

CHAPTER 3

It is thought that in the Hebrew language the meanings of the words *figure* [*temunah*] and *shape* [*tabnith*] are identical. This is not the case. For *tabnith* is a term deriving from the verb *banoh* [*to build*], and it signifies the build and aspect of a thing; I mean to say its shape, for instance, its being a square, a circle, a triangle, or some other shape. Accordingly it says : *The shape of the tabernacle and the shape of all its vessels.*¹ And it says : *According to the shape which thou wast shown upon the mountain;*² *the shape of any bird;*³ *the shape of a hand;*⁴ *the shape of the porch.*⁵ In all these passages the word means shape. For this reason the Hebrew language does not use this word⁶ with reference to *attributes* that apply in any way to the deity.

As for the term *figure*, it is used amphibolously in three different senses. It is used to designate the form of a thing outside the mind that is apprehended by the senses, I mean the shape and configuration of the thing. Thus it says: *And make you a graven image, the figure of any, and so*

on;⁷ *For ye saw no figure.*⁸ It is also used to designate the imaginary form of an individual object existing in the imagination after the object of which it is the form is no longer manifest to the senses.⁹ Thus it says, *In thoughts from the visions of the night, and so on,*¹⁰ the conclusion of the dictum being, *It stood still, but I could not discern the appearance thereof, a figure was before mine eyes.* He means: a fantasm of the imagination¹¹ that is before my eyes while in sleep. The term is also used to designate the true notion grasped by the intellect. It is with a view to this third meaning that the word *figure* is used with reference to God, may He be exalted. Thus it says : *And the figure of the Lord shall he look upon.*¹² The meaning and interpretation of this verse are : he grasps the truth of God. |

¹. Exod. 25:9.

². Exod. 25:40.

³. Deut. 4:17.

⁴. Ezek. 8:3.

⁵. I Chron. 28:11.