

will last forty years, as it is written, *Forty years long shall I take hold of the generation.*¹ R. Eleazar b. Azariah said: Seventy years, as it is written, *And it shall come to pass in that day, that Tyre shall be forgotten seventy years, according to the days of one king.*² Now, who is the one [uniquely distinguished] king? The Messiah, of course. Rabbi said: Three generations; for it is written, *They shall fear thee with the sun, and before the moon* [they shall fear thee], *a generation and generations.*³

R. Hillel⁴ said: There shall be no Messiah for Israel,⁵ because they have already enjoyed him in the days of Hezekiah. R. Joseph said: May God forgive him [for saying so]. Now, when did Hezekiah flourish? During the first Temple. Yet Zechariah, prophesying in the days of the second, proclaimed, *Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold, thy king cometh unto thee! he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.*⁶

Another [Baraita] taught: R. Eliezer said: The days of the Messiah will be forty years. Here it is written, *And he afflicted thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna;*⁷ whilst elsewhere it is written, *Make us glad, according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us.*⁸ R. Dosa said: Four hundred years. It is here written, *And they shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years;*⁹ whilst elsewhere it is written, *Make us glad, according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us.* Rabbi said: Three hundred and sixty-

(1) Ps. XCV, 10: i.e., rule over them through the Messiah (rendered, 'I wearied') is connected with root 'to hold'. (2) Isa. XXIII, 15. (3) Ps. LXXII, 5. The verse is thus interpreted: They shall fear thee when Messiah comes, who is referred to as a sun (cf. 17), and they shall fear thee on account of the reign of the house of David, which is likened to the moon (cf. LXXXIX, 39: He shall be established for ever as the moon) for a generation (one) and generations (two). (4) [A brother of Judah II.] (5) But the Almighty will himself redeem Israel and reign over them (Rashi). [He may have been prompted to this declaration by Origen's professed discovery in the Old Testament of Messianic passages referring to the founder of Christianity' (J.E. VI, 401).] (6) Zech. IX, 9. (7) Deut. VIII, 3. (8) Ps. XC, 15: hence, just as they were afflicted forty years in the wilderness, so shall they rejoice forty years under the kingship of the Messiah. (9) Gen. XV, 13.

The *Eleventh Fundamental Principle* is that God rewards those who perform the commandments of the Torah and punishes those who transgress its admonitions. The greatest reward is the world to come; the worst punishment is extinction. We have already made this sufficiently clear. The Scripture which teaches this fundamental principle is "if you will not forgive their sin, extinguish me." To which God replied, "I will expunge from My book only the man who has sinned against Me" (Ex. 32:32 ff.). This proves He knows both the obedient and the sinner, and rewards or punishes each.

The *Twelfth Fundamental Principle* refers to the Messianic Era. We are to believe as fact that the Messiah will come and not consider him late. If he delays, wait for him (Hab. 2:3); set no time limit for his coming. One must not make conjectures based on Scripture to conclude when Messiah will come. The sages said: "May the Spirit depart from those who calculate the end-time" (Sanhedrin 97b). One must believe that the Messiah will have more station and honor than all the kings who ever lived, as all the prophets from Moses to Malachi prophesied. Whoever doubts this or minimizes it denies the Torah which testifies to it explicitly, in the Balaam story and in the passage that begins, "You are standing . . ." (Deut. 29:9). A corollary of this principle is the assertion that the king of Israel must come only from the house of David and the seed of Solomon. Anyone who rejects this family denies God and the words of His prophets.

The *Thirteenth Fundamental Principle* is the Resurrection of the Dead, which we have already explicated.

When a man believes in all these fundamental principles, and his faith is thus clarified, he is then part of that "Israel" whom we are to love, pity, and treat, as God commanded, with love and fellowship. Even if a Jew should commit every possible sin, out of lust or masochery by his lower nature, he will be punished for his sins but will still have a share in the world to come. He is one of the "sinners in Israel." But if a man gives up any one of these fundamental principles, he has removed himself from the Jewish community. He is an atheist, a heretic, an unbeliever who "cuts among the plantings." We are commanded to hate him and to destroy him. Of him it is said: "Shall I not hate those who hate You, O Lord?" (Ps. 139:21).

I have spent too much time on these matters, leaving the general subject of my book. But I have done so because I saw their use-

fulness for faith. So I have collected a number of scattered but useful statements from our great books. You must know them well. Repeat them frequently. Meditate on them carefully. If your mind seduces you into thinking that you comprehend them after one reading—or ten readings—God knows you are deceived! Do not read them hurriedly, for I did not just happen to write them down. Only after careful research and introspection, when I came to see which opinions are clearly true and untrue, did I come to know what to accept. I have proved each point systematically. May God fulfill my wish and lead me on the way of goodness.

come upon the wicked. No specific description of this punishment is contained in the Talmud. One teacher says that the sun will come so close to the wicked that it will burn them. He finds proof for this belief in the verse: "For behold, the day comes, it burns as a furnace; and all the proud and all that work wickedness shall be stubble; and the day that comes shall set them ablaze, says the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch" (Mal. 3:19). Others say that a strange heat will be produced within their own bodies to incinerate them. They find support for this position in the Scriptural words: "Your own spirit is a fire which will consume you" (Is. 33:11).

The resurrection of the dead is one of the cardinal principles established by Moses our Teacher. A person who does not believe in this principle has no real religion, certainly not Judaism. However, resurrection is only for the righteous. This is the meaning of the statement in *Bereshit Rabbah* (ch. 13) which declares: "The creative power of rain is for both the righteous and the wicked, but the resurrection of the dead is only for the righteous." How, after all, could the wicked come back to life, since they are dead even in their lifetimes? Our sages taught: "The wicked are called dead even while they are still alive; the righteous are alive even when they are dead" (*Berakhot* 18b). All men must die and their bodies decompose.

The "days of the Messiah" refers to a time in which sovereignty will revert to Israel and the Jewish people will return to the land of Israel. Their king will be a very great one, with his royal palace in Zion. His name and his reputation will extend throughout all the nations in even greater measure than did King Solomon's. All nations will make peace with him, and all countries will serve him out of respect for his great righteousness and the wonders which occur through him. All those who rise against him will be destroyed and delivered into his hands by God. All the verses of the Bible testify to his triumph and our triumph with him. However, except for the fact that sovereignty will revert to Israel, nothing will be essentially different from what it is now. This is what the sages taught: "The only difference between this world and the days of the Messiah is that oppression by other kingdoms will be abolished" (*Berakhot* 34b; *Shabbat* 63a, 151b; *Pesahim* 68a; *Sanhedrin* 91b, 99a). In the days of the Messiah there will still be rich and poor, strong and weak. However in those days it will be very easy for men to make a living. A minimum of labor will produce great benefits. This is what the

sages meant when they said: "In the future, the land of Israel will bring forth ready baked rolls and fine woolen garments" (*Shabbat* 30b). This is rather like what people say when someone finds something ready for use. They say, "So-and-So has found his bread already baked and his meal already cooked." The Scriptural support for all of this is in the expression, "and aliens shall be your plowmen and your vinedressers" (*Is.* 61:5). This verse suggests that there will be sowing and reaping even in the Messianic time. The Talmud (*Shabbat* 30b) records the irritation of one of the sages with a student whose objection to this passage showed that he did not understand his teaching on it because he understood the verse literally. The sage replied to him incorrectly, in accordance with the student's inadequate understanding of the matter. The reason for the sage's refusal to give a true answer is found in the verse: "Answer not a fool according to his folly" (*Prov.* 26:4).

The great benefits which will occur in those days include our release from oppression by other kingdoms which prevents us from fulfilling all the commandments—a widespread increase of wisdom, in accordance with the Scriptural promise: "For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (*Is.* 11:9)—and the end of the wars, again in accordance with the Scriptural statement: "Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (*Micah* 4:3). In those days perfection will be widespread, with the result that men will merit the life of the world to come.

But the Messiah will die, and his son and his grandson will reign in his stead. The prophet has already predicted his death in the verse: "He shall not fail nor be crushed till he has set the right in the earth" (*Is.* 42:2). However, his reign will be a very long one. All human life will be longer, for when worries and troubles are removed men live longer. There is no reason for surprise that the Messiah's reign will extend for thousands of years. As our sages have put it: "When good is gathered together it cannot speedily be dissipated."

We do not long and hope for the days of the Messiah because of an increase of productivity and wealth which may occur then, or that we may ride on horses and drink wine to the accompaniment of song, as some confused people think. The prophets and the saints looked forward to the days of the Messiah and yearned for them because then the righteous will be gathered together in fellowship, and because goodness and wisdom will prevail. They desired it also

ceeds, rebuilds the sanctuary on its site, and gathers the dispersed of Israel, he is beyond all doubt the Messiah. He will prepare the whole world to serve the Lord with one accord, as it is written: "For then will I turn to the peoples a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord to serve Him with one consent" (Zeph. 3:9).

Chapter 12

(¶ 1 Let no one think that in the days of the Messiah any of the laws of nature will be set aside, or any innovation be introduced into creation. The world will follow its normal course. The words of Isaiah: "And the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid" (Is. 11:6) are to be understood figuratively, meaning that Israel will live securely among the wicked of the heathens who are likened to wolves and leopards, as it is written: "A wolf of the deserts does spoil them, a leopard watches over their cities" (Jer. 5:6). They will all accept the true religion, and will neither plunder nor destroy, and together with Israel earn a comfortable living in a legitimate way, as it is written: "And the lion shall eat straw like the ox" (Is. 11:7). All similar expressions used in connection with the Messianic age are metaphorical. In the days of King Messiah the full meaning of those metaphors and their allusions will become clear to all.*

(¶ 2 Said the rabbis: "The sole difference between the present and the Messianic days is delivery from servitude to foreign powers" (Sanhedrin 91b). To take the words of the prophets in their literal sense, it appears that the inauguration of the Messianic era will be marked by the war of Gog and Magog; that prior to that war, a prophet will arise to guide Israel and set their hearts aright, as it is written: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet" (Mal. 3:23). He (Elijah) will come neither to declare the clean unclean, nor the unclean clean; neither to disqualify those who are presumed to be of legitimate descent, nor to pronounce qualified those who are presumed to be of illegitimate descent, but to bring peace in the world, as it is said: "And he shall turn the hearts of the fathers to the children" (*ibid.* 3:24).

Some of our sages say that the coming of Elijah will precede the advent of the Messiah. But no one is in a position to know the details of this and similar things until they have come to pass. They

are not explicitly stated by the prophets. Nor have the rabbis any tradition with regard to these matters. They are guided solely by what the Scriptural texts seem to imply. Hence there is a divergence of opinion on the subject. But be that as it may, neither the exact sequence of those events nor the details thereof constitute religious dogmas. No one should ever occupy himself with the legendary themes or spend much time on Midrashic statements bearing on this and like subjects. He should not deem them of prime importance, since they lead neither to the fear of God nor to the love of Him. Nor should one calculate the end. Said the rabbis: "Blasted be those who reckon out the end" (Sanhedrin 97b). One should wait (for his coming) and accept in principle this article of faith, as we have stated before.

(¶ 3 In the days of King Messiah, when his kingdom will be established and all Israel will gather around him, their pedigrees will be determined by him through the Holy Spirit which will rest upon him, as it is written: "And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier . . ." (Mal. 3:3). First he will purify the descendants of Levi, declaring: "This one, of good birth, is a priest; this one, of good birth, is a Levite." Those who are not of good birth will be demoted to the rank of (lay) Israelites, for it is written: "And the Tishatha said to them that they should not eat of the most holy things, till there stood up a priest with Urim and Tummim" (Ezra 2:63). It is inferred therefrom that the genealogy of those considered to be of good lineage will be traced by means of the Holy Spirit, and those found to be of good birth will be made known. The descent of the Israelites will be recorded according to their tribes. He will announce: "This one is of such-and-such a tribe, and this one of such-and-such a tribe." But he will not say concerning those who are presumed to be of pure descent: "This is a bastard; this is a slave." For the rule is: once a family has been intermingled with others, it retains its status.

(¶ 4 The sages and prophets did not long for the days of the Messiah that Israel might exercise dominion over the world, or rule over the heathens, or be exalted by the nations, or that it might eat and drink and rejoice. Their aspiration was that Israel be free to devote itself to the Law and its wisdom, with no one to oppress or disturb it, and thus be worthy of life in the world to come.

(¶ 5 In that era there will be neither famine nor war, neither jeal-

*See *Guide*, III, ch. 11; also II, ch. 29.

cies in Judaism pushed the restorative factor in Messianism decidedly into the foreground. With the influential formulation of this tendency by Maimonides restoration becomes the focus of Messianism. By contrast, the utopian element quite peculiarly recedes and is only maintained at a bare minimum. That it is maintained at all is due only to the fact that a utopian element of the prophetic promise in a precise sense, namely the universal knowledge of God, is related to the supreme good of these philosophical doctrines. But this supreme good is the contemplative life which the medieval philosophers, on account of the presuppositions of their Greek philosophical legacy, were bound to regard as the ideal of a fulfilled life. As the history of all three monotheistic religions teaches us, the theoretical contemplation, which on a purely philosophical basis could be set up as the highest value, was easily able to find a connection with the religious sphere. Occupation with the contents of the Torah and the reflection on God's attributes and rule created within Judaism a traditional framework for such an identification of the *vita contemplativa* with concern for the objects and facts of the Jewish religious realm. The fulfillment of God's law was, after all, always closely connected with its study, without which such fulfillment could not even be considered legitimate. It is this idea of study of the Torah which opens up the highest realm of contemplation to the Jewish philosopher, and it is only from here that the world of *Halakhah* was illumined. The active life, which is ordered by the *Halakhah*, finds its complement and consummation in that sphere which Maimonides never doubted was of superior worth. It was possible to develop this idea of the contemplative life as a positive value without any reference to the Messianic idea. And in fact it appears without any such reference as the crowning element at the conclusion of Maimonides' main philosophical work, his *Guide of the Perplexed*. In other words, it is in principle, though only in rare and isolated cases, independently capable of realization even in an unredeemed world. However, a utopian content of this vision is preserved, since in the Messianic age—incidentally, under purely natural conditions—the leisure for such a *vita contemplativa* will take on entirely different dimensions and the contemplative knowledge of God will become everyone's principal concern. The utopian content does not disappear entirely, but it is now only the intensive realization of a state which fundamentally and in its real essence can be already reached under the conditions of our time. Utopianism is

come to Me; if not, I will take note [Gen. 18:21].¹⁹⁹ So whatever happens in this world that has its source in God, they say it is the inescapable consequences of planetary conjunctions.

They have affirmed the truth of their propositions in order to underrmine the principles of our religion, and to give free rein to their animal instincts and passions as do the beasts and the ostriches. We have been admonished by God against those views in Scripture to the following effect: "If you rebel against Me so that I bring disaster upon you as a punishment of your misdeeds, but you ascribe your reverses to chance rather than to your guilt, I shall increase your afflictions and make them more grievous."²⁰⁰ This is the intent of His words in the Chapter of Admonitions: *If you remain be-keri toward Me, I too will remain be-keri to you* [Lev. 26:27-28]. Now *keri* signifies chance, hazard. It means to say: "If you regard My chastisement as a fortuitous event, I shall bring the most severe calamities upon you, sevenfold for your sins" [Lev. 26:21].²⁰¹ These foregoing remarks have made it abundantly clear that the advent of the Messiah is in no way subject to the influence of the stars.

Indeed one of our keen minds in the province of Andalusia calculated by means of astrology the date of the final redemption, and predicted the coming of the Messiah in a particular year.²⁰² Every one of our distinguished scholars made little of his declaration, discounted what he did, and censured him sharply for it. But grim fate dealt more sternly with him than we could have. For at the very time the Messiah was supposed to arrive, a rebel leader rose in the Maghreb who issued an order of conversion. As you are well aware, the event proved to be a great debacle for the partisans of this prognosticator. Indeed, the hardships experienced by our people in the Diaspora are responsible for these extravagances, for a drowning man catches at a straw.²⁰³

Now, my coreligionists, you be strong and of good courage, all you who wait for the Lord [Ps. 31:25]. Strengthen one another, affirm your faith in the Expected One, may he speedily appear in your midst. *Strengthen the hands that are slack, make firm the tottering knees* [Isa. 35:3]. Remember, God has informed us through Isaiah, the herald of the nation, that the prolongation of the adversities of exile will impel many of our people to believe that God has relinquished and abandoned us—far be it from Him—but He assured us that He would not

abandon and would not relinquish us for He declared: *Zion says, "The Lord has forsaken me, my Lord has forgotten me." Can a woman forget her baby, or disown the child of her womb? Though she might forget, I never could forget you* [Isa. 49:14-15]. God had already divulged this through the First Prophet, saying: *For the Lord your God is a compassionate God: He will not fail you nor will He let you perish* [Deut. 4:31], and also: *Then the Lord your God, will restore your fortunes and take you back in love* [Deut. 30:3].

It is, my coreligionists, one of the fundamental articles of the Jewish faith that most surely the future redeemer of Israel will spring only from the stock of Solomon son of David.²⁰⁴ He will gather our nation, assemble our exile, redeem us from our degradation, propagate the true religion, and exterminate his opponents, as God promised us in the Torah: *What I see for them is not yet, what I behold will not be soon: a star rises from Jacob, a meteor comes forth from Israel; it smashes the brow of Moab, the foundation of all children of Seth. Edom becomes a possession* [Num. 24:17-18].²⁰⁵ The hour of his arrival will be at a time of great catastrophe and dire misfortune for Israel, as was predicted in the verse: *And neither bond nor free is left* [Deut. 32:36].²⁰⁶ Then God will bring him forth and he will fulfill the promises made in his behalf. A later prophet too was alluding to the messianic tribulations when he declared: *But who can endure the day of his coming?* [Mal. 3:2].²⁰⁷ This is the proper belief that one must hold.

From the prophecies of Daniel and Isaiah and from the statements of our sages it is clear that the advent of the Messiah will take place some time subsequent to the universal expansion of the Roman and Arab empires, which is an actuality today. This fact is true beyond question or doubt. Daniel is the last prophet to portray the kingdom of the Arabs, the rise of Muhammad, and then the arrival of the Messiah.²⁰⁸ Similarly, Isaiah intimated that the coming of the Messiah will occur after the rise of the Madman, for he says: *Riders on asses, riders on camels, horsemen in pairs* [Isa. 21:7,9].²⁰⁹ Now the rider on ass is the Messiah, as is evident from the verse, which describes him as *humble, riding on an ass* [Zech. 9:9].²¹⁰ He will follow the man riding a camel, that is the Arab kingdom.²¹¹ The statement *horsemen in pairs* refers to the two empires Edom and Ishmael. A similar interpretation of Daniel's vision concerning the image and the beasts²¹² is

versa. According to his ordinance it would be necessary for the *nouveaux riches* to return their recently acquired property to the newly impoverished. Such a regulation, which would keep property moving in a circle, is the peak of folly.

As to the place where the Messiah will make his first appearance, He informs us that he will first present himself only in the land of Israel as is stated: *He will suddenly come to His temple* [Mal. 3:1].²³⁷ As to the how of his advent, nothing at all will be known about it before it occurs. The Messiah is not a person concerning whom it may be predicted that he will be the son of so-and-so, or of the family of so-and-so. On the contrary, he will be unknown before his coming, but he will prove by means of miracles and wonders that he is the true Messiah. In allusion to his mysterious lineage, God says: *Behold a man whose name is the Shoot, and who shall shoot up* [Zech. 6:12].²³⁸ Similarly Isaiah, referring to his arrival, implies that neither his father nor mother, nor his kith and kin will be known, for he will grow, by his favor, like a sapling, like a root out of arid ground [Isa. 53:2].²³⁹ After his manifestation in Palestine, Israel will be gathered in Jerusalem and the other cities of Palestine. Then the tidings will spread to the East and to the West until it will reach Yemen and those beyond you in India, as we learn from Isaiah: *Go, swift messengers, to a nation far and remote, to a people thrust forth and away . . . which sends out envoys by sea, in papyrus vessels upon the water* [Isa. 18:2].²⁴⁰ The redemption will not be reversed so that it will appear in distant lands first, and ultimately reach Palestine.²⁴¹

What the great powers are that all the prophets from Moses to Malachi ascribe to the Messiah may be inferred from various statements in the twenty-four books of Scripture. The most significant of them is that the report of his advent will strike terror into the hearts of all the kings of the earth, and their kingdoms will fall; neither will they be able to war or revolt against him. They will neither defame nor calumniate him, for the miracles he will perform will frighten them into complete silence. Isaiah refers to the submission of the kings to him in the verse: *Kings shall be silenced because of him* [Isa. 52:15].²⁴² He will slay whom he will by the word of his mouth, none will escape or be saved, as is written: *He shall strike down a land with the rod of*

the preeminence of the Messiah, the manner and place of his appearance, and the marks by which he is to be identified. The Messiah indeed ranks above all prophets after Moses in eminence and distinction, and God has bestowed some gifts upon him that he did not bestow upon Moses, as may be gathered from the following verses: *He shall sense the truth by his reverence for the Lord* [Isa. 11:3]; *The spirit of the Lord shall alight upon him* [Isa. 11:2]; *Justice shall be the girdle of his loins* [Isa. 11:5].²³¹ God has conferred upon him six appellations in the verse: *For a child has been born to us, a son has been given us. And authority has settled on his shoulders. He has been named "the Mighty God is planning grace; the Eternal Father, a peaceable ruler" (Pele, Yoetz, El, Gibbor, Aviad, Sar-shalom)* [Isa. 9:5].²³² He continues to magnify him, and declares: *You are My son; I have fathered you this day* [Ps. 2:7].²³³ All these statements demonstrate the superiority of the Messiah to all the descendants of Adam.

Transcendent wisdom is a *sine qua non* for inspiration. It is an article of our faith that the gift of prophecy is vouchsafed only to the wise, the strong, and the rich. Strong is defined as the ability to control one's passions.²³⁴ Rich signifies wealthy in knowledge. Now if we dare not put trust in a man's pretensions to prophecy if he does not excel in wisdom, how much less must we take seriously the claims of an ignoramus that he is the Messiah. That the man in question is untoured is evident from the order he issued to the people to give away, as you state, all their possessions for eleemosynary purposes. They did right in disobeying him, and he was wrong inasmuch as he disregarded the Jewish law concerning almsgiving. Scripture says: *But of all that a man owns, be it man or beast or land of his holding, nothing that he has proscribed for the Lord may be sold or redeemed* [Lev. 27:28]. The rabbis explain, in their comment on this verse, "part of all that he owns, but not all that he has."²³⁵ The sages accordingly set bounds to the bounty of the beneficent in an explicit ruling, which reads: "He who is inclined to be liberal with the poor, may not part with more than a fifth of his possessions."²³⁶ There is no doubt that the reasoning that led him to claim that he is the Messiah induced him to issue a command to his fellowmen to give away their property and distribute it to the poor. But then the affluent would become destitute and vice