

suggests that there was no creation and that the universe's existence is infinite."

63. The Rabbi said: "One cannot fault Greek philosophers for their mistaken beliefs. After all, they are a nation which never inherited Divine wisdom [related to creation] or Torah. The Greeks derive from the descendants of [Noach's son] Yefes, who hail from the north.⁵⁵ The Divinely inspired wisdom of which we speak, which was passed down from Adam, went only to [Noach's son] Shem, who was the elite descendant⁵⁶ of Noach. This wisdom has never ceased nor will it ever cease from mankind. Even the wisdom which the Greeks do possess was only acquired by them after they conquered the Persian empire and adopted their wisdom. Persia, in turn, had acquired its knowledge from the Babylonian empire.⁵⁷ Greek philosophers, then, made their appearance only after that point in history when Persia was conquered. And later, when the Roman empire conquered

55. The descendants of Yefes settled in the northern parts of the civilized world, and Cham's descendants settled in the south. Shem alone, among the sons of Noach, chose the central part of the civilized world, namely, Eretz-Yisrael and its environs (see *Kuzari* 1:95). The Near East was where all miraculous and prophetic experiences occurred, including the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai. Anyone who was not living in these areas during those times would not be privy to these experiences.

56. This goes back to the Rabbi's statement in 1:47.

57. The Babylonian empire in turn acquired its wisdom from its captive nation, Israel. The Rabbi later says this explicitly in 2:66.

דבר שאין לו תחלה ותכלית. כג. אמר החבר: הפילוסופים, אין להאשים אותם, מפני שהם עם שלא נחלו חכמה ולא תורה, מפני שהם זונים, וזו חכמה יקרה השוכנים בצפון, והחכמה, שהיא גרשה מאדם, והיא חכמה המתקנת בלח אלהי, איננה פי אם בודע שם שהיא קגלת נח, לא פסקה החכמה ולא תפסק מן הסגולה ההיא מאדם. ולא הייתה החכמה בין, אלא מעת שגברו ונעתקה החכמה אליהם מפרס, ואל פרס מפשידים, וזו חכמה הפילוסופים המקרסמים בימים ההם, לא קדם לכן ולא לאחר מכן, ומעת ששבה המלכות לרומיים

only a few books, and those were written by only a few individuals. Only the feeble-minded will be beguiled by some of their astrology books—which record events dating back tens of thousands of years—or by works like the Nabatean *Book of Agriculture*.⁵³ That particular work mentions the names of Janbushar, Sagrit, and Roanai, who purportedly lived before Adam. They even allege that Janbushar was Adam's teacher, among other such claims."

62. The Kuzari said: "Granted, I have tried to disprove your thesis by bringing proof from an undisciplined nation which cannot agree about their information. However, what will you say about the Greek philosophers? They are famous for their excellent research and exactitude. All of them agree that the world has always existed, without a beginning.⁵⁴ This is much more than saying that the world is tens—or even thousands—of thousands of years old; it

53. See *Moreh* 3:29–30, where Rambam discusses this particular work. He says that it had been translated into Arabic and was very popular. It is a book on the occult, superstition, and idol worship, and is called the *Book of Agriculture* because the Nabateans believed that the only way to successfully work the soil was to first appease the celestial gods—the sun and the stars. (See also *Moreh* 3:37.) The Nabateans were a Semitic people who lived in the ancient territory of Edom in Transjordan. Their recorded history begins as early as the fourth century BCE, and they faded out of history with the advent of Islam.

54. There is, however, disagreement between pre-Aristotelian philosophers and Aristotle as to the exact nature of the eternity of the universe. For a discussion of this subject, see *Moreh* 2:13. The Rabbi will discuss this later in 1:67.

of the universe—despite the philosophical difficulties—in- stead of strengthening his theory of eternal existence, which is actually riddled with even greater difficulties."

66. The Kuzari asked: "But how can the mind entertain an idea [creation] if the opposite [eternal existence] has already been proved?"

67. [1] The Rabbi said: "When was this issue ever proved? God forbid! The Torah never expects us to believe in things contradicted by evidence or proofs. The Torah does, however, recount miracles, that is, departures from nature, such as new creations, or transformations of things,⁶⁰ in order to teach about God's wisdom and His ability to act upon His will at a desired time. [It is not true that the eternal existence theory has already been proved;] the question as to whether the universe was created or has always existed, timelessly, is a deep one, and there are valid, logical arguments that can be made for either side. Therefore, what tips the scales in favor of creation is a tradition that dates from Adam to Noach, and down to Moshe's prophecies. That is undoubtedly more reliable than logical arguments.

להחזיק החדוש עם קשיו, באשר החזיק הקדמות אשר הוא יותר קשה לקבל.

כו. אמר הפוזרי: וכי יש במופת הכרעה מתפשט בשכל?

כז. אמר החבר: ומאין לנו מופת בשאלה הזאת, חלילה לאל שתבוא התורה בזה שיצדקה ראייה או מופת, אך תבוא התורה בנפלאות ונשות המנהיגים לבריאת דברים או להפך דבר אל דבר אחר, להורות על חכמת בורא העולם ויכלתו לעשות מה שחפץ בעת שיחפץ. ושאלת החדוש והקדמות צמקה, וראיות שתי המענות גם כן שוות, עד שפיקריע החדוש—הקבלה מאדם ועד נח ומשה, בנבואה, אשר היא מאין ספק יותר נאמנת מן ההקשה.

the Greek empire, no philosopher of that stature ever arose again."⁵⁸

64. The Kuzari said: "[Just because Greeks were not part of this 'elite' transmission of wisdom,] is that reason enough to reject Aristotle's great wisdom?"

65. The Rabbi answered: "Yes, it is. Aristotle was forced to exert his mental efforts regarding the universe because he did not have any reliable tradition from his forefathers. He therefore contemplated the origin and end of the universe.⁵⁹ It was very difficult for him to fathom a beginning to the universe, while at the same time it was difficult to fathom the theory of an eternal, timeless universe without beginning. But eventually, using reason alone as his guide, he decided to subscribe to the theory of eternal existence. He never saw any reason to ask earlier generations about the age of the universe or how mankind came into existence. Had Aristotle been a part of the nation that inherited a tradition of wisdom [about creation], which was so thoroughly accepted and deeply embedded, he would have exerted his efforts toward strengthening belief in creation

לא קם בהם פילוסוף מפרסם עד עתה. כד. אמר הפוזרי: וכי זה מחנב שלא נאמין לאריסטו בחכמתו?

כה. אמר החבר: כן, מפני שהקריית את שכלו ומחשבתו בעבור שלא הייתה בידו קבלה מפי שאמיו בהגדתו, והושב בתחלת העולם וסופו, והיה קשה על מחשבתו לצייר התחלה, באשר היה קשה גם כן הקדמות אך הקריע הקשותיו הנוטים אל הקדמות במחשבתו המופשטת, ולא ראה לשאל על מגני שני מי שהיה לפניו, והיאוד נתיחסו בני אדם. ואלו היה הפילוסוף באמה שינתחל מקבלות ומפרסמות שאינו יכול לחדות אותם, היה מתעסק בהקשותיו ומופתיו

as a result of its physicality, it is lowly and disgraceful. Granted, the creations in this world are fascinating; [but if you want to suggest that it is man's sophisticated make-up that allows God to communicate with him, then why limit God's connection to man alone?] Even in the smallest of insects God's unfathomable wisdom is apparent."

69. The Rabbi said: "This does not require a lengthy answer. The wisdom that you see involved in the creation of an ant, for example—do you attribute this wisdom to some star or other heavenly force other than God, Who is truly omnipotent and exact, and Who provides each and every thing with its exact properties?"

70. The Kuzari said: "These properties are attributed to nature."

71. The Rabbi asked: "And what exactly is 'nature'?"

72. The Kuzari said: "It is a certain force within the universe which, I grant you, I do not understand clearly. But the wise scientists know precisely what it is."

73. The Rabbi said: "Their understanding of nature is just as nebulous as ours. Aristotle defined it a bit by stating that *nature* is the

כל־שכן מהחושיים - חבור עם הבריאה
האמת הנקנה המגנה בקמרה, ואם היא
נפלאה בצורתה, כי בקמן שברמשים
מפליאת חקמתו מה שאין הדעת מושגת
אותו.

סט. אמר החבר: בדרך זה לא הארכתי
בדברים רבים רבים להשיבך. האמת מניחם
ואת החקמה הנמצאת בבריאת הנמלה
דרך מושל אל גלגל או אל בוכב או לזולתו
מבלתי הבורא, היכול, המשער, אשר נתן
לכל דבר חסו מאין תוספת וחסרון?
ע. אמר הפוזרי: וזהו הקניחם אל פעל
הטבע.

עא. אמר החבר: ומה הוא הטבע?
עב. אמר הפוזרי: הוא כח מהמכחות, על
מה ששמענו בחקמות, ואין אנו יודעים מה
הוא, אבל החקמים יודעים אותו גלי ספק.
עג. אמר החבר: אבל ידעתם בו
כידעתנו. גדר אותו הפילוסוף כי הוא

ת ה'ל'ק
ק'ל'ט'
ק'ל'ט'



[2] "[Until now, however, I have been addressing only Aristotle's belief in eternal existence. Other philosophers, while still believing in eternal existence, nevertheless believe that the universe in its current form was shaped from some primordial matter at some point in history.]⁶¹ Were a Jew of faith to believe in some primordial matter that God used to create the current universe, and that this primordial matter had been used previously to create other universes as well, this would not constitute a defect of faith. Ultimately, he would still believe that this world had been created at some finite time, and that humankind stemmed from the first people, Adam and Chavah (Eve)."⁶²

68. The Kuzari said: "I have been sufficiently convinced in this area. If our relationship continues, I will ask you later to provide me with stronger proofs.⁶³ In the meantime, return to your main point. I do not understand how you were able to accept the following ideology. You believe that the Creator of all physical bodies, life forces, souls, and angels, Who is well beyond the comprehension of angelic creatures let alone the human senses, communes [via man] with this physical world, despite the fact that,

ואם היה מצטרף בעל התורה להאמין
וליהדות כהיולי בהמר קרמוון ועולמים רבים
קדם העולם הזה, לא היה פנה פנים באמונתו,
כי הוא מאמין כי העולם הזה הוא חדש מזמן
ידוע, ותחלת האדם אשר היו בו - אדם וחוה.
סח. אמר הפוזרי: די לי באלה הטענות,
המסקינות בשער הזה, ואם תאמר הקרתי עמד,
אטריחה להראות לי הטענות המסקינות. אבל
שוב אל גלגל דבריה, והיאך התחזק בגופשכם
הדבר הגדול הזה, שיהיה לבורא הגופות
והרוחות והנשמות והשכלים והמלאכים, אשר
נתעלה והתחדש והתגדל מהשגת השכלים

61. This is the Platonic model of creation, discussed in *Moreh* (2:13). See note 54, above.
62. Rambam in *Moreh* (2:25) states the same idea. He concludes by saying that since we have no logical/philosophical reason to accept the Platonic model of a primordial mass, Jews adhere to the traditional belief of creation ex nihilo (*yesh me'ayin*).
63. This will take place later in the book, *Kuzari* 5:17.