

[2] "This is how I started to respond when you asked me about my faith. I answered what I and the rest of the Jewish people are obliged to believe based on our first-hand encounter with God [at Mount Sinai]. We have passed down this account, without interruption, from generation to generation, and so even today it is as if we are eyewitnesses to the event."

26. The Kuzari said: "If this is so, it would seem that your Torah was given only to you Jews, and no one else is bound by it."

27. The Rabbi said: "You are right, but non-Jews who wish to adhere to the Torah will share in the rewards like us, though not to the same degree.⁴⁰ If the requirement to follow the Torah were based on the fact the God created us, then all people — white and black alike — would be obliged to follow it. Rather, we Jews are obliged to follow the Torah because God took us out of Egypt and attached His glory to us. God did this specifically for us, as we are the 'choicest' of all mankind."⁴¹

וכן פתחתי לך כְּאִשֶּׁר שְׁאַלְתִּי עַל אֲמוּנָתִי, הַשִּׁבוּתִּיד מִה שֶׁאֲנִי חַיִּב בּוֹ וְחַיִּבִּין בּוֹ כָּל קְהַל יִשְׂרָאֵל, אֲשֶׁר הִתְפַּרֵּר אֲצִלָּם הַמַּעֲמֵד הַהוּא בְּרֵאוֹת עֵינֵיהֶם וְאַחֵר כֵּן הִקְבִּילָה הַנְּמֻשָּׁקֶת, שֶׁהִיא כְּמִרְאֵה הָעֵינַי.

כו. אָמַר הַכּוּזָרִי: אִם כֵּן אֲנִי רוֹאֶה שְׁתּוֹרַתְכֶם אֵינָה נְתוּנָה כִּי אִם לְכֶם, וְאִין חַיִּב כְּהַ זֵילְתְּכֶם.

כז. אָמַר הַחֶבְרִי: כֵּן הוּא, לְכָל הַנִּלְוָה אֵלֵינוּ מִן הָאֲמוֹת בְּקִרְטָא, יִגְיעָהוּ מִן הַפּוֹקֵחַ אֲשֶׁר יִיטִיב הַבוֹרָא אֵלֵינוּ, אֲדָּ לֹא יִהְיֶה שְׁנֵה עֲפֵנוּ. וְאֵלּוּ הֵיָה חַיִּיב הַתּוֹרָה מִפְּנֵי שֶׁבְּרָאנוּ, הֵיָה שְׁנֵה כְּהַ כָּל כְּנֵי אָדָם, הַלְּכוּ וְהַשְׁחֹרוּ, כִּי הִלַּל בְּרִיאֹתָיו. אֲדָּ אֵנוּ חַיִּיבִים כְּהַ מִפְּנֵי שֶׁהוֹצִיאָנוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם, וְהִתְחַבְּרֹת כְּבוֹדוֹ אֵלֵינוּ, מִפְּנֵי שֶׁאַנְחֵנוּ הַסְּגִלָּה מִכְּנֵי אָדָם.



23. The Rabbi asked: "And if someone should ask you your opinion about this king, what would you say?"

24. The Kuzari said: "I would start with praises that describe what I knew about the king [based on the evidence of his gifts], and then I would add additional accolades [based on what I had heard about him] that were confirmed [through those gifts]."

25. [1] The Rabbi said: "This is exactly the way I responded to you when you first made your inquiry. This is also how Moshe first spoke with Pharaoh when he told him that the 'God of the Hebrews' had sent him.³⁸ Moshe referred to God as the God of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov, because it was well known among the nations of that time that God had communicated with these men, guided them, and performed miracles for them. Note that Moshe did *not* say that the 'God of Heaven and earth' had sent him, nor did he refer to Him as 'He Who created us all.' Similarly, when God first spoke to the Jewish people [at Mount Sinai] He declared, 'I am the Lord your God Who took you out of Egypt,'³⁹ but *not* 'I am the Creator of the universe and your Creator.'

כג. אָמַר הַחֶבְרִי: וְאִם יִשְׁאַלְךָ הַשּׁוֹאֵל עֲלַי, בְּמָה תִּתְאָר אוֹתוֹ?

כד. אָמַר הַכּוּזָרִי: פְּתֹאֲרִים אֲשֶׁר הִתְפַּרֵּרוּ אֲצִלִּי, וְאַחֲפַר אֲלֵיהֶם אֲשֶׁר הָיוּ סָסֵק אֲצִלִּי וְהִתְפַּרְרוּ בְּאֵלֶּה הָאֲחֻרָיִים.

כה. אָמַר הַחֶבְרִי: עַל הַדָּרָךְ הַזֶּה הַשִּׁבוּתִּיד כְּאִשֶּׁר שְׁאַלְתִּי. וְכֵן פִּתַּח מִשָּׁה לְדַבֵּר עִם פְּרָעָה כְּשֶׁאָמַר לוֹ: "אֱלֹהֵי הָעִבְרִים שְׁלַחְנִי אֵלֶיךָ" — רָצָה לוֹמַר: אֱלֹהֵי אֲבְרָהָם וְיִצְחָק וְיַעֲקֹב, מִפְּנֵי שֶׁהָיָה דְבָרָם מִפְּרָסָם אֲצִל הָאֲמוֹת, כִּי הִתְחַבְּר אֲלֵיהֶם דְּבַר הָאֱלֹהִים, וְהִנְהִיג אוֹתָם וְעָשָׂה נִפְלְאוֹת — וְלֹא אָמַר: "אֱלֹהֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ שְׁלַחְנִי אֵלֶיךָ", וְלֹא: "בוֹרָאֵי וּבוֹרָאֵךְ". וְכֵן פִּתַּח דְּבָרָיו אֵל הַכּוּזָרִי: יִשְׂרָאֵל: "אֲנִי יְיָ אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִיָּה מִמִּצְרַיִם מִצְרַיִם", וְלֹא אָמַר: "אֲנִי בּוֹרָא הָעוֹלָם וּבוֹרָאָךְ".

40. This is based on the Talmudic precept (T.B., *Kiddushin* 31a), "Greater is he who is commanded and does than he who is not commanded and does." While a gentile who performs the mitzvos is rewarded, his level of reward is that of one "who is not commanded," and therefore his reward is less. See *Kuzari* 1:111. O.N.
41. *Devarim* 7:6, 14:2, 26:18.

38. *Shemos* 5:3.
39. *Ibid.*, 20:2.

requires of him more refined behavior, the establishment of civilizations, the exercising of social justice, and other forms of conduct and etiquette."

- 36. The Kuzari said: "That is also true."
- 37. The Rabbi asked: "And what level do you think ranks above the human?"
- 38. The Kuzari said: "The level of the great wise men."
- 39. The Rabbi said: "I only wish to classify levels between things which are fundamentally different, such as inorganic [matter] versus plant life and human beings versus animals. But to classify within the same type by drawing distinctions between those with more and those with less is unproductive. Those types of classifications do not examine traits which fundamentally define the level,⁴² and so cannot be considered true distinctions."
- 40. The Kuzari said: "If so, then there is no physical creature on a higher level than the human being."

מכאן תפון המדות והמעוין והפנינה, ושאר הנקודות ונמוסים מנהיגים.
 לו. אמר הפונר: גם זה אמת.
 לו. אמר החבר: ואיזו מדרגה אמתה חושב למעלה מואת?
 לד. אמר הפונר: מעלת החכמים הגדולים.
 לוט. אמר החבר: איני רוצה לומר אלא מעלה תפריד את בעליה פרידה עצמית קהפוד העמוח מן הדומם, והפוד האדם מן הבהמה, אכל הפרידה כרם וגמעט אין לה תקלית, מפני שהיא פרידה מקרית, ואינה מעלה על דרך אמת.
 מ. אמר הפונר: אם כן אין מעלה בפונגשים ותרר על מעלת בני אדם.

42. Using the example of the Kuzari and distinguishing between regular people and wise people, the Rabbi argues that the possession of wisdom is not something that innately defines someone as being human. Take away wisdom from an individual and that person remains a part of the human race. The distinctions made, therefore, should be those which preclude the individuals in one group from being a part of another group, but not shades of difference such as degrees of wisdom.

- 28. The Kuzari said: "Careful, Jew, you are regressing. Your speech has gone lean after having been rich."
- 29. The Rabbi responded: "Lean or rich — please just keep an open mind until I have explained myself."
- 30. The Kuzari said: "Say what you wish."
- 31. The Rabbi said: "Regarding organic behavior, we find that creatures require nourishment, they grow, reproduce their own kind, and each type of creature has its own necessary qualities and conditions. This is true about the plant and animal kingdoms, to the exclusion of nonliving things in nature such as earth, stone, metals, and pure elements."
- 32. The Kuzari said: "An oversimplification, but nevertheless true."
- 33. The Rabbi said: "And regarding animal behavior, all animals share the same life force, which provides them with mobility, natural instincts, traits, senses, the ability to process information, desires, and the like."
- 34. The Kuzari said: "This is also well known and irrefutable."
- 35. The Rabbi continued: "And regarding intelligent behavior, the human being is distinguished from all other animals. Man's higher intellect

כח. אמר הפונר: אני רוצה אותך מתהפך, היהודי, וכבר שב דבורך רזה אחר שהיה שמן.
 כט. אמר החבר: בין רזה בין שמן — הרחב לי לבך עד שאפרש אותו.
 ל. אמר הפונר: אמר מה שתראה.
 לא. אמר החבר: בדיו העניו הטבעי נתחייב לקיימת המזון והגדול וההולדה, וכתותם וכל תנאים, והתחבר בנה העומח ובעלי חיים, מפלעדי האדמה והאבנים והמוצאים והיסודות.
 לב. אמר הפונר: זה קלל שצריה לקרט אותו, אכל אמת הוא.
 לג. אמר החבר: ובעניו הנפשית התחברו בעלי חיים אדם, ונתחייבו מהם הנועות והפצים, ומדות, וחוששים נראים ונסתרים, ונאות, וזולת אלה.
 לד. אמר הפונר: גם זה מבאר, אין דרך לדחותו.
 לה. אמר החבר: ובדיו העניו השקלי התחבר הקודבר מכל החיים, והתחייב