

ר"נ

on

ה'קל"ג

Prophecy

presented by Jeffrey Katz

ה'קל"ג א"ת

I. נבואה is a natural faculty of man built into his עול; no miracle is involved in the phenomenon of נבואה

Guide - II; 32

CHAPTER XXXII

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

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

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

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

3. The third view is that which is taught in Scripture, and which forms one of the principles of our religion. It coincides with the opinion of the philosophers in all points except one. For we believe that, even if one has the capacity for prophecy, and has duly prepared himself, it may yet happen that he does not actually prophesy. It is in that case the will of God [that withholds from him the use of the faculty]. According to my opinion, this fact is as exceptional as any other miracle, and acts in the same way. For the laws of Nature demand that every one should be a prophet, who has a proper physical constitution, and has been duly prepared as regards education and training.

ש"ך

II.  
"perfections"  
→ intellectual  
→ moral  
→ imaginative  
(→ bodily)

showed, that thou mightest know that the Lord He is God" (Deut. iv. 35); "Know therefore this day, and consider it in thine heart, that the Lord He is God" (*ibid.* 36); "Know ye that the Lord is God" (Ps. c. 3). Thus the Law distinctly states that the highest kind of worship to which we refer in this chapter, is only possible after the acquisition of the knowledge of God. For it is said, "To love the Lord your God, and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul" (Deut. xi. 13), and, as we have shown several times, man's love of God is identical with His knowledge of Him. The Divine service enjoined in these words must, accordingly, be preceded by the love of God. Our Sages have pointed out to us that it is a service in the heart, which explanation I understand to mean this: man concentrates all his thoughts on the First Intellect, and is absorbed in these thoughts as much as possible. David therefore commands his son Solomon these two things, and exhorts him earnestly to do them: to acquire a true knowledge of God, and to be earnest in His service after that knowledge has been acquired. For he says, "And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart . . . if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever" (1 Chron. xxviii. 9). The exhortation refers to the intellectual conceptions, not to the imaginations; for the latter are not called "knowledge," but "that which cometh into your mind" (Ezek. xx. 32). It has thus been shown that it must be man's aim, after having acquired the knowledge of God, to deliver himself up to Him, and to have his heart constantly filled with longing after Him. He accomplishes this generally by seclusion and retirement. Every pious man should therefore seek retirement and seclusion, and should only in case of necessity associate with others.

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

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

ties in reflection on it with all! All BN.

Question for consideration: According to P<sup>207</sup>, is the will of the atheist the same as the will of the ideal religious man when giving  $\text{np}^3$  to the poor?

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

## Book II;

## CHAPTER XXXVI

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

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

אם היה נביאם ה' במראה אלה  
אז/א. במלואם אקבר בו" (ויק' י"ב: 1)

"as if" -- because it does not come from without

the thing as if it came from without, and perceives it as if through the medium of bodily senses. These two modes of prophecy, vision and dream, include all its different degrees. It is a well-known fact that the thing which engages greatly and earnestly man's attention whilst he is awake and in the full possession of his senses forms during his sleep the object of the action of his imaginative faculty. Imagination is then only influenced by the intellect in so far as it is predisposed for such influence. It would be quite useless to illustrate this by a simile, or to explain it fully, as it is clear, and every one knows it. It is like the action of the senses, the existence of which no person with common sense would ever deny. After these introductory remarks you will understand that a person must satisfy the following conditions before he can become a prophet: The substance of the brain must from the very beginning be in the most perfect condition as regards purity of matter, composition of its different parts, size and position; no part of his body must suffer from ill-health; he must in addition have studied and acquired wisdom, so that his rational faculty passes from a state of potentiality to that of actuality; his intellect must be as developed and perfect as human intellect can be; his passions pure and equally balanced; all his desires must aim at obtaining a knowledge of the hidden laws and causes that are in force in the Universe; his thoughts must be engaged in lofty matters; his attention directed to the knowledge of God, the consideration of His works, and of that which he must believe in this respect. There must be an absence of the lower desires and appetites, of the seeking after pleasure in eating, drinking, and cohabitation; and, in short, every pleasure connected with the sense of touch. (Aristotle correctly says that this sense is a disgrace to us, since we possess it only in virtue of our being animals; and it does not include any specifically human element, whilst enjoyments connected with other senses, as smell, hearing, and sight, though likewise of a material nature, may sometimes include [intellectual] pleasure, appealing to man as man, according to Aristotle. This remark, although forming no part of our subject, is not superfluous, for the thoughts of the most renowned wise men are to a great extent affected by the pleasures of this sense, and filled with a desire for them. And yet people are surprised that these scholars do not prophesy, if prophesying be nothing but a certain degree in the natural development of man.) It is further necessary to suppress every thought or desire for unreal power and dominion; that is to say, for victory, increase of followers, acquisition of honour, and service from the people without any ulterior object. On the contrary, the multitude must be considered according to their true worth; some of them are undoubtedly like domesticated cattle, and others like wild beasts, and these only engage the mind of the perfect and distinguished man in so far as he desires to guard himself from injury, in case of contact with them, and to derive some benefit from them when necessary. A man who satisfies these conditions, whilst his fully developed imagination is in action, influenced by the Active Intellect according to his mental training, — such a person will undoubtedly perceive nothing but things very extraordinary and divine, and see nothing but God and His angels. His knowledge will only include that which is real knowledge, and his thought will only be directed to such general principles as would tend to improve the social relations between man and man.

Handwritten scribble

5 regus

"intellectual perfection"

this is the key -- his exclusive focus

3 key element of "moral perfection"

is just the starting point of (1) for this

4 + bodily perfect

5 + imagin p'nd

(C'2) is to see what he knows

(C'2) sees "p'nd" etc

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

## CHAPTER XXXVIII

EVERY man possesses a certain amount of courage, otherwise he would not stir to remove anything that might injure him. This psychical force seems to me analogous to the physical force of repulsion. Energy varies like all other forces, being great in one case and small in another. There are, therefore, people who attack a lion, whilst others run away at the sight of a mouse. One attacks a whole army and fights, another is frightened and terrified by the threat of a woman. This courage requires that there be in a man's constitution a certain disposition for it. If man, in accordance with a certain view, employs it more frequently, it develops and increases, but, on the other hand, if it is employed, in accordance with the opposite view, more rarely, it will diminish. From our own youth we remember that there are different degrees of energy among boys. (78247 h 2) ✓

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

✓  
Chess  
&  
master

✓  
I can  
predicts  
the  
future

## VI. (cont.) Nature of דעת

- in waking hours → exclusive dedication to "knowing ד"  
 requires: ① moral perfection -- beating down of all material desires thru supreme effort of willpower  
 - keeping all דברים -- is just the tip of the iceberg --  
 one needs to go far, far beyond the minimalist helachic requirements to attain this level  
 ② "bodily perfection" -- ill health would distract <sup>one</sup> from his exclusive focus

Key: if one is concerned with satiating physical desires, & has this as his objective, then to that extent his objective is something other than "knowing ד".

③ "intellectual perfection" → thru rational proof, one has learned what one can know of ד, within limits of human ability. ( דעת דעת דעת דעת )

- in דעת or דעת → thru דעת's perfect imaginative faculty,

✓ דעת to see what he knows

✓ דעת over philosophers

- ① he sees "דעת דעת דעת" in graphic, ("this-worldly") images (ie. in corporeal images)  
 ② foretells coming events.

single student, unless he be wise and able to reason for himself, and even then you should merely acquaint him with the heads of the different sections of the subject. (Babyl. Talm. *Hagigah*, fol. 11 b). You must, therefore, not expect from me more than such heads. And even these have not been methodically and systematically arranged in this work, but have been, on the contrary, scattered, and are interspersed with other topics which we shall have occasion to explain. My object in adopting this arrangement is that the truths should be at one time apparent and at another time concealed. Thus we shall not be in opposition to the Divine Will (from which it is wrong to deviate) which has withheld from the multitude the truths required for the knowledge of God, according to the words, "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him" (Ps. xxv. 14).

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

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



that of another rabbi in the other case he introduced that view without naming the authority"; or "Who is the author of this anonymous dictum? Rabbi A." "Who is the author of that paragraph in the Mishnah? Rabbi B." Instances of this kind are innumerable.

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

The inconsistencies and contradictions met with in some passages of the prophetic books, if taken literally, are all traceable to the third or fourth cause, and it is exclusively in reference to this subject that I wrote the present Introduction. You know that the following expression frequently occurs, "One verse says this, another that," showing the contradiction, and explaining that either some premise is wanting or the subject is altered. Comp. "Solomon, it is not sufficient that thy words contradict thy father; they are themselves inconsistent, etc." Many similar instances occur in the writings of our Sages. The passages in the prophetic books which our Sages have explained, mostly refer to religious or moral precepts. Our desire, however, is to discuss such passages as contain apparent contradictions in regard to the principles of our faith. I shall explain some of them in various chapters of the present work; for this subject also belongs to the secrets of the Torah.

Contradictions traceable to the seventh cause occurring in the prophetic works require special investigation; and no one should express his opinion on that matter by reasoning and arguing without weighing the matter well in his mind.

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

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

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

Inconsistencies occurring in the Mishnah and Boraitot are traceable to the first cause. You meet frequently in the Gemara with passages like the following:—"Does not the beginning of the passage contradict the end? No; the beginning is the dictum of a certain Rabbi; the end that of another"; or "Rabbi (Jehudah ha-Nasi) approved of the opinion of a certain rabbi in one case and gave it therefore anonymously, and having accepted

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

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

And these figures are very frequent in the books of the prophets. Some are easily recognised by the ordinary reader as figures, others with some difficulty. Thus nobody doubts that the blessing, "May the Lord open to thee his good treasure, the heavens," must be taken figuratively; for God has no treasure in which He keeps the rain. The same is the case with the following passage—"He opened the doors of heaven, he rained upon them manna to eat" (Ps. lxxviii. 23, 24). No person assumes that there is a door or gate in heaven, but every one understands that this is a simile and a figurative expression. In the same way must be understood the following passages—"The heavens were opened" (Ezek. i. 1); "If not, blot me out from thy book which thou hast written" (Exod. xxxii. 32); "I will blot him out from the book of life" (*ibid.* ver. 33). All these phrases are figurative; and we must not assume that God has a book in which He writes, or from which He blots out, as those generally believe that do not find figurative speech in these passages. They are all of the same kind. You must explain passages not quoted by me by those which I have quoted in this chapter. Employ your reason, and you will be able to discern what is said allegorically, figuratively, or hyperbolically, and what is meant literally, exactly according to the original meaning of the words. You will then understand all prophecies, learn and retain rational principles of faith, pleasing in the eyes of God who is most pleased with truth, and most displeased with falsehood; your mind and heart will not be so perplexed as to believe or accept as law what is untrue or improbable, whilst the Law is perfectly true when properly understood. Thus Scripture says, "Thy testimonies are righteousness for ever."

(Ezek. xxx. 1); "And the word of the Lord came" (2 Sam. xxiv. 11); "And behold, the word of the Lord came unto him" (1 Kings xix. 9); "And the word of the Lord came expressly" (Ezek. i. 3); "The beginning of the word of the Lord by Hosea" (Hos. i. 2); "The hand of the Lord was upon me" (Ezek. xxxvii. 1). There are a great many instances of this class. Every passage in Scripture introduced by any of these four forms is a prophecy proclaimed by a prophet; but the phrase, "And Elohim (an angel) came to a certain person in the dream of night," does not indicate a prophecy, and the person mentioned in that phrase is not a prophet; the phrase only informs us that the attention of the person was called by God to a certain thing, and at the same time that this happened at night. For just as God may cause a person to move in order to save or kill another person, so He may cause, according to His will, certain things to rise in man's mind in a dream by night. We have no doubt that the Syrian Laban was a perfectly wicked man, and an idolater; likewise Abimelech, though a good man among his people, is told by Abraham concerning his land [Gerar] and his kingdom, "Surely there is no fear of God in this place" (Gen. xx. 11). And yet concerning both of them, viz., Laban and Abimelech, it is said [that an angel appeared to them in a dream]. Comp. "And Elohim (an angel) came to Abimelech in a dream by night" (*ibid.* ver. 3); and also, "And Elohim came to the Syrian Laban in the dream of the night" (*ibid.* xxxi. 24). Note and consider the distinction between the phrases, "And Elohim came," and "Elohim said," between "in a dream by night," and "in a vision by night." In reference to Jacob it is said, "And an angel said to Israel in the visions by night" (Gen. xlv. 2), but in reference to Laban and Abimelech, "And Elohim came," etc. Onkelos makes the distinction clear; he translates, in the last two instances, *ata memar min kodam adonai*, "a word came from the Lord," and not *ve-itgeli*, "and the Lord appeared." The phrase, "And the Lord said to a certain person," is employed even when this person was not really addressed by the Lord, and did not receive any prophecy, but was informed of a certain thing through a prophet. E.g., "And she went to inquire of the Lord" (Gen. xxv. 22); that is, according to the explanation of our Sages, she went to the college of Eber, and the latter gave her the answer; and this is expressed by the words, "And the Lord said unto her" (*ibid.* ver. 23). These words have also been explained thus, God spoke to her through an angel; and by "angel" Eber is meant here, for a prophet is sometimes called "angel," as will be explained; or the angel that appeared to Eber in this vision is referred to, or the object of the Midrash explanation is merely to express that wherever God is introduced as directly speaking to a person, i.e., to any of the ordinary prophets, He speaks through an angel, as has been set forth by us (chap. xxxiv.).

VIII (cont.)

Book II  
CHAPTER XLII

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

(to say the least)

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

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

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vision only;  
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wrestling  
occurred  
only in  
vision

→ same is true anywhere it says  
"God said to me"; "an angel appeared to me";  
"the hand of God was upon me"; etc. (describes what  
occurred in THE DREAM/VISION only)

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

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

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

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

## CHAPTER LII

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

When the perfect bear this in mind, they will be filled with fear of God, humility, and piety, with true, not apparent, reverence and respect of God, in such a manner that their conduct, even when alone with their wives or in the bath, will be as modest as they are in public intercourse with other people. Thus it is related of our renowned Sages that even in their sexual intercourse with their wives they behaved with great modesty. They also said, "Who is modest? He whose conduct in the dark night is the same as in the day." You know also how much they warned us not to walk proudly, since "the fulness of the whole earth is His glory" (Isa. vi. 3). They thought that by these rules the above-mentioned idea will be firmly established in the hearts of men, viz., that we are always before God, and it is in the presence of His glory that we go to and fro. The great men among our Sages would not uncover their heads because they believed that God's glory was round them