

## Lech Lecha – G-d of Avraham, G-d of Creation

### 1. Yehoshua 24:

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוֹשֻׁעַ אֶל-כָּל-הָעָם, כֹּה-אָמַר ה' אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, בְּעֵבֶר הַנָּהָר יָשְׁבוּ אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם מֵעוֹלָם, תְּרַח אָבִי אֲבֹרָהֶם וְאָבִי נָחוֹר; וַיַּעֲבֹדוּ, אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים. וְאַתָּה אֶת-אֲבוֹתֶיךָ אֶת-אֲבֹרָהֶם, מֵעֵבֶר הַנָּהָר, וְאוֹלָךְ אֹתוֹ, בְּכָל-אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן...

Yehoshua said to the entire nation: Thus said the Eternal, G-d of Yisrael, on the other side of the river dwelt your ancestors forever, Terach, father of Avraham and father of Nachor. They worshipped other gods. I took your father, Avraham, from the other side of the river, and took him through all the land of Canaan.

### 2. Bereishit 11:31

וַיִּקַּח תְּרַח אֶת-אַבְרָם בְּנוֹ, וְאֶת-לוֹט בֶּן-הָרָן בֶּן-בְּנוֹ, וְאֶת שְׂרַי כְּלֹתוֹ, אִשְׁתּוֹ אַבְרָם בְּנוֹ; וַיֵּצְאוּ אִתָּם מֵאוּר כַּשְׂדִּים, לְלֶכֶת אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן, וַיָּבֹאוּ עַד-חָרָן, וַיֵּשְׁבוּ שָׁם.

And Terach took Avram his son, and Lot the son of Haran, his grandson, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Avram's wife; and they went forth from *Ur Kasdim*, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there.

### 3. Daniel 2:2

וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ לְקָרָא לַחֲרֻטְמִים וְלְאֲשָׁפִים, וְלְמַכְשָׁפִים וְלַכְּשָׁדִים, לְהַגִּיד לְמֶלֶךְ, חֲלֻמֹתָיו; וַיָּבֹאוּ, וַיַּעֲמְדוּ לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ. Then the king commanded to call the magicians, and the enchanters, and the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans, to tell the king his dreams. So they came and stood before the king.

### 4. Ibn Ezra *ibid*.

הכשדים הם חכמי המזלות.

'Chaldean' means astrologer.

### 5. Josephus *Antiquities* book 1 chapter 7<sup>1</sup>

Now Avram... was a person of great wisdom, both for understanding all things and persuading his hearers, and was not mistaken in his opinions; for which reason he began to have higher notions of virtue than others had, and he determined to renew and to change the opinion all men happened then to have concerning G-d. He was the first that ventured to publish this notion, that there was but one G-d, the Creator of the universe; and that, as to other [gods], if they contributed anything to the happiness of men, that each of them afforded it only according to his appointment, and not by their own power.

This his opinion was derived from the irregular phenomena that were visible both at land and sea, as well as those that happen to the sun, and moon, and all the heavenly bodies, thus: - He said, "If these bodies had power of their own, they would certainly take care of their own regular movement; but since they do not preserve such regularity, they make it plain, that in so far as they co-operate to our advantage, they do it not of their own abilities, but as they are subservient to Him that commands them, to whom alone we ought justly to offer our honour and thanksgiving."

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<sup>1</sup> Translation by William Whiston (1737) on <http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/index.htm>

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### 6. Shemot 6:2-3

וַיְדַבֵּר אֱלֹקִים, אֶל-מֹשֶׁה; וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו, אֲנִי ה' . וְאַרְא, אֶל-אַבְרָהָם אֶל-יִצְחָק וְאֶל-יַעֲקֹב--בְּקֶל שְׁקִי; וְשָׁמִי ה' לֹא נִדְרַעְתִּי לָהֶם.

G-d spoke unto Moshe, and said unto him: 'I am the Eternal. I appeared to Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov, as G-d Almighty, but by My name Eternal I did not make known to them.

### 7. Seforno Shemot 6:2-3

אֲנִי ה' . מְקַיֵּם הַמְצִיאוֹת, לֹא מְמַצִּיאוֹ בְּלִבָּד, אֲבָל גַּם מְקַיְּמוֹ, שְׂאִין לְנִמְצָאוֹת שׁוֹם יְשׁוֹת וְקִיּוֹם זִוְלָתִי מִה שְׂאִנִּי מִשְׁפִּיעַ עֲלֵיהֶם, כְּאִמְרוֹ "וְאַתָּה מְחַיֶּה אֶת כָּל־פְּלִים" (נחמיה ט, ו), וּמִזֶּה יִתְחַיֵּב שְׂאִין לְשׁוֹם נִמְצָא קִיּוֹם מְצִיאוֹת בְּלִתִּי רְצוֹנִי ... בְּקֶל שְׁקִי . הַמּוֹרָה שֶׁהַמְצִיאֹתֵי אֶת הַמְצִיאוֹת כְּלוֹ.

**I am the Eternal:** Who maintains creation. He not only created it but also maintains it; nothing in creation has any existence or permanence unless I give it to them. This is the meaning of the verse, "You give life to all" (Nechemiah 9:6). From this we learn that nothing has existence without G-d's Will.... **With the name El Shadai:** Which implies creating the entirety of existence.

### 8. Tanna d'vei Eliyahu chapter 6

בית אביו של אברהם עובדי עבודה זרה היו עושיין עבודות זרות ויוצאין ומוכרין בשוק. יום אחד הגיע לאברהם למכור. בא אחד ואמר לו בכמה פסל זה. אמר לו בשלשה מנה. אמר לו בן כמה שנים אתה? אמר לו בן שלשים שנה. אמר לו אתה בן שלשים שנה ותעבוד לזה שעשיתי אותו היום? נסתלק והלך לו. שוב בא אחד. אמר לו בכמה פסל זה. אמר לו בחמשה מנה. אמר לו בן כמה שנים אתה? אמר לו בן חמשים שנה. אמר לו אתה בן חמשים שנה ותעבוד לזה שעשינו היום?

Avraham's family were idol worshippers and manufacturers of idols which they would take to sell in the market. One day it was Avraham's turn to sell. Someone came and inquired into the price of an idol. Avraham told him it cost three *maneh*. He continued and asked, "How old are you?" The man replied, "I am thirty years old." Avraham said to him, "You are thirty yet you worship this that I made today?" The man went away. Another person came. He inquired into the price of a different statue. Avraham told him the price was five *maneh*. He then asked, "How old are you?" The man replied, "I am fifty years old." Avraham said to him, "You are fifty, yet you worship this that we made only today?"

### 9. Mishne Torah Hilchot Avoda Zara chapter 1

כיון שנגמל איתן זה, התחיל לשוטט בדעתו והוא קטן, ולחשוב ביום ובלילה, והיה תמיה: היאך אפשר שיהיה הגלגל הזה נוהג תמיד, ולא יהיה לו מנהיג; ומי יסבב אותו, לפי שאי אפשר שיסבב את עצמו. ולא היה לו לא מלמד ולא מודיע דבר, אלא מושקע באור כשדים בין עובדי עבודה זרה הטיפשים. ואביו ואימו וכל העם עובדים עבודה זרה, והוא היה עובד עימהן. וליבו משוטט ומבין, עד שהשיג דרך האמת, והבין קו הצדק, מדעתו הנכונה; וידע שיש שם אלוה אחד, והוא מנהיג הגלגל, והוא ברא הכול, ואין בכל הנמצא אלוה חוץ ממנו.

Once this great person [Avraham] was weaned, he began contemplating and thinking day and night, while he was yet a child. He wondered how the sphere could constantly move without being directed. Who turned it? Surely it would be impossible for it to rotate on its own! Avraham had no mentor, but was immersed amongst the stupid idolaters of Ur Kasdim, where everyone, including his mother and father, served idols, as did he. In his heart, however, he continued to contemplate, until he realised the way of truth and understood the path of righteousness, and knew that there is a G-d who directs the spheres. He created the world, and there is no other aside from Him.

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### 10. Guide for the Perplexed II:13<sup>2</sup>

Among those who believe in the existence of G-d, there are found three different theories as regards the question whether the Universe is eternal or not.

First Theory.--Those who follow the Torah of Moshe Rabbeinu, hold that the whole Universe, i.e., everything except G-d, has been brought by Him into existence out of non-existence.... Even time itself is among the things created; for time depends on motion, i.e., on an accident in things which move, and the things upon whose motion time depends are themselves created beings, which have passed from non-existence into existence.... This is the first theory, and it is undoubtedly a fundamental principle of the Law of our teacher Moshe; it is next in importance to the principle of G-d's unity. Do not follow any other theory. Avraham, our father, was the first that taught it, after he had established it by philosophical research. He proclaimed, therefore, "the name of the L-rd the G-d of the Universe" (Bereishit 21:33); and he had previously expressed this theory in the words, "The Possessor of heaven and earth" (ibid. 14:22)....

Second Theory.--The theory of all Philosophers whose opinions and works are known to us is this: It is impossible to assume that G-d produced anything from nothing, or that He reduces anything to nothing... They therefore assume that a certain substance has coexisted with G-d from eternity in such a manner that neither G-d existed without that substance nor the latter without G-d. But they do not hold that the existence of that substance equals in rank that of G-d: for G-d is the cause of that existence, and the substance is in the same relation to G-d as the clay is to the potter, or the iron to the smith: G-d can do with it what He pleases; at one time He forms of it heaven and earth, at another time He forms some other thing....

Third Theory is that of Aristotle, his followers, and commentators. Aristotle maintains, like the adherents of the second theory, that a corporeal object cannot be produced without a corporeal substance. He goes, however, farther, and contends that the heavens are indestructible. For he holds that the Universe in its totality has never been different, nor will it ever change: the heavens, which form the permanent element in the Universe, and are not subject to genesis and destruction, have always been so; time and motion are eternal, permanent, and have neither beginning nor end....

### 11. Guide for the Perplexed II:25

We do not reject the Eternity of the Universe, because certain passages in Scripture confirm the Creation; for such passages are not more numerous than those in which G-d is represented as a corporeal being; nor is it impossible or difficult to find for them a suitable interpretation. We might have explained them in the same manner as we did in respect to the Incorporeality of G-d.... For two reasons, however, we have not done so, and have not accepted the Eternity of the Universe.

First, the Incorporeality of G-d has been demonstrated by proof: those passages in the Bible, which in their literal sense contain statements that can be refuted by proof, must and can be interpreted otherwise. But the Eternity of the Universe has not been proved; a mere argument in favour of a certain theory is not sufficient reason for rejecting the literal meaning of a Biblical text, and explaining it

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<sup>2</sup> *Guide for the Perplexed*, by Moshe Maimonides, Friedländer tr. [1904], at sacred-texts.com

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figuratively, when the opposite theory can be supported by an equally good argument.

Secondly, our belief in the Incorporeality of G-d is not contrary to any of the fundamental principles of our religion: it is not contrary to the words of any prophet. Only ignorant people believe that it is contrary to the teaching of Scripture: but we have shown that this is not the case: on the contrary, Scripture teaches the Incorporeality of G-d. If we were to accept the Eternity of the Universe as taught by Aristotle, that everything in the Universe is the result of fixed laws, that Nature does not change, and that there is nothing supernatural, we should necessarily be in opposition to the foundation of our religion, we should disbelieve all miracles and signs, and certainly reject all hopes and fears derived from Scripture, unless the miracles are also explained figuratively.... If, however, we accepted the Eternity of the Universe in accordance with the second of the theories which we have expounded above (chapter 23), and assumed, with Plato, that the heavens are likewise transient, we should not be in opposition to the fundamental principles of our religion; this theory would not imply the rejection of miracles, but, on the contrary, would admit them as possible. The Scriptural text might have been explained accordingly, and many expressions might have been found in the Bible and in other writings that would confirm and support this theory.

### 12. Guide for the Perplexed III:30

Every narrative in the Torah serves a certain purpose in connexion with religious teaching. It either helps to establish a principle of faith, or to regulate our actions, and to prevent wrong and injustice among men; and I will show this in each case. It is one of the fundamental principles of the Law that the Universe has been created *ex nihilo*, and that of the human race, one individual being, Adam, was created. As the time which elapsed from Adam to Moshe was not more than about two thousand five hundred years, people would have doubted the truth of that statement if no other information had been added, seeing that the human race was spread over all parts of the earth in different families and with different languages, very unlike the one to the other. In order to remove this doubt the Torah gives the genealogy of the nations (Bereishit 5 and 10), and the manner how they branched off from a common root. It names those of them who were well known, and tells who their fathers were, how long and where they lived. It describes also the cause that led to the dispersion of men over all parts of the earth, and to the formation of their different languages, after they had lived for a long time in one place, and spoken one language (*ibid.* 11), as would be natural for descendants of one person.

### 13. Bereishit 14:18, 22

וּמֶלֶךְ-צָדֵק מֶלֶךְ שָׁלֵם, הוֹצִיא לֶחֶם וְיַיִן; וְהוּא כַהֵן, לֹא-לֵעֲלִיּוֹן. וַיְבָרְכֵהוּ, וַיֹּאמֶר: בָּרוּךְ אַבְרָם לֵאלֹהֵי עֲלִיּוֹן, קִנְיַת שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ.  
וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְרָם, אֵל-מֶלֶךְ סֹדֶם: הֲרַמְתִּי יְדֵי אֶל-ה' אֱלֹהֵי עֲלִיּוֹן, קִנְיַת שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ....

And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine; and he was priest of G-d the Most High. He blessed him, and said: 'Blessed is Avram of God Most High, Maker of heaven and earth.... And Avram said to the king of Sodom: 'I have lifted up my hand unto the L-rd, G-d Most High, Posessor of heaven and earth.'

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### 14. Guide for the Perplexed II:30

We must also consider the four different terms employed in expressing the relations of the heavens to G-d, *bore* (Creator), *'oseh* (Maker), *koneh* (Possessor), and *el* (G-d)... in reference to the Universe, the heavens and the earth, which comprises the totality of the Creation, Scripture employs the verb *bara*, which we explain as denoting he produced something from nothing; also *'asah* ("he made") on account of the general forms or natural properties of the things which were given to them; *kanah*, "he possessed," because G-d rules over them like a master over his servants... But although none can be a master unless there exists something that is in his possession, this attribute cannot be considered to imply the belief in the eternal existence of a *materia prima*, since the verbs *bara*, "he created," and *'asah*, "he made," are also employed in reference to the heavens.

### 15. Rambam *Introduction to Chelek*: fourth principle (standard version)

היסוד הרביעי הקדמות. והוא שנאמין כי זה האחד האמור, הוא קדמון בהחלט, וכל נמצא זולתו בלתי קדמון בערכו אליו. והראיות על זה בכתבי הקודש רבות.

The fourth principle is G-d's eternity. We must believe that this One mentioned above is entirely eternal. Anything which exists aside from Him is not eternal in comparison to Him. There are many proofs of this in Scripture.

### 16. Rambam *Introduction to Chelek*: fourth principle (Shilat edition based on Rambam's notes on *Guide for the Perplexed*)

ודע, כי היסוד היותר גדול של תורת משה רבנו הוא היות העולם מחודש, המציאו ה' ובראו אחר ההעדר הגמור. וזה שתראני סובב סביב ענין קדמותו על דעת הפילוסופים, הוא כדי שיהיה המופת על מציאותו יתעלה מוחלט, כמו שבארתי ובררתי ב'מורה'... And you must know that the greatest principle of the Torah of Moshe Rabbeinu is that the world was created. G-d created it and made it exist after complete nothingness. If you see me talking around the concept of eternity of the universe, which is the belief of the philosophers, it is only in order that the evidence of G-d's existence will be clear, as I have explained and clarified in *Guide for the Perplexed*.