

## Did Hasdai Crescas Read Averroes’ *Discourse on God’s Knowledge* ?<sup>\*</sup>

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**Abstract:** The two medieval Hebrew translations of Averroes’ short *Discourse on God’s Knowledge* have recently been edited by Silvia Di Donato. Did Hasdai Crescas, who cites Averroes by name 20 times in his *Light of the Lord*, read this work? Although Crescas uses arguments similar to those found in the *Discourse*, it cannot be proved he read it. The term “eternal knowledge” is found 13 times in Averroes’ *Discourse* and 4 times in Crescas’ *Light*. In his other works, Averroes avoids the term, and it is found either never or very rarely in them. The term is similarly avoided by Maimonides. It was, however, a favorite of Alghazali, and it is found also in Judah Halevi’s *Kuzari*. Averroes’ frequent use of the term in his *Discourse* is thus curious to say the least.

**Key Words:** Averroes Alghazali, Hasdai Crescas, Eternal Knowledge

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Following the publication of her editions of the two medieval Hebrew translations of Averroes' *Discourse on God's Knowledge*<sup>①</sup>, Dr. Silvia Di Donato put an interesting question to me: "Did Rabbi Hasdai Crescas (c. 1340-1410/11) read Averroes' *Discourse*?" In what follows, I try to answer this question, although, I will admit at the outset, I was unable to arrive at a definitive conclusion.

Crescas discussed the problem of God's knowledge in his Hebrew book, *The Light of the Lord (Or Adonai)*, Book II, Part 1.<sup>②</sup> His discussion is long, intricate, and frankly somewhat wearisome. He critically and profoundly engages the discussions by Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed*, Part III, Chapters 16, 19-21<sup>③</sup>(and also *Mishneh Torah*, Hilkhot Teshubah, Chapter 5, Paragraph 5), and Gersonides' *Wars of the Lord*, Book III<sup>④</sup>(and also his Commentaries on the Bible and on Averroes' Aristotelian Commentaries).

Did Crescas read Averroes' *Discourse* (*qawl*, short discourse, speech), commonly but misleadingly called "The Appendix" (*damīma*)? There are some indications that he did, but others that he did not. There is similarly no proof that he read Averroes' *Decisive Treatise (Faṣl al-Maqāl)*, which makes reference to the *Discourse*.<sup>⑤</sup> Averroes writes there: "Prompted by one of our friends [presumably the Almohad ruler Abū Ya'qūb Yūsuf], we have devoted

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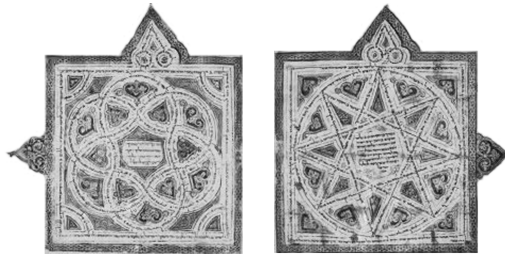
① Silvia Di Donato, "La tradizione ebraica dell'opuscolo di Averroè sulla scienza divina," in *Philosophical Translations in Late Antiquity and in the Middle Ages in Memory of Mauro Zonta*, eds. Francesca Gorgoni, Irene Kajon, and Luisa Valente (Rome: Aracne, 2022), 141-169. References to the two Hebrew translations of the *Discourse* will be to Di Donato's essay.

② Shlomo Fisher ed., *The Light of the Lord* (Jerusalem: Ramot, 1990); English version, *Light of the Lord*, trans. Roslyn Weiss (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018). Quotations of all translations in this paper are modified for uniformity.

③ *The Guide of the Perplexed*, trans. Shlomo Pines (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963). On Maimonides' position and its affinity to Averroes', see Charles H. Manekin, "Maimonides on Divine Knowledge—Moses of Narbonne's Averroist Reading," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 76 (2002): 52-74.

④ *Milḥamot Adonai*, Books I-V, eds. Charles Touati and Ofer Elior (Tel-Aviv: University of Tel-Aviv Press, 2018); English version, *The Wars of the Lord*, trans. Seymour Feldman (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1984-1999).

⑤ References to the *Discourse* and the *Decisive Treatise* will be to Averroes, *The Book of the Decisive Treatise and Epistle Dedicatory*, ed. and trans. Charles E. Butterworth (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 2008).



a short discourse [*qawl*] to this question [*masāla*].”<sup>①</sup>

Of course, Crescas *could very well* have read both works. He did not read Arabic. However, the *Discourse* had been translated twice into Hebrew. It was translated once by Rabbi Todros ben Meshullam Todrosi in 1340, titled *Ma’amar ba-Madda’ ha-Qadum* (“Discourse on the Eternal Knowledge”); and once by an anonymous translator later in the same century, titled *Iggeret be-’Inyan ha-Safeq ha-Qoreh bi-Yedi’at ha-Qadmon yit’aleh* (“Epistle on the Doubt concerning the Knowledge of the Eternal One, may He be exalted”).<sup>②</sup> One Hebrew translator thus held the title to refer to *al-’ilm al-qadīm* (the Eternal Knowledge) and the other held it to refer to *’ilm al-qadīm* (“Knowledge of The Eternal One”). Is knowledge merely a possession or attribute of God (as the use of the construct case suggests), or is it God Himself? Is Averroes’ *Discourse* about the knowledge of the Eternal One or about the Eternal Knowledge? Muhsin Mahdi sums up Averroes’ opinion in the *Discourse*: “God’s eternal knowledge *is* God Himself.”<sup>③</sup> Nonetheless, Averroes may have been intentionally ambiguous on this question (as were Avicenna and Maimonides).

As for the *Decisive Treatise*, it was translated anonymously into Hebrew in approximately 1300, titled *Ha-Hebdel ha-Ne’emar she-beyn ha-Torah ve-ha-Hokhmah min ha-Debequt* (“The Determination concerning the Connection

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① *Decisive Treatise*, 13. The Arabic manuscripts do not preserve a title for the *Discourse*. However, in this text in the *Decisive Treatise* it is called a “discourse,” “short discourse,” “statement,” or “speech.” Butterworth, following Mahdi, refers to the work as an “epistle dedicatory.” Di Donato refers to it as an “epistola,” “opuscolo,” or “discorso.” The Arabic text of the *Discourse*, p. 38, begins with the prefatory comment: “The question [*masāla*] mentioned by the sheikh Abū al-Walid [ibn Rushd] in the *Decisive Treatise*.” These two citations from the *Discourse* and the *Decisive Treatise* are thus mutually referring.

② Silvia Di Donato, “La tradizione,” 155-156, found evidence that the anonymous translator made some use of the Todros translation. It is, however, not impossible that the anonymous translation was made independently, but the text was modified by a glossist who compared the earlier Todros translation. According to Di Donato’s analysis, the two translations are based on essentially the same Arabic original. On Todros and Averroes, see Steven Harvey and Oded Horezky, “Averroes ex Averroe,” *Aleph* 21 (2021): 7-78.

③ Mahdi, “Averroës on Divine Law and Human Wisdom,” in *Ancients and Moderns: Essays on the Tradition of Political Philosophy in Honor of Leo Strauss*, ed. Joseph Cropsey (New York: Basic Books, 1964), 121.

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between the Law and Wisdom”).<sup>①</sup>

My disappointing conclusion that I cannot prove that Crescas made use of the *Discourse* or the *Decisive Treatise* is perhaps surprising. Crescas had great respect for Averroes. He twice includes him among the “great philosophers” (*gedole ha-filosofim*), together with al-Fārābī, Avicenna, and Rabbi Moses al-Lāwī;<sup>②</sup> and he names him as the latest of the four most important commentators on Aristotle, following Alexander of Aphrodisias, Themistius, and al-Fārābī.<sup>③</sup>

Together with Maimonides (1138-1204) and Gersonides (1288-1344), Averroes (1126-1198) is one of the three medieval philosophers who constitute the main target of Crescas’ radical critique of Aristotelianism in his *Light of the Lord*. However, these three philosophers did not only constitute the target of his critique, they also provided the conceptual framework within which he developed his own original philosophy. Crescas’ critique of Aristotelianism (that is, of Averroes, Maimonides, and Gersonides) is a critique *from the inside*.<sup>④</sup>

Averroes is mentioned explicitly by name 20 times in 14 different chapters of the *Light of the Lord*. 16 mentions are found in Book I, which contains the critique of Aristotelian physics and the discussion of the proofs of God. One mention is found in Book II, which treats of the fundamental beliefs of Judaism (and that one mention is significantly in the Part concerning God’s knowledge). One mention is found in Book III, which treats of the non-fundamental beliefs of Judaism. Two mentions are found in Book IV, which treats of disputed questions. All these explicit references are to Averroes’ Aristotelian Commentaries, especially to his Middle Commentary on the *Physics*.<sup>⑤</sup> Crescas studied his Aristotle systematically with Averroes’

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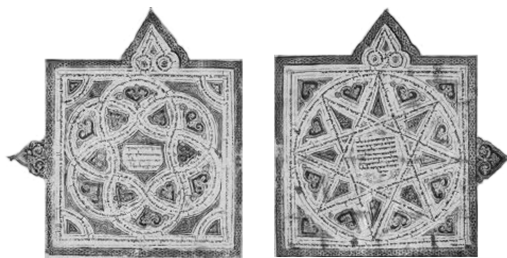
① Norman Golb, “The Hebrew Translation of Averroes’ *Faṣṭ al-Maqāl*,” *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 25 (1956): 91-113.

② *Light*, I, 3, 3, 113-114; IV, 12, 411-412; English, 112-114, 352-353.

③ *Light*, I, Introduction, 13; English, 30. See also Harry Austryn Wolfson, *Crescas’ Critique of Aristotle* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1929), 130-131.

④ See my “Crescas’ Attitude toward Averroes,” in *Averroes and Averroism in Medieval Jewish Thought*, eds. Racheli Haliva, Yoav Meyrav, and Daniel Davies (Leiden: Brill, 2024), 350-360.

⑤ See *ibid.* for a discussion of all 20 mentions.



commentaries, and with Gersonides' supercommentaries.

What about Averroes' *Incoherence of the Incoherence*? At least one Hebrew translation, made by Rabbi Qalonymus ben David ben Todros before 1328, was available in Crescas' time. Although Crescas never cites this book by name, there are certain passages in the *Light of the Lord* which definitely reflect the debates of Alghazali and Averroes. For example, his discussion of the problem of many Gods in *Light*, Book I, Part 3, Chapter 4, clearly borrows arguments from Alghazali's *Incoherence of the Philosophers* and counter-arguments from Averroes' *Incoherence of the Incoherence*. However, this does not prove that he had a copy of either Alghazali's book or Averroes' book. The relevant debate between Alghazali and Averroes was quoted verbatim in Moses Narboni's Commentary on Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed*, and Crescas definitely used Narboni's Commentary.<sup>①</sup> Similarly, Wolfson cites the *Incoherence of the Philosophers* and the *Incoherence of the Incoherence* more than a dozen times in his *Crescas' Critique of Aristotle*, but concludes that Crescas may not have read either book and if he did use them it was in an ancillary way.<sup>②</sup> Crescas' student, Rabbi Zerahiah Halevi Saladin, translated Alghazali's *Incoherence of the Philosophers* from Arabic to Hebrew—but it is not clear if he completed a draft of it in time for Crescas to have used it in writing the *Light*. Be that as it may, Zerahiah's decision to translate this work presumably reflects his teacher's interest in getting a Hebrew copy of it.

The situation is the same with regard to Averroes' *Exposition of the Methods of the Proofs*. An anonymous translation had been made no later than 1347<sup>③</sup>, and thus Crescas could theoretically have read it, but he makes no explicit reference to it.

Well, did Crescas read Averroes' *Discourse*? Let's take a glance at some of the evidence.

Averroes discusses the problem of God's knowledge in the *Discourse*, the

① See Wolfson's comment, *Crescas' Critique*, 14; and see my "The Problem of Many Gods in Al-Ghazali, Averroes, Maimonides, Crescas, and Sforno," in *Sceptical Paths*, eds. Guiseppe Veltri, Racheli Haliva, Stefan Schmid, and Emidio Spinelli (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019), 83-96.

② *Crescas' Critique*, 11-18.

③ Di Donato, "Le *Kitāb al-Kašf 'an manāhiḡ al-'adilla* d'Averroès," *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 25 (2015): 108.

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*Decisive Treatise*, the *Exposition*, the *Incoherence of the Incoherence*, and in some of his Aristotelian Commentaries. The *Discourse* is wholly devoted to the problem. It is not always easy to discern if a thinker is influenced by Averroes' discussion in the *Discourse* or by a parallel discussion in one of his other works. However, the *Discourse* does have certain distinct features.

As Muhsin Mahdi emphasizes, the *Discourse* was an epistle written for a prince, not for a philosopher.<sup>①</sup> The distinguished addressee is probably Averroes' patron, the Almohad ruler Abū Ya'qūb Yūsuf. Averroes explicitly states that he is *not* attempting to give a full solution to this problem in such a short work, but only to give "the gist" of it.<sup>②</sup> *Nota bene!* The *Discourse* does not present Averroes' final position on this question. It is a short epistle written for a non-philosopher. In reading an epistle, one must take into consideration not only the personality of the author, but also that of the addressee. It's a dialogical form.

The most striking terminological feature of the *Discourse* is its use of the term "eternal knowledge" (*al-'ilm al-qadīm*). Mahdi observes that the term appears 13 times in the *Discourse* (not including the title), but not once in the *Decisive Treatise* or the *Exposition*.<sup>③</sup> I may add that it also does not appear in the *Incoherence of the Incoherence* or in any other works of Averroes which I have been able to check online. Thus, the fact that the term appears 13 times in the tiny five-page *Discourse* and never (or, let's say, rarely) in all his other works—is to say the least a curiosity. It is almost a joke.

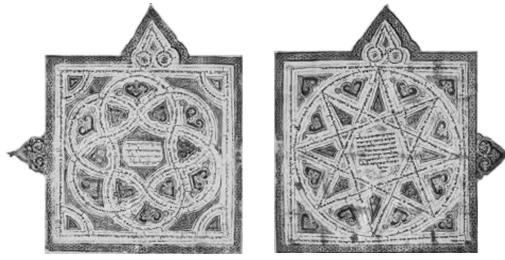
The term was used often by Averroes' adversary Alghazali. He uses it, for example, in his *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* ("Revival of the Religious Sciences"), Quarter I, Book 2, Section 3, Pillar 2: "The eighth principle is that His knowledge is *eternal*. He has never ceased knowing Himself and His

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① Muhsin Mahdi, "Averroës on Divine Law," 118-119. See 121: "Whatever his accomplishments in the sciences engaged in by the dialectical theologians or the philosophers, the prince is addressed as a ruler whose main achievements lay elsewhere," etc.

② *Discourse*, 40: "The solution of this doubt requires a long discussion [*kalām ta'wīl*]. Here... we are intent upon stating the gist [*nukta*] of how it is resolved." Mahdi, "Averroës on Divine Law," 119, translates "*nukta*" as "subtle allusion." If so, Averroës is not revealing the gist of the philosophic solution, but presenting only a veiled allusion to it.

③ Mahdi, "Averroës on Divine Law," 129, n. 25.



attributes, as well as everything He creates. [The coming into being of] everything He creates is not new to Him, for it comes into being by virtue of His *eternal knowledge* [*al-'ilm al-qadīm*].”<sup>①</sup>

The term appears twice in Alghazali’s *Incoherence of the Philosophers* :

In Discussion I , First Proof, he accuses the Aristotelians of denying that God knows particulars, a conclusion that necessarily follows according to him from the premises that (1) the knower is the known and that (2) the known comprises a plurality of *intelligibilia*. He remarks that the only defense the Aristotelians have is to say that there is no analogy between “eternal knowledge” (*al-'ilm al-qadīm*) and “temporal knowledge.” In his reply to Alghazali in his *Incoherence of the Incoherence*, Averroes does *not* use the term “eternal knowledge” and avoids mentioning the charge regarding the plurality of *intelligibilia* known by God.<sup>②</sup>

In Discussion III , Alghazali argues that it is possible for an eternal cause to have a simultaneous effect, e.g., the eternal knowledge (*al-'ilm al-qadīm*) is the cause of the Eternal One’s knowing. In his reply, Averroes again does *not* use the term “eternal knowledge,” but agrees that according to the Aristotelians the eternal God eternally creates the eternal world.<sup>③</sup>

One might be forgiven if he or she got the impression that Averroes is boycotting the term “eternal knowledge.” He persistently avoids it—even in places where we would most expect him to use it.

The term is used by Rabbi Judah Halevi, whose religious philosophy was influenced by Alghazali. He writes in his *Kuzari*, V, 18: “His eternal knowledge [*'ilmuhu al-qadīm*] is the cause of all that comes into being.”<sup>④</sup>

As far as I have been able to check, it is not used by Maimonides, whose philosophic position is often very close to that of his fellow Cordovan.

The thrust of the argument offered in the *Discourse* is that eternal

① Alghazali, *The Foundations of the Articles of Faith*, trans. Nabih Amin Faris (Lahore: Ashraf, 1963), 25-26.

② Averroes, *The Incoherence of the Incoherence*, trans. Simon van den Bergh (London: Gibbs Memorial, 1969), 7-8.

③ Ibid., 102-104.

④ David H. Baneth and Haggai Ben-Shammai eds. (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1977), 216 (Hirschfeld, 336, I. 6). Rabbi Judah ibn Tibbon translates: *madda'o ha-qadmon*.

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knowledge is not temporal knowledge, and thus what is true of the latter is not necessarily true of the former. This is surprisingly the very same argument mentioned by Alghazali in his *Incoherence of the Philosophers*, Discussion I, First Proof 1, when he remarked sarcastically that the only defense the Aristotelians have against his criticisms is to claim that there is no analogy between “eternal knowledge” and “temporal knowledge.” Why on earth, one must ask, did Averroes appropriate in the *Discourse* not only his adversary’s vocabulary (“eternal knowledge”) but also his counterfactual argument (the one from the lack of an analogy between eternal and temporal knowledge).

In all of Averroes’ various discussions of God’s knowledge, two major problems arise concerning God’s knowledge of particulars: (1) If the Knower is the Known, and God knows a plurality of things, then God is a plurality; (2) If the Knower is the Known, and God knows things which are continuously changing, then God too undergoes change.

In his reply to Alghazali in the *Incoherence of the Incoherence*, Discussion I, First Proof, Averroes mentions *only* the problem of change, and not that of plurality. Similarly, in the *Discourse*, Averroes mentions *only* the problem of change, and not that of plurality.

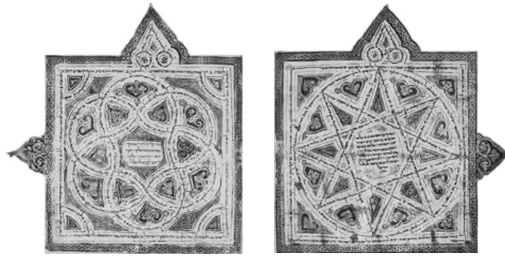
One suspects that in Averroes’ view the argument from God’s eternal knowledge is sufficient to rebut the charge of God’s changeability, but *not* to rebut that of God’s plurality. If God’s knowledge is eternal, it is not changeable—but it still may be plural. The *Discourse* solves 50% of the problem—the easier 50%.<sup>①</sup>

Having clarified briefly these aspects of Averroes’ position in the

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① In point of fact, it seems that the argument from the plurality of objects known led Averroes to conclude that God does not know particulars. See Steven Harvey, “Book Reviews,” *Iyyun* 47 (1998): 82–83: “The most telling statement is probably the following comment from [Averroes’] Long Commentary on *Metaphysics*  $\Lambda$  1075a10, where he boldly speaks in his own name...: ‘[According to] Themistius... it is possible that the [divine] Intellect intellects simultaneously many *intellecta*. This contradicts our assertion [*qawluna*] that He intellects His own Essence and nothing outside of It...The truth is that He knows His own essence only’... Here Averroes clearly sides with Aristotle and Alexander and rejects Themistius’ explanation... [T]he uncharacteristic and unexpected personal comment, ‘this contradicts our assertion’ instead of ‘his [Aristotle’s] assertion’ shows Averroes’ desire to reveal to discerning readers that his position on the question of God’s knowledge of things other than Himself is one with that of Aristotle. This is something Averroes did not do in his popular works.”





*Discourse*, we may now turn to our question: Did Crescas read it?

Crescas uses the term “eternal knowledge” (*yedi'ato ha-qedumah*) four times in his *Light of the Lord*: once in Book II, Part 1, Chapter 1; and three times in one passage in Book II, Part 1, Chapter 4.

In Book II, Part 1, Chapter 1, he writes:

Now, that God's knowledge does not make the possible necessary, this is self-evident... It says, “O Lord, Thou hast searched me, and known me” [Psalms 139: 1]... that is, He *had known me* already beforehand. This indicates that which is the very truth itself, that His knowledge is eternal [*yedi'ato qedumah*] and unchanging.<sup>①</sup>

According to Crescas' homiletic exegesis of Psalms 139:1, God's knowledge of an individual is not empirical but eternally prior. This short passage cannot be definitively linked to Averroes' *Discourse*.

In the more substantive passage in Book II, Part 1, Chapter 4, he writes:

As for the doubt... based on the premise that true knowledge should be of an existent thing, it is valid with regard to *our* knowledge which is acquired from existent things [*yedi'atenu ha-qenuyah*], but with regard to His knowledge which bestows existence to things [*yedi'ato ha-maqnah*] it is fallacious. For His knowledge of things concerns that which has the most sublime existence possible, namely, that which is in His essence, for it is He who bestows and overflows existence to things [*ha-maqneh ve-ha-mashpia' ha-meš'i'ut la-debarim*]. Since these things are known to Him in His eternal knowledge [*yedi'ato ha-qedumah*], they clearly have existence...

As for the doubt... based on the [presumed] change in knowledge when one alternative of a possibility is realized, thus removing the nature of the possible, its resolution is as follows... Since it was His eternal knowledge [*yedi'ato ha-qedumah*] that at that moment the nature of the possible would change, when that moment arrives and what occurs is just as He has [eternally] known it, there is no change in His knowledge.

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① *Light*, 127; English, 123-124.

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As for the doubt... based on the premise that if we posit as possible the contradictory of the alternative known by God, and if it comes to be, two absurdities follow: one, a change in His knowledge; and second, His eternal knowledge [ *yedi'ato ha-qedumah* ] was not knowledge but an erroneous conjecture... This is inescapable—unless we posit that the alternative He knew was possible in one sense and determined in another sense.<sup>①</sup>

The three uses of the term “eternal knowledge” in this passage are significant, and might *prima facie* be seen as evidence that Crescas read the *Discourse*. However, the three uses are not very closely connected to Averroes’ text. It is true that Crescas repeats here Averroes’ fundamental argument that the presupposition of God’s eternal knowledge solves the problem of change in God. However, despite my earnest efforts, I was unable to detect a literary connection between Crescas’ words here and Averroes’ *Discourse*. Crescas may well have borrowed the term “eternal knowledge” and the argument from Alghazali, Judah Halevi, or some philosopher influenced by Alghazali or Judah Halevi, like for example Moses Narboni. With his anti-Aristotelian and neo-Platonic tendencies, Crescas was much closer to Alghazali and Halevi than to Averroes (even though the presence of Averroes in the *Light of the Lord* is far more prominent than that of Alghazali or Halevi).

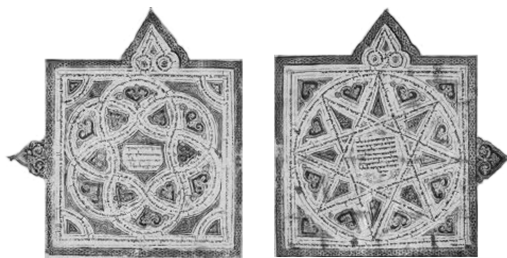
In addition, Crescas is most preoccupied in this text with the alleged conflict between God’s foreknowledge and human choice, a subject which is not mentioned explicitly in the *Discourse*.

A crucial pair of terms for Averroes in the *Discourse* is “cause” and “effect.” God’s knowledge is the *cause* of things, ours is their *effect*. In Averroes’ words, “existence is the cause [ *illa* ; both Hebrew translations: *illah* ] and reason [ *sebab* ; both Hebrew translations: *sibbah* ] of our knowledge, while eternal knowledge is the cause and reason of existence.”<sup>②</sup> Crescas of course agrees with this opinion, but does not happen to use the terms “cause” and

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① *Light*, 147-148; English, 140. I.e., one can make sense out of God’s pre-eternal knowledge of human choice only if one posits that human choice, like everything else, is strictly determined. See *Light*, II, 5. Cf. my *Physics and Metaphysics in Hasdai Crescas* (Amsterdam: Gieben, 1998), 137-157.

② *Discourse*, 41, ll. 1-2; Todros, 162, ll. 16-17; Anonymous, 166, ll. 5-6.



“effect.” He expresses the same idea as follows in *Light*, Book II, Part 1, Chapter 1: “The particular difference between His knowledge and our knowledge... is that from His knowledge... the known objects have acquired [*qanu*] their existence, while our knowledge is... acquired [*qenuyah*] from the objects of knowledge by means of the senses and the imagination.”<sup>①</sup> Crescas’ formulation is indebted to Gersonides, who wrote in his *Wars of the Lord*, Book III, Chapter 5: “He does not acquire [*qoneh*] His knowledge from them; rather, they acquire [*yiqnu*] their existence from His knowledge of them.”<sup>②</sup>

In his paraphrase of these comments of Crescas’, Rabbi Isaac Abrabanel, in his Commentary on the *Ethics of the Fathers*, 3:15, adds the words “cause” and “effect.” “Rabbi Hasdai explained... that God’s knowledge differs from our knowledge in that our knowledge is acquired [*qenuyah*] from...and an effect [*mesobebet*] of the objects of knowledge... while His knowledge is not so, for it is the cause [*sibbah*] of the existence of the objects of knowledge.” Abrabanel may be said to have read Crescas in the light of one of Averroes’ works.<sup>③</sup>

In *Light*, Book II, Part 1, Chapter 3, Crescas argues that the confirmed predictions of future events by prophets and others prove that God or the angels (that is, the separate intellects) have knowledge of future events. He states the argument as follows: “It is evident... that prophets and diviners can communicate particular things qua particular to people who are indicated to them. Necessarily they know these things through one who informs [them]—either God or an angel [a separate intellect]. Either way, if the informer [God or the angel] does not know these things, how will he make them known to another? Would that I knew! Averroes remarked on this doubt in his book *On Sense and Sensibilia*.”<sup>④</sup> Averroes’ text cited by Crescas reads as follows: “Since it has been made clear that the endower of this [prophetic] knowledge is a separate intellect... and separate intellects can comprehend only universal natures... would that I knew how the Active Intellect could endow the

① *Light*, 145; English, 138.

② *Wars*, 340; English, 133.

③ Abrabanel, *Nahalat Abot* (Ashkelon: Golan, 2013), 3:15, 157.

④ *Light*, 139; English, 132. See my “Crescas’ Attitude toward Averroes,” 357.

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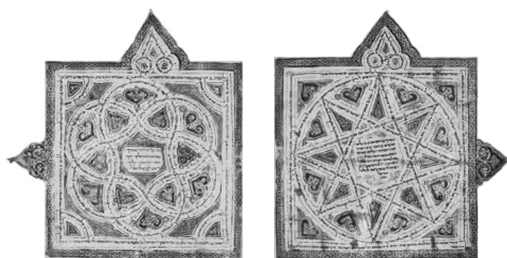
particular form that is peculiar to a certain time, place, and... individual... It cannot be denied that the separate intellect endows the imaginative soul with the universal nature... and the imaginative soul receives it as a particular.”<sup>①</sup>

Crescas thus explicitly cites Averroes' Commentary on Aristotle's *On Sense and Sensibilia*, and the reference is accurate. Is there, however, any evidence that Crescas was also aware of Averroes' parallel remarks on the subject in the *Discourse*? Averroes writes there: “How can it be conceived that the Peripatetics... are of the opinion that eternal knowledge does not include particulars, when they are of the opinion that it is the reason for premonition with respect to dreams, revelation, and inspirations [*ilhāmāt*].”<sup>②</sup> There is nothing in this text from the *Discourse* to suggest that it influenced Crescas' text. It will have been noticed that Averroes teaches in the text from his Commentary on Aristotle's *On Sense and Sensibilia* that the immediate source of prophecy is the Active Intellect, not God, that is, not the Eternal Knowledge. Moreover, Averroes states there expressly that the Active Intellect per se does not know particulars. The text in the Commentary thus disconfirms the one in the *Discourse* on two counts: first, the immediate source of prophecy is not God (the Eternal Knowledge) but the Active Intellect; second, the Active Intellect per se does not know particulars.

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① Averroes, *Epitome of Parva Naturalia*, Hebrew trans. Moses ibn Tibbon, ed. Harry Blumberg, Book II, Chapter 3 (Cambridge, MA: Mediaeval Academy of America, 1954), 48, 51-52; English, trans. Blumberg (Cambridge, MA: Medieval Academy of America, 1961), 43-44, 46. Cf. Aristotle, *On Prophecy*, 462b. In medieval ontology, the Active Intellect, the tenth and lowest of the separate intellects, is responsible for cognition in the sublunar realm. It contains the universal propositions of logic, mathematics, and physics, but no empirical data about individual things. According to Averroes' understanding, a prophet or a diviner, in predicting the future, applies his or her high analytic ability (acquired from the Active Intellect) to his or her extensive and precise empirical knowledge (derived from sense perception and imagination). In this way, for example, a prophet or diviner can know beforehand which army will win a particular battle and which king will live to celebrate.

② *Discourse*, 42, ll. 12-15. Cf. Manekin, “Maimonides on Divine Knowledge,” 64-66. The term *ilhām* (“inspiration”), pl. *ilhāmāt*, is common in religious writings, but rare among Aristotelian philosophers. See *Quran* 91 (the Sun):8. Todrosi translates: *hashka fot*. The anonymous translation has: *hashgahot*. The term appears 10 times in Halevi's *Kuzari*, I, 87, p. 38, l. 11; II, 26, p. 96, l. 28; p. 98, l. 11; III, 19, p. 170, l. 17; III, 39, p. 188, l. 27; V, 12, p. 314, l. 28; p. 316, l. 1; p. 318, l. 23; V, 20, p. 342, l. 22; p. 342, l. 26. Ibn Tibbon translates: *limmud* (5 times), *da'at* (3 times), *hoda'ah*, and *ezer*. The page references to the *Kuzari* are to the standard Hirschfeld pagination, given in the Baneth and Ben-Shammai edition.



Averroes' rhetorical question in the *Discourse* turns out to be a ruse.

In conclusion, Rabbi Hasdai Crescas' comments in the *Light of the Lord* on God's eternal foreknowledge are in some respects similar to Averroes' statements in his *Discourse on God's Knowledge*, and perhaps he read this work, but if he did, I can't prove it.