

## **GUIDE 1:64 ESSENCE AND EMANATION**

This is a late lexical chapter defining the words *shem*, “name,” and *kavod*, “glory, greatness, heaviness.” By “late,” I mean that Maimonides did not place it in the Guide’s Lexicon, which ended at 1:45. He places lexical chapters at different points throughout the rest of the book. The late lexical chapters usually camouflage the esoteric subjects of creation and ongoing providence, *Maaseh Bereshit* and *Maaseh Merkava*.

The chapter’s lexical format conceals an ancient discussion: Does the “Glory of God” mean God’s essence or an emanation of that essence? This provides us the opportunity to discuss the role of emanation in Maimonides’ thought. (On essence vs. emanation, see Harry A. Wolfson, *Crescas’ Critique of Aristotle*, pp. 458-462, and my note below on Crescas).

For Maimonides the terms *shem* and *kavod* are for the most part both synonymous and homonymous; that is, they both can mean either essence or emanation.

### ***SHEM* (NAME) Homonym**

1. The name of someone or something
2. The essence or being of the person or thing named; the divine essence
3. The emanation of God: here concealed as a *command* of God placed in a person who is thereby made God’s instrument (the *dibbur ha-nivra* discussed in the next chapter, 1:65)

### ***KAVOD* (GLORY, GREATNESS, HEAVINESS) Homonym**

1. The emanation of God: here concealed as the “created light” (*or ha-nivra*) that descends to rest upon a particular person or place
2. The divine essence
3. Praise of God: this is also a concealed reference to the emanation of God

## **A NAME IS NOT JUST A NAME AND PRAISE IS NOT JUST PRAISE**

Maimonides’ lexical chapters usually give both a common, “material” definition of each term as well as a special “spiritual” definition. Both name and glory have such a “material” definition (the first definition of *shem* and the last definition of *kavod*). He typically treats this definition pejoratively, as he does here in his proof-texts for *shem*. His proof-text for the material definition of *kavod*, by contrast, is not really negative in character, since it conceals a “spiritual” variant of its first definition, emanation.

Maimonides begins by telling us that sometimes “name” just means name. As examples he quotes Exodus 40:7—not taking The Name in vain, and Leviticus 24:16—the capital consequences of blasphemy. Both choices for this definition of *shem* are rather negative in character.

We also use “glory” in a “material” way when we *praise* God. Many quotes and most of the chapter are devoted to this use, in which lowly stones and bones “praise” God, but this material is not what is most important to Maimonides. Once again, Maimonides intentionally diverts our attention from his real object, the relation between essence and emanation. He thereby follows the law in Mishnah *Hagigah* against the public teaching of Jewish esotericism.

“Glory,” in this third sense, is the praise we utter to make known the extent of our cognition of God. It is good to do this, because it helps others to recognize God. Even animals, vegetables and minerals “praise” God, for the evidence of their nature expresses the truth of their Creator, and we praise their Creator when we learn their nature. Maimonides writes:

“Things which have no comprehension are therefore said to give utterance to praise, e.g., ‘All my bones shall say, Lord, who is like unto Thee?’ (Psalms 35:10). Because a consideration of the properties of the bones leads to the discovery of that truth, and it is through them that it became known, they are represented as having uttered the divine praise.”

Yehuda Even-Shmuel explains Maimonides’ choice of this Psalm as his proof-text by noting that our bones “praise” God in our physical actions of prayer, i.e., bowing, genuflection, prostration, and utterance. He continues in this vein, recalling the turning of flowers to the sun, *etc.* The great chain of being becomes a great ladder of praise.

Kafih’s approach is better. He invests this definition of *kavod* as praise with more significance by relating it to one of its other meanings, emanation (note 24, *ad loc.*). He does this by reading “All my *bones* (*atmotai*) shall say, Lord, who is like unto thee” as “All my *being*...” since *etsem* can mean either “bone” or “essence/being.” Thus all my being, all my humanity, praise God. Kafih next quotes Maimonides’ *Commentary on the Mishnah, Hagigah 2:1* (my trans.):

“Anyone who fails to have consideration for (*khas al*) his Maker’ [the Mishnah continues: ‘it were a mercy if he had not come into the world’] means one who has no consideration for his *intellect*, because the intellect is the Glory of God (*ki ha-sekel hu kavod hashem*).”

In other words, when man recognizes his own intellectual nature placed in him by God he thereby “praises” the Glory of God. His “praise” is his recognition of the divine emanation within himself. In our chapter Maimonides similarly says that “...the true glorification (תעט'מה) of the Lord consists in the comprehension of His greatness (עט'מתה),” *ki romemutu ha-amitit hi hakheret gadulato*. By this important remark, he equates praise with knowledge, as if to say that the true praise, i.e. the acquisition of knowledge, is the movement from potential to active intellect. We merely give expression to this activity of cognition in our verbal prayer and praise, which is just the public expression of private recognition. One excels in such prayer only to the extent he frequently engages in such active intellectual meditation. Moses was apparently able to achieve this state on a permanent basis. (on Jud-Ar. עט'מתה, see Pines’ note 17, p. 157; Blau, *Dictionary Of Medieval Judeo-Arabic Texts*, 444).

On another level, the active intellect is the emanation that connects us to God, for it is through the active intellect that He made us in His image. When that intellect is realized in ourselves, we “praise” God. Thus, “praise,” in definition 3, is both the act of a corporeal being (its “material” sense) and, simultaneously, evidence of the incorporeal emanation of the active intellect.

## ESSENCE

The second meaning of *shem* and the second meaning of *kavod* is “essence,” *etsem*. The essence of God is just God himself.

Sometimes we use “name” and “glory” as courteous euphemisms when what we mean to refer to is the divine essence. In the last chapter, Moses suggested that the elders would politely ask what God’s *name* is, instead of demanding *what* He is. Similarly, Moses asked: “Show me, I pray Thee, Thy *glory*” (Exodus 33:18-20), to which the reply was given, “Man shall not see *Me* and live.” If he was only asking for “glory” this reply would have been inappropriate. Death does not come from seeing “glory,” only from trying to grasp God’s ungraspable

essence, as we saw in the story of the four who went to paradise. “Glory,” then, was Moses’ euphemism for that essence. Asking to see the glory was a courteous way of saying, “show me Yourself.”

When we recognize that God has no attributes, we express our understanding of His essence without poetry and myth. Reality appears without the veil of corporealizing imagination. This is the domain of truth. Maimonides frequently couples the term “essence” with the term “truth.” He does this several times here: “essence of God and His truth” (*atsmo ytaaleh v’amitato* = Arabic, *dhaata taali w’khakikata*). We ask to know His essence, but the truth is that He is just Himself, unitary and simple. This unity and simplicity is unlike any we will ever know. We cannot see this and live.

## EMANATION

The third meaning of *shem*, and the first meaning of *kavod*, is emanation. Maimonides does not clearly state this meaning in either case, but does so through camouflage. In the case of *shem* it is camouflaged as the command that God places in a person to make him God’s instrument. We know, however, from many other statements, that this command comes as an emanation from the active intellect upon the prepared mind of the illuminant.

In the first meaning of *kavod*, the emanation is concealed as the indwelling *Shekhina*. God *created* this *emanated* being, just as He created the emanated command in the heart of the prophet.

The problem is that the philosophers usually thought of *emanation* and *creation* as contradictory. Emanation was usually understood to be an inevitable process, in which the will played no role. It was, so to speak, natural. The usual example given for emanation was the action of the sun. The sun does not choose to shine on us. Maimonides’ own example is of a fountain overflowing on all sides (Guide 2:12). But the doctrine of emanation could not be reduced to such simple metaphors.

Emanation was originally a philosophic solution to a number of related problems in Platonic philosophy. The problems all arise from the Hellenic conclusion that all mind is one.

This was the concept of the unity of intellect. Multiplicity and difference are products of matter, not of mind. Whatever distinctions we conceive in the noetic world come from our own projections, not from that world itself. The world of the mind is entirely free of material distinctions.

This conclusion of the unity of intellect gave rise to the problems that emanation was supposed to solve. If “the One” is pure thought and thus entirely single, how, then, do the many come from the one? Moreover, how do the corporeal things emerge from their purely intellectual source?

Emanation was philosophy’s answer to these related problems. The emanatory source was conceived as a being so fully complete (“the One”) that its perfection overflowed its source to bestow being outside of it, on the paradigm of the life-giving rays of sunlight and warmth, or of the rejuvenating waters pouring from the fountain. These sources of life are complete yet inexhaustible, just as the divine source of life is complete yet inexhaustible. Ibn Tufayl wrote that what God “Himself possess must be greater and more perfect, fuller, better, and more lasting out of all proportion than what He gives,” (*Hayy Ibn Yaqzan*, L.E. Goodman trans., 134).

Although these images were apt, they were only images, since these examples are themselves *physical* results of the divine emanatory outpouring, an entirely intellectual phenomenon. The ultimate cause of the overflow is God’s cognition of his own intellectual nature, triggering the production of mind, which reflects on itself to produce soul, *etc.* Of course, an important aspect of this intellectual overflow is the notion of indeterminacy, which eventually finds its expression in the indeterminacy of matter, both in its hylic state and, eventually, in the form that we experience it.

This philosophic solution to the problems of the noetic creation produced as many problems as it solved. Some ridiculed it, while others took it seriously. Theology took over the scheme and expanded it to the point that it superimposed itself on the strictly religious doctrine of ongoing providence. This “providence” had been a scandal for rationalism, but now it received philosophic coloration and support. Thus, emanation came to be responsible for many things: for the ongoing creation of souls, for prophecy, for the appearance of *a priori* truths in the minds of men, and for the support of all natural processes through the installation of forms in matter.

In the form that Maimonides received it, emanation was ineluctably meshed with the ancient cosmological system and its physical counterpart, with its interplay of ensouled spheres and their five elements, and with constant generation and corruption following the cycle of form/matter/privation. It is precisely this conceptual matrix that marks Maimonides as an *ancient* rather than a modern, however some might otherwise prefer. It is only with the Zohar that emanation was explicitly detached from this apparatus and removed entirely to the spiritual world.

### VOLITIONAL EMANATION

The seeming contradiction of a created willed emanation was not new with Maimonides. Maimonides shares it with several likeminded medieval thinkers. Some Muslim thinkers made emanation the process by which God creates the many things. They kept the process, more or less as the ancient Neo-Platonists conceived it, but emphasized the concept of God’s will as the originating force behind the process. The result is that God wills the creation of the emanated being. (This concept of a created, willed emanation appears in Valentinus and the Gnostics, also see Wolfson, *Studies*, v. 1, 199, “The Identification of *Ex Nihilo* with Emanation in Gregory of Nyssa,” and v. 2, p. 493. Even in Plotinus, however, “the One” wills the emanation it creates; see Alfred Ivry, “NeoPlatonic Currents in Maimonides’ Thought,” in *Perspectives on Maimonides*, ed. Kraemer, Littman 1991.)

In Avicenna it was clear that the process of emanation was a divine creation, although not so clear that it was willed. His schema is very important, even if only as a backdrop to the way people thought about the world and its origins. For those not familiar with Avicenna’s portrait of emanation, this will seem very strange indeed. First, God thinks of himself. This act of self-recognition produces an emanation: the first mind. A triadic realization occurs with each subsequent emanation, 1) of God as necessary cause, 2) of mind as a necessary product in relation to God, and 3) of mind’s existence as contingent in itself. This triadic realization produces another mind, a soul, and a sphere. When that mind considers itself (in similar triadic fashion) as caused, another mind, soul and sphere are created; up to ten times, and then the process stops.

Yehudah Ha-Levi ridicules cosmological emanationism in the *Kuzari*. He is a sketchy on the details, but the picture is clear enough, and his jibes are funny (4:25 end, H. Hirschfeld, trans., my comments in parentheses):

“Philosophers speculating on these things arrived at the conclusion that from one only one can issue. They conjectured an angel (mind), standing near to God, and having emanated from the Prime Cause. To this angel they attributed two characteristics; firstly, his consciousness of his own existence by his very essence; secondly, his consciousness of having a cause. Two things resulted from this, viz. an angel and the sphere of fixed stars (Ha-Levi uses the older dyadic scheme rather than the triadic version). From his recognition of the Prime Cause a second angel emanated, and from his consciousness of his existence emanated the sphere of Saturnus, and so forth to the moon, and the Creative Intellect. People accepted this theory, and were deceived by it to such an extent, that they looked upon it as conclusive, because it was attributed to Greek philosophers. It is, however, a mere assertion without convincing power, and open to various objections. Firstly, for what reason did this emanation cease (at its tenth iteration); did the Prime Cause become impotent? Secondly, it might be asked: Why, from Saturnus' recognition of what was above, did not one thing arise, and from his recognition of the first angel another thing, so that the Saturnine emanations counted four? Whence do we know altogether that if a being became conscious of its essence a sphere must arise, and from the recognition of the Prime [Cause], an angel must arise? When Aristotle asserts that he was conscious of his existence, one may consistently expect that a sphere

should emanate from him, and when he asserts that he recognized the Prime Cause, an angel should emanate.”

Despite Ha-Levi, many of his successors continued to take emanation seriously. But which version? Avicennian emanation remained an accepted explanation for the existence of the cosmos, but most also accepted the broader, more diffuse, theological/providential version.

How much of medieval emanationism Maimonides accepts is not clear. As we will see in later chapters, Maimonides agrees that willed emanation explains the ongoing providential creation of souls in the world, but that it does not explain the creation of the universe, which for him is creation *ex nihilo* and *de novo*. This is something like the Church Fathers’ distinction between the creation of the world and the emanation of the word (Wolfson, *Studies*, v. 1, 207, “The Meaning of *Ex Nihilo* in the Church Fathers, Arabic and Hebrew Philosophy, and St. Thomas”). These are two different accounts, two different *maasim*.

The willed aspect of the emanation is the subject of the next chapter, Guide 1:65. God makes His will known to man, by a created voice (or, as here, a “created light”) or through some other kind of inspiration, “and there is no difference” whether man learns of that will by one of these means or another (*beyn sh’noda b’kol nivra o sh’noda b’derekh m’darkhei ha-navua asher n’varam*). The reason “there is no difference” (Pines: “it is indifferent”) is that through each of those metaphors what becomes known is an emanation from the supernal mind upon man’s intellect.

## ANGELS?

Maimonides’ second definition of *shem* is “command.” When this command is placed in someone, God makes His will known to him. He says:

“Sometimes it (the term *shem*) stands for ‘the word of God,’ so that ‘the name of God,’ ‘the word of God,’ and ‘the command of God,’ are identical phrases; comp. ‘*For My name is in him*’ (Exodus 23:21), that is, My word or My command is in him; i.e., he is the instrument of My desire and will. I shall explain this fully in treating of the homonymy of the term *malakh*, ‘angel.’”

It is not obvious from his context why Maimonides suddenly mentioned angels. His readers, however, would have recalled that the subject of “For My name is in him” was an angel. He emphasized that angel in order to both suggest and conceal the panoply of meanings he attached to the doctrine of emanation.

The chapters he means by saying “I shall explain this fully,” are 2:7 and 2:34 (see, also, my notes on 1:49 “Angels, Providence and the Eternal Feminine” for a full discussion). In both chapters, he comes on to Exodus 23:21, “for My name is in him,” i.e., in a particular angel. Guide 2:7 relates that any *agent* is an angel, whether it is a mind, a sphere, or even one of the four elements. In 2:34, he extends this explanation to include all prophets. The prophet’s inspiration, that emanation that pours out upon his mind and his imagination, is an angel:

“This is the explanation of the words, ‘for My name is in him.’ The object of all this is to say to the Israelites, This great sight witnessed by you, the revelation on Mount Sinai, will not continue for ever, nor will it ever be repeated. Fire and cloud will not continually rest over the tabernacle, as they are resting now on it: but the towns will be conquered for you, peace will be secured for you in the land, and you will be informed of what you have to do, by an angel whom I will send to your prophets; he will thus teach you what to do, and what not to do. Here a principle is laid down which I have constantly expounded, *viz.*, that all prophets except Moses *receive the prophecy through an angel*. Note it.” (Guide 2:34)

## THE ANGEL METATRON

Who was this angel? Maimonides knew very well who this angel was. It was the angel Metatron.

Here is the full passage from Exodus about “My name is in him”:

“Behold, I send an angel before thee, to keep thee by the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Beware of him, and hearken unto his voice; be not *rebellious* against him (*al tamer bo*); for he will not pardon your transgression; *for My name is in him*. But if thou shalt indeed hearken unto his voice, and do all that I speak; then I will be an enemy unto thine enemies, and an adversary unto thine adversaries. For Mine angel shall go before thee, and bring thee in unto the Amorite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, and the Canaanite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite; and I will cut them off.” (Exodus 23:20-23, in JPS 1917)

That passage comes during the revelation on Sinai. After Moses departs, an angel will lead the Jews, and God’s name is in him, which is why he must be obeyed. The Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 38b, tells us who this angel was:

“R. Nahman said: He who is as skilled in refuting the *minim* (heretics), as is R. Idith, let him do so; but not otherwise. Once a *min* said to R. Idith: It is written (Exodus 24:1), ‘And unto Moses He said, Come up to the Lord (*alei el ha-shem*).’ But, surely, it should have stated, ‘Come up unto Me!’ — It was *Metatron* [who said that], he (R. Idith) replied, *whose name is similar* to that of his Master, for it is written, ‘For My name is in him.’ But if so, [the *min* retorted,] we should worship him! The same passage, however, — replied R. Idith — says: ‘Be not *rebellious* against him (*al tamer bo*),’ i.e., *exchange* Me not for him (a play on the homonymy of the Hebrew, *tamer*, for both ‘exchange’ and ‘rebellious’). But, if so, why is it stated: ‘He will not pardon your transgression’? He (R. Idith) answered: By our troth, we would not accept him even as a messenger, for it is written, ‘And he (Moses) said unto Him, If Thy [personal] presence go not, carry us not up hence.’ (Exodus 33:15. *Soncino* footnote: The *min* was a believer in the doctrine of two rulers and he sought support for this belief from Exodus 24:1. R. Idith met his argument by showing that even Metatron was accepted by Jews only as guide, and in no sense a second god.)”

Rashi on Exodus 23:21 compresses the Aggadic tradition on this material, and explains why Metatron’s name is “similar” to God’s name:

“‘*For My Name is within him*’: [This clause] is connected to the beginning of the verse: ‘Beware of him’ because My Name is associated with him. Our Sages said, This is [the angel] Metatron, ‘whose name is similar to that of his Master’ (*Sanhedrin* 38b). The numerical value of Metatron [314] equals that of *Shadai* [314].”

Metatron represents the active intellect, which is a divine emanation. The Talmud tells of Metatron three times, most significantly in *Hagigah* 15b where the apostate Akher (Elisha Ben Avuya) suggests that Metatron is exalted sufficiently that he can sit in the presence of God. He is the *meta thronos*, the one whose throne is behind God. Metatron is the primary archangel, who bears the name of God *within* him. Since the name is within him, the mention of that name can *refer* to Metatron, this created emanation, rather than to the divine essence. In another important account, Enoch, the mystical hero of Genesis who rose to heaven to become an angel of fire, became Metatron, thus giving license to generations of adepts to emulate this ascension. (See my discussion of Metatron in chapter 1:12, and, cf. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 67-70; with Idel, *Kabbalah New Perspectives*, 67, at ft. 67. Can 67 be a magic number for these two scholars of mysticism?).

Maimonides has all this in mind when he quotes “For My Name is within him,” ostensibly discussing his definition of *shem* as “command” but then lurching momentarily into angelology (“I shall explain this fully in treating...the term *malakh*, ‘angel.’”)

## **OR HANIVRA: THE CREATED LIGHT**

Another poetic notion of the created emanation is the *or ha-nivra*, the “created light.” Maimonides began his account of the created light when he said that definition 1 of “glory” was the same as definition 3 of “name,” and then gave the definition of “glory” as this created emanation:

“Similarly, the *glory of Y\*H\*V\*H* is sometimes intended to signify the created light (*or ha-nivra*) that God causes to descend in a particular place to confer honor upon it in a miraculous way.” (Pines’ trans.)

The created light is the light created on the first day, the light of wisdom, by which you can see the universe entire. Only the light of the mind can conceivably accomplish this. This light was removed and stored (*or ha-ganuz*) by God for the righteous in the world to come (See my essay on the created light, Guide 1:19). Saadia Gaon, in the *Book of Knowledge and Belief* (2:3b end), says that the created light is the Shekhina.

The discussion of this created emanation flourishes in the domain of imagination, poetry and myth more than in the sobriety of philosophic discourse. Emanation differs from essence, which resides exclusively in the domain of truth. That explains these imaginative references for the *kavod* and *shem* as created emanation: angels, created light, created word, Metatron, Shekhina. All of these are ready at hand, and the first two Maimonides explicitly mentions in our chapter. “And there is no difference” whether man learns of the created emanation by one of these imaginative means or another.

The last line of the chapter ties this all together, but in an obscure way. Referring to *kavod*, but clearly also to *shem*, since we already know that they have the same definitions (essence or emanation), he says:

“Consider well the homonymity of this term, and explain it in each instance in accordance with the context: you will thus escape great embarrassment.”

What embarrassment would he be saving us from? Schwarz (*ad loc.*, note 17) points us to Guide 3:7 for the answer, where Maimonides writes about Ezekiel’s vision of the *Maaseh Merkava*, the Subject of the Chariot:

“The prophet likewise says, ‘that is the likeness of the glory of the Lord’ (Ezekiel 1:28): but ‘the glory of the Lord’ is different from ‘the Lord’ Himself, as has been shown by us several times. All the figures in this vision refer to the glory of the Lord, to the chariot, and not to Him who rides upon the chariot; for God cannot be compared to anything. Note this.”

Our chapter comes precisely to prevent the confusion of God’s created emanation with His essence, that is, Himself. Such confusion could result in our worshipping those creations arising in prophecy, to the exclusion of their Creator.

## **KAVOD: CRESCAS’ INTERPRETATION OF MAIMONIDES**

Continuing his discussion of *kavod*, “the Glory of the Lord,” Maimonides quotes a significant passage from Exodus concerning its action:

“And the glory of the Lord *abode* (*vayishkan*) upon Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days: and the seventh day He called unto Moses out of the midst of the cloud.” (Exodus 24:16)

It is bad enough that the text has God *abide* in a physical place. The Septuagint, the ancient Greek translation of the Bible is worse. It gives us “came down” (κατέβη) instead of “abode,” which opens up whether God can “come down.” Harry A. Wolfson (*Crescas*, 460-462) explains the philosophic history of this passage as follows: Philo (c. 20 B.C.E.–50 C.E.), who knew the Septuagint as well if not better than the Hebrew, was troubled by this

implication of spatial descent. He, therefore, taught that “glory” was either: a) the presence of God’s manifested powers; or, b) the subjective human apprehension of God. In neither case could it mean God or His essence. Wolfson then shows that Saadia, Ha-Levi, and other Jewish medievals translated *kavod* as *Shekhina*. They, thus, followed, perhaps consciously, this Philonic tradition. However, the Hebrew verb *vayishkan* translated as “abode” or κατέβη, does share the root of *Shekhina*.

According to Wolfson, this Philonic interpretation parallels Maimonides’ definitions 1 (indwelling/emanation) and 3 (praise) of *kavod*. He argues that Maimonides could have read Philo. Thus, Maimonides is able to translate glory (*ibid.* 461): “in two ways, one taking the term *kavod* to mean the essence of God (definition 2, unlike Philo) and the other to mean an emanation” (definitions 1 and 3, like Philo).

Wolfson then proceeds to show how Crescas identified glory with the Sefirot, so that there are likewise two ways of taking the Sefirot, either as essence or as emanation. Similarly, Wolfson quotes Abraham Shalom (d. 1492), who compared this Cabalist dilemma to the question whether the prime mover was God or an emanation from Him. Crescas acknowledges his dilemma by showing how to translate the “glory” in Ezekiel 3:12 either way: as essence or as emanation. The passage from Ezekiel reads, “Then the spirit took me up, and I heard behind me a voice of a great rushing, [saying], Blessed [be] the glory of the Lord from his place,” *barukh kavod y\*h\*v\*h mimekomo*. Wolfson writes (*ibid.*, p. 462):

“What Crescas is trying to do...is to transfer Maimonides’ discussion of the term *kavod* as he understood it to the term *kavod* as it was understood by the Cabalists in the sense of the Sefirot,”

Either taking the Sefirot as essence:

A) “The blessedness (*barukh*) of the glory of the Lord (*kavod ha-shem*)’ i.e., of the Sefirot, ‘is from glory’s place (*mimekomo*),’ i.e., from God’s essence, inasmuch as the glory or Sefirot are [understood to be] identical with God’s essence.” (Crescas wrote, p. 203: “The pronominal suffix *his* in *from his place*,” i.e., the final *o* in *mimekomo*, refers to *glory’s place*, “that is to say, from God’s own essence and not from something outside Himself,” since the suffix *o* can mean *his* or *its*).

Or, as emanation:

B) “Blessed (*barukh*) is the glory of God (*kavod ha-shem*)’ i.e., of the Sefirot [as emanation], ‘from His place (*mimekomo*),’ i.e., from God’s essence.” (Crescas: “The pronominal suffix refers to God, the meaning of the verse being the *glory of God* is *blessed* and is poured forth in abundance *from the place of God*, i.e., from His essence, as it is an emanation.”)

Crescas preferred, however, to understand that the *kavod* was formative, and, therefore, emanational, for he wrote, “The whole earth is full (*malei*) of His glory’ (Isaiah 6:3), which is an allusion to the element of *impregnation*, which is one of the elements of glory” (*sh’hu ysod ha-ibbur sh’b’ysodot kavodo*, cf., Guide 1:19, the lexical chapter on *malei*). He meant that the *kavod* was the willed created emanation born of the copulation of the *sefirot* called *ysod* and *malkhut* (“foundation” and “sovereignty”).

Given Maimonides’ acknowledgment that both definitions are possible, we are to recall “the homonymity of this term, and explain it in each instance in accordance with the context: you will thus escape great embarrassment.” He does not deny the existence of a created emanation. However, we should worship the essence of the Lord, not His created emanation.

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