Guide for the Perplexed, by Moses Maimonides, Friedlander tr. [1904], at sacred-texts.com

THE GUIDE FOR THE PERPLEXED

BY

MOSES MAIMONIDES

TRANSLATED FROM

THE ORIGINAL ARABIC TEXT

BY

M. FRIEDLANDER, PHD

SECOND EDITION

REVISED THROUGHOUT

London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd.

[1904]

Originally Scanned and OCRed by Andrew Meit and David Reed. Additional proofing and formatting by Richard Hartzman. Extensive additional proofing and formatting by John Bruno Hare at sacred-texts.com. This text is in the public domain in the United States because it was published prior to January 1st, 1923. Abridged and Re-formatted by Seth Goldstein. Page numbers at the top of some pages refer to the pages of the original print publication.

CONTENTS

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 Pumbadita 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 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 Hasdai, Judah ha-levi, Hananel, 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 Omeyades; 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, Kore 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 Marheshvan, 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 Marheshvan. 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. Simhah, 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., Moed, 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 Petah-tikvah ("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 Nahum, 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 Dalalat al-hairin, "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 Alharizi. 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 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; if 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."

ANALYSIS OF THE GUIDE FOR THE PERPLEXED

IT is the object of this work "to afford a guide for the perplexed," i.e. "to thinkers whose studies have brought them into collision with religion" (9), "who have studied philosophy and have acquired sound knowledge, and who, while firm in religions matters, are perplexed and bewildered on account of the ambiguous and figurative expressions employed in the holy writings" (5). Joseph, the son of Jehudah Ibn Aknin, a disciple of Maimonides, is addressed by his teacher as an example of this kind of students. It was "for him and for those like him" that the treatise was composed, and to him this work is inscribed in the dedicatory letter with which the Introduction begins. Maimonides, having discovered that his disciple was sufficiently advanced for an exposition of the esoteric ideas in the books of the Prophets, commenced to give him such expositions "by way of hints." His disciple then begged him to give him further explanations, to treat of metaphysical themes, and to expound the system and the method of the Kalam, or Mohammedan Theology. [*1] In compliance with this request, Maimonides composed the Guide of the Perplexed. The reader has, therefore, to expect that the subjects mentioned in the disciple's request indicate the design and arrangement of the present work, and that the Guide consists of the following parts:--1. An exposition of the esoteric ideas (sodot) in the books of the Prophets. 2. A treatment of certain metaphysical problems. 3. An examination of the system and method of the Kalam. This, in fact, is a correct account of the contents of the book; but in the second part of the Introduction, in which the theme of this work is defined, the author mentions only the first-named subject. He observes "My primary object is to explain certain terms occurring in the prophetic book. Of these some are homonymous, some figurative, and some hybrid terms." "This work has also a second object. It is designed to explain certain obscure figures which occur in the Prophets, and are not distinctly characterised as being figures" (2). Yet from this observation it must not be inferred that Maimonides abandoned his original purpose; for he examines the Kalam in the last chapters of the First Part (ch. lxx.-lxxvi.), and treats of certain metaphysical themes in the beginning of the Second Part (Introd. and ch. i.-xxv.). But in the passage quoted above he confines himself to a delineation of the main object of this treatise, and advisedly leaves unmentioned the other two subjects, which, however important they may be, are here of subordinate interest. Nor did he consider it necessary to expatiate on these subjects; he only wrote for the student, for whom a mere reference to works on philosophy and science was sufficient. We therefore meet now and then with such phrases as the following "This is folly discussed in works on metaphysics." By references of this kind the author may have intended so create a taste for the study of philosophical works. But our observation only holds good with regard to the Aristotelian philosophy. The writings of the Mutakallemim are never commended by him; he states their opinions, and tells his disciple that he would not find any additional argument, even if he were to read all their voluminous works (133). Maimonides was a zealous disciple of Aristotle, although the theory of the Kalam might seem to have been more congenial to Jewish thought and belief. The Kalam upheld the theory of God's Existence, Incorporeality, and Unity, together with the creatio ex nihilo. Maimonides nevertheless opposed the Kalam, and, anticipating the question, why preference should be given to the system of Aristotle, which included the theory of the Eternity of the

Universe, a theory contrary to the fundamental teaching of the Scriptures, he exposed the weakness of the Kalam and its fallacies.

The exposition of Scriptural texts is divided by the author into two parts the first part treats of homonymous, figurative, and hybrid terms, [*1] employed in reference to God; the second part relates to Biblical figures and allegories. These two parts do not closely follow each other; they are separated by the examination of the Kalam, and the discussion of metaphysical problems. It seems that the author adopted this arrangement for the following reason first of all, he intended to establish the fact that the Biblical anthropomorphisms do not imply corporeality, and that the Divine Being of whom the Bible speaks could therefore be regarded as identical with the Primal Cause of the philosophers. Having established this principle, he discusses from a purely metaphysical point of view the properties of the Primal Cause and its relation to the universe. A solid foundation is thus established for the esoteric exposition of Scriptural passages. Before discussing metaphysical problems, which he treats in accordance with Aristotelian philosophy, he disposes of the Kalam, and demonstrates that its arguments are illogical and illusory.

The "Guide for the Perplexed" contains, therefore, an Introduction and the following four parts:--1. On homonymous, figurative, and hybrid terms, 2. On the Supreme Being and His relation to the universe, according to the Kalam. 3. On the Primal Cause and its relation to the universe, according to the philosophers. 4. Esoteric exposition of some portions of the Bible (sodot) a. Maaseh bereshith, or the history of the Creation (Genesis, ch. i-iv .); b. on Prophecy; c. Maaseh mercabhah, or the description of the divine chariot (Ezekiel, ch. i.).

According to this plan, the work ends with the seventh chapter of the Third Part. The chapters which follow may be considered as an appendix; they treat of the following theological themes the Existence of Evil, Omniscience and Providence, Temptations, Design in Nature, in the Law, and in the Biblical Narratives, and finally the true Worship of God.

In the Introduction to the "Guide," Maimonides (1) describes the object of the work and the method he has followed; (2) treats of similes; (3) gives "directions for the study of the work"; and (4) discusses the usual causes of inconsistencies in authors.

1 (pp. 2-3). Inquiring into the root of the evil which the Guide was intended to remove, viz., the conflict between science and religion, the author perceived that in most cases it originated in a misinterpretation of the anthropomorphisms in Holy Writ. 'The main difficulty is found in the ambiguity of the words employed by the prophets when speaking of the Divine Being; the question arises whether they are applied to the Deity and to other things in one and the same sense or equivocally; in the latter case the author distinguishes between homonyms pure and simple, figures, and hybrid terms. In order to show that the Biblical anthropomorphisms do not imply the corporeality of the Deity, he seeks in each instance to demonstrate that the expression under examination is a perfect homonym denoting things which are totally distinct from each other, and whenever such a demonstration is impossible, he assumes that the expression is a hybrid term, that is, being employed in one instance figuratively and in another homonymously. His explanation of "form" (zelem) may serve as an illustration.

According to his opinion, it invariably denotes "form" in the philosophical acceptation of the term, viz., the complex of the essential properties of a thing. But to obviate objections he proposes an alternative view, to take zelem as a hybrid term that may be explained as a class noun denoting only things of the same class, or as a homonym employed for totally different things, viz., "form" in the philosophical sense, and "form" in the ordinary meaning of the word. Maimonides seems to have refrained from explaining anthropomorphisms as figurative expressions, lest by such interpretation he might implicitly admit the existence of a certain relation and comparison between the Creator and His creatures.

Jewish philosophers before Maimonides enunciated and demonstrated the Unity and the Incorporeality of the Divine Being, and interpreted Scriptural metaphors on the principle that "the Law speaks in the language of man" but our author adopted a new and altogether original method. The Commentators, when treating of anthropomorphisms, generally contented themselves with the statement that the term under consideration must not be taken in its literal sense, or they paraphrased the passage in expressions which implied a lesser degree of corporeality. The Talmud, the Midrashim, and the Targumim abound in paraphrases of this kind. Saadiah in "Emunot ve-de'ot," Bahya in his "Hobot ha-lebabot," and Jehudah ha-levi in the "Cusari," insist on the necessity and the appropriateness of such interpretations. Saadiah enumerates ten terms which primarily denote organs of the human body, and are figuratively applied to God. To establish this point of view he cites numerous instances in which the terms in question are used in a figurative sense without being applied to God. Saadiah further shows that the Divine attributes are either qualifications of such of God's actions as are perceived by man, or they imply a negation. The correctness of this method was held to be so obvious that some authors found it necessary to apologize to the reader for introducing such well-known topics. From R. Abraham ben David's strictures on the Yad hahazakah it is, however, evident that in the days of Maimonides persons were not wanting who defended the literal interpretation of certain anthropomorphisms. Maimonides, therefore, did not content himself with the vague and general rule, "The Law speaks in the language of man," but sought carefully to define the meaning of each term when applied to God, and to identify it with some transcendental and metaphysical term. In pursuing this course he is sometimes forced to venture upon an interpretation which is much too far-fetched to commend itself even to the supposed philosophical reader. In such instances he generally adds a simple and plain explanation, and leaves it to the option of the reader to choose the one which appears to him preferable. The enumeration of the different meanings of a word is often, from a philological point of view, incomplete; he introduces only such significations as serve his object. When treating of an imperfect homonym, the several significations of which are derived from one primary signification, he apparently follows a certain system which he does not employ in the interpretation of perfect homonyms. The homonymity of the term is not proved; the author confines himself to the remark, "It is employed homonymously," even when the various meanings of a word might easily be traced to a common source.

2 (pag. 4-8). In addition to the explanation of homonyms Maimonides undertakes to interpret similes and allegories. At first it had been his intention to write two distinct works--Sefer ha-nebuah, "A Book on Prophecy," and Sefer ha-shevaah, "A Book of Reconciliation." In the former work he had intended to explain difficult passages of the

Bible, and in the latter to expound such passages in the Midrash and the Talmud as seemed to be in conflict with common sense. With respect to the "Book of Reconciliation," he abandoned his plan, because he apprehended that neither the learned nor the unlearned would profit by it the one would find it superfluous, the other tedious. The subject of the "Book on Prophecy" is treated in the present work, and also strange passages that occasionally occur in the Talmud and the Midrash are explained.

The treatment of the simile must vary according as the simile is compound or simple. In the first case, each part represents a separate idea and demands a separate interpretation; in the other case, only one idea is represented, and it is not necessary to assign to each part a separate metaphorical meaning. This division the author illustrates by citing the dream of Jacob (Gen. xxviii. 12 sqq.), and the description of the adulteress (Prov. vii. 6 sqq.). He gives no rule by which it might be ascertained to which of the two categories a simile belongs, and, like other Commentators, he seems to treat as essential those details of a simile for which he can offer an adequate interpretation. As a general principle, he warns against the confusion and the errors which arise when an attempt is made to expound every single detail of a simile. His own explanations are not intended to be exhaustive; on the contrary, they are to consist of brief allusions to the idea represented by the simile, of mere suggestions, which the reader is expected to develop and to complete. The author thus aspires to follow in the wake of the Creator, whose works can only be understood after a long and persevering study. Yet it is possible that he derived his preference for a reserved and mysterious style from the example of ancient philosophers, who discussed metaphysical problems in figurative and enigmatic language. Like Ibn Ezra, who frequently concludes his exposition of a Biblical passage with the phrase, "Here a profound idea (sod) is hidden," Maimonides somewhat mysteriously remarks at the end of different chapters, "Note this," "Consider it well." In such phrases some Commentators fancied that they found references to metaphysical theories which the author was not willing fully to discuss. Whether this was the case or not, in having recourse to that method he was not, as some have suggested, actuated by fear of being charged with heresy. He expresses his opinion on the principal theological questions without reserve, and does not dread the searching inquiries of opponents; for he boldly announces that their displeasure would not deter him from teaching the truth and guiding those who are able and willing to follow him, however few these might be. When, however, we examine the work itself, we are at a loss to discover to which parts the professed enigmatic method was applied. His theories concerning the Deity, the Divine attributes, angels, creatio ex nihilo, prophecy, and other subjects, are treated as fully as might be expected. It is true that a cloud of mysterious phrases enshrouds the interpretation of Ma'aseh bereshit (Gen. i-iii.) and Ma'aseh mercabah (Ez. i.). But the significant words occurring in these portions are explained in the First Part of this work, and a full exposition is found in the Second and Third Parts. Nevertheless the statement that the exposition was never intended to be explicit occurs over and over again. The treatment of the first three chapters of Genesis concludes thus: "These remarks, together with what we have already observed on the subject, and what we may have to add, must suffice both for the object and for the reader we have in view" (II. xxx.).

In like manner, he declares, after the explanation of the first chapter of Ezekiel "I have given you here as many suggestions as maybe of service to you, if you will give

them a further development. . . . Do not expect to hear from me anything more on this subject, for I have, though with some hesitation, gone as far in my explanation as I possibly could go" (III. vii.).

3 (pag. 8-9), In the next paragraph, headed, "Directions for the Study of this Work," he implores the reader not to be hasty with his Criticism, and to bear in mind that every sentence, indeed every word, had been fully considered before it was written down. Yet it might easily happen that the reader could not reconcile his own view with that of the author, and in such a case he is asked to ignore the disapproved chapter or section altogether. Such disapproval Maimonides attributes to a mere misconception on the part of the reader, a fate which awaits every work composed in a mystical style. In adopting this peculiar style, he intended to reduce to a minimum the violation of the rule laid down in the Mishnah (Hagigah ii. i), that metaphysics should not be taught publicly. The violation of this rule he justifies by citing the following two Mishnaic maxims: "It is time to do something in honour of the Lord" (Berakot ix. 5), and "Let all thy acts be guided by pure intentions" (Abot ii. i 7). Maimonides increased the mysteriousness of the treatise, by expressing his wish that the reader should abstain from expounding the work, lest he might spread in the name of the author opinions which the latter never held. But it does not occur to him that the views he enunciates might in themselves be erroneous. He is positive that his own theory is unexceptionally correct, that his esoteric interpretations of Scriptural texts are sound, and that those who differed from him--viz., the Mutakallemim on the one hand, and the unphilosophical Rabbis on the other--are indefensibly wrong. In this respect other Jewish philosophers--e.g. Saadiah and Bahya--were far less positive; they were conscious of their own fallibility, and invited the reader to make such corrections as might appear needful. Owing to this strong self-reliance of Maimonides, it is not to be expected that opponents would receive a fair and impartial judgment at his hands.

4 (pag. 9-11). The same self-reliance is noticeable in the next and concluding paragraph of the Introduction. Here he treats of the contradictions which are to be found in literary works, and he divides them with regard to their origin into seven classes. The first four classes comprise the apparent contradictions, which can be traced back to the employment of elliptical speech the other three classes comprise the real contradictions, and are due to carelessness and oversight, or they are intended to serve some special purpose. The Scriptures, the Talmud, and the Midrash abound in instances of apparent contradictions; later works contain real contradictions, which escaped the notice of the writers. In the present treatise, however, there occur only such contradictions as are the result of intention and design.

PART I.

The homonymous expressions which are discussed in the First Part include--(1) nouns and verbs used in reference to God, ch. i. to ch. xlix.; (2) attributes of the Deity, ch. 1. to lx.; (3) expressions commonly regarded as names of God, ch. lxi. to lxx. In the first section the following groups can be distinguished--(a) expressions which denote form and figure, cii. i. to ch. vi.; (b) space or relations of space, ch. viii. to ch. xxv.; (c) parts of the animal body and their functions, ch. xxviii. to ch. xlix. Each of these groups includes chapters not connected with the main subject, but which serve as a help for the better understanding of previous or succeeding interpretations. Every word selected for

discussion bears upon some Scriptural text which, according to the opinion of the author, has been misinterpreted. But such phrases as "the mouth of the Lord," and "the hand of the Lord," are not introduced, because their figurative meaning is too obvious to be misunderstood.

The lengthy digressions which are here and there interposed appear like outbursts of feeling and passion which the author could not repress. Yet they are "words fitly spoken in the right place", for they gradually unfold the author's theory, and acquaint the reader with those general principles on which he founds the interpretations in the succeeding chapters. Moral reflections are of frequent occurrence, and demonstrate the intimate connexion between a virtuous life and the attainment of higher knowledge, in accordance with the maxim current long before Maimonides, and expressed in the Biblical words, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Ps. cxi. 10). No opportunity is lost to inculcate this lesson, he it in a passing remark or in an elaborate essay.

The discussion of the term "zelem" (cii. i.) afforded the first occasion for reflections of this kind. Man, "the image of God," is defined as a living and rational being, as though the moral faculties of man were not an essential element of his existence, and his power to discern between good and evil were the result of the first sin. According to Maimonides, the moral faculty would, us fact, not have been required, if man had remained a purely rational being. It is only through the senses that "the knowledge of good and evil" has become indispensable. The narrative of Adam's fall is, according to Maimonides, an allegory representing the relation which exists between sensation, moral faculty, and intellect. In this early part (ch. ii.), however, the author does not yet mention this theory; on the contrary, every allusion to it is for the present studiously avoided, its full exposition being reserved for the Second Part.

The treatment of hazah "he beheld" (ch. vi), is followed by the advice that the student should not approach metaphysics otherwise than after a sound and thorough preparation, because a rash attempt to solve abstruse problems brings nothing but injury upon the inexperienced investigator. The author points to the "nobles of the children of Israel" (Exod. xxiv. s i), who, according to his interpretation, fell into this error, and received their deserved punishment. He gives additional force to these exhortations by citing a dictum of Aristotle to the same effect. In a like way he refers to the allegorical use of certain terms by Plato (ch. xvii.) in support of his interpretation of "zur" (lit., "rock") as denoting "Primal Cause."

Deleted the rest of the preface

INTRODUCTION

[Letter of the Author to his Pupil, R. Joseph Ibn Aknin.]

In the name of GOD, Lord of the Universe.

To R. Joseph (may God protect him!), son of R. Jehudah (may his repose be in Paradise!):--

My dear pupil, ever since you resolved to come to me, from a distant country, and to study under my direction, I thought highly of your thirst for knowledge, and your fondness for speculative pursuits, which found expression in your poems. I refer to the time when I received your writings in prose and verse from Alexandria. I was then not yet able to test your powers of apprehension, and I thought that your desire might possibly exceed your capacity. But when you had gone with me through a course of astronomy, after having completed the [other] elementary studies which are indispensable for the understanding of that science, I was still more gratified by the acuteness and the quickness of your apprehension. Observing your great fondness for mathematics, I let you study them more deeply, for I felt sure of your ultimate success. Afterwards, when I took you through a course of logic, I found that my great expectations of you were confirmed, and I considered you fit to receive from me an exposition of the esoteric ideas contained in the prophetic books, that you might understand them as they are understood by men of culture. When I commenced by way of hints, I noticed that you desired additional explanation, urging me to expound some metaphysical problems; to teach you the system of the Mutakallemim; to tell you whether their arguments were based on logical proof; and if not, what their method was. I perceived that you had acquired some knowledge in those matters from others, and that you were perplexed and bewildered; yet you sought to find out a solution to your difficulty. I urged you to desist from this pursuit, and enjoined you to continue your studies systematically; for my object was that the truth should present itself in connected order, and that you should not hit upon it by mere chance. Whilst you studied with me I never refused to explain difficult verses in the Bible or passages in rabbinical literature which we happened to meet. When, by the will of God, we parted, and you went your way, our discussions aroused in me a resolution which had long been dormant. Your absence has prompted me to compose this treatise for you and for those who are like you, however few they may be. I have divided it into chapters, each of which shall be sent to you as soon as it is completed. Farewell!

Prefatory Remarks.

"Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk, for I lift up my soul unto Thee." (Psalm cxliii. S.)

"Unto you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men." (Prov. viii. 4)

"Bow down thine ear and hear the words of the wise, and apply thine heart unto my knowledge." (Prov. xxii. 17.) My primary object in this work is to explain certain words occurring in the prophetic books. Of these some are homonyms, and of their

several meanings the ignorant choose the wrong ones; other terms which are employed in a figurative sense are erroneously taken by such persons in their primary signification. There are also hybrid terms, denoting things which are of the same class from one point of view and of a different class from another. It is not here intended to explain all these expressions to the unlettered or to mere tyros, a previous knowledge of Logic and Natural Philosophy being indispensable, or to those who confine their attention to the study of our holy Law, I mean the study of the canonical law alone; for the true knowledge of the Torah is the special aim of this and similar works.

The object of this treatise is to enlighten a religious man who has been trained to believe in the truth of our holy Law, who conscientiously fulfils his moral and religious duties, and at the same time has been successful in his philosophical studies. Human reason has attracted him to abide within its sphere; and he finds it difficult to accept as correct the teaching based on the literal interpretation of the Law, and especially that which he himself or others derived from those homonymous, metaphorical, or hybrid expressions. Hence he is lost in perplexity and anxiety. If he be guided solely by reason, and renounce his previous views which are based on those expressions, he would consider that he had rejected the fundamental principles of the Law; and even if he retains the opinions which were derived from those expressions, and if, instead of following his reason, he abandon its guidance altogether, it would still appear that his religious convictions had suffered loss and injury. For he would then be left with those errors which give rise to fear and anxiety, constant grief and great perplexity.

This work has also a second object in view. It seeks to explain certain obscure figures which occur in the Prophets, and are not distinctly characterized as being figures. Ignorant and superficial readers take them in a literal, not in a figurative sense. Even well informed persons are bewildered if they understand these passages in their literal signification, but they are entirely relieved of their perplexity when we explain the figure, or merely suggest that the terms are figurative. For this reason I have called this book Guide for the Perplexed.

I do not presume to think that this treatise settles every doubt in the minds of those who understand it, but I maintain that it settles the greater part of their difficulties. No intelligent man will require and expect that on introducing any subject I shall completely exhaust it; or that on commencing the exposition of a figure I shall fully explain all its parts. Such a course could not be followed by a teacher in a viva voce exposition, much less by an author in writing a book, without becoming a target for every foolish conceited person to discharge the arrows of folly at him. Some general principles bearing upon this point have been fully discussed in our works on the Talmud, and we have there called the attention of the reader to many themes of this kind. We also stated (Mishneh torah, I. ii. 12, and iv. 10) that the expression Ma'ase Bereshit (Account of the Creation) signified" Natural Science," and Ma'aseh Mercabah ("Description of the Chariot") Metaphysics, and we explained the force of the Rabbinical dictum, The Ma'aseh Mercabah must not be fully expounded even in the presence of a single student, unless he be wise and able to reason for himself, and even then you should merely acquaint him with the heads of the different sections of the subject. (Babyl. Talm. Hagigah, fol. II b). You must, therefore, not expect from me more than such heads. And even these have not been methodically and systematically

arranged in this work, but have been, on the contrary, scattered, and are interspersed with other topics which we shall have occasion to explain. My object in adopting this arrangement is that the truths should be at one time apparent, and at another time concealed. Thus we shall not be in opposition to the Divine Will (from which it is wrong to deviate) which has withheld from the multitude the truths required for the knowledge of God, according to the words, "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him" (Ps. xxv. 14).

Know that also in Natural Science there are topics which are not to be fully explained. Our Sages laid down the rule, "The Ma'aseh Bereshith must not be expounded in the presence of two." If an author were to explain these principles in writing, it would be equal to expounding them unto thousands of men. For this reason the prophets treat these subjects in figures, and our Sages, imitating the method of Scripture, speak of them in metaphors and allegories; because there is a close affinity between these subjects and metaphysics, and indeed they form part of its mysteries. Do not imagine that these most difficult problems can be thoroughly understood by any one of us. This is not the case. At times the truth shines so brilliantly that we perceive it as clear as day. Our nature and habit then draw a veil over our perception, and we return to a darkness almost as dense as before. We are like those who, though beholding frequent flashes of lightning, still find themselves in the thickest darkness of the night. On some the lightning flashes in rapid succession, and they seem to be in continuous light, and their night is as clear as the day. This was the degree of prophetic excellence attained by (Moses) the greatest of prophets, to whom God said, "But as for thee, stand thou here by Me" (Deut. v. 31), and of whom it is written "the skin of his face shone," etc. (Exod. xxxiv. 29). [Some perceive the prophetic flash at long intervals; this is the degree of most prophets.] By others only once during the whole night is a flash of lightning perceived. This is the case with those of whom we are informed, "They prophesied, and did not prophesy again" (Num. xi. 25). There are some to whom the flashes of lightning appear with varying intervals; others are in the condition of men, whose darkness is illumined not by lightning, but by some kind of crystal or similar stone, or other substances that possess the property of shining during the night; and to them even this small amount of light is not continuous, but now it shines and now it vanishes, as if it were "the flame of the rotating sword."

The degrees in the perfection of men vary according to these distinctions. Concerning those who never beheld the light even for one day, but walk in continual darkness, it is written, "They know not, neither will they understand; they walk on in darkness" (Ps. lxxxii. 5). Truth, in spite of all its powerful manifestations, is completely withheld from them, and the following words of Scripture may be applied to them, "And now men see not the light which is bright in the skies" (Job xxxvii. 21). They are the multitude of ordinary men: there is no need to notice them in this treatise.

You must know that if a person, who has attained a certain degree of perfection, wishes to impart to others, either orally or in writing, any portion of the knowledge which he has acquired of these subjects, he is utterly unable to be as systematic and explicit as he could be in a science of which the method is well known. The same difficulties which he encountered when investigating the subject for himself will attend him when endeavouring to instruct others: viz., at one time the explanation will appear lucid, at another time, obscure: this property of the subject appears to remain the same both to the advanced scholar and to the beginner. For this reason, great theological scholars gave instruction in all such matters only by means of metaphors and allegories. They frequently employed them in forms varying more or less essentially. In most cases they placed the lesson to be illustrated at the beginning, or in the middle, or at the end of the simile. When they could find no simile which from beginning to end corresponded to the idea which was to be illustrated, they divided the subject of the lesson, although in itself one whole, into different parts, and expressed each by a separate figure. Still more obscure are those instances in which one simile is employed to illustrate many subjects, the beginning of the simile representing one thing, the end another. Sometimes the whole metaphor may refer to two cognate subjects in the same branch of knowledge.

If we were to teach in these disciplines, without the use of parables and figures, we should be compelled to resort to expressions both profound and transcendental, and by no means more intelligible than metaphors and similes: as though the wise and learned were drawn into this course by the Divine Will, in the same way as they are compelled to follow the laws of nature in matters relating to the body. You are no doubt aware that the Almighty, desiring to lead us to perfection and to improve our state of society, has revealed to us laws which are to regulate our actions. These laws, however, presuppose an advanced state of intellectual culture. We must first form a conception of the Existence of the Creator according to our capabilities; that is, we must have a knowledge of Metaphysics. But this discipline can only be approached after the study of Physics: for the science of Physics borders on Metaphysics, and must even precede it in the course of our studies, as is clear to all who are familiar with these questions. Therefore the Almighty commenced Holy Writ with the description of the Creation, that is, with Physical Science; the subject being on the one hand most weighty and important, and on the other hand our means of fully comprehending those great problems being limited. He described those profound truths, which His Divine Wisdom found it necessary to communicate to us, in allegorical, figurative, and metaphorical language. Our Sages have said (Yemen Midrash on Gen. i. 1), "It is impossible to give a full account of the Creation to man. Therefore Scripture simply tells us, In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. i. 1). Thus they have suggested that this subject is a deep mystery, and in the words of Solomon, "Far off and exceedingly deep, who can find it out?" (Eccles. vii. 24). It has been treated in metaphors in order that the uneducated may comprehend it according to the measure of their faculties and the feebleness of their apprehension, while educated persons may take it in a different sense. In our commentary on the Mishnah we stated our intention to explain difficult problems in the Book on Prophecy and in the Book of Harmony. In the latter we intended to examine all the passages in the Midrash which, if taken literally, appear to be inconsistent with truth and common sense, and must therefore be

taken figuratively. Many years have elapsed since I first commenced those works. I had proceeded but a short way when I became dissatisfied with my original plan. For I observed that by expounding these passages by means of allegorical and mystical terms, we do not explain anything, but merely substitute one thing for another of the same nature, whilst in explaining them fully our efforts would displease most people; and my sole object in planning to write those books was to make the contents of Midrashim and the exoteric lessons of the prophecies intelligible to everybody. We have further noticed that when an ill-informed Theologian reads these Midrashim, he will find no difficulty; for possessing no knowledge of the properties of things, he will not reject statements which involve impossibilities. When, however, a person who is both religious and well educated reads them, he cannot escape the following dilemma: either he takes them literally, and questions the abilities of the author and the soundness of his mind-doing thereby nothing which is opposed to the principles of our faith,--or he will acquiesce in assuming that the passages in question have some secret meaning, and he will continue to hold the author in high estimation whether he understood the allegory or not. As regards prophecy in its various degrees and the different metaphors used in the prophetic books, we shall give in the present work an explanation, according to a different method. Guided by these considerations I have refrained from writing those two books as I had previously intended. In my larger work, the Mishnah Torah, I have contented myself with briefly stating the principles of our faith and its fundamental truths, together with such hints as approach a clear exposition. In this work, however, I address those who have studied philosophy and have acquired sound knowledge, and who while firm in religious matters are perplexed and bewildered on account of the ambiguous and figurative expressions employed in the holy writings. Some chapters may be found in this work which contain no reference whatever to homonyms. Such chapters will serve as an introduction to others: they will contain some reference to the signification of a homonym which I do not wish to mention in that place, or explain some figure: point out that a certain expression is a figure: treat of difficult passages generally misunderstood in consequence of the homonymy they include, or because the simile they contain is taken in place of that which it represents, and vice versa.

Having spoken of similes, I proceed to make the following remark:--The key to the understanding and to the full comprehension of all that the Prophets have said is found in the knowledge of the figures, their general ideas, and the meaning of each word they contain. You know the verse:

"I have also spoken in similes by the Prophets" (Hosea xii. 10); and also the verse, "Put forth a riddle and speak a parable" (Ezek. xvii. 2). And because the Prophets continually employ figures, Ezekiel said, "Does He not speak parables?" (xxi. 5). Again, Solomon begins his book of Proverbs with the words, "To understand a proverb and figurative speech, the words of the wise and their dark sayings" (Prov. i. 6); and we read in Midrash, Shir ha-shirim Rabba, i. 1); "To what were the words of the Law to be compared before the time of Solomon? To a well the waters of which are at a great depth, and though cool and fresh, yet no man could drink of them. A clever man joined cord with cord, and rope with rope, and drew up and drank. So Solomon went from figure to figure, and from subject to subject, till he obtained the true sense of the Law." So far go the words of our Sages. I do not believe that any intelligent man thinks that

"the words of the Law" mentioned here as requiring the application of figures in order to be understood, can refer to the rules for building tabernacles, for preparing the lulab, or for the four kinds of trustees. What is really meant is the apprehension of profound and difficult subjects, concerning which our Sages said, "If a man loses in his house a sela, or a pearl, he can find it by lighting a taper worth only one issar. Thus the parables in themselves are of no great value, but through them the words of the holy Law are rendered intelligible." These likewise are the words of our Sages; consider well their statement, that the deeper sense of the words of the holy Law are pearls, and the literal acceptation of a figure is of no value in itself. They compare the hidden meaning included in the literal sense of the simile to a pearl lost in a dark room, which is full of furniture. It is certain that the pearl is in the room, but the man can neither see it nor know where it lies. It is just as if the pearl were no longer in his possession, for, as has been stated, it affords him no benefit whatever until he kindles a light. The same is the case with the comprehension of that which the simile represents. The wise king said, "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in vessels of silver" (Prov. xxv. 11). Hear the explanation of what he said:--The word maskiyoth, the Hebrew equivalent for "vessels," denotes "filigree network"--i.e., things in which there are very small apertures, such as are frequently wrought by silversmiths. They are called in Hebrew maskiyyoth (lit. "transpicuous," from the verb sakah, "he saw," a root which occurs also in the Targum of Onkelos, Gen. xxvi. 8), because the eye penetrates through them. Thus Solomon meant to say, "just as apples of gold in silver filigree with small apertures, so is a word fitly spoken."

See how beautifully the conditions of a good simile are described in this figure! It shows that in every word which has a double sense, a literal one and a figurative one, the plain meaning must be as valuable as silver, and the hidden meaning still more precious: so that the figurative meaning bears the same relation to the literal one as gold to silver. It is further necessary that the plain sense of the phrase shall give to those who consider it some notion of that which the figure represents. just as a golden apple overlaid with a network of silver, when seen at a distance, or looked at superficially, is mistaken for a silver apple, but when a keen-sighted person looks at the object well, he will find what is within, and see that the apple is gold. The same is the case with the figures employed by prophets. Taken literally, such expressions contain wisdom useful for many purposes, among others, for the amelioration of the condition of society; e.g., the Proverbs (of Solomon), and similar sayings in their literal sense. Their hidden meaning, however, is profound wisdom, conducive to the recognition of real truth.

Know that the figures employed by prophets are of two kinds: first, where every word which occurs in the simile represents a certain idea; and secondly, where the simile, as a whole, represents a general idea, but has a great many points which have no reference whatever to that idea: they are simply required to give to the simile its proper form and order, or better to conceal the idea: the simile is therefore continued as far as necessary, according to its literal sense. Consider this well.

An example of the first class of prophetic figures is to be found in Genesis:--"And, behold, a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; and, behold, the angels of God ascending and descending on it" (Gen. xxviii. 12). The word "ladder" refers to one idea: "set up on the earth" to another: "and the top of it reached to heaven"

to a third: "angels of God" to a fourth: "ascending" to a fifth; "descending" to a sixth; "the Lord stood above it" (ver. 13) to a seventh. Every word in this figure introduces a fresh element into the idea represented by the figure.

An example of the second class of prophetic figures is found in Proverbs (vii. 6-26):--"For at the window of my house I looked through my casement, and beheld among the simple ones; I discerned among the youths a young man void of understanding, passing through the street near her corner: and he went the way to her house, in the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark night: and, behold, there met him a woman with the attire of a harlot, and subtil of heart. (She is loud and stubborn; her feet abide not in her house: now the is without, now in the streets, and lieth in wait in every corner.) So she caught him, and kissed him, and with an impudent face said unto him, I have peace offerings with me; this day have I paid my vows. Therefore came I forth to meet thee, diligently to seek thy face, and I have found thee. I have decked my bed with coverings of tapestry, with striped cloths of the yam of Egypt. I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon. Come, let us take our fill of love until the morning: let us solace ourselves with loves. For the goodman is not at home, he is gone a long journey: he hath taken a bag of money with him, and will come home at the day appointed. With her much fair speech she caused him to yield, with the flattering of her lips she forced him. He goeth after her straightway, as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or as fetters to the correction of a fool: till a dart strike through his liver: as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life. Hearken unto me now therefore, O ye children, and attend to the words of my mouth. Let not thine heart decline to her ways, go not astray in her paths. For she hath cast down many wounded: yea, many strong men have been slain by her."

The general principle expounded in all these verses is to abstain from excessive indulgence in bodily pleasures. The author compares the body, which is the source of all sensual pleasures, to a married woman who at the same time is a harlot. And this figure he has taken as the basis of his entire book. We shall hereafter show the wisdom of Solomon in comparing sensual pleasures to an adulterous harlot. We shall explain how aptly he concludes that work with the praises of a faithful wife who devotes herself to the welfare of her husband and of her household. All obstacles which prevent man from attaining his highest aim in life, all the deficiencies in the character of man, all his evil propensities, are to be traced to the body alone. This will be explained later on. The predominant idea running throughout the figure is, that man shall not be entirely guided by his animal, or material nature; for the material substance of man is identical with that of the brute creation.

An adequate explanation of the figure having been given, and its meaning having been shown, do not imagine that you will find in its application a corresponding element for each part of the figure; you must not ask what is meant by "I have peace offerings with me" (ver. 14); by "I have decked my bed with coverings of tapestry" (ver. 16); or what is added to the force of the figure by the observation "for the goodman is not at home" (ver. 19), and so on to the end of the chapter. For all this is merely to complete the illustration of the metaphor in its literal meaning. The circumstances described here are such as are common to adulterers. Such conversations take place between all adulterous persons. You must well understand what I have said, for it is a principle of the utmost importance with respect to those things which I intend to expound. If you observe in one of the chapters that I explained the meaning of a certain figure, and pointed out to you its general scope, do not trouble yourself further in order to find an interpretation of each separate portion, for that would lead you to one of the two following erroneous courses: either you will miss the sense included in the metaphor, or you will be induced to explain certain things which require no explanation, and which are not introduced for that purpose. Through this unnecessary trouble you may fall into the great error which besets most modern sects in their foolish writings and discussions: they all endeavour to find some hidden meaning in expressions which were never uttered by the author in that sense. Your object should be to discover inmost of the figures the general idea which the author wishes to express. In some instances it will be sufficient if you understand from my remarks that a certain expression contains a figure, although I may offer no further comment. For when you know that it is not to be taken literally, you will understand at once to what subject it refers. My statement that it is a figurative expression will, as it were, remove the screen from between the object and the observer.

Directions for the Study of this Work.

If you desire to grasp all that is contained in this book so that nothing shall escape your notice, consider the chapters in connected order. In studying each chapter, do not content yourself with comprehending its principal subject, but attend to every term mentioned therein, although it may seem to have no connection with the principal subject. For what I have written in this work was not the suggestion of the moment: it is the result of deep study and great application. Care has been taken that nothing that appeared doubtful should be left unexplained. Nothing of what is mentioned is out of place, every remark will be found to illustrate the subject-matter of the respective chapter. Do not read superficially, lest you do me an injury, and derive no benefit for yourself. You must study thoroughly and read continually; for you will then find the solution of those important problems of religion, which are a source of anxiety to all intelligent men. I adjure any reader of my book, in the name of the Most High, not to add any explanation even to a single word: nor to explain to another any portion of it except such passages as have been fully treated of by previous theological authorities: he must not teach others anything that he has learnt from my work alone, and that has not been hitherto discussed by any of our authorities. The reader must, moreover, beware of raising objections to any of my statements,

because it is very probable that he may understand my words to mean the exact opposite to what I intended to say. He will injure me, while I endeavoured to benefit him. "He will requite me evil for good." Let the reader make a careful study of this work; and if his doubt be removed on even one point, let him praise his Maker and rest contented with the knowledge he has acquired. But if he derive from it no benefit whatever, he may consider the book as if it had never been written. Should he notice any opinions with which he does not agree, let him endeavour to find a suitable explanation, even if it seem far-fetched, in order that he may judge me charitably. Such a duty we owe to every one. We owe it especially to our scholars and theologians, who endeavour to teach us what is the truth according to the best of their ability. I feel assured that those of my readers who have not studied philosophy, will still derive profit from many a chapter. But the thinker whose studies have brought him into collision with religion, will, as I have already mentioned, derive much benefit from every chapter. How greatly will he rejoice! How agreeably will my words strike his ears! Those, however, whose minds are confused with false notions and perverse methods, who regard their misleading studies as sciences, and imagine themselves philosophers, though they have no knowledge that could truly be termed science, will object to many chapters, and will find in them many insuperable difficulties, because they do not understand their meaning, and because I expose therein the absurdity of their perverse notions, which constitute their riches and peculiar treasure, "stored up for their ruin." God knows that I hesitated very much before writing on the subjects contained in this work, since they are profound mysteries: they are topics which, since the time of our captivity have not been treated by any of our scholars as far as we possess their writings; how then shall I now make a beginning and discuss them? But I rely on two precedents: first, to similar cases our Sages applied the verse, "It is time to do something in honour of the Lord: for they have made void thy law" (Ps. cxix. 126). Secondly, they have said, "Let all thy acts be guided by pure intentions." On these two principles I relied while composing some parts of this work. Lastly, when I have a difficult subject before me--when I find the road narrow, and can see no other way of teaching a well established truth except by pleasing one intelligent man and displeasing ten thousand fools--I prefer to address myself to the one man, and to take no notice whatever of the condemnation of the multitude; I prefer to extricate that intelligent man from his embarrassment and show him the cause of his perplexity, so that he may attain perfection and be at peace.

Introductory Remarks.

[ON METHOD]

THERE are seven causes of inconsistencies and contradictions to be met with in a literary work. The first cause arises from the fact that the author collects the opinions of various men, each differing from the other, but neglects to mention the name of the author of any particular opinion. In such a work contradictions or inconsistencies must occur, since any two statements may belong to two different authors. Second cause: The author holds at first one opinion which he subsequently rejects: in his work., however, both his original and altered views are retained. Third cause: The passages in question are not all to be taken literally: some only are to be understood in their literal

sense, while in others figurative language is employed, which includes another meaning besides the literal one: or, in the apparently inconsistent passages, figurative language is employed which, if taken literally, would seem to be contradictories or contraries. Fourth cause: The premises are not identical in both statements, but for certain reasons they are not fully stated in these passages: or two propositions with different subjects which are expressed by the same term without having the difference in meaning pointed out, occur in two passages. The contradiction is therefore only apparent, but there is no contradiction in reality. The fifth cause is traceable to the use of a certain method adopted in teaching and expounding profound problems. Namely, a difficult and obscure theorem must sometimes be mentioned and assumed as known, for the illustration of some elementary and intelligible subject which must be taught beforehand the commencement being always made with the easier thing. The teacher must therefore facilitate, in any manner which he can devise, the explanation of those theorems, which have to be assumed as known, and he must content himself with giving a general though somewhat inaccurate notion on the subject. It is, for the present, explained according to the capacity of the students, that they may comprehend it as far as they are required to understand the subject. Later on, the same subject is thoroughly treated and fully developed in its right place. Sixth cause: The contradiction is not apparent, and only becomes evident through a series of premises. The larger the number of premises necessary to prove the contradiction between the two conclusions, the greater is the chance that it will escape detection, and that the author will not perceive his own inconsistency. Only when from each conclusion, by means of suitable premises, an inference is made, and from the enunciation thus inferred, by means of proper arguments, other conclusions are formed, and after that process has been repeated many times, then it becomes clear that the original conclusions are contradictories or contraries. Even able writers are liable to overlook such inconsistencies. If, however, the contradiction between the original statements can at once be discovered, and the author, while writing the second, does not think of the first, he evinces a greater deficiency, and his words deserve no notice whatever. Seventh cause: It is sometimes necessary to introduce such metaphysical matter as may partly be disclosed, but must partly be concealed: while, therefore, on one occasion the object which the author has in view may demand that the metaphysical problem be treated as solved in one way, it may be convenient on another occasion to treat it as solved in the opposite way. The author must endeavour, by concealing the fact as much as possible, to prevent the uneducated reader from perceiving the contradiction.

Inconsistencies occurring in the Mishnah and Boraitot are traceable to the first cause. You meet frequently in the Gemara with passages like the following:--"Does not the beginning of the passage contradict the end? No: the beginning is the dictum of a certain Rabbi: the end that of an other"; or "Rabbi (Jehudah ha-Nasi) approved of the opinion of a certain rabbi in one case and gave it therefore anonymously, and having accepted that of another rabbi in the other case he introduced that view without naming the authority"; or "Who is the author of this anonymous dictum? Rabbi A." "Who is the author of that paragraph in the Mishnah? Rabbi B." Instances of this kind are innumerable.

Apparent contradictions or differences occurring in the Gemara may be traced to the first cause and to the second, as e.g., "In this particular case he agrees with this

rabbi"; or "He agrees with him in one point, but differs from him in another"; or "These two dicta are the opinions of two Amoraim, who differ as regards the statement made by a certain rabbi." These are examples of contradictions traceable to the first cause. The following are instances which may be traced to the second cause. "Rabba altered his opinion on that point"; it then becomes necessary to consider which of the two opinions came second. Again," In the first recension of the Talmud by Rabbi Ashi, he made one assertion, and in the second a different one."

The inconsistencies and contradictions met with in some passages of the prophetic books, if taken literally, are all traceable to the third or fourth cause, and it is exclusively in reference to this subject that I wrote the present Introduction. You know that the following expression frequently occurs, "One verse says this, another that," showing the contradiction, and explaining that either some premise is wanting or the subject is altered. Comp. "Solomon, it is not sufficient that thy words contradict thy father: they are themselves inconsistent, etc." Many similar instances occur in the writings of our Sages. The passages in the prophetical books which our Sages have explained, mostly refer to religious or moral precepts. Our desire, however, is to discuss such passages as contain apparent contradictions in regard to the principles of our faith. I shall explain some of them in various chapters of the present work: for this subject also belongs to the secrets of the Torah. Contradictions traceable to the seventh cause occurring in the prophetical works require special investigation: and no one should express his opinion on that matter by reasoning and arguing without weighing the matter well in his mind.

Inconsistencies in the writings of true philosophers are traceable to the fifth cause. Contradictions occurring in the writings of most authors and commentators, such as are not included in the above-mentioned works, are due to the sixth cause. Many examples of this class of contradictions are found in the Midrash and the Agada: hence the saying, "We must not raise questions concerning the contradictions met with in the Agada." You may also notice in them contradictions due to the seventh cause. Any inconsistency discovered in the present work will be found to arise in consequence of the fifth cause or the seventh. Notice this, consider its truth, and remember it well, lest you misunderstand some of the chapters in this book.

Having concluded these introductory remarks I proceed to examine those expressions, to the true meaning of which, as apparent from the context, it is necessary to direct your attention. This book will then be a key admitting to places the gates of which would otherwise be closed. When the gates are opened and men enter, their souls will enjoy repose, their eyes will be gratified, and even their bodies, after all toil and labour, will be refreshed.

PART ONE

"Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in."--(Isa. xxvi. 2.)

CHAPTER I

Some have been of opinion that by the Hebrew zelem, the shape and figure of a thing is to be understood, and this explanation led men to believe in the corporeality [of the Divine Being]: for they thought that the words "Let us make man in our zelem" (Gen. i. 26), implied that God had the form of a human being, i.e., that He had figure and shape, and that, consequently, He was corporeal. They adhered faithfully to this view, and thought that if they were to relinquish it they would eo ipso reject the truth of the Bible: and further, if they did not conceive God as having a body possessed of face and limbs, similar to their own in appearance, they would have to deny even the existence of God. The sole difference which they admitted, was that He excelled in greatness and splendour, and that His substance was not flesh and blood. Thus far went their conception of the greatness and glory of God. The incorporeality of the Divine Being, and His unity, in the true sense of the word--for there is no real unity without incorporeality--will be fully proved in the course of the present treatise. (Part II., ch. i.) In this chapter it is our sole intention to explain the meaning of the words zelem and demut. I hold that the Hebrew equivalent of "form" in the ordinary acceptation of the word, viz., the figure and shape of a thing, is toar. Thus we find "[And Joseph was] beautiful in toar ('form'), and beautiful in appearance" (Gen. xxxix. 6): "What form (toar) is he of?" (1 Sam. xxviii. 14): "As the form (toar) of the children of a king" (Judges viii. 18). It is also applied to form produced by human labour, as "He marketh its form (toar) with a line," "and he marketh its form (toar) with the compass" (Isa. xliv. 13). This term is not at all applicable to God. The term zelem, on the other hand, signifies the specific form, viz., that which constitutes the essence of a thing, whereby the thing is what it is; the reality of a thing in so far as it is that particular being. In man the "form" is that constituent which gives him human perception: and on account of this intellectual perception the term zelem is employed in the sentences "In the zelem of God he created him" (Gen. i. 27). It is therefore rightly said, "Thou despisest their zelem" (Ps. lxiii. 20); the "contempt" can only concern the soul--the specific form of man, not the properties and shape of his body. I am also of opinion that the reason why this term is used for "idols" may be found in the circumstance that they are worshipped on account of some idea represented by them, not on account of their figure and shape. For the same reason the term is used in the expression, "the forms (zalme) of your

emerods" (1 Sam. vi. 5), for the chief object was the removal of the injury caused by the emerods, not a change of their shape. As, however, it must be admitted that the term zelem is employed in these two cases, viz. "the images of the emerods" and "the idols" on account of the external shape, the term zelem is either a homonym or a hybrid term, and would denote both the specific form and the outward shape, and similar properties relating to the dimensions and the shape of material bodies; and in the phrase "Let us make man in our zelem" (Gen. i. 26), the term signifies "the specific form" of man, viz., his intellectual perception, and does not refer to his "figure" or "shape." Thus we have shown the difference between zelem and toar, and explained the meaning of zelem.

Demut is derived from the verb damah, "he is like." This term likewise denotes agreement with regard to some abstract relation: comp. "I am like a pelican of the wilderness" (Ps. cii. 7); the author does not compare himself to the pelican in point of wings and feathers, but in point of sadness." Nor any tree in the garden of God was like unto him in beauty" (Ezek. 8); the comparison refers to the idea of beauty. "Their poison is like the poison of a serpent" (Ps. lviii. 5); "He is like unto a lion" (Ps. xvii. 12); the resemblance indicated in these passages does not refer to the figure and shape, but to some abstract idea. In the same manner is used "the likeness of the throne" (Ezek. i. 26); the comparison is made with regard to greatness and glory, not, as many believe, with regard to its square form, its breadth, or the length of its legs: this explanation applies also to the phrase "the likeness of the hayyot ("living creatures," Ezek. i. 13).

As man's distinction consists in a property which no other creature on earth possesses, viz., intellectual perception, in the exercise of which he does not employ his senses, nor move his hand or his foot, this perception has been compared--though only apparently, not in truth--to the Divine perception, which requires no corporeal organ. On this account, i.e., on account of the Divine intellect with which man has been endowed, he is said to have been made in the form and likeness of the Almighty, but far from it be the notion that the Supreme Being is corporeal, having a material form.

CHAPTER II

Some years ago a learned man asked me a question of great importance; the problem and the solution which we gave in our reply deserve the closest attention. Before, however, entering upon this problem and its solution I must premise that every Hebrew knows that the term Elohim is a homonym, and denotes God, angels, judges, and the rulers of countries, and that Onkelos the proselyte explained it in the true and correct manner by taking Elohim in the sentence, "and ye shall be like Elohim" (Gen. iii. 5) in the last-mentioned meaning, and rendering the sentence "and ye shall be like princes." Having pointed out the homonymity of the term "Elohim" we return to the question under consideration. "It would at first sight," said the objector, "appear from Scripture that man was originally intended to be perfectly equal to the rest of the animal creation, which is not endowed with intellect, reason, or power of distinguishing between good and evil: but that Adam's disobedience to the command of God procured him that great perfection which is the peculiarity of man, viz., the power of distinguishing between good and evil-the noblest of all the faculties of our nature, the essential characteristic of the human race. It thus appears strange that the punishment

for rebelliousness should be the means of elevating man to a pinnacle of perfection to which he had not attained previously. This is equivalent to saying that a certain man was rebellious and extremely wicked, wherefore his nature was changed for the better, and he was made to shine as a star in the heavens." Such was the purport and subject of the question, though not in the exact words of the inquirer. Now mark our reply, which was as follows:--"You appear to have studied the matter superficially, and nevertheless you imagine that you can understand a book which has been the guide of past and present generations, when you for a moment withdraw from your lusts and appetites, and glance over its contents as if you were reading a historical work or some poetical composition. Collect your thoughts and examine the matter carefully, for it is not to be understood as you at first sight think, but as you will find after due deliberation; namely, the intellect which was granted to man as the highest endowment, was bestowed on him before his disobedience. With reference to this gift the Bible states that "man was created in the form and likeness of God." On account of this gift of intellect man was addressed by God, and received His commandments, as it is said: "And the Lord God commanded Adam" (Gen. ii. 16)--for no commandments are given to the brute creation or to those who are devoid of understanding. Through the intellect man distinguishes between the true and the false. This faculty Adam possessed perfectly and completely. The right and the wrong are terms employed in the science of apparent truths (morals), not in that of necessary truths, as, e.g., it is not correct to say, in reference to the proposition "the heavens are spherical," it is "good" or to declare the assertion that "the earth is flat" to be "bad": but we say of the one it is true, of the other it is false. Similarly our language expresses the idea of true and false by the terms emet and sheker, of the morally right and the morally wrong, by tob and ra'. Thus it is the function of the intellect to discriminate between the true and the false--a distinction which is applicable to all objects of intellectual perception. When Adam was yet in a state of innocence, and was guided solely by reflection and reason--on account of which it is said: "Thou hast made him (man) little lower than the angels" (Ps. viii. 6)--he was not at all able to follow or to understand the principles of apparent truths; the most manifest impropriety, viz., to appear in a state of nudity, was nothing unbecoming according to his idea: he could not comprehend why it should be so. After man's disobedience, however, when he began to give way to desires which had their source in his imagination and to the gratification of his bodily appetites, as it is said, "And the wife saw that the tree was good for food and delightful to the eyes" (Gen. iii. 6), he was punished by the loss of part of that intellectual faculty which he had previously possessed. He therefore transgressed a command with which he had been charged on the score of his reason; and having obtained a knowledge of the apparent truths, he was wholly absorbed in the study of what is proper and what improper. Then he fully understood the magnitude of the loss he had sustained, what he had forfeited, and in what situation he was thereby placed. Hence we read, "And ye shall be like

elohim, knowing good and evil," and not "knowing" or "discerning the true and the false": while in necessary truths we can only apply the words "true and false," not "good and evil." Further observe the passage, "And the eyes of both were opened, and they knew they were naked" (Gen. iii. 7): it is not said, "And the eyes of both were opened, and they saw"; for what the man had seen previously and what he saw after this circumstance was precisely the same: there had been no blindness which was now removed, but he received a new faculty whereby he found things wrong which previously he had not regarded as wrong. Besides, you must know that the Hebrew word pakah used in this passage is exclusively employed in the figurative sense of receiving new sources of knowledge, not in that of regaining the sense of sight. Comp., "God opened her eyes" (Gen. xxi. 19). "Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened" (Isaiah xxxviii. 8). "Open ears, he heareth not" (ibid. Xlii. 20), similar in sense to the verse, "Which have eyes to see, and see not" (Ezek. xii. 2). When, however, Scripture says of Adam, "He changed his face (panav) and thou sentest him forth" Job xiv. 20), it must be understood in the following way: On account of the change of his original aim he was sent away. For panim, the Hebrew equivalent of face, is derived from the verb panah, "he turned," and signifies also "aim," because man generally turns his face towards the thing he desires. In accordance with this interpretation, our text suggests that Adam, as he altered his intention and directed his thoughts to the acquisition of what he was forbidden, he was banished from Paradise: this was his punishment; it was measure for measure. At first he had the privilege of tasting pleasure and happiness, and of enjoying repose and security; but as his appetites grew stronger, and he followed his desires and impulses, (as we have already stated above), and partook of the food he was forbidden to taste, he was deprived of everything, was doomed to subsist on the meanest kind of food, such as he never tasted before, and this even only after exertion and labour, as it is said, "Thorns and thistles shall grow up for thee" (Gen. iii. 18), "By the sweat of thy brow," etc., and in explanation of this the text continues, "And the Lord God drove him from the Garden of Eden, to till the ground whence he was taken." He was now with respect to food and many other requirements brought to the level of the lower animals: comp., "Thou shalt eat the grass of the field" (Gen. iii. 18). Reflecting on his condition, the Psalmist says, "Adam unable to dwell in dignity, was brought to the level of the dumb beast" (Ps. xlix. 13)." May the Almighty be praised, whose design and wisdom cannot be fathomed."

CHAPTER III

IT might be thought that the Hebrew words temunah and tabnit have one and the same meaning, but this is not the case. Tabnit, derived from the verb banah (he built), signifies the build and construction of a thing--that is to say, its figure, whether square, round, triangular, or of any other shape. Comp. "the pattern (tabnit) of the Tabernacle and the pattern (tabnit) of all its vessels" (Exod. xxv. 9); "according to the pattern (tabnit) which thou wast shown upon the mount" (Exod. xxv, 40); "the form of any bird" (Deut. iv. 17); "the form (tabnit) of a hand" (Ezek. viii. 3); "the pattern

(tabnit) of the porch" (1 Chron. xxviii. 11). In all these quotations it is the shape which is referred to. Therefore the Hebrew language never employs the word tabnit in speaking of the qualities of God Almighty.

The term temunah, on the other hand, is used in the Bible in three different senses. It signifies, first, the outlines of things which are perceived by our bodily senses, i.e., their shape and form; as, e.g., "And ye make an image the form (temunat) of some likeness" (Deut. iv. 16); "for ye saw no likeness" (temunah) (Deut. iv. 15). Secondly, the forms of our imagination, i.e., the impressions retained in imagination when the objects have ceased to affect our senses. In this sense it is used in the passage which begins "In thoughts from the visions of the night" (Job iv. 13), and which concludes "it remained but I could not recognize its sight, only an image--temunah--was before my eyes," i.e., an image which presented itself to my sight during sleep. Thirdly, the true form of an object, which is perceived only by the intellect: and it is in this third signification that the term is applied to God. The words "And the similitude of the Lord shall he behold" (Num. xii. 8) therefore mean "he shall comprehend the true essence of the Lord."

CHAPTER IV

THE three verbs raah, hibbit, and hazah, which denote "he perceived with the eye," are also used figuratively in the sense of intellectual perception. As regards the first of these verbs this is well known, e.g., And he looked (va-yar) and behold a well in the field" (Gen. xxix. 2) here it signifies ocular perception: "yea, my heart has seen (raah) much of wisdom and of knowledge" (Eccles. i. 16); in this passage it refers to the intellectual perception.

In this figurative sense the verb is to be understood, when applied to God e.g., "I saw (raiti) the Lord" (1 Kings xxii. 19); "And the Lord appeared (va-yera) unto him (Gen. xviii. 1); "And God saw (va-yar) that it was good" (Gen. i. 10) "I beseech thee, show me (hareni) thy glory" (Exod. xxxiii. 18); "And they saw (va-yiru) the God of Israel" (Exod. xxiv. 10). All these instances refer to intellectual perception, and by no means to perception with the eye as in its literal meaning: for, on the one hand, the eye can only perceive a corporeal object, and in connection with it certain accidents, as colour, shape, etc.: and, on the other hand, God does not perceive by means of a corporeal organ, as will be explained.

In the same manner the Hebrew hibbit signifies "he viewed with the eye; comp. "Look (tabbit) not behind thee" (Gen. xix. 17); "But his wife looked (va-tabbet) back from him" (Gen. xix. 26); "And if one look (ve-nibbat) unto the land" (Isa. v. 30); and figuratively, "to view and observe" with the intellect, "to contemplate" a thing till it be understood. In this sense the verb is used in passages like the following: "He hath not beheld (hibbit) iniquity in Jacob" (Num. xxiii. 21); for "iniquity" cannot be seen with the eye. The words, "And they looked (ve-hibbitu) after Moses" (Exod. xxxiii. 8)--in addition to the literal understanding of the phrase--were explained by our Sages in a figurative sense. According to them, these words mean that the Israelites examined and criticised the actions and sayings of Moses. Compare also "Contemplate (habbet), I pray thee, the heaven"

(Gen. xv. 5); for this took place in a prophetic vision. This verb, when applied to God, is employed in this figurative sense; e.g., "to look (me-habbit) upon God" (Exod. iii. 6) "And the similitude of the Lord shall he behold" (yabbit) (Num. xii. 8); And thou canst not look (habbet) on iniquity" (Hab. i. 13).

The same explanation applies to hazah. It denotes to view with the eye, as: "And let our eye look (ve-tahaz) upon Zion" (Mic. iv. 11); and also figuratively, to perceive mentally: "which he saw (hazah) concerning Judah and Jerusalem" (Isa. i. 1); "The word of the Lord came unto Abraham in a vision" (mahazeh) (Gen. xv. 1); in this sense hazah is used in the phrase, "Also they saw (va-yehezu) God" (Exod. xxiv. 11). Note this well.

CHAPTER V

WHEN the chief of philosophers (Aristotle) was about to inquire into some very profound subjects, and to establish his theory by proofs, he commenced his treatise with an apology, and requested the reader to attribute the author's inquiries not to presumption, vanity, egotism, or arrogance, as though he were interfering with things of which he had no knowledge, but rather to his zeal and his desire to discover and establish true doctrines, as far as lay in human power. We take the same position, and think that a man, when he commences to speculate, ought not to embark at once on a subject so vast and important; he should previously adapt himself to the study of the several branches of science and knowledge, should most thoroughly refine his moral character and subdue his passions and desires, the offspring of his imagination; when, in addition, he has obtained a knowledge of the true fundamental propositions, a comprehension of the several methods of inference and proof, and the capacity of guarding against fallacies, then he may approach the investigation of this subject. He must, however, not decide any question by the first idea that suggests itself to his mind, or at once direct his thoughts and force them to obtain a knowledge of the Creator, but he must wait modestly and patiently, and advance step by step.

In this sense we must understand the words "And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God" (Exod. iii. 6), though retaining also the literal meaning of the passage, that Moses was afraid to gaze at the light which appeared to his eye; but it must on no account be assumed that the Being which is exalted far above every imperfection can be perceived by the eye. This act of Moses was highly commended by God, who bestowed on him a well deserved portion of His goodness, as it is said: "And the similitude of the Lord shall he behold" (Num. xii. 8). This, say our Sages, was the reward for having previously hidden his face, lest he should gaze at the Eternal. (Talm. B. Berakot Fa.)

But "the nobles of the Children of Israel" were impetuous, and allowed their thoughts to go unrestrained: what they perceived was but imperfect. Therefore it is said of them, "And they saw the God of Israel, and there was under his feet," etc. (Exod. xxiv. 10); and not merely, "and they saw the God of Israel"; the purpose of the whole passage is to criticize their act of seeing and not to describe it. They are blamed for the nature of their perception, which was to a certain extent corporeal--a result which necessarily

followed, from the fact that they ventured too far before being perfectly prepared. They deserved to perish, but at the intercession of Moses this fate was averted by God for the time. They were afterwards burnt at Taberah, except Nadab and Abihu, who were burnt in the Tabernacle of the congregation, according to what is stated by authentic tradition. (Midr. Rabba ad locum.)

If such was the case with them, how much more is it incumbent on us who are inferior, and on those who are below us, to persevere in perfecting our knowledge of the elements, and in rightly understanding the preliminaries which purify the mind from the defilement of error: then we may enter the holy and divine camp in order to gaze: as the Bible says, "And let the priests also, which come near to the Lord, sanctify themselves, lest the Lord break forth upon them" (Exod. xix. 22). Solomon, also, has cautioned all who endeavour to attain this high degree of knowledge in the following figurative terms, "Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God" (Eccles. iv. 17).

I will now return to complete what I commenced to explain. The nobles of the Children of Israel, besides erring in their perception, were, through this cause, also misled in their actions: for in consequence of their confused perception, they gave way to bodily cravings. This is meant by the words, "Also they saw God and did eat and drink" (Exod. xxiv. 11). The principal part of that passage, viz., "And there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone" (Exod. xxiv. 10), will be further explained in the course of the present treatise (ch. xxviii.). All we here intend to say is, that wherever in a similar connection any one of the three verbs mentioned above occurs, it has reference to intellectual perception, not to the sensation of sight by the eye: for God is not a being to be perceived by the eye.

It will do no harm, however, if those who are unable to comprehend what we here endeavour to explain should refer all the words in question to sensuous perception, to seeing lights created [for the purpose], angels, or similar beings.

CHAPTER VI

THE two Hebrew nouns ish and ishshah were originally employed to designate the "male and female" of human beings, but were afterwards applied to the "male and female" of the other species of the animal creation. For instance, we read, "Of every clean beast thou shalt take to thee by sevens," ish ve-ishto (Gen. Vii. 2), in the same sense as ish ve-ishshah, "male and female." The term zakar u-nekebah was afterwards applied to anything designed and prepared for union with another object Thus we read, "The five curtains shall be coupled together, one (ishshah) to the other" (ahotah) (Exod. xxvi. 3).

It will easily be seen that the Hebrew equivalents for "brother and sister" are likewise treated as homonyms, and used, in a figurative sense, like ish and ishshah.

CHAPTER VII

IT is well known that the verb yalad means "to bear," "they have born (ve-yaledu) him children" (Deut. xxi. 15). The word was next used in a

figurative sense with reference to various objects in nature, meaning, "to create," e.g. "before the mountains were created" (yulladu) (Ps. xc. 2); also, "to produce," in reference to that which the earth causes to come forth as if by birth, e.g., "He will cause her to bear (holidah) and bring forth" (Isa. Iv. 10). The verb further denotes, "to bring forth," said of changes in the process of time, as though they were things which were born, e.g., "for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth" (yeled) (Prov. xxvii. 1). Another figurative use of the word is its application to the formation of thoughts and ideas, or of opinions resulting from them: comp. "and brought forth (ve-yalad) falsehood" (Ps. vii. 14); also, "and they please themselves in the children (yalde) of strangers" (Isa. ii. 6), i.e., "they delight in the opinions of strangers." Jonathan the son of Uzziel paraphrases this passage, "they walk in the customs of other nations."

A man who has instructed another in any subject, and has improved his knowledge, may in like manner be regarded as the parent of the person taught, because he is the author of that knowledge: and thus the pupils of the prophets are called "sons of the prophets," as I shall explain when treating of the homonymity of ben (son). In this figurative sense, the verb yalad (to bear) is employed when it is said of Adam, "And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat (va-yoled) a son in his own likeness, in his form" (Gen. V. 3). As regards the words, "the form of Adam, and his likeness," we have already stated (ch. i.) their meaning. Those sons of Adam who were born before that time were not human in the true sense of the word, they had not "the form of man." With reference to Seth who had been instructed, enlightened and brought to human perfection, it could rightly be said, "he (Adam) begat a son in his likeness, in his form." It is acknowledged that a man who does not possess this "form" (the nature of which has just been explained) is not human, but a mere animal in human shape and form. Yet such a creature has the power of causing harm and injury, a power which does not belong to other creatures. For those gifts of intelligence and judgment with which he has been endowed for the purpose of acquiring perfection, but which he has failed to apply to their proper aim, are used by him for wicked and mischievous ends; he begets evil things, as though he merely resembled man, or simulated his outward appearance. Such was the condition of those sons of Adam who preceded Seth. In reference to this subject the Midrash says: "During the 130 years when Adam was under rebuke he begat spirits," i.e., demons; when, however, he was again restored to divine favour "he begat in his likeness, in his form." This is the sense of the passage, "Adam lived one hundred and thirty years, and he begat in his likeness, in his form" (Gen. v. 3).

CHAPTER VIII

ORIGINALLY the Hebrew term makom (place) applied both to a particular spot and to space in general subsequently it received a wider signification and denoted "position," or "degree," as regards the perfection of man in certain things. We say, e.g., this man occupies a certain place in such and such a subject. In this sense this term, as is well known, is frequently used by authors, e.g., "He fills his ancestors' place (makom) in point of wisdom

and piety"; "the dispute still remains in its place" (makom), i.e., in statu quo [ante]. In the verse, "Blessed be the glory of the Lord from His place" (mekomo) (Ezek. iii. 12), makom has this figurative meaning, and the verse may be paraphrased "Blessed be the Lord according to the exalted nature of His existence," and wherever makom is applied to God, it expresses the same idea, namely, the distinguished position of His existence, to which nothing is equal or comparable, as will be shown below (chap. lvi.).

It should be observed that when we treat in this work of any homonym, we do not desire you to confine yourself to that which is stated in that particular chapter; but we open for you a portal and direct your attention to those significations of the word which are suited to our purpose, though they may not be complete from a philological point of view. You should examine the prophetical books and other works composed by men of science, notice the meaning of every word which occurs in them, and take homonyms in that sense which is in harmony with the context. What I say in a particular passage is a key for the comprehension of all similar passages. For example, we have explained here makom in the sentence "Blessed be the glory of the Lord from His place" (mekomo); but you must understand that the word makom has the same signification in the passage "Behold, a place (makom) is with me" (Exod. xxxiii. 26), viz., a certain degree of contemplation and intellectual intuition (not of ocular inspection), in addition to its literal "a place," viz., the mountain which was pointed out to Moses for seclusion and for the attainment of perfection.

CHAPTER IX

THE original meaning of the word kisse, "throne," requires no comment. Since men of greatness and authority, as, e.g., kings, use the throne as a seat, and "the throne" thus indicates the rank, dignity, and position of the person for whom it is made, the Sanctuary has been styled "the throne," inasmuch as it likewise indicates the superiority of Him who manifests Himself, and causes His light and glory to dwell therein. Comp. "A glorious throne on high from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary" (Jer. xvii. 12). For the same reason the heavens are called "throne," for to the mind of him who observes them with intelligence they suggest the Omnipotence of the Being which has called them into existence, regulates their motions, and governs the sublunary world by their beneficial influence: as we read, "Thus saith the Lord, The heavens are my throne and the earth my footstool" (Isa. lxvi. 1); i.e., they testify to my Existence, my Essence, and my Omnipotence, as the throne testifies to the greatness of him who is worthy to occupy it.

This is the idea which true believers should entertain; not, however, that the Omnipotent, Supreme God is supported by any material object; for God is incorporeal, as we shall prove further on; how, then, can He be said to occupy any space, or rest on a body? The fact which I wish to point out is this: every place distinguished by the Almighty, and chosen to receive His light and splendour, as, for instance, the Sanctuary or the Heavens, is termed "throne"; and, taken in a wider sense, as in the passage "For my hand is upon the throne of God" (Exod. xvii. 16), "the throne" denotes

here the Essence and Greatness of God. These, however (the Essence and Greatness of God) need not be considered as something separate from the God Himself or as part of the Creation, so that God would appear to have existed both without the throne, and with the throne: such a belief would be undoubtedly heretical. It is distinctly stated, "Thou, O Lord, remainest for ever; Thy throne from generation to generation" (Lam. v. 19). By "Thy throne" we must, therefore, understand something inseparable from God. On that account, both here and in all similar passages. the word "throne" denotes God's Greatness and Essence, which are inseparable from His Being.

Our opinion will be further elucidated in the course of this Treatise.

CHAPTER X

WE have already remarked that when we treat in this work of homonyms, we have not the intention to exhaust the meanings of a word (for this is not a philological treatise); we shall mention no other significations but those which bear on our subject. We shall thus proceed in our treatment of the terms 'alah and yarad.

These two words, 'alah, "he went up," and yarad, "he went down," are Hebrew terms used in the sense of ascending and descending. When a body moves from a higher to a lower place, the verb yarad, "to go down," is used; when it moves from a lower to a higher place, 'alah, "to go up," is applied. These two verbs were afterwards employed with regard to greatness and power. When a man falls from his high position, we say "he has come down," and when he rises in station "he has gone up." Thus the Almighty says, "The stranger that is within thee shall get up above thee very high, and thou shalt come down very low" (Deut. xxviii. 43). Again, "The Lord thy God will set thee on high ('elyon) above all nations of the earth" (Deut. xxviii. 1): "And the Lord magnified Solomon exceedingly" (lema'alah) (1 Chron. xxix. 25). The Sages often employ these expressions, as: "In holy matters men must ascend (ma'alin) and not descend (moridin)." The two words are also applied to intellectual processes, namely, when we reflect on something beneath ourselves we are said to go down, and when our attention is raised to a subject above us we are said to rise.

Now, we occupy a lowly position, both in space and rank in comparison with the heavenly sphere, and the Almighty is Most High not in space, but with respect to absolute existence, greatness and power. When it pleased the Almighty to grant to a human being a certain degree of wisdom or prophetic inspiration, the divine communication thus made to the prophet and the entrance of the Divine Presence into a certain place is termed (yeridah), "descending," while the termination of the prophetic communication or the departure of the divine glory from a place is called 'aliyah, "ascending."

The expressions "to go up" and "to go down," when used in reference to God, must be interpreted in this sense. Again, when, in accordance with the divine will, some misfortune befalls a nation or a region of the earth, and when the biblical account of that misfortune is preceded by the statement that the Almighty visited the actions of the people, and that He punished

them accordingly, then the prophetic author employs the term "to descend": for man is so low and insignificant that his actions would not be visited and would not bring punishment on him, were it not for the divine will: as is clearly stated in the Bible, with regard to this idea, "What is man that thou shouldst remember him, and the son of man that thou shouldst visit him" (Ps. viii. 5).

The design of the Deity to punish man is, therefore, introduced by the verb "to descend": comp. Go to, let us go down and there confound their language" (Gen. xi. 7) "And the Lord came down to see" (Gen. xi. 5); "I will go down now and see" (Gen. xviii. 21). All these instances convey the idea that man here below is going to be punished.

More numerous, however, are the instances of the first case, viz., in which these verbs are used in connection with the revelation of the word and of the glory of God, e.g., "And I will come down and talk with thee there" (Num. xi. 17); "And the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai (Exod. xix. 20); "The Lord will come down in the sight of all the people (Exod. xix. 11); "And God went up from him" (Gen. xxxv. 13); "And God went up from Abraham" (Gen. xvii. 22). When, on the other hand, it says, "And Moses went up unto God" (Exod. xix. 3), it must be taken in the third signification of these verbs, in addition to its literal meaning that Moses also ascended to the top of the mount, upon which a certain material light (the manifestation of God's glory) was visible; but we must not imagine that the Supreme Being occupies a place to which we can ascend, or from which we can descend. He is far from what the ignorant imagine.

CHAPTER XI

THE primary meaning of the Hebrew yashab is "he was seated," as "Now Eli the priest sat (yashab) upon a seat" (1 Sam. i. 9); but, since a person can best remain motionless and at rest when sitting, the term was applied to everything that is permanent and unchanging; thus, in the promise that Jerusalem should remain constantly and permanently in an exalted condition, it is stated," She will rise and sit in her place" (Zech. xiv. 10); further," He maketh the woman who was childless to sit as a joyful mother of children" (Ps. cxiii. 9); i.e., He makes her happy condition to be permanent and enduring.

When applied to God, the verb is to be taken in that latter sense: "Thou O Lord, remainest (tesheb) for ever" (Lam. v. 19); "O thou who sittest (ha-yoshebi) in the heavens" (Ps. cxxiii. 1); "He who sitteth in the heavens" (ii. 4), i.e., He who is everlasting, constant, and in no way subject to change; immutable in His Essence, and as He consists of nought but His Essence, He is mutable in no way whatever; not mutable in His relation to other things: for there is no relation whatever existing between Him and any other being, as will be explained below, and therefore no change as regard; such relations can take place in Him. Hence He is immutable in every respect, as He expressly declares, "I, the Lord, do not change" (Mal. iii. 6); i.e., in Me there is not any change whatever. This idea is expressed by the term yashab when referring to God.

The verb, when employed of God, is frequently complemented by "the Heavens," inasmuch as the heavens are without change or mutation, that is to say, they do not individually change, as the individual beings on earth, by transition from existence into non-existence.

The verb is also employed in descriptions of God's relation (the term "relation" is here used as a homonym) to existing species of evanescent things: for those species are as constant, well organized, and unvarying as the individuals of the heavenly hosts. Thus we find, "Who sitteth over the circle of the earth" (Isa. xl. 22), Who remains constantly and unremittingly over the sphere of the earth; that is to say, over the things that come into existence within that sphere.

Again, "The Lord sitteth upon the flood" (Ps. xxix. 10), i.e., despite the change and variation of earthly objects, no change takes place with respect to God's relation (to the earth): His relation to each of the things which come into existence and perish again is stable and constant, for it concerns only the existing species and not the individuals. It should therefore be borne in mind, that whenever the term" sitting" is applied to God, it is used in this sense.

CHAPTER XII

THE term kam (he rose) is a homonym. In one of its significations it is the opposite of "to sit," as "He did not rise (kam) nor move for him" (Esth. v. 9). It further denotes the confirmation and verification of a thing, e.g.: "The Lord will verify (yakem) His promise" (1 Sam. i. 23); "The field of Ephron was made sure (va-yakom) as the property of Abraham" (Gen. xxiii. 17). "The house that is in the walled city shall be established (ve-kam)" (Lev. xxv. 30); "And the kingdom of Israel shall be firmly established (ve-kamah) in thy hand" (1 Sam. xxiv. 20). It is always in this sense that the verb is employed with reference to the Almighty; as "Now shall I rise (akum), saith the Lord" (Ps. xii. 7), which is the same as saying, "Now shall I verify my word and my dispensation for good or evil." "Thou shalt arise (takum) and have mercy upon Zion" (Ps. cii. 13), which means: Thou wilt establish what thou hast promised, viz., that thou wouldst pity Zion.

Generally a person who resolves to set about a matter, accompanies his resolve by rising, hence the verb is employed to express "to resolve" to do a certain thing; as, "That my son hath stirred up my servant against me" (1 Sam. xxii. 8). The word is figuratively used to signify the execution of a divine decree against a people sentenced to extermination, as "And I will rise against the house of Jeroboam" (Amos vii. 9); "but he win arise against the house of the evildoers" (Isa. xxxi. 2). Possibly in Psalm xii. 7 the verb has this latter sense, as also in Psalm cii. 13, namely: Thou wilt rise up against her enemies.

There are many passages to be interpreted in this manner, but in no way should it be understood that He rises or sits--far be such a notion! Our Sages expressed this idea in the formula," In the world above there is neither sitting nor standing ('amidah)"; for the two verbs 'amad and kam are synonyms [and what is said about the former is also applicable to the latter].

CHAPTER XIII

THE term 'amad (he stood) is a homonym signifying in the first instance "to stand upright," as "When he stood (be-'omdo) before Pharaoh" (Gen. xli. 46); "Though Moses and Samuel stood (ya'amod)" (Jer. xv. 1); "He stood by them" (Gen. xviii. 8). It further denotes "cessation and interruption," as "but they stood still ('amedu) and answered no more" (Job xxxii. 16); "and she ceased (va-ta'amod) to bear" (Gen. xxix. 35). Next it signifies "to be enduring and lasting," as, "that they may continue (yo'amedu) many days" (Jer. xxxii. 14); "Then shalt thou be able to endure ('amod)" (Exod. xviii. 23); "His taste remained ('amad) in him" (Jer. xlviii. 11), i.e., it has continued and remained in existence without any change: "His righteousness standeth for ever" (Ps. cxi. 3), i.e., it is permanent and everlasting. The verb applied to God must be understood in this latter sense, as in Zechariah xiv. 4, "And his feet shall stand (ve-'amedu) in that day upon the Mount of Olives" (Zech. xiv. 4), "His causes, i.e., the events of which He is the cause, will remain efficient," etc. This will be further elucidated when we speak of the meaning of regel (foot). (Vide infra, chap. xxviii.) In the same sense is this verb employed in Deuteronomy v. 28, "But as for thee, stand thou here by me," and Deuteronomy v. 5, "I stood between the Lord and you."

CHAPTER XIV

THE homonymous term adam is in the first place the name of the first man, being, as Scripture indicates, derived from adamah, "earth." Next, it means "mankind," as "My spirit shall not strive with man (adam)" (Gen. vi. 3). Again "Who knoweth the spirit of the children of man (adam)" (Eccles. iii. 21); "so that a man (adam) has no pre-eminence above a beast" (Eccles. iii. 19). Adam. signifies also "the multitude," "the lower classes" as opposed to those distinguished from the rest, as "Both low (bene adam) and high (bene ish)" (Ps. xlix. 3).

It is in this third signification that it occurs in the verses, "The sons of the higher order (Elohim) saw the daughters of the lower order (adam)" (Gen. vi. 2); and "Forsooth! as the humble man (adam) you shall die" (Ps. lxxxii. 7).

CHAPTER XV

ALTHOUGH the two roots nazab and yazab are distinct, yet their meaning is, as you know, identical in all their various forms.

The verb has several meanings: in some instances it signifies "to stand or "to place oneself," as "And his sister stood (va-tetazzab) afar off" (Exod. ii. 4); "The kings of the earth set themselves" (yiyazzebu) (Ps. ii. 2); "They came out and stood" (nizzabim) (Num. xvi. 27). In other instances it denotes continuance and permanence, as, "Thy word is established (nizzab) in Heaven" (Ps. cxix. 89), i.e., it remains for ever.

Whenever this term is applied to God it must be understood in the latter sense, as, "And, behold, the Lord stood (nizzab) upon it" (Gen. xxviii. 13), i.e., appeared as eternal and everlasting "upon it," namely, upon the ladder,

the upper end of which reached to heaven, while the lower end touched the earth. This ladder all may climb up who wish to do so, and they must ultimately attain to a knowledge of Him who is above the summit of the ladder, because He remains upon it permanently. It must be well understood that the term "upon it" is employed by me in harmony with this metaphor. "Angels of God" who were going up represent the prophets. That the term "angel" was applied to prophets may clearly be seen in the following passages: "He sent an angel" (Num. xx. 16); "And an angel of the Lord came up from Gilgal to Bochim" (Judges ii. 1). How suggestive, too, is the expression "ascending and descending on it"! The ascent is mentioned before the descent, inasmuch as the "ascending" and arriving at a certain height of the ladder precedes the "descending," i.e., the application of the knowledge acquired in the ascent for the training and instruction of mankind. This application is termed "descent," in accordance with our explanation of the term yarad (chapter x.).

To return to our subject. The phrase "stood upon it" indicates the permanence and constancy of God, and does not imply the idea of physical position. This is also the sense of the phrase "Thou shalt stand upon the rock" (Exod. xxxiii. 21). It is therefore clear that nizzab and 'amad are identical in this figurative signification. Comp. "Behold, I will stand ('omed) before thee there upon the rock in Horeb" (Exod. xvii. 6).

CHAPTER XVI

THE word zur (rock) is a homonym. First, it denotes "rock," as "And thou shalt smite the rock" (zur) (Exod. xvii. 6). Then, "hard stone," like the flint, e.g., "Knives of stone" (zurim) (Josh. V. 2). It is next employed to signify the quarry from which the stones are hewn; comp. "Look unto the rock (zur) whence ye are hewn" (Isa. li. 1). From this latter meaning of the term another figurative notion was subsequently derived, viz., "the root and origin" of all things. It is on this account that after the words "Look to the rock whence ye are hewn," the Prophet continues, "Look unto Abraham your father," from which we evidently may infer that the words "Abraham your father" serve to explain "the rock whence ye are hewn"; and that the Prophet meant to say, "Walk in his ways, put faith in his instruction, and conduct yourselves according to the rule of his life! for the properties contained in the quarry should be found again in those things which are formed and hewn out of it."

It is in the latter sense that the Almighty is called "rock," He being the origin and the causa efficiens of all things besides Himself. Thus we read, "He is the Rock, His work is perfect" (Deut. xxxii. 4); "Of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful" (Deut. xxxii. 18); "Their Rock had sold them" (xxxi. 30); "There is no rock like our God" (1 Sam. ii. 2); "The Rock of Eternity" (Isa. xxvi. 4). Again, "And thou shalt stand upon the Rock" (Exod. xxxiii. 21), i.e., Be firm and steadfast in the conviction that God is the source of all things, for this will lead you towards the knowledge of the Divine Being. We have shown (chap. viii.) that the words "Behold, a place is with me" (Exod. xxxiii. 21) contain the same idea.

CHAPTER XVII

Do not imagine that only Metaphysics should be taught with reserve to the common people and to the uninitiated: for the same is also the case with the greater part of Natural Science. In this sense we have repeatedly made use of the expression of the Sages, "Do not expound the chapter on the Creation in the presence of two" vide Introd. page [2]. This principle was not peculiar to our Sages: ancient philosophers and scholars of other nations were likewise wont to treat of the principia rerum obscurely, and to use figurative language in discussing such subjects. Thus Plato and his predecessors called Substance the female, and Form the male. (You are aware that the principia of all existing transient things are three, viz., Substance, Form, and Absence of a particular form; the last-named principle is always inherent in the substance, for otherwise the substance would be incapable of receiving a new form: and it is from this point of view that absence [of a particular form] is included among the principia. As soon, then, as a substance has received a certain form, the privation of that form, namely, of that which has just been received, has ceased, and is replaced by the privation of another form, and so on with all possible forms, as is explained in treatises on natural philosophy.)--Now, if those philosophers who have nothing to fear from a lucid explanation of these metaphysical subjects still were in the habit of discussing them in figures and metaphors, how much more should we, having the interest of religion at heart, refrain from elucidating to the mass any subject that is beyond their comprehension, or that might be taken in a sense directly opposite to the one intended. This also deserves attention.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE three words karab, "to come near," naga', "to touch," and nagash, "to approach," sometimes signify "contact" or "nearness in space," sometimes the approach of man's knowledge to an object, as if it resembled the physical approach of one body to another. As to the use of karab in the first meaning, viz., to draw near a certain spot, comp. "As he drew near (karab) the camp" (Exod. xxxii. 19); "And Pharaoh drew near (hikrib) (Exod. xiv. 10). Naga', in the first sense, viz., expressing the contact of two bodies, occurs in "And she cast it (va-tagga') at his feet" (Exod. iv. 25); "He caused it to touch (va-yagga') my mouth" (Isa. vi. 7). And nagash in the first sense, viz., to approach or move towards another person, is found, e.g., in "And Judah drew near (va-yiggash) unto him" (Gen. xliv. 1).

The second meaning of these three words is "approach by means of knowledge," or "contact by comprehension," not in reference to space. As to naga' in this second sense, comp. "for her judgment reacheth (naga') unto heaven" (Jer. li. 9). An instance of karab being used in this meaning is contained in the following passage, "And the cause that is too hard for you, bring (takribun) it unto me" (Deut. i. 17); this is equivalent to saying, "Ye shall make it known unto me." The verb karab (in the Hiphil) is thus employed in the sense of giving information concerning a thing. The verb nagash is used figuratively in the phrase, "And Abraham drew near (va-yiggash), and said" (Gen. xviii. 23); this took place in a prophetic vision and

in a trance, as will be explained (Part I. chap. xxi., and Part II. chap. xli.; also in "Forasmuch as this people draw near (niggash) me with their mouths and with their lips" (Isa. xxix. 13). Wherever a word denoting approach or contact is employed in the prophetic writings to describe a certain relation between the Almighty and any created being, it has to be understood in this latter sense [viz., to approach mentally]. For, as will be proved in this treatise (II. chap. iv.), the Supreme is incorporeal, and consequently He does not approach or draw near a thing, nor can aught approach or touch Him; for when a being is without corporeality, it cannot occupy space, and all idea of approach, contact, distance, conjunction, separation, touch, or proximity is inapplicable to such a being.

There can be no doubt respecting the verses "The Lord is nigh (karob) unto all them that call upon him" (Ps. cxlv. 18); "They take delight in approaching (kirbat) to God" (Isa. lviii. 2); "The nearness (kirbat) of God is pleasant to me" (Ps. lxxii. 28); all such phrases intimate a spiritual approach, i.e., the attainment of some knowledge, not, however, approach in space. Thus also "who hath God so nigh (kerobim) unto him" (Deut. iv. 7); "Draw thou near (kerab) and hear" (Deut. v. 27); "And Moses alone shall draw near (ve-niggash) the Lord; but they shall not come nigh (yiggashu)" (Exod. xxiv. 2).

If, however, you wish to take the words "And Moses shall draw near" to mean that he shall draw near a certain place in the mountain, whereon the Divine Light shone, or, in the words of the Bible, "where the glory of the Lord abode," you may do so, provided you do not lose sight of the truth that there is no difference whether a person stand at the centre of the earth or at the highest point of the ninth sphere, if this were possible: he is no further away from God in the one case, or nearer to Him in the other; those only approach Him who obtain a knowledge of Him; while those who remain ignorant of Him recede from Him. In this approach towards, or recession from God there are numerous grades one above the other, and I shall further elucidate, in one of the subsequent chapters of the Treatise (I. chap. lx., and II. chap. xxxvi.) what constitutes the difference in our perception of God.

In the passage, "Touch (ga') the mountains, and they shall smoke" (Ps. cxliv. 5), the verb "touch" is used in a figurative sense, viz., "Let thy word touch them." So also the words, "Touch thou him himself" (Job ii. 5), have the same meaning as "Bring thy infliction upon him." In a similar manner must this verb, in whatever form it may be employed be interpreted in each place, according to the context; for in some cases it denotes contact of two material objects, in others knowledge and comprehension of a thing, as if he who now comprehends anything which he had not comprehended previously had thereby approached a subject which had been distant from him. This point is of considerable importance.

CHAPTER XIX

THE term male is a homonym which denotes that one substance enters another, and fills it, as "And she filled (va-temalle) her pitcher" (Gen. xxiv. 16); "An omer-full (melo) for each" (Exod. xvi. 32), and many other instances. Next, it signifies the expiration or completion of a fixed period

of time, as "And when her days to be delivered were fulfilled (va-yimleu)" (Gen. xxv. 24); "And forty days were completed (va-yimleu) for him" (Gen. 1. 3). It further denotes attainment of the highest degree of excellency, as "Full (male) with the blessing of the Lord" (Deut. xxxiii. 23); "Them hath he filled (mille) with wisdom of heart" (Exod. xxxv. 35) He was filled (va-yimmale) with wisdom, and understanding, and cunning" (1 Kings vii. 14). In this sense it is said "The whole earth is full (melo) of his glory" (Isa. vi. 4), "All the earth gives evidence of his perfection," i.e. leads to a knowledge of it. Thus also" The glory of the Lord filled (male) the tabernacle" (Exod. xl. 34); and, in fact, every application of the word to God must be interpreted in this manner; and not that He has a body occupying space. If, on the other hand, you prefer to think that in this passage by "the glory of the Lord," a certain light created for the purpose is to be understood, that such light is always termed "glory," and that such light "filled the tabernacle," we have no objection.

CHAPTER XX

THE word ram (high) is a homonym, denoting elevation in space, and elevation in dignity, i.e., greatness, honour, and power. It has the first meaning in "And the ark was lifted up (va-tarom) above the earth" (Gen. vii. 17); and the latter meaning in "I have exalted (harimoti) one chosen out of the people" (Ps. lxxxix. 20); "Forasmuch as I have exalted (harimoti) thee from amongst the dust" (1 Kings xvi. 2); "Forasmuch as I exalted (harimoti) thee from among the people" (1 Kings xiv. 7).

Whenever this term is employed in reference to God, it must be taken in the second sense: "Be thou exalted (rumah), O God, above the heavens" (Ps. lvii. 12). In the same manner does the root nasa (to lift up) denote both elevation in space and elevation in rank and dignity. In the former sense it occurs in "And they lifted up (va-yisseu) their corn upon their asses" (Gen. xlii. 26) and there are many instances like this in which this verb has the meaning "to carry," "to move" from place to place: for this implies elevation in space. In the second sense we have "And his kingdom shall be exalted" (ve-tinnase) (Num. xxiv. 7); "And he bare them, and carried them" (va-yenasseem) (Isa. lxiii. 9); "Wherefore do ye exalt yourselves" (titnasseu) (Num. xvi. 3).

Every form of this verb when applied to God has this latter sense--e.g., "Lift up thyself (hinnase), thou judge of the earth" (Ps. xciv. 2); "Thus saith the High (ram) and Exalted (nissa) One" (Isa. lvii. 15)--denoting elevation in rank, quality, and power, and not elevation in space.

You may be surprised that I employ the expression, "elevation in rank, quality, and power," and you may say, "How can you assert that several distinct expressions denote the same thing?" It will be explained later on (chap. 1. seqq.) that those who possess a true knowledge of God do not consider that He possesses many attributes, but believe that these various attributes which describe His Might, Greatness, Power, Perfection, Goodness, etc., are identical, denoting His Essence, and not anything extraneous to His Essence. I shall devote special chapters to the Names and Attributes of God; our intention here is solely to show that "high and exalted" in the passage quoted denote elevation in rank, not in space.