

THE 13 IKARIM

יג עקרי אמונה של הרמב"ם

(8) THE FOURTH IKAR - CREATION~ETERNITY

A SYNTHESIS

סמנר מדרשת רחל וחייה

A] The Accurate Wording of the 4th Ikar

1. [The fourth principle] is that He is beyond time. This means that the One G-d we have described [in Ikarim 2 & 3] is absolutely Eternal [First] and that everything that exists apart from Him cannot be eternal in comparison to Him. Proof for this can be brought from many verses. This Fourth Principle is what is expressed by the verse "A support/shelter is the Eternal G-d" (*Devarim 33:27*). Know that the most fundamental principle of the Torah of Moshe our Teacher is that the world was created and formed new. God brought it into existence from a state of absolute nothingness. The reason that you will see that I have discussed at length the issue of 'the Eternity of the World' [*kadmut haolam*], which is the view of the philosophers, is to demonstrate conclusively that G-d exists, as I have explained and clarified in the Moreh Nevuchim

רמב"ם - הקדמה לפ' חלק, משנה סנבדרין

As we saw in the last shiur, the Rambam introduces for us the dichotomy of his assertion of Creation Ex Nihilo in the Ikarim and Eternity of the Universe (Kadmut) which he assumes in his logical proof of G-d in the Guide¹

B] The Rambam's Esotericism

2. One of seven causes should account for contradictory or contrary statements to be found in any book
- The fifth cause: is a necessary methodology which must be adopted when teaching profound matters which are difficult to explain. Namely, a difficult premise must sometimes be mentioned and assumed (although it should really have been explained properly), in order to illustrate some easier subject which has to be taught first The teacher is forced to forgo a thorough explanation of the premise and must be prepared to give a superficial understanding. He should not get into the full detail, but should rather leave it on a level that the students can understand, so that they will be able to grasp what they have to right now. Later, at the appropriate time, he can treat the issue more thoroughly and develop it fully.

.....

The seventh cause: in speaking about very profound matters it is necessary to conceal some parts and to disclose others. Sometimes, in the case of certain statements, this requires that the discussion proceed on the basis of a certain premise, whereas in another place the discussion will proceed on the basis of another contradictory premise. It is best that the average [reader] should not be at all aware of the contradiction. The author accordingly uses some device to conceal it.

Whether contradictions due to the seventh cause are to be found in the books of the Prophets is a matter for further study and investigation. Inconsistencies in works of philosophy ... are due to the fifth and seventh cause. In the *Midrashim* and the *Haggadah* there are to be found ... also contradictions due to the seventh cause

Inconsistencies that are to be found in this book are due to the fifth and seventh causes. Be aware of this, understand it well and think very carefully about it, so that you will not be confused by some of the chapters

Moreh Nevuchim - preface

1. See detailed comments on this source on Sheet 7

C] Did the Rambam (also) subscribe to the Eternity of the Universe

C1] Use of Eternity of the Universe in his philosophical proof of G-d

see Shiur 7 sources 2 and 3

C2] Acceptance that the Torah verses do not negate Eternity of the Universe

see Shiur 7 source 4

C3] Acceptance that Platonic Eternity is not against Jewish thought

3. If, however, we accepted the Eternity of the Universe in accordance with the second of the theories which we set out above (2:23) and assumed, like Plato, that the universe is transient, we should not be in opposition to the fundamental principles of our religion; **this theory would not imply the rejection of miracles, but, on the contrary, would admit them as possible. The Scriptural text might have been explained accordingly, and many expressions might have been found in the Bible and in other writings that would confirm and support this theory.** But there is no necessity for this expedient, so long as the theory has not been proved

Guide to the Perplexed 2:25

4. ושאלת החדוש והקדמות עמוקה, וראיות שתי הטענות שוות, עד שתכריע החדוש הקבלה מאדם ונח ומשה בנבואה אשר היא יותר נאמנת מן ההקשה. ואם היה מצטרך בעל תורה להאמין ולהודות בהיולי קדמון ועולמות רבים קודם העולם הזה, לא היה בזה פגם באמונתו, כי העולם הזה הוא חדש מזמן ידוע ותחלת האדם אדם ונח

ספר הכוזרי מאמר א אות טו

The sefer HaKuzari also writes that it would be acceptable for a Jew to adopt the Platonic approach to Creation

C4] Correspondence between the Rambam's views on Eternity and on Prophecy

5. There are the same number of different opinions concerning Prophecy as concerning the Eternity or Non-Eternity of the Universe. For we have shown that those who assume the existence of God as proved may be divided into three classes, according to the view they take on the question of whether the Universe is Eternal or not. Similarly there are three different opinions on Prophecy ...

1. Among those who believe in Prophecy..... there are some ignorant people who think as follows: God selects any person He pleases, inspires him with the spirit of Prophecy, and entrusts him with a mission. It makes no difference whether that person be wise or stupid, old or young; provided he be, to some extent, morally good ...

2. The philosophers hold that prophecy is a certain faculty of man in a state of perfection, which can only be obtained by study. Although the faculty is common to the all people, yet it is not fully developed in each individual, either on account of a deficiency in the individual's character, or some other external cause..... It is only brought to a state of perfection in some individuals, and not in all; Accordingly, it is impossible that an ignorant person should be a prophet; or that a person who was not a prophet the evening before should, unexpectedly on the following morning, find that he is a prophet, as if prophecy were a thing that could be found unintentionally.

3. The third view is that which is taught in Scripture, and which forms one of the principles of our religion. It coincides with the opinion of the philosophers in all points except one. For we believe that, even if one has the capacity for prophecy, and has duly prepared himself, it may yet happen that he does not actually prophesy. In that situation, it is the will of God [that withholds from him the use of the faculty]. For the laws of Nature demand that every one should be a prophet, who has a proper physical constitution, and has been duly prepared as regards education and training. If that person is not a prophet, he is in the same position as a person who, like Jeroboam (1 Kings 13), is deprived of the use of his hand, or of his eyes, as was the case with the army of Syria, in the history of Elisha (2 Kings 6:18)

Guide to the Perplexed 2:32

If the 3 understandings of Creation/Eternity mirror the 3 understandings of Prophecy, as the Rambam claims, we arrive at the following correlation:-

Aristotelian Eternity ----- **The Philosopher's View of Prophecy**
Fully Natural Fully Natural

Creation Ex Nihilo ----- **The Ignorant View of Prophecy**
Fully Supernatural Fully Supernatural

Platonic Eternity ----- **The Torah View of Prophecy**
Natural with G-d's Intervention Natural with G-d's Intervention

According to this, Platonic Eternity seems to come out as the preferred system²

C5] Approach in the Mishne Torah

Surprisingly, the Rambam makes no mention of Creation in Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah. In Hilchot Teshuva, in the list of people who deny key principles of Torah and lose their place in the World to Come, he does however mention Creation indirectly.

6. חמשה הן הנקראים מינים: האומר שאין שם אלוה ואין לעולם מנהיג, והאומר שיש שם מנהיג אבל הן שנים או יותר, והאומר שיש שם רבון אחד אבל שהוא גוף ובעל תמונה, וכן האומר שאינו לבדו הראשון וצור לכל, וכן העובד כוכב או מזל וזולתו כדי להיות מליץ בניו ובין רבון העולמים כל אחד מחמשה אלו הוא מין..... כשגת הראשון: "7: וכן האומר שאינו לבדו הראשון. א"א כאותו שאמר אליכם אייר גדול היה אלא שמלא לו סמנים גדולים תכו וזכו חושך ומים ורוח, וזכה עשה מה שטעה

רמב"ם הלכות תשובה פרק ג הלכה ז

The 5 categories of Min seem directly to parallel the first 5 Ikarim. Certainly as understood by the Ra'avad, the 4th category of Min is someone who understands that G-d fashioned the world from the pre-existing 'Simanim Gedolim' ie advanced materials. This would seem to exclude Aristotelian Eternity, but does it exclude Platonic Eternity?

C6] Is Creation based on a pre-existing rationale?

7. [Man's] actions are divided into four classes; they are either purposeless, unimportant, in vain, or good. I maintain that no intelligent person can assume that any of the actions of God can be in vain, purposeless, or unimportant. According to our view, and the view of all that follow the Law of Moses, all actions of God are "very good." Thus Scripture says, "And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good".....Those who adopt the absurd idea that God's actions are utterly purposeless, and refuse to consider them as the result of His wisdom, are afraid they might otherwise be compelled to admit the theory of the Eternity of the Universe.....

Guide to the Perplexed 3:25

G-d created the world for a purpose and with a rationale. This to some degree leans towards a view of Eternity - that something pre-existed the Creation i.e. a rationale and ethic according to which the world was made. The Rambam even acknowledges that some people are afraid to take this position in case they feel that it leads them to have to accept Eternity

C7] Classical Interpretations of the Rambam's approach

The following classical interpreters of the Rambam all considered that the Rambam's esoteric belief was inclined towards Eternity, rather than Creation:-

- R. Shmuel ibn Tibbon (1162-1232)
- R. Yosef ibn Kaspi (1280-1340) - commentary on Guide 1:9, 2:13

2. See Davidson, Herbert: Maimonides' Secret Position on Creation. In: I. Twersky, ed. Studies in Medieval Jewish History and Literature. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979, p. 16-40.

- R. Nissim b. Moshe - Ma'aseh Nissim 223
- R. Profiat Duran - commentary on Guide 1:9
- R. Moshe of Narbonne - Pirkei Moshe 302-3³

D] A Synthesis - Creation and Eternity - Both true in an irreducible dichotomy

Mori VeRebbi R' Meir Triebitz shilt'a posits a synthesis as follows⁴. Creation Ex Nihilo is not a theory of the physical creation of the Universe. It is a theological position which ascribes free will to G-d and thus to Man. It is the cornerstone of Torat Moshe Rabbeinu. However, the actual physical origin of the world may indeed be Platonic. Furthermore, the pre-existing rationale to creation and the philosophical proof of G-d's existence require Eternity as an axiom

8. יח ומלכּי-צֶדֶק מִלְדָּה שְׁלֵם הוֹצִיא לְחַם וְגַן וְהוּא כְהֵן לְאֵל עֲלִיוֹן: יט וַיְבָרְכֵהוּ וַיֹּאמֶר בְּרוּךְ אַבְרָם לְאֵל עֲלִיוֹן קִנְיָה שָׁמַיִם וְאָרֶץ: כ וּבְרוּךְ אֵל עֲלִיוֹן אֲשֶׁר-מִגֵּן צָרִיד בְּיַדָּהּ וַיִּתְּנוּ-לוֹ מַעֲשֵׂה מִכָּל: כא וַיֹּאמֶר מִלְדָּה-סֵדֶם אֶל-אַבְרָם תּוֹלְדֵי הַנְּפֹשׁ וְהַרְבֵּשׁ קַח-לָךְ: כב וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְרָם אֶל-מִלְדָּה סֵדֶם הַרְמֹתִי יְדֵי אֱלֹהֵי אֵל עֲלִיוֹן קִנְיָה שָׁמַיִם וְאָרֶץ:

בראשית יד:יח-כב

The Chumash outlines a fascinating meeting between Avraham, Malchitzedek King of Shalem (identified by Chazal with Shem - the then 'spiritual leader' of the non-Jewish world) and the King of Sedom. Malchitzedek invokes G-d using the expression א-ל עֲלִיוֹן קִנְיָה שָׁמַיִם וְאָרֶץ

Avraham picks up this theme but adds the name of יה-וה-א-ל עֲלִיוֹן קִנְיָה שָׁמַיִם וְאָרֶץ:- יה-וה-א-ל עֲלִיוֹן קִנְיָה שָׁמַיִם וְאָרֶץ

9. [Creation] is the first theory, and it is undoubtedly a fundamental principle of the Law of our teacher Moses; it is next in importance to the principle of God's Unity. Do not follow any other theory. Abraham, our father, was the first that taught it, after he had established it by philosophical research. He proclaimed, therefore, "the name of the Lord the God of the Universe" (ה' א-ל עולם) (Gen. 21:33); and he had previously expressed this theory in the words, "The Possessor of heaven and earth" (Gen 14:22)

Guide to the Perplexed 2:13

Rambam sees in the words of Avraham a statement of Creation

10. We must also consider the four different terms employed in expressing the relations of the heavens to God, *Boreh* (Creator), *Oseh* (Maker), *Koneh* (Possessor), and *E-I* (G-d)..... [I]n reference to the Universe which comprises the totality of the Creation, Scripture employs the verb *bara*, which we explain as meaning that he produced something from nothing; *kanah*, "he possessed," because G-d rules over them like a master over his servants. For this reason He is also called, "The Lord of the whole earth" (Jos. 3:11-13); *Ha-adon*, "the Lord" (Exod. 23:17). And since one cannot be a master unless there exists something that is in one possession (*kinyan*), **and this would seem to indicate a belief in the Eternal existence of primal matter**, it therefore uses the expressions *bara* and *asah*

Guide to the Perplexed 2:30

Nevertheless, the words 'Koneh' clearly imply, says the Rambam, a belief in Eternity. What we have here is an exchange between the Philosopher Shem and the Jewish statement of Creation Ex Nihilo by Avraham

*NB The 'Big Bang' is an expression of Kadmut not Creation, in that it assumes a pre-existing scientific construct. Creation Ex Nihilo states that there is **no scientific account** of creation. Creation ex nihilo has to be beyond scientific or ethical rationale.*

Thus Creation and Eternity exist side-by-side in an irreducible dichotomy

3. See further Shapiro, Marc: The Limits of Orthodox Theology p77

4. For further detail listen to Rabbi Triebitz's full shiur at <http://hashkafacircle.com/shiurim/ikarim/13-ikkarim-06-creation-ex-nihilo/>