



Daniel Jeremy Silver Collection Digitization Project

Featuring collections from the Western Reserve Historical Society and
The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives

MS-4850: Daniel Jeremy Silver Papers, 1972-1993.

Series IV: Writings and Publications, 1952-1992, undated.

Sub-series B: Other Writings, 1952-1992, undated.

Reel
75

Box
23

Folder
1479

Research notes, Saadia, notes, undated.

A policy of peace is required - spirit of Islam (peace - Islam)
Arabia / Islamic principles, Translators of Islamic teachings → Syria -
contribute to religious studies

For peace under the first 2-3 centuries remains in Arab
Books (Quran - Quran) words of Talabiah definitive -
Translators misconstrued words (misconstrued - misconstrued)

(Kennedy)

New Interpretations present

- 1) misconstrued word system (misconstrued)
- 2) misconstrued meaning of misconstrued word -

Quran for misconstrued word - misconstrued

In Islam - KALAM (misconstrued) = THE STUDY OF
ULTIMATE CONCEPTS WHICH RELIGION ENVOLES

KALAM = (CONVERSATION) = the dialogue which is ^{under} religion ^{and} science (many - less between science & religion) / ^{for} ^{the} ^{purpose} ^{of} ^{the} ^{religion} ^{and} ^{science}

at first philosophical conversations between science & religion { free will (understand it), good / bad (penalty of), immortality } ^{unjust} ^{need - proof}

Later on science + question { creation } + attitudes (Y, Hindu)

On uncovering these books =

MUTAKAALLIYAH = DIALECTICIAN (refutation of other system)

1) creation vs attitude (stand)

2) creation (from creation)

1) attitudes 1) stand alone knowing being one

2) no body -

3) Free will (omnipotent)

4) power and will and omnipotent

5) Proof of unrepeatability unrepeatability

6) Proof of morality (vs. science)

7) Sovereignty

Sacred to people (802-442) - idea of modern world

idea of religion (and first modern world
Dance of modern)

Modern world modern world modern world

925 Sun

Modern

Modern modern modern

Modern modern modern

Modern modern modern

Modern 1) Modern

4) modern modern modern

2) modern

3) modern modern modern

(IN ARABIC)



11/11/11

130

NATIONALIST MUTUALITY (NEUTRAL) KALAM

even in
few
other

1) modern modern modern modern modern

2) modern modern modern modern modern

Religion Religion Religion

Religion Religion Religion Religion Religion

Religion Religion Religion Religion Religion

THROUGH ITS OWN POWERS TO DIVINE TRUTH

BOTH MORAL AND METAPHYSICAL

What is purpose of revelation, if man is always
into being or man?

PEDAGOGIC

TO EVERY MAN (NO Phil.
TRAINING)
TO PROTECT PHILOSOPHY AGAINST
THE UNCERTAINTY OF LOGIC

a question of truth is not a religious question

around Phil. with assumption of man truth of
revelation

but a religious community needs - can challenge

little new =

REVELATION proved truth revelation - need to have subjective
eye-witness - can challenge revelation (HAD - unbelievable)
history (but not a number of different gods doubt)
MOSES - publicly - ALL ISRAEL - (US man white)

Allegedly specific get search for concealed principles to
get to point where no system is concealed and into
TOUS VITAE (Kamler List) given concealed concealed
not known until 19th century in fact

Before passed - 18th - movement with 711 children

950 town - given movement of various - 2 versions of
quest change - (Alleged) - The and of concealed

Chapters (Henderson also Stapleton - night
religion

history of concealed of past

NASI

H.F. JUDEN in public

6:10 950



MASS to concealed of concealed

concealed

Then concealed - movement and rapid - no unit
East State - Bentley - but a small religion

culture (up movement - the strong and fact -
dependence - religion movement)

1) concealed - movement - strong - for all
given 392

2) intentionally on major - PHILIP SPR - concealed
pure description - religion in movement

(Henderson concealed - the same)
Temple (Temple)

Reason

+

from

God

QED

Religion values

Reminders

Kalam

remembering nature of our creator

(Why articles so difficult)

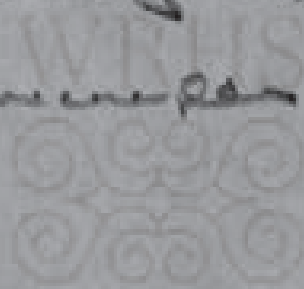
1) Waved hands - force of at first - finally force could
~~murder~~ murder any no day

US DABUYA -

no need of beyond scope -

the world

Q. measure -



KALAM notes

M.M. Cutler

Insider from

5000 in hand

Insider appears to
rel. to TRUTH }

Report

Water 750-1050

- Spent

Efficiency

Zionists



Storm at Sea

I

With fainting heart and shaking knees I cry
To God. Terror invades my limbs
When the oarsmen are dumbfounded at the deep
And the sailors cannot summon up their strength.
Can I feel differently when I am suspended
On shipboard between sea and sky?
I stagger and reel. But this is easy to bear
Until I dance in your midst, O Jerusalem.

II

In the heart of the seas I shall say to my heart,
Fearful and trembling at the roar of the waves;
'If you have faith in God who made
The sea, and whose name will not fade,
Do not be frightened as the breakers rise.
He is at your side, and he has set a limit for the sea.'

The Army of Old Age

When a grey hair appeared all on its own
Upon my head, I cut it down.

'You are the victor now,' it said,

'But what will you do, once my banners are spread?'



Mount Avarim

I greet you Mount Avarim. I greet you from all sides.
On you was gathered the best of men; you received the most
precious of graves.

If you do not know him, ask the Red Sea that was divided in two;
Or ask the bush; ask Mount Sinai, and they will reply:

'He was not a man of words, and yet he was faithful to the
mission of God.'

I have vowed to visit you soon, if God will be my help.



Self-Exhortation to make the Journey to Israel

Are you, at fifty, pursuing your youth,
As your days are preparing to fly away?
Do you run from the worship of God,
And yearn to serve only men?
Do you seek the crowd's company and leave
The One whom all that will may seek?
Are you slow to prepare for your journey?
Will you sell your portion for a lentil stew?
Your desire continually conceives new pleasures,
But does not your soul say to you, 'Enough!'
Exchange your desire's counsel for that of God.
Desist from pursuing your five senses.
Please your Creator in the days that remain
To you, the days which hasten by.
Do not prevaricate before his will.
Do not confront him with magic and sorcery.
Be strong like a leopard to do his command,
Swift as a gazelle, mighty as a lion.

Let your heart remain firm in the midst of the seas,
When you see the mountains heaving and bending,
And the sailors with their hands like rags,
The masters of spells tongue-tied.
They embarked on a straight course, full of joy.
But now they are forced back, overwhelmed.
The ocean is before you as your refuge!
Your only escape are the nets of the deep!
The sails tear loose and lash,

The timbers tremble and shudder,
The grip of the wind plays on the waves,
Like bearers of sheaves to the threshing.
First they are flattened to the floor of the granary,
Then are thrown high into the stacks.
When they rise up, they are as lions.
When they break, they are like serpents.
The first are pursued by the second—
Snakes whose bite is incurable.

The mighty ship falls like a speck before God.
The mast and its banner cannot withstand,
The boat and its decks are confused,
Lower, middle and upper together.
The drawers of ropes are in torment,
Men and women full of anguish.
The sailors' spirits are deep in despair.
Bodies grow weary of their souls.
The masts' strength is of no use,
The aged's counsel does not benefit.
The masts of cedar are no more than stubble,
The fir-trees are turned to reeds,
Sand thrown into the sea is straw,
The sockets of iron are like chaff.

The people pray, each to his holy one,
And you turn to the Holy of Holies.
You recall the miracles of Red Sea and Jordan,
Inscribed as they are on every heart.
You praise the One who calms the sea's rearing,
When the waves throw up their slime.
You will tell him: 'Foul hearts are pure now!'
He will remind you of the merits of your holy forbears.
He will renew his wonders when you perform for him
Song and dance of Mahlim and Mushlim.
He will return the souls to their bodies,
And the dry bones will live again.

And soon the waves will be silent,
Like flocks scattered over the earth.
And when the sun enters the ascent of the stars,
And over them presides the moon, their captain,
The night will be like a negress clothed in gold tapestry,
Like a purple garment scattered with crystals.
And the stars will be bewildered in the heart of the sea,
Like exiles driven from their own homes.
And in their own image they will make light
In the midst of the sea like flaming fires.
The water and sky will be ornaments
Pure and shining upon the night.
The sea's colour will be as heaven's,
Both—two seas bound together,
And between them my heart, a third sea,
As the waves of my praise swell once again.



My Heart is in the East

My heart is in the East, and I in the depths of the West.
My food has no taste. How can it be sweet?
How can I fulfil my pledges and my vows,
When Zion is in the power of Edom, and I in the fetters of Arabia?
It will be nothing to me to leave all the goodness of Spain.
So rich will it be to see the dust of the ruined sanctuary.



Jerusalem

Beautiful heights, joy of the world, city of a great king,
For you my soul yearns from the lands of the West.
My pity collects and is roused when I remember the past,
Your glory in exile, and your temple destroyed.
Would that I were on the wings of an eagle,
So that I could water your dust with my mingling tears.
I have sought you, although your king is away,
And snakes and scorpions oust Gilead's balm.
I shall cherish your stones and kiss them,
And your earth will be sweeter than honey to my taste.

by JUDAH HALEVI

If parting be decreed for the two of us,
Stand yet a little while I gaze upon thy
face. . . .

By the life of love, remember the days
of thy longing.

As I remember the nights of thy
delight.

As thine image passeth into my dreams,
So let me pass, I entreat thee, into thy
dreams,

Between me and thee roar the waves
of a sea of tears

And I cannot pass over unto thee.

But O, if thy steps should draw nigh
to cross—

Then would its waters be divided at
the touch of thy foot.

Would that after my death unto mine
ears should come

The sound of the golden bells upon thy
skirts!

Or shouldst thou be asking how fareth
thy beloved, I from the depths of
the tomb

Would ask of thy love and thy welfare.
Verily, to the shedding of mine heart's
blood

There be two witnesses, thy cheeks and
thy lips.

How sayeth thou it is not true, since
these be my witnesses

For my blood, and that thine hands
have shed it?

Why desirest thou my death, whilst I
but desire

To add years unto the years of thy life?
Though thou dost rob my slumber in
the night of my longing.

Would I not give the sleep of mine
eyes unto thy eyelids? . . .

Yea, between the bitter and the sweet
standeth my heart—

The gall of parting, and the honey of
thy kisses.

After thy words have beaten out my
heart into thin plates,

It is the likeness of rubies over pearls
What time I behold thy lips over thy
teeth.

The sun is on thy face and thou
spreadest out the night
Cover his radiance with the clouds of
thy locks.

Fine silk and brodered work are the
covering of thy body,

But grace and beauty are the covering
of thine eyes.

The adornment of maidens is the work
of human hands,

But thou—majesty and sweetness are
thine adornment. . . .

In the field of the daughters of delight,
the sheaves of love

Make obeisance unto thy sheaf. . . .

I cannot hear thy voice, but I hear

Upon the secret places of my heart, the
sound of thy steps

On the day when thou wilt revive
The victims whom love for thee hath
slain—on the day when thy dead
shall live anew,

Then turn again to my soul to restore
it to my body; for on the day

Of thy departure, when thou wentest
forth, it went out after thee.

—*Translated from the Hebrew*
by Nina Davis Salaman

LOVE SONG

by JUDAH HALEVI

"See'st thou o'er my shoulders falling,
Snake-like ringlets waving free?
Have no fear, for they are twisted
To allure thee unto me."

Thus she spake, the gentle dove,
Listen to thy plighted love:—

"Ah, how long I wait, until
Sweetheart cometh back (she said)
Laying his caressing hand
Underneath my burning head."

—*Translated from the Hebrew*
by Emma Lazarus

by JUDAH HALEVI

THE MIRROR

Into my eyes he loving looked,
My arms about his neck were twined,
And in the mirror of my eyes,
What but his image did he find?

Upon my dark-hued eyes he pressed
His lips with breath of passion rare.
The rogue! 'Twas not my eyes he
kissed;
He kissed his picture mirrored there.

HE COMETH

He cometh, O bliss!
Fly swiftly, ye winds,
Ye odorous breezes,
And tell him how long
I've waited for this!

O happy that night,
When sunk on thy breast,
Thy kisses fast falling,
And drunken with love,
My troth I did plight.

Again my sweet friend
Embraceth me close.
Yes, heaven doth bless us,
And now thou hast won
My love without end.

MY SWEETHEART'S DAINTY LIPS

My sweetheart's dainty lips are red,
With ruby's crimson overspread;
Her teeth are like a string of pearls;
Adown her neck her clust'ring curls
In ebon hue vie with the night,
And o'er her features dances light.

The twinkling stars enthroned above
Are sisters to my dearest love.
We men should count it joy complete
To lay our service at her feet.

A forecast 'tis of heav'nly bliss!
—Translated from the Hebrew
by Emma Lazarus

MARRIAGE SONG

by JUDAH HALEVI

Fair is my dove, my loved one,
None can with her compare:
Yea, comely as Jerusalem,
Like unto Tirzah fair.

Shall she in tents unstable
A wanderer abide,
While in my heart awaits her
A dwelling deep and wide?

The magic of her beauty
Has stolen my heart away:
Not Egypt's wise enchanters
Held half such wondrous sway.

E'en as the changing opal
In varying lustre glows,
Her face at every moment
New charms and sweetness shows.

White lilies and red roses
There blossom on one stem:
Her lips of crimson berries
Tempt mine to gather them

By dusky tresses shaded
Her brow gleams fair and pale,
Like to the sun at twilight,
Behind a cloudy veil.

Her beauty shames the day-star,
And makes the darkness light:
Day in her radiant presence
Grows seven times more bright.

This is a lonely lover!
Come, fair one, to his side,
That happy be together
The bridegroom and the bride!

The hour of love approaches
That shall make one of twain:
Soon may be thus united
All Israel's hosts again!

—Translated from the *Hebrew*
by Alice Lucas

FOUR LOVE POEMS

by MOSES IBN EZRA
(Spain, c. 1070—c. 1138)

WITH HOPELESS LOVE

With hopeless love my heart is sick,
Confession bursts my lips' restraint.
That thou, my love, dost cast me off,
Hath touched me with a death-like
taint.

I view the land both near and far,
To me it seems a prison vast.
Throughout its breadth, where'er I
look,
My eyes are met by doors locked fast.

And though the world stood open wide,
Though angel hosts filled ev'ry space,
To me 'twere destitute of charm
Didst thou withdraw thy face.

STRANGE LOVE

Perchance in days to come,
When men and all things change,
They'll marvel at my love,
And call it passing strange.

Without I seem most calm,
But fires rage within—
'Gainst me, as none before,
Thou didst a grievous sin.

What! tell the world my woe
That were exceeding vain.
With mocking smile they'd say,
'You know, he is not sane!'

ELEGY

(on the death of the woman he loved)
In pain she bore the son who her

Would never know. Relentless death
spread straight
His nets for her, and she, scarce
animate,
Unto her husband signed: I ask this
grace,
My friend, let not harsh death our love
efface;
To our babes, its pledges, dedicate
Thy faithful care; for vainly they await
A mother's smile each childish fear to
chase.
And to my uncle, prithee, write. Deep
pain
I brought his heart. Consumed by
love's regret
He roved, a stranger in his home.
I fain
Would have him shed a tear, nor love
forget.
He seeketh consolation's cup, but first
His soul with bitterness must quench
its thirst.

MY LOVE IS LIKE A MYRTLE

My love is like a myrtle tree,
When all the dance her hair falls down.
Her eyes deal death most pitiless,
Yet who would dare on her to frown?

Said I to sweetheart: 'Why dost thou
resent
The homage to thy grace by old men
paid?'
She answered me with question
pertinent:
'Dost thou prefer a widow to a maid?'
—Translated from the *Hebrew*
by Solomon Solis-Cohen

LOVE-SONGS

by MOSES IBN EZRA

I

THE SPLENDOR OF THINE EYES

Come, Ophrah, fill my cup—but not
with wine,
The splendor of thine eyes therein let

So shall the draught thou pour'st this
night in Spain,
Bear to far lands and days, thy fame—
and mine!

II

THE HOT FLAME OF MY GRIEF

Beautiful as the pomegranate is the
white face of Ophrah when she
blushes;
And I, that must part from her, weep—
Until the hot flame of my grief dries
up my tears.

III

WHY SHOULD I GRIEVE?

Why should I grieve? The purling of
the brook,
The throstle's song, I hear. On couch
of blooms,
More brilliant than the weave of
Persia's looms,
I lie beneath the myrtle's shade, and
look
On the bright necklace of the turtle
dove—
And dream—and dream, ah me, of my
lost love.

IV

BEAUTIFUL IS THE LOVED ONE

Beautiful is the loved one
As she sways in the dance
Like a bough of the myrtle,
Her unbound tresses
Billowing about her.
She slays me with the arrows of her
glances—
They are drunk with my blood—
But she shows no mercy.

V

WHEN SHE PLAYS
UPON THE HARP OR LUTE

Beautiful are the fingers of the loved
one:

They fly over the strings swiftly as
arrows,
And smoothly as the pen of a ready
writer.
When she lets the music of her voice
be heard,
Throstle and robin upon the branches
Hush their song.

VI

THOSE BEAUTEFUS MAIDS

But give me for my soul, those
beauteous maids,
With hair like night, with faces like
the moon—
Singing, with lutes held to their breasts
they seem
Like nursing mothers, to their babes
that ercon.

—Translated from the Hebrew
by Solomon Solis-Cohen

REJOICE, O YOUTH, IN THE
LOVELY HIND

(Fragment from the Wedding Song
in honor of R. Solomon ben Matir)
by MOSES IBN EZRA

Rejoice, O youth, in the lovely hind,
And sing ye both in ecstasy of joy.
Delight thou, O bridegroom, in a figure
graceful as the palm,
And lissom as the branches of the
myrtle;
Fear not, at twilight, the tinkling of her
neck-chains
Or the rustling of her headdress;
Nor quail before the dove-like eyes,
Drunk with the wine of passion.
Let thy heart be firm in the embrace
of arms
Adorned with bracelets and brave
with bangles,
And flee not from the snake-like loveliness
That coil about a face bathed in
maiden blushes;
Verily, they come to greet thee

slow-hearted,
 babbling, fighting
 and back-biting
 master, brother,
 we bespatter one another.

EPITAPH FOR MR. MOSES LEVY*

O Frail Adam,
 What the Earth Surely Produces
 Death by His Power Reduces.
 Thy Heavenly Part Man Being Fled,
 Alas, The Other Parts are Dead.

Mr. Moses Levy depart^d this Life
 June the 14th. 1728.

EL ROPERO† ("The Tailor")

by ANTONIO DI MONTORO
 (Spain, 1404-1477)

Ropero, so sad and so forlorn,
 Now thou feelest pain and scorn.
 Until sixty years had flown,
 Thou couldst say to every one,
 "Nothing wicked have I known."

Christian convert hast thou turned,
Credo thou to say hast learned;
 Willing art now bold to view
 Plates of ham—no more askew.
 Mass thou hearest,

*From the inscription on the tombstone of Moses Levy, New York merchant and *Parnas* (President) of the *Shearith Israel* Congregation, who lies buried in the Congregation's first cemetery on the New Bowery in downtown New York.

†His conversion to Christianity notwithstanding, Montoro's Jewish origin was never forgiven him. A Spanish *caballero*-poet flung at him the following piece of abuse:

You Cohen, you cur,
 You miserable Jew,
 You wicked usurer!

Church reverest,
 Genuflexions makest,
 Other alien customs takest.
 Now thou, too, mayst persecute
 Those poor wretches, like a brute.

DUEL WITH VERSES OVER A GREAT MAN

(The bitter controversies which raged among Jews for centuries over the religious writings of the great philosopher Maimonides (1135-1206) are reflected in these 13th Century Hebrew verses by opponents and defenders. However, learned Arabs fully appreciated the genius of "Abu Amram." The poet and *Cadi*, Alsaïd ibn Sina Almulk, eulogized him thus in Arabic:

Galen's art heals only the body,
 But Abu Amram's the body and soul.
 He could heal with his wisdom the
 sickness of ignorance.)

Two Epitaphs for Maimonides
 (Carved on his traditional tombstone
 in Tiberias)

Epitaph I

Here lies a man, and still no man;
 If you were a man, angels of heaven
 Must have overshadowed your mother.

(The above lines were later effaced and the following were substituted:)

Epitaph II

Here lies Moses Maimuni
 The excommunicated heretic.

Epigram I

[By a hostile critic]

Thou Guide to doubt, be silent
 evermore;
 Thy sinful folly shall remain unheard,
 That makes of Bible-fact but
 metaphor,

And to a dream degrades the prophet's word.

Epigram II

[Retort by an adherent]

Thou fool profane, be silent!
Nevermore
Dare, sandaled, upon holy ground to stand;
What dost thou know of fact or metaphor?
Nor dream, nor prophet canst thou understand.

Epigram III

[By a hostile critic]

Forgive us, son of Amram, be not wroth
That we should call this fool by thy great name;
Prophet the Bible calls God's messengers,
The servants of false Baal it calls the same.

The members of the bigoted opposition to Maimonides' teachings in Montpellier, when they saw that all their attacks were to no avail, in desperation petitioned the head of the Dominicans in that city in these words: "You burn your heretics, persecute ours also. The majority of Jews of Provence are being perverted by the heretical writings of Maimuni (Arabic name for Maimonides). If you will cause these writings to be publicly and solemnly burned, your action will have the effect of frightening the Jews away from them." The result of this petition was that in 1235 the Dominicans confiscated the works of Maimonides in every home and had them publicly burned. Epigram #4 refers to this incident. [See Graetz: *History of the Jews*, v. 3, Chapter 16.])

[By an adherent]

What thought ye to burn, when ye kindled the pyre
For writings more precious than gold?
Lo, truth is a flame—will ye quench it with fire?
In a chariot ablaze like the Tishbite of old,
It rises to Heaven. O, bigots, behold—
God's angel appears in the fire!

Epigram V

[By an adherent]

Against the guide of Truth,
A false pack raised their voices.
Punishment overtook them;
Their tongue was directed to heaven,
Now it lies in the dust.

—Translated from the Hebrew

HEAVY-HEARTED

by JUDAH AL-HARIZI
(Spain, c. 1200)

Those ravens black that rested
Erstwhile upon my head,
Within my heart have nested,
Since from my hair they fled.

—Translated from the Hebrew

TO A PLAGIARIST

by MOSES IBN EZRA
(Spain, c. 1070–1138)

Admire thy wreath? And wherefore
should I not,
Since leaf and bloom are from my
garden plot?
Take just pride in thy pearl-string:
Every gem
Is perfect; and with care I polished
them!

—Translated from the Hebrew
by Solomon Solis-Cohen

To forty years; he runs his way:—
 behind
 The light companions of his youth
 remain;
 And evil be it or sweet, yet shall he find
 Joy in his lot,
 Firm by his work, his charge forsaking
 not.

*(Yet in the end
 He shall return:
 As at his birth he was,
 So shall he be.)*

The days of vanity—days nothing
 worth—
 Remember he of fifty years, and
 mourns
 Because the days of mourning come;
 and earth
 And all the glory of the world he
 scorns,
 Bearing the fear
 Lest his own time indeed be drawing
 near.

*(For in the end
 He shall return:
 As at his birth he was,
 So shall he be.)*

Ask: what befalls when sixty years are
 his?
 Then have his muscles grown like root
 and bar
 Set to his work—sufficing but for this
 And rooted that they bend now but so
 far;
 And never they
 Shall move again to rouse him for the
 fray.

*(For in the end
 He shall return:
 As at his birth he was,
 So shall he be.)*

If into seventy years his life-way
 wends,
 His words are heard no longer: 'tis his

To go unheeded. Now upon his friends
 Only a burden, he becomes a weight
 On his own soul,
 And on the staff that bears him to his
 goal.

*(For in the end
 He shall return:
 As at his birth he was,
 So shall he be.)*

At eighty years, then is he but a care
 Upon his sons; his heart is no more his,
 Nor his thoughts with him; only he is
 there,
 Scorned of his neighbors. Yea, his
 portion is
 Call to the brim,
 And wormwood is the morsel now for
 him.

*(For in the end
 He shall return:
 As at his birth he was,
 So shall he be.)*

And after—he is even as one dead.
 Happy the man who deemeth his own
 part
 That of a stranger who is quickly fled:
 Who hath no contemplation in his
 heart
 Nor thought nor sense
 But his soul's after-life and
 recompense.

*(For in the end
 He shall return:
 As at his birth he was,
 So shall he be.)*

—Translated from the Hebrew
 Ey Nira Davis Salaman

TIME-SERVERS

by JUDAH HALEVI
 (Spain, 1085–1140)

Time-servers are the cowering slaves
 of slaves,
 Alone on earth, who serves the Lord is

PURSUIT OF WISDOM

Each soul shall win the gift that most
it craves;

Seek God, my soul—God shall thy
portion be!

—Translated from the Hebrew
by Solomon Solis-Cohen

FORTUNE'S TREACHERY

by JUDAH HALEVI

When Fortune's shield protects thee,
then beware—

Tomorrow, for thy foot she sets a snare.
Her gift, an eaglet's pinion—now thy
flight,

Anon, the lethal arrow—to upbear!
—Translated from the Hebrew
by Solomon Solis-Cohen

WALK IN THE PRECEPTS

by MOSES IBN EZRA
(Spain, c. 1070–1138)

Walk in the precepts, and content
thyself

With hearthcakes, and a little salt
thereto;

Array thy soul in truth, nor be ashamed
If worn and patched the garments that
men view.

—Translated from the Hebrew
by Solomon Solis-Cohen

MAN IS A WEAVER

by MOSES IBN EZRA

Thou who art clothed in silk, who
drawest on

Proudly thy raiment of fine linen spun,
Bethink thee of the day when thou
alone

Shalt dwell at last beneath the marble
stone.

Anigh the nest of adders thine abode,
With the earth-crawling serpent and
the toad.

Trust in the Lord, He will sustain thee

And without fear thy soul
with God.

If the world flatter thee
voiced art,
Know 'tis a cunning witch
thy heart,
Whose habit is to wed man
grief,
And those who are close-bred
to part.

He who bestows his wealth
poor,
Has only lent it to the Lord.
Of what avail to clasp it
hand?
It goes not with us to the
obscure.

The voice of those who dwell
the tomb,
Who in corruption's house
their home;
"O ye who wander o'er us
When will ye come to shake
the gloom?"

How can'st thou ever of this
complain,
And murmuring, burdened
pain?
Silence! thou art a traveller
A guest, who may but over
remain.

Be thou not wroth against him
but show
How he who yesterday gladdened
know,
Today is begging for his
And painfully upon a cross

How foolish they whose eyes
upon
The treasures of their world
alone,
Far wiser were it to
And soul

Jesse's root a verdant branch
All spring."
Friend has cast His eyes upon my
grief,
According to His mercy, sends relief.
Mark! the redemption hour's
resounding stroke,
For him who bore with patient heart
the yoke!

—Translated from the Hebrew
by Emma Lazarus

A LETTER TO HIS FRIEND ISAAC

by JUDAH HALEVI
(Spain, 1085–1140)

But yesterday the earth drank like a
child
With eager thirst the autumn rain.
Or like a wistful bride who waits
the hour
Of love's mysterious bliss and pain.
And now the Spring is here with
yearning eyes;
Midst shimmering golden flower-
beds,
On meadows carpeted with varied
hues,
In richest raiment clad, she treads.
She weaves a tapestry of bloom o'er
all,
And myriad eyed young plants
upspring,
White, green, or red like lips that
to the mouth
Of the beloved one sweetly cling.
Whence come these radiant tints,
these blended beams?
Here's such a dazzle, such a blaze,
As though earth stole the splendor
of the stars,
Pain to eclipse them with her rays.
Come! go we to the garden with our
wine,
Which scatters sparks of hot desire,
Within our hand 't is cold, but in
our veins

It flashes clear, it glows like fire.
It bubbles sunnily in earthen jugs.
We catch it in the crystal glass,
Then wander through cool, shadowy
lanes and breathe
The spicy freshness of the grass.
Whilst we with happy hearts our
circuit keep,
The gladness of the Earth is shown.
She smileth, though the trickling
rain-drops weep
Silently o'er her, one by one.
She loves to feel the tears upon
her cheek,
Like a rich veil, with pearls inwove.
Joyous she listens when the swallows
chirp,
And warbles to her mate, the dove.
Blithe as a maiden midst the young
green leaves,
A wreath she'll wind, a fragrant
treasure;
All living things in graceful motion
leap,
As dancing to some merry measure.
The morning breezes rustle cordially,
Love's thirst is sated with the balm they
send.
Sweet breathes the myrtle in the frolic
wind,
As though remembering a distant
friend.
The myrtle branch now proudly lifted
high,
Now whispering to itself drops low
again.
The topmost palm-leaves rapturously
stir,
For all at once they hear the birds'
soft strain.
So stirs, so yearns all nature, gayly
decked,
To honor Isaac with her best array.
Hear'st thou the word? She cries—
I beam with joy,
Because with Isaac I am wed today.

—Translated from the Hebrew
by Emma Lazarus

THE EARTH IN SPRING

by JUDAH HALEVI

Then, day by day, her broiled
gown

○ She changes for fresh wonder;
A rich profusion of gay robes
She scatters all around her.
From day to day her flowers' tints
Change quick, like eyes that brighten,
Now white, like pearl, now ruby-red,
Now emerald-green they'll lighten.
She turns all pale; from time to
time
Red blushes quick o'er-cover;
She's like a fair, fond bride that pours
Warm kisses on her lover.
The beauty of her bursting spring
So far exceeds my telling.
Methinks sometimes she pales the
stars
That have in heaven their dwelling.

—Translated from the Hebrew
by Edward G. King

JOY OF LIFE

(From *The Book of Tarshish*)

by MOSES IBN EZRA
(Spain, c. 1070–1138)

A beautiful woman, a cup of wine,
and a garden;
The song of bird and the sound of
murmuring waters;
These are balm to a lover, and joy
to the sad one, and welcome to
the stranger,
And wealth to the poor, and healing
to the sick.

—Translated from the Hebrew
by Solomon Solis-Cohen

THE BEAUTY OF THE STARS

By MOSES IBN EZRA

I gaze upon the beauty of the stars
that cover the face of the sky,
And think of them as a garden of
blossoms—

Until the white dawn rises like a dove,
From beneath the wings of a raven
that flees away.

—Translated from the Hebrew
by Solomon Solis-Cohen

BLESS THE LORD, O MY SOUL

(Judah, 6th to 1st Century B.C.E.)

Bless the Lord, O my soul.
O Lord my God, Thou art very great;
Thou art clothed with glory and
majesty.
Who coverest Thyself with light as
with a garment,
Who stretchest out the heavens like
a curtain;
Who layest the beams of Thine
upper chambers in the waters,
Who makest the clouds Thy chariot,
Who walkest upon the wings of the
wind;
Who makest winds Thy messengers,
The flaming fire Thy ministers.

Who didst establish the earth upon
its foundations,
That it should not be moved for
ever and ever;
Thou didst cover it with the deep
as with a vesture;
The waters stood above the
mountains.
At Thy rebuke they fled,
At the voice of Thy thunder they
hasted away—
The mountains rose, the valleys
sank down—
Unto the place which Thou hadst
founded for them;
Thou didst set a bound which they
should not pass over,
That they might not return to
cover the earth.

Who sendest forth springs into the
valleys;
They run between the mountains;
They give drink to every beast of the
field,

Curtains of Solomon

'Curtains of Solomon, how is it you have changed
Among the tents of Kedar, without grace or glory?'

'The peoples who lived among us before
Have left us in ruins, rubble beyond repair.
The sacred vessels are in exile and profaned.
How can you want glory from a lily among thorns?'

'Pushed out by their neighbours, sought by their Lord,
He will call all of them by name, omitting no man.
Their glory as at first shall be restored at the last.
He will kindle seven times more brightly their light that
is obscured.'

Save my People

Your anger has enveloped me. Envelop me now with love.
Shall my sin stand between me and you for ever?
How long shall I seek your companionship in vain?
I uphold your right hand. You have enslaved me to the stranger.
You who dwell on cherubs' wings, outstretched above the ark,
Arise, look down from your dwelling. Save my people, my
Redeemer.

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real of reaction - why
Prediction needed at all

Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy Law' (Ps. 119.18). My intention is to place the subject matter throughout the book within the grasp of the reader and not beyond it; to speak a language which is easy and not difficult; to adduce only the principal proofs and arguments, not their ramifications, so that the reader may find his way about without too great difficulty; that his study may be made straightforward, and through it he may attain his object: Justice and Truth, even as the Faithful Servant said with regard to wisdom when placed within easy grasp, 'Then thou shalt understand righteousness and justice, and equity, yea, every good path' (Prov. 2.9).

I will first explain the reason why men are involved in doubts. I say then that all knowledge of Reason is based on knowledge derived from sense perception. Now the information afforded by the senses is liable to doubts in one of two ways: either because the person who is inquiring has an inadequate idea of the object of the investigation, or, alternatively, because he is perfunctory in his observation and does not take sufficient pains with it. Take the case of a person who is looking for someone called Reuben ben Jacob. He may be in doubt whether he has found him for one of two reasons: either because his knowledge of Reuben is inadequate, since he never met him before and therefore does not know him, or else because seeing some other person he may wrongly assume him to be Reuben, taking the line of least resistance and neglecting to make proper inquiries. He has no claim to be forgiven since he takes things too easily and conducts his search carelessly. The result will be that his doubts will never be cleared up.

The same applies to the 'knowledge of Reason'. Here again doubts arise from one of two causes: either because the person who seeks such knowledge may be unfamiliar with the methods of demonstration, and therefore discard a correct proof and accept a false proof as correct; or, alternatively, he may know the right methods of investigation, but is neglectful in applying them, and hasty in arriving at conclusions before having completed the work of investigation with regard to the matter he seeks to know. All the more is this the case if both deficiencies

¹ For a definition of this term cf. below, p. 36.

are combined in the same person, that is to say, if the person is not acquainted with the art of investigation, and, in addition, lacks patience to proceed even as far as his proper knowledge would carry him. He will remain far removed from the object of his investigation, or despair of attaining it. Concerning the first of the two kinds of people we have mentioned the prophet says, 'Everyone that knoweth, understandeth' (Neh. 10.29);¹ concerning the latter² it is said, "They know not, neither do they understand" (Ps. 82.5).³ There may even be a third deficiency in addition to these two, namely, where the one who carries on an investigation has no clear idea as to what he actually wants to know. Then he will be still further removed from attaining true knowledge, so much so that even if the truth should occur to him and strike his mind, he would not notice it. He resembles a man who is unacquainted with the art of weighing and with the shape of the scales and weights, and who, in addition, does not know how much money he has a right to claim from his debtor. Even if his debtor had paid the full amount of the debt, he would not know that he had received the full payment; and if he took less from the debtor than was owing to him, he would, nevertheless, think that he had treated him unjustly. If this will be the position when one of the two people has a claim on the other, a similar thing will happen if one wants to weigh money for himself, but does not understand the instruments of weighing, and is unable to determine the exact weight they indicate. [To use yet another simile: He resembles a man who in accepting money for himself or somebody else sorts out the coins himself although he is ignorant of the art of testing coins, and, therefore, frequently accepts a worthless coin and refuses a good one. The result will be the same if though well able to test he nevertheless acts carelessly.⁴ Scripture has already compared the test which is applied to the words of righteousness to the testing of money. It says, "The tongue of the righteous is as choice silver; the heart

¹ I.e. Only one that knows the right methods of investigation is able to arrive at the truth.

² Who combine both deficiencies.

³ They either possess the methods of investigation, nor do they try to understand by patient effort.

⁴ Here the only deficiency is lack of knowledge.

⁵ The two alternatives of this simile illustrate the two points made above: deficiency of knowledge and lack of patience are the causes of doubt.

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of the wicked is little worth' (Prov. 10.20).¹ These who have only little skill in the art of testing, or, alternatively, have only little patience in applying it, are regarded as oppressors because they do violence to the truth, as is said, 'The heart of the wicked is little worth',² whereas those who practice the art of testing are considered righteous on account of their knowledge and patience, as stated in the preceding words, 'The tongue of the righteous is as choice silver'. The wise are praiseworthy, and their doubts vanish only if they persevere in carrying through their investigation to the end, in addition to knowing how to conduct it,³ as the wise said, 'Behold, I waited for your words, I listened for your reasons, until I searched out what to say' (Job 32.11), and as has been said by another wise man, 'Take not the final word of truth out of my mouth' (Ps. 119.43).⁴

I have been led to make these introductory remarks by my observation of a great many people in the matter of their doctrines and beliefs. Some there are who have arrived at the truth and rejoice in the knowledge that they possess it; of them the prophet says 'Thy words were found, and I did eat them, and Thy words were unto me a joy and the rejoicing of my heart' (Jer. 15.16). Others have arrived at the truth, but doubt it; they fail to know it for a certainty and to hold on to it; of these the prophet says 'Though I write for him ever so many things of My law, they are accounted as a stranger's' (Hos. 8.12). Still others confidently affirm that which is false in the belief that it is true; they hold on to falsehood, and abandon that which is right; of them it is said, 'Let him not trust in vanity, deceiving himself; for vanity shall be his recompense' (Job 15.31). Others again base their conduct on a certain belief for a time, and then reject it on account of some defect they find in it; then they change over to another belief and renounce it in turn because of something in it which seems questionable to them; then they go over to yet another belief for a while, and drop it because of some point which, in their opinion, renders it invalid. These

¹ The words of truth are the result of a testing process, i.e., that of investigation, similar to the testing of silver. Cf. *Comm. Prov.*, p. 39.

² i.e. Small in knowledge and patience.

³ Doubt vanishes only after the completion of the whole process of investigation. The process of cognition is later described as a successive elimination of doubts.

⁴ The final word in the process of cognition contains the truth and is free from doubt and uncertainty.

HAS TO
EXPLAIN
WHY
DOUBTS
IF
REASON
LEADS
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people are changing continually all their life. They resemble a person who desires to go to a town, but does not know the road that leads to it; he travels a parasang¹ on one road and becomes perplexed, returns and travels a parasang on another road, becomes again perplexed and returns, and so a third and fourth time. [Of such a man Scripture says, 'The labour of fools wearieth everyone of them, he knoweth not how to go to the city' (Eccl. 10.15), that is to say *because he knoweth not.*²

When I considered these evils both in their own nature and in their particular manifestations, my heart grieved for my race, the race of mankind, and my soul was moved on account of our own people Israel, as I saw in my time many of the believers clinging to unsound doctrines and mistaken beliefs while many of those who deny the faith boast of their unbelief and despise the men of truth, although they are themselves in error. I saw men sunk, as it were, in a sea of doubt and covered by the waters of confusion,³ and there was no diver to bring them up from the depths and no swimmer to come to their rescue. But as my Lord has granted unto me some knowledge which I can use for their support, and endowed me with some ability which I might employ for their benefit, I felt that to help them was my duty, and guiding them aright an obligation upon me [as the Prophet says, 'The Lord God hath given me the tongue of them that are taught, that I should know how to sustain with words him that is weary' (Isa. 50.4)] although I confess to the shortcomings of my knowledge, which is far from being perfect, and admit the deficiency of my understanding, which is far from being complete, realizing as I do that I am not superior in knowledge to my contemporaries, but can offer my contribution only to the best of my ability and according to my lights [as the prophet says, 'But as for me, this secret is not revealed to me for any wisdom that I have

¹ A parasang is three miles.

² Saadya classifies his contemporaries on the basis of the distinction between doubt and certainty, error and truth: (1) Some possess both truth and certainty; (2) others possess truth, but lack certainty; (3) others lack truth, but possess certainty; (4) still others lack both truth and certainty. It is Saadya's endeavour to offer them both truth and certainty. Cf. Heschel *loc. cit.*, p. 291.

³ No doubt, Saadya alludes to Isa. 11.9 (Hab. 2.14), 'For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea'. Cf. below, p. 31, where the verse is quoted to illustrate the state of man's perfection in contrast to his state of error and doubt as described in the above passage.

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more than any living' (Dan. 2.30).] Nevertheless, I maintain the hope that He who knoweth my intentions and the desire of my heart will grant me success and sustain me according to my purpose, not according to my gifts and abilities [as has been said by another prophet, 'I know, my God, that Thou searchest the heart, and hast pleasure in uprightness' (1 Chron. 29.17).]

[In the name of God, the Creator of the universe, I implore any learned man who may read this book and find in it some mistake, to correct it, or if he finds a doubtful letter,¹ to put it right. Let him not be prevented from doing so by the fact that the book is not his, or because I preceded him in shedding light on matters which were not clear to him. For the wise have compassion on wisdom and feel kindness for it as members of one family feel kindly towards each other, as is said, 'Say unto wisdom: thou art my sister' (Prov. 7.4); the ignorant have likewise compassion on their ignorance, and do not forsake it, as is said, 'Though he spare it, and will not let it go, but keep it still within his mouth' (Job 20.13).]

I further implore in the name of God (may He be exalted) all those of my readers who strive after wisdom to read this book with an open mind, to try honestly to see my point of view, and to clear their minds of obstinacy, hasty judgment and confused thinking so that they may derive from it the maximum of profit and advantage with the help of Him who has taught us wherein our benefit lies and on what it depends [as the prophet said, 'I am the Lord thy God, who teacheth thee for thy profit, who leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go' (Isa. 48.17)]. If both the scholar and the learner follow this path in reading this book, the certainty of him that feels certain will increase; the doubt of him that is in doubt will vanish; the believer who blindly relies on tradition,² will turn into one basing his belief on speculation and understanding; those who put forward erroneous arguments will be silenced; those who are obstinate and haughty will be ashamed; and the righteous and upright will rejoice, as is said, 'The upright see it and are

¹ Kaufmann (p. 440) sees here an allusion to the fact that Saadya wrote his book in Arabic characters whose diacritical points are apt to cause misreading and confusion. Cf. also *Attrib.-Lehre* p. 89, n. 150.

² Arab. *ishfid*, a term which denotes 'the adoption of the utterances or actions of another as authoritative with faith in their correctness without investigating reasons'. Cf. *El*, Vol. IV, p. 670.

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glad; and all iniquity stoppeth her mouth. Whoso is wise, let him observe these things; and let them consider the mercies of the Lord' (Ps. 107.42-3). In this way the innermost thoughts of a man will be purified and brought into conformity with his outward behaviour; his prayer will be sincere as there will be enshrined in his heart an inner voice rebuking and summoning him to right conduct, as the prophet says, 'Thy words have I laid up in my heart, that I might not sin against Thee' (Ps. 119.11). Their faith will show itself in their dealings with each other; jealousy between them in matters of this world will diminish; all will turn towards the men of wisdom and not to that which is evil. Theirs will be salvation, mercy and happiness, as God (be He praised and sanctified) has said, 'Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth, for I am God, and there is none else' (Isa. 45.22). All this will result from the disappearance of doubts and the removal of errors. The knowledge of God and His Law will spread in the world like the spreading of water in all parts of the sea, as is said, 'For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea' (Isa. 11.9).

2. THE NATURE OF DOUBT AND BELIEF

(ed. Landauer 7.1-17; 9.15-12.17;

ed. Slucki 4.11-26; 5.12-7.2)

One might ask: 'How can it be reconciled with the wisdom of the Creator (be He exalted and glorified) that He allowed errors and doubts to arise in the minds of His creatures?' We may answer this question at once by saying that the very fact that they are created beings causes them to be subject to error and delusion. For according to the order of Creation they require for every work which they undertake a certain measure of time in which to complete it stage after stage. Cognition being one of their activities, it undoubtedly comes under the same rule. In its initial stage, their knowledge proceeds from a complex, vague and confused idea of things, but by their faculty of Reason they purify and clarify it in a continual process until, after a certain measure of time, their errors are removed, and a clear idea is formed without any admixture of

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Handwritten notes:
 P. 11.9
 doubt,
 error

doubt.¹ And just as every productive art is carried out by successive operations and remains incomplete if those performing it desist from it prior to its completion — such as sowing, building, weaving and the other kinds of productive work which can only be accomplished by the worker's persisting in it patiently until the end — so the work of acquiring knowledge demands that one should start from the beginning and proceed chapter after chapter until the final stage is reached. At the beginning there may be, for example, ten doubts; at the second stage they will be reduced to nine, at the third to eight, and if a man continues to reason and to reflect, his doubts will in this way be further reduced until, at the final stage, there will emerge in full clarity the one proposition which formed the object of his search, and which stands out clearly defined, with no error or doubt attached to it . . . Now were he to abandon his speculation when he arrived at the fifth or fourth or any other stage, the doubts which attended the preceding stages of his reflection would be removed, but there would still remain with him the doubts attached to the remaining stages in front of him. If he retains in his mind the result of his speculation up to the point which he reached, he may hope to return to this point and complete the inquiry. If he fails to retain it, he will have to start his inquiry afresh. For this reason many people have gone astray and spurned wisdom. Some of them are ignorant of the road that leads to it, others whilst taking the road fail to complete the journey and get lost. As Scripture says, 'The man that strayeth out of the way of understanding shall rest in the congregation of the shades' (Prov. 21.16).]

With regard to those who fail to reach the goal of wisdom the Sages of Israel have said, 'With the increase in numbers of the disciples of Shammai and Hillel, who did not advance far

¹ Saadya describes the process of cognition as a successive elimination of doubts. It consists of three stages: (a) the complex impression, which gives only a vague idea as to the nature of the object of enquiry; (b) the act of analysing this idea; (c) the acceptance of the final truth by an act of belief which is free from doubt. In his *Comm. Yef.* (pp. 36-7, transl. p. 39), Saadya speaks of the three operations of synthesis, analysis and belief which constitute the three stages in the process of cognition. He finds these three faculties expressed in the formula used by the *Sifer Yeqirah*, 'Know, reflect, preserve' (*da' ve-hashöb u-nejör*). The faculty of synthesis presents the object in its concrete entirety; the faculty of analysis eliminates what is faulty and confirms what is correct in the impression; the faculty of belief adopts and preserves the knowledge established by the two preceding faculties. Saadya's definition of Belief (see below, p. 34) follows the same pattern.

Synthesis
= removal
of
doubts

✓

[PROLEGOMENA]

enough in their studies, the controversies increased'.¹ This utterance of theirs shows that if the disciples carry through their studies to the end, no controversy or discord arises amongst them. Let not therefore the fool in his impatience lay the blame for his own fault on the Creator (be He exalted and glorified) by saying that He implanted these doubts in him, whereas it is his own ignorance or impatience which threw him into confusion, as we have explained. Nor is it possible that any action of his can, by a single stroke, remove all doubt. For if it could, it would transcend the sphere of created beings, to which he belongs. Another person may not attach any blame for this fault of his to God, but desires God to impart to him the ability to know with a knowledge that is free from doubt. Such a one asks for nothing less than to be like God. For the one who possesses immediate knowledge² is the Creator of the universe (be He blessed and sanctified) as we shall explain later when we come to this matter again.³ The knowledge of all created beings, however, is only possible through the intermediacy of causes, i.e. through inquiry and speculation, which require time as we have described. From the first until the last moment of this period of time they must remain in doubt as we have explained, and they are the praiseworthy ones who persist until they have cleansed the silver from the dross, as is said, 'Take away the dross from the silver, and there cometh forth a vessel for the refiner' (Prov. 25.4); and until their churning has produced butter, as is said, 'For the churning of milk bringeth forth curd' (Prov. 30.23); and until their seed sprouts and can be reaped, as is said, 'Sow to yourselves according to righteousness, reap according to mercy' (Hosea 10.12); and until the fruit has ripened on their tree and turned into nourishing food, as is said, '... A tree of life to them that lay hold upon her' (Prov. 3.18).

Having thus dealt sufficiently with the origin of error and

¹ b. Sanh. 88b; the passage is also quoted by R. Sherira Gaon in his famous Letter where he gives an historical account of the origin and development of Rabbinic controversies. He explains that the Hadrianic persecutions made it impossible for the disciples to complete their studies. Cf. *Iggeret de-Rabbeinu Sherira Gaon*, ed. A. Hymann, London, 1910, p. 22.

² Kaufmann, p. 443, misunderstood this sentence. Saadya now turns to those who, whilst not blaming God for their own fault, nevertheless, act stupidly by desiring a kind of knowledge which is peculiar to God.

³ Lit. 'Knowledge without cause', i.e. without the effort of inquiry and speculation.

⁴ Cf. *Amudat*, p. 108 (36).

Prolegomena
but see also

prolegomena
ad.

Quick
y s u n v m e t
end of

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BOOK OF DOCTRINES AND BELIEFS

doubt, it is now fitting that we should explain the nature of Belief.¹ We affirm that this is an idea² arising in the soul as to what an object of knowledge really is: when the idea is clarified by speculation,³ Reason comprehends it, accepts it, and makes it penetrate the soul and become absorbed into it; then man believes this idea which he has attained, and he preserves it in his soul for another time or other times [as is said, 'Wise men lay up knowledge' (Prov. 10.14), and as is further said, 'Receive, I pray thee, instructions from His mouth, and lay up His words in thy heart' (Job 22.22)].

Belief is of two kinds, true or false. True belief means believing a thing to be as it really is, the large as large, the small as small, the black as black, the white as white, the existing as existing, the non-existing as non-existing. False belief means believing a thing to be the opposite of what it really is, the large as small, the small as large, the white as black, the black as white, the existing as non-existing, and the non-existing as existing. The wise man, who deserves praise, is the one who fixes his attention on the realities of things, and adapts his belief to them. Thanks to his wisdom he relies on that which can indeed be relied on and guards against that which must be guarded against. The fool, who is blameworthy, is the one who makes his belief the standard, and decrees that the realities of things must follow his belief. Thanks to his folly he relies on

¹ Arab. 'iḥkād; Tibbon translates it here and elsewhere rightly by 'emūnah, whereas in the title of the book he renders 'iḥkādāt by de'at. Saadya's definition given above makes it clear beyond doubt that he uses the word in the sense of 'belief'. Cf. Translator's Introduction, p. 19.

² Arab. ma'nā; hebr. 'inyan; it means 'idea', 'thought', not 'process' as Ventura (p. 81, n. 13) suggests, since the word occurs twice in the above definition and undoubtedly denotes 'idea' in the second place. The difficulty involved in the statement by Saadya that belief is an idea, is not solved by substituting 'process' for 'idea', since belief is not described as a process, but as an attitude of mind. The process of speculation which leads to Belief is not identical with Belief. Saadya's way of expression is inaccurate, and what he means to say is that Belief starts from an idea arising in the soul, etc. The above definition describes Belief as the final stage in the process of cognition much in the same way as the passage of *Comm. Yes.* quoted above, p. 12, n. 1. One must compare the above definition with the passage in *Comm. Yes.* in order to see that Belief represents only the final stage in the process of knowledge: First an impression (idea) arises as to the quality of a thing (faculty of synthesis); then examination clarifies the impression (faculty of analysis); finally Reason adopts the knowledge and makes it the object of belief (faculty of Belief). A different interpretation has been suggested by Heschel, *loc. cit.* p. 300 ff. Heschel is of opinion that Saadya discriminates between 'two types of belief or two stages in the process of belief'. As we have shown, *Comm. Yes.* does not support this interpretation.

³ Lit. 'When the butter of speculation emerges, a reference to the metaphor used before as a description of the process of speculation.

FROLEGOMENA

that which should be guarded against, and guards against that which can be relied on [as is said, 'A wise man feareth, and departeth from evil, but the fool beaveth overbearingly, and is confident' (Prov. 14.16).]

In this connection I should like to refer to certain people who cause me astonishment. Though really servants they think they have no master, and they feel confident that what they reject is false and what they affirm is correct. These people are sunk in the depths of foolishness and stand on the brink of the abyss. If they are right, let the poor man believe that his boxes and baskets are full of money, and let him see what it will profit him. Or let one believe that he is seventy years of age when he is forty, and let him see what that will benefit him. Or let him believe that he is well fed whilst he is starving or that he has drunk his fill whilst he is thirsty, or that he is well clothed whilst he is naked. Let him see in what condition he will find himself. Another one belonging to this sort of people, who has a dangerous enemy, may believe that his enemy has already died and perished, and he fears him no more. How quickly there will come upon him the evil that he apprehends not! The height of folly, however, is reached by those people who think that because they do not believe in Divine authority they are free from God's commandments and prohibitions, from His promise and warning, and all that these imply. [Scripture describes such people as saying, 'Let us break His bonds asunder, and cast away His cords from us' (Ps. 2.3).]

Some people in India try to make themselves insensitive to fire, but it still burns them whenever they touch it. Others, in the exuberance of youth, inure themselves to be flogged and whipped, but they nevertheless suffer pain every moment they are beaten. How much more severe will be the lot of those who brazenly defy the Creator of the universe. Thanks to their folly they will not escape what His wisdom had imposed on them, [as is said, 'He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength; who hath hardened himself against Him and prospered?' (Job 9.4).]

W. t. "2" India
in C. C.

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3. THE FOUR ROOTS OF KNOWLEDGE

(ed. Landauer 12.17-14.6; 15.13-17.14; 18.16-20.18;
ed. Slucki 7.3-30; 8.12-9.8; 9.29-10.33)

Having completed the inquiry with which we were first concerned, it is desirable that we should now mention the sources¹ of truth and certainty, which are the origin of all knowledge and the fountain of all cognition.² We shall discuss the matter so far as it has a bearing on the subject of this book. We affirm then that there exist three sources of knowledge:³ (1) The knowledge given by sense perception; (2) the knowledge given by Reason; (3) inferential knowledge.⁴ We proceed now to give an explanation of each of these Roots.

By the knowledge of sense perception we understand that which a man perceives by one of the five senses, i.e. sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch.⁵ By the knowledge of Reason we understand that which is derived purely from the mind,⁶ such as the approval of truth and the disapproval of falsehood. By inferential knowledge we understand a proposition which a man cannot deny without being compelled to deny at the same time some proposition obtained from Reason or sense perception. Where there is no way of denying these propositions, the previous proposition must of necessity be accepted. E.g. we are compelled to admit that man possesses a soul, although we do not perceive it by our senses, so as not to deny its obvious functions. Similarly, we are compelled to admit that the soul is endowed with Reason, although we do not perceive it by our senses, so as not to deny its (Reason's) obvious function.

[We have found many people who reject these three Roots of

¹ Lit. 'matters' (Arab. *mas'idd*, from sing. *madda*, matter), a term used by Saadya in the sense of source, origin. Tibbon copies the Arabic noun which is derived from the verb *madda*, to spread, extend, by using the Biblical noun, *mesheq*, which is derived from *mashaq*, to extend. Cf. Ps. 126.6; Job 28.18. See Kaufmann, *Attrib.-Lehre*, p. 1, n. 2; Klatzkin-Zobel, Vol. II, p. 293.

² Having dealt with the origin of error and doubt, Saadya now turns to a discussion of the origin of their opposites, i.e. truth and certainty.

³ An additional fourth source of knowledge, that of reliable Tradition, will be mentioned further below.

⁴ Lit. 'the knowledge of the eye witness'.

⁵ Lit. 'knowledge arrived at by (logical) necessity'.

⁶ This is the order in which the senses are enumerated by Aristotle, and following him, by most Arabic and Jewish philosophers. Cf. Kaufmann, *Die Sinne*, p. 44 ff. Tibbon's translation changes the order slightly.

⁷ i.e. unaided by sense perception. Saadya refers to self-evident axioms of Reason. See Kaufmann, pp. 445-6; Heichel *loc. cit.*, p. 277, n. 65.

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Knowledge. A few of them deny the first root. I shall deal with them in chapter 1 of this book and refute their arguments.¹ By denying the first root they (implicitly) deny the second and third as well since these are based on it. A larger group of people admit the first root, but deny the second and third. I shall deal with their view as well in chapter 1 and refute their arguments. Most people, however, admit the first two roots and deny the third one. The reason of this unequal distribution of views lies in the fact that the second type of knowledge is more hidden² than the first, and likewise the third more hidden than the second. Naturally, one is more readily inclined to deny what is hidden than what is obvious. There are also people who alternately deny a type of knowledge and approve another just as it suits them in their opposition to other people's views.³ Each group of these affirms what their opponents reject, and claims that it is driven by inexorable logic to its own view. Some people, for instance, affirm that all things are in a state of rest, and deny that there is any movement, whereas others affirm that all things move, and deny that there is any rest.⁴ Each group stigmatizes the arguments put forward by its opponents as inconclusive and erroneous. But we, the Congregation of the Believers in the Unity of God, accept the truth of all the three sources of knowledge,⁵ and we add a fourth source, which we derive from the three preceding ones, and which has become a Root of Knowledge for us, namely, the truth of reliable Tradition.⁶ For it is based on the knowledge of sense perception and the knowledge of Reason, as we shall explain in chapter 3 of this book.

These four Roots of Knowledge having been specified, we have now to explain in which way we may rely on them for evidence of truth.

¹ In a passage not included in this Selection. See, however, below, p. 62, n. 4; p. 110, n. 3.

² i.e. less obvious and evident.

³ The version given above is based on the reading of the Leningrad recension.

⁴ Saadya refers to the well-known controversy between Parmenides and Heraclitus, which was resumed by the Mutakallimūn. Cf. Ventura, p. 83.

⁵ The distinction between the three sources of knowledge as stated by Saadya was also upheld by the 'Faithful Brethren of Basra', but they defined Reason as that which is acquired by speculation, not as the axioms of self-evident truth. Cf. Heschel *loc. cit.*, p. 280, n. 73; Ventura p. 83.

⁶ Arab. *al-sharh al-jadīd*. The Arabic term denotes both Qur'ān and Tradition. Saadya comprises in this term the written and oral traditions of Judaism.

First with regard to the knowledge of sense perception, whenever an object makes an impression on our normal sense organ by coming into contact with it,¹ we may safely believe without any doubt that it is in reality as we perceived it, provided we are sufficiently expert not to be misled by illusions, like the people who believe that the image which appears in the mirror is an image which has been actually created there, the truth being that it is the property of polished bodies to reflect the image of an object that faces them; or like those people who regard the image of a man's stature which appears in the water reversed as real and created in that moment, not knowing that the reason for this is that the depth of the water exceeds the height of the stature. If we are careful to avoid these and similar mistakes, the belief in sense perception will prove sound, and we shall not be misled by illusions as is said, 'And they rose up early in the morning, and the sun shone upon the water, and the Moabites saw the water some way off as red as blood; and they said: This is blood' (2 Kings 3.22-3).

As to the knowledge of Reason we hold that every conception formed in our mind (Reason) which is free from defects is undoubtedly true knowledge, provided we know how to reason, complete the act of reasoning and guard against illusions and dreams. For there are people who affirm that the images one sees in a dream are real things which are created.² They are driven to this assumption in order not to have to reject the testimony of the senses. They do not know that some dreams are produced from the thoughts of yesterday which pass through the mind [of these it is said, 'For a dream cometh through a multitude of business' (Eccl. 5.2);] or that other dreams are due to the food they have eaten, which may have been too hot or too cold, too much or too little [in regard to these Scripture says, '... As when a hungry man dreameth, and, behold, he eateth ... or as when a thirsty man dreameth, and, behold, he drinketh ...' (Isa. 29.8)] or that still other dreams are caused by the preponderance of one of the humours

¹ Saadya holds, with Aristotle, that perception comes about when a particular element in an object comes in contact with the same element in the sense organ. Cf. *Amānāh*, p. 60 (32); Aristotle, *De sensu*, 2.

² Ibn Hāzīm reports that in the opinion of Šālih Kubba, one of the disciples of the Mu'tazilite al-Nazzām, everything one sees in dreams conforms to reality: an inhabitant of Andalusia who sees himself in China whilst dreaming must have been actually transferred by God to China during that moment. Cf. Ventura, p. 84.

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in the temperament¹ — the hot and the moist create the illusion of joy and pleasure, while the dry produces the illusion of grief and sorrow; of this the suffering Job² said, 'When I say: my bed shall comfort me, my couch shall ease my complaint; then Thou scarest me with dreams, and terrifiest me through visions' (Job 7.13-14). But dreams also contain a flash of inspiration from above in the form of illuminating hints and images, as is said, 'In thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth on men' (Job 4.13).

As to inferential knowledge the position is this: if we perceive a certain object with our senses and accept it as actually existing, but are unable to believe firmly that this object exists unless we believe that some other things co-exist with it, then it is necessary for us to believe in the existence of all those things be they a few or many. For the sense perception concerned could not have come to us without them. There may be one such inferred object or there may be two, three, four or more. Whatever the conclusion may be, it must be upheld because neither the sense perception nor any of these inferential notions can be denied.

An example of the inference of a single object is the following: if we see smoke without seeing the fire which produces the smoke, it is necessary for us to believe in the existence of the fire on account of the existence of the smoke because the one could not be accounted for without the other. Similarly, if we hear the voice of a man from behind a wall, it is necessary for us to believe in his presence there, for there could be no voice of a man unless from one who was present. An example of more than one single inference is the case when we see food being absorbed into the stomach of an animal in solid form and re-emerge in the form of waste. If we do not believe in the performance of four different functions, our sense perception could not be accounted for. These functions are performed (1) by the power of attracting nourishment into the body; (2) the power of retaining the food until it is thoroughly softened; (3) the power of digestion and assimila-

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¹ Cf. H. A. Wolfson, JQR, Vol. 33 (1942-43), p. 237, n. 103; see also the Translator's article in Melilah (ed. E. Robertson and M. Wallenstein), 1944, p. 11, n. 65. The four humours correspond to the four qualities (warm, cold, dry, moist) and to the four temperaments.

² Lit. 'the suffering man smitten with illness'.

tion; and (4) the power of expelling from the body what has become waste.¹ Since our sense perception can only be accounted for by the performance of these four functions, it is necessary to believe that they actually take place.

[The character of inferential knowledge having been explained, it is necessary for us to draw attention to certain mistakes against which one must guard, for most of the controversies between men and most of their differences in methods of argument arise from these mistakes.

(1) If someone declares that he believes in such and such a thing, because otherwise he would have to deny some sense perception, it is necessary for us to consider whether the sense perception could occur without that other thing which he believes. If this is the case, his belief is invalidated. Some people, for instance, believe that the whiteness of the Milky Way, which is testified by sense perception, is due to the fact that originally the rotation of the sun followed that course.² But if we examine the facts we find that other explanations are possible. The phenomenon may be caused by rising vapours or by fixed luminous particles or by an accumulation of small stars or similar causes. Thus their statement is invalidated.

(2) If someone declares that he believes in such and such a thing because, otherwise, he would have to deny some proposition furnished by Reason, it is necessary for us to consider whether this proposition would be true without the thing which he believes. In such case his belief would be invalidated. Some people, for instance, assert that there exists more than one earth.³ They argue that fire must occupy the centre of the universe since the most precious thing is invariably placed in the centre so as to be well guarded.⁴ But in our opinion this belief⁵ is equally safeguarded by our acknowledgment that man

¹ A detailed description of these four faculties and their functions is given by Josef b. Yehudah, the disciple of Maimonides, in his *Sefir Musar* (ed. W. Bacher), pp. 43-6.

² Cf. Aristotle, *Meteorologia*, I, 8, in the name of some Pythagoreans.

³ Cf. below, p. 53, n. 2.

⁴ Cf. Aristotle, *De Caelo*, II, 13, 293a, in the name of the Pythagoreans. The assumption is that the fire is the most precious element and must therefore be surrounded by a circle of earths since 'the most precious place befits the most precious thing'. Cf. below, pp. 115-6.

⁵ I.e. the proposition derived purely from the reason that the most precious thing is always placed in the centre.

lives upon this earth which is the centre of the universe.¹ Thus their assertion is invalidated.

(3) If someone declares that he believes that such and such an inference must be drawn from some sense perception, but this belief of his is inconsistent with some other sense perception, we have to weigh which is the more decisive of the two sense perceptions and judge accordingly. Some people, for instance, assert that all things originated from water² because all living beings come from a moist substance.³ But they ignore another testimony of their senses, namely the fact that water is fluid and flows off. It is impossible to assume that it is the basic element⁴ seeing that it cannot stay by itself. If two arguments like these clash, it is proper that we should give preference to the more decisive one.

(4) If someone declares that he believes that such and such an inference must be drawn from some sense perception, but his statement involves a contradiction, it must be considered as false. Some people, for instance, assert that the good is identical with the pleasant,⁵ because this is what sense perception suggests to them. But they fail to remember that to kill them affords pleasure to their enemies in much the same way as killing their enemies affords pleasure to them. Thus good and evil will be present in the same act, which is self-contradictory.⁶

(5) If someone declares that he believes such and such a thing for such and such a reason, and, upon examining his reason, we find that it necessitates something different which he does not believe, his belief is rendered invalid.⁷ Those, for instance, who affirm the pre-existence of the world, declare that they believe the universe to be without beginning in time,

¹ If we assign central importance to the human race, we must assume that the earth is placed in the centre of the universe.

² The well-known view of Thales of Milet.

³ Arab. *unjar*; element, origin.

⁴ Lit. 'root'.

⁵ The hedonistic view of the Epicureans, which dominates also Plato's earlier dialogues.

⁶ Saadya uses this argument again below, pp. 99-100, where he is concerned with the rational character of the Law and combats the hedonistic view on grounds of Reason.

⁷ In other words, a belief which does not conform to the principle on which it is assumedly based is inadmissible.

because they want to accept as true only what they perceive with their senses.¹ But if they accept as true only what their senses perceive, this principle should also preclude their view that the world is without beginning in time, since it is impossible for them to perceive with their senses the timeless in its original state.

Likewise, if someone declares that he affirms such and such a thing for such and such a reason, but we find that in fact he involves himself in an even greater difficulty than the one he tried to avoid, his assertion will be invalid. Thus some of those who affirm the Unity of God refuse to admit that God is unable to bring back yesterday, so as not to attribute to him any lack of power, but they involve themselves in an even more serious difficulty in that they attribute to Him something absurd, as will be pointed out, please God, in part of chapter 2.²

In endeavouring to establish the truth of inferential knowledge we shall henceforth be on guard against these five possible forms of mistakes, namely, (1) that it does not conflict with knowledge established by sense perception; (2) that it does not conflict with knowledge established by Reason; (3) that it should not conflict with some other truths; (4) that it should not be self-contradictory, still more that it should not (5) involve a difficulty more serious than the one intended to avoid. The first and primary condition, however, is that we should carefully apply our experience³ to our interpretation of sense perceptions and of the dictates of Reason as described. In addition, we have to persevere in the work of rational inquiry until its final completion so that altogether seven conditions have to be fulfilled in order to bring out the clear truth. If, therefore, someone who is not a member of our people comes forward with certain arguments based on inferential knowledge we have to examine his statement in the light of the above seven conditions. If it stands their test and is proved correct when weighed in their balances, it is the clear truth which we, too, have to accept.

We shall employ similar rules in dealing with the reliable

¹ Cf. above, p. 37.

² Cf. *Amānāt*, p. 108 (356).

³ Which teaches us to guard against illusions and dreams. Cf. above, p. 38.

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Tradition, that is to say the Books of the Prophets. But this is not the place to explain the conditions peculiar to them. I have explained them at length in the Introduction to the Commentary on the Torah.¹

4. REASON AND FAITH

(ed. Landauer 20.18-22.8; 24.14-26.17;
ed. Slucki 10.33-11.24; 12.26-13.26)

It may be objected: 'How can we undertake to pursue knowledge by means of speculation and inquiry with the object of attaining mathematical certainty seeing that our people reject this manner of speculation as leading to unbelief² and the adoption of heretical views?' Our answer is that only the ignorant speak thus.³ Similarly one will find that the ignorant people in our town⁴ are of opinion that every one who goes to India becomes rich. So, too, some of the ignorant people in our nation are said to think that the eclipse of the moon occurs whenever something resembling a dragon swallows the moon.⁵ Some of the ignorant people in Arabia are said to hold the opinion that unless a man's camel is slaughtered over his grave, he will have to appear on foot on Judgment Day.⁶ There exist many more ridiculous opinions like these. Another objection is that the greatest of the Sages of Israel prohibited this, and particularly the speculation on

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SAADYAH GARRISON

¹ Saadya obviously refers to his extensive Commentary on the Pentateuch which he wrote for learned readers and from which only fragments have survived. The Introduction to his Translation (*tafsir*), which he wrote for the general public, contains no reference such as mentioned above. Cf. *Comm. Pent.*, pp. 1-4. Below, pp. 157-8. Saadya lays down four Rules for the interpretation of Scripture. There can be little doubt that this exegetical canon is identical with the rules mentioned in the above passage.

² Arab. *kuf*.

³ Arab. *zandaka*.

⁴ Saadya's sharp rebuff of those who condemn philosophical speculation is matched by the equally sharp hostility towards him on the part of those who held this view. Moses Taku (1230-90) selected Saadya as his chief target of attack in denouncing philosophical speculation. Cf. J. Sarachek, *Faith and Reason*, 1915, p. 136.

⁵ Baghdad.

⁶ An Arabic folklore belief, which also occurs in Jewish sources. For the literature see Kaufmann, p. 449.

⁷ Instead of riding on his camel. Cf. Pococke, *Specimen*, p. 65, quoted by Kaufmann, *ibid.*

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the origin of Time and Space, when they declared, 'Whosoever speculates on four things should better not have been created: on what is above and what is below, what was in the beginning, and what will be in the end'.¹ Our answer is this: it cannot be thought that the Sages should have wished to prohibit us from rational inquiry seeing that our Creator has commanded us to engage in such inquiry in addition to accepting the reliable Tradition. Thus He said, 'Know ye not? Hear ye not? Hath it not been told you from the beginning? Have ye not understood the foundations of the earth?' (Isa. 40.21)². The pious men said to each other, 'Let us choose for us that which is right; let us know among ourselves what is good' (Job 34.4), and, indeed, the five men, namely Job, Eliphaz, Bildad, Zopher and Elihu, had long discussions on this subject.

What, however, our Sages did try to prevent us from doing was to brush aside the prophetic Scriptures and to rely on our own personal judgments in our speculations on the origin of Space and Time. For one who speculates after this manner may sometimes find the truth and sometimes go astray; until he has found the truth, he will be without religion³; and even if he finds the truth of religion and clings to it, he is never sure that he will not depart from it should doubts arise in his mind and weaken his belief. All of us agree that one who acts in this way is a sinner, even though he may be a genuine philosopher. But we, the Congregation of the Children of Israel, have a different way of investigation and speculation, and it is this which I want to mention and explain with the help of God.

The reader of this book should know that we inquire and speculate in matters of our religion for two reasons: (1) in

¹ Hagigah 2.1. As Scholem (*EJ*, Vol. 9, col. 635) has pointed out, this Mishnah passage echoes the definition of Gnosis in the 'Excerpta ex Theodoto'. There can be no doubt that it was directed against the mounting tide of Gnostic speculation in Jewish circles, without, however, achieving much result. The Rabbis continued to engage in speculations on the subjects indicated in the above formula, as testified by the innumerable utterances on these matters scattered throughout Talmud and Midrash.

² Saadya emphasizes the necessity of knowing, hearing and understanding in addition to the acceptance of Tradition. He declares that philosophical speculation is a religious duty. Maimonides holds the same view. Cf. Leo Strauss, *Philosophie und Gesetz*, pp. 76 ff. In his *Comm. Yes.*, p. 1 (14), Saadya describes Philosophy as 'comparable to that which is best amongst the works of the Creator'.

³ Arab. *din*. Cf. *EJ*, Vol. I, p. 975. In Saadya's terminology *din* denotes the sum total of revealed truths or the true revealed religion. Tibbon translates it by *dat*, sometimes by *Torah*. Cf. below, p. 47, n. 2; p. 95, n. 2.

PROLEGOMENA

order that we may find out for ourselves¹ what we know in the way of imparted knowledge from the Prophets of God; (2) in order that we may be able to refute those who attack us on matters connected with our religion. For our Lord (be He blessed and exalted) instructed us in everything which we require in the way of religion, through the intermediacy of the Prophets after having established for us the truth of prophecy by signs and miracles. He commanded us to believe these matters and to keep them. He also informed us that by speculation and inquiry we shall attain to certainty on every point in accordance with the Truth revealed through the words of His Messenger.

In this way we speculate and search in order that we may make our own what our Lord has taught us by way of instruction. There is, however, another objection which we have to consider. It may be asked: If the doctrines of religion can be discovered by rational inquiry and speculation, as God has told us, how can it be reconciled with His wisdom that He announced them to us by way of prophetic Revelation and verified them by proofs and signs of a visible character, and not by rational arguments? To this we will give a complete answer with the help of God. We say: God knew in His wisdom that the final propositions which result from the labour of speculation can only be attained in a certain measure of time.² Had he, therefore, made us depend on speculation³ for religious knowledge, we should have existed without religion for some time until the work of speculation was completed and our labour had come to an end. Perhaps many of us would never have completed the work because of their inability⁴ and never have finished their labour because of their lack of patience;⁵ or doubts may have come upon them, and confused and bewildered their minds. From all these troubles God (be He exalted and glorified) saved us quickly by sending us His Messenger, announcing through him the Tradition, and allowing us to see with our own eyes signs in support of it: and

¹ Lit. 'that it may become a matter of actual (hi-l-fi') knowledge to us'. For the term 'actual' cf. below, p. 57, n. 4.

² Cf. above, pp. 31-2.

³ Lit. 'transferred our debt to it', i.e. to speculation; Tibbon's translation uses the Talmudic term *himshah*, 'to give an order'.

⁴ Because of their deficiency of skill in the art of speculation. Cf. above, pp. 26-8.

⁵ Cf. above, pp. 26-8.

proofs which cannot be assailed by doubts, and which we can find no ground for rejecting, as is said, 'Ye yourselves have seen that I have talked with you from heaven' (Ex. 24.22). He spoke to His Messenger in our presence, and He based on this fact our obligation to believe him for ever, as He said, 'That the people may hear when I speak with thee, and may also believe thee for ever' (Ex. 15.9). So we were immediately obliged to accept the teaching of religion with all that it implies since it was verified by the testimony of sense perception, and its acceptance is obligatory on the strength of the reliable Tradition which has been handed down to us as we shall explain.¹ He commanded us to inquire patiently until the truth of Tradition was brought out by speculation, and not to depart from our religious position before its truth was verified, since we are obliged to believe in it on account of what we saw with our eyes and heard with our ears. In the case of some of us it may take a very long time until our speculation is completed, but we shall be none the worse for that, and if another one is held up in his studies on account of some hindrance, he will nevertheless not remain without religion. Even women and children and people incapable of speculation will possess a complete religion and be aware of its truths, for all human beings are equal so far as the knowledge of the senses is concerned. Praise unto Him Whose wisdom guideth man! This is why we find that the Torah mentions in many passages children and women in addition to the men when speaking of signs and miracles.

To make the matter clearer, let us suppose that someone who possesses 1000 dinar distributes this money in the following way:²

| | | |
|------------------------|------------------------|-------|
| 5 persons receive each | $20\frac{2}{3}$ dinar, | = 102 |
| 6 persons receive each | $16\frac{2}{3}$ dinar, | = 100 |
| 7 persons receive each | $14\frac{2}{3}$ dinar, | = 100 |
| 8 persons receive each | $12\frac{2}{3}$ dinar, | = 99 |
| 9 persons receive each | 11 dinar, | = 99 |

500

¹ Cf. below, pp. 108-11.

² The following account is one of the numerous instances in which Saadya indulges 'in his favourite hobby of arithmetical calculations'. Cf. Gandz, 'Saadya Gaon as a Mathematician', in *Saadya Anniversary Volume*, New York, 1943, p. 187.

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He wishes to show his friends without delay how much of the money is left in his hands. He, therefore, tells them that the balance left amounts to 500 dinar and proves it by weighing the gold that is left in his hands. After he has weighed it in their presence, and the amount of 500 dinar has been established, his friends are obliged to believe what he told them. They are now at leisure to arrive at the same knowledge by a different method, namely, by working it out arithmetically, each according to his capacity and understanding, provided no hindrance arises through adverse conditions.¹ Another illustration: One may diagnose rapidly a certain malady on the evidence of some obvious symptom long before another reaches the same conclusion after an exhaustive examination.

It is desirable that we should further believe that even prior to the existence of the children of Israel God imparted our religion³ to humanity³ by means of prophecy, wondrous signs, miracles and manifestations.⁴ Those who were present were convinced by what they had perceived with their own eyes; those who received a tradition in regard to it were convinced by what they had perceived with their own ears, as the Torah says, with reference to some of them, 'For I have known him (Abraham), to the end that he may command his children' (Gen. 18.19).

¹ Saadya speaks of two kinds of tests for the verification of truth: one is the quick and easy one, and the other the slow and difficult one. One who wants to know how much money he has distributed and how much is left, may simply weigh the gold that was left in his hand, which is the easy and quick way. The other slow and difficult test is to figure out the sums of all the shares, add them and deduct the sum total from the original sum. Cf. Gandz, *loc. cit.*

² Arab. *dis*; Tibbon translates it here by *Torah*, cf. above, p. 44, n. 3;

² Lit. 'To His creatures'.

⁴ Saadya obviously refers to the Revelations to Adam, Noah and Abraham.

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PROLEGOMENA

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² Arab. *din*; Tibbon translates it here by *Torah*. cf. above, p. 44, n. 3;

³ Lit. 'To His creatures'.

⁴ Saadya obviously refers to the Revelations to Adam, Noah and Abraham.

that God is affected by accidents, seeing that He is the Creator of all accidents. Whenever we find that He speaks of Himself as loving one thing and hating another, the meaning is that everything which He commands us to do He calls 'Loved by Him', since He bids us love it; e.g. 'For the Lord loveth justice' (Ps. 37.28); 'For the Lord is righteous, He loveth righteousness' (Ps. 11.7), etc.; and, after a summary of the things to be loved, it is said, 'For in those things I delight, saith the Lord' (Jer. 9.23) — and everything which He forbids us to do He terms 'Hated by Him', since He bids us hate it; e.g. 'There are six things which the Lord hateth' (Prov. 6.16); 'I hate robbery with iniquity' (Isa. 61.8); and, after a summary of the things to be hated, 'For all these are things that I hate, saith the Lord' (Zech. 8.17). Whenever we find that He speaks of himself as being pleased or wrathful, the meaning is that His bestowal of happiness and reward on some of His creatures He calls pleasure — e.g. 'The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear Him' (Ps. 147.11); 'Lord, Thou hast been favourable unto Thy land' (Ps. 85.2) — and when He decrees suffering and punishment to others He calls it wrath — e.g. 'The face of the Lord is against them that do evil' (Ps. 34.17); 'But His power and His wrath is against all them that forsake Him' (Ezra 8.22). But wrath and pleasure, as well as love and hatred in the human sense, apply only to beings in whom there is hope and fear. In the case of the Creator of the universe it is impossible to suppose that He should hope for, or fear, anything which He has created.¹ Likewise, we have to exclude from Him all other attributes of quality that may arise in our minds.

¹ A vindication of Love and Wrath as essential attributes of God has been attempted by A. Henschel (*Die Prophetie*, 1936).

COMMANDMENT AND PROHIBITION

I. LAW AND GRACE

(ed. Landauer II2.II-II3.12;
ed. Slucki 58.1-20)

vs
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It is desirable that I should preface this chapter by the following remarks. Since it has been established that the Creator (be He exalted and glorified) is eternal, and that there was nothing co-existent with Him,¹ His creation of the world testifies to His goodness and grace,² as we mentioned at the end of Chapter I in speaking of the reason for the creation of things,³ and according to what we find in the Scriptures as well, namely, that He is good and doeth good, as is said, 'The Lord is good to all; and His tender mercies are over all His works' (Ps. 145.9).

continued
attributed
1
creation
entirely
God's
initiation

The first of His acts of kindness towards His creatures was the gift of existence, i.e. His act of calling them into existence after they had been non-existent, as He said to the men of distinction among them, 'Everyone that is called by My name, and whom I have created for My glory' (Isa. 43.7). Thereafter He offered them a gift by means of which they are able to obtain complete happiness and perfect bliss, as is said, 'Thou makest me to know the path of life; in Thy presence is fullness of joy, in Thy right hand bliss for evermore' (Ps. 16.11). This

TORAH
=
GIFT OF
HAPPINESS

¹ For an analysis and appreciation of the main thesis of this chapter cf. the Translator's article, 'Saadya's Conception of the Law' in *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, Manchester, Vol. 28, No. 2 (1944), pp. 120-39; also his (Hebr.) article, 'Saadya's Classification of the Law' in *Rab Saadya Gaon* (ed. J. L. Fishman), Jerusalem, 1943, pp. 658-73.

² Cf. Saadya's refutation of the Platonic conception of a *prima materia* and of the dualistic view of two co-eternal principles, above, pp. 61-2, 69-73.

³ Arab. *djād wa-fa'āl*; Tibbon translates it by *israh we-hesed*. — Saadya means to say that the act of Creation sprang entirely from God's initiative, seeing that nothing existed which could have caused him to act.

⁴ Saadya explains at the end of Chapter 1 (*Amānūt*, pp. 72-3; Hebr., p. 38) that God created the world for two reasons: to manifest His wisdom through the order of creation (cf. above, p. 66, n. 2) and to bestow happiness upon the beings to be created, through the medium of the Law.

ANALOGY vs. Those who saw
LAW as burdensome

gift consists of the commandments and prohibitions which He gave them.

243 This
imply
LIMITATION
God's
ACTION

250 -

When faced with this statement, the first impulse of Reason will be to object that God should have been able to bestow upon men perfect bliss and to grant them everlasting happiness without imposing upon them commandments and prohibitions. Moreover, it would seem that in this way His goodness would have been more beneficial to them, seeing that they would have been free from the necessity of making any laborious effort. My answer to this objection is that, on the contrary, the order instituted by God, whereby everlasting happiness is achieved by man's labours in fulfilment of the Law, is preferable. For Reason judges that one who obtains some good in return for work which he has accomplished enjoys a double portion of happiness in comparison with one who has not done any work and receives what he receives as a gift of grace. Reason does not deem it right to place both on the same level. This being so, our Creator has chosen for us the more abundant portion, namely, to bestow welfare on us in the shape of reward, thus making it double the benefit which we could expect without an effort on our part, as is said, 'Behold, the Lord God will come as a Mighty One, and His arm will rule for Him; behold, His reward is with Him, and His recompense before Him' (Isa. 40.10) ^(C)

2. THE TWO CLASSES OF LAW:

LAWS OF REASON AND LAWS OF REVELATION

(ed. Landauer 113.13-118.11;

ed. Slucki 58.21-61.13)

After these introductory remarks, I now come to the subject proper. I declare that our Lord (be He exalted and glorified) has informed us through the words of His prophets that He

1 Saadya's answer is that man's happiness is greater when his own action has merited the blessings granted to him. For this reason, God in His infinite love, gave him the Law, for enables man to feel that his happiness is due to a blend of grace and merit. In this sense, the Law is a creation of God's love. Saadya's words paraphrase the well-known saying of R. Hninanyah b. 'Akashya (Makkot 3.16); they evidently oppose the Pauline doctrine, which considers Law and Grace incompatible. On the subject of reward, see A. Marmorstein, *The Doctrine of Merits in Old Rabbinical Literature*, 1920.

COMMANDMENT AND PROHIBITION

wishes us to lead a religious life by following the religion¹ which He instituted for us. This religion contains laws², which He has prescribed for us, and which it is our duty to keep and to fulfil in sincerity, as is said, 'This day the Lord thy God commanded thee to do these statutes and ordinances; thou shalt, therefore, observe and do them with all thy heart and with all thy soul' (Deut. 26.16). His messengers established these laws for us by wondrous signs and miracles, and we commenced to keep and fulfil them forthwith. Later we found that speculation confirms the necessity of the Law for us. It would, however, not have been appropriate to leave us to our own devices³.

It is desirable that I should explain which matters and aspects (of the Divine Law) speculation confirms as necessary. (1) I maintain that Reason bids us⁴ respond to every benefactor either by returning his kindness if he is in need of it, or by offering thanks if he is not in need of recompense. Now since this is a dictate of Reason itself, it would not have been fitting for the Creator (be He exalted and glorified) to waive this right in respect of Himself, but it was necessary that He should command his creatures to worship Him and to render thanks unto Him for having created them.⁵ (2) Reason further lays down that the wise man should not permit himself to be vilified and treated with contempt. It is similarly necessary that the

¹ Arab. *din*; Tibbon translates it by *Torah*. Cf. above, p. 44. n. 3.

² Arab. *shari'at*; Tibbon translates it by *miṣvaḥ*.

³ Saadya means to say that mankind would have been able to evolve a code of moral laws based on Reason, but such a process would have taken some considerable time. For this reason, God revealed His Law and thus enabled mankind to follow the right path immediately. In a similar way, Lessing solves the tension between Reason and Revelation by explaining the latter as a stage preparatory to, and necessary for, the 'education of the human race'.

⁴ Arab. *al-'aql yuwaḍḍijibu*; Hebr. *has-sekel meḥayyeh*. In the subsequent passage Saadya enumerates three distinctly rational laws, those of *gratitude*, *reverence*, and *social conduct*, all of which are introduced by the stereotyped formula, 'Reason dictates it as necessary'. As the Translator has shown in his above quoted articles, the choice both of these three principles and of the term '*aql*' for Reason reflects the Mu'tazilite background of Saadya's thought.

⁵ In the controversy between Mu'tazila and Ash'ariya as to the nature of the Law, 'gratitude' is the classical example adduced by the Mu'tazila in order to demonstrate the rational character of moral cognition. It is noteworthy that Saadya bases the institution of Divine Worship on the duty of gratitude towards God. In the introduction to his Prayer Book (*Siddur*) he derives the duty of prayer from the verse, 'He is thy praise' (Deut. 10.21): *Tefillah* (praise) comprises three branches, the first of which is thanks for the past (*todah*); the two others are petitions for the future (*tefilah*) and recognition of God's might (*hoda'ah*). Cf. I. Elbogen, 'Saadya's Siddur', in *Saadya Anniversary Volume*, New York, p. 250.

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COMMANDMENT AND PROHIBITION

includes humbleness before God, worship, standing up in His presence, etc. All this is written in the Law.¹ The second group includes the prohibition of idolatry,² swearing falsely by His name, describing Him by derogatory attributes, etc. All this is written in the Law. To the third group belongs the practice of justice, truth-telling, equity, and impartiality, the avoidance of homicide, adultery, theft, tale-bearing, and trickery against one's fellowman; also the command that the Believer should love his neighbour as he loves himself, and whatever is involved in these precepts. All this is written in the Law.

In regard to all the things which He commands us to do, He has implanted approval of them in our Reason; and in regard to all the things which He forbids us to do, He has implanted disapproval of them in our Reason,³ as is said in the Book of Wisdom — wisdom being identical with Reason — 'For my mouth shall utter truth, and wickedness is an abomination to my lips' (Prov. 8.7).

The Second Class of Law⁴ consists of matters regarding which Reason passes no judgment in the way either of approval or disapproval so far as their essence is concerned. But our Lord has given us an abundance of such commandments and prohibitions in order to increase our reward and happiness through them, as is said, 'The Lord was pleased, for His righteousness' sake, to make the Law great and glorious' (Isa. 42.21).⁵ That which belongs to the things commanded by God assumes the character of 'good', and that which belongs to the things forbidden by Him assumes the character of 'evil' on account of

¹ Lit. 'is in the text' (*nass*), i.e. of the Torah.

² Arab. *shirk*; association, i.e. of other gods with Him.

³ In stating that God has implanted the cognition of moral values in man's Reason, Saadya follows the Stoic and Mu'tazilite conception of natural religion. The term Reason (*ʿaql*) used in this connection denotes man's natural moral sense. It corresponds to the notion of *fitra*, which expresses the Mu'tazilite doctrine of natural religion.

⁴ I.e. the revelational laws.

⁵ Cf. above, p. 94, n. 1.

because it was revealed by God, but it was revealed by God because it was good, a view clearly inspired by Greek thought. Saadya, in dividing the laws into rational and purely revelational, and recognizing both, seems to have steered a middle course in this controversy, which agitated the mind of the Islamic world. But his attitude was necessitated not so much by a tendency to compromise as by the character of the Biblical Law itself, which so clearly showed the two aspects of (rational) morality and (non-rational) ritual.

the Service thereby performed.¹ Thus the Second (Class of Law) is in fact joined to the First Class.² In spite of this³ one cannot fail, upon closer examination, to find in it some slender moral benefits and rational basis to act against the greater moral benefits and firmer rational basis attached to the First Class (of Law).

It is proper that I should first and foremost discuss the rational laws.⁴ Wisdom suggests⁵ that bloodshed must be prevented among human beings, for if it were allowed people would annihilate each other. That would mean, apart from the pain suffered, a frustration of the purpose which the Wise (God) intended to achieve through them. Homicide cuts them off from the attainment of any purpose He created and employs them for.

Wisdom further suggests the prohibition of adultery; for, otherwise, human beings would become similar to the animals. No person would be able to know and honour his father in return for the education he received at his hands. Nor would a

¹ Saadya means to say that in the case of the revelational laws the character of good and evil is not constituted by the innate moral cognition of man, but by the idea of command and prohibition annexed to them by the Divine Law. Since the essence of the Divine Law is Service, i.e. obedience to God's will, good and evil in the realm of the Second Class of Law is conditioned by the idea of 'Service'. The Arabic text makes the meaning of the passage unmistakably clear. The phrase *li-mawḍi' anṣ'ibhad bi-falika* is to be translated, 'on account of the service (performed) thereby'. *Li-mawḍi'* in the sense of 'because', 'on account' occurs also *Andādā*, 120.3 and 238.7, where Tibbon translates it by *ba'ashūr* (because) and *minnē* (because). Unfortunately, he translates *li-mawḍi'* in the above passage in too literal imitation of the Arabic by *li-mekōm*, which was misunderstood by Guttman (p. 136) as *li-nakōm*, and interpreted as a reference to God, *Makōm* being a Rabbinic name for God. Hence he mistook *li-mekōm ha'ashūdāh* for 'Gottesdienst' (Service of God).

² Since Reason 'permits' Service as a means of achieving happiness (cf. above, pp. 96-7), the Second Class of Law, i.e. those based on the idea of Service only, are nevertheless 'reasonable', though to a lesser degree than the First Class.

³ Viz. the fact that the Second Class of Law has no rational basis in itself.

⁴ Saadya starts here another line of exposition of the rational and revelational laws. He no longer adheres to the division of the rational laws into three groups as suggested above, but surveys them under different aspects. It must be assumed that this second passage represents a revised version of Saadya's treatment of the subject. As will be seen from the context, it no longer reflects Mu'tazilite influence, but a background of Platonic and Aristotelian thought. Cf. the Translator's (Hebr.) article quoted above, pp. 66-71.

⁵ The stereotyped formula used now is no longer the phrase, 'Reason ('akl) dictates ...', but 'Wisdom suggests' (Arab. *min al-hikmat*; Hebr. *min ha-hokmah*). This change of terminology corroborates the assumption that this passage represents a new version of the theme. The term *hikmat* (wisdom) is used by Saadya as an equivalent to the Platonic term *λογιστικόν*, which denotes the ruling and judging faculty in the triad of the soul. It is the function of wisdom to create harmony both in the individual soul and in society. The laws are, in this light, the products of wisdom. Cf. the Translator's article, *loc. cit.*

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father be able to bequeath to his son his means of livelihood though the son inherited his existence from him; nor would one know one's other relatives such as paternal and maternal uncles; nor would one be able to show them the kindness due to relatives.

Wisdom further suggests the prohibition of theft; for if it were permitted some people would rely on their ability to steal some other people's property, and would not do any productive work¹ nor amass wealth. But if everyone relied on this sort of subsistence, theft itself would be rendered impossible by the abolition of property since nothing at all would be found to steal.

Wisdom further suggests, and this is perhaps its first principle, that one should speak the truth and abstain from falsehood, for truth is a statement which accords with facts and actual conditions, whereas a lie is a statement which does not accord with facts and actual conditions. When the senses perceive an object in a certain state, and the soul ascribes to it another state, then the two statements conflict in the soul, and from their contradiction the soul knows that there is something wrong.²

I will furthermore say this: I have met certain people who think that our selection of these four things as objects of reprobation is wrong. In their opinion that is to be reprobated which causes them pain and grief, and the good, in their opinion, is that which causes them pleasure and rest.³ To this proposition I reply at length in Chapter 4 on the subject of Justice.⁴ I will here mention only part of the reply. I say that one who holds this opinion has ignored all the arguments which I have adduced⁵, and one who ignores this is a fool with whom we need not trouble ourselves. Nevertheless, I shall not be content until I have compelled him to admit that his view is self-contradictory and impossible. I declare that the killing

¹ Lit., 'cultivate the world'.

² Lit., 'strange'; Arab. *munkar*. Tibbon translates it by *negri* or *muzen*. Cf. *Amānāt*, 119-2, 200-2. On the definition of the lie cf. Plato, *Republic* II, B-C pp.

³ i.e. Homicide, adultery, theft and falsehood.

⁴ The hedonistic view, which seems to have found many followers in Saadya's time since the Mu'tazilites also regarded it necessary to combat it. Cf. al-Sharaṭīnī I, 63. In his refutation of the hedonistic position Saadya stands solidly on Platonist ground.

⁵ In a paragraph of Chapter 4 not included in this Selection (*Amānāt*, 249-50; Hebr. 77) Saadya points out that man could not exist without the desire for the satisfaction of his physical wants, but that it is his task to control his passions.

⁶ i.e. the four dialectical arguments against homicide, adultery, theft and falsehood.

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of an enemy whilst pleasing to the killer causes pain to the killed; that the seizure of any property or married woman whilst pleasing to the person who commits this act causes pain to the person who suffers it. According to the opinion of those who hold this theory it would necessarily follow from their premise that each of these acts is both wisdom and folly at the same time, wisdom because it affords pleasure to the person who commits murder, robbery and rape, and folly because it causes pain to his victim. But every theory which involves a self-contradiction is invalid.¹ The contradictory qualities may also appear combined in relation to one person as in the case of honey into which poison has been dropped. In this case the same person eats something which affords pleasure and causes death at the same time. Surely this compels them to admit that (according to their theory) wisdom and folly will exist together.²

The Second Class of Law concerns such matters as are of a neutral character from the point of view of Reason,³ but which the Law has made the objects of commandment in some cases, and of prohibition in others, leaving the rest in their neutral state. Instances are the distinguishing from ordinary days of Sabbath and Festivals; the selection of certain individuals to be Prophets and Leaders⁴; the prohibition to eat certain foodstuffs; the avoidance of sexual intercourse with certain people; the abstention enforced during periods of impurity. The great motive for the observance of these principles and the laws derived and branching out from them is, of

¹ Saadya's arguments against the hedonistic view follow closely the Platonic pattern. Plato demonstrated the self-contradiction involved in this theory by pointing out that the pleasant of to-day becomes the pain of to-morrow. Saadya uses the same argument elsewhere. (*Amānāt*, p. 116; *Hebr.* 60; *Comm. Prov.* p. 7.) Here he introduces a significant change by pointing out that what is pleasing to the evildoer is painful to his victim. The contradiction between pleasure and pain is thus established by reference to the *I and the Thou*, an attitude which reflects the Jewish ethical conception in contrast to the more self-centred Greek attitude.

² Since this is absurd, their theory that the good is identical with the pleasant is disproved.

³ Lit., 'concerns that which is permissible (i.e. neither commanded nor prohibited) by Reason'. Saadya now turns to a discussion of the 'usefulness' of the Second Class of Law, i.e. those based entirely on Revelation.

⁴ Arab. *imām*; Tibbon's translation by *kohen* (priest) obliterates the meaning of the Arabic term which denotes religious and secular leadership. Cf. S. W. Baron, 'Saadya's Communal Activities' in *Saadya Anniversary Volume*, New York, p. 39, n. 113. In his *Siddur* Saadya uses the term *Imām* for the Reader (*sheliḥ ṣibbūr*). Cf. Elbogen, *loc. cit.*, p. 250.

COMMANDMENT AND PROHIBITION

course, the command of our Lord and the promotion of our happiness resulting from it, but I find for most of them also some minor and partial motives of a useful character.¹ I wish to point out and to discuss some of them, realizing as I do that God's wisdom (be He blessed and exalted) is above all this.²

The distinction conferred upon certain times has these advantages: In the first place, it enables us to desist from our work at certain times and obtain a rest from our many travails; furthermore, to enjoy the pleasures of learned pursuits, and to have the benefit of additional prayer; there is also the advantage that people will be free to meet at gatherings and discuss matters concerning their religion and proclaim them in public, etc.³

The distinction conferred upon a certain person has these advantages: it enables the public to receive reliable instruction from him, to ask his intercession; and it enables him to inspire people with a desire for godliness that they may attain something like his own rank, and to devote his efforts to promoting piety amongst men, since he is worthy of that; and similar activities.⁴

The prohibition of eating certain animals has this advantage: it makes it impossible to liken any of the animals to the Creator⁵; since it is unthinkable that one should permit oneself either to eat or to declare as impure what one likens to God; also it prevents people from worshipping any of the animals,

¹ Saadya intends to show that in addition to the general principle of 'Service', which he established as a rational basis for the Second Class of Law (see above, pp. 96-7), there is also an aspect of practical usefulness attached to them.

² Saadya means to say that the rational explanation of these laws cannot claim to exhaust their deep and hidden meaning, which is only known to the wisdom of the Divine Lawgiver.

³ In other words, the holy seasons of the year are intended to enable man to devote himself entirely to the spiritual side of life. They also help to promote human fellowship on the ground of common ideals. Saadya stresses here the moral and social value of Sabbath and Festivals.

⁴ It is noteworthy that Saadya sees here the chief function of religious leadership in its social aspects. In his *Sefer ha-galui* he asserts that 'God does not leave His people in any generation without a scholar whom He inspires and enlightens so that he in turn may so instruct and teach the people as to make them prosper through him'. He leaves no doubt that he regarded himself as the chosen leader of his own generation (cf. S. W. Baron, *loc. cit.*, pp. 57-58), although he modestly mentions on another occasion (cf. above pp. 29-30) that he did not feel himself to be superior in wisdom to any of his contemporaries.

⁵ i.e. to conceive God in the image of a particular animal as was the case in ancient pagan religions.

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since it is unthinkable that one should worship either what serves for food or what one declares as impure.¹

The prohibition of sexual intercourse with certain categories of women has this advantage: in the case of a married woman, I have already stated the reason before.² As to one's mother, sister and daughter, the reason is this: the necessities of daily life foster intimacy between the members of a family. Consequently, if marriage between them were permitted, they would indulge in sexual licence.³ Another purpose is to prevent men from being attracted only by those women who are of beautiful appearance and rejecting those who are not, when they see that their own relatives do not desire them.⁴

The laws of defilement and purity have this advantage: they teach men humility and reverence; they strengthen in them (the desire) to pray once more after a period of neglect⁵; they make people more conscious of the dignity of the Hcly Place after they have abstained from entering it for a period; and they turn their minds to the fear of God.⁶

If one examines most of these revelational laws in the above fashion, one will find for them a great number of partial motives and reasons of usefulness. But the wisdom of the Creator and His knowledge is above everything human beings can attain, as is said, 'For the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways' (Isa. 55.9).

¹ Saadya's interpretation of the dietary laws is, in a sense, a striking anticipation and rejection of the theory of modern ethnologists who explain the Biblical prohibition of eating certain animals by reference to their alleged sacred character as the totems of ancient Hebrew clans. Cf. L. B. Paton, 'Early Hebrew Ethics', in *The Evolution of Ethics* (1927), p. 166. Saadya explains that these animals were forbidden in order to combat the view that they were of a sacred character. He wrote a *Book on Forbidden Food*, a fragment of which has survived in two different recensions. Cf. Malter, p. 347.

² Cf. above, pp. 98-9, where the law forbidding adultery is rationally explained.

³ Cf. Freud's *Totem and Taboo*, where the complicated social system of primitive society is explained by reference to the need for separation of blood relatives in order to avoid sexual licence.

⁴ Saadya wrote a special treatise, *The Interpretation of the Laws of Incest*, which has been edited with an English translation and introduction by H. Hirschfeld in JQR, Vol. 17, pp. 713-20. Cf. Malter, pp. 346-7.

⁵ Cf. b. *Berakhot*, 2c b ff.; *Ozar ha-Geonim* (ed. B. M. Lewin), Vol. I, pp. 54-5.

⁶ Saadya wrote also a special treatise, *On Defilement and Purity*, which is quoted by a number of medieval authors. Cf. Malter, p. 348.

COMMANDMENT AND PROHIBITION

3. THE NECESSITY OF REVELATION

(ed. Landauer 118.11-120.3;
ed. Slucki 61.14-62.14)

Having distinguished in the preceding chapter the Two Classes of Law, namely, the rational and the revelational laws, it is now desirable that I should explain the necessity of prophetic Revelation.¹ For I have heard that there are people who contend that men do not need prophets, and that their Reason is sufficient to guide them aright according to their innate cognition of good and evil.² I, therefore, subjected this view to the test of true reasoning, and it showed me that if things were as they make out, God would know it better and would not have sent us prophets, for He does not do things which have no purpose. Then I reflected still more deeply and found that mankind is fundamentally in need of the prophets, not solely on account of the revelational laws, which had to be announced, but also on account of the rational laws, because their practice cannot be complete unless the prophets show us how to perform them. Thus, for instance, Reason commands gratitude towards God for the blessings received from Him, but does not specify³ the form, time, and posture appropriate⁴

¹ Lit. 'What is the necessity for messengers and prophets?' So far as the Second Class of Law is concerned, i.e. those based entirely on Revelation, the necessity of prophetic Revelation is no problem. Saadya's question is as to whether there was any need to include the rational laws in the Torah seeing that human Reason could have established them by its own efforts, unaided by Revelation. An answer to this question is already implied in Saadya's two previous statements, (a) that it would have taken some time for mankind to evolve a code of moral laws, and that it would have been unfair to leave a portion of humanity without it; (b) that man's happiness is greater if merited by obedience to God's will; that is to say that although the moral Law is valid in itself by virtue of Reason, reward is only possible for obedience to the revealed Law. (Cf. *Amānāt*, 155; Hebr. 79). Without Revelation, only grace is possible. For this reason God included in the Torah also the laws of Reason. He stamped them, as it were, with the seal of religious Law. In this section Saadya advances a third reason for the necessity of Revelation.

² Saadya refers here to the doctrine of the Brahmins (*Barhima*), which is frequently quoted in both Islamic and Karaite sources as having rejected, on the grounds of 'natural religion', all prophetic (revealed) religion. Cf. al-Sharastīnī II, 338-7; Weissinck, p. 261; Aron b. Elia, *ʿEj Hayyim* (ed. Delitzsch), pp. 160-1. Saadya knows also of another version of the doctrine of the Brahmins, that which accepts the Revelation to Adam, but rejects all later prophecy. Cf. *Amānāt*, 139 (71); Pines, p. 211, n. 1.

³ Arab. *ḥadd*.

⁴ In his *Siddur* Saadya covers these three points: he offers the established texts of prayers, the rules about the hours of prayer, and the attitude at prayer. Cf. Elbogen, *loc. cit.*, p. 253.

and
question
to the expression of such gratitude. So we are in need of prophets. They gave it a form which is called 'Prayer'¹; they fixed its times, its special formulae, its special modes and the special direction which one is to face when praying.² Another instance: Reason disapproves of adultery, but gives no definition of the way in which a woman can be acquired by a man so as to become his legal wife; whether this is effected merely by a form of words, or merely by means of money, or by her and her father's consent, or by the witness of two or ten people, or in the presence of the whole population of a town, or by a symbolic act, or by impressing a sign upon her.³ So the prophets laid down the rules of dowry, contract and witness. Another instance: Reason disapproves of theft, but gives no definition of the way in which some object of value becomes a man's property; whether by means of labour, or by way of commerce, or by inheritance, or by the appropriation of un-owned articles as in the case of a hunter in the desert or on the seas; whether the purchase becomes valid by the payment of the price, or by the act of taking possession of the purchased article, or merely by repeating a form of words; and so with many other questions which arise in the wide and extensive field covered by this subject. So the prophets presented us with an equitable decision on every single point relating to these matters.⁴ Another instance is the measure of punishment for crimes. Reason deems it right that every crime be punished according to its measure, but does not define its measure; whether punishment should be in the nature of a reprimand only, or should include the defamation of the evildoer, or include, in addition, corporal punishment by stripes, and if so,

¹ Arab. *ṣalāt*; Tibbon translates, *tefilah*, but according to Saadya's classification of Prayer (quoted above, p. 95, n. 3), *tefilah* denotes only one particular element of Prayer, namely, the petition. There is, in fact, another line of thought expressed in Saadya's *Siddur*, which considers *tefilah* (petition) the essential element of prayer (cf. Elbogen, *loc. cit.*, pp. 230-1), but there is no evidence for this in the above passage since it uses the comprehensive Arabic term *ṣalāt*.

² As in his *Siddur*, Saadya uses familiar terms of the Muslim cult to denote Jewish practices and institutions, since he wrote for Jews brought up in an Islamic environment. Here he uses the Arabic term *qibla* for the direction in which the prayer is to be spoken (i.e. the direction of the Temple in Jerusalem). Other expressions borrowed from the Islamic cult are *imām* (cf. above, p. 100, n. 4) and *ṣalāt*. See Elbogen, *loc. cit.*, p. 230.

³ Obviously some non-Jewish practice, which Saadya found in vogue.

⁴ Saadya himself wrote treatises on the Laws of Inheritance, on the Laws of Pledges, on Testimony and Contracts, and on Laws regulating the acquisition of objects received by gift. Cf. Malter, pp. 344-8.

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(ed. Landauer 120.3-122.14;
ed. Slucki 62.14-63.28)

Having explained the necessity for the sending of prophets, it is desirable that I should now explain how their prophetic mission was verified to the rest of the people.² I say then that

¹ Saadya assigns to prophetic Revelation the function of determining the details and particulars of the rational laws, which Reason is unable to establish. He must have had in mind Aristotle's distinction between natural and legal justice, the one being the universal law of nature, the other being the particular law of each country and founded on agreement. Cf. *Eth. Nic.*, V, 1134 b; *Rhetoric* I, 1352.

* In echoing Aristotle's reliance on agreement for legal justice, Saadya makes the ironical remark that people never agree. Hence the authority of the revealed Law is necessary to settle the details of regulation, although Reason is able to establish the principles. In other words, the Prophet is the legislator of the ideal state. Cf. the Translator's article, *loc. cit.*

* Saadya explains elsewhere that the appearance of the Created Glory (*Kahol nibra'*), which accompanied, as a visible element, the audible manifestations (*dibbur nibra'*) of God's Word (see above, p. 90, n. 1), served as a criterion to the Prophet that he was in the presence of Divine Revelation. (Cf. *Amânât*, 99-100, 123; *Hebr.* 51, 63). Only in the case of Moses' prophecy did the Word speak directly, without the intermediacy of a visible manifestation. (For an explanation of Saadya's complicated theory see the Translator's article, 'Saadya's Theory of Revelation', pp. 20 ff.). Saadya's problem, in the above chapter, is, however, the criterion of true prophecy, not for the prophet himself, but for the people to whom he is to convey the Divine message. Here the function of miracle comes in, as explained in the text. Although Saadya states (see *Amânât*, 123; *Hebr.* 63) that the people saw in the 'Pillar of cloud' a testimony of God's self-manifestation to Moses and probably to the other prophets as well (cf. Ps. 99.7), he regards, not quite consistently, the performance of miracles as a necessary credential of true prophecy.

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men know (the limits) of their power and ability, namely, the fact that they are unable to subdue the elements of nature or to change the essence of things. They realize that they are powerless in regard to these matters since this is the work of the Creator. He subdued the diverse elements of nature and combined them to form composite things in spite of their antagonistic character. He transformed their original natures so that, in their combinations, their essential characteristics disappeared and something new and different emerged, namely, man and plant and similar bodies. This is indisputably a sign that they are the work of a Creator. Now every prophet chosen by the Creator for a prophetic mission commences his career as soon as God furnishes him with one of the following signs; either he enables him to subdue the elements of nature, e.g. to prevent fire from burning or restraining water from flowing or cause the sphere to halt on its way, etc.; or He enables him to change the essence of the elements, e.g. to transform an organism into inorganic nature, or inorganic nature into an organism, or water into blood, or blood into water. And whenever such a sign is delivered into the hands of the prophet the people who see it are obliged to pay reverence to him and to hold his message to be true, for the Wise (God) does not deliver a sign into his hands unless he is trusted.¹ This fact, although discoverable by Reason, is also stated in the text of Scripture, as the reader will know from the story of our Teacher Moses and the wonders and miracles delivered into his hand, which, for the sake of brevity, I shall not mention here as these things are described in the text of the Book of Exodus and in other books and their Commentaries;² thus he said to his people, 'The great trials which thine eyes saw' (Deut. 7.19). Those men³ who believed⁴ in him believed the truth,⁵ and they were the superior ones, as is said, 'And he did the signs in the sight of the people, and the people believed' (Ex. 4.30-31). Those who did not believe in him and did not believe the truth were lost in error, as the reader will know

¹ Saadya qualifies this statement later (see below, pp. 113-4) by saying that miracles produced in support of doctrines which are contrary to Reason cannot be accepted as evidence for their truth. For no miracle can prove the rationally impossible. It is most remarkable that he unhesitatingly puts the judgment of Reason above any proof furnished by miracles. Cf. also Albo, 'Ikkarim', I, 18.

² Arab. *tafsir*.

³ Lit. 'servants'.

⁴ Arab. *'amana*.

⁵ Arab. *jaddaka*.

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from the story of those in regard to whom it is said, 'Because they believed not in God . . . (Ps. 78.22).

I must here add a qualification to avoid misunderstanding, namely, that the Creator (be He exalted and glorified) does not change the essence of a thing before having announced to the people that He is going to change it. The reason for this¹ is that they may believe in the truth of His prophet. But without reason He does not make any change in the essence of things, for if we were to believe² that, we should have no certainty of anything, and none of us when returning to his home and people would be sure that the Creator had not changed their essences so that they would be different from what they were when we left them; similarly if a man acted as witness for a person or pronounced judgment on a person. But it is necessary for us to believe³ that the existing things remain as they are, and that their Lord does not alter them except after having announced it beforehand.

I say furthermore that, in the judgment of wisdom, it is impossible that the messengers sent to mankind should have been angels,⁴ because men do not know either the capabilities or the limitations of the angels. If they (the angels) had come and performed miracles which men are powerless to perform, people would have thought that such is the nature of all angels, and they would have had no clear proof that the miracle was a sign from the Creator. If, however, the prophets are men like ourselves and we find that they are doing things which we are actually powerless to do and which are entirely the work of the Creator, it becomes evident to us that they are sent by His Word. I maintain that for this very reason God placed the prophets and the rest of mankind on the same level in regard to death, so that men should not think that, in the same way as the prophets differ from the rest of mankind by being able to live

¹ i.e. the reason for changing the nature of things.

² Arab. 'i'tikād.

³ Saadya rejects the conception of angel as intermediary of Revelation. According to the *Barhima*, who denied prophecy (cf. above, p. 103, n. 2), God communicates with men through angels. Cf. al-Sharastīnī, II, 6, 42; Guttmann, p. 103, n. 1.—Saadya also repudiates the angel doctrine in the form given it by Nahīwandi and the Maghīriya sect as well as by Jewish mystics who identified the angel mentioned in Ex. 23.20 with a mediator (*metatron*), a conception closely akin to the *Logos* of Philonic tradition and bordering upon Gnostic dualism. Instead of the angel, he introduces the conception of *Kaphod nifra*, which is rooted in the Jewish mystical tradition. Cf. the Translator's article, 'Saadya's Theory of Revelation', pp. 27-30; 32-3.

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for ever, so they also differ from the rest of mankind in being able to do things which others are powerless to do. For the same reason, God did not cause them to abstain from food, drink and sexual intercourse, since this might have weakened the force of their miracles, for people might have thought that such abstinence was due to their peculiar nature and that in the same way as such a nature was granted to them, so the power of working miracles was also granted to them. For the same reason, God did not assure them of lasting bodily health, or of great fortunes, or of posterity, or of protection against oppressors seeking to beat or insult or kill them; for if He had done so, it was possible that people might attribute their miracles to their peculiar condition by virtue of which they did not belong to the same class as ordinary men; they would say that since they are shown to be exceptional in those respects, it follows that they are capable of things which all other people are powerless to do. Knowing as I do that His wisdom is above everything, I nevertheless venture to declare that the reason why He left them in every respect in the same condition as the rest of mankind, and yet at the same time made them different by enabling them to do things which all other men are powerless to do, was to verify His sign and to establish His prophecy. I declare that for this reason also, He did not cause them to perform miracles continually or to know the hidden things (of the future) continually lest the people should think that they are possessed of a peculiar quality to which this power is due, but He made them do this at certain periods and to have such knowledge at certain opportune times. In this way it became clear that this originated from the Creator and not from them.

5. SCRIPTURE AND TRADITION

(ed. Landauer 125.18-128.2;
ed. Slucki 65.13-66.12)

I will now explain the character of the Holy Scriptures.* I declare that God included in His Book a brief record of all that

* Whilst Saadya emphasizes the ordinary human quality of the prophet, Yehudah Hallevi raises the status of the prophet to a position similar to that of the angels. As to the background of Yehudah Hallevi's theory, cf. the article by I. Heinemann in *K'meret*, 5702, pp. 267 ff., and the Translator's article in *Melilah*, pp. 14-17.

* Arab. *al-kutub al-muqaddas*.

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happened in past times in the form of narratives¹ intended to instruct us in the right way of obedience towards Him. He further included His laws, and added promises of reward for their observance. Thus Scripture became a source of everlasting benefit. For all the books of the prophets and the learned books of all nations, numerous though they are, comprise only three principal elements: (1) a list of commandments and prohibitions, which forms one point; (2) the reward and punishment which are the fruits of the former; and (3) an account of those who rendered good service to their country and prospered, as well as of those who dealt corruptly and perished. For the instruction needed for a good life is only complete if these three elements are combined. Let me give an illustration: A man visits a sick person afflicted with fever and knows for certain that the cause of his illness is pressure of the blood. Now if he tells him not to eat meat nor to drink wine, he has already done something to instruct him in the right way, but his instruction is as yet incomplete. If he adds the warning, 'lest you contract pleurisy', he has increased the weight of his instruction, but it still remains incomplete until he clinches it with the example, 'As was the case with X who contracted pleurisy'. By this means he has made his instruction complete. For this reason the Scriptures comprise these three principal aspects, of which I need not give any examples as they are so familiar.

I say further that the Wise (be He exalted and glorified) knew that His laws and the stories of His wondrous signs would, through the passage of time, require people to hand them down² to posterity, so that they might become as evident to later generations as they were to the earlier ones. Therefore, He prepared in our minds a place for the acceptance of reliable Tradition,³ and in our souls a quiet corner for trusting it so that His Scriptures and stories should remain safely with us.⁴

¹ Arab. 'achbâr, from sing. *chabar*. The term *chabar*, story, report, is also used in the wider meaning of tradition, and occurs in this sense repeatedly throughout this chapter.

² Arab. *nâkil*. Saadya discusses in this chapter the character of the 4th Root of Knowledge mentioned in the Prolegomena. Cf. above, p. 37.

³ Arab. *al-chabar ap-jâdîq*; Tibbon translates, *ha-baggadah han-nefemet*. Cf. above, p. 37, n. 6.

⁴ Saadya means to say that the faculty of belief in the truth of reports received and tradition in general, forms an integral part of the make-up of the human soul. He illustrates this point in the exposition which follows; it stresses the paramount importance of tradition in all spheres of intellectual and practical life.

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I deem it proper to mention a few points in regard to the truth of Tradition. Unless men had the confidence that there exists in the world such a thing as true report, no man would build any expectations on any report he might be told about success in any branch of commerce, or of progress in any art [which we naturally believe], since it is gain which man requires and for which he exerts his strength. Nor would he fear what he should guard against, be it the dangerous state of a road, or a proclamation prohibiting a certain action. But if a man has neither hopes nor fears, all his affairs will come to grief. Unless it is established that there is such a thing as true report in this world, people will not pay heed to the command of their ruler nor his prohibition, except at such time as they see him with their own eyes, and hear his words with their own ears; and when no longer in his presence, they will cease to accept his commands and prohibitions.¹ If things were like this, all management of affairs would be rendered impossible and many people would perish. And unless there was a true tradition in this world, a man would not be able to know that a certain property was owned by his father, and that this is an inheritance from his grandfather, nor would a man be able to know that he is the son of his mother, let alone that he is the son of his father. Human affairs would be in a state of perpetual doubt, so much so that people would only hold to be true what they perceive with their own senses, and this only at the actual moment of their sense perceptions, an opinion which is akin to the view of those who affect ignorance,² which I mentioned in Chapter I.

Scripture already declares that reliable tradition is as true as the things perceived by sight. Thus it says, 'For pass over to the isles of the Kittites, and see, and send unto Kedar, and consider diligently . . .' (Jer. 2.10).³ Why does it add the words, 'And consider diligently' in connection with the matter of

¹ Saadya sees in Hope and Fear — the two cardinal themes of the Greek Tragedy — the prime movers in human affairs. Cf. above, pp. 68, 92, where he states that in the case of God it is impossible to assume that He should hope or fear.

² Saadya seems to assume that the refusal to believe in true reports entails an inability to believe oneself in regard to the testimony of one's own memory.

³ Arab. *mutafāḥihun*; by this term Saadya denotes the Pyrrhonians, whose standpoint is one of absolute scepticism. He deals with this view under No. 13 of his list of cosmological theories. Cf. *Amānāt*, 69 ff. (36 ff.); see above, p. 62, n. 4.

⁴ The verse mentions two ways of verification, (1) to see for oneself; (2) to ask for reports. Both are put on the same level, which seems to Saadya an indication that sense perception and tradition have the same character of truth.

SKETCHES

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oneself

ask
reports

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report? The answer is: because a report (tradition) is, unlike sense perception, liable to be falsified in two ways, either through a wrong idea or through wilful distortion. For this reason Scripture warns, 'And consider diligently'. Having considered deeply how we can have faith in tradition seeing that there are these two ways (of possible falsification) I found, by way of Reason, that wrong idea and wilful distortion can only occur and remain unnoticed if they emanate from individuals, whereas, in a large collective group, the underlying ideas of the individuals who compose it will never be in agreement with one another, and if they wilfully decide and agree on inventing a story, this will not remain unnoticed amongst their people, but whenever their story is put out, there will be related, at the same time, the story of how they came to agree upon it. And when a tradition is safe against these two possibilities (of falsification), there is no third way in which it could possibly be falsified. And if the Tradition of our Fathers is viewed from the aspect of these principles, it will appear sound and safe against any attack, and true, and firmly established.¹

6. THE ETERNAL VALIDITY OF THE LAW

(ed. Landauer 128.3-19; 132.5-133.10;
ed. Slucki 66.13-26; 68.9-32)

Having dealt with these matters (i.e. the character of Scripture and Tradition), I deem it right to add to my remarks a word on the Abrogation of the Law,² since this seems to be

¹ In a passage of the Prolegomena not included in this Selection (*Amshul*, 20-3; Hebr. 11-12), Saadya quotes Isa. 44.8 ('And ye are my witnesses') with reference to the historical experience of Israel as recorded in the Scriptures. He particularly mentions the Ten Plagues, the dividing of the Red Sea, and the Sinaitic Revelation. He continues, 'I think that the most wondrous experience of all is the miracle of the Mannah; for a miracle which continues for some period is more wondrous than one which passes, for no fraudulent device can be suspected when a people of nearly a million souls is fed from nothing for a period of 40 years . . . and it cannot be assumed that the whole people should have agreed [to invent this story], for general consent is sufficient as a condition for the trustworthiness of a tradition'. The meaning of the last sentence becomes clear from the above exposition. Cf. Guttman, p. 147-8, n. 3. Later Jewish philosophers followed the trend of this 'historical' argument. It plays a most prominent part in Yehudah Hallevi's thought. Cf. *Kuzari*, I, 86, where Saadya's remark about the miracle of Mannah is literally repeated. Cf. also I, 25, 47-8.

² Arab. *na-shan ash-shar'*. The question whether the Biblical Law was given for all time or whether it was to be abrogated at a certain period, formed the subject of many disputes amongst Jews, Christians, and Muhammedans. The famous historian al-Mas'udi (died 957) reports that he had numerous discussions on this point with Abū Kathir, the teacher of Saadya. Cf. Ventura, pp. 201-2.

the proper place for it. I declare that the Children of Israel, according to an accepted tradition,¹ were told by the prophets that the laws of the Torah shall never be abrogated.² They assert that they heard this in clear terms which allowed no room for misunderstanding or allegorical interpretation. I thereupon searched in the Scriptures and found support for this tradition. First, in regard to most of the laws it is written that they are 'a covenant for ever'³ and 'for your generations'. There is, furthermore, the phrase which occurs in the Torah, 'Moses commanded us a law, an inheritance of the congregation of Jacob' (Deut. 33.4). Moreover, our people, the Children of Israel, are a people only by virtue of our laws, and since the Creator has declared that our people should exist as

¹ Arab. *nāḥḥ*; Tibbon translates it by *ḥabbalah*.

² Cf. p. Megillah, I, 5: R. Yoḥanan said, 'The Prophets and the Writings will be abolished in the Future World, but the Five Books of the Torah will never be abolished ... R. Shimeon b. Levi said, 'Not even the Scroll of Esther nor the laws (*halakhot*) will ever be abolished'. In some Midrashic utterances, however, the possibility of an abrogation of certain laws in the Future World is considered. Cf. Lev. R. 13.3; *Midr. Shofar* Top on Ps. 146.7 ('The Lord looseth the prisoners' — *matir 'asurim* — in the sense of *matir 'isurim*, 'permitteth that which is forbidden'); *Yalk. Shimeoni Prov.* §944. See also *Tosefta Niddah* 61 b. In Halachic literature the view is predominant that even in the Future World not a single law nor letter of the Torah will be changed. The Midrashic passages quoted above are explained either with reference to the state of man after death when his soul is free from the Law (cf. b. *Niddah* 61 b; *Yad Mal.* 437), or as a temporary suspension of certain laws (cf. *S'deh Hemed*, Vol. 11; ch. 3. 7), or in a merely homiletical fashion (cf. *Responsa R. Shelomo b. Adret* 93). Maimonides (*Comm. Mishnah Sanh.* X, 9; *Yes. Hat.* 9) declares with reference to Deut. 13.1 that the Law will never be modified nor changed for another Law (cf. the line in the *Yigdal Hymn*, 'God will not alter nor change His Law to everlasting for any other'). In *March* III, 34, he makes the same statement. He explains that the Law, being perfect (Ps. 19.8), is not subject to change. Albo (*Ikkarim* III, 14-20) argues against Maimonides that, on principle, the Law could be altered (with the exception of the Decalogue) if the prophet who announced a new law were superior to Moses; but this possibility, he emphasizes, is precluded by Deut. 34.10. In Jewish mysticism, the Midrashic utterances quoted above are given depth and significance by the theory of World Periods (*Sh'mitot*) as explained in the book *Temunah* (about 1250). It teaches that the Torah is to be read in different ways during the various successive periods without, however, being changed in its outward form. In the current period which is that of Stern Judgment, commandments and prohibitions are necessary, in accordance with the present reading of the Torah. But in the coming Aeon the Torah will no longer contain prohibitions since the power of evil will be broken. Cf. Scholem, pp. 173-6; see also pp. 228, 275. The followers of the Jewish Pseudo-Messiah Sabbatai Zvi, especially the Frankist movement, made ample use of this bold theory, by which they sought to sanction their antinomian doctrine. Cf. Scholem's article in *K'nesset*, 3697, pp. 370 ff.

³ *le-olam*.—Albo (*Ikkarim*, III, 16) denies that the Hebrew word *'olam* necessarily means eternity; it may also be applied, he says, to limited periods, in the same way as the word *nefesh*. In a passage not included in this Selection (*Amidah*, 138-9; Hebr. 71), Saadya admits that *'olam* can denote a limited period, but asserts that such a meaning is exceptional and cannot be applied without cogent reasons. On the etymology and meaning of *'olam* cf. the Translator's article 'Olam and Aion' in *Festschrift für Jakob Freimann* (1937), pp. 1-14.

COMMANDMENT AND PROHIBITION

long as heaven and earth exist, it necessarily follows that our laws should continue to exist as long as heaven and earth are in being, and this is what he says, 'Thus saith the Lord, who giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, who stirreth up the sea, that the waves thereof roar, the Lord of Hosts is His name: If these ordinances depart from before Me, saith the Lord, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before Me for ever' (Jer. 31.35-36).¹

I found that in the last period of prophecy God exhorted (his people) that they should keep the Law of Moses until the Day of Judgment, which will be preceded by the advent of Elijah; He says, 'Remember ye the law of Moses, My servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, even statutes and ordinances. Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord' (Mal. 3.22-23).

Some people say that in the same way as the reason for our believing in Moses was his performance of wonders and miracles, so it follows that the reason for believing in some other prophet would be the performance of wonders and miracles by the latter. I was greatly astonished when I heard this remark. For the reason of our belief in Moses lies not in the wonders and miracles only, but the reason for our belief in him and all other prophets lies in the fact that they admonished us in the first place to do what was right,² and only after we had heard the prophet's message and found that it was right did we ask him to produce miracles in support of it. If he performed them, we believed in him. But if we hear his call and find it, at the outset, to be wrong, we do not ask him for miracles, for no miracle can prove the (rationally) impossible. The case is similar to that of two people Reuben and Simon appearing before the judge. If Reuben claims from

¹ Some of the Church Fathers, notably Justin and Eusebius, sought to prove the abrogation of the Biblical Law by reference to Jer. 31.31-4, where mention is made of the 'new covenant' which God will make with the House of Judah. Saadya quotes here verses 35-6 of that very chapter in order to prove that the Law of the Torah is destined to be valid eternally. A direct answer to the Christian exegesis of Jer. 31.31-4 is given in a subsequent passage (not included in this Selection (*Amanat*, 135; Hebr. 69), where Saadya points out that the 'new covenant' is nothing but the old Law fulfilled and no longer broken by Israel. He refers to verses 32-3 in support of his interpretation.

² Arab. *ḥaḍ'ir*; lawful, right, i.e. conforming to the innate cognition of Reason.

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Simon something within the realm of the possible, saying for instance, 'He owes me a thousand dinar', then the judge will ask him to produce evidence, and if he can establish the claim, the money will be awarded to him. But if he claims something in the nature of the impossible, as by saying, 'He owes me the river Tigris', his claim will be void from the outset since nobody owns the Tigris, and it would not be correct for the judge to ask him for evidence for his claim.

So it is with everyone who claims to be a prophet. If he tells us, 'My Lord commands you to fast to-day', we ask him for a sign of his prophecy, and if we see it, we believe it and shall fast. But if he says, 'My Lord commands you to commit adultery and to steal' or, 'He announces to you that He will flood the world again' or, 'He informs you that He created heaven and earth in one year (without allegory),¹ we shall not ask him for a sign because he brings us a message which neither Reason nor Tradition can sanction. Some people carried the discussion a stage further and said, 'What if he does not pay regard to us, but shows us wonders and miracles, and willy-nilly we see them, what shall we say to him then?'

Reason
suppose NN I replied: 'We shall tell him then the same as we would say in case someone showed us wonders and miracles in support of a doctrine which runs counter to the innate dictates of our Reason, with regard to the approval of truth and the disapproval of falsehood, etc.'² He would be driven to assert that the disapproval of falsehood and the approval of truth are not dictated by Reason, but are matters of (legal) commandment and prohibition,³ and so likewise the condemnation of murder, adultery, theft, etc. But when he comes down to that, he is no longer worthy of my notice, and I see no purpose in further discussion with him.

¹ Arab. *hizbiyy*, i.e. in a literal sense.

² i.e. We shall reply that no miracle can prove the rationally impossible.

³ The Ash'arite view. Cf. above, p. 98, n. 4.

⁴ The authority of Reason is above discussion and cannot be disproved by miracles.

CHAPTER IV

ON OBEDIENCE AND DISOBEDIENCE; COMPULSION AND JUSTICE

I. MAN — THE CENTRE OF THE UNIVERSE¹

(ed. Landauer 145.1-148.7;

ed. Slucki 75.1-76.17)

I COMMENCE my discussion of this point with the following prefatory observation. In spite of the great multiplicity of created things, we need have no difficulty in deciding which of them is the most essential part² of Creation, because this is a point which the Science of Nature is able to elucidate for us. From the teaching of Science on this point we find that Man is the most essential part of Creation, because it is the rule and habit of Nature to place the most excellent (part of anything) in the centre with things of less excellence surrounding it.³ To take our first illustration from something very small: The grain is in the middle of the grain-sheaf because it is the most excellent part of the stalk; for the plant grows out, and is fed, from the grain. Likewise the kernel from which the tree grows is in the middle of the fruit, no matter whether the kernel is edible as in the case of an almond tree, or whether it is a stone as in the case of the date. In the latter case the edible part of the fruit is of less importance and left at the outside as a protecting shell for the kernel. Likewise the yolk is in the middle of the egg because the young of birds and the chickens develop from it. Likewise, the heart of man is in the middle of his chest because it is the seat of the soul and of the natural warmth.⁴ Likewise the pupil⁵ is in the middle of the eye because it is the chief organ of sight. We notice that the same observation applies to a great number of things besides. Then we found

¹ For a discussion of this Chapter, cf. S. Rawidowicz, 'Mishnat ha-'Adam le-Rab Saadya Gaon', in *Metudaah* (ed. S. Rawidowicz), 1943, pp. 112-25.

² Lit. 'the final object' (Arab. *al-makrūd*).

³ Cf. Aristotle, *De celo*, II, 13, 293 a, 31-2, in the name of the Pythagoreans.

⁴ Cf. below, p. 148.

⁵ Lit. 'the seeing spirit', an expression borrowed from the Greek *δραστήριον πνεῦμα*.

Plato - reason
Socrates - Same Perception



very subtle
di allentato &
pursued of

expressed
Tonal

creation of beauty

rely on really revelation do

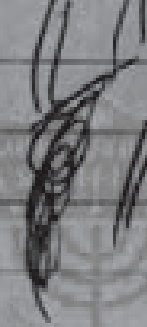
ultra clear but
but

B - 2^B

Indomitable PAINFUL

repeated
push off

reinforced!!



must feel sense of
make it positive

of and stay
I am - you

can't get it
for nothing!!!

Give up
answer

rebel
tradition!!!

Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, to whom the truth is known with absolute certainty;³ who confirmeth to men the certainty of the truths which their souls experience⁴ — finding as they do through their souls their sense perceptions to be trustworthy; and knowing as they do through their souls their rational knowledge to be correct;⁵ thereby causing their errors to vanish, their doubts to be removed, their proofs to be clarified, and their arguments to be well-grounded. Glory unto Him who is exalted above all attributes and praise.⁶

After this brief opening in praise and eulogy of our Lord, I will begin this book, which it is my intention to write, with an exposition of the reason why men, in their search for Truth, become involved in errors, and how these errors can be removed so that the object of their investigations may be fully attained; moreover, why some of these errors have such a powerful hold on some people that they affirm them as the truth, deluding themselves that they know something. May God help me to dispel errors from my mind and thereby reach the stage of obedience towards Him, even as His Faithful Servant prayed that He might grant him perfection, saying, 'Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy Law' (Ps. 119.18). My intention is to place the subject matter throughout the book within the grasp of the reader and not beyond it; to speak a language which is easy and not difficult; to adduce only the principal proofs and arguments, not their ramifications, so that the reader may find his way about without too great difficulty; that his study may be made straightforward, and through it he may attain his object: Justice and Truth, even as the Faithful Servant said with regard to wisdom when placed within easy grasp, 'Then thou shalt understand righteousness and justice, and equity, yea, every good path' (Prov. 2.9).

I will first explain the reason why men are involved in doubts. I say then that all 'knowledge of Reason'¹ is based on knowledge derived from sense perception. Now the information afforded by the senses is liable to doubts in one of two ways: either because the person who is inquiring has an inadequate idea of the object of the investigation, or, alternatively, because he is perfunctory in his observation and does not take sufficient pains with it. Take the case of a person who is looking for someone called Reuben ben Jacob. He may be in doubt whether he has found him for one of two reasons:

either because his knowledge of Reuben is inadequate, since he never met him before and therefore does not know him, or else because seeing some other person he may wrongly assume him to be Reuben, taking the line of least resistance and neglecting to make proper inquiries. He has no claim to be forgiven since he takes things too easily and conducts his search carelessly. The result will be that his doubts will never be cleared up.

The same applies to the 'knowledge of Reason'. Here again doubts arise from one of two causes: either because the person who seeks such knowledge may be unfamiliar with the methods of demonstration, and therefore discard a correct proof and accept a false proof as correct; or, alternatively, he may know the right methods of investigation, but is neglectful in applying them, and hasty in arriving at conclusions before having completed the work of investigation with regard to the matter he seeks to know. All the more is this the case if both deficiencies are combined in the same person, that is to say, if the person is not acquainted with the art of investigation, and, in addition, lacks patience to proceed even as far as his proper knowledge would carry him. He will remain far removed from the object of his investigation, or despair of attaining it. Concerning the first of the two kinds of people we have mentioned the prophet says, 'Everyone that knoweth, understandeth' (Neh. 10.29);¹ concerning the latter it is said, 'They know not, neither do they understand' (Ps. 82.5).² There may even be a third deficiency in addition to these two, namely, where the one who carries on an investigation has no clear idea as to what he actually wants to know. Then he will be still further removed from attaining true knowledge, so much so that even if the truth should occur to him and strike his mind, he would not notice it. He resembles a man who is unacquainted with the art of weighing and with the shape of the scales and weights, and who, in addition, does not know how much money he has a right to claim from his debtor. Even if his debtor had paid the full amount of the debt, he would not know that he had received the full payment; and if he took less from the debtor than was owing to him, he would, nevertheless, think that he had treated him unjustly. If this will be the position when one of the two people has a claim on the other, a similar thing will happen if one wants to weigh money for himself, but does not understand the instruments of weighing, and is unable to deter-

mine the exact weight they indicate.¹ To use yet another simile: He resembles a man who in accepting money for himself or somebody else sorts out the coins himself although he is ignorant of the art of testing coins, and, therefore, frequently accepts a worthless coin and refuses a good one. The result will be the same if though well able to test he nevertheless acts carelessly.² Scripture has already compared the test which is applied to the words of righteousness to the testing of money. It says, 'The tongue of the righteous is as choice silver; the heart of the wicked is little worth' (Prov. 10.20).³ Those who have only little skill in the art of testing, or, alternatively, have only little patience in applying it, are regarded as oppressors because they do violence to the truth, as is said, 'The heart of the wicked is little worth',⁴ whereas those who practice the art of testing are considered righteous on account of their knowledge and patience, as stated in the preceding words, 'The tongue of the righteous is as choice silver'. The wise are praiseworthy, and their doubts vanish only if they persevere in carrying through their investigation to the end, in addition to knowing how to conduct it,⁵ as the wise said, 'Behold, I waited for your words, I listened for your reasons, until I searched out what to say' (Job 32.11), and as has been said by another wise man, 'Take not the final word of truth out of my mouth' (Ps. 119.43).⁶

I have been led to make these introductory remarks by my observation of a great many people in the matter of their doctrines and beliefs. Some there are who have arrived at the truth and rejoice in the knowledge that they possess it; of them the prophet says, 'Thy words were found, and I did eat them, and Thy words were unto me a joy and the rejoicing of my heart' (Jer. 15.16). Others have arrived at the truth, but doubt it; they fail to know it for a certainty and to hold on to it; of these the prophet says, 'Though I write for him ever so many things of My law, they are accounted as a stranger's' (Hosea 8.12). Still others confidently affirm that which is false in the belief that it is true; they hold on to falsehood, and abandon that which is right; of them it is said, 'Let him not trust in vanity, deceiving himself; for vanity shall be his recompense' (Job 15.31). Others again base their conduct on a certain belief for a time, and then reject it on account of some defect they find in it; then they change over to another belief and renounce it in turn because of something in it which seems questionable to them; then they go over to yet another belief for a while, and drop it because of some point which, in their opinion, renders it invalid. These

people are changing continually all their life. They resemble a person who desires to go to a town, but does not know the road that leads to it; he travels a parasang¹ on one road and becomes perplexed, returns and travels a parasang on another road, becomes again perplexed and returns, and so a third and fourth time. Of such a man Scripture says, 'The labour of fools wearieth everyone of them, he knoweth not how to go to the city' (Eccl. 10.15), that is to say *because he knoweth not.*²

When I considered these evils both in their own nature and in their particular manifestations, my heart grieved for my race, the race of mankind, and my soul was moved on account of our own people Israel, as I saw in my time many of the believers clinging to unsound doctrines and mistaken beliefs while many of those who deny the faith boast of their intellect and despise the men of truth, although they are themselves in error. I saw men sunk, as it were, in a sea of doubt and covered by the waters of confusion,³ and there was no diver to bring them up from the depths and no swimmer to come to their rescue. But as my Lord has granted unto me some knowledge which I can use for their support, and endowed me with some ability which I might employ for their benefit, I felt that to help them was my duty, and guiding them aright an obligation upon me, as the Prophet says, 'The Lord God hath given me the tongue of them that are taught, that I should know how to sustain with words him that is weary' (Isa. 50.4), although I confess to the shortcomings of my knowledge, which is far from being perfect, and admit the deficiency of my understanding, which is far from being complete, realizing as I do that I am not superior in knowledge to my contemporaries, but can offer my contribution only to the best of my ability and according to my lights, as the prophet says: 'But as for me, this secret is not revealed to me for any wisdom that I have more than any living' (Dan. 2.30). Nevertheless, I maintain the hope that He who knoweth my intentions and the desire of my heart will grant me success and sustain me according to my purpose, not according to my gifts and abilities, as has been said by another prophet, 'I know, my God, that Thou searchest the heart, and hast pleasure in uprightness' (1 Chron. 29.17).

I further implore in the name of God (may He be exalted) all those of my readers who strive after wisdom to read this book with an open mind, to try honestly to see my point of view, and to clear their minds of obstinacy, hasty judgment and confused thinking so that they may derive from it the maxi-

man of profit and advantage with the help of Him who has taught us wherein our benefit lies and on what it depends, as the prophet said, 'I am the Lord thy God, who teacheth thee for thy profit, who leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go' (Isa. 48.17). If both the scholar and the learner follow this path in reading this book, the certainty of him that feels certain will increase; the doubt of him that is in doubt will vanish; the believer who blindly relies on tradition, will turn into one basing his belief on speculation and understanding; those who put forward erroneous arguments will be silenced; those who are obstinate and haughty will be ashamed; and the righteous and upright will rejoice, as is said, 'The upright see it and are glad; and all iniquity stoppeth her mouth. Whoso is wise, let him observe these things, and let them consider the mercies of the Lord' (Ps. 107.42-3). In this way the innermost thoughts of a man will be purified and brought into conformity with his outward behaviour; his prayer will be sincere as there will be enshrined in his heart an inner voice rebuking and summoning him to right conduct, as the prophet says, 'Thy words have I laid up in my heart, that I might not sin against Thee' (Ps. 119.11). Their faith will show itself in their dealings with each other; jealousy between them in matters of this world will diminish; all will turn towards the men of wisdom and not to that which is evil. Theirs will be salvation, mercy and happiness, as God (be He praised and sanctified) has said, 'Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth, for I am God, and there is none else' (Isa. 45.22). All this will result from the disappearance of doubts and the removal of errors. The knowledge of God and His Law will spread in the world like the spreading of water in all parts of the sea, as is said, 'For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea' (Isa. 11.9).

One might ask: 'How can it be reconciled with the wisdom of the Creator (be He exalted and glorified) that He allowed errors and doubts to arise in the minds of His creatures?' We may answer this question at once by saying that the very fact that they are created beings causes them to be subject to error and delusion. For according to the order of Creation they require for every work which they undertake a certain measure of time in which to complete it stage after stage. Cognition being one of their activities, it undoubtedly comes under the same rule. In its initial stage, their knowledge proceeds from a complex, vague and confused idea of things, but by their faculty of Reason they purify and clarify it in a continual process until, after a certain measure of time, their errors are re-

moved, and a clear idea is formed without any admixture of doubt.¹ And just as every productive art is carried out by successive operations and remains incomplete if those performing it desist from it prior to its completion — such as sowing, building, weaving and the other kinds of productive work which can only be accomplished by the worker's persisting in it patiently until the end — so the work of acquiring knowledge demands that one should start from the beginning and proceed chapter after chapter until the final stage is reached. At the beginning there may be, for example, ten doubts; at the second stage they will be reduced to nine, at the third to eight, and if a man continues to reason and to reflect, his doubts will in this way be further reduced until, at the final stage, there will emerge in full clarity the one proposition which formed the object of his search, and which stands out clearly defined, with no error or doubt attached to it . . . Now were he to abandon his speculation when he arrived at the fifth or fourth or any other stage, the doubts which attended the preceding stages of his reflection would be removed, but there would still remain with him the doubts attached to the remaining stages in front of him. If he retains in his mind the result of his speculation up to the point which he reached, he may hope to return to this point and complete the inquiry. If he fails to retain it, he will have to start his inquiry afresh. For this reason many people have gone astray and spurned wisdom. Some of them are ignorant of the road that leads to it, others whilst taking the road fail to complete the journey and get lost, as Scripture says, 'The man that strayeth out of the way of understanding shall rest in the congregation of the shades' (Prov. 21.16).

With regard to those who fail to reach the goal of wisdom the Sages of Israel have said, 'With the increase in numbers of the disciples of Shammai and Hillel, who did not advance far enough in their studies, the controversies increased'.² This utterance of theirs shows that if the disciples carry through their studies to the end, no controversy or discord arises amongst them. Let not therefore the fool in his impatience lay the blame for his own fault on the Creator (be He exalted and glorified) by saying that He implanted these doubts in him, whereas it is his own ignorance or impatience which threw him into confusion, as we have explained. Nor is it possible that any action of his can, by a single stroke, remove all doubt. For if it could, it would transcend the sphere of created beings, to which he belongs. Another person may not attach any blame for this fault of his to God,³ but desires God to impart

to him the ability to know with a knowledge that is free from doubt. Such a one asks for nothing less than to be like God. For the one who possesses immediate knowledge¹ is the Creator of the universe (be He blessed and sanctified) as we shall explain later when we come to this matter again.² The knowledge of all created beings, however, is only possible through the intermediacy of causes, i.e. through inquiry and speculation, which require time as we have described. From the first until the last moment of this period of time they must remain in doubt as we have explained, and they are the praiseworthy ones who persist until they have cleansed the silver from the dross, as is said, 'Take away the dross from the silver, and there cometh forth a vessel for the refiner' (Prov. 25.4); and until their churning has produced butter, as is said, 'For the churning of milk bringeth forth curd' (Prov. 30.33); and until their seed sprouts and can be reaped, as is said, 'Sow to yourselves according to righteousness, reap according to mercy' (Hosea 10.12); and until the fruit has ripened on their tree and turned into nourishing food, as is said, '... A tree of life to them that lay hold upon her' (Prov. 3.18).

Having thus dealt sufficiently with the origin of error and doubt, it is now fitting that we should explain the nature of Belief.³ We affirm that this is an idea⁴ arising in the soul as to what an object of knowledge really is: when the idea is clarified by speculation,⁵ Reason comprehends it, accepts it, and makes it penetrate the soul and become absorbed into it; then man believes this idea which he has attained, and he preserves it in his soul for another time or other times, as is said, 'Wise men lay up knowledge' (Prov. 10.14), and as is further said, 'Receive, I pray thee, instructions from His mouth, and lay up His words in thy heart' (Job 22.22).

Belief is of two kinds, true or false. True belief means believing a thing to be as it really is, the large as large, the small as small, the black as black, the white as white, the existing as existing, the non-existing as non-existing. False belief means believing a thing to be the opposite of what it really is, the large as small, the small as large, the white as black, the black as white, the existing as non-existing, and the non-existing as existing. The wise man, who deserves praise, is the one who fixes his attention on the realities of things, and adapts his belief to them. Thanks to his wisdom he relies on that which can indeed be relied on and guards against that which must be guarded against. The fool, who is blameworthy, is the one who makes his belief the standard, and decrees that the realities of things must follow his belief. Thanks to his folly he relies on

that which should be guarded against, and guards against that which can be relied on, as is said, 'A wise man feareth, and departeth from evil, but the fool behaveth overbearingly, and is confident' (Prov. 14.16).

In this connection I should like to refer to certain people who cause me astonishment. Though really servants they think they have no master, and they feel confident that what they reject is false and what they affirm is correct. These people are sunk in the depths of foolishness and stand on the brink of the abyss. If they are right, let the poor man believe that his boxes and baskets are full of money, and let him see what it will profit him. Or let one believe that he is seventy years of age when he is forty, and let him see what that will benefit him. Or let him believe that he is well fed whilst he is starving or that he has drunk his fill whilst he is thirsty, or that he is well clothed whilst he is naked. Let him see in what condition he will find himself. Another one belonging to this sort of people, who has a dangerous enemy, may believe that his enemy has already died and perished, and he fears him no more. How quickly there will come upon him the evil that he apprehends not! The height of folly, however, is reached by those people who think that because they do not believe in Divine authority they are free from God's commandments and prohibitions, from His promise and warning, and all that these imply. Scripture describes such people as saying, 'Let us break His bonds asunder, and cast away His cords from us' (Ps. 2.3).

Some people in India try to make themselves insensitive to fire, but it still burns them whenever they touch it. Others, in the exuberance of youth, inure themselves to be flogged and whipped, but they nevertheless suffer pain every moment they are beaten. How much more severe will be the lot of those who brazenly defy the Creator of the universe. Thanks to their folly they will not escape what His wisdom had imposed on them, as is said, 'He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength; who hath hardened himself against Him and prospered?' (Job 9.4).

Having completed the inquiry with which we were first concerned, it is desirable that we should now mention the sources of truth and certainty, which are the origin of all knowledge and the fountain of all cognition. We shall discuss the matter so far as it has a bearing on the subject of this book. We affirm then that there exist three sources of knowledge: (1) The knowledge given by sense perception; (2) the knowledge given by Reason; (3) inferential knowledge. We proceed now to give an explanation of each of these Roots.

By the knowledge of sense perception we understand that which a man perceives by one of the five senses, i.e. sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch.* By the knowledge of Reason we understand that which is derived purely from the mind,* such as the approval of truth and the disapproval of falsehood. By inferential knowledge we understand a proposition which a man cannot deny without being compelled to deny at the same time some proposition obtained from Reason or sense perception. Where there is no way of denying these propositions, the previous proposition must of necessity be accepted. E.g. we are compelled to admit that man possesses a soul, although we do not perceive it by our senses, so as not to deny its obvious functions. Similarly, we are compelled to admit that the soul is endowed with Reason, although we do not perceive it by our senses, so as not to deny its (Reason's) obvious function.

We have found many people who reject these three Roots of Knowledge. A few of them deny the first root. I shall deal with them in chapter 1 of this book and refute their arguments.* By denying the first root they (implicitly) deny the second and third as well since these are based on it. A larger group of people admit the first root, but deny the second and third. I shall deal with their view as well in chapter 1 and refute their arguments. Most people, however, admit the first two roots and deny the third one. The reason of this unequal distribution of views lies in the fact that the second type of knowledge is more hidden* than the first, and likewise the third more hidden than the second. Naturally, one is more readily inclined to deny what is hidden than what is obvious. There are also people who alternately deny a type of knowledge and approve another just as it suits them in their opposition to other people's views.* Each group of these affirms what their opponents reject, and claims that it is driven by inexorable logic to its own view. Some people, for instance, affirm that all things are in a state of rest, and deny that there is any movement, whereas others affirm that all things move, and deny that there is any rest.* Each group stigmatizes the arguments put forward by its opponents as inconclusive and erroneous. But we, the Congregation of the Believers in the Unity of God, accept the truth of all the three sources of knowledge,* and we add a fourth source, which we derive from the three preceding ones, and which has become a Root of Knowledge for us, namely, the truth of reliable Tradition.* For it is based on the knowledge of sense perception and the knowledge of Reason, as we shall explain in chapter 3 of this book.

These four Roots of Knowledge having been specified, we

have now to explain in which way we may rely on them for evidence of truth.

First with regard to the knowledge of sense perception, whenever an object makes an impression on our normal sense organ by coming into contact with it,¹ we may safely believe without any doubt that it is in reality as we perceived it, provided we are sufficiently expert not to be misled by illusions, like the people who believe that the image which appears in the mirror is an image which has been actually created there, the truth being that it is the property of polished bodies to reflect the image of an object that faces them; or like those people who regard the image of a man's stature which appears in the water reversed as real and created in that moment, not knowing that the reason for this is that the depth of the water exceeds the height of the stature. If we are careful to avoid these and similar mistakes, the belief in sense perception will prove sound, and we shall not be misled by illusions, as is said, 'And they rose up early in the morning, and the sun shone upon the water, and the Moabites saw the water some way off as red as blood; and they said: This is blood' (2 Kings 3.22-3).

As to the knowledge of Reason we hold that every conception formed in our mind (Reason) which is free from defects is undoubtedly true knowledge, provided we know how to reason, complete the act of reasoning and guard against illusions and dreams. For there are people who affirm that the images one sees in a dream are real things which are created.² They are driven to this assumption in order not to have to reject the testimony of the senses. They do not know that some dreams are produced from the thoughts of yesterday which pass through the mind; of these it is said, 'For a dream cometh through a multitude of business' (Eccl. 5.2); or that other dreams are due to the food they have eaten, which may have been too hot or too cold, too much or too little; in regard to these Scripture says, '... As when a hungry man dreameth, and, behold, he eateth ... or as when a thirsty man dreameth, and, behold, he drinketh ...' (Isa. 29.8); or that still other dreams are caused by the preponderance of one of the humours in the temperament³ — the hot and the moist create the illusion of joy and pleasure, while the dry produces the illusion of grief and sorrow; of this the suffering Job⁴ said, 'When I say: my bed shall comfort me, my couch shall ease my complains; then Thou scarest me with dreams, and terrifiest me through visions' (Job 7.13-14). But dreams also contain a flash of inspiration from above in the form of illuminating hints and images, as is said, 'In thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth on men' (Job 4.13).

As to inferential knowledge the position is this: if we perceive a certain object with our senses and accept it as actually existing, but are unable to believe firmly that this object exists unless we believe that some other things co-exist with it, then it is necessary for us to believe in the existence of all those things be they a few or many. For the sense perception concerned could not have come to us without them. There may be one such inferred object or there may be two, three, four or more. Whatever the conclusion may be, it must be upheld because neither the sense perception nor any of these inferential notions can be denied.

An example of the inference of a single object is the following: if we see smoke without seeing the fire which produces the smoke, it is necessary for us to believe in the existence of the fire on account of the existence of the smoke because the one could not be accounted for without the other. Similarly, if we hear the voice of a man from behind a wall, it is necessary for us to believe in his presence there, for there could be no voice of a man unless from one who was present. An example of more than one single inference is the case when we see food being absorbed into the stomach of an animal in solid form and re-emerge in the form of waste. If we do not believe in the performance of four different functions, our sense perception could not be accounted for. These functions are performed (1) by the power of attracting nourishment into the body; (2) the power of retaining the food until it is thoroughly softened; (3) the power of digestion and assimilation; and (4) the power of expelling from the body what has become waste.¹ Since our sense perception can only be accounted for by the performance of these four functions, it is necessary to believe that they actually take place.

The character of inferential knowledge having been explained, it is necessary for us to draw attention to certain mistakes against which one must guard, for most of the controversies between men and most of their differences in methods of argument arise from these mistakes.

(1) If someone declares that he believes in such and such a thing, because otherwise he would have to deny some sense perception, it is necessary for us to consider whether the sense perception could occur without that other thing which he believes. If this is the case, his belief is invalidated. Some people, for instance, believe that the whiteness of the Milky Way, which is testified by sense perception, is due to the fact that originally the rotation of the sun followed that course.² But if we examine the facts we find that other explanations

are possible. The phenomenon may be caused by rising vapours or by fixed luminous particles or by an accumulation of small stars or similar causes. Thus their statement is invalidated.

(2) If someone declares that he believes in such and such a thing because, otherwise, he would have to deny some proposition furnished by Reason, it is necessary for us to consider whether this proposition would be true without the thing which he believes. In such case his belief would be invalidated. Some people, for instance, assert that there exists more than one earth.² They argue that fire must occupy the centre of the universe since the most precious thing is invariably placed in the centre so as to be well guarded.³ But in our opinion this belief⁴ is equally safeguarded by our acknowledgment that man lives upon this earth which is the centre of the universe.⁵ Thus their assertion is invalidated.

(3) If someone declares that he believes that such and such an inference must be drawn from some sense perception, but this belief of his is inconsistent with some other sense perception, we have to weigh which is the more decisive of the two sense perceptions and judge accordingly. Some people, for instance, assert that all things originated from water⁶ because all living beings come from a moist substance.⁷ But they ignore another testimony of their senses, namely the fact that water is fluid and flows off. It is impossible to assume that it is the basic element⁸ seeing that it cannot stay by itself. If two arguments like these clash, it is proper that we should give preference to the more decisive one.

(4) If someone declares that he believes that such and such an inference must be drawn from some sense perception, but his statement involves a contradiction, it must be considered as false. Some people, for instance, assert that the good is identical with the pleasant,⁹ because this is what sense perception suggests to them. But they fail to remember that to kill them affords pleasure to their enemies in much the same way as killing their enemies affords pleasure to them. Thus good and evil will be present in the same act, which is self-contradictory.¹⁰

(5) If someone declares that he believes such and such a thing for such and such a reason, and, upon examining his reason, we find that it necessitates something different which he does not believe, his belief is rendered invalid.¹¹ Those, for instance, who affirm the pre-existence of the world, declare that they believe the universe to be without beginning in time,

because they want to accept as true only what they perceive with their senses.⁴ But if they accept as true only what their senses perceive, this principle should also preclude their view that the world is without beginning in time, since it is impossible for them to perceive with their senses the timeless in its original state.

Likewise, if someone declares that he affirms such and such a thing for such and such a reason, but we find that in fact he involves himself in an even greater difficulty than the one he tried to avoid, his assertion will be invalid. Thus some of those who affirm the Unity of God refuse to admit that God is unable to bring back yesterday, so as not to attribute to him any lack of power, but they involve themselves in an even more serious difficulty in that they attribute to Him something absurd, as will be pointed out, please God, in part of chapter 2.⁵

In endeavouring to establish the truth of inferential knowledge we shall henceforth be on guard against these five possible forms of mistakes, namely, (1) that it does not conflict with knowledge established by sense perception; (2) that it does not conflict with knowledge established by Reason; (3) that it should not conflict with some other truths; (4) that it should not be self-contradictory, still more that it should not (5) involve a difficulty more serious than the one intended to avoid. The first and primary condition, however, is that we should carefully apply our experience⁶ to our interpretation of sense perceptions and of the dictates of Reason as described. In addition, we have to persevere in the work of rational inquiry until its final completion so that altogether seven conditions have to be fulfilled in order to bring out the clear truth. If, therefore, someone who is not a member of our people comes forward with certain arguments based on inferential knowledge we have to examine his statement in the light of the above seven conditions. If it stands their test and is proved correct when weighed in their balances, it is the clear truth which we, too, have to accept.

We shall employ similar rules in dealing with the reliable Tradition, that is to say the Books of the Prophets. But this is not the place to explain the conditions peculiar to them. I have explained them at length in the Introduction to the Commentary on the Torah.⁷

It may be objected: 'How can we undertake to pursue knowledge by means of speculation and inquiry with the object of attaining mathematical certainty seeing that our people reject this manner of speculation as leading to unbelief?'

and the adoption of heretical views¹. Our answer is that only the ignorant speak thus.* Similarly one will find that the ignorant people in our town² are of opinion that every one who goes to India becomes rich. So, too, some of the ignorant people in our nation are said to think that the eclipse of the moon occurs whenever something resembling a dragon swallows the moon.* Some of the ignorant people in Arabia are said to hold the opinion that unless a man's camel is slaughtered over his grave, he will have to appear on foot on Judgment Day.* There exist many more ridiculous opinions like these. Another objection is that the greatest of the Sages of Israel prohibited this, and particularly the speculation on the origin of Time and Space, when they declared, 'Whosoever speculates on four things should better not have been created: on what is above and what is below, what was in the beginning, and what will be in the end'.³ Our answer is this: it cannot be thought that the Sages should have wished to prohibit us from rational inquiry seeing that our Creator has commanded us to engage in such inquiry in addition to accepting the reliable Tradition. Thus He said, 'Know ye not? Hear ye not? Hath it not been told you from the beginning? Have ye not understood the foundations of the earth?' (Isa. 40.21)*. The pious men said to each other, 'Let us choose for us that which is right; let us know among ourselves what is good' (Job 34.4), and, indeed, the five men, namely Job, Eliphaz, Bildad, Zopher and Elihu, had long discussions on this subject.

What, however, our Sages did try to prevent us from doing was to brush aside the prophetic Scriptures and to rely on our own personal judgments in our speculations on the origin of Space and Time. For one who speculates after this manner may sometimes find the truth and sometimes go astray; until he has found the truth, he will be without religion*; and even if he finds the truth of religion and clings to it, he is never sure that he will not depart from it should doubts arise in his mind and weaken his belief. All of us agree that one who acts in this way is a sinner, even though he may be a genuine philosopher. But we, the Congregation of the Children of Israel, have a different way of investigation and speculation, and it is this which I want to mention and explain with the help of God.

The reader of this book should know that we inquire and speculate in matters of our religion for two reasons: (1) in order that we may find out for ourselves what we know in the way of imparted knowledge from the Prophets of God; (2) in order that we may be able to refute those who attack on matters connected with our religion. For our Lord (Isa. 40.21)

blessed and exalted) instructed us in everything which we require in the way of religion, through the intermediacy of the Prophets after having established for us the truth of prophecy by signs and miracles. He commanded us to believe these matters and to keep them. He also informed us that by speculation and inquiry we shall attain to certainty on every point in accordance with the Truth revealed through the words of His Messenger.

In this way we speculate and search in order that we may make our own¹ what our Lord has taught us by way of instruction. There is, however, another objection which we have to consider. It may be asked: If the doctrines of religion can be discovered by rational inquiry and speculation, as God has told us, how can it be reconciled with His wisdom that He announced them to us by way of prophetic Revelation and verified them by proofs and signs of a visible character, and not by rational arguments? To this we will give a complete answer with the help of God. We say: God knew in His wisdom that the final propositions which result from the labour of speculation can only be attained in a certain measure of time.² Had he, therefore, made us depend on speculation³ for religious knowledge, we should have existed without religion for some time until the work of speculation was completed and our labour had come to an end. Perhaps many of us would never have completed the work because of their inability⁴ and never have finished their labour because of their lack of patience;⁵ or doubts may have come upon them, and confused and bewildered their minds. From all these troubles God (be He exalted and glorified) saved us quickly by sending us His Messenger, announcing through him the Tradition, and allowing us to see with our own eyes signs in support of it and

proofs which cannot be assailed by doubts, and which we can find no ground for rejecting, as is said, "Ye yourselves have seen that I have talked with you from heaven" (Ex. 10.22). He spoke to His Messenger in our presence, and He based on this fact our obligation to believe him for ever, as He said, "That the people may hear when I speak with thee, and may also believe thee for ever" (Ex. 19.9). So we were immediately obliged to accept the teaching of religion with all that it implies since it was verified by the testimony of sense perception, and its acceptance is obligatory on the strength of the reliable Tradition which has been handed down to us as we shall explain.⁶ He commanded us to inquire patiently until the truth of Tradition was brought out by speculation, and not to depart from our religious position before its truth was verified, since we are

obliged to believe in it on account of what we saw with our eyes and heard with our ears. In the case of some of us it may take a very long time until our speculation is completed, but we shall be none the worse for that, and if another one is held up in his studies on account of some hindrance, he will nevertheless not remain without religion. Even women and children and people incapable of speculation will possess a complete religion and be aware of its truths, for all human beings are equal so far as the knowledge of the senses is concerned. Praise unto Him Whose wisdom guideth man! This is why we find that the Torah mentions in many passages children and women in addition to the men when speaking of signs and miracles.

To make the matter clearer, let us suppose that someone who possesses 1000 dinar distributes this money in the following way:

| | | |
|------------------------|------------------------|-------|
| 5 persons receive each | $20\frac{1}{2}$ dinar, | = 102 |
| 6 persons receive each | $16\frac{2}{3}$ dinar, | = 100 |
| 7 persons receive each | $14\frac{2}{7}$ dinar, | = 100 |
| 8 persons receive each | $12\frac{1}{2}$ dinar, | = 99 |
| 9 persons receive each | 11 dinar, | = 99 |

500

He wishes to show his friends without delay how much of the money is left in his hands. He, therefore, tells them that the balance left amounts to 500 dinar and proves it by weighing the gold that is left in his hands. After he has weighed it in their presence, and the amount of 500 dinar has been established, his friends are obliged to believe what he told them. They are now at leisure to arrive at the same knowledge by a different method, namely, by working it out arithmetically, each according to his capacity and understanding, provided no hindrance arises through adverse conditions.³ Another illustration: One may diagnose rapidly a certain malady on the evidence of one obvious symptom long before another reaches the same conclusion after an exhaustive examination.

It is desirable that we should further believe that even prior to the existence of the children of Israel God imparted our religion⁴ to humanity⁵ by means of prophecy, wondrous signs, miracles and manifestations.⁶ Those who were present were convinced by what they had perceived with their own eyes; those who received a tradition in regard to it were convinced by what they had perceived with their own ears, as the Torah says, with reference to some of them, 'For I have known him (Abraham), to the end that he may command his children' (Gen. 18.19).