

## GUIDE 1:24 WALKING

Maimonides uses Guide chapter 1:24 to expand our understanding of the hiding of the divine face and the visitation of punishment connected to that terrible withdrawal of providence.

This is a lexical chapter. See explanation in Chapter 1:1, “Introduction to the Lexical Chapters of the Guide.”

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### **HALAKH: (WALK, GO, TRAVEL)**

1. Movements performed by living beings.
2. Movements of objects “less solid (finer—*yoter adinim*) than the bodies of living beings.” Maimonides refers to the four elements.
3. Any incorporeal or metaphorical manifestation.
4. Divine action: God, in one action, “hides his face” and visits punishment.
5. Torah observant conduct, living a morally good life.

#### Instance of Definition 1 Contextualized:

“And Jacob *went (halakh)* on his way, and the angels (*malakhei*) of God met him. And when Jacob saw them, he said, This [is] God’s host: and he called the name of that place Mahanaim. And Jacob sent (*vayishlakh*) messengers (*malakhim*) before him to Esau his brother unto the land of Seir, the country of Edom.” (Genesis 32:2-3, KJV numbers are different from other versions)

Maimonides plainly wants us to interpret “went” in this passage corporeally despite Jacob’s mention of angels. See essay below: “The Jacob Exception to the Rule of Abraham.”

#### Instances of Definition 2 Contextualized:

“And the waters returned from off the earth continually: and after the end of the hundred and fifty days the waters were abated. And the ark rested in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, upon the mountains of Ararat. And the waters decreased continually (*halokh v’khasor—went on decreasing*) until the tenth month: in the tenth [month], on the first [day] of the month, were the tops of the mountains seen.” (Genesis 8:3-5).

Maimonides means that we can also apply the term *halakh* to corporeal items that border on incorporeality, meaning the four elements, and particularly fire and water. The examples he chooses, this proof-text and the next, show unusual cooperative behavior of water and fire when God uses them to punish mankind. The flood destroyed life because sulfur coals boiled the waters (Rashi on Genesis 6:14, *Genesis Rabba* 28:8).

“And the Lord said unto Moses, Stretch forth thine hand toward heaven, that there may be hail in all the land of Egypt, upon man, and upon beast, and upon every herb of the field, throughout the land of Egypt. And Moses stretched forth his rod toward heaven: and the Lord sent thunder and hail, and the fire ran (*va-tihalakh*) along (down) upon the ground; and the Lord rained hail upon the land of Egypt.” (Exodus 9:22-3)

This passage also shows that God uses cooperative mixtures of the usually uncooperative elements, fire and water, to punish mankind. Rashi, from Midrash *Tanchuma, Va’era* 14:

“This was a miracle within a miracle. The fire and hail intermingled. Although hail is water, to perform the will of their Maker they made peace between themselves (that the hail did not extinguish the fire nor did the fire melt the hail).”

Another feature of this special kind of fire is that it violates the laws of Maimonidean (Aristotelian) motion. Fire should always rise to its “proper place” above air. Fire only “runs” down when God makes it do so. (KJV misunderstands “ran down” as “ran along,” *va-tikhalakh esh artsah*. See Judaica Press and JPS 1917). Abraham ben Maimonides, *ad loc.*, understands that strange elemental cooperation took place. “The element of fire came

out, which formerly had been above (*b'tokh*—?) the element of air, and both elements mixed with the elements of water and earth to descend upon the earth” (my translation). Two quotes down, Maimonides quotes Genesis 3:8, about the voice of God “walking” in Eden after the sin. Midrash *Genesis Rabba* 19:7 compares the *traveling* of the voice there to the *traveling* down of the fire in this verse. Maimonides cites both passages to compare God’s hiding His face when Adam turned from Him, and His turning from Egypt to punish it with the plague of hail. Both involve the *traveling, halakh*, of the punishment while God’s “hides” His face. Maimonides elaborates this idea in the next proof-text, using the image of the snake to tie Egypt’s punishment to Adam’s punishment.

Instances of Definition 3 Contextualized:

“(20) Egypt [is like] a very fair heifer, [but] destruction cometh; it cometh out of the north. (21) Also her hired men [are] in the midst of her like fatted bullocks; for they also are turned back, [and] are fled away together: they did not stand, because the day of their calamity was come upon them, [and] the time of their visitation. (22) The voice thereof *shall go (yelekh)* like a serpent; for they (Babylon) shall march with an army, and come against her with axes, as hewers of wood. (23) They shall cut down her forest, saith the Lord, though it cannot be searched; because they are more than the grasshoppers, and [are] innumerable.” (Jeremiah 46:20-23)

Despite Egypt’s size, Babylon’s “grasshoppers” will destroy its “forest.” Definition 3 includes the purely metaphorical use of *halakh* and its variants. The “voice” walking is the incorporeal manifestation of the soul of serpentine Egypt, slithering from its Babylonian punishment. Providence turns from Egypt because Egypt turned against God. The image of the serpent comes to remind us of the combination of the “hiding of the face” and the visitation of punishment. Rashi, *ad loc.* to Jeremiah, recognized this connection:

“The ‘snake’ comes to teach us about Egypt but ends by learning. For we learn from here that when the Holy One, blessed be He, said to the serpent, ‘You shall walk on your belly’ (Genesis 3:14), He severed his feet, and his voice went to the end of the world.”

The Edenic serpent was able to walk, but its legs were cut out, just as Egypt’s forest is cut down by Babylon. When the snake loses its primal limbs its “voice” is exiled to the end of the world, i.e., to Egypt, from whence Israel escaped and to which it is commanded never to return.

Instances of Definition 4 Contextualized:

“And they heard the voice of the Lord God *walking (mithalekh)* in the garden (Eden) in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden.” (Genesis 3:8)

This “voice of the Lord” is a created voice, a *kol ha-nivra*. Maimonides explains: “It is ‘the voice’ that is qualified by ‘walking.’” He means it is not God himself walking, but His *presence*, the Shekhina leaving, i.e., the hiding of the divine countenance. The Midrash to our passage ties the traveling of the divine voice to the traveling down of the plague of fire upon the Egyptians (*Genesis Rabba* 19:7):

“‘And they heard the voice of the Lord God traveling (walking) in the garden toward the cool of the day.’ R. Halapay said: We know [from here] that a voice may travel, but we do not yet know that ‘traveling’ can apply to fire; and whence do we know that? From a verse elsewhere: ‘And the fire traveled down upon the earth’ (Exodus 9:23, two quotes above).”

In both cases, the Egyptian and the Edenic, we witness the simultaneous withdrawal of providence and visitation of punishment of Definition 4 of *halakh*. In Guide 1:2 Maimonides explains what happened when Adam hid from voice of God walking:

“When, however, Scripture says of Adam, ‘He changed his face (*panav*) and thou sentest him forth’ (Job 14:20), it must be understood in the following way: On account of the change of his original aim he was sent away. For *panim*, the Hebrew equivalent of face, is derived from the verb *panah*, ‘he turned,’ and signifies also ‘aim,’ because man generally turns his face towards the thing he desires. In accordance with this interpretation, our text suggests that Adam, as he altered his intention and directed his thoughts to the acquisition of what he was forbidden, he was banished from Paradise: this was his punishment; it was measure for measure.... Reflecting on his condition, the Psalmist says, ‘Adam unable to dwell in dignity, was brought to the level of the dumb beast’ (Psalms 49:13).”

See our discussion of this exchange of *providence* for *chance* in the last chapter. We learned there that man enjoys providence only when he concentrates his thought on the divine. When man turns to hide his face from God, losing that providence, he then projects the hiding of his own face upon God. The loss of providence subjects man to fate, like the “dumb beast.” As Maimonides says in 3:51: “The cause of our being exposed to chance and abandoned to destruction like cattle, is to be found in our separation from God.” This thought is continued and expanded in the next two quotations.

“When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah [saw] his wound, then went Ephraim to the Assyrian, and sent to king Jareb: yet could he not heal you, nor cure you of your wound. For I [will be] unto Ephraim as a lion, and as a young lion to the house of Judah: I, [even] I, will tear and *go (v'elekh)* away; I will take [and *go*] *away (v'elekh)*, and none shall rescue [him]. I will *go (elekh)* [and] return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early.” (Hosea 5:13-15)

In the last chapter Maimonides cited this line to introduce the discussion of “Hiding of the Face.” Abraham ben Maimonides discusses this Hosea passage:

“Our Obligation of Reliance (*ha-bitakhon*): The Third Category (of Reliance) is the reliance incumbent upon all of the religious people. That is a firmly planted conviction and a genuine, heartfelt awareness that the natural causes and normal channels are directed by God’s detailed will for each person, in every time and every situation. If He wills a situation will follow nature and its laws, and if He wills, it will veer from the norm and escape nature (R. Abraham then provides several anciently standard prescriptions from diet and pharmacology that he thought followed nature). All these valid natural methods are subservient to God’s desire and will. By His judgment and permission, they work for most people according to the nature of their bodies, each method according to its standard use. But He may judge and desire that they should function in a way quite the opposite of what is expected. If one has rebelled against God’s order and neglected His Torah, His wisdom may decree a punishment of illness in this world. Even if the person will eat the very best foods, they will cultivate in him defective blood and harmful mixtures and bring terrible sicknesses. Even if he takes useful medicines, they will not help and they will not save him from his disease—they ‘could ... not heal you, nor cure you of your wound.’ (Hosea 5:13)”

(*The Guide to Serving God*, Feldheim 2008, trans.: Yaacov Wincelberg, pp. 213-214.)

I provided this large excerpt (R. Abraham continues quite a bit further in this vein) because it well portrays Maimonidean thinking about the action of providence, and pegs the discussion to this passage in Hosea. The seal of its authenticity is R. Abraham’s continual recourse to medical analogies, in which we hear the voice of his father and teacher. Notice that R. Abraham’s discussion draws together Definitions 4 and 5, that the Jew enjoys providence in direct relation to his Torah observant conduct.

“With him (Moses) will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold: wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses? And the anger of the Lord was kindled against them; and he departed (*va-yelakh*). And the cloud departed from off the tabernacle; and, behold, Miriam [became] leprous, [white] as snow: and Aaron looked upon Miriam, and, behold, [she was] leprous.” (Numbers 12:8-10)

The context is that Miriam defames her brother Moses, who she should have been “afraid” of (12:8). She is punished by biblical leprosy. God departs as he punishes, hiding His face as He visits punishment. See my essay below: “Miriam.”

#### Instances of Definition 5 Contextualized:

“The Lord shall establish thee an holy people unto himself, as he hath sworn unto thee, if thou shalt keep the commandments of the Lord thy God, and walk (*v'halakhta*) in His ways.” (Deuteronomy 28:9)

Maimonides says of this passage and the following two passages, that *walking* is “applied to conduct, which concerns only the inner life, and which requires no bodily motion.” Even-Shmuel says that he means both the duties of the heart and of the limbs (*kiyum khovot ha-evarim v'khovot ha-levavot*). Friedlander, note 3, *ad loc.*, says the Arabic phrase for “conduct—inner life,” *i'l-sira al-fādila*, literally means “the higher walking,” walking

in a figurative, moral sense. Maimonides seems to shift his focus in these quotes. He was concerned above with what happens to prophets like Miriam when they turn their focus from God. But these paragons are understood to follow the Torah commandments at all times. The Definition 5 passages, by contrast, focus on the conduct of the Jewish people. If only they remain true to “His ways,” they will receive His providential attentions and not His punishing visitations.

“Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. *Ye shall walk (telekhu)* after the Lord your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave (*tidbakun*) unto him.” (Deuteronomy 13:3-4)

This passage carries the meaning of the prior passage, but also raises the issue of false prophets. False prophets are a serious problem for Maimonides’ system. We need a rational lodestar to distinguish imagined from real prophecy, false from true prophets. There must be a law for false prophets. This law is part of *halakha*, from our lexical term, *halakh*, the “walking” we do when we follow the commands of Torah. Maimonides provides tests for prophets: 1) The prophet must give predictions that come true; 2) he must not change the Torah, 3) neither may he transgress or cause transgression of its commandments; 4) he must not promote idolatry (Mishneh Torah, *Ysodei ha-Torah*, 9 and 10).

“(3)And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem....(5) O house of Jacob, come ye, and *let us walk (lekhu v’nelkha)* in the light of the Lord.” (Isaiah 2:3, 2:5).

Maimonides also used this passage in the last Guide chapter. Before the law goes forth from Zion to the world, the people must first determine to live by Torah. As Maimonides says, this “means only the inner life,” not merely practice but wholehearted commitment.

### THE JACOB EXCEPTION TO THE RULE OF ABRAHAM

“(2)And Jacob *went (halakh)* on his way, and the angels (*malakhei*) of God met him. (3) And when Jacob saw them, he said, This [is] God’s host: and he called the name of that place Mahanaim. (4) And Jacob sent (*vayishlakh*) messengers (*malakhim*) before him to Esau his brother unto the land of Seir, the country of Edom.” (Genesis 32:2-4, KJV text, JPS 1917 numbering)

Maimonides’ usual interpretive strategy in the Guide is anti-contextual. This means that given the four possible modes of traditional biblical interpretation: literal, homiletic, metaphoric and esoteric (*pshat, derash, remez, sod*), he usually opts for the latter two. But his citation of Genesis 32:2 for Definition 1 of *halakh* represents an unusual attempt to justify a contextually literal interpretation in the teeth of his own *rule* of anti-contextual reading. What drove him to this pass?

Maimonides wants us to interpret “went” in Genesis 32:2 corporeally despite Jacob’s vision of angels. As we will see, this represents a serious interpretive choice.

According to Maimonides’ own Abraham Rule, all experiences that the Torah relates during a prophetic vision are part of that vision no matter how mundane their description. Maimonides has an exception to the rule, which I call the Jacob Exception. In Guide 2:42 Maimonides first repeats the Abraham rule (“it is one of the great mysteries of the Law”) and then gives the exception:

“The same, I hold, is the case (*v’kakh ani omer gam*) when it is said in reference to Jacob, ‘And a man wrestled with him’ (Gen. 32:25, in the same chapter as our proof-text); this took place in a prophetic vision, since it is expressly stated in the end (32:31) that it was an angel. The circumstances are here exactly the same as those in the vision of Abraham, where the general statement, ‘And the Lord appeared

to him,' etc., is followed by a *detailed description*. Similarly the account of the vision of Jacob begins, 'And the angels of God met him' (Gen. 32:2 our verse); *then follows a detailed description how it came to pass that they met him*; namely, Jacob sent messengers (32:4), and after having prepared and done certain things, 'he was left alone,' etc., 'and a man wrestled with him' (32:25). By this term 'man' [one of] the angels of God is meant, mentioned in the phrase, 'And angels of God met him'; the wrestling and speaking was entirely a prophetic vision." (My italics)

The difference, slightly glossed, is that Abraham's "detailed description" is his *vision*. Most of Jacob's "detailed description" is *historical setting* for his vision. When Maimonides asserts that we should treat these two cases "the same," he conceals his Jacob Exception. Had they been "the same," he could not have given Genesis 32:2 as his only proof-text for Definition 1, i.e., physical locomotion.

The question is whether verses 32:2 and 32:4 refer to angels or to messengers. The same Hebrew term, *malakh*, can take either interpretation. This problem also troubles the Midrash. *Genesis Rabba* 75:4 expresses the division of opinion, commenting on 32:4: "These were none but human messengers. (But) the Rabbis said: it means literally angels."

Maimonides agrees with the Midrashic author, not the Rabbis. The Rabbis called the *malakhim* angels conformably to Maimonides' usual rule of Abraham, which identifies all occurrences in dreams and visions of the prophets as part of the prophetic vision, so that if one part of the account is part of the vision, it all is. Since the "angels (*malakhei*) of God" met Jacob in his vision in 32:3, it follows, according to the usual Abraham Rule, that the *malakhim* in the next verse must also be angels, not lowly human messengers. However, on the contrary, like the Midrash, Maimonides repeats in Guide 2:6 that the case of Jacob is an exception: "There is no doubt that the word *angel* is used of a messenger sent by man: e.g., 'and Jacob sent *malakhim* (Genesis 32:4).'" Maimonides holds that the *malakhei* and "God's host" in 32:2-3 both describe angels, but that the *malakhim* in 32:4 are merely messengers. Why did he come to the Jacob Exception?

According to his interpretation, Genesis employs narrative "flashback." This flashback supplies important information, even though the Bible presents it out of sequence. Maimonides reads the chapter non-chronologically, according to the Talmudic rule permitting non-chronological interpretation (Talmud, *Pesakhim* 6b): "there is no before or after in the Torah."

Verse 32:2 begins the account of Jacob's prophetic dream-vision of wrestling with the angel. That account, which resumes later at 32:25, interrupts itself to provide the setting through the device of narrative flashback. The historical setting is important because this angel is Esau's guardian angel (*Genesis Rabba* 77:3, 78:3). Thus at 32:2 we learn that before he met the "angels of God" Jacob "went on his way" to meet Esau. Genesis 32:4 continues the flashback by telling how he sent *messengers* to his brother. This flashback recounts the tense preparations for that dangerous meeting, continuing until 32:24. At 32:25, the account of the vision resumes: "And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day." Since we are now back to the vision proper, the Rule of Abraham insures that the "man" is one of the angels that Jacob began the story with, specifically Esau's guardian angel.

The synagogue reading also breaks up the account: Line 2, where Jacob goes "on his way" to meet Esau, and then meets divine angels, is in the preceding reading, called *Vayeitsei* (28:10-32:3). 32:4 begins the reading called *Vayishlakh* (Genesis 32:4-36:43), "and he sent messengers." When Jacob "went on his way" in verse 2 of *Vayeitsei*, it really describes a bodily movement, conforming to Definition 1. This "detailed description" in *Vayeitsei* begins the account of a historical occurrence.

The "detailed description" in *Vayishlakh*, 32:4, returns to this historical setting after the interruption of Jacob's vision, that "the angels of God met him: And when Jacob saw them, he said, This [is] God's host." *Vayishlakh* continues the historical setting, 32:4 through 32:24, telling of the detailed preparations for meeting Esau. Only

after 32:24 in *Vayishlach* does the “detailed description” resume the vision. So that when Maimonides says that the “detailed description” of Jacob’s vision is “the same” as Abraham’s “detailed description” of his prophetic dream vision in Genesis 9 (where the whole chapter is taken as visionary), he conceals the distinction that he himself has drawn between the two accounts. He can only mean that the detailed descriptions of Jacob’s experience recounted in the second clause of 32:2, all of 32:3, and then 32:25 through 32:30 (where he wrestles the angel) are visionary like Abraham’s. The detailed descriptions of the first clause of 32:2, and then 32:4 through 32:24 are mundane descriptions partially delivered through flashback to provide the historical setting for Jacob’s visionary experiences.

Maimonides has to introduce this exception, since no other permissible use of *halakh* which could justify his making 32:2 the proof-text for Definition 1. Definition 2 applies to elements; Definition 3 to metaphorical manifestations (i.e., the Egyptian “serpent”); Definition 4 to God, and Definition 5 to moral conduct. The proof-text itself demands to be taken literally. Maimonides cannot warp the meaning of Genesis 32 to make Jacob’s energetic preparations occur in a dream. Had he not acknowledged this exception, 32:2 and 32:4 would undermine his controversial Abraham Rule.

### MIRIAM

“(8) With him (Moses) will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold: wherefore then were ye not afraid (*yeretem*) to speak against my servant Moses? (9) And the anger of the Lord was kindled against them; *and he departed (va-yelakh)*. (10) And the cloud departed from off the tabernacle; and, behold, Miriam [became] leprous, [white] as snow: and Aaron looked upon Miriam, and, behold, [she was] leprous.” (Numbers 12:8-10)

This section of Numbers is very important to Maimonides, for this is where we learn that God’s relationship with Moses is different from that of other prophets. He speaks to Moses “face to face” and “not in riddles” (Numbers 12:8). Yet Miriam defames Moses, who she should be “afraid” of, and is punished with the biblical version of leprosy. Maimonides writes:

“The two meanings of the verb are combined, viz., the withdrawal of the Divine protection, expressed by ‘and he went,’ and the revelation, manifestation, and appearance of something namely, of the anger which went forth and reached them, in consequence of which Miriam became ‘leprous, white as snow.’”

Friedlander wonders, footnote 2, *ad loc.*:

“It is impossible to imagine how the verb *va-yelakh* could be used here as implying two opposite motions at the same time (to come and to go away), each of which is related to a different subject: ‘The Lord (i.e., His protection) went away, and His anger came,’ unless we assume that Maimonides understood by *va-yelakh* ‘He went,’ and that the act manifested itself in two ways: in the withdrawal of the Divine protection and the manifestation of the Divine anger.”

The Aggada notices the difficulty, but resolves it by dividing the two actions in time: God first turns, then punishes (*Sifrei Beha’alothekha* 1:42:10, Midrash, *Tanchuma Tzav* 13). By contrast, Maimonides makes time irrelevant. God neither hides His face nor manifests His anger in the temporal dimension, though *we* suffer it in time. Aristotelian time is an accident of motion, and motion is an affection of matter. Divine incorporeal action is neither affectional nor accidental. The departure of providence and the inception of punishment are, so to speak, simultaneous. They are two aspects, but only as seen by us, of God’s unitary action.

More important is the contrast of Miriam with Moses suggested by our chapter. David Shatz, in an otherwise fine essay on the final chapters of the Guide, negated this contrast. He wrote:

“Maimonides here (Guide 3:51) abandons the idea that Moses was singular, an idea found in scattered places in the Guide and even earlier in 3:51 (Pines, p. 620). Any claims for the uniqueness or near uniqueness of Moses are undermined still more at the end of the chapter, when Aaron and Miriam suddenly surface as individuals who achieved passionate love and secured salvation from death. They seem to rank even above the Patriarchs. By conceding that Moses was not singular, and that even individuals whose achievements as prophets and leaders are surpassed by those of Moses can appropriately be grouped with him, Maimonides is perhaps subtly suggesting that even Moses did not achieve perfection.” (“Worship, Corporeality, and Human Perfection: A Reading of Guide of the Perplexed, 3:51-54,” *The Legacy of Maimonides: Religion, Reason and Community*, ed. Levy and Carmy, Yashar Books, 2006, p. 241)

Here is the passage he refers to, Guide 3:51:

“The more the forces of his body are weakened, and the fire of passion quenched, in the same measure does man’s intellect increase in strength and light; his knowledge becomes purer, and he is happy with his knowledge. When this *perfect man* (my italics: *ha-shalem*, ar. אֱלֹכָאֵמֶל) is stricken in age and is near death, his knowledge mightily increases, his joy in that knowledge grows greater, and his love for the object of his knowledge more intense, and it is in this great delight that the soul separates from the body. To this state our Sages referred, when in reference to the death of Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, they said that death was in these three cases nothing but a kiss. They say thus: We learn from the words, ‘And Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab by the mouth of the Lord’ (Deuteronomy 34:5), that his death was a kiss. The same expression is used of Aaron: ‘And Aaron the priest went up into Mount Hor . . . by the mouth of the Lord, and died there’ (Numbers 33:38) Our Sages said that the same was the case with Miriam; but the phrase ‘by the mouth of the Lord’ is not employed, because it was not considered appropriate to use these words in the description of her death as she was a female (Talmud, *Moed Katan* 28b) The meaning of this saying is that these three died in the midst of the pleasure derived from the knowledge of God and their great love for Him. When our Sages figuratively call the knowledge of God united with intense love for Him a kiss, they follow the well-known poetical diction, ‘Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth’ (Song of Songs 1:2). This kind of death, which in truth is deliverance from death, has been ascribed by our Sages to none but to Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. The other prophets and pious men are beneath that degree: but their knowledge of God is strengthened when death approaches.”

This passage is carefully balanced by another passage shortly before it in the same chapter 3:51 also referring to *perfect* (*ha-shalem*, *ha-shlamim*) men. Again, the idea is that we take our attention from God when we devote it to the material world:

“Hence it appears to me that it is only in times of such neglect that some of the ordinary evils befall a prophet or a *perfect* (my italics: *ha-shlamim*, ar. אֱלֹכָאֵמֶלִין) and pious man: and the intensity of the evil is proportional to the duration of those moments, or to the character of the things that thus occupy their mind. Such being the case, the great difficulty is removed that led philosophers to assert that Providence does not extend to every individual, and that man is like any other living being in this respect, viz., the argument based on the fact that good and pious men are afflicted with great evils.”

This should answer David Shatz’ question, but our chapter completes the answer. When perfect ones withdraw attention from God, and fail to set Him before them always, even a Miriam is punished with plague. The specific difference between Moses and Miriam is that Moses never withdraws from the presence of God. Moses has a unique quality of steadfastness in meditation (Mishneh Torah, *Yodei Ha Torah* 7:6). On this subject, Professor Shatz is excellent: the supreme difficulty of maintaining concentration (*devekut*).

Nonetheless, Miriam is of the elite. More is expected of the higher types, and so both their punishments and rewards are greater. For a slip of the tongue, she contracts plague: but in the end, she wins immortality.

Even-Shmuel's chapter summation brilliantly digests these ideas:

“In the Third Rank (see in my notes to Guide 1:22 for the list of Even-Shmuel's four Ranks of actions, through which the existence of God is manifested to us) the divine actions appear in relation to God's *creatures*. God is not limited in action to creation alone, but also protects and provides for his creatures. To us it looks as though He removes His providence from them when they pervert their ways. Consequently, divine action appears to us to be at once providential extension and providential removal. Despite this appearance, they both stem from one source, God's eternal will, and influence of both manifestations is expressed through one term: *halakh*.”

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