, The Lord make thee like Zedekiah, and like Ahab, whom the king of Babylon roasted in the fire. Because they have committed villany in Israel, and have committed adultery with their neighbours' wives, and have spoken lying words in my name, which I have not commanded them" (Jer. xxix. 22, 23). Note what is meant by these words.

#### CHAPTER XLI

I NEED not explain what a dream is, but I will explain the meaning of the term *mareh*, "vision," which occurs in the passage: "In a vision (*be-mareh*) do I make myself known unto him" (Num. xii. 6). The term signifies that which is also called *mareh ha-nebuah*, "prophetic vision," *yad ha-shem*, "the hand of God," and *mahazeh*, "a vision." It is something terrible and fearful which the prophet feels while awake, as is distinctly stated by

p. 235

[paragraph continues] Daniel: "And I saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me, for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength" (Dan, x. 8). He afterwards continues, "Thus was I in deep sleep on my face, and my face toward the ground" (*ibid.* ver. 9). But it was in a prophetic vision that the angel spoke to him and "set him upon his knees." Under such circumstances the senses cease to act, and the [Active Intellect] influences the rational faculties, and through them the imaginative faculties, which become perfect and active. Sometimes the prophecy begins with a prophetic vision, the prophet greatly trembles, and is much affected in consequence of the perfect action of the imaginative faculty: and after that the prophecy follows. This was the case with Abraham. The commencement of the prophecy is, "The word of the Lord came to Abraham in a vision" (Gen. xv. 1); after this, "a deep sleep fell upon Abraham"; and at last, "he said unto Abraham," etc. When prophets speak of the fact that they received a prophecy, they say that they received it from an angel, or from God; but even in the latter case it was likewise received through an angel. Our Sages, therefore, explain the words, "And the Lord said unto her" that He spake through an angel. You must know that whenever

Scripture relates that the Lord or an angel spoke to a person, this took place in a dream or in a prophetic vision.

There are four different ways in which Scripture relates the fact that a divine communication was made to the prophet. (1) The prophet relates that he heard the words of an angel in a dream or vision; (2) He reports the words of the angel without mentioning that they were perceived in a dream or vision, assuming that it is well known that prophecy can only originate in one of the two ways, "In a vision I will make myself known unto him, in a dream I will speak unto him" (Num. xii. 6). (3) The prophet does not mention the angel at all; he says that God spoke to him, but he states that he received the message in a dream or a vision. (4) He introduces his prophecy by stating that God spoke to him, or told him to do a certain thing, or speak certain words, but he does not explain that he received the message in a dream or vision, because he assumes that it is well known, and has been established as a principle that no prophecy or revelation originates otherwise than in a dream or vision, and through an angel. Instances of the first form are the following:--"And the angel of the Lord said unto me in a dream, Jacob" (Gen. xxxi. 11); "And an angel said unto Israel in a vision of night" (*ibid.* xlvi. 2); "And an angel came to Balaam by night"; "And an angel said unto Balaam" (Num. xxii. 20-72). Instances of the second form are these: "And *Elohim* (an angel), said unto Jacob, Rise, go up to Bethel" (Gen. xxxv. 1); "And *Elohim* said unto him, Thy name is Jacob," etc. (*ibid.* xxxv. 10); "And an angel of the Lord called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time" (*ibid.* xxii. 15); "And *Elohim* said unto Noah" (*ibid.* vi. 13). The following is an instance of the third form: "The word of the Lord came unto Abraham in a vision" (*ibid.* xv. 1). Instances of the fourth form are: "And the Lord said unto Abraham" (*ibid.* xviii. 13); "And the Lord said unto Jacob, Return," etc. (*ibid.* xxxi. 3); "And the Lord said unto Joshua" (Josh. v. 9); "And the Lord said unto Gideon" (Judges vii. 2). Most of the prophets speak in a similar manner: "And the Lord said unto me" (Deut. ii. 2); "And the word of the Lord came unto me"

p. 236

[paragraph continues] (Ezek. xxx. 1); "And the word of the Lord came" (2 Sam. xxiv. 11); "And behold, the word of the Lord came unto him" (1 Kings xix. 9); "And the word of the Lord came expressly" (Ezek. i. 3); "The beginning of the word of the Lord by Hosea" (Hos. i. 2); "The hand of the Lord was upon me" (Ezek. xxxvii. 1). There are a great many instances of this class. Every passage in Scripture introduced by any of these four forms is a prophecy proclaimed by a prophet; but the phrase, "And *Elohim* (an angel) came to a certain person in the dream of night," does not indicate a prophecy, and the person mentioned in that phrase is not a prophet; the phrase only informs us that the attention of the person was called by God to a certain thing, and at the same time that this happened at night. For just as God may cause a person to move in order to save or kill another person, so He may cause, according to His will, certain things to rise in man's mind in a dream by night. We have no doubt that the Syrian Laban was a perfectly wicked man, and an idolater; likewise Abimelech, though a good man among his people, is told by Abraham concerning his land [Gerar] and his kingdom, "Surely there is no fear of God in this place" (Gen.

xx. 11). And yet concerning both of them, viz., Laban and Abimelech, it is said [that an angel appeared to them in a dream]. Comp. "And Elohim (an angel) came to Abimelech in a dream by night" (*ibid.* ver. 3); and also, "And *Elohim* came to the Syrian Laban in the dream of the night" (*ibid.* xxxi. 24). Note and consider the distinction between the phrases, "And *Elohim* came," and "*Elohim* said," between "in a dream by night," and "in a vision by night." In reference to Jacob it is said, "And an angel said to Israel in the visions by night" (Gen. xlvi. 2), but in reference to Laban and Abimelech, "And *Elohim* came," etc. Onkelos makes the distinction clear; he translates, in the last two instances, *ata memar min kodam adonai*, "a word came from the Lord," and not *ve-itgeli*, "and the Lord appeared." The phrase, "And the Lord said to a certain person," is employed even when this person was not really addressed by the Lord, and did not receive any prophecy, but was informed of a certain thing through a prophet. E.g., "And she went to inquire of the Lord" (Gen. xxv. 22); that is, according to the explanation of our Sages, she went to the college of Eber, and the latter gave her the answer; and this is expressed by the words, "And the Lord said unto her" (*ibid.* ver. 23). These words have also been explained thus, God spoke to her through an angel; and by "angel" Eber is meant here, for a prophet is sometimes called "angel," as will be explained; or the angel that appeared to Eber in this vision is referred to, or the object of the Midrash explanation is merely to express that wherever God is introduced as directly speaking to a person, i.e., to any of the ordinary prophets, He speaks through an angel, as has been set forth by us (chap. xxxiv.).

## CHAPTER XLII

WE have already shown that the appearance or speech of an angel mentioned in Scripture took place in a vision or dream; it makes no difference whether this is expressly stated or not, as we have explained above. This is a point of considerable importance. In some cases the account begins by stating that the prophet saw an angel; in others, the account apparently introduces

p. 237

a human being, who ultimately is shown to be an angel; but it makes no difference, for if the fact that an angel has been heard is only mentioned at the end, you may rest satisfied that the whole account from the beginning describes a prophetic vision. In such visions, a prophet either sees God who speaks to him, as will be explained by us, or he sees an angel who speaks to him, or he hears some one speaking to him without seeing the speaker, or he sees a man who speaks to him, and learns afterwards that the speaker was an angel. In this latter kind of prophecies, the prophet relates that he saw a man who was doing or saying something, and that he learnt afterwards that it was an angel.

This important principle was adopted by one of our Sages, one of the most distinguished among them, R. Hiya the Great (*Bereshit Rabba*, xlvi.), in the exposition of the Scriptural passage commencing, "And the Lord appeared unto him in the plain of Mamre" (Gen. xviii.). The general statement that the Lord appeared to Abraham is followed by the description in what manner that

appearance of the Lord took place; namely, Abraham saw first three men; he ran and spoke to them. R. Hiya, the author of the explanation, holds that the words of Abraham, "My Lord, if now I have found grace in thy sight, do not, I pray thee, pass from thy servant," were spoken by him in a prophetic vision to one of the men; for he says that Abraham addressed these words to the chief of these men. Note this well, for it is one of the great mysteries [of the Law]. The same, I hold, is the case when it is said in reference to Jacob, "And a man wrestled with him" (Gen. xxxii. 25); this took place in a prophetic vision, since it is expressly stated in the end (ver. 31) that it was an angel. The circumstances are here exactly the same as those in the vision of Abraham, where the general statement, "And the Lord appeared to him," etc., is followed by a detailed description. Similarly the account of the vision of Jacob begins, "And the angels of God met him" (Gen. xxxii. 2); then follows a detailed description how it came to pass that they met him; namely, Jacob sent messengers, and after having prepared and done certain things, "he was left alone," etc., "and a man wrestled with him" (*ibid.* ver. 24). By this term "*man*" [one of] the angels of God is meant, mentioned in the phrase, "And angels of God met him"; the wrestling and speaking was entirely a prophetic vision. That which happened to Balaam on the way, and the speaking of the ass, took place in a prophetic vision, since further on, in the same account, an angel of God is introduced as speaking to Balaam. I also think that what Joshua perceived, when "he lifted up his eyes and saw, and behold a man stood before him" (Josh. v. 13) was a prophetic vision, since it is stated afterwards (ver. 14) that it was "the prince of the host of the Lord." But in the passages, "And an angel of the Lord came up from *Gilgal*" (Judges ii. 1); "And it came to pass that the angel of the Lord spake these words to all Israel" (*ibid.* ver. 2); the "angel" is, according to the explanation of our Sages, Phineas. They say, The angel is Phineas, for, when the Divine Glory rested upon him, he was "like an angel." We have already shown (chap. vi.) that the term "angel" is homonymous, and denotes also "prophet," as is the case in the following passages:--"And He sent an angel, and He hath brought us up out of Egypt" (Num. xx. 16); "Then spake Haggai, the angel of the Lord, in the Lords message" (Hagg. i. 13); "But they mocked the angels of

p. 238

[paragraph continues] God" (2 Chron. xxxvi. 16). Comp. also the words of Daniel, "And the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation" (Dan. ix. 11). All this passed in a prophetic vision. Do not imagine that an angel is seen or his word heard otherwise than in a prophetic vision or prophetic dream, according to the principle laid down:--"I make myself known unto him in a vision, and speak unto him in a dream" (Num. xii. 6). The instances quoted may serve as an illustration of those passages which I do not mention. From the rule laid down by us that prophecy requires preparation, and from our interpretation of the homonym "angel," you will infer that Hagar, the Egyptian woman, was not a prophetess; also Manoah and his wife were no prophets: for the speech they heard, or imagined they heard, was like the *bat-kol* (prophetic echo), which is so frequently mentioned by our Sages, and is something that may be experienced

by men not prepared for prophecy. The homonymity of the word "angel" misleads in this matter. This is the principal method by which most of the difficult passages in the Bible can be explained. Consider the words, "And an angel of the Lord found her by the well of water" (Gen. xvi. 7), which are similar to the words referring to Joseph--"And a man found him, and behold, he was erring in the field" (*ibid.* xxxvii. 15). All the Midrashim assume that by *man* in this passage an angel is meant.

#### CHAPTER XLIII

WE have already shown in our work that the prophets sometimes prophesy in allegories; they use a term allegorically, and in the same prophecy the meaning of the allegory is given. In our dreams, we sometimes believe that we are awake, and relate a dream to another person, who explains the meaning, and all this goes on while we dream. Our Sages call this "a dream interpreted in a dream." In other cases we learn the meaning of the dream after waking from sleep. The same is the case with prophetic allegories. Some are interpreted in the prophetic vision. Thus it is related in Zechariah, after the description of the allegorical vision--"And the angel that talked with me came again and waked me as a man that is awakened from his sleep. And he said unto me, 'What dost thou see?'" etc. (Zech. iv. 1-2), and then the allegory is explained (ver. 6, *sqq.*).

Another instance we find in Daniel. It is first stated there: "Daniel had a dream and visions of his head upon his bed" (Dan. vii. 1). The whole allegory is then given, and Daniel is described as sighing that he did not know its interpretation. He asks the angel for an explanation, and he received it in a prophetic vision. He relates as follows: "I came near unto one of those that stood by, and asked him the truth of all this. So he told me, and made me know the interpretation of the things" (*ibid.* ver. 16). The whole scene is called *hazon* (vision), although it was stated that Daniel had a dream, because an angel explained the dream to him in the same manner as is mentioned in reference to a prophetic dream. I refer to the verse: "A vision appeared to me Daniel, after that which appeared to me at the first" (*ibid.* viii. 1). This is clear, for *hazon* (vision) is derived from *haza*, "to see," and *mareh*, "vision," from *raah*, "to see"; and *haza* and *raah* are

p. 239

synonymous. There is therefore no difference whether we use *mareh*, or *maḥazeh*, or *hazon*, there is no other mode of revelation but the two mentioned in Scripture: "In a vision I make myself known to him, in a dream I will speak unto him" (Num. xii. 6). There are, however, different degrees [of prophetic proficiency], as will be shown (chap. xlv.).

There are other prophetic allegories whose meaning is not given in a prophetic vision. The prophet learns it when he awakes from his sleep. Take, e.g., the staves which Zechariah took in a prophetic vision.



You must further know that the prophets see things shown to them allegorically, such as the candlesticks, horses, and mountains of Zechariah (Zech. iv. 2; vi. 1-7), the scroll of Ezekiel (Ezek. ii. 9), the wall made by a plumb-line (Amos vii. 7), which Amos saw, the animals of Daniel (Dan. vii. and viii.), the seething pot of Jeremiah (Jer. i. 13), and similar allegorical objects shown to represent certain ideas. The prophets, however, are also shown things which do not illustrate the object of the vision, but indicate it by their name through its etymology or homonymity. Thus the imaginative faculty forms the image of a thing, the name of which has two meanings, one of which denotes something different [from the image]. This is likewise a kind of allegory. Comp. *Makkal shaked*, "almond staff," of Jeremiah (i. 11-12). It was intended to indicate by the second meaning of shaked the prophecy, "For I will watch" (*shoked*), etc., which has no relation whatever to the staff or to almonds. The same is the case with the *kelub. kayiz*, "a basket of summer fruit," seen by Amos, by which the completion of a certain period was indicated, "the end (*ha-kez*) having come" (Amos viii. 2). Still more strange is the following manner of calling the prophet's attention to a certain object. He is shown a different object, the name of which has neither etymologically nor homonymously any relation to the first object, but the names of both contain the same letters, though in a different order. Take, e.g., the allegories of Zechariah (chap. xi. 7, *sqq.*). He takes in a prophetic vision staves to lead the flock; he calls the one *No'am* (pleasure), the other *hobelim*. He indicates thereby that the nation was at first in favour with God, who was their leader and guide. They rejoiced in the service of God, and found happiness in it, while God was pleased with them, and loved them, as it is said, "Thou hast avouched the Lord thy God," etc., and "the Lord hath avouched thee," etc. (Deut. xxvi. 17, 18) They were guided and directed by Moses and the prophets that followed him. But later a change took place. They rejected the love of God, and God rejected them, appointing destroyers like Jeroboam and Manasse as their rulers. Accordingly, the word *hobelim* has the same meaning [viz., destroying] as the root *habal* has in *Mehabbelim keramim*, "destroying vineyards" (Song of Sol. ii. 15). But the prophet found also in this name *Hobelim* the indication that the people despised God, and that God despised them. This is, however, not expressed by the word *habal*, but by a transposition of the letters *Het*, *Bet*, and *Lamed*, the meaning of despising and rejecting is obtained. Comp. "My soul loathed them, and their soul also abhorred me" [*baḥalah*] (Zech. xi. 8). The prophet had therefore to change the order of the fetters in *habal* into that of *Baḥal*. In this way we find very strange things and also mysteries (*Sodot*) in the words *neḥoshet*, *Kalal*, *regel*, *'egel*, and *hashmal* of the *Mercabah*, and in other terms in other

p. 240

passages. After the above explanation you will see the mysteries in the meaning of these expressions if you examine them thoroughly.

## CHAPTER XLIV

PROPHECY is given either in a vision or in a dream, as we have said so many times, and we will not constantly repeat it. We say now that when a prophet is inspired with a prophecy he may

see an allegory, as we have shown frequently, or he may in a prophetic vision perceive that God speaks to him, as is said in Isaiah (vi. 8), "And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" or he hears an angel addressing him, and sees him also. This is very frequent, e.g., "And the angel of God spake unto me," etc. (Gen. xxxi. 11); "And the angel that talked with me answered and said unto me, Dost thou not know what these are" (Zech. iv. 5); "And I heard one holy speaking" (Dan. viii. 13). Instances of this are innumerable. The prophet sometimes sees a man that speaks to him. Comp., "And behold there was a man, whose appearance was like the appearance of brass, and the man said to me," etc. (Ezek. xl. 3, 4), although the passage begins, "The hand of the Lord was upon me" (*ibid.* ver. 1). In some cases the prophet sees no figure at all, only hears in the prophetic vision the words addressed to him; e.g., "And I heard the voice of a man between the banks of Uali" (Dan. viii. 16); "There was silence, and I heard a voice" (in the speech of Eliphaz, Job iv. 16); "And I heard a voice of one that spake to me" (Ezek. i. 28). The being which Ezekiel perceived in the prophetic vision was not the same that addressed him: for at the conclusion of the strange and extraordinary scene which Ezekiel describes expressly as having been perceived by him, the object and form of the prophecy is introduced by the words, "And I heard a voice of a man that spake to me." After this remark on the different kinds of prophecy, as suggested by Scripture, I say that the prophet may perceive that which he hears with the greatest possible intensity, just as a person may hear thunder in his dream, or perceive a storm or an earthquake; such dreams are frequent. The prophet may also hear the prophecy in ordinary common speech, without anything unusual. Take, e.g., the account of the prophet Samuel. When he was called in a prophetic vision, he believed that the priest Eli called him; and this happened three times consecutively. The text then explains the cause of it, saying that Samuel naturally believed that Eli had called him, because at that time he did not yet know that God addressed the prophet in this form, nor had that secret as yet been revealed to him. Comp., "And Samuel did not yet know the Lord, and the word of the Lord was not yet revealed to him," i.e., he did not yet know, and it had not yet been revealed to him, that the word of God is communicated in this way. The words, "He did not yet know the Lord," may perhaps mean that Samuel had not yet received any prophecy; for in reference to a prophet's receiving divine communication it is said, "I make myself known to him in a vision, I speak to him in a dream" (Num. xii. 6). The meaning of the verse accordingly is this, Samuel had not yet received any prophecy, and therefore did not know that this was the form of prophecy. Note it.

p. 241

## CHAPTER XLV

AFTER having explained prophecy in accordance with reason and Scripture, I must now describe the different degrees of prophecy from these two points of view. Not all the degrees of prophecy which I will enumerate qualify a person for the office of a prophet. The first and the second degrees are only steps leading to prophecy, and a person possessing either of these two degrees does not belong to the class of prophets whose merits we have been discussing. When

such a person is occasionally called prophet, the term is used in a wider sense, and is applied to him because he is almost a prophet. You must not be misled by the fact that according to the books of the Prophets, a certain prophet, after having been inspired with one kind of prophecy, is reported to have received prophecy in another form. For it is possible for a prophet to prophesy at one time in the form of one of the degrees which I am about to enumerate, and at another time in another form. In the same manner, as the prophet does not prophesy continuously, but is inspired at one time and not at another, so he may at one time prophesy in the form of a higher degree, and at another time in that of a lower degree; it may happen that the highest degree is reached by a prophet only once in his lifetime, and afterwards remains inaccessible to him, or that a prophet remains below the highest degree until he entirely loses the faculty: for ordinary prophets must cease to prophesy a shorter or longer period before their death. Comp. "And the word of the Lord ceased from Jeremiah" (Ezra i. 1); "And these are the last words of David" (2 Sam. xxiii. 1). From these instances it can be inferred that the same is the case with all prophets. After this introduction and explanation, I will begin to enumerate the degrees of prophecy to which I have referred above.

(1) The first degree of prophecy consists in the divine assistance which is given to a person, and induces and encourages him to do something good and grand, e.g., to deliver a congregation of good men from the hands of evildoers; to save one noble person, or to bring happiness to a large number of people; he finds in himself the cause that moves and urges him to this deed. This degree of divine influence is called "the spirit of the Lord"; and of the person who is under that influence we say that the spirit of the Lord came upon him, clothed him, or rested upon him, or the Lord was with him, and the like. All the judges of Israel possessed this degree, for the following general statement is made concerning them:--"The Lord raised up judges for them; and the Lord was with the judge, and he saved them" (Judges ii. 18). Also all the noble chiefs of Israel belonged to this class. The same is distinctly stated concerning some of the judges and the kings:--"The spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah" (*ibid.* xi. 29); of Samson it is said, "The spirit of the Lord came upon him" (*ibid.* xiv. 19); "And the spirit of the Lord came upon Saul when he heard those words" (1 Sam. xi. 6). When Amasa was moved by the holy spirit to assist David, "A spirit clothed Amasa, who was chief of the captains, and he said, Thine are we, David," etc.(1 Chron. xii. 18). This faculty was always possessed by Moses from the time he had attained the age of manhood: it moved him to slay the Egyptian, and to prevent evil from the two men that quarrelled; it was so strong that, after he had fled from Egypt out of fear, and arrived in Midian, a trembling

p. 242

stranger, he could not restrain himself from interfering when he saw wrong being done; he could not bear it. Comp. "And Moses rose and saved them" (Exod. ii. 17). David likewise was filled with this spirit, when he was anointed with the oil of anointing. Comp. "And the spirit of God came upon David from that day and upward" (1 Sam. xvi. 13). He thus conquered the lion and the bear and the Philistine, and accomplished similar tasks, by this very spirit. This faculty did

not cause any of the above-named persons to speak on a certain subject, for it only aims at encouraging the person who possesses it to action; it does not encourage him to do everything, but only to help either a distinguished man or a whole congregation when oppressed, or to do something that leads to that end. just as not an who have a true dream are prophets, so it cannot be said of every one who is assisted in a certain undertaking, as in the acquisition of property, or of some other personal advantage, that the spirit of the Lord came upon him, or that the Lord was with him, or that he performed his actions by the holy spirit. We only apply such phrases to those who have accomplished something very good and grand, or something that leads to that end; e.g., the success of Joseph in the house of the Egyptian, which was the first cause leading evidently to great events that occurred subsequently.

(2) The second degree is this: A person feels as if something came upon him, and as if he had received a new power that encourages him to speak. He treats of science, or composes hymns, exhorts his fellow-men, discusses political and theological problems; all this he does while awake, and in the full possession of his senses. Such a person is said to speak by the holy spirit. David composed the Psalms, and Solomon the Book of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon by this spirit; also Daniel, Job, Chronicles, and the rest of the Hagiographa were written in this holy spirit; therefore they are called *ketubim* (Writings, or Written), i.e., written by men inspired by the holy spirit. Our Sages mention this expressly concerning the Book of Esther. In reference to such holy spirit, David says: "The spirit of the Lord spoke in me, and his word is on my tongue" (2 Sam. xxiii. 2); i.e., the spirit of the Lord caused him to utter these words. This class includes the seventy elders of whom it is said, "And it came to pass when the spirit rested upon them, that they prophesied, and did not cease" (Num. xi. 25); also Eldad and Medad (*ibid.* ver. 26); furthermore, every high priest that inquired [of God] by the Urim and Tummim; on whom, as our Sages say, the divine glory rested, and who spoke by the holy spirit; Yahaziel, son of Zechariah, belongs likewise to this class. Comp. "The spirit of the Lord came upon him in the midst of the assembly, and he said, Listen, all Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, thus saith the Lord unto you," etc. (2 Chron. xx. 14, 15); also Zechariah, son of Jehoiada the priest. Comp. "And he stood above the people and said unto them, Thus saith God" (*ibid.* xxiv. 20); furthermore, Azariah, son of Oded; comp. "And Azariah, son of Oded, when the spirit of the Lord came upon him, went forth before Asa," etc. (*ibid.* xv. 1, 2); and all who acted under similar circumstances. You must know that Balaam likewise belonged to this class, when he was good; this is indicated by the words, "And God put a word in the mouth of Balaam" (Num. xxiii. 5), i.e., Balaam spoke by divine inspiration; he therefore says of himself, "Who heareth the words of God," etc. (*ibid.* xxiv. 4)

p. 243

[paragraph continues] We must especially point out that David, Solomon, and Daniel belonged to this class, and not to the class of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Nathan the prophet, Elijah the Shilonite, and those like them. For David, Solomon, and Daniel spoke and wrote inspired by the holy spirit, and when David says, "The God of Israel spoke and said unto me, the rock of Israel" (2 Sam. xxiii.

3), he meant to say that God promised him happiness through a prophet, through Nathan or another prophet. The phrase must here be interpreted in the same manner as in the following passages, "And God said to her" (Gen. xxv. 26); "And God said unto Solomon, Because this hath been in thy heart, and thou hast not kept my covenant," etc. (1 Kings xi. 11). The latter passage undoubtedly contains a prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite, or another prophet, who foretold Solomon that evil would befall him. The passage, "God appeared to Solomon at Gibeon in a dream by night, and God said" (*ibid.* iii. 5), does not contain a real prophecy, such as is introduced by the words "The word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, saying" (Gen. xv. 1) or, "And God said to Israel in the visions of the night" (*ibid.* xlvi. 2), or such as the prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah contain: in all these cases the prophets, though receiving the prophecy in a prophetic dream, are told that it is a prophecy, and that they have received prophetic inspiration. But in the case of Solomon, the account concludes, "And Solomon awoke, and behold it was a dream" (1 Kings iii. 15); and in the account of the second divine appearance, it is said, "And God appeared to Solomon a second time, as he appeared to him at Gibeon" (*ibid.* ix. 2); it was evidently a dream. This kind of prophecy is a degree below that of which Scripture says, "In a dream I will speak to him" (Num. xii. 6). When prophets are inspired in a dream, they by no means call this a dream, although the prophecy reached them in a dream, but declare it decidedly to be a prophecy. Thus Jacob, our father, when awaking from a prophetic dream, did not say it was a dream, but declared, "Surely there is the Lord in this place," etc. (Gen. xxviii. 16); "God the Almighty appeared to me in Luz, in the land of Canaan" (*ibid.* xlvi. 3), expressing thereby that it was a prophecy. But in reference to Solomon we read "And Solomon awoke, and behold it was a dream" (1 Kings iii. 15). Similarly Daniel declares that he had a dream; although he sees an angel and hears his word, he speaks of the event as of a dream: even when he had received the information [concerning the dreams of Nebukadnezzar], he speaks of it in the following manner:—"Then was the secret revealed to Daniel in a night vision" (Dan. ii. 19). On other occasions it is said, "He wrote down the dream" "I saw in the visions by night," etc.; "And the visions of my head confused me" (Dan. vii. 1, 2, 15); "I was surprised at the vision, and none noticed it" (*ibid.* viii. 27). There is no doubt that this is one degree below that form of prophecy to which the words, "In a dream I will speak to him," are applied. For this reason the nation desired to place the book of Daniel among the Hagiographa, and not among the Prophets. I have, therefore, pointed out to you, that the prophecy revealed to Daniel and Solomon, although they saw an angel in the dream, was not considered by them as a perfect prophecy, but as a dream containing correct information. They belonged to the class of men that spoke, inspired by the *ruah ha-kodesh*, "the holy spirit." Also in the order of the holy writings, no distinction is made between the books of Proverbs,

p. 244

[paragraph continues] Ecclesiastes, Daniel, Psalms, Ruth, and Esther; they are all written by divine inspiration. The authors of all these books are called prophets in the more general sense of the term.

(3) The third class is the lowest [class of actual prophets, i.e.] of those who introduce their speech by the phrase, "And the word of the Lord came unto me," or a similar phrase. The prophet sees an allegory in a dream--under those conditions which we have mentioned when speaking of real prophecy--and in the prophetic dream itself the allegory is interpreted. Such are most of the allegories of Zechariah.

(4) The prophet hears in a prophetic dream something clearly and distinctly, but does not see the speaker. This was the case with Samuel in the beginning of his prophetic mission, as has been explained (chap. xliv.).

(5) A person addresses the prophet in a dream, as was the case in some of the prophecies of Ezekiel. Comp. "And the man spake unto me, Son of man," etc. (Ezek. xl. 4).

(6) An angel speaks to him in a dream; this applies to most of the prophets: e.g., "And an angel of God said to me in a dream of night" (Gen. xxxi. 11).

(7) In a prophetic dream it appears to the prophet as if God spoke to him. Thus Isaiah says, "And I saw the Lord, and I heard the voice of the Lord saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" (Isa. vi. 1, 8). Micaiah, son of Imla, said likewise, "I saw the Lord" (1 Kings xxii. 19).

(8) Something presents itself to the prophet in a prophetic vision; he sees allegorical figures, such as were seen by Abraham in the vision "between the pieces" (Gen. xv. 9, 10); for it was in a vision by daytime, as is distinctly stated.

(9) The prophet hears words in a prophetic vision; as, e.g., is said in reference to Abraham, "And behold, the word came to him, saying, This shall not be thine heir" (*ibid.* xv. 4).

(10) The prophet sees a man that speaks to him in a prophetic vision: e.g., Abraham in the plain of Mamre (*ibid.* xviii. 1), and Joshua in Jericho (Josh. v. 13)

(11) He sees an angel that speaks to him in the vision, as was the case when Abraham was addressed by an angel at the sacrifice of Isaac (Gen. xxii. 15). This I hold to be--if we except Moses--the highest degree a prophet can attain according to Scripture, provided he has, as reason demands, his rational faculties fully developed. But it appears to me improbable that a prophet should be able to perceive in a prophetic vision God speaking to him; the action of the imaginative faculty does not go so far, and therefore we do not notice this in the case of the ordinary prophets; Scripture says expressly, "In a *vision* I will make myself known, in a *dream* I will speak to him"; the speaking is here connected with *dream*, the influence and the action of the intellect is connected with *vision*; comp. In a vision I will make myself known to him" (*etvadda* 'hitpa'el of *yada* ' "to know" but it is not said here that in a vision anything is heard from God. When I, therefore, met with statements in Scripture that a prophet heard words spoken to him, and that this took place in a vision, it occurred to me that the case in which God

appears to address the prophet seems to be the only difference between a vision and a dream, according to the literal sense of the Scriptural

p. 245

text. But it is possible to explain the passages in which a prophet is reported to have heard in the course of a vision words spoken to him, in the following manner: at first he has had a vision, but subsequently he fell into a deep sleep, and the vision was changed into a dream. Thus we explained the words, "And a deep sleep fell upon Abram" (Gen. xv. 12); and our Sages remark thereon, "This was a deep sleep of prophecy." According to this explanation. it is only in a dream that the prophet can hear words addressed to him; it makes no difference in what manner words are spoken. Scripture supports this theory, "In a dream I will speak to him." But in a prophetic vision only allegories are perceived, or rational truths are obtained, that lead to some knowledge in science, such as can be arrived at by reasoning. This is the meaning of the words, "In a vision I will make myself known unto him." According to this second explanation, the degrees of prophecy are reduced to eight, the highest of them being the prophetic vision, including all kinds of vision, even the case in which a man appears to address the prophet, as has been mentioned. You will perhaps ask this question: among the different degrees of prophecy there is one in which prophets, e.g., Isaiah, Micaiah, appear to hear God addressing them; how can this be reconciled with the principle that all prophets are prophetically addressed through an angel, except Moses our Teacher, in reference to whom Scripture says, "Mouth to mouth I speak to him" (Num. xii. 8)? I answer, this is really the case, the medium here being the imaginative faculty that hears in a prophetic dream God speaking; but Moses heard the voice addressing him "from above the covering of the ark from between the two cherubim" (Exod. xxv. 22) without the medium of the imaginative faculty. In *Mishne-torah* we have given the characteristics of this kind of prophecy, and explained the meaning of the phrases, "Mouth to mouth I speak to him"; "As man speaketh to his neighbour" (Exod. xxxiii. 11), and the like. Study it there, and I need not repeat what has already been said.

## CHAPTER XLVI

ONE individual may be taken as an illustration of the individuals of the whole species. From its properties we learn those of each individual of the species. I mean to say that the form of one account of a prophecy illustrates all accounts of the same class. After this remark you will understand that a person may sometimes dream that he has gone to a certain country, married there, stayed there for some time, and had a son, whom he gave a certain name, and who was in a certain condition [though nothing of all this has really taken place]; so also in prophetic allegories certain objects are seen, acts performed--if the style of the allegory demands it--things are done by the prophet, the intervals between one act and another determined, and journeys undertaken from one place to another; but all these things are only processes of a prophetic vision, and not real things that could be perceived by the senses of the body. Some of the accounts simply relate these incidents [without premising that they are part of a vision], because

it is a well-known fact that all these accounts refer to prophetic visions, and it was not necessary to repeat in each case a statement to this effect.

Thus the prophet relates: "And the Lord said unto me," and need not

p. 246

add the explanation that it was in a dream. The ordinary reader believes that the acts, journeys, questions, and answers of the prophets really took place, and were perceived by the senses, and did not merely form part of a prophetic vision. I will mention here an instance concerning which no person will entertain the least doubt. I will add a few more of the same kind, and these will show you how those passages must be understood which I do not cite. The following passage in Ezekiel (viii. 1, 3) is clear, and admits of no doubt: "I sat in mine house, and the elders of Judah sat before me, etc., and a spirit lifted me up between the earth and the heaven, and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem," etc.: also the passage, "Thus I arose and went into the plain" (iii. 2, 3), refers to a prophetic vision: just as the words, "And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them" (Gen. xv. 5) describe a vision. The same is the case with the words of Ezekiel (xxxvii. 1), "And set me down in the midst of the valley." In the description of the vision in which Ezekiel is brought to Jerusalem, we read as follows: "And when I looked, behold a hole in the wall. Then said he unto me, Son of man, dig now in the wall; and when I had digged in the wall, behold a door" (*ibid.* viii. 7-8), etc. It was thus in a vision that he was commanded to dig in the wall, to enter and to see what people were doing there, and it was in the same vision that he digged, entered through the hole, and saw certain things, as is related. just as all this forms part of a vision, the same may be said of the following passages: "And thou take unto thee a tile," etc., "and lie thou also on thy left side," etc.; "Take thou also wheat and barley," etc., "and cause it to pass over thine head and upon thy beard" (chaps. iv. and v.) It was in a prophetic vision that he saw that he did all these actions which he was commanded to do. God forbid to assume that God would make his prophets appear an object of ridicule and sport in the eyes of the ignorant, and order them to perform foolish acts. We must also bear in mind that the command given to Ezekiel implied disobedience to the Law, for he, being a priest, would, in causing the razor to pass over every corner of the beard and of the head, have been guilty of transgressing two prohibitions in each case. But it was only done in a prophetic vision. Again, when it is said, "As my servant Isaiah went naked and barefoot" (Isa. xx. 3), the prophet did so in a prophetic vision. Weak-minded persons believe that the prophet relates here what he was commanded to do, and what he actually did, and that he describes how he was commanded to dig in a wan on the Temple mount although he was in Babylon, and relates how he obeyed the command, for he says, "And I digged in the wall." But it is distinctly stated that all this took place in a vision.

It is analogous to the description of the vision of Abraham which begins, "The word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, saying" (Gen. xv. 1); and contains at the same time the passage, "He brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now to the heaven and count the stars" (*ibid.* ver. 6). It



is evident that it was in a vision that Abraham saw himself brought forth from his place looking towards the heavens and being told to count the stars. This is related [without repeating the statement that it was in a vision]. The same I say in reference to the command given to Jeremiah, to conceal the girdle in the Euphrates, and the statement that he concealed it, examined

p. 247

it after a long time, and found it rotten and spoiled (Jer. xiii. 4-7). An this was allegorically shown in a vision; Jeremiah did not go from Palestine to Babylon, and did not see the Euphrates. The same applies to the account of the commandment given to Hosea (i.-iii.): "Take unto thee a wife of whoredom, and children of whoredom," to the birth of the children and to the giving of names to them. All this passed in a prophetic vision. When once stated that these are allegories, there is left no doubt that the events related had no real existence, except in the minds of those of whom the prophet says "And the vision of every one was unto them like the words of a sealed book (Isa. xxix. 11). I believe that the trial of Gideon (Judges vi. 21, 27) with the fleece and other things was a vision. I do not call it a prophetic vision, as Gideon had not reached the degree of prophets, much less that height which would enable him to do wonders. He only rose to the height of the judges of Israel, and he has even been counted by our Sages among persons of little importance, as has been pointed out by us.

The same can be said of the passage in Zechariah (xi. 7), "And I fed the flock of slaughter," and all the incidents that are subsequently described: the graceful asking for wages, the acceptance of the wages, the wanting of the money, and the casting of the same into the house of the treasure; all these incidents form part of the vision. He received the commandment and carried it out in a prophetic vision or dream.

The correctness of this theory cannot be doubted, and only those do not comprehend it who do not know to distinguish between that which is possible, and that which is impossible. The instances quoted may serve as an illustration of other similar Scriptural passages not quoted by me. They are all of the same kind, and in the same style. Whatever is said in the account of a vision, that the prophet heard, went forth, came out, said, was told, stood, sat, went up, went down, journeyed, asked, or was asked, all is part of the prophetic vision; even when there is a lengthened account, the details of which are well connected as regards the time, the persons referred to, and the place. After it has once been stated that the event described is to be understood figuratively, it must be assumed for certain that the whole is a prophetic vision.

## CHAPTER XLVII

IT is undoubtedly clear and evident that most prophecies are given in images, for this is the characteristic of the imaginative faculty, the organ of prophecy. We find it also necessary to say a few words on the figures, hyperboles, and exaggerations that occur in Scripture. They would create strange ideas if we were to take them literally without noticing the exaggeration which they contain, or if we were to understand them in accordance with the original meaning of the

terms, ignoring the fact that these are used figuratively. Our Sages say distinctly Scripture uses hyperbolic or exaggerated language and quote as an instance, "cities walled and fortified, rising up to heaven" (Deut. i. 28). As a hyperbole our Sages quote, "For the bird of heaven carries the voice" (Eccles. x. 20); in the same sense it is said, "Whose height is like that of cedar trees" (Amos ii. 9). Instances of this kind are frequent in the language of all prophets; what they say is frequently hyperbolic or

p. 248

exaggerated, and not precise or exact. What Scripture says about Og, "Behold, his bedstead was an iron bedstead, nine cubits its length," etc. (Deut.), does not belong to this class of figures, for the bedstead (*eres*, comp. *arsenu*, Song of Sol. i. 16) is never exactly, of the same dimensions as the person using it; it is not like a dress that fits round the body; it is always greater than the person that sleeps therein; as a rule, is it by a third longer. If, therefore, the bed of Og was nine cubits in length, he must, according to this proportion, have been six cubits high, or a little more. The words, "by the cubit of a man," mean, by the measure of an ordinary man, and not by the measure of Og; for men have the limbs in a certain proportion. Scripture thus tells us that Og was double as long as an ordinary person, or a little less. This is undoubtedly an exceptional height among men, but not quite impossible. As regards the Scriptural statement about the length of man's life in those days, I say that only the persons named lived so long, whilst other people enjoyed the ordinary length of life. The men named were exceptions, either in consequence of different causes, as e.g., their food or mode of living, or by way of miracle, which admits of no analogy.

We must further discuss the figurative language employed in Scripture. In some cases this is clear and evident, and doubted by no person: e.g., "The mountains and hills shall break forth in song before you, and all the trees of the wood clap their hands" (Isa. Iv. 12); this is evidently figurative language; also the following passage--"The fir-trees rejoice at thee," etc. (*ibid.* xiv. 8), which is rendered by Jonathan, son of Uzziel, "The rulers rejoice at thee, who are rich in possessions." This figure is similar to that used in the phrase, "Butter of kine and milk of sheep," etc. (Deut. xxxii. 14).

And these figures are very frequent in the books of the prophets. Some are easily recognised by the ordinary reader as figures, others with some difficulty. Thus nobody doubts that the blessing, "May the Lord open to thee his good treasure, the heavens," must be taken figuratively; for God has no treasure in which He keeps the rain. The same is the case with the following passage--"He opened the doors of heaven, he rained upon them manna to eat" (Ps. lxxviii. 23, 24). No person assumes that there is a door or gate in heaven, but every one understands that this is a simile and a figurative expression. In the same way must be understood the following passages--"The heavens were opened" (Ezek. i. 1); "If not, blot me out from thy book which thou hast written" (Exod. xxxii. 32); "I will blot him out from the book of life" (*ibid.* ver. 33). All these phrases are figurative: and we must not assume that God has a book in which He writes, or from which He

blots out, as those generally believe that do not find figurative speech in these passages. They are all of the same kind. You must explain passages not quoted by me by those which I have quoted in this chapter. Employ your reason, and you will be able to discern what is said allegorically, figuratively, or hyperbolically, and what is meant literally, exactly according to the original meaning of the words. You will then understand all prophecies, learn and retain rational principles of faith, pleasing in the eyes of God who is most pleased with truth, and most displeased with falsehood; your mind and heart will not be so perplexed as to believe or accept as law what is untrue or improbable, whilst the Law is perfectly true when properly understood. Thus Scripture says, "Thy testimonies are righteousness for ever"

p. 249

[paragraph continues] (Ps. cxix. 144); and "I the Lord speak righteousness" (Isa. xlv. 19). If you adopt this method, you will not imagine the existence of things which God has not created, or accept principles which might partly lead to atheism, or to a corruption of your notions of God so as to ascribe to Him corporeality, attributes, or emotions, as has been shown by us, nor will you believe that the words of the prophets are false: for the cause of this disease is ignorance of what we have explained. These things belong likewise to the mysteries of the Law; and although we have treated them in a general manner, they can easily be understood in all their details in accordance with the above remarks.

## CHAPTER XLVIII

IT is clear that everything produced must have an immediate cause which produced it; that cause again a cause, and so on, till the First Cause, viz., the will and decree of God is reached. The prophets therefore omit sometimes the intermediate causes, and ascribe the production of an individual thing directly to God, saying that God has made it. This method is well known, and we, as well as others of those who seek the truth, have explained it; it is the belief of our co-religionists.

After having heard this remark, listen to what I will explain in this chapter; direct your special attention to it more than you have done to the other chapters of this part. It is this: As regards the immediate causes of things produced, it makes no difference whether these causes consist in substances, physical properties, freewill, or chance--by freewill I mean that of man--or even in the will of another living being. The prophets [omit them and] ascribe the production directly to God and use such phrases as, God has done it, commanded it, or said it: in all such cases the verbs "to say," "to speak," "to command," "to call," and "to send" are employed. What I desired to state in this chapter is this: According to the hypothesis and theory accepted, it is God that gave will to dumb animals, freewill to the human being, and natural properties to everything; and as accidents originate in the redundancy of some natural force, as has been explained [by Aristotle] and are mostly the result of the combined action of nature, desire, and freewill: it can consequently be said of everything which is produced by any of these causes, that God

commanded that it should be made, or said that it should be so. I will give you instances, and they will guide you in the interpretation of passages which I do not mention. As regards phenomena produced regularly by natural causes, such as the melting of the snow when the atmosphere becomes warm, the roaring of the sea when a storm rages [I quote the following passages], "He sendeth his word and melteth them" (Ps. cxlvii. 18); "And he saith, and a storm-wind riseth, and lifteth up its waves" (*ibid.* cvii. 25) In reference to the rain we read: "I will command the clouds that they shall not rain," etc. (Isa. v. 6). Events caused by man's freewill, such as war, the dominion of one nation over another, the attempt of one person to hurt another, or to insult him, [are ascribed to God, as] e.g., in reference to the dominion of Nebuchadnezzar and his host, "I have commended my holy ones, also I have called my heroes for my anger" (Isa. xiii. 3); and "I will send him against a hypocrite nation" (*ibid.* x. 6) in reference to Shimei, son of Gera, "For God said to him, Curse David" (2 Sam. xvi. 10); in reference

p. 250

to the deliverance of Joseph, the righteous, from prison, "He sent an angel and loosed him" (Ps. cv. 20); in reference to the victory of the Persians over the Chaldees, "I will send to Babylon scatterers, and they shall scatter it" (Jer. li. 2); in reference to the providing of food to Elisha, "I have commanded there a woman, a widow, to maintain thee" (1 Kings xvii. 9); and Joseph, the righteous, says: "Not ye have sent me hither," etc. (Gen. xlv. 8). The case that the will of an animal or its desire for some of its natural wants is the cause of some event, may be illustrated by the following instance: "And God spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah" (ii. 11). The act is ascribed to God, because He gave the fish the will, and not because He made it a prophet or endowed it with a prophetic spirit. Similarly it is said of the locusts that appeared in the days of Joel, son of Pethuel, "Mighty is he that accomplishes his word" (Joel ii. 11); or of the beasts that took possession of the land of Edom when destroyed in the days of Sennacherib, "He cast lot for them, and his hand divided it unto them by a line" (Isa. xxxiv. 27). Although here the verbs "to say," "to command," "to send," are not used, the meaning is evidently the same, and you must explain all passages that are analogous to it in a similar manner. Events evidently due to chance are ascribed to God: e.g., in reference to Rebecca, "Let her be a wife to the son of thy master, as the Lord spake" (Gen. xxiv. 51); in reference to David and Jonathan, "Go, for the Lord has sent thee." (1 Sam. xx. 22); in reference to Joseph, "God sent me before you" (Gen. xlv. 7). You see clearly that the providing of a cause, in whatever manner this may take place, by substance, accident, freewill, or win, is always expressed by one of the five terms, commanding, saying, speaking, sending, or calling. Note this, and apply it everywhere according to the context. Many difficulties will thereby be removed, and passages apparently containing things far from truth will prove to be true. This is the conclusion of the treatise on Prophecy, its allegories and language. It is all I intend to say on this subject in this treatise. We will now commence to treat of other subjects, with the help of the Most High.