4th Principle: God is Eternal

As we have previously discussed since God is not and has not a body, therefore, nothing associated with the physical realm can apply to Him. Sleep, wakefulness, anger and laughter, joy and sadness, do not apply to Him. Whenever the Tora or the Prophets speak about God in this way (anthropomorphism) , they do so in a metaphorical way or describing a prophetic vision. Similarly, we cannot apply to God concepts such as birth or death. God does not exist in time, or He exist independently of time. Beginning, end, age do not apply to Him.

Asking ourselves, "If God created the world, who created God?" is like asking: "If the baker baked the bread, who baked the baker?" The concept of 'baking' cannot be applied to the existence of the baker, only to his actions. Similarly, the concept of creation cannot be applied to the existence of God. God is eternal. He was not born or created. In the beginning, God alone existed. Other than God , everything had a beginning and was created by God. Even time itself is among the things created by God.

Jews never believed in the eternity of the universe. The Fourth principle of our faith asserts that only God is eternal. Maimonides (1165-1204) wrote: "A fundamental principle of the Law of Moses is that the World was created anew and that God formed it and created it from absolute non-existence. That which you observe, that I repeatedly argue against the eternity of the world according to the view of the philosophers, is to demonstrate the absoluteness of the miracle of His existence as I have explained and clarified in the Guide for the Perplexed."

Why Maimonides emphasized this belief? Beginning probably with Aristotle (384- 322 BCE), philosophers and scientists denied a beginning of the Universe. They thought that the universe was never born or created. In their opinion, the universe was eternal ('olam qadmon). This solid idea started to change only in 1930, when Edwin Hubble discovered that the universe was expanding. And if the cosmos was expanding, and not moving in circles as it was previously thought, then it must have a had a point of beginning. A few years later many scientists came with a simple inductive formula which affirmed that tracking back the movie of the universe's expansion one

will inevitably find a moment of beginning. The most famous hypothesis that asserts the beginning of the universe is the Big Bang theory reaffirms the Biblical idea of beginning. It is the first scientific theory that postulates a beginning of the universe, after 25 centuries of denying it.

Now, when scientist assert that the world had a beginning out of an *"initial singularity of infinite density which contained all of the mass and spacetime of the Universe"* they need to address where that singularity came from, without a Supernatural Power intervention. While by definition God is eternal, in scientific terms you definitely need to explain how something would come out of nothing. This question is, undoubtedly, the Aquiles heel of the Big Bang theory.

The belief in God's eternity also touches upon the question of theodicy. According to Rabbi Hayim Pereira-Mendes, God's eternity has also implications in our expectations for justice. Since God is eternal, punishment for the wicked or reward for the righteous, might take place beyond the time-limits of our lives. "The knowledge that God is eternal, especially when coupled with the knowledge that He is omnipotent reconciles us with our trials and sorrows, and solves the puzzles of earthly life and its many seeming difficulties and contradictions. Thus, we observe that the good often suffer misfortune or trial, and the wicked are successful and apparently happy. But God is Eternal, and will, in His own time and in His own way, in this life or in the Future or Eternal Life, show us the meaning and benefits of the sorrows and trials, the difficulties and contradictions."

Dedicated to the memory of IDF Capt. Ishay Rosales, 23 years old, z"l