

The Rabbi: Dost thou think that the languages are eternal and without beginning?

54. Al Khazari: No; they undoubtedly had a beginning, which originated in a conventional manner. Evidence of this is found in their composition of nouns, verbs, and particles. They originated from sounds derived from the organs of speech.

[55. The Rabbi: Didst thou ever see any one who contrived a language, or didst thou hear of him?]

56. Al Khazari: Neither the one nor the other. There is no doubt that it appeared at some time, but prior to this there was no language concerning which one nation, to the exclusion of another, could come to any agreement.

(Contra: Noam Chomsky's Universal Grammar – but also supports the Kuzari's argument, see also R. Hirasch to Gen. 11)

57. The Rabbi: Didst thou ever hear of a nation which possessed different traditions with regard to the generally acknowledged week which begins with the Sunday and ends with the Sabbath? How is it possible that the people of China could agree with those of the western islands without common beginning, agreement and convention?

58. Al Khazari: Such a thing would only have been possible if they had all come to an agreement. This, however, is improbable, unless all men are the descendants of Adam, of Noah, or of some other ancestor from whom they received the hebdomadal calculation.

(Contra: There are various explanations of why the number seven was chosen. There are seven natural celestial objects which are visible to the naked eye and which move around the sky independent of the celestial dome: i.e., the Sun, the Moon, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn. The number seven also divides more or less evenly into the length of both the lunar month and the year: the lunar month is approximately four seven-day weeks long (28 days versus 29.53 days) and the year is approximately 52 seven-day weeks long (364 days versus 365.24 days.) Seven is also the largest prime number which is less than the number ten, which is the base for most counting systems)

59. The Rabbi: That is what I meant. East and West agree on the decimal system. What instinct induced them to keep to the number ten, unless it was a tradition handed down by the first one who did so?

(Contra: Some cultures do, or used to, use other numeral systems, including pre-Columbian Mesoamerican cultures such as the Maya, who use a vigesimal system (using all twenty fingers and toes), some Nigerians who use several duodecimal (base 12) systems, the Babylonians, who used sexagesimal (base 60), and the Yuki, who reportedly used quaternary (base 4).)

Fourty of  
Shtandus  
Argument

60. Al Khazari: Does it not weaken thy belief if thou art told that the Indians have antiquities and buildings which they consider to be millions of years old?

61. The Rabbi: It would, indeed, weaken my belief had they a fixed form of religion, or a book concerning which a multitude of people held the same opinion, and in which no historical discrepancy could be found. Such a book, however, does not exist. Apart from this, they are a dissolute, unreliable people, and arouse the indignation of the followers of religions through their talk, whilst they anger them with their idols, talismans, and witchcraft. To such things they pin their faith, and deride those who boast of the possession of a divine book. Yet they only possess a few books, and these were written to mislead the weak-minded. To this class belong astrological writings, in which they speak of ten thousands of years, as the book on the Nabataean Agriculture, in which are mentioned the names of Janbūshār, Sagrit and Roanai. It is believed that they lived before Adam, who was the disciple of Janbūshār, and such like.

62. Al Khazari: If I had supported my arguments by reference to a negro people, i.e. a people not united upon a common law, thy answer would have been correct. Now what is thy opinion of the philosophers who, as the result of their careful researches, agree that the world is without beginning, and here it does not concern tens of thousands, and not millions, but unlimited numbers of years.

63. The Rabbi: There is an excuse for the Philosophers. Being Grecians, science and religion did not come to them as inheritances. They belong to the descendants of Japheth, who inhabited the north, whilst that knowledge coming from Adam, and supported by the divine influence, is only to be found among the progeny of Shem, who represented the successors of Noah and constituted, as it were, his essence. This knowledge has always been connected with this essence, and will always remain so. The Greeks only received it when they became powerful, from Persia. The Persians had it from the Chaldaeans. It was only then that the famous [Greek] Philosophers arose, but as soon as Rome assumed political leadership they produced no philosopher worthy the name.

64. Al Khazari: Does this mean that Aristotle's philosophy is not deserving of credence?

65. The Rabbi: Certainly. He exerted his mind, because he had no tradition from any reliable source at his disposal. He meditated on the beginning and end of the world, but found as much difficulty in the theory of a beginning as in that of eternity. Finally, these abstract speculations which made for eternity, prevailed, and he found no reason to inquire into the chronology or derivation of those who lived before him. Had he lived among a people with well authenticated and generally acknowledged traditions, he would have applied his deductions and arguments to establish the theory of creation, however difficult, instead of eternity, which is even much more difficult to accept.

66. Al Khazari: Is there any decisive proof?

67. The Rabbi: Where could we find one for such a question? Heaven forbid that there should be anything in the Bible to contradict that which is manifest or proved! On the

other hand it tells of miracles and the changes of ordinary, things newly arising, or changing one into the other. This proves that the Creator of the world is able to accomplish what He will, and whenever He will. The question of eternity and creation is obscure, whilst the arguments are evenly balanced. The theory of creation derives greater weight from the prophetic tradition of Adam, Noah, and Moses, which is more deserving of credence than mere speculation. If, after all, a believer in the Law finds himself compelled to admit an eternal matter and the existence of many worlds prior to this one, this would not impair his belief that this world was created at a certain epoch, and that Adam and Noah were the first human beings.

On Aristotle:

1. Learned from Jews:

2. a.Pythagoras –Menashe Ben Israel

Of Aristotle himself Josephus has preserved ("Contra Apionem," i. 22) a very interesting passage from the writings of Clearchus, the pupil of Aristotle, the authenticity of which is maintained by such authorities as Lobeck, Bernays, von Gutschmid ("Kleine Schriften," iv. 578), and Theo. Reinach ("Textes d'Auteurs Grecs et Romains Relatifs au Judaïsme," 1895, pp. 10-12):

"In his first book on Sleep he relates of Aristotle, his master, that he had a discourse with a Jew; and his own account was that what this Jew said merited admiration and showed philosophical erudition. To speak of the race first, the man was a Jew by birth and came from Coëlyria [Palestine]. These Jews are derived from the philosophers of India. In India the philosophers call themselves Kalani, and in Syria Jews, taking their name from the country they inhabit, which is Judea; the name of their capital is rather difficult to pronounce: they call it Jerusalem. Now this man, who had been the guest of many people, had come down from the highland to the seashore [Pergamus]. He was a Greek not only in language, but in soul; so much so that, when we happened to be in Asia in about the same places whither he came, he conversed with us and with other persons of learning in order to test our wisdom. And as he had had intercourse with a large number of sages, he imparted to us more knowledge of his own."

## 2.Regarded as a Jew.

Joseph b. Shem-Tob assures his reader that he had seen it written in an old book that Aristotle at the end of his life had become a proselyte ("ger zedek"). The reputed statement of Clearchus is repeated by Abraham Bibago in the guise of the information that Aristotle was a Jew of the tribe of Benjamin, born in Jerusalem, and belonging to the family of Kolajah (Neh. xi. 7). As authority for it Eusebius is cited, who, however, has merely the above statement of Josephus.

According to another version, Aristotle owed his philosophy to the writings of King Solomon, which were presented to him by his royal pupil Alexander, the latter having obtained them on his conquest of Jerusalem. With this legend of Alexander is associated the celebrated "Letter of Aristotle" to that monarch. Herein Aristotle is made to recant all his previous philosophic teachings, having been convinced of their incorrectness by a Jewish sage. He acknowledges as his chief error the claim that truth is to be ascertained by the reasoning faculty only, inasmuch as divine revelation is the sole way to truth. This "letter" is the conclusion of an

alleged book of Aristotle, "two hands thick," in which he withdraws, on the authority of a Jew, Simeon, his views with regard to the immortality of the soul, to the eternity of the world, and similar tenets. The existence of this book is mentioned for the first time about 1370 by Hayim of Briviesca, who expressly declares that he heard from Abraham ibn Zarza that the latter received it from the vizir Ibn al-Khatib (d. 1370). He does not state whether this apocrypha was written in Arabic or Hebrew; the Hebrew "Letter," as received, does not appear like a translation. It is safe to assume with Hayim, that the Simeon mentioned was none other than Simeon the Just, about whose supposed relations to Alexander the Great the oldest Jewish sources give us information (Yoma, 69a; see Alexander the Great). Identical with this letter is the prayer of Aristotle which the Polish Bahurim had in their prayer-books during the sixteenth century (Isseles, Responsa No. 6; ed. Hanau, 10a.

A second "Letter" by Aristotle to Alexander contains wise counsel on politics; he advises the monarch that he must endeavor to conquer the hearts, and not simply the bodies, of his subjects (preface to "Sod ha-Sodot"). See Samter, "Monatsschrift," (1901) p. 453.

The essay entitled "The Apple," also ascribed to Aristotle, is tinged with a similar tendency. In it Aristotle refers to Noah and to Abraham, "the first philosopher." It was these spurious writings of Aristotle which gained for him the esteem of the cabalists, as evidenced by the very flattering utterances of Moses Botarel (Commentary on "Yeẓirah," 26b). The story of the love-affair between Aristotle and Alexander's wife, in which the former comes off very badly—current in the Middle Ages (see Peter Alfonsi, "Disciplina Clericalis," vii.) and originating in a Hindoo fable (see "Pantschatantra," ed. Benfey, ii. 462)—was also told in Jewish circles, and exists in manuscript by Judah b. Solomon Cohen (thirteenth century), in Spirgati's catalogue, No. 76 (1900), p. 18.

Bibliography: Abraham Bibago, *Derek Emuna*, p. 46;  
Azaria de Rossi, *Meor Enayim*, ed. Benjacob, p. 236;  
Gedallah ibn Yahyah, *Shalshelet ha-Kabbala*, ed. Warsaw, 1889, pp. 139, 140, under the heading of *Hakme Yawan*

3. At *Guide* II.15, Maimonides states that Aristotle himself must have realized that he has no real proof with which to demonstrate that the universe is eternal because "it was Aristotle who taught mankind the methods, the rules and the conditions of demonstration".