

the Book *of* Job



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Transcribed and edited by students from recorded lectures

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Included herein is Maimonides two chapters on Job taken from his Guide for the Perplexed, referred to in the transcribed notes, crucial for understanding God's justice. I have also taken the liberty to commence with my thoughts on Maimonides' Guide where he explains – among many topics – the meaning of "Satan." As always, Maimonides' words are enlightening; directing us towards an understanding of God's "discussion" with Satan, God's system of justice, providence, and the words of Job's four friends.

Rabbi Marshall Gisser

Introduction

Maimonides on Job: Guide for the Perplexed

Book III, Chap. XXII

Commentary by Rabbi Marshall Gisser

“The strange and wonderful Book of Job treats of the same subject as we are discussing: its basis is a fiction, conceived for the purpose of explaining the different opinions which people hold on Divine Providence. You know that some of our Sages clearly stated Job has never existed, and has never been created, and that he is a poetic fiction. Those who assume that he has existed, and that the book is historical, are unable to determine when and where Job lived. Some of our Sages say that he lived in the days of the Patriarchs: others hold that he was a contemporary of Moses: others place him in the days of David, and again others believe that he was one of those who returned from the Babylonian exile. This difference of opinion supports the assumption that he has never existed in reality. But whether he has existed or not, that which is related of him is an experience of frequent occurrence, is a source of perplexity to all thinkers, and has suggested the above-mentioned opinions on God’s Omniscience and Providence. This perplexity is caused by the account that a simple and perfect person, who is upright in his actions, and very anxious to abstain from sin, is afflicted by successive misfortunes, namely, by loss of property, by the death of his children, and by bodily disease, though he has not committed any sin. According to both theories, viz., the theory that Job did exist, and the theory that he did not exist, the introduction to the book is certainly a fiction; I mean the portion which relates to the words of the adversary, the words of God to the former, and the handing over of Job to him. This fiction, however, is in so far different from other fictions that it includes profound ideas and great mysteries, removes great doubts, and reveals the most important truths. I will discuss it as fully as possible: and I will also tell you the words of our Sages that suggested to me the explanation of this great poem.

First, consider the words: “There was a man in the land Uz. “ The term Uz has different meanings; it is used as a proper noun. Compare, “Uz, his first-born” (Gen. xxii 21): it is also imperative of the verb Uz, “to take advice. “ Compare, uzu, “take counsel” (Isaiah viii. 10). The name Uz therefore expresses the exhortation to consider well this lesson, study it, grasp its ideas, and comprehend them, in order to see which is the right view.

“The sons of God then came to present themselves before the Lord, and the adversary came also among them and in their number. “ (chap. i 6, ii 1). It is not said: “And the sons of God and the adversary¹ came to present themselves before the Lord”: this sentence would have implied that the existence of all that came was of the same kind and rank. The words used are these: “And the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and the adversary came also among them. “ Such a phrase is only used in reference to one that comes without being expected or invited; he only comes among others whose coming has been sought. The adversary is then described as going to and fro on the earth, and walking up and down thereon. He is in no relation to the beings above, and has no place among them. For this reason it is said, “from going to and fro on the earth, and walking up and down on it,” for his “going” and “walking” can only take place on the earth. [Job], the simple and righteous man, is given and handed over to the adversary; whatever evils and misfortunes befell Job as regards his property, children, and health, were all caused by this adversary. When this idea is sufficiently indicated, the author begins to reflect on it: one opinion Job is represented to hold, whilst his friends

Commentary

¹Maimonides says, “had the verse read “And the sons of God and the adversary came...” it would imply that the adversary was of the same nature and existence as other existences, which “come before God”. But as the verse says “and the adversary came also among them” in a separate referral, and only after mentioning “sons of God”, we learn that the adversary is of a different nature, not being subsumed under the “sons of God”. The adversary’s “coming” was mentioned separately from the coming of other existences. Who or what were these other existences, and what is Maimonides’ main point?

Maimonides offers us additional clues, as he says: “The adversary is then described as going to and fro on the earth, and walking up and down thereon. He is in no relation to the beings above, and has no place among them. For this reason it is said, ‘from going to and fro on the earth, and walking up and down on it,’ for his ‘going’ and ‘walking’ can only take place on the earth.”

The adversary, meaning Satan, or the instincts, is limited to Earth. Man’s soul on the other hand, may achieve eternal life; not limited to a brief, Earthly existence. Thus, those who appear “before God”, refers to man’s intelligence, his soul, the faculty which is related to intelligence and thus, relates to God as Maimonides explains, “appears before God.” We now learn that God’s address of the adversary is in fact, God’s address of the instincts. There is no real-life, intelligent being traversing the Earth called “Satan”: Satan is a metaphor for the instinctual nature of man. Thus, there was no conversation between God and Satan.

Now, as the “sons of God” means man’s intelligence, what is meant by “they came to present themselves before God”? This means that the “sons of God”, or rather, man’s intelligence “answers to God”. The act of responding to a summon means “compliance”. “They came to present themselves before God” means that part of man that complies with God’s commands, man’s intellect. In other words, man’s intelligence is the part of man, which may comply with God’s commands, or “stand before God”. The fact that Satan “also” came means that there is some role that Satan plays when man follows God’s commands. This role is one of ‘compelled deviation’ from its normal role: that is, the instincts are affected by the intellect’s compliance with Torah. Maimonides further explains, “Satan” means to “turn one aside”, as derived from the instance of Bilaam and his donkey. As in “turn aside” form the path of Torah.

Up to this point, we interpret this story of Job as, “man complying with God, but being deterred in some manner by his instincts.” Job is the man to which we refer. He is complying with God, as the book states: he never committed a sin. So if Job is complying in action, wherein must his deviation lie? It can only refer to his thoughts. This too is supported by “Job did not sin with his lips” (2:10). Rashi states that with his lips he did not sin, but he did sin in his heart. What is a sin of the heart? It is an incorrect thought. We now come to the crux of the matter, i.e., Job’s error and the true meaning of God’s discussion with Satan, and His handing of Job over to Satan.

defend other opinions. I will further on expound these opinions, which formed the substance of the discussion on the misfortunes of Job, caused by the adversary alone.

Job, as well as his friends, was of opinion that God Himself was the direct agent of what happened, and that the adversary was not the intermediate cause. It is remarkable in this account that wisdom is not ascribed to Job. The text does not say he was an intelligent, wise, or clever man; but virtues and uprightness, especially in actions, are ascribed to him. If he were wise he would not have any doubt about the cause of his suffering², as will be shown later on. Besides, his misfortunes are enumerated in the same order as they rank in man's estimation. There are some who are not perplexed or discouraged by loss of property, thinking little of it: but are terrified when they are threatened with the death of their children and are killed by their anxiety. There are others who bear without shock or fainting even the loss of their children, but no one endowed with sensation is able to bear bodily pain. We generally extol God in words, and praise Him as righteous and benevolent, when we prosper and are happy, or when the grief we have to bear is moderate. But [it is otherwise] when such troubles as are described in Job come over us. Some of us deny God, and believe that there is no rule in the Universe, even if only their property is lost. Others retain their faith in the existence of justice and order, even when suffering from loss of property, whereas loss of children is too much affliction for them. Others remain firm in their faith, even with the loss of their children; but there is no one who can patiently bear the pain that reaches his own person: he then murmurs and complains of injustice either in his heart or with his tongue.

Now consider that the phrase, "to present themselves before the Lord", is used in reference to the sons of God, both the first and the second times, but in reference to the adversary, who appeared on either occasion among them and in their number, this phrase is not used the first time, whilst in his second appearance, "the adversary also came among them to present himself before the Lord." Consider this, and see how very extraordinary it is! These ideas presented themselves like an inspiration to me.³ The

² Here, Maimonides directs our attention to Job's fault; he lacked knowledge. What was the knowledge Job possessed, and why was it flawed?

³ Maimonides now contrasts the first and second appearance of Satan before God. The second time, Satan is now referred to as coming "together" with the others. According to this interpretation, this means that Satan, or rather, the instincts, are closer in "proximity" to God, in some way, as now, they too "appear" before God as do the son's of God. But the nature of Satan's first arrival was less related to the "sons of God". Meaning, the instincts were less related to intelligence this first time. What is so amazing to Maimonides regarding this second arrival, that he says, "Consider this, and see how very extraordinary it is! These ideas presented themselves like an inspiration to me"? Maimonides feels this second referral that Satan came along with the "sons of God" is crucial. I will now explain.

Having clarified that this account of Satan is a metaphor as Maimonides states quite emphatically, and as the Rabbis indicated, that Satan refers to man's instincts, and that the "sons of God" refer to man's soul or intelligence, we must now clarify God's "handing of Job over to Satan" and His discussion with Satan.

God is in fact not talking to Satan, since Satan is man's instincts. But we must ask, "whose instincts?" There can be only on answer: those belonging to Job. For it would be unjust that God abandons Job, had Job not been at fault. God only abandons he who sins, and he who will heed punishment and repent, God will rebuke: "For whomever God loves He rebukes, like a father, the son in whom he delights." (Proverbs, 3:12) God does not do futile acts, and hence, He rebukes only those whom He loves, meaning, those who listen to His rebuke, as they wish self-improvement. We must now understand the conversation between God and Satan. (It is advisable that the reader knows these first two chapters in Job before continuing.)

God opens; admiring how good Job is; fearing evil and not sinning. Satan replies that Job is good, as long as his life is without pain and trouble. However, if troubles arise, Job would not continue his good path. This is Satan's position. God then allows Satan to afflict Job. Let us interpret this. Satan (Job's instincts) will allow Job to follow God, provided Job has the good in life. Job harbored an unexamined allegiance to God, as long as he experienced wealth, health and children. These words of Satan are really Job's underlying feelings, but personified in the character of Satan. However, if the good life were to be taken away, Job

phrase, “to present themselves before the Lord,” implies that they are beings who are forced by God’s command to do what He desires. This may be inferred from the words of the prophet Zechariah concerning the four chariots that came forth. He says: “And the angel answered and said to me, These four winds of the heavens come forth from presenting themselves before the Lord of the whole earth” (Zech. vi 5). It is clear that the relation of the sons of God to the Universe is not the same as that of the adversary. The relation of the sons of God is more constant and more permanent. The adversary has also some relation to the Universe, but it is inferior to that of the sons of God. It is also remarkable in this account that in the description of the adversary’s wandering about on the earth, and his performing certain actions, it is distinctly stated that he has no power over the soul: whilst power has been given to him over all earthly affairs, there is a partition between him and the soul; he has not received power over the soul. This is expressed in the words, “But keep away from his soul”(Job. ii. 6). I have already shown you the homonymous use of the term “soul” (nefesh) in Hebrew (Part L, chap. xli). It designates that element in man that survives him; it is this portion over which the adversary has no power⁴.

felt he would not be so steadfast in worshipping God. That is what Satan said, in other words, “take these away, and Job won’t be upright”. This means that Job possessed this philosophy.

What is meant by God “allowing Satan to afflict Job”? This means that God’s system is one, wherein a person’s false philosophy, as Job (Satan) possessed, will remove him from God’s providence, allowing all evils to befall him. (We are not concerning ourselves with the justice of Job’s children, as this story is a metaphor.) Now, once we are made aware of Job’s corruption embodied in the metaphor of Satan, we are told that God allowed Satan to afflict Job. This means that God allowed “Job’s instincts” to hurt him. Any man or woman, whose ideas are false and corrupt, will not be under God’s providence. But in fact, this is God’s overall system of justice for mankind in general, and not an independent system applying solely to Job. And this too is a perfection: for when man experiences evils, it is God’s design of educating man that his life is flawed, no longer deserving of God’s protection. It is God’s way of teaching us to examine our philosophies and actions, detecting our sins, and perfecting ourselves.

Perhaps, this story is written with the apparent “injustice” of God freely letting Satan loose on Job’s life, to open our ears, and compel our investigation into such an important matter as God’s justice. The startling literal understanding of God letting Satan loose to harm Job, might very well be God’s way of heightening our attention, and drawing us towards the area of God’s justice.

Returning to Maimonides’ “amazement” at the second time Satan appeared before God, this time together with the “sons of God”, we wonder what was the source of Maimonides’ amazement. Once Job experienced these initial tragedies, he did what all other righteous people do: he investigated his philosophy, and examined his instincts. This “examination of his instincts” might be what is referred to with the words, “Satan came along with the sons of God”. Meaning, this time, after his initial tragedies, Job’s instincts (Satan) were confronted by reality, or were subjected to scrutiny. “Satan coming before God” together with his intellect, means his instincts were no longer ‘unexamined’. Until Job received punishments, his instincts were distant from his intellect, they were not “before God”. However, this changed once Job experienced tragedy upon tragedy. Now, “Satan also came before God”. Now, Job’s instinctual philosophy that he would “obey God as long as life is good” would now be subject to his intellectual probe, described as “Satan coming before God”. In compliance with this theory, Satan never again reappears in the book of Job, for Job’s instincts corrupted his ways only once.

We learn that the instincts are limited to our Earthly existence, and are even molded by our Earth-bound, physical desires. We become attached to what we emotionally feel is the ultimate good, i.e., health, wealth and children, and that our obedience to God is conditional on these. Left unexamined, we are subject to losing God’s divine intervention, we are “like animals” who have no individual providence. (lit. “k’vihamos nidmu”, Psalms, 49:13,21) The book of Job teaches us to examine our philosophy, detecting what false views we create from our subjective desires, and what evil may befall us if we live based on fantasy, and not God’s reality. We learn how kind God is in offering man opportunities to perfect himself, as we read here, and in the myriad of Biblical instances where God perfected man and men.

The cryptic and metaphorical style of the book of Job teaches us that God wishes to relay information to us in a manner that does not stun and bewilder our minds with its stark contrast to our cherished, sensitive, albeit false beliefs. Rather, God writes subtle metaphors and books, allowing man the ability to come to ideas when his mind may consider them as possible truths. Maimonides states this as well in his letter to his student R. Joseph b. Judah: “... for my object was that the truth should present itself in connected order, and that you should not hit upon it by mere chance.”

⁴ It appears that the instincts can cause man to be removed from God’s providence, availing him to bodily harm, but not that the flawed, instinctual views harbored in this life might warrant death. ■

After these remarks of mine listen to the following useful instruction given by our Sages, who in truth deserve the title of “wise men”: it makes clear that which appears doubtful, and reveals that which has been hidden, and discloses most of the mysteries of the Law. They said in the Talmud as follows: R. Simeon, son of Lakish, says: “The adversary (Satan) evil inclination (yezer ha-ra), and the angel of death, are one and the same being. “ Here we find all that has been mentioned by us in such a dear manner that no intelligent person will be in doubt about it. It has thus been shown to you these three different terms designate one and the same thing, and that actions ascribed to these three are in reality the actions of one and the same agent. Again, the ancient doctors of the Talmud said: “The adversary goes about and misleads, then he goes up and accuses, obtains permission, and takes the soul. “ You have already been told that when David at the time of the plague was shown the angel “with the sword drawn in his hand stretched out over Jerusalem” (2 Sam. xxiv. 17), it was done for the purpose of conveying a certain idea to him. The same idea was also expressed in the vision concerning the sins of the sons of Joshua, the high priest, by the words, “And the adversary stood on his right hand to accuse him” (Zech. iii 1). The vision then reveals that [the adversary] is far from God, and continues thus: “The Lord will rebuke thee, O adversary, the Lord who hath chosen Jerusalem will rebuke thee” (ibid. ver. 2). Balaam saw prophetically the same vision in his journey, addressing him with the words, “Behold I have come forth to be a hindrance to thee” (Num. xxii. 32). The Hebrew, Satan, is derived from the same root as seteh, “turn away” (Prov. iv. 15): it implies the notion of turning and moving away from a thing; he undoubtedly turns us away from the way of truth, and leads us astray in the way of error. The same idea is contained in the passage, “And the imagination of the heart of man is evil from his youth” (Gen. viii. 21). The theory of the good and the evil inclinations (yezer ha-tob, ve-yezer ha-ra’) is frequently referred to in our religion. Our Sages also say, “Serve God with your good and your evil inclinations. “ (B. T. Ber. 57a.) They also say that the evil inclination we receive at our birth: “for at the door sin croucheth” (Gen. iv. 7), as is distinctly said in the Law, “And the imagination of the heart of man is evil from his youth”(ibid. viii 21). The good inclination, however, comes when the mind is developed. In explaining the allegory representing the body of man and his different faculties, our Sages (B. T. Ned. 32b) said: “The evil inclination is called a great king, whilst the good inclination is a child, poor, though wise” (Eccles. ix. 14). All these sayings of our Sages are contained in their writings, and are well known. According to our Sages the evil inclination, the adversary (Satan), and the angel [of death], are undoubtedly identical; and the adversary being called “angel”, because he is among the sons of God, and the good inclination being in reality an angel, it is to the good and the evil inclinations that they refer in their well-known words, “Every person is accompanied by two angels, one being on his right side, one on his left. “ In the Babylonian Gemara (Sabbath 119b), they say distinctly of the two angels that one is good and one bad. See what extraordinary ideas this passage discloses, and how many false ideas it removes.

I believe that I have fully explained the idea contained in the account of Job; but I will now show the character of the opinion attributed to Job, and of the opinions attributed to his friends, and support my statement by proofs gathered from the words of each of them. We need not take notice of the remaining passages which are only required for the context, as has been explained to you in the beginning of this treatise.” ■

Maimonides on Job: Guide for the Perplexed

Book III, Chap. XXIII

Assuming the first part of the history of Job as having actually taken place, the five, viz., Job and his friends, agreed that the misfortune of Job was known to God, and that it was God that caused Job's suffering. They further agree that God does no wrong, and that no injustice can be ascribed to Him. You will find these ideas frequently repeated in the words of Job. When you consider the words of the five who take part in the discussion, you will easily notice that things said by one of them are also uttered by the rest. The arguments are repeated, mixed up, and interrupted by Job's description of his acute pain and troubles, which had come upon him in spite of his strict righteousness, and by an account of his charity, humane disposition, and good acts. The replies of the friends to Job are likewise interrupted by exhortations to patience, by words of comfort, and other speeches tending to make him forget his grief. He is told by them to be silent; that he ought not to let loose the bridle of his tongue, as if he were in dispute with another man; that he ought silently to submit to the judgments of God. Job replies that the intensity of his pains did not permit him to bear patiently, to collect his thoughts and to say what he ought to say. The friends, on the other hand, contend that those who act well receive reward, and those who act wickedly are punished. When a wicked and rebellious person is seen in prosperity, it maybe assumed for certain that a change will take place; he will die, or troubles will afflict him and his house. When we find a worshipper of God in misfortune, we may be certain that God will heal the stroke of his wound. This idea is frequently repeated in the words of the three friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tzofar, who agree in this opinion. It is, however, not the object of this chapter to describe in what they agree, but to define the distinguishing characteristic of each of them, and to elucidate the opinion of each as regards the question why the most simple and upright man is afflicted with the greatest and acutest pain. Job found in this fact a proof that the right cons and the wicked are equal before God, who holds all mankind in contempt. Job

therefore says (ix. 22, 23): “This is one thing, therefore I said it, He destroyeth the perfect and the wicked. If the scourge slay suddenly, he will laugh at the trial of the innocent.” He thus declares that when a scourge comes suddenly, killing and destroying all it meets, God laughs at the trial of the innocent. He further confirms this view in the following passage: “One dieth in his full strength, being wholly at ease and quiet. His vessels are full of milk, etc. And another dieth in the bitterness of his soul, and never eateth with pleasure. They shall lie down alike in the dust, and the worms shall cover them” (ibid. xxi. 23-26). In a similar manner he shows the good condition and prosperity of wicked people; and is even very explicit on this point. He speaks thus: “Even when I remember I am afraid, and trembling taketh hold on my flesh. Wherefore do the wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power? Their seed is established in their sight with them,” etc. (ibid. 6-8). Having thus described their prosperity he addresses his opponents, and says to them: “Granted that as you think, the children of this prosperous atheist will perish after his death, and their memory will be blotted out, what harm will the fate of his family cause him after his death? For what pleasure hath he in his house after him, when the number of his months is cut off in the midst?” (ibid. 21). Job then explains that there is no hope after death, so that the cause [of the misfortune of the righteous man] is nothing else but entire neglect on the part of God. He is therefore surprised that God has not abandoned the creation of man altogether; and that after having created him, He does not take any notice of him. He says in his surprise: “Hast thou not poured me out as milk, and curdled me like cheese?” etc. (ibid. x. 10, seq.). This is one of the different views held by some thinkers on Providence. Our Sages (B. T. Baba B. 16a) condemned this view of Job as mischievous, and expressed their feeling in words like the following: “dust should have filled the mouth of Job”, “Job wished to upset the dish”: “Job denied the resurrection of the dead”: “He commenced to blaspheme.” When, however, God said to Eliphaz and his colleagues, “You have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath” (xlii. 7), our Sages assume as the cause of this rebuke, the maxim, “Man is not punished for that which he utters in his pain”; and that God ignored the sin of Job [in his utterances], because of the acuteness of his suffering. But this explanation does not agree with the object of the whole allegory. The words of God are justified, as I will show, by the fact that Job abandoned his first very erroneous opinion, and himself proved that it was an error. It is the opinion which suggests itself as plausible at first thought, especially in the minds of those who meet with mishaps, well knowing that they have not merited them through sins. This is admitted by all, and therefore this opinion was assigned to Job. But he is represented to hold this view only so long as he was without wisdom, and knew God only by tradition, in the same manner as religious people generally know Him. As soon as he had acquired a true knowledge of God, he confessed that there is undoubtedly true felicity in the knowledge of God; it is attained by all who acquire that knowledge, and no earthly trouble can disturb it. So long as Job’s knowledge of God was based on tradition and communication, and not on research, he believed that such imaginary good as is possessed in health, riches, and children, was the utmost that men can attain: this was the reason why he was in perplexity, and why he uttered the above-mentioned opinions, and this is also the meaning of his words: “I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth Thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent because of dust and ashes” (xlii. 5, 6): that is to say he abhorred all that he had desired before, and that he was sorry that he had been in dust and ashes; comp. “and he sat down among the ashes” (ii. 8). On account of this last utterance, which implies true perception, it is said afterwards in reference to him, “for you have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath.”

The opinion set forth by Eliphaz in reference to Job’s suffering is likewise one of the current views on Providence. He holds that the fate of Job was in accordance with strict justice. Job was

guilty of sins for which he deserved his fate. Eliphaz therefore says to Job: “Is not thy wickedness great, and thine iniquities infinite?” (xxii.5). He then points out to him that his upright actions and his good ways, on which he relies, need not be so perfect in the eyes of God that no punishment should be inflicted on him.” Behold, he putteth no trust in his servants: and his angels he chargeth with folly: how much less in them that dwell in houses of clay” etc. (iv.17-18). Eliphaz never abandoned his belief that the fate of man is the result of justice, that we do not know all our shortcomings for which we are punished, nor the way how we incur the punishment through them.

Bildad the Shuffite defends in this question the theory of reward and compensation. He therefore tells Job that if he is innocent and without sin, his terrible misfortunes will be the source of great reward, will be followed by the best compensation, and will prove a boon to him as the cause of great bliss in the future world. This idea is expressed in the words: “If thou be pure and upright, surely now he will awake for thee, and make the habitation of thy righteousness prosperous. Though thy beginning was small, yet thy latter end will greatly increase” (viii. 6-8). This opinion concerning Providence is widespread, and we have already explained it.

Tzofar the Naamathite holds that the Divine Will is the source of everything that happens: no further cause can be sought for His actions, and it cannot be asked why He has done this and why He has not done that. That which God does can therefore not be explained by the way of justice or the result of wisdom. His true Essence demands that He does what He wills; we are unable to fathom the depth of His wisdom, and it is the law and rule of this wisdom that whatever He does is done because it is His will and for no other cause. Tzofar therefore says to Job: “But oh that God would speak, and open His lips against thee; and that He would show thee the secrets of wisdom, for wisdom hath two portions. Know, therefore, that God exacteth of thee less than thine iniquity deserveth. Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?” (xi. 6-7).

In this manner consider well how the Book of Job discusses the problem, which has perplexed many people and led them to adopt in reference to Divine Providence some one of the theories which I have explained above: all possible different theories are mentioned therein. The problem is described either by way of fiction or in accordance with real fact, as having manifested itself in a man famous for his excellency and wisdom. The view ascribed to Job is the theory of Aristotle. Eliphaz holds the opinion taught in Scripture, Bildad’s opinion is identical with that of the Mu’tazilah, whilst Tzofar defends the theory of the Asha’riyah. These were the ancient views on Providence; later on a new theory was set forth, namely, that ascribed to Elihu. For this reason he is placed above the others, and described as younger in years but greater in wisdom. He censures Job for his foolishly exalting himself, expressing surprise at such great troubles befalling a good man, and dwelling on the praises of his own deeds. He also tells the three friends that their minds have been weakened by great age. A profound and wonderful discourse then follows.

Reflecting on his words we may at first thought be surprised to find that he does not add anything to the words of Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tzofar; and that he only repeats their ideas in other terms and more explicitly. For he likewise censures and rebukes Job, attributes justice to God, relates His wonders in nature, and holds that God is not affected by the service of the worshipper, nor by the disobedience of the rebellious. All this has already been said by His colleagues. But after due consideration we see clearly the new idea introduced by Elihu, which is the principal object of his speech, an idea which has not been uttered by those who spoke before

him. In addition to this he mentions also other things set forth by the previous speakers, in the same manner as each of the rest, viz., Job and his three friends, repeat what the others have said. The purpose of this repetition is to conceal the opinion peculiar to each speaker, and to make all appear in the eyes of the ordinary reader to utter one and the same view, although in reality this is not the case.

The new idea, which is peculiar to Elihu and has not been mentioned by the others, is contained in his metaphor of the angel's intercession. It is a frequent occurrence, he says, that a man becomes ill, approaches the gates of death, and is already given up by his neighbors. If then an angel, of any kind whatever, intercedes on his behalf and prays for him, the intercession and prayers are accepted; the patient rises from his illness, is saved, and returns to good health. This result is not always obtained: intercession and deliverance do not always follow each other: it happens only twice, or three times. Elihu therefore says: "If there be an angel with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand, to show unto man his uprightness," etc. (xxxiii. 29). He then describes man's condition when convalescent and the rejoicing at his recovery, and continues thus: "Lo, all these things worketh God twice, three times with man" (ibid. 29). This idea occurs only in the words of Elihu.

His description of the method of prophecy in preceding verses is likewise new. He says: "Surely God speaketh in one way, yea in two ways, yet man perceiveth it not. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon man, in slumberings upon the bed." (ibid. 14, 15) He afterwards supports and illustrates his theory by a description of many natural phenomena, such as thunder, lightning, rain, and winds; with these are mixed up accounts of various incidents of life, e.g., an account of pestilence contained in the following passage: "In a moment they die, and at midnight; the people become tumultuous and pass away" (xxxiv. 20). Great wars are described in the following verse: "He breaketh in pieces mighty men without number, and setteth others in their stead" (ibid. 24).

There are many more passages of this kind. In a similar manner the Revelation that reached Job (chap. xxxviii., chap. xli.), and explained to him the error of his whole belief, constantly describes natural objects, and nothing else; it describes the elements, meteorological phenomena, and peculiarities of various kinds of living beings. The sky, the heavens, Orion and Pleiades are only mentioned in reference to their influence upon our atmosphere, so that Job's attention is in this prophecy only called to things below the lunar sphere.

Elihu likewise derives instruction from the nature of various kinds of animals. Thus he says: "He teacheth us through the beasts of the earth, and maketh us wise through the fowls of heaven" (xxxv. 11). He dwells longest on the nature of the Leviathan, which possesses a combination of bodily peculiarities found separate in different animals, in those that walk, those that swim, and those that fly. The description of all these things serves to impress on our minds that we are unable to comprehend how these transient creatures come into existence, or to imagine how their natural properties commenced to exist, and that these are not like the things, which we are able to produce. Much less can we compare the manner in which God rules and manages His creatures with the manner in which we rule and manage certain beings. We must content ourselves with this, and believe that nothing is hidden from God, as Elihu says: "For his eyes are upon the ways of man, and he seeth all his goings. There is no darkness nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves" (xxxiv. 21, 22). But the term management, when applied to God, has not the same meaning which it has when applied to us; and when we say that He rules

His creatures we do not mean that He does the same as we do when we rule over other beings. The term “rule” has not the same definition in both cases: it signifies two different notions, which have nothing in common but the name. In the same manner, as there is a difference between works of nature and productions of human handicraft, so there is a difference between God’s rule, providence, and intention in reference to all natural forces, and our rule, providence, and intention in reference to things which are the objects of our rule, providence, and intention. This lesson is the principal object of the whole Book of Job; it lays down this principle of faith, and recommends us to derive a proof from nature, that we should not fall into the error of imagining His knowledge to be similar to ours, or His intention, providence, and rule similar to ours. When we know this we shall find everything that may befall us easy to bear; mishap will create no doubts in our hearts concerning God, whether He knows our affairs or not, whether He provides for us or abandons us. On the contrary, our fate will increase our love of God; as is said in the end of this prophecy: “Therefore I abhor myself and repent concerning the dust and ashes” (xlii. 6): and as our Sages s said in the Book of Job, all will be clear to you, and you will find that I have grasped and taken hold of the whole subject; nothing has been left unnoticed, except such portions as are only introduced because of the context and the whole plan of the allegory. I have explained this method several times in the course of this treatise. ■

Chapter I

The Book of Job

Rabbi Israel Chait

Student's edited notes from taped lectures

In his “Guide” discussing the book of Job, Maimonides describes the different levels of men who can withstand certain pains, but cannot stand others. He concludes that nobody can withstand the pain that is within his own person: “*the person will murmur against God either with his heart or with his tongue.*” There are two possibilities for man’s troubles: 1) God is ignorant of the person in pain; or 2) God is aware, but does nothing about it. It is this second view, which causes many to rebel against God. However, it is striking how the person in pain never murmured against God, while other people were in pain. This unveils the small-mindedness of this person. The complaint is due to an emotionally subjective view of reality, and not based on one seeking justice.

We ask, “Why has this person in pain never recognized injustice in the world, until it happened to him?” However, this is not the theme of the Job. The book of Job focuses on what happens ‘after’ the pain strikes: how does man deal with it? Job was not someone who ran away from God. Even while he possessed all his wealth, he served God perfectly. After every feast, he offered God sacrifices. He never allowed his success to run away with him, or delude him with feelings of security. He placed his security in God. Most successful people act otherwise.

We must question if, as the verses imply, it was just for God to take away all that Job had, in order to discern if Job would remain faithful to God. Did Job deserve these tragedies?

We cannot suggest that these things that God took were for Job’s good. For the only reason the physical is taken away from someone, is because he is not using it as a means towards perfection. But if someone is leading the proper path, then, the more physical he possesses, the more perfected he can

become. In fact, we read that Job made good use of what he had (sacrifices). On this point, the Rabbis teach, *“For every fruit that a person passes without benefiting, he will be judged.”*

We also cannot suggest that God punished Job so mankind will behave for the correct reasons. An illustration of this impropriety is a teacher who occasionally hits a good child, in order that the other children will behave for the right reasons. The other children should behave because it is the right thing to do, and not to avoid pain. This would not be justice: the good student is not receiving what he deserved. Thus, Job too could not be punished to scare humanity towards a better path, for this would be an injustice to Job. God does not operate except with perfect justice.

Additionally, to maintain that the book of Job is to teach of a man who possessed certain evil traits, and that punishments came to remove those evils, is an untenable position. This theory is already known, and a separate book of Job would be redundant. Conversely, the verses tell us that Job was perfected, *“Ish Tam v’yashar v’yera’i elokim”*, *“A perfect man, and upright, and God fearing.”* Thus, Job had no sins, for which he required punishments.

We must discount Job’s situation as a test of any sort, for God to “learn” how Job might function in certain situations, for this imputes ignorance of God, the omniscient. Therefore, since Job’s evils could not afford God any new knowledge, God must have delivered these tragedies to Job, for Job. This implies that Job must have possessed some imperfection if this trial is to help him. For one is only helped in as far as he needs help. But this would mean that Job has not truly reached perfection, contradicting the verses! So what does the verse mean by *“tam v’yashar”*, *“perfect and upright”*? A possibility was offered: trials are those uncomfortable situations, in which God perfects man through the situation itself. However, this reasoning is wrong. Judaism maintains that man perfects himself in only one way: attainment of knowledge. The only time man is in pain so as to help himself, is when he must uproot a poor character trait, as Maimonides teaches, we must go to the other extreme, and this carries some temporal, emotional stress. But after this trait is neutralized, any further pain will only serve to keep man away from the best state of mind for perfection. Pain cannot contribute to man’s perfection. Additionally, Job was “perfect.” There were no character traits, for which he required perfection.

If Job required no correction, perhaps his pain is a good, in that it conditioned him to handle pain for the rest of his life. Perhaps this is why God troubled Job. In order to answer this suggestion, we must know how the pain is perfecting him. Pain straddles two parts of man: 1) physiological - the scream after being inflicted with a wound, and 2) psychological - the fact that he feels he cannot go on with life due to the physiological aspects of the pain. In regards to physiological aspects, the scream is unavoidable. This is the inevitable, emotional reaction to a sense perception. The human condition demands this must occur. So if one maintains that the endurance of pain is perfecting, it must be limited to the psychological sphere. Wherein lies this perfection? If we suggest that perfection is in the ‘acceptance’ of this state, why is that any different than the acceptance of any other reality? The truth is that it is not any different. Therefore, when we talk about accepting pain, we are really talking about ‘accepting reality’.

What is it that allows a person to accept reality? It is knowledge of the causes that were responsible in bringing about that reality. What follows is that if knowledge is the factor that allows one to accept reality, endurance of the reality should not play any role. It does not seem to help at all. It is the knowledge of this specific reality that makes it easier for man to accept it. Therefore, we cannot be of the opinion that Job was given pain to prepare him for future pains. If God wished to teach Job how to better accept pain, he would have given him knowledge, and not pain. However, one may yet maintain

that pain may help a person obtain knowledge of the causes of reality. But of course, this theory is baseless, as physical pain is unrelated to the attainment of knowledge.

The last possibility is that the endurance of a great pain prepares one for a smaller one. Why would one think this way? The reason is that as long as a person can remember his tragedies, anything less seems like pleasure. If, for example, someone would experience a great pain on January 1st and then a lesser pain on January 2nd, he would think the lesser pain was not (as) painful: his current grief over his previous day's troubles obscures the lesser pain today. But if the lesser pain arrived at December 31st, the person would definitely view it as painful, since the past year was free of pain. By comparison, the pain received on December 31st, a full year later, registers as a real, acute pain. Therefore, this theory of "training" a person in greater pains so lesser pains are tolerable by comparison, does not achieve its objective, and is not a satisfactory explanation.

Chapter II

The Story of Job

Severely tortured by successive tragedies, Job's wife told him to curse God, as this is the natural response. Job responded, "Shall we accept the good from God and not the bad?" Meaning, complaining now that life has become bad, is a distortion: any good life carries some pains, and cursing God would mean I dislike "life" in its entirety; the good with the bad. (The Rabbis say that "with his lips" Jobs did not sin, but he did sin in his heart.)

The verses tell us that Job regressed: at first he did not sin, but later on he did, teaching of Job's initial philosophy, and its results. His philosophy was that one must accept the good *and* the bad from God. But the fact that the Rabbis tell us that "belibo chatah" (he sinned in his heart) teaches that the germ of the sin was present. It was only a matter of time before Job would sin. This is illustrated by the fact that after his three friends came to visit; he did not speak for seven days. He was troubled. But on the seventh day he began to verbalize his pain. The Torah is telling us that Job's philosophy was good, but only up to a point – Job possessed limited tolerance. His philosophy was not proper, because it broke down. The true philosophy of life, by definition, will stand for the duration of "life", i.e., under all circumstances.

In truth, there was an opposing force that prevented Job from sinning up to this point. Job possessed feelings of rebellion. This is why he yelled at his wife when she suggested he curse God: mainly, because she represented to him those traits that he actually contained. She was an externalization of the very forces that he was fighting within himself. This book may be summed up as an account of a man who was perfect in all areas, except for his philosophy, regressing from one level to the next.

From Job's first words – "shall we accept the good and not the bad" – we see that he maintained a certain loyalty towards God. Job was one step ahead of the "gam zoo letova" philosophy. The "gam zoo letova" philosophy (lit. "this too is for the good") maintains something which is absurd: he

maintains that God has better knowledge than himself when evil occurs, while the afflicted individual has no knowledge of how it is for the good. But in a severe case (viz. one's spouse dies) this very individual does not say, "this too is for the good." The converse is true: he attacks God. The "gam zoo letova" personality is inconsistent in his philosophy.

Job's initial philosophy was that a person must accept whatever God gives him, since God is the Creator. Job did not qualify his philosophy by saying that there must be some good present. However, why did Job's philosophy fall apart? It did so, because a human being cannot maintain a philosophy bereft of any benefit. Job was able to maintain this philosophy, with the provision that some personal benefit existed. But now that everything had been taken from him, he perceived no gain in keeping to his ideals. But if Job reached the point where he saw no benefit left in life, why did he go on? And we see that he did in fact reach that point because he said,

"cursed is the day of my birth. It was a dark day...it was better that I never left the womb."

Job went on with life due to one consideration; he desired to hear what his three friends had to say about his predicament. He thought that there might be some reason to go on.

There may be loyalty between two parties, but that loyalty lasts only as long as the parties feel that there exists a just balance. However, if one's life becomes wrecked by his loyalty, for what good reason shall he remain loyal? There is also a lesson in the Rabbis' words, "Job did not sin with his lips, but he *did* sin with his heart." This philosophy of loyalty harbors a conflict. With these words, the Rabbis wished to alert us to this conflict. This is seen for example, in the case where a master does a small harm to the servant: the servant's desire for showing gratefulness overpowers the desire to rebel. This was the case regarding Job. The Rabbis stated that he did not sin with his lips (because of the desire for showing gratefulness) but he sinned in his heart (the conflict was present).

In chapter three, Job voices his complaint, he states that God performed an injustice: God performs all, and God created the day of his birth, which in turn is the cause for all his suffering. Herein, Job made a transition. He first describes in detail how terrible was this day of his birth. He then proceeds to state that had he not been born, he would be at rest. He would share the company of kings. He describes death as equal for all, where all are free from their respective, tragic lives. What is meant by this transition? First, Job was merely describing his state, and his disgust with life. He still maintained the immortality fantasy. But once he saw how temporal life really is, he looked at death as a good: death could save him from his present pain. Since he overcame his immortality fantasy by seeing no purpose in his life, he was able to look at death as something, which catered to his desires. That was the transition. Ecclesiastes 3:11 states, "*Gam es HaOlam nasan b'libam...*" ("Also the world was given in their heart..."). Ibn Ezra says this means that the feeling of eternity was planted in man. Without this feeling of immortality, man would not move towards accomplishments. Job lost this feeling of eternity. Thus, there are two things in Job's monologue: 1) it was unjust that he should live and 2) a description of his psychological state.

Chapter III

Eliphaz's Argument

Chapter 4

Eliphaz commences his words to Job, urging him to listen to some of his own preaching. Job always comforted people and maintained that others greatly exaggerated their situations. Eliphaz then accuses Job of feeling just. This would mean God is not just because He is hurting an “innocent man” (Job). Eliphaz concludes that Job must truly be guilty:

“Shall man be just before God?” Also, “In his angels he charges with folly.”

Meaning, if in his prophets (angels) sin is present, “how much more so does sin exist with you Job.” Eliphaz maintains that Job has no way to perceive God’s idea of innocence and guilt. Therefore, Job’s entire defense of his innocence is false. He tells Job that he must have sinned. (5:7 Rashi says that it is impossible for man not to sin.)

Eliphaz maintained that there are two kinds of sins: 1) an overt sin, known to the sinner, for which man is culpable, and 2) a sin due to human nature where God will act to help him overcome it, since it is not known by the sinner. Eliphaz maintained that since Job denied having sinned, Job committed the second type of sin, and was fortunate that God was punishing him so he could perfect himself. Eliphaz further maintains that once Job finds his sin, God will heal him and he will enjoy a good life.

Job's Response to Eliphaz

Chapter 6

Until verse 11, Job states that he has not sinned. What is meant by “*is my strength the strength of stones?*” Job means that God’s punishments must allow man to overcome his wrong. But Job claims, “My punishment does not allow me to search out my wrong, as you say the punishment was meant to do. There must be limits to the punishment so as to make it possible for me to overcome my wrong.” In other words, Job is saying that if his punishment was meant to do as Eliphaz suggests, it is an unjust punishment. Eliphaz told Job that he must gain his composure, for he felt that Job was letting his punishment overtake him. But Job’s reply was that God’s acute pains were not allowing him to gain his composure. Job meant to say that Eliphaz’s argument was good only up until the point where Job was, that point being where the troubles make it impossible for him to function well enough to think, as Job says, “*Am I made out of stone?*”

What is meant by 6:21:

“For now ye are nothing; ye see my casting down, and are afraid?”

Job maintains that Eliphaz was siding with God. Job first told his friends that they are afraid that something was going to happen to them, and that is why they sided with God, afraid to side with Job. Secondly, Job maintained that they were afraid to face the reality, which Job suggested. Their fear was that by agreeing with Job, they would have to abandon their philosophy. (Rashi, Ibn Ezra)

The reason why Job retorted to his friends, first by describing his pain, was to make them see that the pain was too great to do as they told him (to pull himself together). Their philosophy was one in which they desired to remain secure in their own ideas, fearful to look at reality objectively, lest they see that they are wrong.

Job continues, stating that their philosophy will “bury orphans and undermine friends” because they are not being objective.

Chapter 7 verse 12 states,

“Am I a sea, or a whale, that You set a watch over me?”

With these words, Job commences a new argument. Since Job could not find in himself any sin, and since he never denied God’s Providence, he concluded that God must be out to get him. For why else would God’s Providence relate to him? If not to help, it must be to hurt. So he questions God as to why he in particular was chosen as a target, “Why am I so important that you come against me as an enemy?” So we learn from these complaints that Job maintained, 1) there is a Creator, 2) He knows what is happening, and 3) He has the power to stop Job’s pain. Job was stuck without a reason as to why these events befell him.

Chapter IV Bildad's Argument

Chapter 8

“If thou were pure and upright; surely now He would awake for thee, and make the habitation of thy righteousness prosperous. Though thy beginning was small, yet thy latter end should greatly increase.” (8:6,7)

Bildad maintained that for all the punishments Job endured in this world, he would receive reward in the next world. Bildad maintained that Job did not sin, and therefore, he felt that just people receive punishments.

Job's Response to Bildad

Bildad maintained that the innocent would be paid back in the end for their troubles. But Job replies (9:23):

“If the scourge slay suddenly, He will laugh at the trial of the innocent.”

Job uses this case of the plague to show Bildad that there really is no difference between the righteous and the evildoers, for everyone is plagued alike. This first argument is the practical one. Job says yet another point (9:24) *“If not He then who?”* This means that if it is not God who caused my

pain, then something else did. And while that “something else” caused the pain, God was lax. (We know this is impossible.) Job accuses God in either case.

Job responded in this manner, for Bildad said that although you may experience pain, God would eventually step in and correct your situation. Therefore, Job refuted Bildad, as it imputes injustice to God. For if it were just, why would God eventually “step in”? “Eventual” justice means that until that point, there was injustice. Job maintained that justice from God could not be limited to justice in the end result alone: it must be just “throughout.” God could not be inactive while someone undeserving was troubled. This argument is the primary breakdown of Bildad. The first refutation was the practical argument, “a scourge really does affect the just people with the wicked”, and the second argument addressed God’s justice.

Bildad first states,

“Does God pervert judgment, and does the almighty pervert justice?”

Job answered both. But before we review Job’s answer, let us sum up Bildad: he maintains of the “pain and compensation” theory, revealing that Bildad felt that if God is so powerful and great, He could not do unjust things. He had a premise and a conclusion. Premise: God is powerful and great. Conclusion: He cannot do injustice. But Job answered, “It is true, God can and did all these great things. But that does not mean that He does justice.” Here, Job stated, “although I cannot step into the ring with God because He is powerful and can turn my words around, and I have no power before Him, nonetheless, power and justice are two separate things. And you (Bildad) cannot prove that because God is powerful, this makes Him just.” Job refutes Bildad’s first argument that “power is synonymous with justice” and the second argument that the righteous individual survives the scourge.

In 10:10 Job says,

“Has though poured me out like milk, and curdled me like cheese?”

Job is now questioning God’s Specific Providence (Hashgacha Pratyos). “Poured me as milk” means God created me, and “curdled me as cheese” means God did not pay attention to me after my creation. In other words, “there is no Divine Providence. And if one says there is, then there seems to be many contradictions.”

Job made the next logical step. He saw that certain things were happening, that if attributed to God, would mean that God was unjust. Therefore, keeping to reason, he had only one choice, which was to say that God was not involved; in other words, no Specific Providence. The reason why Job also stated that there was no World to Come (10:22) is because it would not make sense that God should torture someone and then give them payment. The reason why he denied the Reincarnation of the Dead was because this falls under the category of God’s Specific Providence. In chapter ten, Job answers both of Bildad’s arguments and then makes some headway into his own belief as to what was transpiring.

Chapter V

Tzofar's Argument

Tzofar is of the opinion that all of God's actions are due to His essence. Thus, the only understanding of His actions is by understanding His essence. Therefore, since man cannot understand God's essence, we cannot understand His actions. Tzofar argues that it is impossible to attain reasons for God's actions. (11:3) These are the words of Maimonides. But Tzofar's words do not seem to be what Maimonides says. If we review Tzofar in verses 13 through 20, he seems to be saying that there is a system of justice. So how can Maimonides hold the view that that we cannot understand God's actions, yet, we can understand His justice?

It is true that Tzofar says, "Who can know God?" But this is not particular to Tzofar. So why does Maimonides state what he did? Tzofar also states in verse 5 that God exacted less from Job than what he really deserved. In 4:17 we see that Eliphaz says the same thing as Tzofar. Furthermore, it seems as though Tzofar contradicts himself: first he says that God exacted less than he deserved, which means there is a system, and then he says that you cannot understand God, which would mean that even if there were a system, you could not fathom it.

In truth, there is no contradiction. For when Tzofar says there is a system, as in, "*Job got less than he deserved*" and verses 13-20, he means just that. And when he states that God is unknowable, he means that God's system of justice is not based on man's idea of justice, but rather on God's system, which is part of His essence, and unknowable to man. Therefore, both are true: there can be a system, and also, it is unknowable. Tzofar is not suggesting a contradiction.

Job's Response to Tzofar

Chapter 12

Job straddles both sides of the argument regarding the existence of Specific Providence (Hashgacha Pratyos). Does this mean he is unsure? No it does not. What Job means with his apparent contradiction is that he cannot detect a system with which God works? And the reason that this is in his answer is that Tzofar said that there is in fact a system. Thereby, Job conveys to Tzofar, via example, how there really is no system, in his opinion. Job unmask an inconsistency in the way of the world, if one attributes all situations to God.

In chapter 13:1-10, Job rebukes his three friends. Especially in verse 10 where he says:

“Will you secretly show partiality to God?”

Job is saying that the three have an emotional prejudice for God. He continues, “God will get you for your lies because God does not like lies in any form.” In verse 13 Job states that he should be left alone so as to speak his mind, and let whatever come, be upon him. He says this because he maintains it better to commit himself to what his knowledge tells him, than to openly deceive himself, like the three are doing. He maintains it is true that he may get punished for his opinion, but it would be much worse to openly fool himself. But in order for Job to hold this view, he must be premising that God favors truth, because that is what Job is committing himself to via this opinion.

We see from verses 15 and 16 that Job did not lose his love God. He says he will trust in God. On the whole, even though Job did not understand why these things were happening to him, he still loved the truth. Ironically, Job would be more in line with perfection by saying something, which may not be true. The reason why he would be more truthful, is because he was guided by reason. If he were to deny reason, that would surely be going against truth.

In verse 21 Job says that God should,

“draw His Hand far from me”, and “let not thy terror make me afraid.”

The “drawing of the hand” means “don’t oppress me physically”, while “Thy terror” means mentally. Job wished to be physically and mentally capable of arguing with God. Then, in verse 23, he says, “How many are mine iniquities and sins? Make me to know my transgression and my sin.” Job meant in other words, “God is doing this to me because of my sins, and if so, I want to know what exactly the sins are.” Or God is doing this because He wants to destroy me, “Wherefore hidest Thou Thy face, and holdest me for Thine enemy?” (13:24)

Chapter VI

Providence & Justice

Chapter 14

Job now commences a new line of reasoning. What do these first three verses mean?

“Man that is born of a woman is of few days and full of trouble. He comes forth like a flower, and is cut down: he flees also as a shadow, and continues not. And do You open Your eyes upon such an one, and bring me into judgment with Thee?” (14:1-3)

Job means that since man must sin at youth, how can God judge him for those things? Job mentioned this idea earlier in chapter 13:26 when he said, “For Thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth.” Job desires that God judge him as a human being: “punishing me because of the sins of his youth is not right.” In verses 4 and 5, Job voices man’s physical limitations (“number of months”) and therefore he must be judged as a being with these limitations. Meaning, he cannot be held responsible for actions that are humanly inevitable. These actions were not in his power at the time.

Job rules-out Tzofar’s argument on both accounts. First, he explains why he discounts Divine will: looking at the nature of things unveils stark inconsistencies. Secondly, there cannot be ‘compensation’

because this means that something evil happens, and then receives payment for that evil. Although he is repaid, this would mean that God was lax when the evil occurred. Job concludes that there must be some justice, but he complains that the justice is not so just, if he receives punishment for what he committed in his youth.

In chapter 14, verses 20-22 what is Job's complaint?

“You prevail forever against him, and he passes: You change his countenance, and send him away. His sons come to honor, and he knows it not; and they are brought low, but he perceives it not of them. But his flesh upon him shall have pain, and his soul within him shall mourn.”

Here, Job gives the example of a tree that is cut down, but the water replenishes it. He then goes on to state that when man is laid low, he does not rise again. Job is clearly stating the destructions that exist. But there are two kinds: 1) temporary: a tree, and 2) permanent: man.

Maimonides states that God's justice is different than that of man, and man must abide by God's justice. God does not abide by man's justice. There are laws of justice but they are God's laws. And about anything which belongs to God, namely, His system of justice, we cannot ask why it is this way because we would in essence be asking about God's nature. This is just like asking, “Who created God?” We cannot ask this question because His nature is that He exists. The same applies to the question of God's justice: His very nature dictates this form of justice.

Chapter VII

Good & Evil

Tzofar says as follows:

“Know therefore that God has exacted from you less than what your sins deserved.” (11:6)

This can be taken two ways: 1) that by God exacting less, God is acting mercifully and not exacting strict justice. He is acting for man’s sake as opposed to what the plan of creation calls for. 2) (More in line with the tenor of his words) “Job, you really deserve nothing. You have no claim against God. Whatever God exacts is less than what you deserve because you have no claim against God.” However, if Tzofar were trying to demonstrate God’s justice, why would he opine that “exacting less” is justice? It would show just the contrary: God did *not* display justice! Therefore we explain this verse to refer to Tzofar’s commentary on Job’s status, and not referring to how God works. Meaning Tzofar is condemning Job by saying he should have received more punishment - not that God did not fulfill His plan. Tzofar is telling Job, “you are judging this situation from your own view of justice. Therefore, any theory you suggest will minimize what you truly deserve.

In 15:1-7, Eliphaz says that if Job had not done away with fear of God, he would see matters clearly. (We see this is his argument from verse 4). He maintains that since Job did away with fear of God that is why he cannot see that he sinned. (This was Eliphaz's previous argument.) But if Job would fear God, he would understand where he sinned. Eliphaz's argument can be equated to someone who is told first by a child, and then by a great genius that he sinned. His response to the child would be one of amusement, whereas if a genius would tell him he sinned, he would search diligently to detect his flaw. Here too, Eliphaz maintains that Job would see his error by doing a thorough investigation, had he maintained his fear of God.

"What do you know, that we know not? What do you understand, which is not in us?" (15: 9) Eliphaz means to say that Job cannot assume his experiences afford him any more knowledge than it affords him. For experiences of pain per say are not the source of knowledge. It is the fact that Job is having a certain amount of pain that affords knowledge, and not the experience. Therefore, Eliphaz is saying that Job could convey what he was experiencing so Eliphaz could be put on the same plane of knowledge as Job, and then work out the situation. Having seen Job and hearing his complaints, Eliphaz maintains that he is stubborn and does not have a disproof of God. "You have a sin and do not want to surrender to God", said Eliphaz. From 14:26 and on, Eliphaz states his view that Job's sin is one that was not overt. So Job must search it out. And since this is what is required, and Job failed to do so, his suffering is understood.

"With his wealth he goes against God" (14:27)

But he won't be successful against God. Further in this chapter Eliphaz is describing the life of the "rasha" – the evil person; viz.,

"21; a dreadful sound is in his ears. 22; he is waited for by the sword. 23; the day of darkness is ready at hand;

In verses 28-35 his whole thrust is that there must be a point where the rasha breaks, and has a sudden downfall. Sure, the Rasha has a rise, but from his glorious heights, comes his great surge downwards. Why is this so?

The reason the Rasha is successful to begin with, is because at first, he abandons all peripheral distractions from his quest, and this is something at which he succeeds. But the motivation of the rasha is something that cannot last. An example can be taken from Hitler, may his name and remembrance be wiped out: his flaw was his "superman" emotion. He would push aside fear in order to maintain this image. However, when he came to a situation where rationally he should retreat, he could not, because emotionally, this opposed his superman emotion. This is where lies the break and fall of the rasha.

This is what Eliphaz is telling Job at the end of chapter 15: "Since you put all your energies into the wickedness, hence, you will suffer a great downfall because it is impossible for the wicked to prosper." This second argument of Eliphaz is directed squarely at the person at Job, whereas the first argument conveyed abstract ideas. In 15:25 Eliphaz is referring to the "rasha" as one whose emotions do not allow him to see reality.

16:1-6: Job states that they cannot understand his pain. His friends' view that Job could possibly tell them everything so they may debate on equal footing with Job, is false. He then criticizes them for not strengthening him. He says that he is terrified of the physical problems, saying that they "filled him wrinkles." Then he continues to talk about the psychological problems. In 16:10, "they have gaped...they have smitten...they have gathered against me." Job means to say that a just person must have enemies. The reason being that people who are unjust are not going to be happy to hear his just words; they will rejoice

when he falls. So the psychological pain is being the subject of mockery. Job was a counselor and advisor in a big city, and a person in his position will naturally have enemies. From 16:11 until the end of this chapter, Job seems to openly state that the only possibility in his situation is that God should admit that there are some imperfections. In 16:17 he says, “There is no injustice in my hands.” He means that he does not deserve his situation.

In chapter 17, Job states two thoughts: his three friends do not have wisdom and they are afraid to join hands with him. Job desires someone who will argue with him. In 17:8 he states what a wise man is, and he degrades the three of them. From 17:11 and on, he speaks about there being no possible hope for him in life. What Job means by calling the grave his father and the worm his mother and sister is that the grave is his new home.

Chapter 18

“Consider and afterwards we will speak.” Here, Bildad accuses Job of acting emotionally. “Shall the earth be forsaken?”... “The rock moved out of its place?” He means that Job is being self-centered, viz. “Will the world (earth & the rock) change for you?” Bildad is of a different view than Eliphaz. Eliphaz says that God metes out justice directly. Bildad maintains it is compensation. The question is how to understand the “wicked” described by Bildad?

The common denominator of the three is that God is just. But the purpose of Bildad’s monologue about the wicked was to tell Job to return before it is too late. If we look at Job’s answer, we can see how this view is supported. One more point in 18: it says he is cast in a net by his own feet (meaning that due to the acts of the rasha, he falls and it says the “trap shall take him by the heel”. But this latter statement does not propose that it is the doing of the rasha.) This theory of compensation (maintained by Bildad) works in two ways, while the rasha creates his own downfall. This is under normal circumstances. However, sometimes the Rasha will be successful. In this case, God will knock him down and give him what he deserves. Bildad emphasizes the downfall of the rasha so as to effectuate Job’s repentance.

Chapter 19

In verses 3 and 4, Job ridiculed his friends for not functioning objectively. They were supposed to accept Job’s facts as true, and help him if they could, with advice on how to address his predicament. But they did not accept Job’s words as truth, and distorted his claim of innocence, saying that he really sinned. They were changing the facts. That is why Job says, “and even if I did sin, it remains with me.” Meaning, he really did not sin, however, the friends should have accepted that as fact. They are not functioning as Job had expected. They could not listen to the possibility of Job’s question; they had to change the facts.

Job’s view is that nothing takes place in this world without it being the will of God. (19:19) Job expresses the pain he suffers from his friends, who were part of his own clique, as they mocked him. He lost his friends. In 19:23 Job states that his words should be written down. Why? He is stating how sure he is of his objectivity.

Chapter 20

Tzofar presents an argument that the wicked suffer. Then in chapter 21 Job states that they do not. Is this an argument in facts? I truth, both are correct. Tzofar is right that the rasha falls. But Job states that it is not due to God intervening, that the Rasha falls. Job breaks down that part of the argument, which Tzofar

wishes to use to show that there is a Divine system. Job maintains the fall of the rasha to be his own undoing. But when the wicked make good in this life, where is the justice? Job refutes Tzofar's argument. In 21:22 "Shall any teach God knowledge?" Job means to mock Tzofar because Tzofar is saying that the Rasha does not succeed, and there is a system of justice. Job retorts and says how can it be that God knows all (21:22) and yet, the righteous suffer? Hence, there must not be a system of providence.

Job accepted Hashgacha Klaliyot (general Providence) but not Hashgacha Pratiyot (Providence for individuals). Otherwise, there is a system and it is corrupt; since Job felt a providential system over individuals should have shielded him, he being wholly righteous. Either way, Tzofar is wrong according to Job's view. Verse 22 is a rhetorical question: "Will one teach God knowledge?" Then Job states "And He, on high matters [alone] does He judge." Meaning God is involved in the higher spheres, but not in everyday particulars. This is also what King David said, "What is man that You [God] shall be mindful of him?" God is too lofty to be involved in man's affairs.

Job's opinion of God not recognizing man is not at all incorrect. We see that King David maintained this view. If one does not question this, his ego is corrupt. This is not to say that there is no answer to this question, for we know that God takes notice of man, but a person should initially agree with King David's sentiment.

Verses 23-26: The reason why Job carries the parallel here to post mortem is because he is searching for some justice...even after death. But he finds none, *viz.* "and they both lay down in the dust." Job does not find a better situation for the wealthy after death. (The wealthy here is the rasha and the poor is the righteous.) They are equal in life, and there is no difference after death. There are those who will tell you that certain righteous people are not eaten by the worms. This story is evidence to the emotion that Job is trying to counter. (The escape of being eaten by worms makes no sense in terms of a reward.)

Job maintains that if there are one or two incidents where a righteous person escapes, you cannot build your faith on this, because this also happens to the rasha. This is the last part of his argument in verse 21. The reason why Job tells Tzofar to ask the wayfarers is because they can give an opinion concerning world events, and not merely in an isolated case. Certainly, one can find a case to support a purported faith system, but objectivity demands we examine the general rule. Job also exclaims, "who can tell the rasha to his face his loss in life?" Meaning, how can you tell the rasha he is not succeeding, when in fact he is? Since he is successful, he is convinced that nothing wrong will happen. Even in religious circles, people see successful peers and say that God must be favoring his actions. But the simple breakdown to this argument is the successful, wicked individuals. One cannot suggest that God is looking down upon them with a smile. People feel that when they are successful at something, it is an omen that they are acting properly. Conversely, if one receives punishment, one thinks he ought to check his actions. Truthfully, one should examine his path in life rationally. One should not change a trait if it is proper, for the sake of changing one's ways.

Another break down to this argument is to show not only how the wicked are saved, but how the righteous are punished: can one say that since Rabbi Yochanan lost ten sons, that he questioned his path in life? Job was saying to his friends that they are bent on an emotion that the righteous will always prosper. But this is not how it works in reality and the only reason why someone thinks this way, is due to an emotional wish for things to work this way. It is a superstition.

In verse 21:32 Job says that when a rasha is dead, he will be in a nice grave and the "clods of the valley shall be sweet to him." Job means, this so-called truth by which all swear (in the end the rasha will get his punishment and he'll be remembered for bad) is not true. But in Proverbs, King Solomon states, "The memory of the righteous will be a blessing, and the name of the wicked will rot." This opposes Job's opinion.

In truth, there are two types of rasha: 1) Proverbs refers to a person who acts unjustly towards others and with others. So during this rasha's lifetime, his friends will praise what he is doing because they are gaining from him. But after he dies, those who review his actions will see he is a rasha: the reason being they can no longer gain from him. And the opposite is the case with the righteous: during his life, some will hate him because they know he is doing right and they see the wrong in themselves. But when the righteous person dies and he no longer oppresses the emotions of others, they can look at his acts objectively and see he was just. In Job we discuss the second rasha: 2) a person who does not outwardly espouse evil, but underneath he is evil and escapes unscathed. During his life he is not looked upon outwardly as a rasha. So Job says, "if you tell me there is a system of justice, this rasha should not get away with evil, and if he does, there is no system." So this second rasha never acquired a defamed reputation like the first, hence, no bad memories. But Job felt that there should be some evidence of downfall for this second type...but there is not. Every argument is present here!

Chapter 22

Eliphaz states all the sins of Job, while Job says he is innocent. We stated earlier that Job told Eliphaz that he did help the poor, and Eliphaz denied it. Eliphaz continues to deny Job's words. Furthermore, what does "will you benefit God with your righteousness" have to do with Eliphaz's argument? The reason for the first part of Eliphaz's argument is to accuse Job of operating under the emotion of trying to satisfy God with his actions. Eliphaz maintains, "Because you did not give a poor widow her needs, for this you are punished." Eliphaz maintains Job's sin to be that he did not do more, and he should have. He also feels that Job possessed this corrupt feeling that all the good he performed would build up a debt for God to reward him.

Chapter 23

There is one thought Job is expressing until verse 7: that he is right. Verse 5: "I would know His words," meaning, I know God would agree with me. Verse 6: "He would listen to me." Job is stating that there is no way that he is wrong. Verse 7: "There the upright reason with Him, so I should be delivered from my Judge." Meaning, Job is akin to the upright. Verse 10: "When He has tried me, I shall come forth like gold." Job is convinced that he is perfectly guiltless. The question is in verse 5, how can Job say that he is going to understand everything that God says? Even a fool does not utter this. What Job means is that everyone must be judged according to his or her own level. Job states that he has thoroughly examined himself and has found no flaw. Since he found nothing lacking, he knows God cannot either. The reason why God cannot show Job wrong in this area is because the area we address is the 'extent of Job's knowledge'. Job is stating that in this area, he has as much knowledge as God, because this is an area, which Job experienced totally.

If Job were to say that he knows how God would answer him in biology or astronomy, then he would be making a mistake because there could be something, which Job wasn't witness to in its creation, and hence, he would be ignorant. However, regarding his life's experiences, Job states that he remembers everything and found no flaw.

Job's reasoning is sound: he feels that he has perceived the level required of himself during his life, and that he had reached that level. For if one says God demanded Job to reach an unattainable level of perfection, this would not be just. Job felt certain that he has done all that is possible – according to his make up – to search for any error. He has done all he can to live as best he could. Now, since Job has this knowledge, he feels God cannot add anything in this area.

One might perhaps suggest, that only God knows when any person has reached his true potential, so Job's claim that he reached this potential is inaccurate. This may be answered from another example, when one learns Torah: one may feel tired after learning for an hour or two, but thinks, "Maybe I can go on a little longer?" So he does, and is even more exhausted. He feels that since God alone knows man's true limits, perhaps he should learn for yet another hour. Following this course, he will soon perish. For there is only so much that an organism may tolerate. We conclude: man must be aware of his limitations. This must be God's design. Job was in the right to assess himself, claiming with certainty that he did all he could. (This view of "always being to go a bit further" is the view belonging to Eliphaz.) From verse 8 until the end of this chapter, Job changes his argument from one of security in being right, to one of fear of God. Why did he change?

Job follows his argument to its logical conclusion: since he feels correct in his assessment, also convinced that God desires justice. Hence, God must be avoiding him, since justice would demand that Job's innocence release him from his travails. Since he is still tortured, it must be due to God avoiding him altogether. Otherwise, God should step in to rescue him. Job states this in verse 23:13, "But He is in one mind, and who can turn Him? And what His soul desires, even that He does". Job was faced with two possible explanations; 1) that he was not just; 2) or he was in fact completely just, but God was not concerned with his specific justice. Meaning, "God has His own will - He does what He wills."

In 24:1, the word "ittim" (times) refers to "chance occurrences." Here, Job asks why chance occurrences are hidden from God. Job premises the following: God created the world and all existing causes. It follows that God created all chance occurrences, the very results of His creation. If this is so, how does He hide from me, "The righteous never witness His acts." With this, Job moves from the argument of "God's lack of concern with him", to, "All creation – including chance occurrences – should partake of God's justice."

In this entire chapter (24), Job describes the success of the wicked. But verse 20 presents a problem:

"The womb shall forget him; the worm shall feed sweetly on him; he shall be no more remembered; and wickedness shall be broken as a tree."

This verse implies that the wicked do in fact suffer, against Job's current tone. But in fact, this verse is no problem. For Job is stating that even in death, the wicked die suddenly, and with no pain. Again, the wicked escape mishap. This is a direct refutation of Bildad's argument of "retribution of the wicked."

Chapter VIII

Limited Providence

Chapter 25

This chapter commences with Bildad's view that "Oseh Shalom Bimromav" – "God works peace in His heights." Bildad means that God's perfected system is not in the realm of the physical, but in the metaphysical world, "in His heights." Bildad attempts to answer Job's claim against Earth-bound injustice, by suggesting that justice does exist perfectly in the heavens, but as this system of justice is filtered down to Earth, it becomes imperfect. It is odd, as Bildad herein offers the answer of Eliphaz. Job states that Bildad's remarks help only Bildad, but not himself.

Chapter IX

The Rasha's Own Undoing

Chapter 27

The problem in this chapter is that in verses 9 and 10, Job seems to be stating that there is a system with which God works, wherein the rasha is punished from God:

“Let mine enemy be as the wicked, and he that riseth up against me as the unrighteous. 8. For what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul? 9. Will God hear his cry when trouble cometh upon him? 10. Will he delight himself in the Almighty? Will he always call upon God?”

This goes against the tenor of Job's words up to this point. However, Job is not saying that God brings evil upon the rasha, but rather, that living a wicked life in and of itself goes against reality: even without God stepping in, the rasha will fail. First, (verse 8) Job tells the three that he won't and cannot move from living honestly and that they are the hypocrites. And when he seems to start showing partiality towards the idea of there being a system, he really is not changing his course. He refers only to the state of the rasha, not whether or not God hears him, viz. “will God hear his cry” should read, “will his cry be heard.” The words “Will he cry” means: will the rasha recognize reality so as to cry. Job's critique is on the ignorance of the rasha, not on the absence of God's response. And verse 10 means, “Will he partake of the enjoyment of knowledge?” Job means to say, “Will the rasha exist in reality?” Job is consistent.

We must ask why Job does not say the opposite regarding the righteous, i.e., that the righteous – while living in reality – will prosper, and not necessarily from God? The reason being that it is not true

that the righteous individual experiences an easy life. Chance events come up that could destroy him. But the wicked person – the rasha – will inevitably meet up with disaster simply because the world does not function in line with his schemes.

Chapter X

Fleeting Fortunes

Chapter 28

(28:1,2) “1. Surely there is a vein for the silver, and a place for gold where they mine it. 2. Iron is taken out of the earth, and brass is molten out of the stone.”

Job’s idea about the silver mine is that there is change in the physical. At one time you will see that a mine will give forth gold or silver, and later, that town that was full of mines will be empty like a ghost town. This phenomenon Job discusses refers not only to geographical locations, but it is also a metaphor for man’s success. Someone can be extremely wealthy one day and the next, he could lose all of his money. Job also maintains that since God acts with wisdom, there must be an explanation as to why this happens.

A question was raised as to how Job could say that there is really wisdom (verse 12) if he never witnessed it: “But where shall wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding?” The same can be asked about a person who studies physics, and when he sees a certain idea that does not make sense to him, should he negate all of his previous knowledge, discounting all of physics, or should he assume physics as a science remains intact, but attribute his problem to his own misunderstanding? Of course a wise person will opt for the latter. The same applies to Job. He was not about to say there is no system of how God works, because he did not understand this area.

Why in this chapter does Job allegorize wisdom with gold? The reason is because the search for gold is really the search for happiness. However, true happiness only comes via wisdom. So Job equates gold with wisdom. That is why he maintains that gold cannot equal wisdom because gold relies on wisdom for its true value. So here again, Job maintained that there is understanding, but man cannot

attain it. He maintained that since God created everything and God works with reason, hence everything must have reason. But he said, “[wisdom] is hidden from the eyes of all living beings” (28:21). Job maintained the reason why man cannot obtain this knowledge (metaphysics) is because this would be tantamount to obtaining knowledge of God, which is impossible. In 28:28 Job describes the kind of knowledge available to him: the fear of God, and doing good. This means that understanding ethics is all man can obtain: “Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding”. What is ethics? Ethics embodies two areas: 1) our personal knowledge of a Supreme Source of wisdom, and 2) knowledge of good and evil. This is man’s lot. (We also note that Job did not list metaphysics as an area of man’s understanding.)

Why did Job use the term “fear” of the Lord? This is because man realizes God’s awesomeness, and that we cannot understand Him. The reason Job does not include areas of physics that man does understand, is because it does not fall into the area of philosophy, and this is what Job is addressing. Job also felt he would be at peace with himself if he had this knowledge of metaphysics. (This is why it is better than gold, for he felt it could offer him some comfort.) But why should this metaphysical knowledge ease his pain? It is because when man knows the nature or source of a phenomenon or experience (in this case the Source of the universe) he may then conform his emotions to that nature. But if man remains ignorant of that knowledge, he becomes frustrated and experiences pain. This is why Job felt that if he could understand God in some manner, he would be happier.

Tangentially, this explains the popularity of idol worship. For with tangible idols, man relates directly to the “source.” He has a form with which to attach his emotions, and this is very satisfying. But “forms” do not exist in Judaism, and are prohibited. All cults wherein followers elevate individual leaders are no different: there too, man attaches himself to a tangible person, just like an idol.

Job is seeking to remove his frustration; realizing an explanation for his suffering would alleviate him. He felt that with an answer for why he is so troubled, he would no longer be painfully trapped with his unanswerable question.

Chapter XI

Religiosity

Chapter 29

“1. Moreover Job continued his parable, and said, 2. Oh that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me; 3. When His candle shined upon my head, and when by His light I walked through darkness; 4. As I was in the days of my youth, when the secret of God was upon my tabernacle.”

Job now reflects on his ignorant state, as he thought, “God walked with me”. Job says he remembers his joy in this thought. This joy was his sensing his religiosity.

“He hath cast me into the mire, and I am become like dust and ashes.” (30:19)

How could Job entertain the idea of his being “cast into the mire” if Job also maintained Aristotle’s opinion that there is no Divine Providence? With this view of being “cast” by God, Job contradicts his position that man receives Divine Providence. However, we may suggest two answers: 1) God did not cast him directly, or, 2) within some system of God’s creation, man may fall into a “bad lot.”

Chapter 31

Job discusses sinning with eyes, followed by sinning in action, viz., “laid wait at my neighbor’s door.” (31:9) Job was describing the eyes and heart: first, the eyes see, and then the heart desires. Job describes two matters: 1) he did not follow his eyes to fall prey to his emotions, and 2) even if the emotions got the better of him, he did not succumb and sin. With his words, he describes the two

pitfalls towards sin. The former is following desires before emotional involvement, and the latter is after the emotions grip the person.

Job continues to describe the emotions, to which he did not fall prey. In verse 13, Job describes how he never looked down upon a servant based on egoistic drives sourced in his relatively higher position. Why does Job state the words, “manservant and maidservant when they contended with me”? A manservant denotes the plain idea of “looking ‘down upon’”, while the second part deals with the idea of feeling that he could use his position as “master” to mistreat his maidservant. In verse 15 Job explains why he should not feel any more important: both he and the servants were ‘made in the belly’ alike. Thus, they are the same and the feeling of importance due to a situation did not have a hold upon him. In verse 14, Job states, “he did not make gold his hope.” He never felt any different due to the wealth that he had. Verse 29, he felt no joy in seeing his enemy’s fall. He never succumbed to base emotions. Verse 34, no amount of pressure could cause him to deviate from his values.

Job ends his words here, and states that if a man totally righteous like he could be subject to so much evil, this refutes God’s Providence.

The story of Job to this point, as an account of someone who lived his best, according to Halacha and philosophy, and yet, very terrible tidings befell him. This is to say that this could happen to anyone even though he tries his best to keep Judaism. How is this possible that one can do everything in his power to live the correct life and yet the system of God does not work for him?

Chapter XII

Elihu and Creation

Chapter 32

Elihu said he is young. Maimonides maintains this to mean his ideas are “young”: he had something different to say than Eliphaz, Bildad and Tzofar. An old opinion (those of the three) is that which is most common among people; something considered “old”.

If Elihu stated that it is the spirit of God, which gives understanding, and not age, why did he wait for the three to give their arguments? He should have voiced his opinion earlier. The reason why he waited is because he maintained that age adds two things, 1) time, 2) and experience through which wisdom may be attained. He felt no right to assume that he was superior to the three, who were older. Therefore he said, “Let years speak”. But once Elihu saw that the three had erred, he stepped in.

Chapter 33

In Verse 5, Elihu says, “If thou can answerer me, set thy words.” This shows that Elihu has a different opinion. He is not merely saying what he feels is right, allowing Job to maintain what he too felt. He is not interested in a face off with Job where each contends that their respective opinions are valid. Elihu was being objective. In verses 6 and 7, Elihu means to say that the ‘answer will talk’ (unveil who is correct:); the ‘person’ will not be recognized here;

“Behold, I am according to thy wish in God's stead: I also am formed out of the clay. 7. Behold, my terror shall not make thee afraid, neither shall my hand be heavy upon thee.” 8. “I have heard your voice.”

This means that Elihu is accepting Job’s words as truths. He is not questioning whether what Job said was true or false, as did the three.

Maimonides says in his Guide, that Elihu seems to be repeating the ideas particular to the three. But Maimonides continues, that the difference in Elihu can be found in the metaphor of the angel who intercedes on behalf of man:

“22. Yea, his soul draws near unto the grave, and his life to the destroyers. 23. If there be an angel with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand, to show unto man his uprightness: 24. Then he is gracious unto him, and says ‘Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom’. 25. His flesh shall be fresher than a child’s: he shall return to the days of his youth: 26. He shall pray unto God, and he will be favorable unto him: and he shall see his face with joy: for he will render unto man his righteousness. 27. He looks upon men, and if any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not; 28. He will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light. 29. Lo, all these things works God twice or three times with man, 30. To bring back his soul from the pit, to be enlightened with the light of the living.”

There are two explanations for this idea of the angel:

1) The angel refers to man’s intellect. Meaning, if man reflects (one in a thousand means even a minute reflection) God will save the individual. This follows Maimonides’ explanation, as he maintains that God’s Providence is directly inline with the perfection of man’s intellect. If he is highly perfected, God’s Providence will be directly inline with him. And if he is corrupt, God’s Providence will not relate to him. What is the idea of “once or twice”? This means that God’s Providence offers man two or three chances in life to follow the intellect. But if this person keeps falling back into the emotions, that individual is too corrupt for God’s two or three mercies, and Divine Providence is removed from him. Maimonides states this in his Laws of Teshuva, “For the first three sins, a person are forgiven.”

2) The second explanation of the angel refers to “nature”. Maimonides explains in the Guide that “angel” refers to a force of nature. The Rabbis also state, “every blade of grass has an ‘angel’ helping it grow.” This means that certain laws of nature govern every blade of grass – no matter how minute. This second view of “angel” maintains that when man falls sick, a natural phenomena can occur (two or three times, but not always) in which the man gets well (viz., healing). But this only happens two or three times because when one usually gets very sick, he does not recover. After recovery, the saved individual may tell his friends about his miraculous “close call.” He feels that the natural phenomena that saved him have to do with God desirous of his health; he now feels that God saved him. This religious feeling is based on the desire to have God take care of him.

Maimonides categorized three differences in Elihu’s words. The first was the idea of the “angel.” The second is the method of prophecy. Maimonides says, “this is likewise new.” In accordance with this second view, an individual might view God in an infantile framework, like a security blanket. The person will view prophecy as well in an infantile light. That is, Job felt God would relate to an individual because this is what God is concerned with. However, Maimonides’ view is just the opposite: God relates to an individual in so far as his knowledge is sound: it is a natural result. Maimonides, in describing Elihu’s account of prophecy says that Elihu supports his theory and description by bringing descriptions of many natural phenomena such as thunder, lightning, rain and winds. But what does this have to do with prophecy? Maimonides teaches that Elihu – according to Maimonides view on prophecy – maintains that there is a science to God’s Providence (prophecy) just as there is a science to the physical world. Elihu attempts to break down Job’s feeling that he knows how God should treat him. Job feels that there is no science to God’s Providence. If he did, he would

not have felt that God should work this way or that, but rather, that God works in a certain way and he (Job) does not have that knowledge, nor claim against his fate.

Elihu's third deviation from the three is his attempt educate Job based on natural considerations; "you cannot assume how God should work, the same way that you cannot assume how nature works." (Maimonides writes, "we are unable to comprehend how these transient creatures come into existence, or to imagine how their natural properties commenced to exist, and that these are not like the things, which we are able to produce. Much less can we compare the manner in which God rules and manages His creatures with the manner in which we rule and manage certain beings.")

Again, Elihu first told Job about the angel, thereby teaching this idea about intercession is based on the infantile. And when he told Job that it happens "once or twice", he meant to alert Job to the reason why he was still suffering: he missed these two times the "angel" could intercede. Job felt since he was sick, he should have been saved. And when he was not saved, he was floored. Since Job was not under God's Specific Providence (Hashgacha Pratyos) due to his lack of knowledge, he fell under God's General Providence (Hashgacha Klalyos) and under God's General Providence, this fate Job experienced happens.

Elihu criticizes Job for maintaining two false views: that God knows mans suffering and therefore God is vicious, or God doesn't know. Elihu answered both. Thus, God knows and is vicious is not true because your sufferings are from God's General Providence, i.e., not ordained by God: that is, man may fall under God's General Providence based on his insignificance as an individual. He would be as an animal, where God does not will that individual member's life or death: he is subject to natural law, and such was the case of Job. And of course the other possibility is not true because God knows everything.

Elihu accused Job of fabricating his own feelings regarding God's methods of "Divine government". Job had a complaint that he should have been treated differently. Meaning, he felt he knew how God should work. But from where did Job obtain this feeling, if not from himself? Hence, Elihu's entire argument is to teach Job how his understanding of God's Providence was false.

Job harbored another false view of God. Job, like many others, felt that God works within a system of rights. Meaning, God does not have the right to do certain things. However, God, being the Creator, is above "rights": He needs no rights or permissions to do act. Therefore, Job was incorrect in assuming that God was wrong.

Chapter 36

What does it mean, "God is great but doesn't despise?" (36:5) It means that God gives out His Providence even though God is so great. Elihu showed Job that man is nothing in comparison to the entire universe. But he goes on to tell Job that nonetheless, God's Providence exists for man.

The purpose of Elihu's wavering between describing God's Providence and man's finitude is to impress upon Job the fact that we really don't understand how God works. In other words, "See how things appear at odds and with no set pattern." The reason this forms the core of Elihu's argument is because Job's opinion, although not verbalized explicitly, is that man is great enough that he can have a complaint against God. Therefore Elihu impressed upon Job how small man really is so as to show Job that his argument was based on an emotion and not based on careful understanding. If Job had accepted the fact that he has no understanding of God, he would not have had a complaint against God.

A review of Elihu's arguments: First, Elihu says that Job is working on an infantile level. Then he says that God knows everything that happens. Hence, God is not ignorant of you and did not "cast you

out.” Then, in 35, Elihu shows God’s kindness in creating man with the intellect and impresses on Job that the system which God created is the best: “Just because you are downtrodden, should God remove the whole system?” Also, “Do not feel that since you are downtrodden, therefore the rest of the system is no good.” From this chapter comes the idea that God’s system of justice is different than man’s sense of how it should operate in his favor.

Until chapter 36, Elihu did not mention God’s Specific Providence. Thus, Elihu states “God is great but doesn’t despise” (36:5) In other words, there is Specific Providence. “The wicked will not live” (35:6) means that God’s Specific Providence won’t assist a rasha. In Verse 19, Elihu asks in other words, “do you want a life without afflictions which can correct your mistakes?” Emotionally, a person despises afflictions. But if he would recognize the good they afford man, he would crave them. So when Elihu says, “will thy riches avail thee” he means that life where God does not afflict us to correct us, is not a worthwhile life. (“Those whom God loves does he afflict.” – Proverbs, 3:12)

Chapter 37

At the end of this chapter Elihu describes how the true follower of God lives. The true relationship between man and God is when man appreciates God’s wisdom: not someone who is looking for his own personal gain. One who seeks wisdom in the universe displays the true relationship; he puts aside his own considerations and yearns for knowledge. In other words, just the opposite of Job.

What does Elihu mean by “shall it be told to God that which I speak?” And, “Men do therefore fear him.” Elihu tells Job that one can never obtain the answers to your questions in terms of how God performs specifics. We must realize our ignorance concerning God’s methods.

Chapter XIII

God Addresses Job

Chapter 38

“12. Hast thou commanded the morning since thy days; and caused the dayspring to know his place; 13. That it might take hold of the ends of the earth, that the wicked might be shaken out of it? 14. It is turned as clay to the seal; and they stand as a garment. 15. And from the wicked their light is withholden, and the high arm shall be broken.”

What is God stating in these verses? God is indicating that His Providence must mesh with the laws of nature, viz. when God asks if Job could take the end of the earth and shake off the wicked, God is trying to say that it is not so easy to get rid of the wicked. Meaning, there is an intricate system regarding how the wicked will be addressed. God impresses upon Job the precise laws that exist.

The Ibn Ezra says that Job's first answer was not correct. And he says that the reason why he did not answer correctly was because Job did not justify God. He only claimed his ignorance. But he did not concede to God's omniscience. Therefore God answered a second time and described the beasts that have strength in the land, and the Leviathan that has strength in the ocean. How was God's second address different from the first? We must take note that Maimonides did not include God's answer to Job because it was not any different than Elihu's answer. So why did God answer at all? God did so to remove Job's difficulty in accepting Elihu's answer. In truth, once Elihu spoke, Job was quiet. He could not respond because he saw that Elihu was correct. Job's act of acknowledging Elihu's ideas elevated him, where God would now relate to him. That is why God did not speak to Job until Elihu did. This is because God's system relates to man in proportion to his perfection. And after hearing Elihu's truths, Job accepted them, thereby raising his very level of perfection. Only now could God relate to Job.

We then ask what God added, if not new content? There is one difference that the Ibn Ezra mentioned and that is the discussion of the powerful beasts. But what effect did this have on Job and again, what more did God accomplish, which Elihu did not?

God's first answer broke down Job's ego. That is was His objective with His questions, viz. "where you there?" "Could you do this?" "Can you control that?" God's questions are broken up into three categories: 1) those concerning Job as a creator, "who made..." 2) those concerning Job as a controller of God's creating things, "can you chain Orion?" 3) and those concerning Job's knowledge, "do you know..."

God went one step further, and that was to convince Job not only that he is nothing, but also that God is everything. Job did not affirm God's absolute and exclusive reign until the second answer which expressed via the powerful beast; the immutability of the laws of nature. Job desired reality to conform to his wishes; therefore, God taught him the existence of nature's laws about the beasts. The first two verses in chapter 41 prove this:

*"1. Canst thou draw out leviathan with a hook? Or his tongue with a cord which thou lettest down?
2. Canst thou put a hook into his nose? Or bore his jaw through with a thorn?"*

First, God asks, "Who can stand before the monster" and then, "Who can stand before Me?" In other words, the metaphor of the monster is an equation to God's laws.

The Book of Jobs ends, as Job receives all that he lost returned, and in even greater measure. This is because once Job was "Matzdik God" (affirmed God's righteousness) thereby; he brought himself directly under God's "Specific Providence." ■

