

# The Accident Cannot Exist for Two Moments - The Sixth Premise | Part I Chapter 73 (8) | Guide for the Perplexed 163 (Auto Translated)

English

Auto Translated

## Shiur Overview

### The Sixth Premise of the Kalam: "An Accident Does Not Endure for Two Moments" (Guide for the Perplexed I, 73)

#### The Central Claim and Foundational Assumptions

##### The Text

The sixth premise of the Mutakallimun states: **An accident does not endure for two moments** — every accident (attribute, quality, characteristic) of a substance (atom) exists for only one unit of time (one "now"), and cannot persist beyond that. This is the **most fundamental** premise in the theological physics of the Kalam.

##### Analysis of the Argument

##### Foundational assumptions (from previous premises):

- The world is composed of substances (atoms) and accidents (attributes/qualities of atoms).
- There is no substance without accident — an accepted assumption from the fourth premise. A substance without accident is something devoid of all definition.
- Even God is not described as having the ability to create a substance without accident, because this is **impossible** (logically impossible), not a weakness.

##### The claim:

- God creates at every moment substance and accident together, simultaneously.
- The accident that is created is according to **God's will** — He chooses which accident will be in each substance.
- An accident by its nature cannot exist for more than one "now." This is not a limitation on God, but part of the very definition of what an accident is — just as an accident without a substance is impossible.
- Since **existence itself** is an accident of the substance, it follows that the existence of everything is momentary.

##### The motivation:

There is no independent physical or logical proof for this claim. The Kalam arrived at it for **theological reasons** — they wanted to establish certain conclusions about the nature of God's action in the world, and for the system to be coherent, they assumed that an accident is by nature momentary.

##### Linguistic-Philological Note

Maimonides uses two different expressions to describe God: "ta'ala" (may He be exalted) and "'azz wa-jall" (the Mighty and Majestic). There is a hypothesis that the expression "'azz wa-jall" appears specifically when Maimonides quotes the position of the Mutakallimun who think they are magnifying God by attributing to Him direct action at every moment — a more "popular-religious" expression, as opposed to "may He be exalted" which is a more philosophical expression. The data: approximately 70 times "ta'ala" versus approximately 17 times "'azz wa-jall" in the Guide for the Perplexed.

---

### The Mechanism of Creating Accidents

#### The Text

The continuation of the sixth premise — description of the mechanism of continuous creation.

#### Analysis of the Argument

Every accident that is created — is lost immediately after the moment of its existence and cannot continue to exist. The Holy One, blessed be He, creates a new accident of the same kind, and again it is lost, and a third is created of the same kind, and so on. As long as God wants to maintain that kind of accident — He continues to create it anew.

**Example:** The table before us does not exist continuously on its own. God creates the accident of "tableness" in the atoms composing it, and at every moment creates it anew. The old is lost and the new is created. What appears to us as continuity — is actually a chain of new creations of the same type.

**Change and loss:** When God wants to change something (for example, a table from white to black) — He simply creates the accident of blackness instead of the accident of whiteness. And when God wants a substance to cease existing — He does not need to perform an action, but only to refrain from creating a new accident. Without an accident — the substance is absent, since a substance without accident does not exist.

---

### The Three Streams in the Kalam and Their Dispute

#### Contexts

Three main streams in the Kalam:

1. **The Ancient Kalam** — the original old Islamic system.
2. **The Mu'tazilah** ("The Separatists") — a more rational stream, which denied divine attributes and affirmed free will. Rav Saadia Gaon followed them extensively, as Maimonides himself noted (chapter 70).
3. **The Ash'ariyah** — the conservative stream, named after al-Ash'ari, who formulated in an extreme and philosophical way the simple theology of Islam. This is the dominant theology in the Islamic world to this day. Al-Ghazali belongs more or less to this system.

#### Dispute Regarding the Continuity of Accidents

**Position of the majority (Ash'ariyah and all the Mutakallimun):** No accident endures for two moments. Everything is created anew at every moment.

**Position of a minority of the Mu'tazilah:** Some accidents indeed do not endure for two moments, but another part does persist for more than one moment. They tried to bring the matter closer to reason and sense, since we see that there is continuity in the world.

**Maimonides' Critique of the Intermediate Position of the Mu'tazilah**

Maimonides rejects the distinction: "**They have no method by which to settle this**" — they have no criterion, rule, or law that would explain why one kind of accident remains and another kind does not remain. The distinction is not based on reason, necessity, or logic, but on arbitrariness.

This is the same critique leveled against them regarding attributes: when the Mu'tazilah established a list of "essential attributes," they had no explanation for why precisely this list. The admission in part only strengthens the critique: the entire system is "inventions according to what they want to be and not according to what truly exists."

---

## Denial of Nature as an Intermediate Cause — The Theological Basis

### The Text

The Mutakallimun refuse to say that there is "nature" existing in the world — that is, that a particular body's nature determines that it will have certain accidents.

### Analysis of the Argument

The concept "nature" means there is an **intermediate cause**: something in the matter and form of the thing that explains its properties. According to Aristotle, accidents belong to the body as a whole (not to the particular substance), and the reason a particular body receives particular accidents is its nature — the type of its matter and the type of its substance.

**Example:** Why does a table hold a computer but a glass of water does not? The Aristotelian answer: the nature of the table — something in its matter and form — enables it to receive this accident.

### The Theological Motive

As Wolfson describes the sequence: in the Quran it is written that Allah is the possessor of all powers and does everything. From this is derived:

- If the computer is on the table — **God** put it there, not "the nature of the table."

- To attribute power to the nature of the table — means there is a power besides Allah, and this is considered in their eyes **heresy**, like assuming minor gods who assist Him.

- Therefore: God creates all accidents **immediately** — without any intermediate cause.

### Critical Note

There is a serious claim here, not nonsense. One who believes that true monotheism means there is no power besides God — gets stuck when trying to explain natural phenomena through the "nature" of things. Therefore, one who wants to be a monotheist without being a Kalamist needs to delve deeply into how he understands the world.

---

## Denial of Continuity — The Necessary Consequence

### Analysis of the Argument

From the denial of nature as a cause, necessarily follows the denial of **continuity of existence**:

1. **Question:** Why is there a table now?

2. **Regular answer:** Because there was a table a moment ago (continuity).

3. **Problem:** If this is the answer — where is God in the story? Continuity itself becomes an independent "power."

4. **Conclusion:** There is no continuity — the fact that there was a table yesterday is not the reason there is a table now.

### Dealing with Difficulties

**First difficulty:** Perhaps things exist for more than one moment, and God's action includes their entire duration of existence?

**Answer:** Even if so — everything has a lifespan, it stops existing. Who causes the cessation? It cannot be that the thing "itself" stops — again this is an independent power from God.

**Second difficulty:** Perhaps God annihilates (destroys) the thing when He wants?

**Answer:** Here a deep problem arises — "**Non-existence does not require an agent**". What does not exist does not need an agent to make it non-existent. Non-existence is not an action. Therefore the only way God "annihilates" something is that He **stops acting** — stops sustaining it.

### Maimonides' Position

The principle "non-existence does not require an agent" is "**true in one respect**" — there is a point of truth in it, but not in all respects. In his way, Maimonides identifies **good logic and correct reasoning** at the basis of the strange worldview of the Kalam: they correctly grasped that non-existence is not something requiring an agent. But from their belief that God does everything, they were forced to invent ways in which God acts without creating non-existence.

### Contexts

- **Premises 10 and 11** — there the discussion goes deeply into the subject of nature and accidents according to Aristotle.

- **Aristotle's system** — accidents belong to the body as a whole, not to the particular substance; the nature of the thing explains its accidents.

- In Aristotle there is a nature that necessitates both existence and non-existence — when a person is born, the cause of his death is already in him, since the essence of man determines that he will live a certain time and die. This too is God's action, but in a more abstract way — as discussed in chapter 68 of the Guide for the Perplexed — and not in the "crude" way of the Kalam.

---

## The Internal Logic of the Kalam — Why They Arrived at Continuous Creation

### Analysis of the Argument

Two possibilities are rejected:

- **Possibility A:** There is natural continuity — rejected, because then there is a natural cause and no need for God's action.

- **Possibility B:** There is continuity but God can stop it — also rejected, because "to stop existence" is not "to do something" but negation of doing, and God is an agent, not a negator.

Therefore the conclusion: **From the outset the world is built such that God needs to create every accident anew at every moment.** There is no nature that necessitates either existence or non-existence.

### The complete logic:

1. **Theological goal:** Want to say that God performs all actions in the world.

2. **Problem:** If things have a nature that necessitates them to continue existing, then there is no need for God to renew them

— the thing exists on its own.

3. **Solution:** The accident — the basic component of the world — is by nature something that does not exist for more than one moment, and therefore God \*needs\* to renew it all the time.

4. **Important clarification:** It is not that God \*wants\* to renew the world (that would be strange — why would He destroy and build every moment?), but that the world \*requires\* continuous renewal because of the nature of accidents.

#### Internal Problem

If the world cannot exist for more than a moment and requires continuous creation, then "destruction of the world" by God is simply cessation of creation — a negative action, "not to do." This makes it difficult to say that God "destroys" the world in a real sense.

---

### The Problem of the World's Non-Existence — Two Systems

#### Analysis of the Argument

If God wants to destroy the world, how will He do it?

**System A:** God will simply stop creating accidents — and automatically the substances (atoms) will also disappear, since there is no existence for a substance without accident. The relationship between substance and accident is **only a logical relationship** — it is impossible to separate them in reality, only in logical analysis do we distinguish between substance and accident, but in reality they exist only together.

**System B:** God will create **an accident of annihilation** (destruction) — an accident that does not exist in a subject (since there is no longer a subject), but **against** the existence of the world, and it will destroy the world. Maimonides presents this as a meaningless word game — an accident that exists alone and not in a subject is an internal contradiction.

---

### The Example of Dyeing the Garment — Denial of Natural Causality

#### The Text

Maimonides brings the central example of the Mutakallimun: a garment dyed red.

#### Analysis of the Argument

According to the Mutakallimun, there are **two errors** that people make:

1. **First error:** We think that **we** dyed the garment — not correct, God is the one who renewed the red appearance in the garment.

2. **Second error:** We think that the red color **passed** from the dye to the garment — not correct, there is no causal connection between immersing the garment in dye and its being red. God created the red color in the garment directly.

The physical reasoning: The blackness (or redness) is an accident found in the body of the dye, and **an accident does not pass from subject to subject**. Therefore God is the one who created the new color accident in the garment directly.

Critical point: The denial of causality is not only regarding human power (that man is not the agent), but also regarding God Himself — God does not act \*through\* the dye. He creates the color in the garment directly. God is accustomed to create the color accident in the garment, and before that He also

creates the dye, and the placing of the garment in the dye, and your thought that you are doing this — all are "customs" that come together, but without causal connection between them.

The principle: **No created being can do anything** — every action is God's action directly.

---

### The Concept of "Custom" (al-'adah) — Substitute for Causality

#### Analysis of the Argument

To explain the regularity observed in the world (why always when we immerse a garment in red dye it becomes red?), the Mutakallimun developed the concept of "**custom**": God **is accustomed** to do things in a certain order, but there is no causal necessity in this.

#### The Parable of the Sultan

The sultan never walks on foot in the street — always in a chariot. One can live a thousand years in the city and not see him walking on foot. But **it is not the nature** of the sultan that he is unable to walk on foot — it is only **his custom**. The moment he wants, he can walk on foot (perform a "miracle").

So God: **is accustomed** to create black color in a garment only when the garment was immersed in black dye, but there is no real causal connection between the immersion and the color. God can at any moment change the "custom."

#### Contexts

This system is identical in essence to the system of **David Hume** regarding causality: what we call "cause and effect" is nothing but **correlation** — a habit of observing two things occurring together, without necessary connection between them. The difference: in Hume this is an epistemological limitation (we cannot know about causal connection), whereas in the Mutakallimun this is an ontological claim (there is no causal connection at all — only God's will).

---

### Absurd Conclusions that Maimonides Derives from the System

#### Cancellation of Knowledge

**"And it necessarily follows from this assumption that these things which you know now are not our knowledge that we knew them yesterday"** — since knowledge is an accident in the soul, and accidents do not exist for two moments, today's knowledge is not the same knowledge as yesterday's. **"Those sciences were annihilated and other sciences like them were created"** — and the Mutakallimun agreed to this and said "yes it is so, for knowledge is an accident."

Knowledge is an especially strong example of the absurd, stronger than the table example. Knowledge is by its nature something trans-temporal and abstract — it is not an action occurring within a limited time frame. The very existence of knowledge is almost proof of non-sensory existence. Therefore to say there is no enduring knowledge, that at every moment new knowledge is created that resembles the previous but is not identical to it — means cancellation of knowledge itself.

#### Cancellation of the Soul

**"And the soul also, one who believes it is an accident... it would follow that for every possessor of a soul, a hundred thousand souls would be created approximately at every moment."** Since time for them is

composed of indivisible atoms (very small), it follows that for each person thousands of souls are created at every moment, without connection between them — they are only "the same thing according to custom."

The soul is precisely what makes a person the same "I" that he was yesterday. If the soul is an accident — personal identity is cancelled. None of the Mutakallimun admitted this in practice, since they believe in the immortality of the soul as religious people. But this follows from their premises and they have no escape.

---

### The Example of the Pen — Denial of Human Action

#### The Text

Here we move to things that the Mutakallimun **themselves said explicitly** ("by agreement from them").

#### Analysis of the Argument

When a person moves a pen to write — the person did not move it. The motion that was created in the pen is an accident that God created in the pen, and the motion of the hand is a separate accident that God created in the hand. There is no causal connection between them, because **"an accident does not pass from its subject"** — an accident exists only in one atom and cannot pass from subject to subject.

This is the physical formulation of the denial of causality: motion in the hand cannot "pass" to the pen. God established a custom that the motion of the hand and the motion of the pen occur together, but **"not that the hand has any action at all or cause in the motion of the pen."**

**The overall conclusion: "No body will be found that has any action at all"** — no physical thing, no created thing, does anything. The only agent is God.

---

### The Final Conclusion: Complete Denial of Causality

#### The Text

According to the system of the Mu'tazilah, the final conclusion: **it will not be said at all "this is the cause of that"** — there is no causality in the world. Nothing causes anything else; everything is done directly by God. Some of them said "cause" only metaphorically — that is, they used the concept of cause in a borrowed way and not literally.

#### Example for Illustration

A practical example is brought: a person told that his father said to him, in the context of trust in God, that "one who counts — becomes counted" (one who counts things causes them to be counted). That is, there is here an assumption that the person's action of counting is the cause of the thing being counted.

**The Kalam were more consistent in their position:** if one truly believes that God is the only agent, then one who counts does **not** become counted. What happens is that God created a custom that usually He also causes people to count and also makes the things be counted — at the same time. But there is no causal connection between the human action and the result.

---

### Connection to Hasidism and the System of the Ba'al Shem Tov

#### Debate with the Hasidic System on Continuous Creation

Rabbi Gershon Henoch of Radzin (the Radziner Rebbe) quoted an opponent who claimed that what the Hasidim say in the name of the Ba'al Shem Tov about "continuous creation" is exactly the system of the Kalam that Maimonides rejects. This claim is correct regarding certain interpretations — mainly Lithuanians who became Hasidim and adopted theology of this type — but the Ba'al Shem Tov himself is much more sophisticated than this.

#### The System of the Lubavitcher Rebbe — and Its Critique

The Lubavitcher Rebbe read in the Tanya that God creates everything at all times, and therefore "something from nothing" is a continuous thing: there is no reason from the fact that there was a world yesterday that there will be a world today, since the world has no nature necessitating existence beyond one moment. He added that since God is "omnipotent" — including ability to do impossibilities — then He *\*can\** create a world with independent existence that does not need Him all the time. Therefore, what is written in the Tanya that God needs to create all the time — he accepts as faith, but does not see it as necessary.

**The critique:** There is here a fundamental confusion between what the world is and what God is. To say that God can make a world that exists without Him — this is like saying that God can cancel Himself, and this is complete nonsense, not "God's ability." Even one who believes in "impossibility of impossibilities" in the most extreme way cannot agree to this.

#### The True Ontological Dependence — Chapter 69

When one stands on the ontological dependence of the world on the existence of God who is above time — there is no statement here about the type of world. As described in chapter 69: God is "the form of the world," the efficient cause — and this is a perpetual present (not "perpetual" in time, because He is beyond time), but the concept of the true dependence of the world on God. This is a truth that cannot be cancelled.

**The Tzemach Tzedek**, who understood this better, said that chapter 69 is the source of the Tanya. There it is written in Maimonides explicitly that there are those who err in thinking that God was once the cause of the world and now is not. If one understands the dependence in a formal way — in a true abstract sense — there is no need for the Kalam's claim to say that God acts always.

#### The Difference Between the Kalam and the Lubavitcher Rebbe

The Kalam do not understand the abstract dependence of the world on God, and therefore say that God creates all the time all things. But **they are more consistent than the Lubavitcher Rebbe:** they do not say "God is omnipotent and therefore can do impossibilities" (which is meaningless — "square triangle" says nothing). Instead, they built a consistent physical description in which the world by its nature requires continuous renewal.

---

#### Maimonides' Position — Summary

Maimonides elaborates in describing the system, and ultimately believes that the very presentation is sufficient to show that the thing is impossible — he does not bother to refute it separately. There is no real physical reason to say that an accident does not exist for two moments — only a theological reason motivated them to this. And in Part II of the

Guide for the Perplexed, when he arrives at the creation of the world, Maimonides will show that it is possible to perform the same proofs (for the existence of God, for the creation of the world) without needing the physical distortion of the Kalam.

**Note on the Name "Speakers"**

Some commentators note that Maimonides calls them "speakers" because they only speak and there is no real meaning in their words — everything is words. Maimonides repeats again and again "they say" regarding them, which emphasizes the nature of the system as speech without real basis.

---

## | Full Transcript

I'm ready to translate the Hebrew transcript to English following your guidelines. However, I don't see the actual Hebrew transcript in your message. Please provide the

Hebrew text you'd like me to translate, and I'll deliver the English translation according to the specifications you've outlined.