

said to you: Meditate and reflect on this parable, grasp its meaning, and see what the true opinion is. Then it mentions that the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord and that Satan came in the midst of their crowd and multitude. For it does not say, *The sons of God and Satan came to present themselves before the Lord*, which would have meant that all of them were there because of an identical relation, but says: *The sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them*.¹ This form of speech is only used with regard to one who has come without having been for his own sake the object of an intention or having been sought for his own sake, but came in the midst of those who came when those whose presence was the object of an intention presented themselves. Then it mentions that this *Satan* roamed and went all over the earth. Thus there is no relationship whatever between him and the upper world, in going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.⁸ Thus his

Then it mentions that this righteous and perfect man was delivered into the hands of this *Satan* and that all the calamities that befell him with respect to his fortune, and his body, were caused by *Satan*. After having made this supposition it begins to set down speeches of people engaged in speculation and ascribes it to *Job*, and ascribes other opinions to his friends. I shall make them clearly known to you; I am referring to those opinions about which there has been a conflict of thoughts and that are concerned with a story the cause of the whole of which was *Satan*; though all of them, *Job* and his friends, thought that God had done it Himself and not through the intermediary of *Satan*. The most marvellous and extraordinary thing about this story is the fact that knowledge is not attributed in it to *Job*. He is not said to be a wise or a comprehending or an intelligent man. Only moral virtue and righteousness in action are ascribed to him. For if he had been wise, his situation would not have been obscure for him, as will become clear.

Then it graduates his misfortunes according to the various circumstances of people. For some people are not frightened by the loss of their fortune and hold it a small thing, but are horrified by the loss of their children and die because of their grief. Others support with patience and without terror even the loss of their children, but no one endowed with sensation can support pain patiently. Now all men, I mean the vulgar, glory

7. Job 1:6; 2:1. 8. Job 1:7; 2:2.

perhaps Rahabam
suggested to say that
both points are true:
1) suffering is often
self-inflicted b/c it is a
result of ignorance
2) Even when it is not
self-inflicted, true
perspective & wisdom
would teach us not to let it
affect us

These 2 comments
to mine point at
a tension or
contradiction!

God didn't do it, rather
Satan did & say that he
will tell us is the
two himself?
Rahabam does not
say that had he
been wise all
this would not
have occurred

God with their tongues and attribute to Him justice and beneficence when they are happy and prosperous or even when they are in a state of endurable suffering. However, when the misfortunes mentioned in *Job* befall them, some of them become unbelievers and believe that there is little order in all that exists at the time when they lose their fortune; others hold to the belief in justice and order in spite even of their having been stricken by the loss of their fortune, but | do not keep patient if tried by the loss of their children. Others again are patient and keep an untroubled belief even when they lose their children, but none of them supports patiently the pain of the body without complaining and repining either with the tongue or in the heart.

The dictum [of Scripture] referring to the *sons of God* says in the two passages: *To present themselves before the Lord*.⁹ *Satan*, however, though he came among their crowd and multitude a first and a second time, is not said in the first passage to *present himself*. In the second passage, however, it says: *And Satan came also among them to present himself before the Lord*.¹⁰ Understand this notion and consider how extraordinary it is, and see how these notions came to me through something similar to prophetic revelation. For the meaning of the words, *to present themselves before the Lord*, is that they exist as subject to His order in what He wills. Thus *Zechariah*, with reference to the *four chariots that go forth*,¹¹ says: *And the angel answered and said unto me: These are the four airs of the heavens, which go forth after presenting themselves before the Lord of all the earth*.¹² It is consequently manifest that the status of the *sons of God* and that of *Satan* in what exists are not identical. For the *sons of God* are more permanent and lasting, while [*Satan*] also has a certain portion, below them in what exists.

Furthermore one of the marvels of this parable consists in the fact that when it mentions that *Satan* roams especially¹³ over the earth and accomplishes certain actions, it also makes clear that he is forbidden to gain dominion over the soul, that he has been given dominion over all terrestrial things, but that he is kept away by a barrier from the soul. This is the meaning of its saying: *Only spare his soul*.¹⁴ I have already explained to you¹⁵ that in our language the term *soul* is equivocal and that it is applied to the thing that remains of man after death; this is the thing over which *Satan* has no dominion.

After what I have mentioned, | hear the useful dictum of the *Sages* to whom the term *Sages* may truthfully be applied; it clarifies all that is obscure, reveals all that is concealed, and renders manifest most of the

9. Job 1:6; 2:1. 10. Job 2:1. 11. Zech. 6:1. 12. Zech. 6:5.
13. Or: only. 14. Job 2:6. 15. Cf. I 41.

Yetzer hakev
is subject to God's
will & it is
almost not
subject to it.
God wants us to
have a Yetzer but
also wants us to
overcome it

The soul is knowledge
& when there is
knowledge there
is no Yetzer b/c
on next page
Ramban equates
Yetzer with ignorance

mysteries of the Torah. It is their dictum in the Talmud: Rabbi Simon ben Laqish said: Satan, the evil inclination, and the angel of death are one and the same.¹⁶ Thus he makes clear all that we have mentioned in a way that is not obscure for one who is endowed with understanding. It has thus become clear to you that these three terms designate one and the same notion and that all the actions attributed to each of these three are only the action of one and the same thing. This is also expressed literally by the ancient Sages of the Mishnah, who said: 'This is taught: he descends and takes the soul.'¹⁷ It is thus ascends and accuses, [then] he takes permission and takes the soul.¹⁷ It is thus clear to you that David saw in a vision of prophecy at the time of the plague, having his drawn sword in his hand stretched out over Jerusalem,¹⁸ was only shown to him in order to indicate a certain notion. That same notion is also expressed in the vision of prophecy referring to the disobedience of the sons of Joshua the high priest: *And Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him.*¹⁹ Thereupon it is made clear in the following dictum how far [Satan] is from Him, may He be exalted: *The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan, yea, the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee.*²⁰ It was he who was seen also by Balaam on the way in a vision of prophecy, when he says to him: *Behold, I am come forth for an adversary [satan].* Know that the word *satan* derives from [the verb 'satah,' to turn away, figuring for instance in the verse]: *Steh [turn away] from it and pass on,*²² I mean to say that it derives from the notion of turning-away and going-away. For it is he²³ who indubitably turns people away from the ways of truth and makes them perish in the ways of error. The same notion is expressed in the dictum: *For the inclination of man's heart is evil from his youth.*²⁴ You know how well known this notion is in our Law, I mean the notion of good inclination and evil inclination; and you know their dictum: *With both your inclinations.*²⁵ They also say that the evil inclination is produced in the human individual at his birth: *Sin coucheth at the door;*²⁶ as the Torah states literally: *From his youth.*²⁷ On the other hand, good inclination is only found

Ramban equates
Satan with
Distance

16. B.T., Baba Bathra, 16a. 17. B.T., Baba Bathra, 16a. 18. I Chron. 21:16. 19. Zech. 3:1. According to B.T., Sanhedrin, 91a, the verse refers to the sin committed by the sons of Joshua in taking non-Jewish women for wives. 20. Zech. 3:2. 21. To Balaam. Num. 22:32. 22. Prov. 4:15. 23. I.e., Satan. 24. Gen. 8:21. 25. Mishnah, Beraitha, IX 5. The Mishnah passage interprets *thy heart* in Deut. 6:5 (*And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart*), as referring both to the good and the evil inclination. 26. Gen. 4:7. 27. Gen. 8:21. The whole biblical phrase may be translated (if one renders *yesser* by 'inclination'): *For the inclination of man's heart is evil from his youth.*

so Job has no
Yetzer Tov (but ||
at end of story
he acquires it - see
next chapter)

in man when his intellect is perfected.²⁸ That is why [the Sages] say²⁹ that in the parable that deals with the body of the human individual and the difference of its faculties and that figures in [Scripture's] dictum, *There was a little city, and few men within it, and so on*,³⁰ the evil inclination is called a great king and good inclination is called a poor wise child.³¹ All these things are dealt with in well-known texts set down by [the Sages], *may their memory be blessed*. Now as they have explained to us that the evil inclination is Satan, who indubitably is an angel—I mean that he too is called an angel inasmuch as he is found in the crowd of the sons of God—good inclination must consequently also be truly an angel. Consequently that well-known opinion figuring in the sayings of the Sages,³² *may their memory be blessed*, according to which every man is accompanied by two angels, one to his right and the other to his left, identifies these two with good inclination and evil inclination. In the Gemara Shabbath, they, *may their memory be blessed*, say clearly with regard to these two angels that one is good and the other evil.³³ See how many marvels are revealed to us by this dictum and how many incorrect imaginings it abolishes.

As I see it now, I have analyzed and explained the story of Job up to its ultimate end and conclusion. I want, however, to explain to you the opinion ascribed to Job and the opinion ascribed to each of his friends, using proofs that I gleaned from the discourse of each of them. You should not, however, pay attention to the other dicta rendered necessary by the order of the discourse, as I explained to you in the beginning of this Treatise.³⁴ |

CHAPTER 23

And all of them were
wrong

If it is supposed that the story of Job happened, the first thing that occurred was a matter on which there was general agreement between the five, I mean Job and his friends, namely, that everything that had befallen Job was known to Him, may He be exalted, and that God had caused these misfortunes to befall him. All of them were also agreed that injustice was not permitted to Him and wrongdoing not to be ascribed to Him. You will find these

28. Cf. Midrash Qoheleth, 9:14; B.T., Sanhedrin, 91b; Genesis Rabbah, XXXIV.

29. Cf. B.T., Nedarim, 32b. 30. Eccles. 9:14.

31. A great king is mentioned in Eccles. 9:14. Eccles. 9:15 speaks of a poor wise man. A poor wise child is mentioned in Eccles. 4:13.

32. Cf. B.T., Hagigah, 16a. Cf. B.T., Berakhoth, 60b, and Rashi's commentary.

33. B.T., Shabbath, 119b. 34. Cf. I Introduction.

prosperity of the wicked, treating at great length of this subject. He says: *Even when I remember I am affrighted, and horror taketh hold on my flesh. Wherefore do the wicked live, become old, yea, wax mighty in power? Their seed is established in their sight, and so on.*⁵ Having described this perfect prosperity, he begins to say to his interlocutors: Even supposing matters are as you think and the children of the prosperous unbeliever perish after he is no more and their traces vanish, in what way is that prosperous man harmed by what happens to his family after he is no more? He says: *For what pleasure hath he in his house after him, when the number of his months is determined?*⁶ Thereupon he begins to make clear that there is no hope after death, and that nothing remains but neglect.⁷ Accordingly he begins to wonder how it is that He has not neglected in the origin the work of the generation and the creation of the human individual and neglects to govern him. He says accordingly:⁸ *Hast Thou not poured me out as milk, | and curdled me like cheese? and so on.*⁹ This is one of the opinions believed in concerning providence. You know the dictum of the Sages that this opinion of Job's is most unsound. They say:¹⁰ *May there be dust upon Job's mouth.* And they say: *Job wanted to upset the plate.* And they say: *Job denied the resurrection of the dead.* They also say of him: *He began to blaspheme.* With regard to His¹¹ saying, may He be exalted, to Eliphaz: *For ye have not spoken of Me the thing that is right, as My servant Job hath*¹² — the Sages, in order to find an excuse for it, say, *A man is not to be blamed for [what he does when] suffering,*¹³ meaning that he was excused because of his great sufferings. However, this kind of speech does not accord with the parable.¹⁴ The cause of this¹⁵ is as we shall now explain to you. [Job] had given up his opinion, which was most mistaken, and had demonstrated that he had been mistaken therein. This view was such as arises at the first reflection and in the beginning thereof, especially in the case of one whom misfortunes have befallen, while he knows of himself that he had not sinned — which is not denied by anyone. For this reason this opinion is ascribed to Job. However, the latter said all that he did say as long as he had no true knowledge and knew the deity only because of his acceptance of authority, just as the multitude adhering to a Law know it. But when he knew God with a certain knowledge, he admitted that true happiness, which is the knowledge of the deity, is guaranteed to all who know Him and that a human being cannot be

Ramban explicitly
rejecting the only
explanation offered
by Hazal & giving
his own!

He extricated himself
from the clutches
of Satan = Netzer =
ignorance

5. Job 21:6-8. 6. Job 21:21. 7. On the part of God.

8. This refers to the formation of the fetus. 9. Job 10:10.

10. B.T., Baba Bathra, 16a. 11. I.e., God's. 12. Job 42:7.

13. B.T., Baba Bathra, 16b.

14. Literally: is not of the sort of the parable.

15. Of God's words to Eliphaz.

If you only have
Tora without outside
knowledge, you can
not know the very
purpose of Tora
itself

troubled in it by any of all the misfortunes in question. While he had known God only through the traditional stories and not by the way of speculation, Job had imagined that the things thought to be happiness,¹⁶ such as health, wealth, and children, are the ultimate goal. For this reason he fell into such perplexity and said such things as he did. | This is the meaning of his dictum: I had heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth Thee; wherefore I abhor myself and repent of dust and ashes.¹⁷ This dictum may be supposed to mean, Wherefore I abhor all that I used to desire and repent of my being in dust and ashes.¹⁸ It is because of this final discourse indicative of correct apprehension that it is said of him after this: For ye have not spoken of Me the thing that is right, as My servant Job hath.¹⁹

The opinion of Eliphaz concerning this event is also one of the opinions professed concerning providence. For he says that everything that befall Job was deserved by him, for he had committed sins because of which he served these misfortunes. This is what he says to Job: Is not thy wickedness great? and are not thine iniquities without end?²⁰ Then he began to tell Job: The righteousness of your actions and your excellent way of life upon which you relied do not entail your being perfect before God so that you should not be punished: 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, whose foundation is in the dust.²¹ Eliphaz does not cease turning around this notion, I mean to say that he believes that everything that befalls a man is deserved, but that the deficiencies for which we deserve punishment and the way in which we deserve to be punished because of them are hidden from our perception.

The opinion of Bildad the Shuhite on this question consists in the belief in compensation. For he says to Job: If you are innocent and have not sinned, in compensation. For he says to Job: If you are innocent and have not sinned, the reason for these great events is to make great your reward. You will receive the finest of compensations. All this is good for you, so that the good that you will obtain in the end be increased. This is | what he says to Job: If thou art pure and upright, surely now He will awake for thee, and make the habitation of thy righteousness prosperous. And though thy beginning was small, yet thy end should greatly increase.²² You know already how well known this opinion on the subject of providence is, and we have already made it clear.

The opinion of Zophar the Naamathite is the one that considers that

16. Literally: the thought happinesses.
17. Job 42:5-6.
18. Job 2:8.
19. Job 42:7.
20. Job 22:5.
21. Job 4:18-19.
22. Job 8:6-7.

everything follows from the will²³ alone; no reason whatever should be sought for His actions, and the question should not be posed:²⁴ Why did He do this and why did He not do that? For this reason the point of view of justice or a requirement of wisdom should not be sought in whatever the deity does, for His greatness and true reality entail His doing what He wills. But we are incapable of penetrating the secrets of His wisdom, which necessitates His doing what He wills without there being another reason. This is what he says to *Job*:²⁵ *That God would speak, and open His lips against thee; and that He would tell thee the secrets of wisdom, that they may teach thee doubly.*²⁶ *Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?*

Know then and consider how the story, which has perplexed people, is composed and called upon them to adopt the various opinions that we have analyzed above concerning God's providence regarding the created things. All that is required by the classification²⁷ is mentioned and ascribed to one of the men famous at that time because of virtue and knowledge. That would have to be said if this is a parable. Or they might have expressed these opinions in true reality if this is a story that has happened. The opinion attributed to *Job* is in keeping with the opinion of Aristotle; the opinion of *Eliphaz* is in keeping with the opinion of our Law; the opinion of *Bildad* is in keeping with the doctrine of the Mu'tazila; the opinion of *Zophar* is in keeping with the doctrine of the Ash'ariyya. These were the ancient opinions concerning providence.

Thereupon another opinion supervenes, namely, the one attributed to *Elihu*. Hence he is considered by them²⁸ as superior.²⁹ For it is mentioned that he was the youngest among them in point of age and the most perfect among them in knowledge. He started to reprove *Job* and to tax him with ignorance | because of his having manifested his self-esteem and because of his not being able to understand how misfortunes could have befallen him though he performed good deeds. For he had expatiated at length on the goodness of his actions. He also described the opinions of [*Job's*] three friends on providence as senile drivel; and made extraordinary speeches that are full of enigmas, in such a way that if someone considers his discourse, he wonders

23. Of God. 24. Literally: it should not be said. 25. *Job* 11:5-7.

26. The following words are omitted: *Know therefore that God exacteth of thee less than thine iniquity deserveth.*

27. Of the opinions. 28. By *Job* and his three friends.

29. Or, according to manuscript variants: He is considered superior to them; or: He is distinguished from them.

The opinion of Eliphaz
is true, but it must
be properly under-
stood

*mighty men without number, and setteth others in their stead;*³⁶ and many other such circumstances.

Similarly you will find that in the prophetic revelation that came to Job³⁷ and through which his error in everything that he had imagined became clear to him, there is no going beyond the description of natural matters—namely, description of the elements or description of the meteorological phenomena or description of the natures of the various species of animals, but of nothing else. For what is mentioned therein in the way of a description of the *firmaments* and the *heavens*³⁸ and *Orion* and the *Pleiades*³⁹ occur because of their influence upon the atmosphere; for He draws his⁴⁰ attention only to what is beneath the sphere of the moon. *Elihu* too derives his warnings from various species of animals. For he says:⁴¹ *He teacheth us from the beasts of the earth, and maketh us wise from the fowls of heaven.*⁴² In this speech⁴³ He dwells at the greatest length on a description of *Leviathan*, who is a combination of corporeal properties divided between the animals that walk, swim, and fly. | The purpose of all these things is to show that our intellects do not reach the point of apprehending how these natural things that exist in the world of generation and corruption are produced in time and of conceiving how the existence of the natural force within them has originated them. They⁴⁴ are not things that resemble what we make. How then can we wish that His governance of, and providence for, them, may He be exalted, should resemble our governance of, and providence for, the things we do govern and provide for? Rather is it obligatory to stop at this point and to believe that nothing is hidden from Him, may He be exalted. As *Elihu* here 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.*⁴⁵ But the notion of His providence is not the same as the notion of our providence; nor is the notion of His governance of the things created by Him the same as the notion of our governance of that which we govern. The two notions are not comprised in one definition, contrary to what is thought by all those who are confused, and there is nothing in common between the two except the name alone. In the same way, our act does not resemble His act; and the two are not comprised in one and

36. Job 34:24. 37. Cf. Job 38-42. 38. Cf. Job 38:37. 39. Cf. Job 38:31.

40. I.e., Job's. 41. Job 35:11.

42. This seems to be, by and large, the meaning of the verse as understood by Maimonides. However, the translation figuring in the English translation of the Bible may be more correct. It reads: *Who teacheth us more than the beasts of the earth, and maketh us wiser than the fowls of heaven.*

43. Of God. 44. Or: it (i.e., the natural force). 45. Job 34:21-22.

the same definition. Just as natural acts differ from those of craftsmanship, so do the divine governance of, the divine providence for, and the divine purpose with regard to, those natural matters differ from our human governance of, providence for, and purpose with regard to, the things we govern, we provide for, and we purpose. This is the object of the *Book of Job* as a whole; I refer to the establishing of this foundation for the belief and the drawing attention to the inference to be drawn from natural matters, so that you should not fall into error and seek to affirm in your imagination that His knowledge is like our knowledge or that His purpose and His providence and His governance are like our purpose and our providence and our governance. If man knows this, every misfortune will be borne lightly by him. | And misfortunes will not add to his doubts regarding the deity and whether He does or does not know and whether He exercises providence or manifests neglect, but will, on the contrary, add to his love, as is said in the conclusion of the prophetic revelation in question: *Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent of dust and ashes.*⁴⁶ As [the Sages], *may their memory be blessed*, have said: *Those who do out of love and are joyful in suffering.*⁴⁷ If you meditate upon everything I have told you with the attention that ought to be practiced in meditating upon this Treatise and if you consider this *Book of Job*, its meaning will become clear to you; and you will find that I have summed up all its notions, nothing being left aside except such matters as figure there because of the arrangement of the discourse and the continuation of the parables, according to what I have explained to you several times in this Treatise.

CHAPTER 24

The subject of *trial* is also very difficult; it is one of the greatest difficulties of the Law. The *Torah* mentions it in six passages, as I shall make clear to you in this chapter. What is generally accepted among people regarding the subject of *trial* is this: God sends down calamities upon an individual, without their having been preceded by a sin, in order that his reward be increased. However, this principle is not at all mentioned in the *Torah* in an

46. Job 42:6. This is Maimonides' interpretation of the verse, whose latter part is translated in the English Bible: *and repent, seeing I am dust and ashes.*

47. B.T., Shabbath, 88b.

You will not be vexed by the question of why this is happening

CHAPTER 22

The story of *Job*, which is extraordinary and marvellous, belongs to the kind of things we are discussing now. I mean to say that it is a parable intended to set forth the opinions of people concerning providence. You know the explicit statement of some of [the Sages]: *Job has not existed and was not created, but was a parable.*¹ Those, on the other hand, who believe that he *has existed and was created* and that the story has happened, do not know at what time and in what place he lived. For some of the *Sages* say that he lived *in the days of the Patriarchs*, whereas others say that he lived *in the days of Moses*; again others say that he lived *in the days of David*; again others say that he was one of *those who came back from Babylon*. This confirms the opinions of those who say that *he has not existed and was not created*. To sum up: *whether he has existed or not*, with regard to cases² like his, which always exist, all reflecting people become perplexed; and in consequence such things as I have already mentioned to you are said about God's knowledge and His providence. I refer to the assertion that a righteous and perfect man, who was just in his actions and is most careful to avoid sins, was stricken — without his having committed a sin entailing this — by great and consecutive calamities with respect to | his fortune, his children, and his body. Now according to both opinions, the one that considers that *he has existed* and the one that considers that *he has not*, the prologue — I mean the discourse of *Satan*, that of God addressed to *Satan*, and the giving-over [of *Job* to *Satan*] — is indubitably, in the view of everyone endowed with intellect, a parable. However, it is not a parable like all others, but one to which extraordinary notions *and things that are the mystery of the universe*³ are attached. Through it great enigmas are solved, and truths than which none is higher become clear. I shall mention to you what it is possible to mention, and I shall mention to you the words of the *Sages* that have drawn my attention to everything that I understand in this great parable.

The first thing that you will consider is its dictum, *There was a man in the land of Uš*,⁴ in which figures the equivocal word *Uš*. It is the name of an individual: *Uš his first-born*;⁵ and also the imperative of a verb meaning to reflect and meditate: *Ušu ʿeṣah* [*take counsel together*].⁶ It is as if [Scripture]

1. B.T., Baba Bathra, 15a.

2. Or, according to certain manuscripts: stories like his.

3. The expression quoted occurs in B.T., Hagigah, 13a, but refers there to Ezekiel's vision.

4. Job 1:1. 5. Gen. 22:21. 6. Isa. 8:10.