

*The Out-of-Body Travel Foundation Journal:*

*'Moses Maimonides - Forgotten Jewish Mystic'*

*Issue Twenty Five*

Compiled by Marilyn Hughes

*The Out-of-Body Travel Foundation!*

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**Moses Maimonides**

**(To have your Questions, Articles, Poetry or Art included in future editions, submit to: [MarilynnHughes1@outofbodytravel.org](mailto:MarilynnHughes1@outofbodytravel.org)!)**

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Having worked primarily in radio broadcasting, Marilynn Hughes spent several years as a news reporter, producer and anchor before deciding to stay at home with her three children. She's experienced, researched, written, and taught about out-of-body travel since 1987.

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Life by Friedlander

*This issue's forgotten mystic, Moses Maimonides, can best be summed up in the Introductory material to Maimonides greatest work 'The Guide for the Perplexed.' Friedlander, his translator and biographer, tells the tale:*

*From Guide for the Perplexed, by Moses Maimonides, Friedländer tr. [1904], at [sacred-texts.com](http://sacred-texts.com)*

## THE LIFE OF MOSES MAIMONIDES

"BEFORE the sun of Eli had set the son of Samuel had risen." Before the voice of the prophets had ceased to guide the people, the Interpreters of the Law, the Doctors of the Talmud, had commenced their labours, and before the Academies of Sura and of Pumbedita were closed, centres of Jewish thought and learning were already flourishing in the far West. The circumstances which led to the transference of the head-quarters of Jewish learning from the East to the West in the tenth century are thus narrated in the *Sefer ha-kabbalah* of Rabbi Abraham ben David:

"After the death of Hezekiah, the head of the Academy and Prince of the Exile, the academies were closed and no new Geonim were appointed. But long before that time Heaven had willed that there should be a discontinuance



of the pecuniary gifts which used to be sent from Palestine, North Africa and Europe. Heaven had also decreed that a ship sailing from Bari should be captured by Ibn Romahis, commander of the naval forces of Abd-er-rahman al-nasr. Four distinguished Rabbis were thus made prisoners-- Rabbi Hushiel, father of Rabbi Hananel, Rabbi Moses, father of Rabbi Hanok, Rabbi Shemarjahu, son of Rabbi Elhanan, and a fourth whose name has not been recorded. They were engaged in a mission to collect subsidies in aid of the Academy in Sura. The captor sold them as slaves; Rabbi Hushiel was carried to Kairuan, R. Shemarjahu was left in Alexandria, and R. Moses was brought to Cordova. These slaves were ransomed by their brethren and were soon placed in important positions. When Rabbi Moses was brought to Cordova, it was supposed that he was uneducated. In that city there was a synagogue known at that time by the name of *Keneset ha-midrash*, and Rabbi Nathan, renowned for his great piety, was the head of the congregation. The members of the community used to hold meetings at which the Talmud was read and discussed. One day when Rabbi Nathan was expounding the Talmud and was unable to give a satisfactory explanation of the passage under discussion, Rabbi Moses promptly removed the difficulty and at the same time answered several questions which were submitted to him. Thereupon R. Nathan thus addressed the assembly:--'I am no longer your leader; that stranger in sackcloth shall henceforth be my teacher, and you shall appoint him to be your chief.' The admiral, on hearing of the high attainments of his prisoner, desired to revoke the sale, but the king would not permit this retraction, being pleased to learn that his Jewish subjects were no longer dependent for their religious instruction on the schools in the East.

Henceforth the schools in the West asserted their independence, and even surpassed the parent institutions. The Caliphs, mostly opulent, gave every encouragement to philosophy and poetry; and, being generally liberal in sentiment, they entertained kindly feelings towards their Jewish subjects. These were allowed to compete for the acquisition of wealth and honour on equal terms with their Mohammedan fellow-citizens. Philosophy and poetry were consequently cultivated by the Jews with the same zest as by the Arabs. Ibn Gabirol, Ibn Ḥasdai, Judah ha-levi, Ḥananel, Alfasi, the Ibn Ezras, and others who flourished in that period were the ornament of their age, and the pride of the Jews at all times. The same favourable condition was maintained during the reign of the Omeyyades; but when the Moravides and the Almohades came into power, the horizon darkened once more, and misfortunes threatened to destroy the fruit of several centuries. Amidst this gloom there appeared a brilliant luminary which sent forth rays of light and comfort: this was Moses Maimonides.

Moses, the son of Maimon, was born at Cordova, on the 14th of Nisan, 4895 (March 30, 1135). Although the date of his birth has been recorded with the utmost accuracy, no trustworthy notice has been preserved concerning the early period of his life. But his entire career is a proof that he did not pass his youth in idleness; his education must have been in harmony with the hope of his parents, that one day he would, like his father and forefathers, hold the honourable office of *Dayyan* or *Rabbi*, and distinguish himself in theological learning. It is probable that the Bible and the Talmud formed the chief subjects of his study; but he unquestionably made the best use of the opportunities which Mohammedan Spain, and especially Cordova, afforded him for the acquisition of general knowledge. It is

not mentioned in any of his writings who were his teachers; his father, as it seems, was his principal guide and instructor in many branches of knowledge. David Conforte, in his historical work, *Ḳore ha-dorot*, states that Maimonides was the pupil of two eminent men, namely, Rabbi Joseph Ibn Migash and Ibn Roshd (Averroes); that by the former he was instructed in the Talmud, and by the latter in philosophy. This statement seems to be erroneous, as Maimonides was only a child at the time when Rabbi Joseph died, and already far advanced in years when he became acquainted with the writings of Ibn Roshd. The origin of this mistake, as regards Rabbi Joseph, can easily be traced. Maimonides in his *Mishneh Tora*, employs, in reference to R. Isaac Alfasi and R. Joseph, the expression "my teachers" (*rabbotai*), and this expression, by which he merely describes his indebtedness to their writings, has been taken in its literal meaning.

Whoever his teachers may have been, it is evident that he was well prepared by them for his future mission. At the age of twenty-three he entered upon his literary career with a treatise on the Jewish Calendar. It is unknown where this work was composed, whether in Spain or in Africa. The author merely states that he wrote it at the request of a friend, whom he, however, leaves unnamed. The subject was generally considered to be very abstruse, and to involve a thorough knowledge of mathematics. Maimonides must, therefore, even at this early period, have been regarded as a profound scholar by those who knew him. The treatise is of an elementary character.--It was probably about the same time that he wrote, in Arabic, an explanation of Logical terms, *Millot higgayon*, which Moses Ibn Tibbon translated into Hebrew.

The earlier period of his life does not seem to have been marked by any incident worth noticing. It may, however, be easily conceived that the later period of his life, which was replete with interesting incidents, engaged the exclusive attention of his biographers. So much is certain, that his youth was beset with trouble and anxiety; the peaceful development of science and philosophy was disturbed by wars raging between Mohammedans and Christians, and also between the several Mohammedan sects. The Moravides, who had succeeded the Omeyades, were opposed to liberality and toleration; but they were surpassed in cruelty and fanaticism by their successors. Cordova was taken by the Almohades in the year 1148, when Maimonides was about thirteen years old. The victories of the Almohades, first under the leadership of the Mahadi Ibn Tamurt, and then under Abd-al-mumen, were, according to all testimonies, attended by acts of excessive intolerance. Abd-al-mumen would not suffer in his dominions any other faith but the one which he himself confessed. Jews and Christians had the choice between Islam and emigration or a martyr's death. The *Sefer ha-kabbalah* contains the following description of one of the persecutions which then occurred:

"After the death of R. Joseph ha-levi the study of the Torah was interrupted, although he left a son and a nephew, both of whom had under his tuition become profound scholars. 'The righteous man (R. Joseph) was taken away on account of the approaching evils. After the death of R. Joseph there came for the Jews a time of oppression and distress. They quitted their homes, 'Such as were for death, to death, and such as were for the sword, to the sword; and such as were for the famine, to the famine, and such as were for the captivity, to the captivity'; and--it might be added to the words of Jeremiah (xv. 2)--'such as were for apostasy, to

apostasy.' All this happened through the sword of Ibn Tamurt, who, in 4902 (1142), determined to blot out the name of Israel, and actually left no trace of the Jews in any part of his empire."

Ibn Verga in his work on Jewish martyrdom, in *Shebet Jehudah*, gives the following account of events then happening:--"In the year 4902 the armies of Ibn Tamurt made their appearance. A proclamation was issued that any one who refused to adopt Islam would be put to death, and his property would be confiscated. Thereupon the Jews assembled at the gate of the royal palace and implored the king for mercy. He answered--'It is because I have compassion on you, that I command you to become Muslemim; for I desire to save you from eternal punishment.' The Jews replied--'Our salvation depends on our observance of the Divine Law; you are the master of our bodies and of our property, but our souls will be judged by the King who gave them to us, and to whom they will return; whatever be our future fate, you, O king, will not be held responsible for it.' 'I do not desire to argue with you,' said the king; 'for I know you will argue according to your own religion. It is my absolute will that you either adopt my religion or be put to death. The Jews then proposed to emigrate, but the king would not allow his subjects to serve another king. In vain did the Jews implore the nobles to intercede in their behalf; the king remained inexorable. Thus many congregations forsook their religion; but within a month the king came to a sudden death; the son, believing that his father had met with an untimely end as a punishment for his cruelty to the Jews, assured the involuntary converts that it would be indifferent to him what religion they professed. Hence many Jews returned at once to the religion of their fathers, while others hesitated for some time, from fear that the

king meant to entrap the apparent converts." From such records it appears that during these calamities some of the Jews fled to foreign countries, some died as martyrs, and many others submitted for a time to outward conversion. Which course was followed by the family of Maimon? Did they sacrifice personal comfort and safety to their religious conviction, or did they, on the contrary, for the sake of mere worldly considerations dissemble their faith and pretend that they completely submitted to the dictates of the tyrant? An answer to this question presents itself in the following note which Maimonides has appended to his commentary on the Mishnah: "I have now finished this work in accordance with my promise, and I fervently beseech the Almighty to save us from error. If there be one who shall discover an inaccuracy in this Commentary or shall have a better explanation to offer, let my attention be directed unto it; and let me be exonerated by the fact that I have worked with far greater application than any one who writes for the sake of pay and profit, and that I have worked under the most trying circumstances. For Heaven had ordained that we be exiled, and we were therefore driven about from place to place; I was thus compelled to work at the Commentary while travelling by land, or crossing the sea. It might have sufficed to mention that during that time I, in addition, was engaged in other studies, but I preferred to give the above explanation in order to encourage those who wish to criticise or annotate the Commentary, and at the same time to account for the slow progress of this work. I, Moses, the son of Maimon, commenced it when I was twenty-three years old, and finished it in Egypt, at the age of thirty[-three] years, in the year 1479 Sel.(1168)."

The *Sefer Haredim* of R. Eleazar Askari of Safed contains the following statement of Maimonides:--"On Sabbath

evening, the 4th of Iyyar, 4925 (1165), I went on board; on the following Sabbath the waves threatened to destroy our lives. . . . On the 3rd of Sivan, I arrived safely at Acco, *and was thus rescued from apostasy*. . . . On Tuesday, the 4th of Marḥeshvan, 4926, I left Acco, arrived at Jerusalem after a journey beset with difficulties and with dangers, and prayed on the spot of the great and holy house on the 4th, 5th, and 6th of Marḥeshvan. On Sunday, the 9th of that month, I left Jerusalem and visited the cave of Machpelah, in Hebron."

From these two statements it may be inferred that in times of persecution Maimonides and his family did not seek to protect their lives and property by dissimulation. They submitted to the troubles of exile in order that they might remain faithful to their religion. Carmoly, Geiger, Munk, and others are of opinion that the treatise of Maimonides on involuntary apostasy, as well as the accounts of some Mohammedan authors, contain strong evidence to show that there was a time when the family of Maimon publicly professed their belief in Mohammed. A critical examination of these documents compels us to reject their evidence as inadmissible.--After a long period of trouble and anxiety, the family of Maimon arrived at Fostat, in Egypt, and settled there. David, the brother of Moses Maimonides, carried on a trade in precious stones, while Moses occupied himself with his studies and interested himself in the communal affairs of the Jews.

It appears that for some time Moses was supported by his brother, and when this brother died, he earned a living by practising as a physician; but he never sought or derived any benefit from his services to his community, or from his correspondence or from the works he wrote for the instruction of his brethren; the satisfaction of being of

service to his fellow-creatures was for him a sufficient reward.

The first public act in which Maimonides appears to have taken a leading part was a decree promulgated by the Rabbinical authorities in Cairo in the year 1167. The decree begins as follows--"In times gone by, when storms and tempests threatened us, we used to wander about from place to place but by the mercy of the Almighty we have now been enabled to find here a resting-place. On our arrival, we noticed to our great dismay that the learned were disunited; that none of them turned his attention to the needs of the congregation. We therefore felt it our duty to undertake the task of guiding the holy flock, of inquiring into the condition of the community, of "reconciling the hearts of the fathers to their children," and of correcting their corrupt ways. The injuries are great, but we may succeed in effecting a cure, and--in accordance with the words of the prophet--'I will seek the lost one, and that which has been cast out I will bring back, and the broken one I will cure' (Micah iv. 6). When we therefore resolved to take the management of the communal affairs into our hands, we discovered the existence of a serious evil in the midst of the community," etc.

It was probably about that time that Maimon died. Letters of condolence were sent to his son Moses from all sides, both from Mohammedan and from Christian countries; in some instances the letters were several months on their way before they reached their destination.

The interest which Maimonides now took in communal affairs did not prevent him from completing the great and arduous work, the Commentary on the Mishnah, which he had begun in Spain and continued during his wanderings



in Africa. In this Commentary he proposed to give the quintessence of the Gemara, to expound the meaning of each dictum in the Mishnah, and to state which of the several opinions had received the sanction of the Talmudical authorities. His object in writing this work was to enable those who are not disposed to study the Gemara, to understand the Mishnah, and to facilitate the study of the Gemara for those who are willing to engage in it. The commentator generally adheres to the explanations given in the Gemara, and it is only in cases where the *halakah*, or practical law, is not affected, that he ventures to dissent. He acknowledges the benefit he derived from such works of his predecessors as the Halakot of Alfasi, and the writings of the Geonim, but afterwards he asserted that errors which were discovered in his works arose from his implicit reliance on those authorities. His originality is conspicuous in the Introduction and in the treatment of general principles, which in some instances precedes the exposition of an entire section or chapter, in others that of a single rule. The commentator is generally concise, except when occasion is afforded to treat of ethical and theological principles, or of a scientific subject, such as weights and measures, or mathematical and astronomical problems. Although exhortations to virtue and warnings against vice are found in all parts of his work, they are especially abundant in the Commentary on *Abot*, which is prefaced by a separate psychological treatise, called *The Eight Chapters*. The dictum "He who speaketh much commits a sin," elicited a lesson on the economy of speech; the explanation of *'olam ha-ba* in the treatise Sanhedrin (xi. 1) led him to discuss the principles of faith, and to lay down the thirteen articles of the Jewish creed. The Commentary was written in Arabic, and was subsequently translated into Hebrew and into other languages. The estimation in which the Commentary was held may be

inferred from the following fact: When the Jews in Italy became acquainted with its method and spirit, through a Hebrew translation of one of its parts, they sent to Spain in search of a complete Hebrew version of the Commentary. R. Simḥah, who had been entrusted with the mission, found no copy extant, but he succeeded, through the influence of Rabbi Shelomoh ben Aderet, in causing a Hebrew translation of this important work to be prepared.-  
-In the Introduction, the author states that he has written a Commentary on the Babylonian Talmud treatise *Hullin* and on nearly three entire sections, viz., *Moëd*, *Nashim*, and *Nezikin*. Of all these Commentaries only the one on *Rosh ha-shanah* is known.

In the year 1572 Maimonides wrote the *Iggeret Teman*, or *Petaḥ-tiḳvoah* ("Letter to the Jews in Yemen," or "Opening of hope") in response to a letter addressed to him by Rabbi Jacob al-Fayumi on the critical condition of the Jews in Yemen. Some of these Jews had been forced into apostasy others were made to believe that certain passages in the Bible alluded to the mission of Mohammed; others again had been misled by an impostor who pretended to be the Messiah. The character and style of Maimonides reply appear to have been adapted to the intellectual condition of the Jews in Yemen, for whom it was written. These probably read the Bible with Midrashic commentaries, and preferred the easy and attractive *Agadah* to the more earnest study of the *Halakah*. It is therefore not surprising that the letter contains remarks and interpretations which cannot be reconciled with the philosophical and logical method by which all the other works of Maimonides are distinguished. After a few complimentary words, in which the author modestly disputes the justice of the praises lavished upon him, he attempts to prove that the present sufferings of the Jews, together with the numerous

instances of apostasy, were foretold by the prophets, especially by Daniel, and must not perplex the faithful. It must be borne in mind, he continues, that the attempts made in past times to do away with the Jewish religion, had invariably failed; the same would be the fate of the present attempts; for "religious persecutions are of but short duration." The arguments which profess to demonstrate that in certain Biblical passages allusion is made to Mohammed, are based on interpretations which are totally opposed to common sense. He urges that the Jews, faithfully adhering to their religion, should impress their children with the greatness of the Revelation on Mount Sinai, and of the miracles wrought through Moses; they also should remain firm in the belief that God will send the Messiah to deliver their nation, but they must abandon futile calculations of the Messianic period, and beware of impostors. Although there be signs which indicate the approach of the promised deliverance, and the times seem to be the period of the last and most cruel persecution mentioned in the visions of Daniel (xi. and xii.), the person in Yemen who pretends to be the Messiah is an impostor, and if care be not taken, he is sure to do mischief. Similar impostors in Cordova, France, and Africa, have deceived the multitude and brought great troubles upon the Jews.--Yet, inconsistently with this sound advice the author gives a positive date of the Messianic time, on the basis of an old tradition; the inconsistency is so obvious that it is impossible to attribute this passage to Maimonides himself. It is probably spurious, and has, perhaps, been added by the translator. With the exception of the rhymed introduction, the letter was written in Arabic, "in order that all should be able to read and understand it"; for that purpose the author desires that copies should be made of it, and circulated

among the Jews. Rabbi Naḥum, of the Maghreb, translated the letter into Hebrew.

The success in the first great undertaking of explaining the Mishnah encouraged Maimonides to propose to himself another task of a still more ambitious character. In the Commentary on the Mishnah, it was his object that those who were unable to read the Gemara should be made acquainted with the results obtained by the Amoraim in the course of their discussions on the Mishnah. But the Mishnah, with the Commentary, was not such a code of laws as might easily be consulted in cases of emergency; only the initiated would be able to find the section, the chapter, and the paragraph in which the desired information could be found. The *halakah* had, besides, been further developed since the time when the Talmud was compiled. The changed state of things had suggested new questions; these were discussed and settled by the Geonim, whose decisions, being contained in special letters or treatises, were not generally accessible. Maimonides therefore undertook to compile a complete code, which would contain, in the language and style of the Mishnah, and without discussion, the whole of the Written and the Oral Law, all the precepts recorded in the Talmud, Sifra, Sifre and Tosefta, and the decisions of the Geonim. According to the plan of the author, this work was to present a solution of every question touching the religious, moral, or social duties of the Jews. It was not in any way his object to discourage the study of the Talmud and the Midrash; he only sought to diffuse a knowledge of the Law amongst those who, through incapacity or other circumstances, were precluded from that study. In order to ensure the completeness of the code, the author drew up a list of the six hundred and thirteen precepts of the Pentateuch, divided them into fourteen groups, these

again he subdivided, and thus showed how many positive and negative precepts were contained in each section of the Mishneh torah. The principles by which he was guided in this arrangement were laid down in a separate treatise, called *Sefer ha-mizvot*. Works of a similar kind, written by his predecessors, as the *Halakot gedolot* of R. Shimon Kahira, and the several *Azharot* were, according to Maimonides, full of errors, because their authors had not adopted any proper method. But an examination of the rules laid down by Maimonides and of their application leads to the conclusion that his results were not less arbitrary; as has, in fact, been shown by the criticisms of Nahmanides. The *Sefer ha-mizvot* was written in Arabic, and thrice translated into Hebrew, namely, by Rabbi Abraham ben Hisdai, Rabbi Shelomoh ben Joseph ben Job, and Rabbi Moses Ibn Tibbon. Maimonides himself desired to translate the book into Hebrew, but to his disappointment he found no time.

This *Sefer ha-mizvot* was executed as a preparation for his principal work, the *Mishneh Torah*, or *Yad ha-hazakah*, which consists of an Introduction and fourteen Books. In the Introduction the author first describes the chain of tradition from Moses to the close of the Talmud, and then he explains his method in compiling the work. He distinguishes between the dicta found in the Talmud, Sifre, Sifra, or Tosefta, on the one hand, and the dicta of the Geonim on the other; the former were binding on all Jews, the latter only as far as their necessity and their utility or the authority of their propounders was recognized. Having once for all stated the sources from which he compiled his work, he did not deem it necessary to name in each case the authority for his opinion or the particular passage from which he derived his dictum. Any addition of references to each paragraph he probably considered

useless to the uninformed and superfluous to the learned. At a later time he discovered his error, he being himself unable to find again the sources of some of his decisions. Rabbi Joseph Caro, in his commentary on the *Mishneh Torah*, termed *Keseph Mishneh*, remedied this deficiency. The Introduction is followed by the enumeration of the six hundred and thirteen precepts and a description of the plan of the work, its division into fourteen books, and the division of the latter into sections, chapters, and paragraphs.

According to the author, the *Mishneh Torah* is a mere compendium of the Talmud; but he found sufficient opportunities to display his real genius, his philosophical mind, and his ethical doctrines. For in stating what the traditional Law enjoined he had to exercise his own judgment, and to decide whether a certain dictum was meant to be taken literally or figuratively whether it was the final decision of a majority or the rejected opinion of a minority; whether it was part of the Oral Law or a precept founded on the scientific views of a particular author; and whether it was of universal application or was only intended for a special period or a special locality. The first Book, *Sefer ha-madda'*, is the embodiment of his own ethical and theological theories, although he frequently refers to the Sayings of our Sages, and employs the phraseology of the Talmud. Similarly, the section on the Jewish Calendar, *Hilkot ha-'ibur*, may be considered as his original work. In each group of the *halakot*, its source, a certain passage of the Pentateuch, is first quoted, with its traditional interpretation, and then the detailed rules follow in systematic order. The *Mishneh Torah* was written by the author in pure Hebrew; when subsequently a friend asked him to translate it into Arabic, he said he would prefer to have his Arabic writings translated into Hebrew instead of

the reverse. The style is an imitation of the Mishnah he did not choose, the author says, the philosophical style, because that would be unintelligible to the common reader; nor did he select the prophetic style, because that would not harmonize with the subject.

Ten years of hard work by day and by night were spent in the compilation of this code, which had originally been undertaken for "his own benefit, to save him in his advanced age the trouble and the necessity of consulting the Talmud on every occasion." Maimonides knew very well that his work would meet with the opposition of those whose ignorance it would expose, also of those who were incapable of comprehending it, and of those who were inclined to condemn every deviation from their own preconceived notions. But he had the satisfaction to learn that it was well received in most of the congregations of Israel, and that there was a general desire to possess and study it. This success confirmed him in his hope that at a later time, when all cause for jealousy would have disappeared, the *Mishneh Torah* would be received by all Jews as an authoritative code. This hope has not been realized. The genius, earnestness, and zeal of Maimonides are generally recognized; but there is no absolute acceptance of his dicta. The more he insisted on his infallibility, the more did the Rabbinical authorities examine his words and point out errors wherever they believed that they could discover any. It was not always from base motives, as contended by Maimonides and his followers, that his opinions were criticised and rejected. The language used by Rabbi Abraham ben David in his notes (*hasagot*) on the *Mishneh Torah* appears harsh and disrespectful, if read together with the text of the criticised passage, but it seems tame and mild if compared with

expressions used now and then by Maimonides about men who happened to hold opinions differing from his own.

Maimonides received many complimentary letters, congratulating him upon his success; but likewise letters with criticisms and questions respecting individual *halakot*. In most cases he had no difficulty in defending his position. From the replies it must, however, be inferred that Maimonides made some corrections and additions, which were subsequently embodied in his work. The letters addressed to him on the *Mishneh Torah* and on other subjects were so numerous that he frequently complained of the time he had to spend in their perusal, and of the annoyance they caused him; but "he bore all this patiently, as he had learned in his youth to bear the yoke." He was not surprised that many misunderstood his words, for even the simple words of the Pentateuch, "the Lord is one," had met with the same fate. Some inferred from the fact that he treated fully of '*Olam ha-ba*, "the future state of the soul," and neglected to expatiate on the resurrection of the dead, that he altogether rejected that principle of faith. They therefore asked Rabbi Samuel ha-levi of Bagdad to state his opinion; the Rabbi accordingly discussed the subject; but, according to Maimonides, he attempted to solve the problem in a very unsatisfactory manner. The latter thereupon likewise wrote a treatise "On the Resurrection of the Dead," in which he protested his adherence to this article of faith. He repeated the opinion he had stated in the Commentary on the Mishnah and in the *Mishneh Torah*, but "in more words; the same idea being reiterated in various forms, as the treatise was only intended for women and for the common multitude."

These theological studies engrossed his attention to a great extent, but it did not occupy him exclusively. In a letter



addressed to R. Jonathan, of Lunel, he says: "Although from my birth the Torah was betrothed to me, and continues to be loved by me as the wife of my youth, in whose love I find a constant delight, strange women whom I at first took into my house as her handmaids have become her rivals and absorb a portion of my time." He devoted himself especially to the study of medicine, in which he distinguished himself to such a degree, according to Alkifti, that "the King of the Franks in Ascalon wanted to appoint him as his physician." Maimonides declined the honour. Alfadhel, the Vizier of Saladin king of Egypt, admired the genius of Maimonides, and bestowed upon him many distinctions. The name of Maimonides was entered on the roll of physicians, he received a pension, and was introduced to the court of Saladin. The method adopted in his professional practice he describes in a letter to his pupil, Ibn Aknin, as follows: "You know how difficult this profession is for a conscientious and exact person who only states what he can support by argument or authority." This method is more fully described in a treatise on hygiene, composed for Alfadhel, son of Saladin, who was suffering from a severe illness and had applied to Maimonides for advice. In a letter to Rabbi Samuel Ibn Tibbon he alludes to the amount of time spent in his medical practice, and says I reside in Egypt (or Fostat); the king resides in Cairo, which lies about two Sabbath-day journeys from the first-named place. My duties to the king are very heavy. I am obliged to visit him every day, early in the morning; and when he or any of his children or the inmates of his harem are indisposed, I dare not quit Cairo, but must stay during the greater part of the day in the palace. It also frequently happens that one or two of the royal officers fall sick, and then I have to attend them. As a rule, I go to Cairo very early in the day, and even if nothing unusual happens I do

not return before the afternoon, when I am almost dying with hunger; but I find the antechambers filled with Jews and Gentiles, with nobles and common people, awaiting my return," etc.

Notwithstanding these heavy professional duties of court physician, Maimonides continued his theological studies. After having compiled a religious guide--*Mishneh Torah*--based on Revelation and Tradition, he found it necessary to prove that the principles there set forth were confirmed by philosophy. This task he accomplished in his *Dalalât al-ḥairin*, "The Guide for the Perplexed," of which an analysis will be given below. It was composed in Arabic, and written in Hebrew characters. Subsequently it was translated into Hebrew by Rabbi Samuel Ibn Tibbon, in the lifetime of Maimonides, who was consulted by the translator on all difficult passages. The congregation in Lunel, ignorant of Ibn Tibbon's undertaking, or desirous to possess the most correct translation of the Guide, addressed a very flattering letter to Maimonides, requesting him to translate the work into Hebrew. Maimonides replied that he could not do so, as he had not sufficient leisure for even more pressing work, and that a translation was being prepared by the ablest and fittest man, Rabbi Samuel Ibn Tibbon. A second translation was made later on by Jehudah Alḥarizi. The Guide delighted many, but it also met with much adverse criticism on account of the peculiar views held by Maimonides concerning angels, prophecy, and miracles, especially on account of his assertion that if the Aristotelian proof for the Eternity of the Universe had satisfied him, he would have found no difficulty in reconciling the Biblical account of the Creation with that doctrine. The controversy on the Guide continued long after the death of Maimonides to divide the community, and it is difficult to say how far the

author's hope to effect a reconciliation between reason and revelation was realized. His disciple, Joseph Ibn Aknin, to whom the work was dedicated, and who was expected to derive from it the greatest benefit, appears to have been disappointed. His inability to reconcile the two antagonistic elements of faith and science, he describes allegorically in the form of a letter addressed to Maimonides, in which the following passage occurs: "Speak, for I desire that you be justified; sif you can, answer me. Some time ago your beloved daughter, the beautiful and charming Kimah, obtained grace and favour in my sight, and I betrothed her unto me in faithfulness, and married her in accordance with the Law, in the presence of two trustworthy witnesses, viz., our master, Abd-allah and Ibn Roshd. But she soon became faithless to me; she could not have found fault with me, yet she left me and departed from my tent. She does no longer let me behold her pleasant countenance or hear her melodious voice. You have not rebuked or punished her, and perhaps you are the cause of this misconduct. Now, 'send the wife back to the man, for he is'--or might become--'a prophet; he will pray for you that you may live, and also for her that she may be firm and steadfast. If, however, you do not send her back, the Lord will punish you. Therefore seek peace and pursue it; listen to what our Sages said: 'Blessed be he who restores to the owner his lost property'; for this blessing applies in a higher degree to him who restores to a man his virtuous wife, the crown of her husband." Maimonides replied in the same strain, and reproached his "son-in-law" that he falsely accused his wife of faithlessness after he had neglected her; but he restored him his wife with the advice to be more cautious in future. In another letter Maimonides exhorts Ibn Aknin to study his works, adding, "apply yourself to the study of the Law of Moses; do not neglect it, but, on the contrary, devote to

it the best and the most of your time, and if you tell me that you do so, I am satisfied that you are on the right way to eternal bliss."

Of the letters written after the completion of the "Guide," the one addressed to the wise men of Marseilles (1194) is especially noteworthy. Maimonides was asked to give his opinion on astrology. He regretted in his reply that they were not yet in the possession of his *Mishneh Torah*; they would have found in it the answer to their question. According to his opinion, man should only believe what he can grasp with his intellectual faculties, or perceive by his senses, or what he can accept on trustworthy authority. Beyond this nothing should be believed. Astrological statements, not being founded on any of these three sources of knowledge, must be rejected. He had himself studied astrology, and was convinced that it was no science at all. If some dicta be found in the Talmud which appear to represent astrology as a true source of knowledge, these may either be referred to the rejected opinion of a small minority, or may have an allegorical meaning, but they are by no means forcible enough to set aside principles based on logical proof.

The debility of which Maimonides so frequently complained in his correspondence, gradually increased, and he died, in his seventieth year, on the 20th Tebeth, 4965 (1204). His death was the cause of great mourning to all Jews. In Fostat a mourning of three days was kept; in Jerusalem a fast was appointed; a portion of the *tochahah* (Lev. xxvi. or Deut. xxix.) was read, and also the history of the capture of the Ark by the Philistines (1 Sam. iv.). His remains were brought to Tiberias. The general regard in which Maimonides was held, both by his contemporaries and by succeeding generations, has been expressed in the

popular saying: "From Moses to Moses there was none like Moses."

*Guide for the Perplexed, by Moses Maimonides,  
Friedländer tr. [1904], at [sacred-texts.com](http://sacred-texts.com)*

*The Out-of-Body Travel Foundation Journal:*  
**Question and Answer Forum!**

Please Send Your Questions to:

**MarilynnHughes1@outofbodytravel.org**

*For Future Inclusion in this Section!*

**Question from Aaron Freedman, Anonymous Location:** I firmly believe that the only way I can live happily on earth is to travel briefly to the afterlife. I've read so many stories of how it completely changes people. Is there a way to induce a near death or out of body experience to the afterlife without drugs?

*Marilynn: Definitely do not use drugs. You can download my how-to manual free at [outofbodytravel.org](http://outofbodytravel.org), click on 'Come to Wisdom's Door: How to Have an Out-of-Body Experience.' Let me know if it helps, it may take some time.*

*But I'd also like to point out to you that although these experiences are indeed profound and life-changing, you don't have to experience them in order to gain the benefit which comes from them. Obviously, you've done a lot of reading about other people's experiences. Use this knowledge you've obtained from the experiences of others to change your life, irregardless of whether God decides to allow you to have the experience yourself.*

*And NEVER use drugs to induce an experience. Although it can be done this way, it is very dangerous, and because you are violating eternal law by trying to force your will upon something, you open yourself up to dark forces and things which you would be protected from by the forces of*

*God if you did such a thing in His time rather than your own.*

*Everyone is called to different things. If you happen to be called to the experience, great. If not, learn from the experiences of others, glean the wisdom from what they saw, experienced and learned in their own afterlife visitation.*

*Blessings,  
MarilynnHughes@outofbodytravel.org  
www.outofbodytravel.org*

**Question from Aaron Freedman, Anonymous Location:**  
Do you believe that in order to change the world everyone needs to have an afterlife experience? I would bet the few thousand people that have experienced true love and peace in the next life are making a big impact on the people around them. But what about the rest of us that are suffering and struggling to find light in this world? Do we have to wait until death to be happy and see the truth?

I keep searching for a practitioner who induces near death experiences without drugs with no luck.

Do you know of anyone who has done this to help people?

*Marilynn: DO NOT seek a near death experience, that's dangerous. You can, however, seek an out-of-body experience which can sometimes have a similar effect.*

*No, I don't believe everybody needs to have an afterlife experience to change the world. You are right in noticing that those who have had them are sometimes given special things to do when they return, but God inspires many*

*people to do great things in many mysterious ways other than afterlife experience.*

*Mother Teresa did not have an afterlife experience, neither did many people who have done great things.*

*If you ever find anybody who is willing to induce a near death experience with or without drugs, don't let them. There are those who have worked on ways to simulate the benefits of the out-of-body experience, like Raymond Moody's Center, The Monroe Institute, the Association for Research and enlightenment and Eckankar. This is very different because they are finding scientific and spiritual ways to induce deeper levels of consciousness which can simulate aspects of out-of-body experiences. But they don't involve bringing anybody close to death to do it. That is absolutely and strictly NOT OKAY. Obviously, it would be dangerous to induce anything near death.*

*You could check out my books at [outofbodytravel.org](http://outofbodytravel.org). 'Come to Wisdom's Door: How to Have an Out-of-Body Experience' teaches you how to prepare for an Out-of-Body Experience, and 'The Mysteries of the Redemption: A Treatise on Out-of-Body Travel and Mysticism' prepares people spiritually for it. You'd be surprised how many people have spontaneous OBE's while reading that book, because it makes possible in their mind the experience and it happens without effort. So be open to that.*

*Patience will be key for you and perhaps a confidence in God that He can lead you to that which He wishes for you to do whether it's what you expect or something entirely different.*

*Please consider joining our Yahoo group which discusses Out-of-Body Travel, as well. At the HOME page submenu,*



*there is a page for joining our Yahoo group. You have to give the sub-menu a minute to pop up but it eventually does so just slide your cursor over the 'Home! Out-of-Body Travel' page until the sub menu appears and then click on 'Discussion Group.'*

*Many Blessings,  
MarilynnHughes@outofbodytravel.org  
www.outofbodytravel.org*

**Question from Aaron Freedman, Anonymous Location:**  
My question is how can one actually leave their body and see the next or past life?

*Marilynn: Some people will see past lives in dreams. One of my friends, shortly before her death, also saw visions of her future life in China through dreams.*

*Generally, however, if you're having an out-of-body experience and are going to be taken into a past life, you will go through a tunnel very similar to the one described by many people who have had near death experiences – dark with a light at the end. When you get to the end of the tunnel, you will 'fall' into that former body.*

*I describe the nature of the tunnel just because there are many tunnels, corridors and passageways beyond this world which all have a different appearance. Some are cloudy and swirling, others are thin with ribs, others are phosphorescent and clear, etc. etc.*

*Sometimes, you overlap this former personality and observe from within all that you saw, did and said. Other times, you experience it more as a conscious participant, whereby you 'become' that personality again – thus, you*

*feel it, taste it, touch it, smell it, be it. By doing this, you can oftentimes get a much broader understanding of the karmic issues you may have brought forth from those lifetimes.*

*I recommend you consider reading ‘Reincarnation and Karma: The Mystic Knowledge Series,’ which contains hundreds of such past life experiences and the many ways in which they present. It also shows the timeline and the purpose of remembering them, which is to understand that issue which has held us to the physical world lifetime after lifetime and what we need to do to overcome it in this one. (You can find that FREE download at [outofbodytravel.org](http://outofbodytravel.org), Click on ‘The Mystic Knowledge Series,’ Select ‘Reincarnation and Karma,’ and you can download it on that page!)*

*Many Blessings,  
MarilynnHughes@outofbodytravel.org  
[www.outofbodytravel.org](http://www.outofbodytravel.org)*

*The Out-of-Body Travel Foundation Journal:*

## ***Different Voices!***

This is our section devoted to the writings and opinions of others, which may not reflect the views of author, Marilyn Hughes. Inclusion of any author's writings or work does not denote an endorsement or recommendation in regards to their writings.

Some of these will be individual writings of others on subjects of spiritual interest, other people's out-of-body experiences - some which may agree with and/or contradict the experiences of the author, poems, journals of spiritual transformation, and critiques - both positive and negative opinions and/or analysis, of the author's work.

We choose to include ALL of these because we feel that the ability to discuss our similarities and differences openly is 'ALL GOOD' as GANDHI used to say.

*We welcome and encourage your submissions for possible future inclusion in this section, although we stress that we are a non-profit organization and payment is not available:*

**MarilynnHughes1@outofbodytravel.org**

*We have found that some of the best critiques, analysis, writings and experiences come from people all over the world in different walks of life who are pursuing their spiritual path with passion and are completely unkno.*

**THANK YOU ALL, whether you agree or disagree with our work, FOR YOUR COMMITMENT TO SEEK THE TRUTH IN WHATEVER WAY THAT TRUTH MAY COME TO SEEK YOU!**

# Excerpts from 'The Guide for the Perplexed

*By Moses Maimonides*

## CHAPTER I

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

because it concludes thus: "This is the *Hayyah* which I saw at the river Chebar" (*ibid.* ver. 15). What we intended to explain is now clear.

## CHAPTER II

THE prophet says that he saw four *Hayyot*: each of them had four faces, four wings, and two hands, but on the whole their form was human. Comp. "They had the likeness of a man" (Ezek. i. 5). The hands are also described as human hands, because these have undoubtedly, as is well known, such a form as enables them to perform all manner of cunning work. Their feet are straight that is to say, they are without joints. This is the meaning of the phrase "a straight foot," taken literally. Similarly our Sages say, the words, "And their feet were straight feet" (*ibid.* i. 7), show that the beings above do not sit. Note this likewise. The soles of the feet of the *Hayyot*, the organs of walking, are described as different from the feet of man, but the hands are like human hands. The feet are round, for the prophet says, "like the sole of a round foot." The four *Hayyot* are closely joined together, there is no space or vacuum left between them. Comp. "They were joined one to another" (*ibid.* i. 9)." But although they were thus joined together, their faces and their wings were separated above" (*ibid.* ver. 11). Consider the expression "above" employed here, although the bodies were closely joined, their faces and their wings were separated, but only above. The prophet then states that they are transparent; they are "like burnished brass" (*ibid.* ver, 7). He also adds that they are luminous. Comp. "Their appearance was like burning coals of fire" (*ibid.* ver. 13). This is all that has been said as regards the form, shape, face, figure, wings, hands, and feet of the *Hayyot*. The prophet then begins to describe the motions of these *Hayyot*, namely, that they have a uniform

motion, without any curvature, deviation, or deflexion: "They turned not when they went" (ver. 17). Each of the *Hayyot* moves in the direction of its face. Comp. "They went every one in the direction of his face" (ver. 9). Now, it is here clearly stated that each *Hayyah* went in the direction of its face, but since each *Hayyah* has several faces, I ask, in the direction of which face? In short, the four *Hayyot* do not move in the same direction; for, if this were the case, a special motion would not have been ascribed to each of them: it would not have been said, "They went each one towards the side of his face." The motion of these *Hayyot* is further described as a running, so also their returning is described as a running. Comp. "And the *Hayyot* ran, and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning" (ver. 14), *razoh* being the infinitive of *ruz*, "to run," and *shob* the infinitive instead of *shub*, "to return." The ordinary words, *haloch* and *bo*, "to go" and "to come," are not used, but such words as indicate running to and fro: and these are further explained by the phrase, "As the appearance of a flash of lightning" (*bazak*, used by the prophet, is identical with *barak*), for the lightning appears to move very quickly; it seems to hasten and to run from a certain place, and then to turn back and to come again to the place from which it had started. This is repeated several times with the same velocity. Jonathan, the son of Uzziel, renders the phrase *razo vashob* thus: They move round the world and return at once, and are as swift as the appearance of lightning. This quick movement and return the *Hayyah* does not perform of its own accord, but through something outside of it, viz., the Divine Will; for "to whichever side it is the Divine Will that the *Hayyah* should move, thither the *Hayyah* moves," in that quick manner which is expressed by "running and returning." This is implied in the words, "Whithersoever the spirit was to go they went (ver. 20); "They turned not when they went" (ver. 17). By "the spirit"

(*ruah*), the prophet does not mean "the wind," but "the intention," as we have explained when discussing the homonym *ruah* (spirit). The meaning of the phrase is, that whithersoever it is the Divine Will that the *Hayyah* shall go, thither it runs. Jonathan, the son of Uzziel, gives a similar explanation: Towards the place whither it is the will to go, they go; they do not turn when they go. The employment of the future tense of the verbs *yihyeh* and *yeleku* in this passage seems to imply that sometimes it will be the will of God that the *Hayyah* should move in one direction, in which it will in fact move, and at other times it will be His will that the *Hayyah* should move in the opposite direction, in which it will then move. An explanation is, however, added, which is contrary to/this conclusion, and shows that the future form (*yihyeh*) of the verb has here the meaning of the preterite, as is frequently the case in Hebrew. The direction in which God desires the *Hayyah* to move has already been determined and fixed, and the *Hayyah* moves in that direction which His will has determined long ago, without having ever changed. The prophet, therefore, in explaining, and at the same time concluding [this description of the *Hayyot*], says, "Whithersoever the spirit was to go they go, thither *was* the spirit to go" (ver. 20). Note this wonderful interpretation. This passage forms likewise part of the account of the motion of the four *Hayyot* which follows the description of their form.

Next comes the description of another part; for the prophet relates that he saw a body beneath the *Hayyot*, but closely joining them. This body, which is connected with the earth, consists likewise of four bodies, and has also four faces. But no distinct form is ascribed to it: neither that of man nor that of any other living being. The [four bodies] are described as great, tremendous, and terrible; no form is

given to them, except that they are covered with eyes. These are the bodies called *Ofannim* (lit. wheels). The prophet therefore says: "Now, as I beheld the *Hayyot*, behold one wheel upon the earth beside the living creatures, with his four faces" (ver. 15). He thus distinctly states that the *Ofannim* form a body, of which the one part touches the *Hayyot*, and the other part the earth; and that the *Ofan* has four faces. But he continues--"The appearance of the *Ofannim* (wheels) and their work was like unto the colour of a beryl: and they four had one likeness" (ver. 16). By speaking of four *Ofannim*, after having mentioned only one *Ofan*, the prophet indicates that the "four faces" and the "four *Ofannim*" are identical. These four *Ofannim* have the same form; comp., "And they four had one likeness." The *Ofannim* are then described as partly inter-joined; for" their appearance and their work was as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel (ver. 16). In the description of the *Hayyot* such a phrase, with the term "in the middle of" (*tok*) is not employed. The *Hayyot* are partly joined, according to the words, "they were joined one to another" (ver. 11); whilst in reference to the *Ofannim* it is stated that they are partly intermixed, "as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel" The body of the *Ofannim* is described as being covered with eyes; it is possible that a body covered with real eyes is here meant, or a body with different colours [*'ayin* denoting "eye," also "colour"], as in the phrase "the colour thereof [*'eno*] as the colour (*ke'en*) of bdellium" (Num. xi. 7); or a body filled with likenesses of things. In this latter sense the term *ayin* is used by our Sages in phrases like the following:--Like that [*ke'en*] which he has stolen, like that [*ke'en*] which he has robbed; or different properties and qualities are meant, according to the meaning of the word *'ayin* in the passage, "It may be that the Lord will look (*be'enai*) on my condition" (2 Sam. xvi. 12). So much for the form of the *Ofannim*. Their motion is



described as being without curvature and deviation; as being straight, without any change. This is expressed in the words, "When they went, they went upon their four sides: and they turned not when they went" (E.: ver. 117). The four *Ofannim* do not move of their own accord, as the *Hayyot*, and have no motion whatever of their own; they are set in motion by other beings, as is emphatically stated twice. The *Hayyot* are the moving agents of the *Ofannim*. The relation between the *Ofan* and the *Hayyah* may be compared to the relation between a lifeless body tied to the hand or the leg of a living animal; whithersoever the latter moves, thither moves also the piece of wood, or the stone, which is tied to the named limb of the animal. This is expressed in the following words:--"And when the *Hayyot* went, the *Ofannim* went by them; and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the *Ofannim* were lifted up" (ver. 19); "and the *Ofannim* were lifted up over against them" (ver. 20). And the cause of this is explained thus:--"The spirit of the *Hayyah* was in the *Ofannim*" (*ibid.*). For the sake of emphasis and further explanation the prophet adds, "When those went, these went; and when those stood, these stood; and when those were lifted up from the earth, the *Ofannim* were lifted up over against them; for the spirit of the *Hayyah* was in the *Ofannim*" (ver. 21). The order of these movements is therefore as follows:--Whithersoever it is the will of God that the *Hayyot* should move, thither they move of their own accord. When the *Hayyot* move the *Ofannim* necessarily follow them, because they are tied to them, and not because they move of their own accord in the direction in which the *Hayyot* move. This order is expressed in the words, "Whithersoever the spirit was to go, they went, thither was the spirit to go; and the *Ofannim* were lifted up over against them: for the spirit of the *Hayyah* was in the *Ofannim*" (ver. 20). I have told you that Jonathan, the son of Uzziel, translates the verse

thus, "to the place whither it was the will that the *Ḥayyot* should go," etc.

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

### CHAPTER III

WHEN Ezekiel recalled to memory the form of the Chariot, which he described in the beginning of the book, the same vision presented itself to him a second time; in this vision he was borne to Jerusalem. He explains in describing it things which have not been made clear at first, e.g., he substitutes the term "cherubim" for *Ḥayyot*, whereby he expresses that the *Ḥayyot* of the first vision are likewise angels like the cherubim. He says, therefore: "Where the cherubims went, the *Ofannim* went by them: and when the cherubims lifted up their wings to mount up from the earth, the same *Ofannim* also turned not from beside them" (x. 16). By these words he shows how closely connected the two motions are [viz., that of the *Ḥayyot* and that of the *Ofannim*]. The prophet adds, "This is the Hayyah that I saw under the God of Israel by the river of Chebar: and I knew that they were cherubims" (ver. 20). He thus describes the same forms and the same motions, and states that the *Ḥayyot* and the cherubim are identical.

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

## CHAPTER IV

IT is necessary to call your attention to an idea expressed by Jonathan, the son of Uzziel. When he saw that the

prophet says in reference to the *Ofannim*, "It was cried unto them in my hearing, O *gilgal*" ("sphere") (x. 13), he assumed that by *Ofannim* the heavens are meant, and rendered *Ofan* by *gilgal*, "sphere," and *Ofannim* by *gilgelaya*, "spheres." I have no doubt that he found a confirmation of his opinion in the words of the prophet that the *Ofannim* were like unto the colour of *tarshish* (ver. 16), a colour ascribed to the heavens, as is well known. When he, therefore, noticed the passage, "Now as I beheld the *Hayyot*, behold one *Ofan* upon the earth" (i. 15), which clearly shows that the *Ofannim* were upon the earth, he had a difficulty in explaining it in accordance with his opinion. Following, however, his interpretation, he explains the terms *erez*, employed here as denoting the inner surface of the heavenly sphere, which may be considered as *erez* ("earth" or "below"), in relation to all that is above that surface. He therefore translates the words *ofan ehad ba-arez*, as follows: "One *ofan* was below the height of the heavens." Consider what his explanation of the passage must be. I think that he gave this explanation because he thought that *gilgal* denotes in its original meaning "heaven." My opinion is that *gilgal* means originally "anything rolling"; comp. "And I will roll thee (*ve-gilgaltika*) down from the rocks" (Jer. li. 25); "and rolled (*va-yagel*) the stone" (Gen. xxix. 10); the same meaning the word has in the phrase: "Like a rolling thing (*galgal*) before the whirlwind" (Isa. xvii. 13). The poll of the head, being round, is therefore called *gulgolet*; and because everything round rolls easily, every spherical thing is called *gilgal*; also the heavens are called *gilgallim* on account of their spherical form. Thus our Sages use the phrase, "It is a wheel (*gilgal*) that moves round the world"; and a wooden ball, whether small or large, is called *gilgal*. If so, the prophet merely intended by the words, "As for the *Ofannim*, it is cried to them in my hearing, O sphere"

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

## CHAPTER V

IT is necessary to notice that the plural *marot elohim*, "visions of God," is here used, and not the singular *mareh*, "vision," for there were several things, of different kinds, that were perceived by the prophet. The following three things were perceived by him: the *Ofannim*, the *Hayyot*, and the man above the *Hayyot*. The description of each of these visions is introduced by the word *va-ereh*, "and I beheld?" For the account of the *Hayyot*, begins, "And I looked (*va-ereh*), and behold a whirlwind," etc. (Ezek. i. 4). The account of the *Ofannim* begins: "Now as I beheld (*va-*

*ereh*) the *Hayyot*, behold one ofan upon the earth" (ver. 15). The vision of that which is above the *Hayyot* in order and rank begins: "And I saw (*va-ereh*) as the colour of the amber, etc., from the appearance of his loins even upward" (ver. 27). The word *va-ereh*, "and I beheld," only occurs these three times in the description of the Mercabah. The doctors of the Mishnah have already explained this fact, and my attention was called to it by their remarks. For they said that only the two first visions, namely, that of the *Hayyot* and the *Ofannim*, might be interpreted to others; but of the third vision, viz., that of the *hashmal* and all that is connected with it, only the heads of the sections may be taught. Rabbi [Jehudah], the Holy, is of opinion that all the three visions are called *ma'aseh mercabah*, and nothing but the heads of the sections could be communicated to others. The exact words of the discussion are as follows:--Where does *maaseh mercabah* end? Rabbi says, with the last *va-ereh*; Rabbi Yizhak says it ends at the word *hashmal* (ver. 27). The portion from *va-ereh* to *hashmal* may be fully, taught; of that which follows, only the heads of the sections; according to some it is the passage from *va-ereh* to *hashmal*, of which the heads of the sections may be taught, but that which follows may only be studied by those who possess the capacity, whilst those that cannot study it by themselves must leave it.--It is clear from the words of our Sages that different visions are described, as may also be inferred from the repetition of the word *va-ereh*, and that these visions are different from each other in degree: the last and highest of them is the vision commencing, "And I saw as the colour of *hashmal*": that is to say, the divided figure of the man, described as "the appearance of fire, etc., from the appearance of his loins even upward, and from the appearance of his loins even downward," etc. There is a difference of opinion among our Sages whether it is permitted to give by way of hints an exposition of any part

of this third vision, or whether it is prohibited even to teach of it the heads of the sections, so that only the wise can arrive at understanding it by their own studies. You will also notice a difference of opinion among our Sages in reference to the two first visions, viz., that of the *Hayyot* and that of the *Ofannim* whether these may be taught explicitly or only by way of hints, dark sayings, and heads of sections. You must also notice the order of these three visions. First comes the vision of the *Hayyot*, because they are first in rank and in the causal relation, as it is said, "For the spirit of the Hayyah was in the *Ofannim*," and also for other reasons. The vision of the *Ofannim* [comes next, and] is followed by one which is higher than the *Hayyot*, as has been shown. The cause of this arrangement is, that in study the first two must necessarily precede the third, and in fact they lead to it.

## CHAPTER VI

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

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

## CHAPTER VII

ONE Of the points that require investigation is the connexion between the vision of the mercabah and the year, month, and day, and also the place of the vision. A reason must be found for this connexion, and we must not think that it is an indifferent element in the vision. We must consider the words, "the heavens were opened" (Ezek. i. 1); they give the key to the understanding of the whole. The figure of opening, also that of opening the gates, occurs frequently in the books of the prophets: e.g., "Open ye the gates that the righteous nation may enter in" (Isa. xxvi. 2); "He opened the doors of heaven" (Ps. lxx-viii. 23); "Lift them up, ye everlasting doors" (*ibid.* xxiv. 9); "Open to me the gates of righteousness, I will go into them, and I will praise the Lord" (*ibid.* cxviii. 19). There are many other instances of this kind. You must further notice that the whole description refers undoubtedly to a prophetic



vision, as it is said, "And the hand of the Lord was there upon him" (Ezek. i. 3); and yet there is a very great difference between the various parts of the description, for in the account of the *Hayyot* the prophet does not say four *Hayyot*, but "the likeness of the four *Hayyot*" (*ibid.* ver. 5); similarly he says, "And the likeness of a firmament was over the heads of the *Hayyot*" (ver. 22); "as the appearance of a sapphire stone, the likeness of a throne," and "the likeness of the appearance of man above it" (ver. 26). In all these instances the word "likeness" is used, whilst in the account of the *Ofannim* the phrases, "the likeness of *Ofannim*," the "likeness of an *Ofan*," are not employed, but they are described in a positive manner as beings in actual existence, with their real properties. The sentence "they four had one likeness" must not mislead you, for here the word "likeness" is not used in the same connexion or in the same sense as indicated above. In the description of the last vision the prophet confirms and explains this view. When he commences to describe the firmament in detail, he says, "the firmament," without adding the words "the likeness of," for he says, "And I looked, and behold, in the firmament that was above the head of the cherubims there appeared over them as it were a sapphire stone, as the appearance of the likeness of a throne" (x. 1). Here the prophet speaks of "the firmament" and not of "the likeness of the firmament," as he does when he connects the firmament with the heads of the likeness of the *Hayyot* (i. 22). But, as regards the throne, he says, "the likeness of a throne appeared over them," in order to indicate that the firmament was first perceived and then the likeness of the throne was seen over it. Consider this well.

You must further notice that in the description of the first vision the *Hayyot* have wings and at the same time human hands, whilst in the second vision, in which the term

cherubim is substituted for *Hayyot*, at first only wings were perceived, and later on human hands were seen. Comp. "And there appeared in the cherubims the form of a man's hand under their wings" (x. 8). Here "form" (*tabnit*) is used instead of "likeness" (*demut*); and the hands are placed under the wings. Note this.

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

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

It is also noteworthy that the likeness of man above the throne is divided, the upper part being like the colour of *hashmal*, the lower part like the appearance of fire. As regards the word *hashmal*, it has been explained to be a compound of two words *hash* and *mal*, including two different notions, viz., *hash* signifying "swiftness," and *mal* denoting "pause." The two different notions are here joined in one word in order to indicate figuratively the two different parts,—the upper part and the lower. We have already given a second explanation, namely, that *hashmal* includes the two notions of speech and silence: in accordance with the saying of our Sages, "At times they are silent, at times they speak," thus deriving *hash* of the same root as *heheshethi*, "I have been silent" (Isa. xlii. 14); the word *hashmal* thus includes two notions, and indicates "speech without sound." There is no doubt that the words,

"at times they are silent, at times they speak," refer to a created object. Now consider how they clearly stated that the divided likeness of man over the throne does not represent God, who is above the whole chariot, but represents a part of the creation. The prophet likewise says "that is the likeness of the glory of the Lord"; but "the glory of the Lord" is different from "the Lord" Himself, as has been shown by us several times. All the figures in this vision refer to the glory of the Lord, to the chariot, and not to Him who rides upon the chariot; for God cannot be compared to anything. Note this. I have thus given you also in this chapter as much of the heads of the sections as will be useful to you for the comprehension of this subject, if you fill out [the sections of] these heads. If you consider all that has been said in this part up to this chapter, the greater part of this subject or the whole of it will be clear to you. except a few points and some repetitions the meaning of which is unknown. Perhaps further study will help to reveal even these things so that nothing will remain unintelligible.

Do not expect or hope to hear from me after this chapter a word on this subject, either explicitly or implicitly, for all that could be said on it has been said, though with great difficulty and struggle. I will now begin to treat of some of the other subjects which I hope to elucidate in this treatise.

## CHAPTER VIII

TRANSIENT bodies are only subject to destruction through their substance and not through their form, nor can the essence of their form be destroyed; in this respect they are permanent. The generic forms, as you know, are all permanent and stable. Form can only be destroyed accidentally, i.e., on account of its connexion with

substance, the true nature of which consists in the property of never being without a disposition to receive form. This is the reason why no form remains permanently in a substance; a constant change takes place, one form is taken off and another is put on. How wonderfully wise is the simile of King Solomon, in which he compares matter to a faithless wife: for matter is never found without form, and is therefore always like such a wife who is never without a husband, never single; and yet, though being wedded, constantly seeks another man in the place of her husband: she entices and attracts him in every possible manner till he obtains from her what her husband has obtained. The same is the case with matter. Whatever form it has, it is disposed to receive another form; it never leaves off moving and casting off the form which it has in order to receive another. The same takes place when this second form is received. It is therefore clear that all corruption, destruction, or defect comes from matter. Take, e.g., man; his deformities and unnatural shape of limbs; all weakness, interruption, or disorder of his actions, whether innate or not, originate in the transient substance, not in the form. All other living beings likewise die or become ill through the substance of the body and not through its form. Man's shortcomings and sins are all due to the substance of the body and not to its form; while all his merits are exclusively due to his form. Thus the knowledge of God, the formation of ideas, the mastery of desire and passion, the distinction between that which is to be chosen and that which is to be rejected, all these man owes to his form; but eating, drinking, sexual intercourse, excessive lust, passion, and all vices, have their origin in the substance of his body. Now it was clear that this was the case,--it was impossible, according to the wisdom of God, that substance should exist without form, or any of the forms of the bodies without substance, and it was

necessary that the very noble form of man, which is the image and likeness of God, as has been shown by us, should be joined to the substance of dust and darkness, the source of all defect and loss. For these reasons the Creator gave to the form of man power, rule, and dominion over the substance;--the form can subdue the substance, refuse the fulfilment of its desires, and reduce them, as far as possible, to a just and proper measure. The station of man varies according to the exercise of this power. Some persons constantly strive to choose that which is noble, and to seek perpetuation in accordance with the direction of their nobler part,--their form: their thoughts are engaged in the formation of ideas, the acquisition of true knowledge about everything, and the union with the divine intellect which flows down upon them, and which is the source of man's form. Whenever they are led by the wants of the body to that which is low and avowedly disgraceful, they are grieved at their position, they feel ashamed and confounded at their situation. They try with all their might to diminish this disgrace, and to guard against it in every possible way. They feel like a person whom the king in his anger ordered to remove refuse from one place to another in order to put him to shame; that person tries as much as possible to hide himself during the time of his disgrace; he perhaps removes a small quantity a short distance in such a manner that his hands and garments remain clean, and he himself be unnoticed by his fellow-men. Such would be the conduct of a free man, whilst a slave would find pleasure in such work;--he would not consider it a great burden, but throw himself into the refuse, smear his face and his hands, carry the refuse openly, laughing and singing. This is exactly the difference in the conduct of different men. Some consider, as we just said, all wants of the body as shame, disgrace, and defect to which they are compelled to attend: this is

chiefly the case with the sense of touch, which is a disgrace to us according to Aristotle, and which is the cause of our desire for eating, drinking, and sensuality. Intelligent persons must, as much as possible, reduce these wants, guard against them, feel grieved when satisfying them, abstain from speaking of them, discussing them, and attending to them in company with others. Man must have control over all these desires, reduce them as much as possible, and only retain of them as much as is indispensable. His aim must be the aim of man as man, viz., the formation of ideas, and nothing else. The best and sublimest among them is the idea which man forms of God, angels, and the rest of the creation according to his capacity. Such men are always with God, and of them it is said, "Ye are princes, and all of you are children of the Most High" (Ps. lxxxii. 6). This is man's task and purpose. Others, however, that are separated from God form the multitude of fools, and do just the opposite. They neglect all thought and all reflection on ideas, and consider as their task the cultivation of the sense of touch,—that sense which is the greatest disgrace: they only think and reason about eating and love. Thus it is said of the wicked who are drowned in eating, drinking, and love, "They also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way," etc. (Isa. xxviii. 7), "for all tables are full of vomit and filthiness, so that there is no place clean" (ver. 8); again, "And women rule over them" (*ibid.* iii. 2),—the opposite of that which man was told in the beginning of the creation, "And for thy husband shall thy desire be, and he shall rule over thee" (Gen. iii. 16). The intensity of their lust is then described thus, "Every one neighed after his neighbour's wife," etc. (Jer. v. 8); "they are all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men" (*ibid.* ix. 2). The whole book of the Proverbs of Solomon treats of this subject, and exhorts to abstain from lust and intemperance. These two

vices ruin those that hate God and keep far from Him; to them the following passages may be applied, "They are not the Lord's" (*ibid.* v. 10); "Cast them out of my sight, and let them go forth" (*ibid.* xv. 1). As regards the portion beginning, "Who can find a virtuous woman?" it is clear what is meant by the figurative expression, "a virtuous woman." When man possesses a good sound body that does not overpower him nor disturb the equilibrium in him, he possesses a divine gift. In short, a good constitution facilitates the rule of the soul over the body, but it is not impossible to conquer a bad constitution by training. For this reason King Solomon and others wrote the moral lessons; also all the commandments and exhortations in the Pentateuch aim at conquering the desires of the body. Those who desire to be men in truth, and not brutes, having only the appearance and shape of men, must constantly endeavour to reduce the wants of the body, such as eating, love, drinking, anger, and all vices originating in lust and passion; they must feel ashamed of them and set limits to them for themselves. As for eating and drinking in so far as it is indispensable, they will eat and drink only as much as is useful and necessary as food, and not for the purpose of pleasure. They will also speak little of these things, and rarely congregate for such purposes. Thus our Sages, as is well known, kept aloof from a banquet that was not part of a religious act, and pious men followed the example of R. Phinehas, son of Jair, who never dined with other persons, and even refused to accept an invitation of R. Jehudah, the Holy. Wine may be treated as food, if taken as such, but to form parties for the purpose of drinking wine together must be considered more disgraceful than the unrestrained conduct of persons who in daylight meet in the same house undressed and naked. For the natural action of the digestive organ is indispensable to man, he cannot do

without it; whilst drunkenness depends on the free will of an evil man. To appear naked in the presence of other people is misconduct only according to public opinion, not according to the dictates of reason, whilst drunkenness, which ruins the mind and the body of man, reason stamps as a vice. You, therefore, who desire to act as human beings must keep away from it, and even from speaking of it. On sexual intercourse, I need not add anything after I have pointed out in the commentary on *Abot* (i. 17) how it is treated by our Law, which is the teaching of pure wisdom--no excuse whatever should induce us to mention it or to speak of it. Thus our Sages said, that Elisha the prophet is called holy, because he did not think of it, and consequently never found himself polluted with semen. In a similar manner they say that Jacob had the first issue of semen for the conception of Reuben. All these traditional stories have the object of teaching the nation humane conduct. There is a well-known saying of our Sages, "The thoughts about the sin are more dangerous than the sin itself." I can offer a good explanation of this saying: When a person is disobedient, this is due to certain accidents connected with the corporeal element in his constitution; for man sins only by his animal nature, whereas thinking is a faculty of man connected with his form--a person who thinks sinfully sins therefore by means of the nobler portion of his self: and he who wrongly causes a foolish slave to work does not sin as much as he who wrongly causes a noble and free man to do the work of a slave. For this specifically human element, with all its properties and powers, should only be employed in suitable work, in attempts to join higher beings, and not in attempts to go down and reach the lower creatures. You know how we condemn lowness of speech, and justly so, for speech is likewise peculiar to man and a boon which God granted to him that he may be distinguished from the rest of living



creatures. Thus God says, "Who gave a mouth to man?" (Exod. iv. 11); and the prophet declares, "The Lord God hath given me a learned tongue" (Isa. l. 4). This gift, therefore, which God gave us in order to enable us to perfect ourselves, to learn and to teach, must not be employed in doing that which is for us most degrading and perfectly disgraceful; we must not imitate the songs and tales of ignorant and lascivious people. It may be suitable to them, but is not fit for those who are told, "And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exod. xix. 6). Those who employ the faculty of thinking and speaking in the service of that sense which is no honour to us, who think more than necessary of drink and love, or even sing of these things: they employ and use the divine gift in acts of rebellion against the Giver, and in the transgression of His commandments. To them the following words may be applied: "And I multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal" (Hos. ii. 10). I have also a reason and cause for calling our language the holy language--do not think it is exaggeration or error on my part, it is perfectly correct--the Hebrew language has no special name for the organ of generation in females or in males, nor for the act of generation itself, nor for semen, nor for secretion. The Hebrew has no original expressions for these things, and only describes them in figurative language and by way of hints, as if to indicate thereby that these things should not be mentioned, and should therefore have no names; we ought to be silent about them, and when we are compelled to mention them, we must manage to employ for that purpose some suitable expressions, although these are generally used in a different sense. Thus the organ of generation in males is called in Hebrew *gid*, which is a figurative term, reminding of the words, "And thy neck is an iron sinew" (*gid*) (Isa. xlvi. 4). It is also called *shupka*, "pouring out" (Deut. xxiii.

2), on account of its function. The female organ is called *kobah* (Num. xxv. 8), from *kobah* (Deut. xviii. 3), which denotes "stomach"; *rehem*, "womb," is the inner organ in which the foetus develops; *zoah* (Isa. xxviii. 8), "refuse," is derived from the verb *yaza*, "he went out"; for "urine" the phrase *meme raglayim*, "the water of the feet" (2 Kings. xviii. 17), is used; semen is expressed by *shikbat zera'*, "a layer of seed." For the act of generation there is no expression whatever in Hebrew: it is described by the following words only: *ba'al*, "he was master"; *shakab*, "he lay"; *lakah*, "he took"; *gillah 'ervah*, "he uncovered the nakedness." Be not misled by the word *yishgalennah* (Deut. xxviii. 30), to take it as denoting that act: this is not the case, for *shegal* denotes a female ready for cohabitation. Comp. "Upon thy right hand did stand the maiden" (*shegal*) "in gold of Ophir" (Ps. xlv. 10). *Yishgalennah*, according to the *Kethib*, denotes therefore "he will take the female for the purpose of cohabitation."

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

## CHAPTER XII

MEN frequently think that the evils in the world are more numerous than the good things; many sayings and songs of the nations dwell on this idea. They say that a good thing is found only exceptionally, whilst evil things are numerous and lasting. Not only common people make this mistake, but even many who believe that they are wise. Al-Razi wrote a well-known book *On Metaphysics* [or *Theology*]. Among other mad and foolish things, it

contains also the idea, discovered by him, that there exists more evil than good. For if the happiness of man and his pleasure in the times of prosperity be compared with the mishaps that befall him,--such as grief, acute pain, defects, paralysis of the limbs, fears, anxieties, and troubles,--it would seem as if the existence of man is a punishment and a great evil for him. This author commenced to verify his opinion by counting all the evils one by one; by this means he opposed those who hold the correct view of the benefits bestowed by God and His evident kindness, viz., that God is perfect goodness, and that all that comes from Him is absolutely good. The origin of the error is to be found in the circumstance that this ignorant man, and his party among the common people, judge the whole universe by examining one single person. For an ignorant man believes that the whole universe only exists for him; as if nothing else required any consideration. If, therefore, anything happens to him contrary to his expectation, he at once concludes that the whole universe is evil. If, however, he would take into consideration the whole universe, form an idea of it, and comprehend what a small portion he is of the Universe, he will find the truth. For it is clear that persons who have fallen into this widespread error as regards the multitude of evils in the world, do not find the evils among the angels, the spheres and stars, the elements, and that which is formed of them, viz., minerals and plants, or in the various species of living beings, but only in some individual instances of mankind. They wonder that a person, who became leprous in consequence of bad food, should be afflicted with so great an illness and suffer such a misfortune; or that he who indulges so much in sensuality as to weaken his sight, should be struck with blindness! and the like. What we have, in truth, to consider is this:--The whole mankind at present in existence, and *a fortiori*, every other species of animals, form an

infinitesimal portion of the permanent universe. Comp. "Man is like to vanity" (Ps. cxliv. 4); "How much less man, that is a worm; and the son of man, which is a worm" (Job xxv. 6); "How much less in them who dwell in houses of clay" (*ibid.* iv. 19); "Behold, the nations are as a drop of the bucket" (Isa. xl. 15). There are many other passages in the books of the prophets expressing the same idea. It is of great advantage that man should know his station, and not erroneously imagine that the whole universe exists only for him. We hold that the universe exists because the Creator wills it so; that mankind is low in rank as compared with the uppermost portion of the universe, viz., with the spheres and the stars: but, as regards the angels, there cannot be any real comparison between man and angels, although man is the highest of all beings on earth; i.e., of all beings formed of the four elements. Man's existence is nevertheless a great boon to him, and his distinction and perfection is a divine gift. The numerous evils to which individual persons are exposed are due to the defects existing in the persons themselves. We complain and seek relief from our own faults: we suffer from the evils which we, by our own free will, inflict on ourselves and ascribe them to God, who is far from being connected with them! Comp. "Is destruction his [work]? No. Ye [who call yourselves] wrongly his sons, you who are a perverse and crooked generation" (Deut. xxxii. 5). This is explained by Solomon, who says, "The foolishness of man perverteth his way, and his heart fretteth against the Lord" (Prov. xix. 3).

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

(1) The first kind of evil is that which is caused to man by the circumstance that he is subject to genesis and

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

that have not been flooded or burned for thousands of years: there are thousands of men in perfect health, deformed individuals are a strange and exceptional occurrence, or say few in number if you object to the term exceptional,--they are not one-hundredth, not even one-thousandth part of those that are perfectly normal.

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

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

inventions bring the evils upon him. The same subject is referred to in Job (v. 6), "For affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground." These words are immediately followed by the explanation that man himself is the author of this class of evils, "But man is born unto trouble." This class of evils originates in man's vices, such as excessive desire for eating, drinking, and love; indulgence in these things in undue measure, or in improper manner, or partaking of bad food. This course brings diseases and afflictions upon body and soul alike. The sufferings of the body in consequence of these evils are well known; those of the soul are twofold:--First, such evils of the soul as are the necessary consequence of changes in the body, in so far as the soul is a force residing in the body; it has therefore been said that the properties of the soul depend on the condition of the body. Secondly, the soul, when accustomed to superfluous things, acquires a strong habit of desiring things which are neither necessary for the preservation of the individual nor for that of the species. This desire is without a limit, whilst things which are necessary are few in number and restricted within certain limits; but what is superfluous is without end--e.g., you desire to have your vessels of silver, but golden vessels are still better: others have even vessels of sapphire, or perhaps they can be made of emerald or rubies, or any other substance that could be suggested, Those who are ignorant and perverse in their thought are constantly in trouble and pain, because they cannot get as much of superfluous things as a certain other person possesses. They as a rule expose themselves to great dangers, e.g., by sea-voyage, or service of kings, and all this for the purpose of obtaining that which is superfluous and not necessary. When they thus meet with the consequences of the course which they adopt, they complain of the decrees and judgments of God; they begin

to blame the time, and wonder at the want of justice in its changes; that it has not enabled them to acquire great riches, with which they could buy large quantities of wine for the purpose of making themselves drunk, and numerous concubines adorned with various kind of ornaments of gold, embroidery, and jewels, for the purpose of driving themselves to voluptuousness beyond their capacities, as if the whole Universe existed exclusively for the purpose of giving pleasure to these low people. The error of the ignorant goes so far as to say that God's power is insufficient, because He has given to this Universe the properties which they imagine cause these great evils, and which do not help all evil-disposed persons to obtain the evil which they seek, and to bring their evil souls to the aim of their desires, though these, as we have shown, are really without limit. The virtuous and wise, however, see and comprehend the wisdom of God displayed in the Universe. Thus David says, "All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep His covenant and His testimonies" (Ps. xxv. 10). For those who observe the nature of the Universe and the commandments of the Law, and know their purpose, see clearly God's mercy and truth in everything; they seek, therefore, that which the Creator intended to be the aim of man, viz., comprehension. Forced by the claims of the body, they seek also that which is necessary for the preservation of the body, "bread to eat and garment to clothe," and this is very little; but they seek nothing superfluous: with very slight exertion man can obtain it, so long as he is contented with that which is indispensable. All the difficulties and troubles we meet in this respect are due to the desire for superfluous things: when we seek unnecessary things, we have difficulty even in finding that which is indispensable. For the more we desire to have that which is superfluous, the more we meet with



difficulties; our strength and possessions are spent in unnecessary things, and are wanting when required for that which is necessary. Observe how Nature proves the correctness of this assertion. The more necessary a thing is for living beings, the more easily it is found and the cheaper it is; the less necessary it is, the rarer and clearer it is. E.g., air, water, and food are indispensable to man: air is most necessary, for if man is without air a short time he dies; whilst he can be without water a day or two. Air is also undoubtedly found more easily and cheaper [than water]. Water is more necessary than food; for some people can be four or five days without food, provided they have water; water also exists in every country in larger quantities than food, and is also cheaper. The same proportion can be noticed in the different kinds of food; that which is more necessary in a certain place exists there in larger quantities and is cheaper than that which is less necessary. No intelligent person, I think, considers musk, amber, rubies, and emerald as very necessary for man except as medicines: and they, as well as other like substances, can be replaced for this purpose by herbs and minerals. This shows the kindness of God to His creatures, even to us weak beings. His righteousness and justice as regards all animals are well known; for in the transient world there is among the various kinds of animals no individual being distinguished from the rest of the same species by a peculiar property or an additional limb. On the contrary, all physical, psychical, and vital forces and organs that are possessed by one individual are found also in the other individuals. If any one is somehow different it is by accident, in consequence of some exception, and not by a natural property; it is also a rare occurrence. There is no difference between individuals of a species in the due course of Nature; the difference originates in the various dispositions of their substances. This is the necessary

consequence of the nature of the substance of that species: the nature of the species is not more favourable to one individual than to the other. It is no wrong or injustice that one has many bags of finest myrrh and garments embroidered with gold, while another has not those things, which are not necessary for our maintenance; he who has them has not thereby obtained control over anything that could be an essential addition to his nature, but has only obtained something illusory or deceptive. The other, who does not possess that which is not wanted for his maintenance, does not miss anything indispensable: "He that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack: they gathered every man according to his eating" (Exod. xvi. 18). This is the rule at all times and in all places; no notice should be taken of exceptional cases, as we have explained.

In these two ways you will see the mercy of God toward His creatures, how He has provided that which is required, in proper proportions, and treated all individual beings of the same species with perfect equality. In accordance with this correct reflection the chief of the wise men says, "All his ways are judgment" (Deut. xxxii. 4); David likewise says: "All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth" (Ps. xxv. 10); he also says expressly "The Lord is good to all; and his tender mercies are over all his works" (*ibid.* cxlv. 9); for it is an act of great and perfect goodness that He gave us existence: and the creation of the controlling faculty in animals is a proof of His mercy towards them, as has been shown by us.

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