

Guide for the Perplexed on the Book of Job and the Theodicy

Part 3 Chapter 12

MEN frequently think that the evils in the world are more numerous than the good things; many sayings and songs of the nations dwell on this idea. They say that a good thing is found only exceptionally, whilst evil things are numerous and lasting. Not only common people make this mistake, but even many who believe that they are wise.

...The origin of the error is to be found in the circumstance that this ignorant man, and his party among the common people, judge the whole universe by examining one single person. For an ignorant man believes that the whole universe only exists for him; as if nothing else required any consideration. If, therefore, anything happens to him contrary to his expectation, he at once concludes that the whole universe is evil. If, however, he would take into consideration the whole universe, form an idea of it, and comprehend what a small portion he is of the Universe, he will find the truth....

איוב פרק כה:ו אף כי אנוש רמה וכן אדם תולעה:

It is of great advantage that man should know his station, and not erroneously imagine that the whole universe exists only for him....

The numerous evils to which individual persons are exposed are due to the defects existing in the persons themselves. We complain and seek relief from our own faults: we suffer from the evils which we, by our own free will, inflict on ourselves and ascribe them to God, who is far from being connected with them....

I explain this theory in the following manner. The evils that befall humans are of three kinds:

(1) The first kind of evil is that which is caused to man by the circumstance that he is subject to genesis and destruction, or that he possesses a body....We have already shown that, in accordance with the divine wisdom, genesis can only take place through destruction, and without the destruction of the individual members of the species the species themselves would not exist permanently. Thus the true kindness, and beneficence, and goodness of God is clear. He who thinks that he can have flesh and bones without being subject to any external influence, or any of the accidents of matter, unconsciously wishes to reconcile two opposites, viz., to be at the same time subject and not subject to change....

You will, nevertheless, find that the evils of the above kind which befall man are very few and rare: for you find countries that have not been flooded or burned for thousands of years: there are thousands of men in perfect health, deformed individuals are exceptional occurrence, or say few in number if you object to the term exceptional,--they are not one-hundredth, not even one-thousandth part of those that are perfectly normal.

(2) The second class of evils comprises such evils as people cause to each other, when, e.g., some of them use their strength against others. These evils are more numerous than those of the first kind: their causes are numerous and known; they likewise originate in ourselves, though the

sufferer himself cannot avert them. This kind of evil is nevertheless not widespread in any country of the whole world. It is of rare occurrence that a man plans to kill his neighbor or to rob him of his property by night. Many persons are, however, afflicted with this kind of evil in great wars: but these are not frequent, if the whole inhabited part of the earth is taken into consideration.

(3) The third class of evils comprises those which every one causes to himself by his own action. This is the largest class, and is far more numerous than the second class. It is especially of these evils that all men complain, only few men are found that do not sin against themselves by this kind of evil....The same subject is referred to in Job:

איוב פרק ה:ו כי לא יצא מעפר אנון ומאדמה לא יצמח עמל:

These words are immediately followed by the explanation that man himself is the author of this class of evils, "But man is born unto trouble." This class of evils originates in man's vices, such as excessive desire for eating, drinking, and love; indulgence in these things in undue measure, or in improper manner, or partaking of bad food. This course brings diseases and afflictions upon body and soul alike.

...The soul, when accustomed to superfluous things, acquires a strong habit of desiring things which are neither necessary for the preservation of the individual nor for that of the species. This desire is without a limit, whilst things which are necessary are few in number and restricted within certain limits; but what is superfluous is without end--e.g., you desire to have your vessels of silver, but golden vessels are still better: others have even vessels of sapphire, or perhaps they can be made of emerald or rubies, or any other substance that could be suggested, Those who are ignorant and perverse in their thought are constantly in trouble and pain, because they cannot get as much of superfluous things as a certain other person possesses. They as a rule expose themselves to great dangers, e.g., by sea-voyage, or service of kings, and all this for the purpose of obtaining that which is superfluous and not necessary....

Observe how Nature proves the correctness of this assertion. The more necessary a thing is for living beings, the more easily it is found and the cheaper it is; the less necessary it is, the rarer and clearer it is. E.g., air, water, and food are indispensable to man: air is most necessary, for if man is without air a short time he dies; whilst he can be without water a day or two. Air is also undoubtedly found more easily and cheaper [than water]. Water is more necessary than food; for some people can be four or five days without food, provided they have water; water also exists in every country in larger quantities than food, and is also cheaper. In these two ways you will see the mercy of God toward His creatures, how He has provided that which is required, in proper proportions, and treated all individual beings of the same species with perfect equality....

Chapter 17

THERE are four different theories concerning Divine Providence; they are all ancient, known since the time of the Prophets, when the true Law was revealed to enlighten these dark regions.

First Theory.--There is no Providence at all for anything in the Universe; all parts of the Universe, the heavens and what they contain, owe their origin to accident and chance; there exists no being that rules and governs them or provides for them. This is the theory of Epicurus, who assumes also that the Universe consists of atoms, that these have combined by chance, and have received their various forms by mere accident....Aristotle has proved the absurdity of the theory, that the whole Universe could have originated by chance; he has shown that, on the contrary, there is a being that rules and governs the Universe....

Second Theory.--Whilst one part of the Universe owes its existence to Providence, and is under the control of a ruler and governor, another part is abandoned and left to chance. This is the view of Aristotle about Providence, and I will now explain to you his theory. He holds that God controls the spheres and what they contain: therefore the individual beings in the spheres remain permanently in the same form. Alexander has also expressed it in his writings that Divine Providence extends down to, and ends with, the sphere of the moon. This view results from his theory of the Eternity of the Universe; he believes that Providence is in accordance with the nature of the Universe: consequently in the case of the spheres with their contents, where each individual being has a permanent existence, Providence gives permanency and constancy. From the existence of the spheres other beings derive existence, which are constant in their species but not in their individuals: in the same manner it is said that Providence sends forth [from the spheres to the earth] sufficient influence to secure the immortality and constancy of the species, without securing at the same time permanence for the individual beings of the species....

Aristotle sees no difference between the falling of a leaf or a stone and the death of the good and noble people in the ship;... nor does he discriminate between the case of a cat killing a mouse that happens to come in her way, or that of a spider catching a fly, and that of a hungry lion meeting a prophet and tearing him. In short, the opinion of Aristotle is this: Everything is the result of management which is constant, which does not come to an end and does not change any of its properties....

Third Theory.--This theory is the reverse of the second. According to this theory, there is nothing in the whole Universe, neither a class nor an individual being, that is due to chance; everything is the result of will, intention, and rule. It is a matter of course that he who rules must know [that which is under his control]. The Mohammedan Ashariyah adhere to this theory, notwithstanding evident absurdities implied in it; for they admit that Aristotle is correct in assuming one and the same cause [viz., the wind] for the fall of leaves [from the tree] and for the death of a man [drowned in the sea]. But they hold at the same time that the wind did not blow by chance; it is God that caused it to move; it is not therefore the wind that caused the leaves to fall; each leaf falls according to the Divine decree; it is God who caused it to fall at a certain time and in a certain place; it could not have fallen before or after that time or in another place, as this has previously been decreed.

The Ashariyah were therefore compelled to assume that motion and rest of living beings are predestined, and that it is not in the power of man to do a certain thing or to leave it undone. The theory further implies a denial of possibility in these things: they can only be either necessary or impossible....It follows also from this theory, that precepts are perfectly useless, since the people to whom any law is given are unable to do anything: they can neither do what they are commanded nor abstain from what they are forbidden....

According to this theory, it must also be assumed that the actions of God have no final cause. All these absurdities are admitted by the Ashariyah for the purpose of saving this theory. When we see a person born blind or leprous, who could not have merited a punishment for previous sins, they say, It is the will of God; when a pious worshipper is tortured and slain, it is likewise the will of God; and no injustice can be asserted to Him for that, for according to their opinion it is proper that God should afflict the innocent and do good to the sinner. Their views on these matters are well known.

Fourth Theory.--Man has free will; it is therefore intelligible that the Law contains commands and prohibitions, with announcements of reward and punishment. All acts of God are due to wisdom; no injustice is found in Him, and He does not afflict the good. The Mu'tazila profess this theory, although they do not believe in man's absolute free will. They hold also that God takes notice of the falling of the leaf and the destruction of the ant, and that His Providence extends over all things. This theory likewise implies contradictions and absurdities. The absurdities are these: The fact that some persons are born with defects, although they have not sinned previously, is ascribed to the wisdom of God, it being better for those persons to be in such a condition than to be in a normal state, though we do not see why it is better; and they do not suffer thereby any punishment at all, but, on the contrary, enjoy God's goodness. In a similar manner the slaughter of the pious is explained as being for them the source of an increase of reward in future life.

They go even further in their absurdities. We ask them why is God only just to man and not to other beings, and how has the irrational animal sinned, that it is condemned to be slaughtered? and they reply it is good for the animal, for it will receive reward for it in the world to come; also the flea and the louse will there receive compensation for their untimely death: the same reasoning they apply to the mouse torn by a cat or vulture; the wisdom of God decreed this for the mouse, in order to reward it after death for the mishap. I do not consider it proper to blame the followers of any of the [last named] three theories on Providence, for they have been driven to accept them by weighty considerations....

Fifth Theory.--This is our theory, or that of our Law. I will show you [first] the view expressed on this subject in our prophetic books, and generally accepted by our Sages. I will then give the opinion of some later authors among us, and lastly, I will explain my own belief. The theory of man's perfectly free will is one of the fundamental principles of the Law of our Teacher Moses, and of those who follow the Law....

Another fundamental principle taught by the Law of Moses is this: Wrong cannot be ascribed to God in any way whatever; all evils and afflictions as well as all kinds of happiness of man, whether they concern one individual person or a community, are distributed according to justice; they are the result of strict judgment that admits no wrong whatever. Even when a person suffers

pain in consequence of a thorn having entered into his hand, although it is at once drawn out, it is a punishment that has been inflicted on him [for sin], and the least pleasure he enjoys is a reward [for some good action]; all this is meted out by strict justice; as is said in Scripture, "all his ways are judgment" (Deut. xxxii. 4); we are only ignorant of the working of that judgment.

The different theories are now fully explained to you; everything in the varying human affairs is due to chance, according to Aristotle, to the Divine Will alone according to the Ashariyah, to Divine Wisdom according to the Mu'tazilites, to the merits of man according to our opinion. It is therefore possible, according to the Ashariyah, that God inflicts pain on a good and pious man in this world, and keeps him for ever in fire, which is assumed to rage in the world to come, they simply say it is the Will of God. The Mu'tazilites would consider this as injustice, and therefore assume that every being, even an ant, that is stricken with pain [in this world], has compensation for it, as has been mentioned above; and it is due to God's Wisdom that a being is struck and afflicted in order to receive compensation. We, however, believe that all these human affairs are managed with justice; far be it from God to do wrong, to punish any one unless the punishment is necessary and merited. It is distinctly stated in the Law, that all is done in accordance with justice; and the words of our Sages generally express the same idea. They clearly say: "There is no death without sin, no sufferings without transgression." (B. T. Shabbath, 55a.)...

My opinion on this principle of Divine Providence I will now explain to you. In the principle which I now proceed to expound I do not rely on demonstrative proof, but on my conception of the spirit of the Divine Law, and the writings of the Prophets. It is this: In the lower or sublunary portion of the Universe Divine Providence does not extend to the individual members of species except in the case of mankind...I agree with Aristotle as regards all other living beings, and *à fortiori* as regards plants and all the rest of earthly creatures. For I do not believe that it is through the interference of Divine Providence that a certain leaf drops [from a tree], nor do I hold that when a certain spider catches a certain fly, that this is the direct result of a special decree and will of God in that moment...In all these cases the action is, according to my opinion, entirely due to chance, as taught by Aristotle.

Divine Providence is connected with Divine intellectual influence, and the same beings which are benefited by the latter so as to become intellectual, and to comprehend things comprehensible to rational beings, are also under the control of Divine Providence, which examines all their deeds in order to reward or punish them. It may be by mere chance that a ship goes down with all her contents, as in the above-mentioned instance, or the roof of a house falls upon those within; but it is not due to chance, according to our view, that in the one instance the men went into the ship, or remained in the house in the other instance: it is due to the will of God, and is in accordance with the justice of His judgments, the method of which our mind is incapable of understanding.

Chapter 22

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 ten 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. Comp. "Uz, his first-born" (Gen. xxii. 21); it is also imperative of the verb *Uz*, "to take advice." Comp. *uzu*, "take counsel" (Isa. 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 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... whatever evils and misfortunes befell Job as regards his property, children, and health, were all caused by this adversary....

Job, as well as his friends, were 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 suffering, as will be shown later on....

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." *להתקייב על יקוק*: Consider this, and see how very extraordinary it is!--These ideas presented themselves like an inspiration to me. The phrase, "to present themselves before the Lord," implies that they are beings who are forced by God's command to do what He desires....

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 I., chap. xli.). It designates that element in man that survives him; it is this Portion over which the adversary has no power.

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 hara*'), and the angel of death, are one and the same being." Here we find all that has been mentioned by us in such a clear manner that no intelligent person will be in doubt about it. It has thus been shown to you that one and the same thing is designated by these three different terms, and that actions ascribed to these three are in reality the actions of one and the same agent....

The Hebrew, *satan*, is derived from the same root as *séteh*, "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....

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.

Chapter 23

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 may be 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 Zofar, 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....

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.¹ 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" (42:5, 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

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Divine Providence is constantly watching over those who have obtained that blessing which is prepared for those who endeavour to obtain it. If man frees his thoughts from worldly matters, obtains a knowledge of God in the right way, and rejoices in that knowledge, it is impossible that any kind of evil should befall him while he is with God, and God with him.

not know all our shortcomings for which we are punished, nor the way how we incur the punishment through them.

Bildad the Shuhite 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.

Zofar 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. Zofar 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 I 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 Zofar 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 Zofar; 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)....

The description of all these things [cosmos and animals] 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 say: "The pious do everything out of love, and rejoice in their own afflictions." (B. T. Shabb. 88*b*.)

If you pay to my words the attention which this treatise demands, and examine all that is 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.