



THOUGHT OF MAIMONIDES: CODE – LAWS OF TORAH FUNDAMENTALS

CHAPTER ONE

This chapter explains that God, Lord of the universe and Master of the world, existed before anything else did, that He has no body, and that there is none other beside Him.

1) It is the most basic of basic principles and a support for wisdom to know that there is something [namely God] that existed before anything else did and that He created everything that there is. Everything in the skies, on the ground and in between exists only because of the fact that He created them.

2) Let it be known that if the Creator did not exist then nothing else would, for nothing can exist independently of the Creator.

3) Let it further be known that if everything ceased to exist, the Creator alone would exist and would not have ceased to exist like everything else had. All things in creation are dependant upon the Creator for their continued existence, but He does not need any of them [for His continued existence]. Therefore, the reality of His existence is not like the reality of the existence of any creation.

4) One of the Prophets said, "But the Lord is the true God", meaning that only God is everlasting and that nothing else is. This is what the Torah has said: "There is none else beside Him", namely, that there is nothing in existence that is everlasting, except for God.

5) The Creator is the God of the world and Master of the Earth, and He guides the [uppermost] sphere with a power that is never-ending, never-weakening and continuous. This sphere rotates perpetually, and it is impossible for it to rotate without being guided. It is God who guides it, even though that He has no hand or body.

6) It is a positive commandment to know these matters, for it is written, "I am the Lord your God". Anyone who even speculates that there might be a god other than the Lord is transgressing a negative commandment, for it is written, "You shall have

no other gods besides Me". Anyone who denies this principle is [in effect] denying everything, for it is on this important principle that everything depends.

7) God is not two or more entities, but a single entity of a oneness even more single and unique than any single thing in creation. His oneness is not like that of a single type which consists of many individuals [like the oneness of a species], and nor is it like the oneness of the body, which incorporates many parts, but His oneness is absolutely unique, and there is nothing else in existence with a oneness like His. Had God been more than a single entity, then all of them would have physical bodies, for entities equal in existence differ only in bodily matters. If the Creator did have a body He would have had weaknesses and an end, for it is impossible for a physical body that has no end to exist. The strength of something that has weaknesses and an end also has an end, and a limit. The strength of our God is not like the strength of the body, for it has no end or pause, and perpetually guides the sphere. Since He has no body He has no bodily appearance, and cannot be sub-divided into different parts - therefore, it is impossible for Him to be anything other than one. It is a positive commandment to know this, for it is written, "...the Lord is our God, the Lord is one".

8) It has been stated in Scripture that God has no physical form, as it is written, "...that the Lord is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath: there is none other". A physical body cannot be in two places at once. It is also written, "...for you saw no manner of form", and, "To whom then will you compare Me, that I should be his equal?" - had God had a body it would have been similar to other bodies.

9) If so, what does the Torah mean when it says things like, "under His feet" (Exodus 31:18), "written with the finger of God" (ibid), "the hand of the Lord" (Exodus 9:3), "the eyes of the Lord" (Genesis 38:7), "the ears of the Lord" (Numbers 11:1), et cetera? These phrases are in line with the level of understanding of people, who can only comprehend physical existence, and the Torah speaks in terms that we can understand. All examples of this nature are merely attributory. For example, when it says, "If I whet My glittering sword" - does God really have a sword and does He really kill with one?! Such phrases are figurative. Evidence for this is that one Prophet saw God as wearing garments as white as snow, whereas another Prophet saw God as wearing crimsoned garments from Bozrah. Moses our Teacher himself saw, at the time of the splitting of the Red Sea, God as a war-waging warrior, but at Sinai as a cantor to show him the order of prayer. This shows that God has no form or shape [because He appears different to different people]. God's appearance varies according to each prophetic vision and what it contains. It is beyond Man's intellect to investigate or comprehend [the nature of] God's existence, as it is written, "Can you find out the deep things of God? Can you find out the purpose of the Almighty?".

10) What motive did Moses have to comprehend [God] as it is written, "I beg of You, show me Your glory"? Just as one can recognise a particular person's appearance and know him to be different from other people, so Moses wanted to recognise God's existence and to be able to differentiate from everything else. God replied to Moses that is beyond the strengths of a living man, whose body and soul are as one, to understand the nature of His existence. God then made to Moses things which no man before or since had known so that Moses comprehended - that God is different in intellect from other things in existence, just as a particular person is different in dress and intellect from all other people. Scripture hinted at this matter by saying, "...and you shall see My back, but My face shall not be seen".

11) Once it is known that God has no physical body it will become clear that He doesn't experience any bodily sensations either, sensations such as formation, decomposition, occupying a physical space or size, rising or falling [in standard], a left or right side, a need to stand or sit, et cetera. God does not exist in Time, so He has no beginning or end. God also does not change, for there is nothing that can induce a change in Him. God cannot die, and does not live as life is known. God also has no stupidity or wisdom as we know them, does not sleep or wake up, and does not experience anger, merriment, joy, sadness, silence or speech as we know them. The Sages said, "God does not have a need to sit, a rival, a back or weariness".

12) Since matters concerning bodily experience are such, then all words connected to this mentioned in the Torah and by the Prophets are all exemplary and figures of speech. Examples of this are: "He who sits in the heavens laughs", "...that they provoked Me to anger", "...that as the Lord rejoiced", et cetera. The Sages said that the Torah is phrased in out terms. In Jeremiah 7:9 it says, "Do they provoke Me to anger?", whereas in Malachi 3:6 it says, "For I am the Lord, I do not change". If God [really] was sometimes angry and sometimes joyful, then He would be changing. Such characteristics are found only in the dark and gloomy [existence of having a] body, which lives in huts of mud and which was created from dust, but God is higher and raised above all this.

CHAPTER TWO

This chapter explains that it is a commandment to love God, that all creations consist of three parts, and starts the discussion of mystical and esoteric speculation.

1) It is a commandment to love and fear the venerable and feared Almighty, for it is written, "And you shall love the Lord your God", and it is also written, "You shall fear the Lord your God".

2) What is the way to love and fear God? Whenever one contemplates the great wonders of God's works and creations, and one sees that they are a product of a wisdom that has no bounds or limits, one will immediately love, laud and glorify [God] with an immense passion to know the Great Name, like David has said, "My soul thirsts for God, for the living God". When one thinks about these matters one will feel a great fear and trepidation, and one will know that one is a low and insignificant creation, with hardly an iota of intelligence compared to that of God, like David has said, "When I observe Your heavens, the work of Your fingers...what is man, that You are heedful of him?". Bearing these things in mind, I shall explain important concepts of the Creator's work, as a guide to understanding and loving God. Concerning this love the Sages said that from it will come to know God.

3) Everything that God created in His world can be placed in one of three classifications. Firstly, there are those creations, such as the bodies of men and animals, plants and the molten images, which have a shape and form which always exist and can be spoiled. Secondly, there are those creations which have a shape and form which does not vary from body to body or in appearance, like those in the first category do, but their shape is fixed by their form and can never change. These are the spheres and the stars contained therein. Their form and shape are like none other. Thirdly, there are those creations which have a form but no shape. These are the angels, which have no bodies, but whose form vary from angel to angel.

4) If so, what did the Prophets mean when they said that they saw angels of fire with wings? This is owing to the riddles of prophetic vision, for angels [in reality] have no bodies and are not affected by physical limitations, for it is written, "For the Lord your God is a consuming fire". This fire is merely analogous, as it is written, "...who makes the wings His messengers".

5) In what, therefore, are these forms different if they no bodies? They are not equal in their existence, some being below others and owing their existence to those above them, and all of them owe their existence to the power of God and to His goodness. Solomon in his wisdom hinted at this by saying, "...for there is a High One that watches over him that is high".

6) The phrase 'some being below others' does not refer to positions in physical height, but just as one person can be more learned than another and we say that he is 'above' the other, and just as says that one set of circumstances is 'above' another, so is the meaning of this phrase.

7) Each level of angel has a different name. The highest level consists of the Holy Chayot, then come the Ophanim, the Erelim, the Chashmalim, the Seraphim, the Malachim, the Elohim, the Cheruvim and the Ishim. The highest level is that of the Holy Chayot and there is none other above it, except that of God. Therefore, in the Prophecies, it is said that they are underneath God's throne. The tenth level consists of the Ishim, who are the angel who speak with the Prophets and appear to them in prophetic visions. They are therefore called Ishim - 'men' - for the reason that their level is closest to that of the intellect of Man.

8) All these forms live and know their Creator exceedingly well; each form according to its level and not according to its size. Even those on the topmost level cannot comprehend the reality of [the existence of] God for the reason that their intellect is insufficient for them to do so, but they understand and comprehend better than those on the levels below theirs do. Even those on the tenth level have some understanding of God, but it is beyond the capabilities of Man, who comprises both form and shape, to understand as well as those on the tenth level do. None know God the way He Himself does.

9) All things that exist, with the exception of God, from the Holy Chayot down to the smallest mosquito that lives in the mud, do so on account of God's might. Since God knows His own self and recognises His own greatness, glory and reality, He knows everything, and there is nothing that is hidden from Him.

10) God recognises His own reality and knows it as it is, but not with an external intellect in the way that we know things, since us and our intellect are not one. God, His intellect and His life, however, are one, in all manners of oneness. It would transpire that he is simultaneously the One that knows, the One that is known and the knowing itself, all as one. This subject cannot be spoken or heard, and it is beyond Man's understanding to recognise his Creator. Therefore, it is written, "By the life of Pharaoh", "As your soul lives" [but], "As the Lord lives"¹⁰, and not, "By the life of the Lord" - for the Creator and His life are not two, like physical life or the life of the angels. Therefore, God does not know the creations because of their own existence, but knows them of His own accord. Therefore, He knows everything, for everything relies on Him for continued existence.

11) What's been said in these two chapters is like a drop on the ocean compared to what has to be said to [fully] explain it. The explanations of the concepts in these two chapters is mystical and esoteric speculation.

12) The first Sages commanded us not to discuss these topics with more than one person and that person should be exceedingly wise. When teaching someone these topics, one teaches him first what is contained in the beginning of these chapters in small quantities, and he should be able to deduce further details on his own. These matters are extremely deep in nature, and not everyone can understand them. Solomon in his wisdom said, "Lambs shall provide Your clothing". In explaining this parable, the Sages said that those things that are His dominion over the world will be His clothing, namely, His and only His, and not for the many. On this it has been said, "Let them be only Your own, and not strangers' with You", and it has also been said, "Honey and milk are under your tongue". The first Sages said that anything that is like milk and honey should be under one's tongue.

CHAPTER THREE

This chapter names the spheres and discusses their physics, and also discusses the nature and physics of the four elements.

1) Those things which are called heaven, firmament, Zevul and Aravot are spheres, and there are nine spheres altogether. The sphere nearest to us is that of the moon. The second nearest is that which contains the planet Mercury, followed by the sphere containing the planet Venus, the sphere of the sun, the sphere containing the planet Mars, the sphere containing the planet Jupiter, the sphere containing the planet Saturn, and the sphere containing all the other stars which are visible in the firmament. The ninth sphere is that which moves from east to west every day, and which encloses and encircles everything. All the stars appear to be in the same sphere, even though the spheres are layered, for the reason that the spheres are pure and transparent like glass or sapphire, so that, for example, the stars in the eighth sphere [will] appear to be under the first sphere.

2) Each and every of the eight spheres which contain the stars is split up into many [sub-] spheres, like the skin of an onion. Some of these [sub-spheres] rotate from west to east, and some, like the ninth sphere, rotate from east to west. There is no free space between the sub-spheres.

3) None of the spheres is light or heavy, and none of them has a colour. What we see as blue [in the sky] is merely an illusion, caused by the height involved. Similarly, the spheres have no smell or taste, for these properties are found only in the physical bodies beneath the spheres.

4) All these spheres that surround the world are spherical like a ball [and concentric], with the world suspended at the centre. Some of the stars have small spheres around them; these small spheres do not surround the world, but they are non-surrounding small spheres contained within the larger surrounding sphere.

5) The number of spheres that surround the world is eighteen, whereas there are only eight non-surrounding small spheres. From the movement of the stars and from knowing their rate of progress each day and hour, and from their inclination from the equator, and from their distance from the Earth, the number of spheres and the way they move and surround [the world] can be deduced. Such calculations are the key calculations to working out the seasons and the [positions of the] Zodiac signs. The wise people of [Ancient] Greece wrote many books on this subject.

6) The early Sages divided the ninth sphere, which surrounds everything, into twelve parts. Each part was given a name appropriate to the pattern of stars it contains. The names of the Zodiac symbols are: Aries, Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, Leo, Virgo, Libra, Scorpio, Sagittarius, Capricorn, Aquarius and Pisces.

7) The ninth sphere has no divisions, or a form of one of the forms described above, or any stars, but with being in contact with the stars of the eighth sphere and the big stars contained therein, it appears to have these forms, or some form close to them. These twelve forms [of the Zodiac] were in conjunction with the appropriate divisions, but after the Flood, when they were named, they shifted slightly. All the stars in the eighth sphere rotate in the same way that the sun and the moon do, but slower; the distance that sun covers in one day will take these stars [of the eighth sphere] seventy years to cover.

8) Of the visible stars, there are some smaller than the Earth, and there are some considerably bigger than the Earth. The Earth is approximately 40 times bigger than the moon, and the sun is approximately 170 times bigger than the Earth, so the moon is approximately 6800 times smaller than the sun. No star is bigger than the sun, and none is smaller than Mercury, which is in the second sphere.

9) All the stars and spheres possess souls, intellect and understanding, and they are alive, exist and recognise their Creator. Like the angels, all of them praise and laud their Creator, and do so according to their importance and level. Just as they recognise God so do they recognise themselves and the angels who are above them. The intellect of the stars and spheres is less than that of the angels, but greater than that of men.

10) The Almighty created a shape which is unlike that of the spheres [themselves] beneath the lunar sphere. This shape has four forms, which [also] aren't like the forms of the spheres. Each of these forms possesses some of this shape. The first form is that of fire, and combines with this shape to form the body of fire. The second form is that of wind, and combines with this shape to form the body of wind. The third form is that of water, and combines with this shape to form the body of water. The fourth form is that of earth, and combines with this shape to form the body of earth. It transpires that there are four bodies under the firmament, one above the other, and each body surrounds that beneath it from all sides, like a ball. The first body nearest the moon is that of fire, followed by the wind, the water and the earth. There is absolutely no free space between these bodies at all.

11) These four bodies do not possess souls, and do not know or recognise God, but they are like non-living matter. Each body has its own nature, which it does not know or understand, and cannot change. David said, "Praise the Lord from the earth, O monsters, and all deeps: fire, and hail, snow and vapours", meaning that those that are found on the earth should praise the Lord for His might that is visible in the fire and hail and in all the other creations beneath the firmament, just as their might is always recognised.

CHAPTER FOUR

This chapter explains that all creations are made from the four elements, discusses the form of the soul, and the difference between mystical and esoteric speculation and the Action of Creation.

1) These four elements - fire, wind, water and earth - are the foundations of all the creations under the heavens. The shape of all things, such as Man, animals, birds, fish, metals, precious stones, pearls, building materials, plants, mountains, clods of earth, et cetera, is founded on these four elements. It transpires that all bodies under the heavens, except for these four elements, consist of a combined form and shape,

the shape of which consists of the four elements, but each of the four elements consists of just a combined shape and form.

2) The fire and wind follow an upward vector from the centre of the world towards the sky, whereas the water and earth follow a downward vector from the sky to the centre, for the centre of the sky is the lowest point beneath which there is none lower. Their passage in this manner is without their knowledge or will, but is their in-built tendency and nature. The nature of the fire is that it is hot and dry, and is the lightest of all the elements. The wind is hot and humid, and the water is cold and wet. The earth is dry and cold, and is the heaviest of all the elements. The water is lighter than the earth, and is therefore found above the earth. The wind is lighter than the water, which is why it hovers above the water, and the fire is lighter than the wind. Since they are the foundations of all bodies under the firmament, it is found that each and every body, be it man or animal, beast or bird, fish or plant, metal or stone, et cetera, has its shape formed out of fire, wind, water and earth. The four elements are mixed together [in forming a body] and change in the process, so that the body formed by the mixture does not represent any single element. No part at all in this mixture will be found to be one of the four elements in its pure form, because they all changed and turned into a different body. Each and every body made out of these four elements will possess the properties of heat, cold, wetness and dryness. Some bodies, such as the bodies of living creatures, however, will contain a greater proportion of fire, which is why they are warm. Some bodies, such as stones, will contain a greater proportion of earth, so they are very dry. Some bodies will contain a greater proportion of water, so they will be the wettest [of all bodies]. In this manner, one will find one warm body hotter than another warm body, and one dry body drier than another dry body. Similarly, one will find bodies which are exceedingly cold, bodies which are exceedingly wet, or bodies which contain equal proportions of the elements. The element in the majority will be the one that will give the resultant body its [most noticeable] characteristics.

3) Anything made from these four elements will eventually be divided up again into them. Some are divided up after only a few days [following their formation], while others are divided up after many years. It is impossible for anything made from these elements not to be divided up. Even gold and rubies will be divided up. Upon division of a body, its elemental constituents return to their appropriate places.

4) If bodies are divided up into the four elements, why does it say about Man, "...and to dust you shall return"? This is because Man is composed mainly of the earth element. When a body divides up, its elemental constituents do not immediately return to their appropriate places, but turn into something else, which turns into another thing, and so on, but the elemental constituents eventually do return to their

appropriate places. The elements return to [and leave] their appropriate places in a never-ending cycle.

5) The four elements are perpetually exchanging material every day and at all hours. What does this mean? Some of the earth which is nearest to the water changes and crumbles, and turns into water. Similarly, some of the water which is nearest to the wind changes and melts, and turns into wind. Likewise, some of the wind nearest the fire changes and turns into fire. Some of the fire nearest the wind turns into wind. Some of the wind nearest the water turns into water. Some of the water nearest the earth turns into earth. This process is long and slow. An element cannot change in its entirety into some other element, for it is impossible for one of the four elements to completely cease to exist, but can exchange material with one of the other elements. There is this exchange of material between each element and its neighbour in a never-ending cycle.

6) This process of change takes place because of the rotation of the spheres, as does fusion of the four elements to form the bodies of Man, living creatures, plants, stone, metal, et cetera. God, with the aid of the tenth type of angel, the Ishim, gave an appropriate shape to each body.

7) One will never see a shape without form, or a form without shape. It is because of a man's wisdom that he knows that a given body has a shape and a form, and that its shape consists of [material from] the four elements, and that there are bodies whose shapes are simple and have just a single constituent. The forms which have no shape are not visible to the eye, but are known by the power of intellect, just as we know God without seeing Him with our eyes.

8) The soul of a living creature is the form given to it by God [to differentiate it from plants], and the extra intellect found in a man's soul is the form of a man as he understands it. Concerning this form the Torah says, "Let us make Mankind in our image, after our likeness"; that is to say that Man will have a form that is capable of understanding [the concepts of] intellects without a shape, such as angels, who have a form but no shape, so that he will be similar to them. The words, "our image" do not refer to the form visible to the eye, namely the form which consists of a mouth, nose, jaw and other parts of the body, for this form is called the countenance. It is not [necessarily] a soul which is found in all living creatures that eat, drink, give birth, feel and think, but the intellect, which is in the form of the [essential] soul, concerning which Scripture said, "...in our image, after our likeness"⁴. This form is very often called the soul and breath. One has to be very careful with these names so as not to make a mistake. Each and every name is self-explanatory.

9) This form of life is not made from the elements [just] to be able to get away from them, and is not created with the strength of or for the needs of the soul, as if the soul needs the body, but is created by God, and is from Heaven. Therefore, when a shape which is composed of the four elements divides up, the soul is 'lost', because the soul is found only with a body and needs a body for all its actions, but knows and understands the knowledge which is distinct from the shapes, and knows God, and remains in existence for ever. Solomon, in his wisdom, said, "And the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it".

10) These matters have been discussed very briefly here, and are deep matters, but not as deep as those discussed in the first two chapters. The matters discussed in the first two chapters are those of the Action of Creation. The first Sages commanded us not to discuss these matters in public either, but with a single person one may talk about them, and one may teach them to a single person.

11) What is the difference between mystical and esoterical speculation and these matters? The former is never discussed with even a single person, unless that person is a wise and understanding person, and even then one doesn't discuss it too deeply. The Action of Creation may be discussed with any single person, even if his intellect is such that he won't understand it, and one may tell him as much as he is capable of understanding. These matters are not discussed amongst many people, for the reason that not everybody is of an intellectual level which will enable them to understand these matters.

12) Whenever a man contemplates these matters and recognises the creations - angels, spheres, Man, et cetera - and sees God's wisdom in all the formations and creations, his love for God will increase, find his soul, and his very essence will yearn to love God. Furthermore, he will fear his baseness, meagerness and lightness when he compares himself to one of the great and holy forms which have no shape and are not elemental [namely, the angels], and he will see himself as an empty and superfluous vessel, full of shame and disgrace.

13) These four chapters have discussed the first five commandments [in the list at the beginning of these Laws], and are what the first Sages called esoterical philosophy, as it is written, "Four people went to study esoterical philosophy, et cetera". Even though those four people were giants of Israel and very great sages, not all of them had the capability to understand and comprehend these matters. I say that it is not fitting to study esoterical philosophy unless one has first studied what is metaphorically called 'bread and meat', which is the study of what is

permitted, what is forbidden, and other commandments. These matters were called small matters by the Sages, as they have said, "Mystical and esoterical speculation is a big matter, whereas the [still applicable] debates of Abbayeh and Ravah are small matters". Nevertheless, it is still fitting to study other commandments first, because they settle a man's mind. Furthermore, they are the great good which God gave to this world, by which we can inherit life in the World To Come. It is possible for everyone - adults, children, men, women, those who are narrow-minded and those who are not - to know these matters.

CHAPTER FIVE

This chapter explains that all Jews are commanded to sanctify God's Name, when to transgress when under a death a threat and when to die, and defines a what constitutes a desecration of God's Name.

1) Every Jew [including women] is commanded to sanctify God's Name, for it is written, "...but I will be hallowed among the children of Israel". We are warned not to desecrate God's Name, as it is written, "Nor shall you desecrate My holy Name"¹. What does this mean? If, for example, a gentile forces a Jew to commit a sin by threatening to kill him if he doesn't, then he should commit the sin in order not to be killed, for concerning this commandment it is written, "...which if a man does he shall live by them" - and not die for them. If he allowed himself to be killed by not committing the sin, then he is liable as a suicide [in the World To Come].

2) This is talking about any sin other than idolatry, adultery and murder, for if a gentile told one to commit one of these sins or else he will kill one, one has to allow oneself to be killed by not committing the sin. This difference [between these three commandments and the others] is applicable only when the gentile intends to receive benefit for himself, by, for example, forcing a Jew to build a house for him on the Sabbath, or cook him a meal on the Sabbath, or by forcing a Jewess to have intercourse with him, but if he just wanted the Jew to sin, then the following applies: If there were no, or fewer than ten, Jews present, then he may save his life by sinning, but if there were ten, or more, Jews present, then he has to allow himself to be killed by not sinning, even if the sin involved is not one of the three mentioned above but is one of the other commandments.

3) These matters do not apply during a time of non-persecution, but at a time of persecution, such as when a wicked king such as Nebuchadnezzar arises and decrees against the Jews that they should forego their religion or one of the commandments,

then one may not sin and one should allow oneself to be killed, even if the decree concerns a commandment other than the three mentioned above, and whether one is forced into sinning in the presence of ten, or more, Jews, or not.

4) Anyone who says that he will sin and so not be killed but [in the end] was killed without having sinned is liable as a suicide. Anybody who says that he will not sin and will allow himself to be killed, and is killed without sinning, is sanctifying God's Name. If this happened in the presence of ten, or more, Jews, then it is a public sanctification, like what Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, Azariah and Rabbi Akivah and his colleagues did. These are people who were persecuted by a kingdom and above whose level there isn't one, and about them it is written, "But for Your sake we are killed all the day long; we are considered as sheep for the slaughter", and it is also written about them, "Gather My pious ones together to Me; those that have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice". Anybody who is told to sin, but is not threatened with death if he doesn't, and he does sin, then has desecrated God's Name. If this was in the presence of ten, or more, Jews, then it is a public desecration, and he has abrogated the positive commandment to sanctify God's Name by transgressing the negative commandment not to desecrate it. Even so, he is not liable to flogging, for the reason that the situation was forced on him. It need not be said that he is not executed by a Court of Law even if he was forced to commit murder, for the reason that flogging and execution are only for people who [of their own accord] willingly sin in the presence of witnesses who warned him, for concerning one who gives of his children to Molech it is written, "Then I will set My face against that man". According to tradition, we have learnt that the word "that" comes to exclude those people who are forced to sin, or who do so inadvertently or accidentally. Since one who is forced to commit idolatry, the worst sin of all, is not liable to karet, and it need not be said that he is not executed by a Court of Law either, then how much more so this rule applies to the other commandments of the Torah. Concerning adultery it is written, "...but you shall do nothing to the girl". {If, however, one could have saved oneself by running away from the [jurisdiction of the] wicked king but one didn't, then one is like a dog who returns to its vomit, and one receives the status of a wilful sinner [with respect to idolatry], and one will be banished from the World To Come and descend to the depth of Hades.}

5) If a group of gentiles said to a group of [Jewish] women, 'Give us one of you and we will debauch her, or else we will debauch all of you', then they [may not select a 'victim' and] must allow themselves all to be debauched, and they may not hand over to them even a single Jewish person. Similarly, if gentiles told a group of Jews to select one of themselves to be killed or else they will all be killed, then they must all allow themselves to be killed, and they may not hand over to them even a single Jewish person. If, however, they singled a person out by saying to the group, 'Give us X to

be killed, or else we will kill all of you', then if the person in question is liable to death in the way that Sheba the son of Bichri was they may hand him over, but this procedure should not, from the outset, be followed. If, however, the person in question was not liable to death they should all allow themselves to be killed, and they may not hand over to them even a single Jewish person.

6) What has been said [regarding idolatry, adultery and murder, and other commandments] concerning situations forced upon one also apply to ill people. What does this mean? If someone was seriously ill and the doctors said that the cure involves breaching one of the negative commandments of the Torah [or any of the other commandments], then he may breach any of the commandments of the Torah except for idolatry, adultery and murder, in order to cure himself of a dangerous illness. One may not transgress any of these three commandments even to cure a dangerous illness. If one did transgress one of these three commandments and was cured as a result, then one is liable to the appropriate punishment in a Court of Law.

7) From where is it known that even in life-threatening situations these three sins may not be committed? It is written, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your might" - this applies even if God is about to take one's soul. Concerning killing one Jew in order to cure another or to save another from a forced situation; common sense tells us that we do not kill one person to save another. Adultery is compared to murder, as it is written, "...for as when a man rises against his fellow and kills him, so is this matter".

8) When it has been said that commandments other than the three special ones may be transgressed in order to cure a life-threatening illness, it may be done only if the ill person receives some [other] benefit from it, such as if the cure involves eating creeping animals or insects, or chametz on Pesach, or eating on Yom Kippur, but if the cure does not involve some [other] benefit, for instance, if the cure involves making a bandage out of chametz [on Pesach], or from orlah, or he has to drink something bitter made from something forbidden, then even if the illness is not life-threatening, one may commit the sin. Vegetables grown together and meat/milk mixtures, however, are always forbidden, even if their administration does not involve some [other] benefit. Therefore, they are not used medicinally, even without involving some [other] benefit, unless the illness is a life threatening one.

9) If someone had his eyes on a particular woman and then developed a terminal illness, and the doctors said that he cannot be cured unless he has intercourse with that woman, then he may not do so and has to die, even if the woman was unmarried. We do not even allow him to speak to her through some sort of barrier [which does

allow them to see each other], even if he will die, so that Jewish girls will not be casual about adultery.

10) One who is not in a forced situation and brazenly sins in order to anger God is desecrating God's Name. Therefore, concerning one who takes a false oath it is written, "...nor shall you profane the Name of your God; I am the Lord". If he desecrated God's Name in the presence of ten, or more, Jews, then he has done so publicly. In a similar vein, anyone who runs away from sin, and fulfils mitzvot for no reason other than that God commands it, in the way that Joseph ran away from his master's wife, is sanctifying God's Name.

11) There are other things which also count as a desecration of God's Name if a man very knowledgeable in Torah and known as being pious does them; things which ordinary people do. Even though these things are not sins, they still count as a desecration of God's Name. Such things include taking possession of an article and not paying for it immediately, even though one may have sufficient funds, and one will be messing the sellers around. Being excessively merry, or eating and drinking a lot amongst ignoramuses also fall into this category, as does speaking to others in an unreposed manner and without a pleasant facial expression, but in a quarrelous and angry manner. Similar things also count. Every great sage has to judge himself, according to his greatness, how to be particular on himself and to act beyond the letter of the law. Similarly, if a wise person is particular to receive people in a reposed manner, and involves himself and receives them with a pleasant expression on his face, and does not hide from them, then even those people who [had previously] mocked him will now respect and honour him, and will trust him. He should, however, not partake of too many meals with ignoramuses, and should always be seen to be busying himself with Torah, and wrapped in his tsitsit and wearing his tephillin, and always acting beyond the letter of the law, which involves not being too withdrawn or bewildered. If he acts in this way, then everyone will adore and love him, and follow his example. This is a sanctification of God's Name, and concerning this it is written, "...and said to me, 'You are My servant, Israel, amongst whom I will be glorified'".

CHAPTER SIX

This chapter explains that it is forbidden to erase any of the Holy Names, and states which Names may be erased.

1) Anyone who erases one of the holy and pure Names by which God is called is liable to flogging according to the Torah, for concerning idol-worship it is written, "...and destroy the name of them from that place. This you shall not do to the Lord your God".

2) The seven Names of God are: the Tetragrammaton, which is written as either Yud-Hey-Vav-Hey or Aleph-Daled-Nun-Yud [Lord], Aleph-Lamed [Almighty], Aleph-Lamed-Hey-Yud-Mem [God], Shin-Daled-Yud [Almighty], Tsadi-Vet-Aleph-Vav-Saf [Hosts] and Aleph-Hey-Yud-Hey [I am]. Anyone who erases even one letter of any of these Names is liable to flogging.

3) Any prefixes to any Name, such as a Lamed to form, 'to the Lord', may be erased, because they are not holy. Any suffixes, such as a Chaf to form, 'your God', may not be erased, because they are like the letters of the Name, which lend holiness to them. Even though these added letters are holy and may not be erased, anyone who does erase them is not liable to flogging according to the Torah, but is flogged because of a Rabbinical decree.

4) If one wrote the Aleph and Lamed of 'Elokim', or the Yud and Hey of the Tetragrammaton, one may not erase them, and it need not be said that the Name which is spelt Yud-Hey [Jah] itself may not be erased, firstly because it is a Name in its own right, and secondly because it is part of the Tetragrammaton. If, however, one wrote the Shin and Daled of 'Shakai', or the Tsadi and Vet of 'Tsvakot', one may erase them.

5) Attributes, such as Merciful and Graceful, with which God is praised are like miscellaneous holy words, and it is permitted to erase them.

6) Concerning a vessel on which a Name is written; the part on which the Name is written must be cut out and relegated to the archives [before the vessel may be used]. Even if the Name was engraved [and not written] in a metal or glass vessel, then one who melts the vessel is liable to flogging. To be allowed to use such a vessel one first has to remove that part on which the Name is engraved and relegate it to the archives. Similarly, if one had a Name written on one's flesh, one may not wash or apply ointments or creams [on that place], and one may not stand in a place which is soiled with excrement. If, for whatever reason by way of a mitzvah, one has to immerse oneself in a ritual bath, one must cover the place on which the Name is written with something that is waterproof before immersing oneself. If one could not find something that is waterproof, one should wrap a garment round [that part of one's skin] without sticking it, so that it won't act as a barrier between one's skin and

the water. The only reason he has to wrap up the Name [in the first place] is that it is forbidden to stand naked in the presence of God's Name.

7) Anyone who removes, by way of destruction, even one stone from the Altar, the Holy Hall or any other part of the Temple Courtyard is liable to flogging, for concerning idol-worship it is written, "And you shall overthrow their altars...This you shall not do to the Lord your God". Similarly, anyone who, for destructive purposes, burns any sanctified wood is liable to flogging, for it is written, "...and burn their asherim with fire...This you shall not do to the Lord your God".

8) It is forbidden to burn any holy writings, or any translations of or commentaries on them. It is also forbidden to tear them up, any anyone who does so is flogged because of a Rabbinical decree. This is talking about holy writings written by a Jew in holiness, but if a Jewish heretic wrote a Sefer Torah, it must be burned along with the Names therein, for the reason that the heretic does not believe in the holiness of the Names, and does not write them with the correct intention, but treats them as ordinary literature. Since his attitudes are such his writings of [any of] God's Names are not holy, and it is a mitzvah to burn them, so as not to give any credence to heretics or to their actions. Any Names written by a gentile, however, are relegated to the archives, as are any holy writings which have become worn out or which were written by a gentile.

9) Any Names mentioned in connection with Abraham are holy. Even where it says, "...and said, 'My Lord, if now I have found favour in Your eyes'", the Name there is holy. All Names mentioned in connection with Lot are not holy, with this exception: "And Lot said to them, 'Oh, not so, my Lord: behold, your servant has found favour in your eyes...in saving my life". All the Names mentioned at the hills of Benjamin are holy. The Names mentioned with Michah are not holy. All the Names mentioned in connection with Navot are holy. All that Solomon wrote in the Song of Songs is holy and has the same status as the other Attributes, with this exception: "You, O Solomon, may have the thousand". Any mention of any king in the book of Daniel is not holy, with the exception of, "You, O king, king of kings", which has the status of other Attributes.

CHAPTER SEVEN

This chapter discusses prophecy and who warrants it, and explains the difference between the prophecy of Moses and that of the other Prophets.

1) One of the bases of religion is to know that God visits people in prophetic visions, which come only to exceedingly wise people of outstanding characteristics, whose inclinations never lead them to earthly matters but who always conquer their inclinations, and who are of correct temperaments. A person who fulfils these criteria, and is of perfect health, will, when studying esoterical philosophy and is attracted by those elevated issues and is of an appropriate temperament to understand and comprehend them, and sanctifies himself by moving away from anybody who concerns himself with ephemeral matters, and encourages himself not to have any thoughts about useless matters and its contrivances, have his thoughts permanently attuned to above, from under God's Throne, to understand the pure and holy forms, and looks upon the wisdom of God [in Creation] in its entirety, from the first form [i.e the Holy Chayot] till the centre of the Earth, and sees in them God's greatness, and then prophecy will immediately come to him. At the time when prophecy comes to him, his soul will be on the same level as that of the Ishim angels, and he will become a different man, and he will realise that he is not [any more] as he was, but will rise above the level of other wise men, as it is written, "...and you shall prophesy with him, and shall be turned into another man".

2) There are [many] levels of prophecy - in the same way that one person can be wiser than another, so can he be more prophetic. Prophetic insights come only in nocturnal visions in dreams, or by day after falling asleep, as it is written, "I the Lord make Myself known to him in a vision, and speak to him in a dream". Whenever one is receiving a prophecy, one's limbs shake, the strength of one's body weakens, and one's thoughts become disturbed, leaving one's mind free to understand what one will see, as it is written in connection with Abraham, "...and, lo, a horror of great darkness fell upon him", and as it is written in connection with Daniel, "...for my comely appearance was horribly changed, and I retained no strength".

3) What is made known to a prophet during prophecy is done so by way of parable, and he will immediately realise what the parable means. For instance, when Jacob the Patriarch saw the ladder with angels ascending and descending it, it was a parable representing monarchy and its subjection. Similarly, the animals which Ezekiel saw, the boiling pot and almond tree which Jeremiah saw, and all the other objects seen by the other Prophets were also parables. Of the Prophets, some, like those mentioned above, related what they saw in their prophecy and their interpretation of it, whereas some related just their interpretation. Sometimes they related just the parables [of the prophecy], like Ezekiel and Zachariah sometimes did. All of the Prophets prophesized by way of parables and riddles.

4) None of the Prophets receive prophecies whenever they wanted, but they would attune their thoughts, be happy and of a good heart, and seek solitude, for prophecy

does not come to those who are sad or lazy, but only to those who are happy. Therefore, the sons of prophets would have before them harps, drums and flutes, and would seek prophecy, as it is written, "...and they shall prophesy", that is to say that they will follow the ways of prophecy until they prophesise, progressing as they go.

5) Those who seek prophecy are called the sons of prophets. Even though they attune their thoughts, the Divine Presence may, or may not, inspire them.

6) All the Prophets, from the first to the last, prophesised in these ways, with the exception of Moses our Teacher, chief of the Prophets. In what ways did Moses differ from the other Prophets? Firstly, whereas the other Prophets received their prophecies in a dream or vision, Moses received his while awake and standing, as it is written, "And when Moses was in the Tent of Meeting to speak with Him, he heard the voice speaking to him, et cetera". Secondly, the other Prophets received their prophecies via an angel. Therefore, what they saw was by way of parable and riddle. Moses, on the other hand, did not receive his prophecies via an angel, as it is written, "With him I speak mouth to mouth", "And the Lord spoke to Moses face to face", "...and the outward appearance of the Lord does he behold"⁷, that is to say that what Moses saw was not by way of parable, but he saw each prophecy absolutely clearly without any parables or riddles. The Torah said about him, "...manifestly, and not in dark speeches"⁷, showing that when Moses received a prophecy he did not do so by way of riddles, but did so with clarity, and saw everything absolutely clearly. Thirdly, the other Prophets were scared [of their prophetic visions] and would shy away, but Moses wasn't and didn't. Scripture says, "...as a man speaks with a friend"⁸ - just as a man is not scared to listen to his friend, so Moses had the capabilities to understand his prophecies and to stand unafraid. Fourthly, none of the Prophets prophesised whenever they wanted to, but whenever God wanted to He would visit Moses and bestow upon him prophecy. Moses did not have to attune his thoughts or otherwise prepare himself, for the reason that he was always prepared and stood like a ministering angel. Therefore, he would receive prophecies at any time, as it is written, "Stand still and I will hear what the Lord will command concerning you". In this God trusted him, as it is written, "Go say to them, 'Return to your tents'. But as for you, stand here by Me, and I will speak to you, et cetera". From here we see that whenever any of the other Prophets had finished prophesising they would return to their houses [and families] and other bodily needs, like everybody else, so they therefore did not separate themselves from their wives. Moses, on the other hand, did not return to his home, and separated himself from his wife, and all that resembled her, forever. His mind was [always] connected to God, and God's glory never left him at all; light emanated from his face, and he was holy like an angel.

7) It is possible for the prophecy of a prophet to be for him alone, to widen his outlooks and to increase his knowledge so that he will now know what he [previously] did not know from these great matters. It is also possible that he has to deliver the prophecy to one of the nations of the world, or to the people of a [particular] town, or to the citizens of a nation, [in order] to teach them wisdom, and to let them know what to do, or to prevent them from doing [again] any bad deeds. When a prophet is sent [by God] on such a mission, he is given a sign and proof [to present], so that people will know that God [really] sent him in truth. Not everyone who presents a sign and proof is believed as a prophet, but only those people who are known to be suitable to receive prophecies on account of their wisdom and actions, and that they went in the ways of prophecy in its holiness and exegeses. When such people present a sign and proof and say that God sent them, it is a commandment to listen to them, for it is written, "...to him you shall listen". It is possible that although a person presents a sign and proof he is not a prophet, and the sign could be achieved by other means; even so, we are commanded to listen to him; because he is a great and wise man who is suitable to receive prophecy, we assume that his prophecy is true. In this we have commanded, just as we have been commanded to decide a verdict according to the testimony of two people who are eligible to bear testimony [together], even though they may be lying; since they have always been honest in the past, we assume that they being honest now as well. About this and similar matters it is written, "The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong to use and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of the Torah", and it is also written, "...for a man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart".

CHAPTER EIGHT

This chapter discusses the signs that Moses performed and why he performed them, and that he did not do so to make the people believe in him.

1) The Children of Israel did not believe in Moses [solely] because of the signs he presented, for someone who believes [in a prophet solely] because of the signs he presents is tainted, for it could be that his signs are performed by means of spells and witchcraft. All the signs that Moses performed in the wilderness were done so according to the needs of the moment, and not to bring proof to his prophecies. There was a need to sink the Egyptians, so Moses split the sea and drowned them in it; the Children of Israel needed food, so Moses brought down the manna for them; they needed water, so Moses split the rock for them; Korah and his followers rebelled, so Moses opened up the ground and they were swallowed up. The same

principle applies with all the other signs. It was the assembly at Mount Sinai that made them believe in Moses, when our eyes, and no-one else's, saw, and our ears, and no-one else's, heard, and Moses drew near to the darkness, and the voice spoke to him, and we heard it saying to Moses, "Moses, Moses, go tell them such-and-such". In connection with this it is written, "The Lord talked with you face to face", and it is also written, "The Lord did not make this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us". From where is it known that the assembly at Mount Sinai was the proof that the prophecy of Moses was true and that he was not speaking basely? It is derived from the verse, "Lo, I come to you in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with you, and believe you forever". From this we see that prior to the assembly at Mount Sinai their belief in Moses was not one that would have lasted for ever, but it was a belief that left room for discussion and thought.

2) It would transpire that those people to whom a prophet is sent are witnesses that his prophecy is true, and he need not perform any other sign, for them and they combine to form one unit with respect to this matter, in the same way that two people who saw the same thing together combine as witnesses, for each of them is a witness that the other is speaking the truth, and need not bring [additional] proof to back him up. So it was with Moses our Teacher, that all of the Children of Israel were his witnesses after the assembly at Mount Sinai, and he didn't have to perform for them any signs. This is what God said to him at the time when his prophecy started, when He showed him what signs to perform in Egypt: "And they shall listen to your voice". Moses knew that anyone who believes [solely] because of signs is tainted and will be doubtful, and expressed a reluctance to go by saying, "But behold they will not believe me"⁴. God told him that these signs will [continue to be performed and] applied only until they had left Egypt and assembled at Mount Sinai, whereupon any doubt will vanish, and also assured him that [at Mount Sinai] He will give signs that Moses had been sent by God in truth from the [very] beginning, and that no doubt will remain. This is what Scripture says: "...and this shall be a sign to you that I have sent you; when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall God upon this mountain". From this we learn that any Prophet that came after Moses is not believed solely because of his signs to make us think that if he makes a sign we should listen to everything he says, but [is believed] because of the commandment of Moses in the Torah: "...to him you shall listen", if he gives a sign. Just as we have been commanded to decide a matter according to the testimony of two witnesses, even though we do not know if his sign is Divine or achieved by spells and witchcraft.

3) Therefore, if a prophet arose and performed great signs and wonders, and tells us to deny the prophecy of Moses our Teacher, we do not listen to him, and we [will] know for sure that his signs are the result of spells and witchcraft. The prophecy of Moses was not dependant upon signs, so the signs of this prophet cannot outweigh

the signs of Moses, for we saw and heard them, just as he did. This is similar to two witnesses who bear testimony that a particular person did a particular thing in front of them, but he is not like they say he is, so we do not listen to them and we know for sure that they are false witnesses. Therefore, the Torah said that if a prophet comes with signs and wonders, we do not listen to him, for he is coming to deny that what we saw with our eyes. Since we believe in wonders only because of a commandment of Moses, how can we accept a sign that is brought to deny the prophecy of Moses which we saw and heard?!

CHAPTER NINE

This chapter explains that a prophet may not make any changes whatsoever in the Torah and the commandments contained therein.

1) It is explicitly and clearly stated in the Torah that it [the Torah] is an everlasting mitzvah, and cannot be changed, subtracted from or added to, as it is written, "Every matter which I command you observe to do it; you shall not add to it, or subtract from it", and it is also written, "...but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of the Torah". From here we see that we have been commanded to keep all the commandments of the Torah for always. In connection with this it is written, "...a statute for ever throughout your generations", and it is also written, "It is not in heaven". From here we see that a prophet may not make any changes [at all] in the Torah. Therefore, if a man, whether a gentile or a Jew, arises and performs signs and wonders, and says that God sent him to add to, or take away from, a mitzvah, or to institute a new mitzvah which we did not hear from Moses, or says that the commandments with which we have been commanded are not for eternity but are meant only for a temporary period, then he is a false prophet, for he has come to undermine the prophecy of Moses. His punishment is death by strangulation, which is the punishment for deliberately speaking in the name of God without having been commanded to do so. God told Moses that all the commandments are for eternity, and no man can accuse God of being deceitful.

2) If so, why is it written in the Torah, "I will raise up for them a prophet from amongst their brethren, like you, and will put My words in his mouth, and he shall say to them all that I shall command him"? The prophet in question does not come to start a [new] religion, but to reiterate the commandments of the Torah and to warn the people not to transgress them, as the last Prophet said, "Remember the Torah of Moses My servant". Similarly, if he gave us commandment in optional matters, such as by

saying, 'Go (or don't go) to such-and-such a place', or, 'Start (or don't start) a war today', or, 'Build (or don't build) a wall here', et cetera, we are commanded to listen to him, and anyone who doesn't is liable to death at the hands of God, for it is written, "And it shall come to pass, that whoever will not listen to My words which he shall speak in My Name, I will require it of him".

3) Similarly, a prophet who himself transgresses his own words, and a prophet who ignores his prophecy [and does not deliver it], are also liable to death at the hands of God, for it is written, "I will require it of him"⁷. Similarly, if a prophet who is known to be a [true] prophet tells us to transgress one, or many, of the commandments of the Torah, whether of the stringent or of the more lenient ones, but only as a temporary practice, then we are commanded to listen to him. So we learnt from the first Sages, that we should listen to a prophet whatever the commandments he tells us to transgress are, as with Elijah at Mount Carmel, except if the commandment he tells us to transgress is that of not practising idolatry, and provided that he tells us to transgress only as a temporary practice, like Elijah did at Mount Carmel, when he offered sacrifices outside Jerusalem, which is the city chosen for offering sacrifices in, and anyone who does so outside Jerusalem is liable to karet. Even so, since Elijah was a prophet, it was a mitzvah to listen to him. The verse, "...to him you shall listen" applies also in situations like the one with Elijah. Had the people asked Elijah how he could violate the Torah verse of, "Take heed to yourself that you do not offer your burnt offerings in any place that you see", he could have told them that anyone offering sacrifices outside the Temple is liable to karet, in accordance with what Moses commanded, but he was offering sacrifices outside the Temple in accordance with what God had said to him, and in order to discredit the prophets of Ba'al. In this manner we are commanded to listen to any prophet who tells us to transgress as a temporary measure. If he tells us that a commandment of the Torah is to be abolished for ever, then his punishment is death by strangulation, for it is written, "...belong to us and to our children for ever".

4) Similarly, if he tries to abolish [for ever] a Rabbinical institution or decree, or, concerning one of the Laws of the Torah he says that God commanded for the Law to be one way,, but we practice [in a different way] according to the words of so-and-so, then he is a false prophet and is put to death by strangulation, even if he shows a sign, for he is trying to disprove the Torah's statement of, "It is not in heaven". If, however, he said that we should do what he says only as a temporary measure, we listen to him.

5) This is talking about any commandment other than the one not to serve idols, for if he told us to serve idols we do not listen to him, even if he told us to do so only as a temporary measure. Even if he performed great signs and wonders and says that

God has commanded that we serve idols on a particular day, or at a particular hour, he is trying to turn us away from God, and about this it is written, "And the sign or wonder come to pass...you shall not listen to the words of that prophet...because he has spoken to turn you away from the Lord your God", for he is trying to disprove the prophecy of Moses. Therefore, we know for sure that he is a false prophet, and that all his signs are the result of spells and witchcraft, and he must be put to death by strangulation.

CHAPTER TEN

This chapter discusses which signs a prophet has to perform before we believe him.

1) Any prophet who arises and says that God sent him does not have to perform a sign of the type that Moses, Elijah or Elishah did, which involved supernatural events. Instead, the sign that he has to perform is to predict the future, and we have to believe him, as it is written, "And if you say in your heart, 'How shall we know the word which the Lord has not to spoken?'" . Therefore, when a man suitable for prophecy comes in the Name of God, without wanting to add to or take away from, any of the commandments, but wants us to serve God properly, we do not ask him to split the sea, or to resurrect the dead, or to perform some other supernatural event, and then believe him, but we tell him to predict the future because he is a prophet, which he does, and we wait to see if what he says happens or not. Even if was wrong in only a small matter, he is a false prophet, but if all of what he said comes true, then he is believed.

2) A prophet has to be checked many times. If all his words are true then he is a prophet, as it says with respect to Samuel, "And all Israel, from Dan to Be'er-Sheva, knew that Samuel was accredited as a prophet of the Lord".

3) Enchanters and diviners also predict the future, so how do they differ from a prophet? Of what enchanters and diviners say some comes true and some does not, as it is written, "Let now the astrologers, the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up, and save you from these things shall come upon you" - it says, "from these things", and not, "from all these things", so it is possible that not all of what they said will come true, and that they were mistaken in everything, as it is written, "...that frustrates the omens of imposters, and makes diviners mad". With respect to a [true] prophet, all of what he says comes true, as it is written, "Know now that nothing shall fall to the earth of the word of the Lord", and it is also written, "The prophet that has a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that has My word, let him speak My word

faithfully. What is the chaff of the wheat? says the Lord", that is to say that the words of diviners is like some chaff into which some wheat has been mixed, whereas the words of the Lord are completely true, with no falsehoods at all. This is backed up by Scripture, which says that prognosticators and diviners deceive the nations with their words, but a prophet makes known truthful matters, and we do not have to enchant or divine [to verify his words], for it is written, "There must not be found among you anyone that makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire...for these nations...The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet from amongst you". From here we see that a prophet makes known only earthly matters, such as famine or plenty, war or peace, and similar things. Prophets even answer the needs of the one, such as when Saul had lost an item and went to a prophet to help him find it. A prophet may say what he wants provided that he does not start another religion, add a mitzvah or take one away.

4) If a prophet predicts something bad, such as that so-and-so will die, or that this year will be one of war or famine, et cetera, and his prediction did not come true, then it is not a disproof of his prophecy and we do not label him as a false prophet, for the reason that God is exceedingly merciful and [often] revokes bad decrees, so it is possible that those on whom evil had been decreed had, like the citizens of Nineveh, repented, or had had their decree suspended, as with Hezekiah. But if, however, the prophet decreed good things and his prediction did not come true, then he is definitely a false prophet, for whenever God makes a good decree, even if it is conditional, He does not revoke it. From here we see that a prophet is tested only with respect to good matters. This is what Jeremiah said in his answer to Hananiah the son of Azur, when Jeremiah was prophesying bad things and Hananiah good things: 'If what I say does not come true, it is not a sign that I am a false prophet, but if what you say does not come true, it shows that you are a false prophet', for it is written, "Nevertheless, hear now this word...As for the prophet who prophecies for peace, when the word of that prophet shall come to pass, then shall it be known that the Lord has truly sent the prophet".

5) If a prophet says about another prophet that he is [indeed] a prophet, then he is assumed to be a prophet, and the prophet who said it does not have to be cross-examined. Moses vouched for Joshua, and all of Israel believed in him before he performed a sign. Similarly in the following generations: it is forbidden to doubt or debate the prophecy of a prophet who has been found to be right time and time again, or the prophecy of a prophet who has been vouched for by another prophet, and it is [also] forbidden to test him excessively or forever [for one who tests him is like one who tests God], for it is written, "Do not test the Lord your God as you tested Him in Massah", when we said, "Is the Lord among us, or not?". Once it has become known that he is a prophet, they will believe and know that God is amongst them,

and they will not debate or doubt his words, in accordance with what is written, "...yet they shall know that there has been a prophet amongst them".