

Maimonides' Monotheism: Between the Bible and Aristotle

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My topic is Maimonides' (1138–1204) theory of monotheism, as developed in his various works throughout his life. The theory of monotheism had an extremely important place in Maimonides' thought. It was fundamental for him both as a Jew and as a philosopher. In the course of our discussion, I will ask which aspects of his theory of monotheism are Biblical or Talmudic, and which are philosophic or Aristotelian - or, if you will, which aspects are Hebrew and which Greek. To be sure, it is not always easy to identify which aspects are Hebrew and which Greek, and, even if the Hebrew and Greek aspects are duly identified, it is often a difficult task to disentangle them.

I. The Commentary on the Mishnah

Maimonides' first important statement regarding monotheism appears in his first major work, his *Commentary on the Mishnah*, written in Arabic and completed in 1168, when he was 30 years old. The work was begun in Fez, Morocco, and completed in Fustat, Egypt. The statement regarding monotheism is found in his Introduction to *Sanhedrin*, ch. 10 (“Pereq Heleq”). He sets down there his celebrated “Thirteen Principles” of Judaism.

The First Principle of the “Thirteen Principles” is God's existence. The Second Principle is God's Oneness or Unity. According to this Second Principle, “the Cause of All is One.” In other words, all created things have only one Cause, which is God. Maimonides phrases the Second Principle as follows:

The Second Principle is God's Oneness [*wahdah*] ... It affirms that the Cause of All is One. However, He is not like the “one” of a genus, nor the “one” of a species, nor “one” in the sense of a compound individual which is divisible into many ones, nor “one” in the sense of a simple body that is one in number but infinitely divisible. Rather, He...is One by virtue of a Oneness to which no other oneness is similar in any way. This Second Principle is taught by the text, “Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One!” [Deuteronomy 6:4]¹⁾

God is One in the sense that He is *unique*. He is the Cause of all created things, but wholly different from them. He has nothing in common with them. Not only is God wholly different from

all created pluralities, He is also wholly different from all created unities. He is a One that is different from all ones. He cannot be numbered and cannot be divided. His is “a Oneness to which no other oneness is similar in any way.” His Oneness means *incomparability*. It may be understood only by the *via negativa*. It is *not* like the oneness of an individual (for example, Socrates); it is *not* like the oneness of a species (for example, humanity); and it is *not* like the oneness of a genus (for example, animal). The word “one” is thus a homonym. It is used absolutely equivocally with regard to God and created things. Its meaning in the sentence “God is One” is wholly different from its meaning in the sentences, “Socrates is *one* individual,” or “There is *one* human species,” or “All animals belong to *one* genus.” This strict monotheism is taught, according to Maimonides, by the Biblical verse, “Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One!” I.e., the Lord is *incomparable*.

Deuteronomy 6:4 is the only verse in the Pentateuch that asserts God's Oneness explicitly. It is the primary statement of monotheism in Judaism, and has a prominent and cherished place in Jewish liturgy, literature, and thought. According to Maimonides' interpretation of it here in his definition of the Second Principle, the verse teaches God's incomparability. It is unclear, however, precisely what the word “one” in this verse means *literally* in its original Biblical context. The verse is part of Moses' charge to the Israelites before they enter the promised Land. He addresses them as follows:

This is the commandment, the statutes, and the ordinances, which the Lord your God commanded...that ye might do them in the Land... Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One! And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words which I command thee this day shall be upon thy heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children... [Deuteronomy 6:1–7].

God's being called “One” seems here to be connected to two things: the observance of the commandments and the love of God. God is presented as the Commander, and the people of Israel are urged to obey Him out of love. It is possible that according to its literal sense the text means that God is the *one* legitimate Commander or the *one* legitimate object of love. In any case, there is nothing explicit in it about the metaphysical concept of Oneness.

The metaphysical framework for Maimonides' discussion of God's Oneness is provided by Aristotle.²⁾ In his *Metaphysics*, V, 6, 1015b-1017a, Aristotle discusses different meanings of the word “one.” He mentions “one” in the sense of a simple or compound individual, “one” in the sense of a species, “one” in the sense of a genus, “one” in the sense of indivisibility, etc. He mentions, in other words, the same senses of “one” to which Maimonides refers in his *Commentary on the Mishnah*. Maimonides in effect asserts that God's Oneness is different from all the sorts of oneness

mentioned in Aristotle's discussion.

In sum, in Maimonides' Second Principle, God's Oneness is defined as incomparability. Maimonides uses Aristotelian terms and concepts, but his definition is non-Aristotelian.

When Aristotle himself speaks about the oneness of the Prime Mover, he speaks in terms of incorporeality not incomparability. In *Metaphysics*, XII, 8, 1073a–1074b, Aristotle discusses the unmoved movers of the various celestial spheres. He conjectures that there may be as many as 47 or 55 unmoved movers. However, he concludes that the one cosmos has only one Prime Mover. The Prime Mover is defined by him as being eternal, indivisible, and incorporeal; and since it is incorporeal, it is One. The close connection between incorporeality and oneness is fundamental for Aristotle. According to him, matter is a necessary condition of plurality or numerability in a species, and thus incorporeality is a sufficient condition of oneness (*ibid.*, 1074a 31–35). If the Prime Mover is incorporeal, the Prime Mover is one. Aristotle dramatically cites Homer's *Iliad*, II, 204: "The rule of many is not good; let one be the ruler!" (*ibid.*, 10, 1076a 4).³ Nonetheless, while it is true that the One Prime Mover is incorporeal, it is also true that *all* the other unmoved movers are incorporeal. Thus, there might be 47 or 55 incorporeal beings. The Prime Mover is therefore not incomparable.

Aristotle's connection between unity and incorporeality made a deep impression on Maimonides. Indeed, God's incorporeality is so important for Maimonides that he does not merely consider it a subordinate clause of the Principle of God's Oneness, but he counts it as an independent Principle. In his Thirteen Principles of Judaism, the Third Principle is God's incorporeality. He defines it as follows:

The Third Principle is the denial of God's corporeality [*nafy jismāniyya*]. It affirms that the One is neither a body nor a power in a body, and suffers no accidents of a body... Therefore, our Sages...said: "[on high there is] no sitting, no standing, no separation, and no composition" [BT *Hagigah* 15a]... The Prophet Isaiah said: "To whom then will ye liken Me, that I should be equal?" [Isaiah 40:25]; but if He were a body, He would be like other bodies... This Third Principle is taught by the text, "Ye saw no figure" [Deuteronomy 4:15].⁴

Whereas Maimonides' explanation of the Principle of Oneness by means of God's *incomparability* is not Aristotelian, his explanation of it by means of God's *incorporeality* is Aristotelian. The explanation of God's Oneness in terms of incomparability may be called in a loose way "Hebrew" or "Biblical." It would seem, then, that there are two different thrusts in Maimonides' approach to God's Oneness: a Hebrew thrust that emphasizes incomparability, and a Greek thrust that emphasizes incorporeality. We may thus speak about two explanations of monotheism according to Maimonides.

There is a Biblical monotheism based on God's incomparability, and there is an Aristotelian monotheism based on God's incorporeality.

Moreover, it might be argued that the Hebrew explanation of God's Oneness in terms of *incomparability* is absent in Aristotle - for the Aristotelian Prime Mover is indeed comparable, that is, it is in some sense similar to the scores of other unmoved movers of the various celestial spheres. That incorporeality is not exclusive to God is indicated also in Maimonides' Talmudic proof-text for incorporeality: "on high there is no sitting, no standing, no separation, and no composition." This dictum manifestly applies to *all* beings "on high," not only to God, and it was in fact said originally not about God but about the angel Metatron, who nonetheless was given permission to sit.⁵⁾ In other words, Maimonides' Talmudic proof-text for God's incorporeality implicitly denies His incomparability, for it compares Him to other supernal beings. God is comparable to Metatron and other angels.

Similarly, it might be claimed that the Aristotelian explanation of God's Oneness in terms of *incorporeality* is absent in the Bible - that is, the explicit concept of "incorporeality" is not found in the Bible in general, and not found in it with reference to God in particular. This is not surprising since, as a rule, Greek philosophic concepts like "incorporeality" have no analogues in the Bible. The Biblical proof-text from Deuteronomy 4:15 ("Ye saw no figure"), in its literal meaning, does not contain an explicit reference to incorporeality, and neither does the Talmudic proof-text ("on high there is no sitting, no standing, no separation, and no composition"), which, as just mentioned, was said in reference to the angel Metatron, who is nowhere said to be incorporeal, and who is described in the cited text as sitting. As for the Biblical proof-text from Isaiah 40:25 ("To whom then will ye liken Me, that I should be equal?"), it expresses incomparability, not incorporeality.

Thus, we can sum up Maimonides' position on monotheism in his *Commentary on the Mishnah*, as follows. Maimonides' monotheism has two explanations. The first explanation is God's *incomparability*, which is found in the Bible and not in Aristotle. This explanation is given in Maimonides' Second Principle of Judaism. The second explanation is God's *incorporeality*, which is found in Aristotle and not in the Bible. This explanation is given in Maimonides' Third Principle of Judaism.

II. The Book of the Commandments

Let us move on now to Maimonides' second great book, *The Book of the Commandments*. In his *Book of the Commandments*, written in Arabic in 1169 in Fustat, Egypt, Maimonides lists and defines

the 613 commandments of the Law of Moses. Positive Commandment no. 2 concerns God's Oneness. He writes:

The Second Commandment...concerns knowledge of God's Oneness [*al-tawhid*]. It is that we know that the [Cause] of the universe...is One. This is His dictum... "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One" [Deuteronomy 6:4]... [God] did not take us out of slavery and bestow upon us loving-kindness and goodness, except that we attain to the knowledge of His Oneness.⁶⁾

In this passage from the *Book of Commandments*, Maimonides lists monotheism, that is, the knowledge of God's Oneness, as a positive commandment. It is the second positive commandment of the Law. The first is to know God's existence.

Maimonides further affirms that God's liberation of the Israelites from Egyptian slavery was only for the sake of their undertaking monotheistic religion. Monotheism was the *telos* of the Exodus. Maimonides does not in this passage try to define monotheism, and mentions neither incomparability nor incorporeality.

III. Mishneh Torah

Let us turn now to Maimonides' third great work, his comprehensive 14-volume Code of Jewish Law, the *Mishneh Torah* ("The Repetition of the Law"). The *Mishneh Torah* was written in Hebrew and completed in 1178 in Fustat, Egypt. In the *Mishneh Torah*, Maimonides again codifies the commandment of monotheism, that is, the commandment to know God's Oneness. It appears in the Book of Knowledge, *Hilkhot Yedode ha-Torah* ("The Laws of the Foundations of the Law") 1:7–8:

God is One. He is not two or more than two, but One, and none of the ones found in the world is similar to His Oneness [*yihud*] - not "one" in respect to species...nor "one" in respect to body...

If there were many Gods, they would have bodies, because multiple beings...are not distinct... except due to accidents that obtain to bodies. If the Maker had a body, He would be limited and finite, for it is impossible to be a body and not be limited... Now, the power of our God...is not that of a body, but is unlimited..., for the celestial sphere revolves eternally... Therefore, He must be One. Knowledge of this is a positive commandment, as it is said, "The Lord our God, the Lord is One!" [Deuteronomy 6:4].

It is stated explicitly in the Law and in the Prophets that the Holy One, blessed be He, is not

a body, as it is said, “the Lord is God in heaven above and upon the earth beneath” [Deuteronomy 4:39], and a body cannot be in two places. It is said, “Ye saw no figure” [ibid., v. 15]. And it is said, “To whom then will ye liken Me, that I should be equal?” [Isaiah 40:25]; but if He were He a body, he would be like other bodies.⁷⁾

As in his *Book of the Commandments*, Maimonides codifies here Deuteronomy 6:4 as the commandment to know God's Oneness: “the Lord Our God, the Lord is One!” He phrases here the commandment to know God's Oneness in a manner very reminiscent of the way he had phrased the Second and Third of the Thirteen Principles of Judaism in his *Commentary on the Mishnah*. He again refers to Aristotle's discussion of different sorts of oneness (e.g., in respect to species, in respect to body), and asserts that God's Oneness is incomparable to any other (“none of the ones found in the world is similar to His Oneness”). He again refers to Aristotle's rule that plurality or numerability in a species presupposes corporeality: objects cannot be numbered unless they are corporeal, and thus if God is incorporeal He cannot be numbered. In addition, he refers here to the Aristotelian physical proof of the Prime Mover (*Physics*, VIII, 5–6, 256a–260a; cf. *Metaphysics*, XII, 6–7, 1071b–1073a), which he reasonably takes to be a proof also for the Oneness of God. According to the Aristotelian physical proof of the Prime Mover, the eternal motion of the celestial sphere can be caused only by an infinite power, and an infinite power cannot be in a finite body; thus, the Prime Mover is not a finite body but incorporeal; and if it is incorporeal, it must be One.

This passage from the *Mishneh Torah* is Hebrew in its affirmation of the *incomparability* of God's Oneness. However, it is patently Aristotelian in its multiple references to the Stagirite's writings and in its explanation of God's Oneness by means of His *incorporeality*. Three Biblical verses are also cited as testimony to God's incorporeality: Deuteronomy 4:15 (“Ye saw no figure”) and Isaiah 4:15 (“to whom then will ye liken Me, that I will be equal”), which were cited in the *Commentary on the Mishnah*; and Deuteronomy 4:39 (“the Lord is God in heaven above and upon the earth beneath”), which is resourcefully cited here for the first time. Although Maimonides calls these Biblical allusions to incorporeality “explicit,” they are so only after having been deftly interpreted by him. As mentioned above, Isaiah 40:25, read literally, expresses incomparability, not incorporeality.

There is some ambiguity here regarding Deuteronomy 6:4, the verse constituting the commandment to know God's Oneness. In the paragraph on the Second Principle in the *Commentary on the Mishnah*, it was unequivocal that the verse refers to incomparability. Here, however, it is quoted after the discussion of incorporeality, and it might be thought that it refers to incorporeality.

Nonetheless, the word “this” (in the phrase “Knowledge of *this* is a positive commandment”) should probably be parsed as referring back to the first sentence (“God is One”).⁸⁾

In *Mishneh Torah*, Hilkhoh Yesode ha-Torah 2:10, in the chapter treating of the angels, i.e., the separate intellects, Maimonides again finds occasion to speak of God’s Oneness. He defines God’s Oneness in terms of His being pure Intellect. Although this interpretation of Oneness seems to depend on Aristotle’s concept of incorporeality and suggests a comparison between God and the angels, Maimonides states explicitly that God’s Oneness is different from that of the angels and thus incomparable.⁹⁾

In the *Mishneh Torah*, as in the *Commentary on the Mishnah*, Maimonides’ conception of God’s Oneness is both Hebrew and Greek, focusing on both incomparability and incorporeality, and intertwining the two. God is One means both that God is incomparable and that He is incorporeal.

IV. The Guide of the Perplexed

We now move on to Maimonides’ fourth major book, his philosophic masterpiece, *The Guide of the Perplexed* (*Dalālat al-Hā’irīn*). *The Guide* was written in Arabic and completed in about 1190 in Fustat, Egypt. Not surprisingly, the subject of monotheism is discussed often in it, and so is that of incorporeality.

In *Guide*, I, 68, a chapter parallel to *Mishneh Torah*, Hilkhoh Yesode ha-Torah 2:10, Maimonides defines God as pure Intellect, and explains His Oneness by means of the Aristotelian concept of incorporeality. Unlike in Hilkhoh Yesode ha-Torah 2:10, he explicitly affirms that God’s Oneness is *comparable* to that all other intellects, including the human one.¹⁰⁾ However, in *Guide*, I, 59, the chapter treating of the *via negativa*, he asserts on the contrary that God is absolutely *incomparable*.¹¹⁾

In *Guide*, I, 72, Maimonides, like Aristotle in *Metaphysics*, XII, 8, 1073a–1074b, argues from the oneness of the universe to the Oneness of God. If the universe is “one being,” then it has One God; and that One God is incorporeal.¹²⁾

In *Guide*, II, 1–2, Maimonides presents several physical and metaphysical demonstrations that, according to him, are required in order to establish “God’s existence, incorporeality, and oneness.” It is striking that “incorporeality” is mentioned here together with “existence” and “oneness,” and it is especially striking that it is mentioned before “oneness.”¹³⁾ Here the Aristotelian doctrine of God’s incorporeality has moved into the very center of Jewish theology, as presented by Maimonides.

This central presence of the doctrine of God’s incorporeality in Maimonides’ theological

demonstrations may lead one to suppose that the Aristotelian notion of God's incorporeality is more essential to his monotheism than the Biblical notion of God's incomparability. Nonetheless, there is a decisive statement in *Guide*, II, 4, that contradicts that supposition. Maimonides writes there:

It cannot be true that the intellect that moves the highest sphere should be identical with the Necessary of Existence, for it has something in common with the other intellects... namely, the act of causing bodies to move.¹⁴⁾

According to this statement, the Prime Mover cannot be God, because it is comparable to the other unmoved movers, but God is incomparable. The Prime Mover, although incorporeal, is not incomparable, and thus cannot be God. God is transcendent with respect to the Prime Mover, and with respect to the entire created universe. According to this significant text from *Guide*, II, 4, therefore, Maimonides prefers the Biblical concept of God's incomparability over the Aristotelian concept of His incorporeality.

However, Maimonides' view is not entirely clear. With regard to the question of whether the Prime Mover is God or is a created being, there was a lively debate among philosophers in the Arabic Aristotelian tradition. Averroes is known for defending the orthodox Aristotelian position that the Prime Mover is God. Avicenna is known for arguing that the Prime Mover is not God but a created being. While Maimonides, in certain crucial passages, agrees with Avicenna, there are other passages in which he seems to agree with the orthodox Aristotelians and Averroes. Students of Maimonides' philosophy have disagreed about his final position. In any case, in the *Guide* and in his other works, the subject of the identity or non-identity of the Prime Mover and God is presented as a difficult and enigmatic problem that requires investigation and analysis.¹⁵⁾

As far as I understand Maimonides, he ultimately prefers Oneness as incomparability over Oneness as incorporeality. I consider decisive his statement in *Guide*, II, 4, that God is not the Prime Mover. Maimonides, as I understand him, considered incorporeality to be an important pedagogical concept that enables one to form a more profound concept of incomparability. Incorporeality is a means to incomparability. The monotheism of *Guide*, I, 68, is a kind of heuristic prolegomenon to the monotheism of *Guide*, I, 59.

The most curious thing about Maimonides' discussion of God's Oneness in the *Guide of the Perplexed* concerns Deuteronomy 6:4: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One!" This majestic verse, which contains the lofty commandment of monotheism, is cited only once in the entire book, and in a context that is odd, to say the least.¹⁶⁾ Let us examine Maimonides one discussion of Deuteronomy 6:4 in the *Guide*.

In *Guide*, III, 45, Maimonides explains the relationship between God and the angels, that is, the separate intellects or unmoved movers. God is incorporeal and One, and the angels are incorporeal and many. The angels are intermediaries between God and the prophets: they receive an emanation from God, and the prophets receive an emanation from them. Thus, belief in the existence of the angels is a premise of belief in prophecy. Maimonides writes as follows:

It has been proved that there is a Being that is neither a body nor a force in a body, who is the true Deity, and He is One; and there are also other beings, namely, the angels, that are also separate from matter and not bodies, and His existence overflows upon them...; and they bestow true prophetic revelation upon the prophets...

In order to fortify belief in this fundamental principle [namely, that of the existence of angels], God commanded that the image of two angels [that is, the two cherubim] be made over the ark in the Temple [Exodus 25:18-20]... If there had been an image of only one cherub, it might have been misleading; for it could have been thought that this was the image of the Deity... As, however, two cherubim were made and the explicit statement enounced, “The Lord our God, the Lord is One” [Deuteronomy 6:4], the truth of the opinion affirming the existence of angels was established, and also the fact that they are many. Thus, a precaution was taken against the error that they are the Deity. The Deity, however, is One, and He has created this multiplicity.¹⁷⁾

This curious passage seems to go out of its way to emphasize the similarity or comparability between God and the angels: both are *incorporeal* and the difference between them is only one of number and ontological rank. God is One and the source of the overflow, while the angels are many and the receivers of the overflow. However, God and the angels can be properly and justifiably compared since both are *incorporeal* beings. Maimonides seems almost to be saying that it was necessary to affirm “The Lord our God, the Lord is One” only because people tended to confuse God and the angels. The interpretation of God’s Oneness in terms of incorporeality would indeed seem to lead to the confusion between God and the angels. God, Metatron, the two cherubim, and the other angels are all incorporeal. This reading of Deuteronomy 6:4, which compromises God’s incomparability, is in sharp contrast to the reading of the verse in the *Commentary on the Mishnah*, which had unequivocally affirmed it.

In *Guide*, I, 55, Maimonides contrasts God’s incorporeality and His incomparability, and writes with regard to His incomparability:

One must...of necessity deny...[God’s] being similar to any existing thing. Everyone has

already been aware of this. Clear statements are made in the books of the Prophets negating the conception that He is like any thing. He says, "To whom then will ye liken Me, that I should be equal?" [Isaiah 40:25]. He says, "To whom then will ye liken God, or what likeness will ye compare unto Him?" [ibid., v. 18]. He says, "There is none like unto Thee, O Lord" [Jeremiah 10:6]. This occurs frequently.¹⁸⁾

Here Maimonides, addressing himself to God's incomparability, cites Isaiah 40:25, a verse that had been cited by him both in his *Commentary on the Mishnah* and his *Mishneh Torah*. He also cites Isaiah 40:18 and Jeremiah 10:6, and claims that similar verses occur "frequently."

According to Maimonides' discussions in the *Guide of the Perplexed*, it would seem that Deuteronomy 6:4 ("The Lord our God, the Lord is One") teaches us that God is One and not Many, while Isaiah 40:25 ("To whom will ye liken Me?") teaches us that God is One and not comparable. Moses' great proclamation of monotheism is thus interpreted according to the Aristotelian concept, while Isaiah and Jeremiah are left to represent the Hebrew concept. If so, Maimonides may be saying that the purest monotheism is not to be found in Moses or Aristotle, but in Isaiah and Jeremiah.¹⁹⁾ It was Isaiah who said, "To whom will ye liken God?" And it was Jeremiah who said, "There is none like unto the Lord."

V. Conclusion

In conclusion, Maimonides' God is the One Cause of the universe. He is uniquely One - radically different from all created beings, whether they be corporeal or incorporeal, or whether they be pluralities or unities. Like Aristotle's God, He is eternal, simple, and indivisible; and like Isaiah's God, He is incomparable.

Dear friends, let me please leave you with one question. What is the difference between a monotheism based on God's *incorporeality* and one based on His *incomparability*? What are the ramifications? What are the consequences for our lives? What is the practical *moral* or *religious* difference?

What is the moral or religious difference between the One God who we can call Perfect, who is changeless, timeless, rational, and unswayed by passions or whims; and the One God we cannot call anything, who is known by Negation alone, who is completely Other, completely transcendent?

What is the moral or religious difference between Aristotle's Greek monotheism and Isaiah's Hebrew monotheism? If we can answer this question, then perhaps we can understand why

Maimonides found it was necessary to base his own carefully conceived monotheism not on Aristotle alone and not on Isaiah alone, but on *both* the Philosopher and the Prophet.

Notes

- 1) Maimonides, *Perush ha-Mishnah*, Arabic text and Hebrew translation, Rabbi J. Qafih, (Jerusalem: Mosad Harav Kook, 1968), Seder Neziqin, p. 211. English translation in I. Twersky, *A Maimonides Reader* (New York: Behrman House, 1972), 417–418.
- 2) See H.A. Wolfson, “Maimonides on the Unity and Incorporeality of God,” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 56 (1965), 112–136; reprinted in Wolfson, *Studies in the History of Philosophy and Religion* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973–1977), vol. 2, 433–357.
- 3) See Averroes’ comment, *ad loc.*, “Nature imitates Art”; translated in Charles Genequand, *Ibn Rushd’s Metaphysics* (Leiden: Brill, 1984), 210.
- 4) *Perush ha-Mishnah*, loc. cit. English translation, *A Maimonides Reader*, p. 418.
- 5) See BT *Hagigah* 15a: “[Elisha ben Abuyah] saw permission was granted to Metatron to sit... Said he: It is taught...that on high there is no sitting, no standing, no separation, and no composition. Perchance there are...two Authorities!” This text explicitly raises the problem of distinguishing between God and angels. Cf. Rabbi Joseph Kaspi, *Commentary on Moreh ha-Nebukhim*, S. Werbluner (ed.), (Frankfurt am Main: Bach, 1848), I, 61, p. 64: “It is a great wonder that He, may He be blessed, is separate...from the Intelligences, even from the highest one, called Metatron... such that the tetragrammaton is predicated of Him alone.” According to Kaspi, Metatron is the Prime Mover, i.e., the first created being.
- 6) Maimonides, *Sefer ha-Misvot*, Arabic text and Hebrew translation, Rabbi J. Qafih, (Jerusalem: Mosad Harav Kook, 1971), 58.
- 7) Maimonides, *The Book of Knowledge*, Hebrew text and English translation by M. Hyamson, (Jerusalem 1962), 34b.
- 8) An analogous ambiguity obtains in Yesode ha-Torah 1:6, p. 34b, where the word “this” (in the phrase “Knowledge of *this* is a positive commandment”) should probably be parsed as referring not to the Aristotelian physical proof of the Prime Mover (1:5) but to the existence of the Necessary Existent (1:1).
- 9) P. 36b: “the Creator and His life are not two as is the case with the life of living bodies or the life of the angels.”
- 10) Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed* (translated by S. Pines; Chicago: University of Chicago, 1963), 163–166. Cf. p. 165: “the...unity of the intellect...does not hold good with reference to the Creator only, but also with reference to every intellect.” Arabic text, ed., S. Munk and I. Joel, Jerusalem: Junovitch, 1931.
- 11) *Guide*, pp. 137–143.
- 12) *Guide*, pp. 184–187.

- 13) *Guide*, II, Introduction, p. 235. Cf. I, 71, p. 182, where “oneness” precedes “incorporeality.”
- 14) *Guide*, pp. 258–259. On p. 257, Maimonides notes that according to Aristotle there are 50 unmoved movers, while according to the view current in his own time there are 10.
- 15) On the views of Avicenna, Averroes, and Maimonides on this subject, see Pines, Translator's Introduction, *Guide*, pp. cxiv–cxv. See my “The *Mishneh Torah* as a Key to the Secrets of the *Guide*,” in *Me'ah She'arim: Studies in Memory of I. Twersky*, E. Fleischer, et al. (eds.), (Jerusalem: Magnes, 2001), 17–19; and my “Maimonides' Avicennianism,” *Maimonidean Studies* 5 (2008), 116–117. See also Kaspi's discussion of Maimonides' interpretation of Metatron (above, note 5).
- 16) See Leo Strauss, Introduction to Pines' translation of the *Guide*, pp. xlvii–xlviii: “To our very great amazement, Maimonides does not quote this verse a single time in any of the chapters devoted to Unity. He quotes it a single time in the *Guide*.”
- 17) *Guide*, p. 577.
- 18) *Guide*, p. 128.
- 19) See Strauss, Introduction to *Guide*, p. xlviii: “As Maimonides indicates, the meaning of ‘the Lord is one’ is primarily that there is no one or nothing similar or equal to Him and only derivatively that He is absolutely simple...He develops the notion of God's incomparability...on the basis of quotations from Isaiah and Jeremiah as distinguished from the Torah.”