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Maimonides and Peace for Our Time

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The topics Maimonides addresses in the Guide for the Perplexed are still relevant for us today, especially his ideas concerning how to achieve and maintain a condition of peace and wellbeing —encompassed in the notion of shalom— in a less than peaceful world. His purpose is not to end perplexity, whether in his own life or in those of his disciples across the generations, but rather to direct that energy toward still vital ends. Following Maimonides’ lead even today, a person may arrive at a condition of relative perfection in which neither faith nor reason need be obviated. One can thus be content without complacency. In fact, both belief and intellect can be revitalized, as within his/her own sphere, a still very human being may achieve the various levels and varieties of perplexed perfection that Maimonides describes.

It may seem quite ironic that I have selected for part of my title a phrase borrowed from a speech given in 1938, by Neville Chamberlain, who in some circles is still considered the arch appeaser of tyrants. You may recall that he served as Prime Minister of the UK during Hitler’s rise to power, making possible or even probable the Holocaust-to-come. His ill-starred attempts to promote “peace for our
time," would apparently lead to—or at least do nothing to stave off—the coming conflagration of nations, not to mention the near annihilation of European Jewry. Despite the potential irony of the title and its associations, it is altogether fitting that we commemorate the eighth centenary of Rabbi Moses’ death: his life and work merit multiple testaments and memorials, given their significance across the ages. Though we may mark Maimonides’ passing (in 1204 of the Common Era), his influence and example have not passed away. Indeed, they continue present, even potent, and not just in the synagogue and in the academy, but in the most unexpected venues.

Certainly, one might speculate as to what can really be known or even conjectured concerning Maimonides’ life, asking with Javier Muguerza and many other writers on this same topic: "¿Qué sé yo de Maimónides y su mundo, ni de ese empeño capital que fue su Guía?" (Muguerza 24). Yet, despite such unforced hesitancy, or perhaps because of it, Muguerza writes to propose a “nueva guía (ilustrada) de perplejos,” a philosophical rapprochement of “modern” and Maimonidean modalities (Muguerza 21-49). In turn, José Gaos, writing originally in 1935, at the eighth centenary of Rabbi Moses’ birth, argues the following: “Tiempo de aniversarios, centenarios y aun milenarios, podríamos definir el nuestro,” citing in Maimonides’ case, as well as in those of many of his predecessors, what he terms the “voz viva de personajes, aunque ha muchos siglos fenecidos” (Gaos 12). This same critic also vocalizes a vision of “vidas superpuestas,” in which, effectively, Maimonides’ life and lively thought continue to be superimposed on ours, as well as ours on his (7). Gaos is not by any means the first (though he may be one of the more convincing) to affirm that “el hombre moderno es histórica prolongación del hombre de la Edad Media, que aún pervive en su fondo” (54). Likewise with regards to centenaries, Asher Ginzberg contends that the Jews “did not feel it necessary to commemorate the death of whom in spirit they regarded as still alive” (quoted by Minkin 110; see also Leaman 162, and Fox 324-25; cf. Strauss 30).

In light of such eulogies of the ostensibly vital, or at least the still viable, I would venture to say that this present project is really not so much about the Rambam as a mortal man mired in time and space, as it is about his ongoing presence and persona, as expressed in the Guide:
for many of us living early in the third millennium of the Common Era, his dialogue with the world and inquiry after the Deity most definitely continue relevant, even eight centuries after his own decease. Certainly many, if not most, of the questions that would perplex Maimonides and his disciples, initially and across the centuries, are yet with us, whether they intrude on or actually inform the domestic tranquility. Additional layers of irony as to this present project may certainly accrue as one considers potentially parallel situations in our contemporary world, where some have demanded preemptive strikes to make the world safe for democracy, for peace and freedom, if not from (or for?) dictators. According to this mindset, U. S. unilateralism will allow other, more reluctant, nations to catch up eventually, presenting finally the united front that was sorely lacking in Chamberlain’s time, as in our own, not to mention in Maimonides’.

Having recited this (relatively) brief prologue, I propose some questions that, hopefully, will provide points of reference for a study of what Maimonides might have to say to us eight centuries after his demise: What could be the Rambam’s message to those of us who are still perplexed after all these years? What can he tell us who must function in the flux of time and space, living in a “modern” world that, frankly, is not so different from his own? What sort of peace can the Rabbi Moses propose for pensive people, particularly for those of us who may want to be(come) believers in an unbelieving world, though without leaving off critical thinking? That Maimonides brings true intellectual rigor to spiritual matters, all the while maintaining the moral equanimity and logical equilibrium that grace his philosophical inquiries, infuses me personally with hope. Employing Gaos’ apt phraseology, the Guide figures on numerous levels as “an obra de conciliación” (Gaos 9). Doubtless, readers may extract their own meanings from Maimonides’ text, perhaps disagreeing among themselves, though they are almost universally in accord, down across the centuries, in their belief that the Guide continues to have meaning(s). This volume stands as an honest effort to reconcile the perplexed to their perplexities, though it will not necessarily resolve all or even most issues it traverses. Granted, various writers underline how in the Guide Maimonides demarcates the “limits of human reason.” That Rabbi Moses establishes (or at least recognizes) such parameters is beyond
contention, though it must also be noted that he and his text likewise do much to illustrate the "range of reason," along with the reach of reasonableness.

On a personal level, I must confess to disagreeing, often profoundly, with many of the Rambam's premises, as well as with numerous of what seem to be his conclusions. Nonetheless, the theory that informs his work, in principle and praxis, that it is possible for a person to be intelligent and open to worldly philosophy, becoming or remaining a believer without leaving off being a serious scholar and even a skeptic, is for me a crucial point. Early on in the Guide for the Perplexed, Maimonides makes clear his purpose: "I prefer to extricate that intelligent man from his embarrassment and show him the cause of his perplexity, so that he may attain perfection and be at peace" (Guide, "Introduction," 9). Even if a reader were to disagree with some, or even with most, of the beliefs that Maimonides affirms or otherwise ascribes to, he/she would surely appreciate the Rabbi's example, in person, as in print. His being, as man and as text, may resonate with his other readers—as it does with me. If as some writers suggest, the Rambam remains as perplexed about certain matters as are his readers, he still makes clear his conviction that it is possible to live in the world, to make one's home, materially and spiritually, among men, serving God and one's fellows, without losing faith, hope, and charity, for others or for oneself. Indeed, one may enjoy, even savor, what Muguerza rather playfully terms Maimonides' "don de la perplejidad" (Muguerza 46), not only while studying the Guide, but also while living one's life. The philosopher, as well as the student of the humanities and the religious person, must be willing to accept ambiguity and uncertainty, peering "through a glass darkly" (as another Hebrew philosopher once wrote) even to the point of relishing this condition, as does Moses Maimonides, a true paragon of and for the perplexed.

Many writers on Maimonides and his opera, particularly those who address themselves to the Guide, label them as less practical and this-worldly, in a word, as "esoteric." I readily grant that the Rabbi is not writing for the masses, though his philosophical programs and positions are by no means exclusively or even excessively abstruse, nor are they so absolutely abstract in affiliation or application. I propose
to approach Rabbi Moses—the text, the man, and potentially the man as text—as a practical guide through, or at least into, some of the quagmires, quandaries, and conundrums we yet encounter. Perhaps I flatter myself, or am otherwise misapprehending things as they really are, but I see in Maimonides and the Guide more than just an implicit methodology to achieve these ends. The author does not dismiss the ongoing struggle between the world, the text, and the devil, but rather seems to offer a measure of peace in medias res, in the thick of the struggle for life and with life. Maimonides makes possible, even practical, the notion of peace in the world: if he directs himself and his Guide to a relatively few individuals, nonetheless, he offers to whomever will read as carefully and as thoughtfully as he requires, "the solution of those important problems of religion, which are a source of anxiety to all intelligent men" (Guide, "Introduction" 8). He does not claim to have the "all the answers," though he does help phrase the questions so that an individual can realize that the process of pondering, of questioning, and perhaps of answering, however tentatively, may itself actually be "the solution." Perpetual, paradigmatic, and in Maimonides' case, peripatetic, perplexity may constitute the most genuine human condition. In this regard, we could recall his journeys, essentially forced marches in some cases, from his youth through the rest of his life, as Moshe ben Maimon would come to typify the wandering Jew, in the world of men, as in the world of ideas.

My thinking at this point is certainly colored by my condition as to what Germanists would call "Faustian man," that is, one who since Goethe and the scholar who was his perplexed protagonist, also accepts the wager with the world, to maintain activity without ceasing, striving ever striving. Granted, the Faust theme did not originate with Goethe, though he gave it particular currency for those of us coming afterward. In this context, then, I recall to mind Faust's bet with Mephistopheles, as it takes place in the Studierzimmer (a possible parallel to the Beth Midrash?):

Werd'ich zum Augenblicke sagen:  
Verweile doch! du bist so schön!  
Dann magst du mich in Fesseln schlagen,  
Dann will ich gern zugrunde gehn! (lines 1699-1702)
We of succeeding generations generally accept without argument (albeit unwittingly) that salvation, whatever that may consist of, lies more in the struggle, rather than in the surcease thereof. So, the perplexed reader, like the equally perplexed writer, may remain that way, still restless though reassured, and not just intellectually, but also emotionally and even spiritually. The peace Maimonides seems to offer is not that of the recluse in the cloister or of the anchorite in the desert. It is not so much a state of silence or solitude, but rather a tranquility of mind and spirit, cognizant of all their possibilities and limitations, at ease with themselves, though without complacency. Through all this, the intelligently perplexed person continues to exist in time and space, grasping the significance of the struggle, though without exiting the quotidian fray. Such an individual remains a stranger in a strange land, though considerably more comfortable with his/her estrangement, while paradoxically establishing a separate peace within him/herself. Such perplexity does not equate to paralysis, whether of the heart, of the mind, or of the spirit.

Nor is the peace the Rambam preaches some sort of misty-eyed pastoral elegy or beatus ille. One need not lose oneself in an otherwise narcissistic Nirvana or nihilistic Neverneverland; nor is it necessary blissfully to surrender oneself to any seductive siren song, in the world or out of it. Maimonides is "tough-minded" in the extreme; his philosophy is not at all self-indulgent. Rabbi Moses merely reminds us that Arcadia is just as stony as ever: he does not attempt to rationalize away the rocks, but, rather, fortifies the reader to deal with them as they crop up along the path. With regard to a centuries-old knock on the academy and academics, the author of the Guide does seem to propose that one intern (or inter) oneself in an ivory tower for the duration. Nonetheless, that tower becomes something of a minaret, calling the reader, not to rote recitation or to passive prayer, but to thoughtful contemplation of his/her human condition, as well as of the possibilities offered by a true understanding of the Divine. Maimonides' responsa constitute more of a rapprochement, rather than a reproach of the individual and the world. He proposes not to obviate perplexity, but instead turns it to good use. Thus, the intelligent person will probably not leave off being perplexed about any number of issues, but will be reassured and revitalized in his/her perspective.
Maimonides' philosophy of peace in perplexity is dynamic, rather than static. His program is not ephemeral or otherwise evasive and equivocal, but instead is evocative.

After all, the word *shalom* as a noun connotes far more than mere quietude: it invokes the genuine wellbeing of the whole person, temporally as well as spiritually. Along these same lines, Susan Perlman writes:

> The Hebrew concept of peace is rooted in 'shalom,' which means wholeness, completeness, soundness, safety, health and prosperity. More than that, peace is experienced when that wholeness or health is expressed in our standing with the God of Israel (Perlman 2-3).

In turn, one can be(come) perfect, as the Rambam asserts throughout the *Guide*, while still functioning in a very imperfect world. At this point I note that *shalom* as an adjective, even in modern Hebrew, can mean "perfect." Certainly, such perfection is relative, figuring more in a human, rather than in a Divine context, but perfection it is. We encounter this usage beginning in Genesis, running throughout the Hebrew Bible, and into the New Testament. Etymologically, this word "perfect" indicates no upstart one-upmanship or otherwise Promethean rivalry with the Deity, but rather lends itself to a more terrestrial plane. The perfect person is one who is totally complete or thoroughly accomplished, at peace, if you will, with him/herself and his/her lot, though never content with a condition of stagnation. This involves not a focus on absolutes, but on relativity. Such is the message Maimonides preaches, that the good person can become perfect in all his/her ways, while still striving to get better at the business of being human, as well as at the comprehension, however negatively, of the Divine.

Thus, the human being sets about discovering his/her place, conforming to it, but becoming all he/she can be within this legitimate sphere of being, rather than the Divine one of absolute nonbeing. To this effect, the Rabbi Moses asserts that people must come to

a correct knowledge of our own self, and comprehend the true nature of everything; we must be content and not trouble our mind with seek-
ing a certain final cause for things that have none, or have no other final cause but their own existence, which depends on the Will of God, or, if you prefer, on the Divine Wisdom (Guide, pt. 3, ch. 13, 277).

In other words, intelligent human beings must learn to recognize, even to appreciate, their own limitations, as well as their own potentialities, a process which Maimonides categorizes as “a correct estimate of ourselves” (Guide, pt. 3, ch. 14, 277). If not, if one attempts “to exceed the limit of [one’s] intellectual power,” he/she “will become exceedingly imperfect” (Guide, pt. 1, ch. 32, 42-43). The trick is to find the balance, the middle ground that constitutes true humanity. It is not to look beyond the mark, nor short of it, but to see the mark clearly for what and where it is, as well as what the human creature can be(come) according to the proper perception of that mark.

Along this same vein, Rabbi Moses offers a justification of the Divine commandments, which are sometimes apparently arbitrary, irrational, or otherwise impractical—in a word, perplexing. He sets himself to making them more understandable within the context of human perfectibility, suggesting that the “general object of the Law is twofold: the well-being of the soul and the well-being of the body” (Guide, pt. 3, ch. 27, 312). Here we might recall that shalom encompasses this condition of wellbeing, of wholeness, even of holiness (the root in English is arguably the same). Rabbi Moses proposes that “the well-being of the soul is promoted by correct opinions communicated to the people according to their capacity.” Maimonides accedes that some of these “opinions” may be “imparted in plain form,” though others will come “allegorically,” as “in their plain form” they may be “too strong for the capacity of the common people” (Guide, pt. 3, ch. 27, 312). This latter contention sounds rather esoteric or elitist; in a sense, it is, though we may remember how the Rambam explains the esoteric physicality of God in the Scripture. Paradoxically, his characterization of the “negative” characteristics of Deity may actually be less esoteric, and in a sense more intelligible, than are the writings of the prophets.

In turn, Maimonides’ investigations concerning prophets and prophecy are for me particularly intriguing. Reacting, I suppose, to the Delphic model of the prophetic as irrational and of the oracular as
by nature cryptic and perhaps deliberately confusing (perplexing in a negative sense), he defines prophecy as

in truth and reality, an emanation sent forth by the Divine Being through the medium of the Active Intellect, in the first instance to man's rational faculty, and then to his imaginative faculty; it is the highest degree and greatest perfection man can attain (Guide, pt. 2, ch. 36, 225).

Rabbi Moses believes that prophets and prophecy existed, though acknowledging that he is not sufficiently "perfect" to enter that domain; still, he is at peace within his own condition. For him, prophecy is rationally irrational, beyond his ken, but still intelligible. Additionally, his particular regard for his namesake, Moses "Our Teacher"—he quotes various passages of scripture to the effect that another prophet like Moses shall never arise—may be influenced by Islam and the status of Mohammed as God's Prophet (Guide, pt. 2, ch. 35, 224-25). But what is important for our present purpose is that Maimonides is at peace with the inherent limitations of his philosophical endeavors, which also involve the Active Intellect, but are not infused with the Divine. He realizes that he is limited, though also elevated and even exalted, by his innate humanity.

Maimonides also ventures to say that "intelligent persons are much perplexed when they inquire into the purpose of Creation" (Guide, pt. 3, ch. 13, 272). He offers what I consider a reasonable argument for the existence of "design in Nature," and by extension, of the Designer thereof, suggesting that the phenomena of the natural world cannot exist "unless it be assumed that Nature has been produced" (Guide, pt. 3, ch. 13, 272-730). His teleology may strike certain readers as somewhat slanted or slightly solipsistic, but by this mechanism, he is able to recreate to his own satisfaction the reasonable universe, making peace with relative incongruity. The Rambam also offers an explication of the trials that confront the learned, as well as the unlearned, in this created life on earth. He writes that "the sole object of all the trials mentioned in Scripture is to teach man what he ought to do or believe" (Guide, pt. 3, ch. 24, 304). He treats, by way of example, the akedah, the projected sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham, concluding that
this event, like all of God's work, is by no means idle or "purposeless." Maimonides therefore comforts himself and others in adversity, telling readers to take care that

we must not think that God desires to examine us and to try us in order to know what He did not know before. Far is this from Him; He is far above what ignorant and foolish people imagine concerning Him in the evil of their thoughts (Guide, pt. 3, ch. 24, 306-7).

In much the same regard, Maimonides focuses on "the strange and wonderful Book of Job," an archetype of piety and passion, which he considers, along with numerous of his rabbinical forebears, a "poetic fiction" (Guide, pt. 3, ch. 22, 296). It is a story written to teach humankind how to bear up under calamity, which surely will come, whatever the Divine purpose. In the very first verse of this book of scripture, before his Divinely appointed trials, Job is characterized as "perfect and upright." From the very outset, and throughout his sufferings, this "righteous Gentile" is at peace with God and with himself, standing for Maimonides as a dignified exemplar of human perfection that may be extrapolated into the contemporary world from the still-modern age of prophets and patriarchs (see also Minkin 226-34).

After briefly discussing the wellbeing of the soul, which he judges to be "first in rank," Maimonides goes on to describe "the well-being of the body [which] is established by a proper management of the relations in which we live one to another." This condition is attained in two ways: first by removing all violence from our midst; that is to say, that we do not do every one as he pleases, desires, and is able to do; but every one of us does that which contributes towards the common welfare. Secondly, by teaching every one of us such good morals as must produce a good social state (Guide, pt. 3, ch. 27, 312-13).

This style of utopia strikes me as the very antithesis of the capitalistic ethos, where every person supposedly prospers economically, if not morally, according to the management of the creature. Nor can these "good morals" be imposed from on high, which would only come about by violence, whether perpetrated by Inquisitors from Rome or from Jerusalem, from Mecca or from Washington. The "shock and
awe" tactics of our own and earlier times may well bludgeon men
and nations into submission, though there is no perfection of
humanity involved in its annihilation, in body and/or in spirit.

Such pipedreams as the Patriot Act or the Statutes of Purity of
Blood make Maimonides' proposals seem considerably less esoteric.
It could also be noted here that even after his nation was set upon by
Islamic fundamentalists, the fanatical Almohades, who in 1148 would
force him and his family into permanent exile, the Rambam maintained
sufficient faith in human potential to write as he did. His lifelong
labor as a physician to humankind, regardless of station or financial
means, bears witness of this faith in his fellow beings, as well as in
himself and in his God. At this juncture, we could also recall that
some four centuries after Maimonides, another figure of possible
Semitic extraction, Cervantes' Don Quijote, would launch himself on
a campaign against evildoers and axes of evil. Then, some four
centuries after the Knight of the Woeful Countenance, another
crusader from Texas would ride out on a similar quest, with no more
realistic goals nor any more viable exit strategy than his predecessor
for what could conceivably be an "inacabable aventura." Such
crusades make the Rambam's idealism, what we might call "la razón
de la sinrazón" seem a good deal less quixotic (Cervantes, pt. 1, ch.1; 22).

Working like his namesake, the Prince of Egypt and teacher of
Israel, Rabbi Moses describes the "true Law," characterizing the
condition of well-being as "a double perfection," first of the body
and then of the soul. In this context, Daniel Frank writes, how for
Maimonides, the "ideal is not the contemplative unconcerned with
the society in which he lives, but rather, the legislative prophet, Moses,
whose imitation of God necessitated political action" (Frank 490). The
former perfection

consists in the most healthy condition of his material relations, and
this is only possible when man has all his wants supplied, as they
arise; if he has his food, and other things needful for his body, e.g.,
shelter, bath, and the like. But one man alone cannot procure all this; it
is impossible for a single man to obtain this comfort; it is only possible
in society, since man, as is well known, is by nature social (Guide, pt. 3,
ch. 27, 313).
Needless to say, this sort of program is far removed from any esoteric Cloudcuckooland. Physical necessities and even comforts lead to individual and collective wellbeing, to health in the mind, in the body, and in the body politic. True, this situation represents only a relative perfection, but it is one that Maimonides recognizes as real and attainable/maintainable in this world.

Only a few pages later, in what has come to be one of the "most disputed" chapters in the *Guide* and in his entire literary corpus (Frank 488), the Rabbi elaborates on what has elsewhere been termed "la primaria perfección" (García 79-86). He describes first the "perfection as regards property; the possession of money, garments, furniture, servants, land, and the like." The Rambam laments how so many spend their days in such acquisition, though he again recognizes that material needs must be met, albeit not necessarily to excess (*Guide*, pt. 3, ch. 54, 394-95). The next of the four perfections enumerated in this final chapter of the *Guide for the Perplexed* "includes the shape, constitution, and form of man's body." Initially, this perfection may appear to have little to do with what Maimonides considers the ultimate perfection, that of the soul; nonetheless, he does not discount the corporeal demands of nature, unless these somehow obstruct the pursuit of higher, more spiritual perfection. Jacob Minkin is quite accurate when he writes that

> in almost tender and beseeching words, Maimonides addresses the reader on the goal and meaning of life. The whole drama of man's longings and ambitions—material possessions and acquisitions, the perfections of health, wisdom, and character—passes before him. The author neither derides nor belittles them. He knows man's need and hunger for them (Minkin 416).

In brief, Maimonides is no Savonarola, but neither is he a sybarite. He is, rather, humane, at once optimistic and realistic, in his hopes and expectations for himself and his fellow human creatures.

So once these physical realities of human existence are met—notice a good bath is a necessity of life!—the Rambam proposes an additional perfection. He figures as a model of philosophical and moral rigor, as well as of charity and compassion: dare I assert he was a genuinely compassionate conservative? Rabbi Moses writes:
The second perfection of man consists in his becoming an actually intelligent being; i.e., he knows about the things in existence all that a person perfectly developed is capable of knowing. This second perfection certainly does not include any action or good conduct, but only knowledge, which is arrived at by speculation, or established by research (Guide, pt. 3, ch. 27, 313).

Maimonides, ever the pragmatic idealist, asserts that such a condition can never be achieved by a person in physical want, as one

that is suffering from great hunger, thirst, heat, or cold cannot grasp an idea even if communicated by others, much less can he arrive at it by his own reasoning. But when a person is in possession of the first perfection, then he may possibly acquire the second perfection, which is undoubtedly of a superior kind, and is alone the source of eternal life (Guide, pt. 3, ch. 27, 313).

Later on, again in chapter 54, Rabbi Moses elaborates once more on this latter perfection, albeit with a slightly emended system of enumeration: here, the third kind of perfection is moral, while the fourth and highest, "the true perfection of man is the possession of the highest intellectual faculties; the possession of such notions which lead to true metaphysical opinions as regards God" (Guide, pt. 3, ch. 54, 395).

Ultimately, Maimonides offers a model of human perfectibility and of a peaceable kingdom, suggesting that only by mastering (though never ignoring) their "desires" and "wants" can "intelligent persons"—intelligent in the sense of their being not just knowledgeable, but also wise—become "free" (Guide, pt. 3, ch. 8, 262). This constitutes the Rabbi's relevance in our own, or in any other age. What he wrote more than eight hundred years ago, still resonates today. It is not by conquering our neighbors that we achieve peace and freedom. It is rather, by conquering ourselves and thereby winning the peace, as well as the war.

Notes

1 This is an expanded version of a paper presented just after sundown on 2 October 2004 (Motzaei Shabbat Hol ha-Moed Sukkoth), in "Still Perplexed after 800 Years: Eight Centuries Since Maimonides," a special session of the annual conference of the Rocky Mountain Modern Language Association,
held in Boulder, Colorado. Once again, I thank my colleague and friend, Dr. Seth Ward, and my student and friend, Mr. Scott E. Thomas, both of the University of Wyoming, for the excellent papers they presented in that session. Dr. Ward also provided invaluable help with certain facets of the research for this paper. Another version of this essay was presented as part of a commemorative program, “Maimonides: Guiding the Perplexed in Our Own Age of Reason” (affectionately termed Wyo Mai), celebrated on the University of Wyoming campus in Laramie, Wyoming, April 19, 2005 (10 Nissan 5765). As to recent writings on Maimonides’ ideas on war and peace, focusing almost exclusively on his writings other than the Guide, see: Krasnianski 1-3; Tougher 1-5; Klinghoffer 1-2.

Concerning Maimonides and the limitations, as well as the expansions, of human reason, see, for instance: Minkin 190; Fox 26-46; Axelrod-Korenbrot 164-67; Galston 215-33; Leaman 129-61; Goldman 15-23.

Further references to the Guide will be noted parenthetically in the text of my essay, according to part, chapter, and page number(s) in the Friedländer edition.

Concerning Rabbi Moses’ condition as author, Alfred L. Ivry posits: “The Guide was written, then, I dare say not only for the perplexed, but by the perplexed; Maimonides using this opportunity to resolve his own perplexity; a perplexity between competing philosophical systems, to one of which he gave his mind, and to the other of which he gave—in spite of himself—his heart” (Ivry 151-52). In turn, I dare say that the Rambam wrote to resolve multiple perplexities on his own part, and that this may well be one of his chief appeals to our “modern” world.

On the matter of Maimonides’ supposed esotericism in the Guide, see, for instance: Strauss 40-52; Pines, “Philosophical Purport” 1-2; Fox 5, 47-66; Idel 79-91; Frank 490-91. In turn, Muguerza, though not denying the esoteric aura of the Guide, affirms also the “componente vivencial” that illustrates the Rabbi’s writings.

Anderson makes no mention of Maimonides in his exhaustive treatment of the theme of the “wandering Jew,” though he does mention various antecedents of the legend, as well as certain of its Iberian avatars. Some of these personages, albeit from a mostly Christian point-of-view, do recall facets of the life and times of Rabbi Moses.

Concerning Maimonides and the Law (Torah, Halakhah, etc.), see among others: Gaos 28-29; Minkin 132; Galston 215-33; Goldman 15-23; Kellner, Judaism 65-79.

Those who have discussed Maimonides’ writings on prophets and prophecy include: Minkin 293-314; Gaos 28-29, 41-42; Axelrod-Korenbrot 131-36; Fox 286-89; Weiss 163-75; Hernández 47; Harvey 72-88; Leaman 39-64; Goldman 22-23; Kellner, Judaism 26-29.

Among the many who have commented on Maimonides’ commentaries on the Divine design of creation, see: Minkin 196; Axelrod-Korenbrot 115-29; Klein-Braslavsky 65-78.

Although essentially in passing, Muguerza mentions several other incidents from the Quijote (40-41).

Among those who have joined in the discussion of Maimonides’ philosophies of perfection, whether in the more temporal spheres or in the spiritual
realms, see, for example: Gaos 15, 34, 40-41; Minkin 136-37, 391-92; Axelrod-Korenbrot 169-81; Frank 491-95; Galston 22024; Leaman 129-61; Goldman 15-23; Hernández 48; Weiss 169-74; Altmann 15-24; Kellner Human Perfection.

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