

Chapter 1 : Ethics of Maimonides by Hermann Cohen

"Bruckstein's edition of "Ethics of Maimonides" will be of great interest and value to scholars in the fields of modern and medieval Jewish thought, as well as philosophy and theology in general. Her commentary is clear and helpful, and very insightful.

Divine simplicity Judaism is based on a strict monotheism , and a belief in one single, indivisible, non-compound God. The Shema Yisrael , one of the most important Jewish prayers, encapsulates the monotheistic nature of Judaism: The Lord is our God; the Lord is one. He is not one as a genus, which contains many species, is one. Nor is He one as a body, containing parts and dimensions, is one. However, some Orthodox Jews do not believe in a literal interpretation of the Genesis creation narrative , and according to that view, Judaism is not in contradiction to the scientific model that states that the age of the universe is around 13.8 billion years. Samuelson writes the "question of dating the universe has never been a problem of Jewish philosophy, ultimately because that philosophy has never taken the literal meaning of the Bible to be its revealed, true meaning". Angel writes that historically, "there has been a general reluctance in Jewish tradition to speculate on the metaphysical aspects of creation": The important statement for Judaism is that God did in fact create the world; an evolutionary process did not simply happen by itself, but was set into motion by God. When the Bible speaks of God creating the world in six days, it may be speaking figuratively. The word yom day in the creation story can hardly be proved to be referring to a day of twenty-four hours. After all, the sun itself was not created until the fourth "day", so it is impossible to argue that the first three "days" were days as we know them. A more appropriate way to understand the creation story is that God created the universe in six stages, and each of these stages may have taken millions of years, or twenty-four hours, or instants. In short, Judaism insists that God created the world, that he created it in stages, and that he continues to maintain the universe which he created. The specific details of the creation process are not central to Jewish thought. The 15th-century Jewish philosopher Joseph Albo argued similarly in his Ikkarim that there are two types of time: Albo argued that "although it is difficult to conceive of God existing in such a duration, it is likewise difficult to imagine God outside space". Other Jewish writers have come to different conclusions, such as 13th-century scholar Bahya ben Asher , 16th-century scholar Moses Almosnino , and the 18th-century Hasidic teacher Nahman of Bratslav , who expressed a view - similar to that expressed by the Christian Neo-Platonic writer Boethius - that God "lives in the eternal present" and transcends or is above all time. Tzimtzum The Jewish view is that God is eternal , with "neither beginning nor end", a principle stated in a number of Biblical passages. The rabbis taught a "quite literally That "God is eternal, but it is not given to man to explore the full meaning of this idea", and so, "one cannot, therefore, expect to find in the rabbinic literature anything like a detailed examination of what is meant by divine eternity". A famous Mishnah statement on attempts to "pierce the veil" is this: Louis Jacobs writes that modern Jewish thinkers such as Levi Olan , echoing some classical Jewish writers such as the 14th-century Talmudist Gersonides have "thought of God as limited by His own nature so that while He is infinite in some respects he is finite in others", referencing the idea, present in classical sources, that "there is a primal formless material co-existent with God from all eternity upon which God has to work, and that God only knows the future in a general sense, but not how individual men will exercise their choice". Maimonides , who wrote that God had foreknowledge and man is free; Gersonides, who wrote that man is free and consequently God does not have complete knowledge, and Hasdai Crescas , who wrote in Or Adonai that God has complete foreknowledge and consequently man is not really free. Jones expressed the view that "God does not create the world by fiat although God does create the world , but leads it by beckoning it into novel possibilities of becoming. Jonas, who was influenced by the Holocaust experience , believed that God is omnipresent, but not "in all respects non-temporal, impassible, immutable, and unqualified omnipotent". He is not only cosmic, but also personal Jewish monotheism thinks of God in terms of definite character or personality, while pantheism is content with a view of God as impersonal. Who hears and answers". Maimonides", who, along with several other Jewish philosophers, rejected the idea of a personal God. Kaplan instead thought of God "as a force, like gravity , built into the very structure of the

universe", believing that "since the universe is constructed to enable us to gain personal happiness and communal solidarity when we act morally, it follows that there is a moral force in the universe; this force is what the Constructionists mean by God", although some Reconstructionists do believe in a personal God. Religious Landscape Survey, Americans who identify as Jewish by religion are twice as likely to favor ideas of God as "an impersonal force" over the idea that "God is a person with whom people can have a relationship". This principle teaches that God is the only one whom we may serve and praise It is therefore not proper to serve angels, stars, or other elements or make them intermediaries to bring us closer to God.

Chapter 2 : UW Press - : Ethics of Maimonides, Hermann Cohen

Taking into consideration the entire corpus of Maimonides' writings, Weiss focuses on the ethical sections of the Commentary on the Mishnah and the Mishneh Torah, but also discusses the Guide of the Perplexed, the letters of Maimonides, and his medical works.

The vices of this power consist of an exaggeration or a deficiency of these virtues. The nutritive and the imaginative powers have neither vices nor virtues. The ancient philosophers laid down the dictum that the soul, like the body, can be healthy or sick. The opposite is true of a diseased soul. Just as the physically sick desire things that are bad for them, but which they consider good, so do those whose souls are ill seek the bad and the evil, thinking that they are good. They must follow the advice of the soul-physicians, even though what they prescribe be distasteful. If a person is physically ill, and does not consult a physician, his end will be premature death, and, likewise, one morally ill, who does not seek the advice of the sages, will experience a moral death. Chapter IV deals with the cure of the diseases of the soul. In agreement with Aristotle, Maimonides declares that actions are good when they follow a medium course between two extremes which are both bad. People often consider one or the other extreme a virtue, as when they praise the reckless man as being brave, or the lazy as being contented. To cure a person who is morally unsound, that is who performs deeds which go to the one or the other extreme, he should be made to practise the opposite extreme until his original fault has been remedied. That is, if a man is niggardly, he must practise deeds of extravagance until his niggardliness disappears. Then he is instructed to stop his extravagance, and follow the medium course of generosity. Man must constantly guard his actions that they maintain the proper balance between exaggeration and deficiency. By this means he gains the highest degree of human perfection, comes nearer to God, and partakes of His eternal blessings. This is the most perfect form of reverencing the Deity. All his actions and words should be so arranged as to accomplish this purpose, and consequently he should seek not the most pleasant but the most useful things. The body should be kept in a healthy condition for the sake of the purity of the soul. When one partakes of food that is pleasant but dangerous to the health, he is like a senseless beast. Man acts sensibly only when all his actions are aimed at gaining bodily welfare and spiritual superiority. Man ought to direct his words towards this goal. He should speak only of such things as will benefit his soul, or avert danger from his body. In consequence of this, man will desist from many ordinary actions and words. He will not think of beautifying the walls of his house with costly decorations or his clothes with expensive embroideries, unless it be done for the purpose of spiritual uplifting. Such an aim is lofty and difficult of attainment, but one accomplishing it ranks as high as does a prophet. The rabbis have most wonderfully and concisely expressed this sentiment by the saying, "Let all your actions be for the sake of God. Agreeing with Aristotelian philosophy, Maimonides asserts that the truly virtuous man practises the good as a result of an innate inclination to do so. He is superior to the one who, though he may do deeds equally good, yet in order to accomplish them, must subdue his desires which are of an evil nature. The rabbis, however, seem to contradict this opinion by saying that he who has evil thoughts and desires, but who conquers them, is greater than he who has no battle to fight. They even maintain that the greater a man is, the more powerful are his desires. On the face of it, the opinions of the rabbis and the philosophers seem to disagree. But here Maimonides uses his wonderful ability as a harmonizer of philosophical and rabbinical doctrines. He explains away the contradiction by stating that the philosophers meant by the desires for evil the inclination to commit such transgressions as murder, stealing, deceit, and so forth. There is no doubt that a soul that desires any of these grave evils is a bad soul. It is in reference to these evils, and not to the first mentioned, that the rabbis say that if a man desires, but conquers them, his reward is great. These are, for instance, the partaking of meat and milk together, or the wearing of clothes made of two different materials. The rabbis would not say, any more than the philosophers, that the man who desires to murder but refrains from doing so is greater than the one who never desires to murder. As explained in Chapter II, there are intellectual and moral virtues, and their opposite vices. These vices, which are termed partitions, prevent man from beholding God. As many vices, intellectual or moral, a man has, by so many partitions is he separated from God. The prophets "looked upon"

God from behind the least number of partitions. The fewer they were, the higher was the rank of the prophet. Three virtues the prophets, however, must have, which Maimonides deduces from the rabbinical saying, "Prophecy rests only upon the wise, the brave, and the rich. The brave man is he who conquers his desires. The rich man is the one who is satisfied with his lot. Moses was the only prophet in whom all moral and intellectual virtues were combined. The only partition or wall between him and God was his physical body, from which the spirit of man cannot divorce itself on earth. This partition the rabbis call specularia, [52] a transparent wall, through which Moses gazed upon the highest truth, but not as one does with human eyes. The interesting problem of the freedom of will, in which again Maimonides successfully blends the philosophical and the rabbinical doctrines, is taken up in Chapter VIII. Maimonides begins with the statement that man is not born with either virtues or vices, just as he is not born skilled in an art. The developing of what is good and the conquering of what is bad may be accomplished by instruction, guidance, and habit. This belief Maimonides denounces as ridiculous. The rabbis and the philosophers alike agree in the belief that man has absolute free choice, and that he alone is responsible for his actions. If this were not so, all commands and prohibitions of the law would be in vain. If such were the case, reward and punishment would be unjust; for no matter how much a man would try to do a certain deed, if it were predetermined that he should not do it, he would be unable to perform it. If Simeon killed Reuben, it would be unjust to punish Simeon; for he did not kill of his own volition, but was forced to do so. Maimonides then attacks a popular belief that all actions, even such as sitting or standing, are done by the will of God. In general, this is true, but not of any given individual action. A stone thrown up in the air falls to the ground, which is in accordance with a general law of nature that God willed at creation. God, however, does not will that a certain stone at a certain time, when thrown into the air, should fall to the ground. At creation God willed also that man should have certain characteristics, that he should walk upright, have a broad chest, have fingers on his hands and so forth, and likewise man was endowed with the characteristics of having freedom of will which he can exercise. Maimonides then proves that certain statements in the Bible which seemingly support the theory of predestination are not of such a nature. In conclusion, Maimonides takes up a question often asked, "Does God know in advance that a certain man will do a good or a bad deed at a certain time, or does He not know it? Maimonides answers by having recourse to metaphysics. God does not know, he says, by means of human knowledge, nor does He live by means of human life, so that it can be said He and His knowledge are distinct, or that He and His life are different, as is true of man. God is, however, the knower, the knowing and the known. He is the living, He is the life, and the giver of life. Man cannot, owing to his imperfections, comprehend what is the knowledge or life of God any more than he can grasp what God Himself is. Thus, Maimonides reconciles the two beliefs that man is free to choose, and that God is yet all-knowing. Written originally in Arabic, the *Moreh* would have remained a sealed book to the majority of Jews, had not Ibn Tibbon rendered it accessible. Had he not translated it, no doubt some one sooner or later would have accomplished that task, but it was very fortunate that one who was a contemporary of Maimonides, who had his entire confidence, and who could correspond with the author in regard to obscure passages, and receive valuable instructions from him, should have done the work. He consciously avoided elegance of expression for the sake of accuracy, and in order to faithfully render the original even went so far as to reproduce ambiguities. As far as possible, he consulted Maimonides on difficult passages. He realized fully that his translation contained Arabisms, [66] but wherever it was possible to use a Hebrew word or expression he did so. Many words and constructions in Hebrew which Ibn Tibbon used for the first time to convey the Arabic sense are now commonly accepted philosophical terms. It is unjust, moreover, to judge Ibn Tibbon by the ordinary texts of the works he has translated. Not until a carefully prepared and revised text of the *Moreh* has been published will one be able to determine accurately his ability and his shortcomings. As in the *Moreh*, he sacrificed style for the sake of accuracy, and so, on the whole, translated with great literalness, very often word for word. Wherever he has to any marked degree departed from the original, the fact has been mentioned in the notes. Wherever Ibn Tibbon was uncertain of the translation of an Arabic word, which might be rendered by one of two Hebrew words, his usual custom was to put one in the text and the other in the margin. These variants came afterwards into the text. In regard to the *Moreh*, he relied upon the advice of Maimonides

as to which should be eventually used. There are also a number of glosses, explaining in detail some of the virtues. The necessity of elucidation becomes apparent from the fact that a number of glosses which did not originate with Ibn Tibbon are found in some of the sources. The critical text of the Hebrew offers in places valuable evidence on obscure readings in the Arabic, attention to which has also been drawn in the notes. The editor has, therefore, chosen a number of the most valuable sources, and has minutely compared them, being constantly guided by the Arabic. He has confined his attention as far as the Arabic is concerned to the Pococke version and that of Wolff based on it. A careful collation of Arabic texts may, however, clear up some points which are still left in doubt. The editor hopes to accomplish this task some day. The material used in collation is as follows: This is the oldest and, on the whole, the best source known to the editor. It is very carefully written, with scarcely any scribal errors. For the first six chapters its evidence is very reliable. In the seventh chapter it begins to vary from the original Arabic, and in the eighth it departs rather widely, having readings which agree substantially with those of some unreliable sources. It is possible that the first six chapters were copied from one source, the seventh and eighth from another. This manuscript is characterized throughout by an almost superfluous use of the *matres lectionis*, even in Biblical quotations. It has a few vocalized words, all of which have been recorded in the notes. The revised text of these two chapters is based mainly on this manuscript. There are, however, many, though unimportant, omissions, except in one instance in Chapter VIII, [76] where all texts depart from the original, on account of which lack of evidence on the part of Ma, the editor has been obliged to reconstruct the text.

Chapter 3 : Ethical Writings of Maimonides - Moses Maimonides, Raymond L. Weiss - Google Books

Hermann Cohen's essay on Maimonides' ethics is one of the most fundamental texts of twentieth-century Jewish philosophy, correlating Platonic, prophetic, Maimonidean, and Kantian traditions. Almut Sh. Bruckstein provides the first English translation and her own extensive commentary on.

At an early age, he developed an interest in sciences and philosophy. He read those Greek philosophers accessible in Arabic translations, and was deeply immersed in the sciences and learning of Islamic culture. This sage, who was revered for his personality as well as for his writings, led a busy life, and wrote many of his works while travelling or in temporary accommodation. The loss of this status left the Jewish and Christian communities with conversion to Islam, death, or exile. Some say, though, that it is likely that Maimonides feigned a conversion to Islam before escaping. During this time, he composed his acclaimed commentary on the Mishnah, during the years 1162-1168. While in Cairo, he studied in a yeshiva attached to a small synagogue which now bears his name. He wrote that this day of visiting the Temple Mount was a day of holiness for him and his descendants. He sent five letters to the Jewish communities of Lower Egypt asking them to pool money together to pay the ransom. The money was collected and then given to two judges sent to Palestine to negotiate with the Crusaders. The captives were eventually released. After a long arduous trip through the desert, however, David was unimpressed by the goods on offer there. The death of his brother caused Maimonides to become sick with grief. The greatest misfortune that has befallen me during my entire life—worse than anything else—was the demise of the saint, may his memory be blessed, who drowned in the Indian sea, carrying much money belonging to me, to him, and to others, and left with me a little daughter and a widow. On the day I received that terrible news I fell ill and remained in bed for about a year, suffering from a sore boil, fever, and depression, and was almost given up. About eight years have passed, but I am still mourning and unable to accept consolation. And how should I console myself? He grew up on my knees, he was my brother, [and] he was my student. Around 1162, Maimonides was appointed the Nagid of the Egyptian Jewish community. Goitein believes the leadership he displayed during the ransoming of the Crusader captives led to this appointment. Gaining widespread recognition, he was appointed court physician to the Grand Vizier Al Qadi al Fadil, then to Sultan Saladin, after whose death he remained a physician to the royal family. He was knowledgeable about Greek and Arabic medicine, and followed the principles of humorism in the tradition of Galen. He did not blindly accept authority but used his own observation and experience. It is remarkable that he managed to write extended treatises, including not only medical and other scientific studies but some of the most systematically thought-through and influential treatises on halakha rabbinic law and Jewish philosophy of the Middle Ages. It is widely believed that he was briefly buried in the study room *beit hamidrash* of the synagogue courtyard, and that, soon after, in accordance with his wishes, his remains were exhumed and taken to Tiberias, where he was re-interred. This location for his final resting-place has been debated, for in the Jewish Cairene community, a tradition holds that he remained buried in Egypt. He succeeded Maimonides as Nagid and as court physician at the age of eighteen. The office of Nagid was held by the Maimonides family for four successive generations until the end of the 14th century. Although it no longer functions as a Jewish house of worship, it is open to the public. Maimonides is sometimes said to be a descendant of King David, although he never made such a claim. It is exceptional for its logical construction, concise and clear expression and extraordinary learning, so that it became a standard against which other later codifications were often measured. A popular medieval saying that also served as his epitaph states, From Mosheh of the Torah to Mosheh Maimonides there was none like Mosheh. It chiefly referred to his rabbinic writings. But Maimonides was also one of the most influential figures in medieval Jewish philosophy. His brilliant adaptation of Aristotelian thought to Biblical faith deeply impressed later Jewish thinkers, and had an unexpected immediate historical impact. In reaction, the more radical interpretations of Maimonides were defeated. At least amongst Ashkenazi Jews, there was a tendency to ignore his specifically philosophical writings and to stress instead the rabbinic and halakhic writings. These writings often included considerable philosophical chapters or discussions in support of halakhic observance; David Hartman observes that

Maimonides clearly expressed "the traditional support for a philosophical understanding of God both in the Aggadah of Talmud and in the behavior of the hasid [the pious Jew]. Crescas bucked the eclectic trend, by demolishing the certainty of the Aristotelian world-view, not only in religious matters but also in the most basic areas of medieval science such as physics and geometry. Because of his path-finding synthesis of Aristotle and Biblical faith, Maimonides had a fundamental influence on the great Christian theologian Saint Thomas Aquinas. An example is the modern citation of his method of determining death of the body in the controversy regarding declaration of death to permit organ donation for transplantation.

Chapter 4 : Oath of Maimonides

Hermann Cohen's essay on Maimonides' ethics is one of the most fundamental texts of twentieth-century Jewish philosophy, correlating Platonic, prophetic, Maimonidean, and Kantian traditions. Almut Sh.

Life and Works Maimonides was born to a distinguished family in Cordova, Spain in 1135. In addition to Maimonides, it was the birthplace of Averroes. But events took a turn for the worse when the Almohads invaded in 1147 and offered all non-Muslims the choice of conversion, exile, or death. His first philosophic work of note was the *Treatise on the Art of Logic*. Around this time, he began work on his first religious masterpiece, the *Commentary on the Mishnah*, which was finished in 1180. It is noteworthy for the emphasis Maimonides places on Oral Torah, by which he means the details, specifications, and interpretations derived from the Written Torah, which was revealed to Moses at Sinai. While discussing the claim that all Israel has a share in the world to come, Maimonides lists 13 principles that he considers binding on every Jew: Maimonides arrived in Egypt in 1168 and eventually settled in Fustat, a section of Cairo. With the publication of the *Mishneh Torah*, he established himself as a thinker for the ages. Not only does this work systematize all the commandments of the Torah, it tries to show that every part of Jewish law serves a rational purpose and nothing is given for the sake of mere obedience. Of particular note are *Book One The Book of Knowledge*, which sets forth the philosophic foundations of Jewish belief, a theory of moral traits or dispositions, the need to study the Torah, the laws concerning idolatry, and the importance of repentance. Also of note is *Book Fourteen Judges*, which ends by arguing that a Messiah will come, restore sovereignty to Israel, establish peace with the other nations, and lead the world in the study of science and philosophy. By contrast, the Messiah will not make people rich, introduce changes in the Torah, or be required to perform miracles. Ostensibly a letter written to an advanced student who cannot decide whether to follow philosophy or the teachings of his religion, it is in reality much more: According to Maimonides, all of Jewish law aims at two things: The former is in every case a means to the latter. The soul is improved by acquiring correct opinions and eventually knowledge on everything humans are capable of knowing. The more knowledge the soul acquires, the more it is able to fulfill the commandment *Deuteronomy 6: The biggest stumbling block to love of God is the belief that the only way to remain true to the Bible is to interpret it literally*. The *Guide* has long been considered a controversial work and in some rabbinic circles was originally banned. It also raises the question of whether the real meaning of the Torah is too controversial to be taught to the average worshipper and should be restricted to the educated few; in short the question of esotericism. He defends himself by saying that the important issue is not whether and how resurrection will occur but whether it is possible for it to occur. As for the latter, once one accepts belief in creation, the possibility of bodily resurrection follows immediately. The *Letter on Astrology* was written at a time when many people believed that the heavenly bodies exert influence over human events. Nevertheless, he argues that there is no scientific basis for this belief and that it should be abandoned even if support for it can be found in the sacred literature. Facing ever-growing demands on his time, Maimonides worked himself into a state of exhaustion and died in Fostat in 1204. An old saying has it that from Moses to Moses, there was none like Moses. *Fundamental Orientation* Maimonides presents a challenge to the modern reader because his view of truth is totally unhistorical. We saw that he was guided by the need to systematize. Given original commandments, he argues that all are means to the fulfillment of the first two, which he interprets as belief in the existence of God and rejection of idolatry. To satisfy the first two commandments, one must believe in a timeless, changeless, immaterial deity who is one in every respect and unlike anything in the created order. A person who fails to recognize such a deity is accorded the status of an idolater no matter how many other commandments she may fulfill or how fervently she may fulfill them. Simply put, to worship God under a false description is not to worship God at all. Not only is this true at present, as Maimonides sees it, it has been true since God first spoke to Adam. Early in the *Guide* 1. By necessity this would have to include belief in a timeless, changeless, immaterial deity. Again Maimonides thinks he is justified in saying that Abraham discovered proofs for the existence of a God who is neither a body nor a force in a body even though the Bible is silent on such matters. These proofs were supposedly passed down to Isaac and Jacob but lost during the

Egyptian captivity when the Israelites adopted the pagan beliefs of their captors. When Moses arose to lead the people out of captivity, he faced a serious problem. If all he did were to offer philosophic proofs again, the people would forget them just as they had forgotten before. So instead of offering proofs alone, he offered the blueprint for a social order that would help the people remember their history and the principles on which it is founded. That is why in addition to the first two commandments, there are others designed to create an environment in which people will have the time, health, and mental facility needed to grasp the truth of monotheism GP 3. Judaism then is based on a particular philosophy. To someone who asks why we have no explicit record of their philosophy, Maimonides answers that any record of such teaching was destroyed when Israel went into exile and suffered persecution. So despite the appearance of a split between Jerusalem and Athens, Maimonides thinks there is only one tradition worth preserving: In short, Jewish tradition has always been philosophical. The problem is that these subjects are too difficult for the average worshipper to grasp and must be expressed as parables or metaphors that the educated few will interpret at one level and the average worshipper at another Stern Looking at his own situation, Maimonides concludes that the tradition of learning that began in Israel has been lost once again. People pray to a material God and justify their actions on the basis of literal interpretation. Someone was needed to reverse this situation and reintroduce Jews to the teachings of their own tradition. Strictly speaking, such truths are Jewish only in the sense that Jews were the first to discover them. From an ethnic standpoint, they are no more Jewish than the Pythagorean theorem is Greek. All this goes to show that Maimonides did not conceive of progress as we do. Although he regarded mastery of science and philosophy as essential parts of human perfection, he did not view them as cumulative. Rather than take us into new territory, his goal was to reacquaint us with the territory that Moses and the patriarchs had already staked out. The important truths do not change. Human progress is measured by the degree to which they are identified and understood. That is why the primary function of the Messiah will be to teach these truths and help create conditions in which more people are able to reflect on them. Demythologized Religion It is clear that the religion Maimonides envisions is not the normal kind. He recognizes that when one is first exposed to Bible stories and the ritual of daily prayer, one may need anthropomorphic descriptions of God and promises of material reward. As he points out time and again, the Torah speaks in the language of ordinary people. If it did not, its appeal would be greatly reduced. But, Maimonides continues, the purpose of the religion is to get one to the point where these things cease to matter and are eventually overcome. To take a few examples, the Bible often suggests that a prophet, or in one case the elders of Israel, saw God e. Maimonides counters GP 1. By the same token, when God is described as near or close, the Bible is not talking about physical location but intellectual apprehension “as when scientists say they are close to finding a cure for a disease GP 1. The many places where the Bible says that God spoke to a prophet do not indicate that God has vocal cords that produce sound but that the prophet came to understand what God wants GP 1. Again one is inclined to ask: Is this the religion of the prophets or a philosophically sanitized religion concocted by a medieval thinker under the sway of Aristotle? Maimonides would reply that there is no difference. The highest human achievement is the perfection of the intellect GP 3. As a sacred document, the Bible is a source of truth. While the truths contained in the Bible may not always be apparent, we know in principle that they are there if one wishes to dig deeply enough. Should human knowledge advance and come up with demonstrations it previously lacked, we would have no choice but to return to the Bible and alter our interpretation to take account of them GP 2. Anything else would be intellectually dishonest. Where does this take us? In the Parable of the Palace GP 3. He “! who has achieved demonstration, to the extent that it is possible, of everything that may be demonstrated; and who has ascertained in divine matters, to the extent that that is possible, everything that may be ascertained; and who has come close to certainty in those matters in which one can only come close to it “! This is not just an intellectual achievement but a spiritual one as well. God and the Via Negativa Maimonides offers several proofs for the existence of God, all of which are versions of the cosmological argument GP 2. According to one such argument, we assume that the heavenly bodies are engaged in eternal motion. We then recognize that it is impossible for there to be an infinite body or an infinite number of finite bodies. So every corporeal thing is finite. If it is finite, it can only contain a finite amount of power. If it can only contain a finite amount of

power, it can only explain motion over a finite period of time. Because the heavenly bodies are always moving, the only thing that can explain that motion is an infinite power. Because an infinite power cannot be contained in a finite thing, it cannot be corporeal. If it is not corporeal, it is not subject to division or change. Seeing that its power is infinite, it cannot derive that power from something else. Thus the only way to explain the motion of the heavenly bodies is to posit the existence of a being that is neither a body nor a force in a body. Although Maimonides thinks this argument gives us sufficient grounds for saying that God is, he does not think it provides any grounds for saying what God is. To see why not, we have to recognize that God is not one in a way comparable to anything else: According to Guide 1. There is no oneness at all except in believing that there is one simple essence in which there is no complexity or multiplicity of notions, but one notion only; so that from whatever angle you regard it and from whatever point of view you consider it, you will find that it is one, not divided in any way and by any cause into two notions. If Maimonides is right, there can be no plurality of faculties, moral dispositions, or essential attributes in God. Even to say that God is all-knowing, all-powerful, and all-good is to introduce plurality, if one means thereby that these qualities are separate attributes. The same is true if we say that God is a composite of matter and form, genus and specific difference, or essence and accident. All introduce plurality where none can be tolerated. Aside from religious considerations, plurality is objectionable because it compromises logical priority. If God were a composite of F and G, some reason would have to be found for what brought them together and keeps them together. In short, if God were a composite, there would have to be a cause prior to God, which is absurd GP 2.

Chapter 5 : Jewish principles of faith - Wikipedia

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References and Further Reading 1. The continuity and coherence of Jewish national life, their life as a people, was largely grounded in the fact that Jewish law bound them together despite diaspora and lack of political self-rule. Talmud was studied intensively, its contents being elaborated and developed to meet the varied conditions of economic, social, and political life. Talmud constitutes the most central collection of interpretation, explication, and commentary on the commandments in Torah, traditionally held to be six hundred and thirteen in number. Knowledge of Talmud, study of it, commentary upon it, and following its guidance bound Jews together as a people in covenant with God. In addition to being an expert on scripture and Talmud, Maimonides was an important judge and legal official in the Jewish community in Egypt. He was a physician in the Muslim court in Egypt and had extensive correspondence with Jews far and wide, writing detailed responses to questions of Jewish law and scriptural interpretation. The prospects of medieval Jewish communities often depended upon the disposition of the Christian or Islamic rulers of the areas in which Jews lived. As is the case for several other important medieval Jewish philosophers, the larger intellectual culture in which Maimonides lived and worked was Islamic rather than Christian. Maimonides Moses ben Maimon was born in Cordoba, Spain, and within a few years his family felt the need to flee persecution. They led a wandering life for several years and then settled in North Africa. They had fled the Iberian Peninsula after an especially intolerant Islamic dynasty came to power. Maimonides visited the Holy Land briefly and was distressed at the condition of Jews living there. Maimonides and others in his family depended to a large extent on his younger brother, a successful merchant. His brother was lost at sea during a journey across the Indian Ocean, and Maimonides wrote that the loss of his brother pained him profoundly, leading him into depression. In the latter part of his life he was physician to a Grand Vizier who was ruling Egypt for the Sultan Saladin. Though he wrote enormously important works on Jewish law he did not believe that one should be paid for being a teacher of Torah and Talmud. He also wrote works on medicine and diseases, on various sciences, and other subjects. He conducted extensive correspondence with Jewish communities far and wide on diverse matters, from details of religious observance to how to respond when confronted with a choice between death and conversion. See, for example, his Epistle to Yemen in Halkin and Hartman. His codification of Jewish law, Mishneh Torah, remains a much studied and important work in the lives of Orthodox Jewish communities to this day. He led an almost breathlessly busy life as physician, judge, codifier of Jewish law, philosopher, scientist, and teacher. The rigors of his responsibilities are described in a letter to Samuel ben Judah ibn Tibbon, the man who translated Guide of the Perplexed from its original Arabic into Hebrew. Maimonides became quite widely known and respected by Jews and Muslims alike. He died in and his death was felt as a considerable loss. Maimonides remains an important philosopher and key figure in Jewish religious tradition, offering extensive guidance on matters of Jewish law and Jewish life. Though there is a longstanding debate within Judaism over whether the central role ascribed to reason by Maimonides is in tension with Judaism as a revelation-based religious tradition it is difficult to imagine Judaism without his influence. Also, as noted above, he was an important influence on non-Jewish philosophers, such as Aquinas, Leibniz, and also on Spinoza , who had his own controversial place in Jewish thought. Maimonides had encyclopedic knowledge of Jewish law and one of his main projects was to try to organize the massive, complex body of interpretation, argument, and elaboration in a systematic, orderly manner. By doing this, he intended to obviate the need for further codification and interpretation. He sought to provide a normatively authoritative presentation of Jewish law. His aim was to articulate what he took to be the correct interpretation of the law without also including the argumentation that yielded his interpretation. The aim was to make the law accessible, to make it easier to find and follow what the law required. The work that resulted, the Mishneh Torah, was a formidable achievement. While it did not bring interpretation and codification of Jewish law to closure, it has remained throughout the centuries a vitally important guide to Jewish law for large numbers of

Orthodox Jews. In that respect, it has more than just historical importance. The student, a young man named Joseph, had written to ask how to reconcile his commitment to Judaism and Jewish tradition on the one hand with his commitment to reason and demonstrative science on the other. Joseph was himself a very capable and learned individual, and the Guide is the subtle, complex, layered series of letters written by Maimonides in reply. In the Christian world there were cathedral schools and, by the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, a number of universities. In contrast, Jews were scattered and the Temple in Jerusalem, formerly the locus of priestly ritual, had been destroyed centuries earlier. Following that destruction and the huge wave of killing by the Romans, Judaism survived in large measure through the development of the rabbinic tradition, to which Talmud was crucial. This is relevant to Maimonides as a philosopher because so much of his work was the project of articulating what he took to be the philosophical wisdom in Scripture and Jewish law. Nonetheless, he was a sophisticated thinker, and one of the main themes of his great work is that Judaism is vindicated by reason. The Book of Beliefs and Opinions opens with an extensive discussion of epistemological issues in which Saadia was anxious to show how Judaism is a religion of reason. He argued that, while revelation is real, much of the substance of what is revealed can be understood in rational terms and is not ultimately a matter of mystery. Saadia was influenced by kalam, Islamic dialectical theology, and Maimonides criticized him for it. Maimonides regarded kalam as less rationally rigorous than philosophy. Maimonides saw himself as improving upon the theses Saadia defended and the arguments Saadia developed. In addition, the intellectual context included some important Neoplatonic Jewish thinkers, such as Isaac Israeli and Solomon ibn Gabirol, and some sharp critics of rationalism, such as Judah Halevi. For a thinker like Maimonides it is very difficult, and in some ways artificial, to separate his philosophical thought from his religious thought. An unhelpful way of looking at this is to believe his religious commitments unduly bias his philosophy or make his philosophical conclusions only valuable to those who share his religious beliefs. Moreover, many medieval philosophers were very rigorous thinkers, bold in argumentation and in critiquing predecessors, and they departed from predecessors in important ways. Many exhibited a high level of analytical acuity. That is certainly true of Maimonides. Maimonides did not write purely philosophical works. His works that are regarded as philosophical address issues motivated by religious ideas and concerns. However, Maimonides held that reason and revelation concern one body of truth; each is a mode of access to truth, and he thought there was significant philosophical wisdom in revelation. This is a theme that will run through the rest of this discussion. He wrote to Maimonides for guidance on how to reconcile, or not, those two commitments. It is a very challenging work. Maimonides himself notes that it contains obscurities and contradictions, in large part on account of the need to reach different audiences with different levels of philosophical understanding. The present discussion does not examine that debate directly. Instead, it focuses on what appear to be the chief philosophical conceptions shaping his thought. To be sure, even if the debate about esotericism is not taken up explicitly, the views presented are relevant at least by implication; complete neutrality on the issue is not possible. Their Aristotelianism often involved elements of Platonism, interwoven in often complex ways. For instance, freedom of the will was vitally important to Maimonides because of its significance in regard to following, or not following, the commandments. Tracing out the implications of creation, revelation, and redemption is a way of understanding many of the differences between Maimonides and the ancient inheritance. To a large extent, that inheritance had been modified by commentators on the ancients and by successors to the ancients. As such, the Aristotelianism Maimonides encountered had already been modified to some degree by Arabic commentators. Some of the commentators, Al-Farabi for example, made little distinction between Plato and Aristotle. Maimonides argued that Torah contained philosophical wisdom and that the most complete understanding of Torah is philosophical understanding. In *The Guide of the Perplexed* Maimonides argues that the eternity of the world is not demonstrable. In that situation, we are to rely on what is made known to us by revelation but not by a simple, dogmatic assertion of faith. Rather, close study of Torah on the basis of epistemically and explanatorily sound principles leads us to belief in a First Cause as creator, which providentially governs the world with concern for the beings created in its image, that is, rational beings. One of the chief differences is that the world is the result of a free act of creation, rather than a necessary emanation, as in many Neoplatonic conceptions, involving no volitional element. That there is a

world is not to be explained by it processing by necessity, from the First Cause. The relations between the several intellects ordering the different spheres that constitute the world are sometimes described by Maimonides as being related by a process of overflow, each emanating from the one immediately superior to it. The relations between causality, agency, emanation, and overflow are complex and perplexing. Nonetheless, he does appear to have held that God is First Cause, God freely created the world, and God sustains the world in existence. Aristotle understood the existence of the world as necessary, given the essence of the First Cause. According to him, God does not make the world and does not will a created order into existence. The causality of the First Cause is not exercised by, for instance, creating the world ex nihilo or even creating it out of a formless pre-existing material substratum. Aristotle, in contrast to some Neoplatonic Aristotelians, did not regard the world as emanating from the First Cause. He also did not regard the world as existing contingently, based on volition of the First Cause. For Maimonides creation is so important because the First Cause is understood to have brought the world into existence through benevolence and wisdom, reflected in the created order. Through study of the created order we can enlarge our understanding of God. Revelation is so important because it means that human beings receive help through divine graciousness. Through the giving of Torah human beings are provided with direction to perfection. This includes guidance regarding repentance and how to return to God when one sins. Redemption is understood here as the culmination of providence is important because it means that the created order is under divine governance. Human beings may not fully understand the wisdom and goodness of the created order, consider Job for example, but they can be confident that it is indeed governed by divine reason and justice. Maimonides examined what he took to be the three main approaches to accounting for the world. They are i a free act of creation ex nihilo, ii imposition of form on pre-existing matter, iii eternal emanation. In this last approach the world did not come into being ex nihilo or de novo. Maimonides did not claim to have demonstrative proof that God created the world ex nihilo and de novo. Neither did he claim that he could conclusively refute the second and third approaches. Among Jewish thinkers there were some who accepted a Platonist view that God imposed form on pre-existent matter. However, Maimonides held that we should accept the Biblical story of creation, suitably interpreted in philosophical terms. There is nothing inconsistent or incoherent in it, and we have the authority of the Bible with which to support it.

Chapter 6 : Project MUSE - Ethics of Maimonides

Ethics in Maimonides' deliberations on the problem. The debate of the ancients over this issue, and the opposing positions of Aristotle and Plato, were presented al.

Chapter 7 : Maimonides - Wikipedia

The Shemonah Peraá, 3im, in Maimonides' system, come, accordingly, under the head of ethics (x"x x"x'x^a x"x•x"x• x x•x•x•), which in turn is a branch of practical philosophy (x"x•x•xTMx•x•x•x•x•xTMx• x"xžx•x•xTMx^a).

Chapter 8 : Maimonides (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy)

The mission of the Maimonides Institute for Medicine, Ethics and the Holocaust (MIMEH) is to explore the ethical implications of the medical transgressions that took place during the holocaust for modern scientific theory, Medical practice, healthcare policy, and human rights endeavors.

Chapter 9 : Ethical Writings by Maimonides

Moses Maimonides, "Laws Concerning Character Traits," in Ethical Writings of Maimonides, ed. by Raymond L. Weiss, Charles Butterworth, New York: Dover Publications, Inc., In this work the differences between Maimonides and Aristotle in regard to ethics are evident, especially regarding the role of the mean.