

GUIDE 1:40
SPIRIT

OVERVIEW: HUMILITY AND AWE

Maimonides' ostensible purpose in this chapter is to define *ruakh*. He says it has six meanings: air, wind, breath, intellectual soul, prophetic flow, and will. It is homonymous because we may only use the last two definitions with God: the *emanation* of prophecy onto a prophet, and the divine *will*.

His real purpose is to link the Job complex of ideas with the complex of ideas surrounding the entry into divine science. Job haunts this chapter, although no word from Job appears in it. What links the Job ideas to the mystery of creation is the anagram of the terms *yekheraf* and *merakhefet*. The former is the key to the last chapter and the latter is the key to this one.

Yekheraf, from Job 27:6, signals Job's *turn* from imagination to intellect. It is his turn from Aristotle's eternal universe, in which nature rules and there is no divine providence. He moves from a false and unwarranted certainty to humility. This humility is the most important prerequisite for the student entering the divine science. Job 27:6 links to the *Maaseh Bereshit* complex of ideas, precisely because of Job's awe at God's wondrous *creation*. Job's *yekheraf* finds its anagrammatic counterpart in God's *merakhefet*, "hovering," in the first sentence of our chapter, its first proof-text, Genesis 1:1-2, which emphasizes God's ongoing role in creation.

Maimonides follows, in Definitions 3 and 4, with proof-texts for the distinction between the mortal *breath* of life and the enduring human intellectual *spirit*. They point to his thoughts on corporal resurrection. Job, who was not wise, believed that there is no *spirit* beyond human *breath* and thus no enduring soul. Beyond death, we can expect nothing. Under his materialist view, we can hope for no miracle, resurrection or divine providence.

Job, lacking humility, confronted with the contradictions of existence, including the punishment of the righteous, rails against God. He cannot enter the divine science until he pauses humbly before such contradictions, a point Maimonides makes with the three quotations he brings for Definition 5 of *ruakh*, about the humility required for the entry level of prophecy.

Humility is necessary because God's purposes are *masked*. When we think we can understand God's purposes, we speak of His intellect; but when we do not, we speak of His will. This is the point of Definition 6, which considers humility in connection with the divine *will*. Job "turns" (*yekheraf*), acquires humility, and begins to acquire wisdom. His mask falls away. Job's eyes open to God's providential "hovering" (*merakhefet*) over His awesome creation.

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

RUAKH (AIR) Homonym

1. Air, one of the four elements.
2. Wind.
3. Breath.
4. Human intellectual soul. "That which remains of man after his death, and is not subject to destruction."

5. The lowest level of prophecy. The emanation of prophecy: “The divine inspiration of the prophets whereby they prophesy.” “Generally used with God,” in the sense that it is divinely caused.
6. Intention, will. “Generally used with God.”

Instance of Definition 1, Elemental Air, Contextualized:

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void (*tohu v'vohu*); and darkness (*khoshekh*) [was] upon the face of the deep. **And the spirit of God (*ruakh elokim*) moved (*merakhefet*) upon the face of the waters.**” (Genesis 1:1-2)

One might expect Maimonides to *deny* that the “spirit” of *God* moving on the waters was the corporeal element of air. *Rashi* does deny it in his poetic comment: “The Throne of Glory was suspended in the air and hovered over the face of the water with the breath of the mouth of the Holy One.” *Rashi* exalts to the mystic realm this “breath of the mouth,” far above physical or cosmological concerns. Maimonides takes a different road in Guide 2:30, his explanation of the stages of *Maaseh Bereshit*, the process of creation. In that chapter, he interprets these verses in what seem to be Aristotelian fashion. One obvious exception is that he invests this cosmology with creation *ex nihilo*, which is the signal that un-Aristotelian miracles will figure significantly in the Guide’s cosmology. Having willed this miraculous creation, God creates the “heaven and the earth” in all their constituent *matter*. The Bible’s first use of the word “earth” refers not to elemental “earth” but to the formless sublunar hyleic matter. The contrast of the “heaven” to the “earth” is that the *matter* of “heaven” is the uniquely unchanging *fifth element*, eternal *a parte post*. Since that sublunar matter does not include this fifth element, but only the four lower ones, the earth *cries*: *tohu v'vohu* (usually translated “unformed and void” but he relies, in Guide 2:5, on a Midrash that interprets *vohu* as crying, onomatopoeically, like “boohoo”). In its first division, this lower hyle is formed into “darkness,” *khoshekh*. “Darkness” is actually elemental *fire* when seen in its natural proper place above elemental *air*, otherwise we should expect to see the sky surrounded with flame and we do not (Guide 2:30). The elemental “fire” in its proper place is transparent. Rather than flames, what we see is a transparent sphere of elemental fire, which is called “darkness.” This elemental fire is above the *ruakh elokim*, “spirit of God,” which is the elemental *air*. This elemental air then moves upon the face of the elemental *waters*. These waters are above *elemental earth*, which appears for the first time in Genesis 1:10. Genesis only then distinguishes this elemental earth from the more generalized sense of “earth” as *matter*, since “earth” in its first use in line 1:2 was the general hyleic matrix. Actually, these elements when isolated in their proper place, unmixed with each other, do not exist *for us*. It is only when they form mixtures, which they have not yet done in this account, that they exist for us and are visible to us. This is also true of hyle, unformed matter. It exists, but not for us, until it is *in-formed*. The reason the text couples *ruakh* with the name of God, *elokim*, is that the movement of the air (i.e., its “hovering,” *merakhefet*), is ultimately caused by God. The spheres rotate out of love of God, who they cannot reach though they constantly try. This rotation produces the diurnal solar alternation that engenders *wind*, which is Definition 2 of *ruakh*. Moreover, the wind forces the elements into each other’s “proper places” so that they collide and combine to provide substance, upon which God emanates the *forms* of the things that only then exist for us. Thus, the meaning of *v'ruakh elokim merakhefet* is the miraculous and ongoing instantiation by which God makes the universal reality present to us.

Instances of Definition 2, Wind, Contextualized:

“And Moses stretched forth his rod over the land of Egypt, and the Lord brought an east wind upon the land all that day, and all [that] night; [and] when it was morning, **the east wind (*v'ruakh*) brought the locusts.**” (Exodus 10:13)

“And the Lord turned a mighty strong **west wind (*ruakh*)**, which took away the locusts, and cast them into the Red sea; there remained not one locust in all the coasts of Egypt.” (Exodus 10:19)

Maimonides considers *wind* separately from *air*, although the elemental air in the first proof-text becomes a hovering wind blowing from the spinning cosmos. Definition 1 is about *what makes up* God’s creation: the created elements. Definition 2 is about the dynamic creative *action* of the elements themselves. The wind causes this action by pushing the four elements from their “proper places.” The elements must return to their proper

places, by the most direct path, and this to-and-fro movement causes the elemental mixtures from which all corporeal things are created. Maimonides quotes the latter passage in Guide 2:30, in which he explains each step of the mystery of creation, and particularly the hovering of the *ruakh elokim*:

“It was here necessary to use the term *ruakh elokim* (in Genesis 1:2), because air is described here as in motion (*merakhefet*), and the motion of the air is, as a rule, ascribed to God (*tanuat ha-ruakh tamid m'yukheset l'hashem*); compare... ‘And the Lord turned a mighty strong west wind.’”

R. Abraham, quoting both our proof-texts in the context of his exposition of the natural system of cause and effect, echoes his father: “The wind depends on God’s will and desire” (*Guide to Serving God*, 229, and the section from 229-237). Our two proof texts from Exodus chapter 10 tell the story of the plague of locusts that God inflicted upon Egypt. Following divine instruction, Moses raised his staff over Egypt, and the Lord caused a wind from the east to cover the land with locusts. Pharaoh begs Moses to pray that God remove the plague, which He does, with a west wind. Divine punishment and providence are always miraculous since they disrupt natural order.

Instances of Definition 3, *Breath*, Contextualized:

“But he, [being] full of compassion, forgave [their] iniquity, and destroyed [them] not: yea, many a time turned he his anger away, and did not stir up all his wrath. For he remembered that they [were but] flesh; a *wind (ruakh)* that passeth away, and cometh not again.” (Psalms 78:38-39)

This proof-text for Definition 3 contradicts the proof-text for Definition 4. This *ruakh* departs at death and does not return, but that latter *ruakh* returns unto God who gave it. The distinction is between breath and spirit. Both quotations appear in Maimonides’ *Treatise on Resurrection*, chapter 8, Maimonides’ last treatise, which is like an appendix to the Guide. Maimonides there rebuts allegations that he did not believe in corporal resurrection. This charge was unfair, since, in other works, he made statements supporting resurrection, and it is one of his thirteen dogmas of faith (Commentary on the Mishnah: Introduction to *Helek*). His argument for resurrection has three steps. *First*, he admits that the majority of biblical statements say there is no life after death. He quotes our proof-text, that the breath departs and does not return. *Second*, he quotes the contradictory Ecclesiastes proof-text, below, Definition 4, that the spirit returns to God. The explanation of the contradiction is that the Bible uses the term equivocally, in the first case it refers to the respiration of animal life, and in the second to the intellectual soul that joins with the unitary intellect when severed from its bodily anchor. This soul is not subject to generation/corruption, for its creation is miraculous. Still its eternal persistence is *natural*:

“This is something which is part of nature and this is what the books of prophecy call the soul or the spirit in partnership with God... This is the law of nature. (Lit. this is what is in nature).” (Translation: Fred Rosner, *Moses Maimonides’ Treatise on Resurrection*, Jason Aronson Publ., 1997, p. 43)

The *third* step of his argument is to acknowledge two quotes from Daniel that do seem to argue for resurrection: 12:2 and 12:13. His explanation for these is that resurrection is a *miracle*, and, since it is a miracle, it is inexplicable. Job had not understood this. While the natural course is that our breath passes away and does not come again, it is also natural that our miraculous human soul shall return to God. And, furthermore, the natural course cannot exclude the miracle of bodily resurrection. Moreover, the *Treatise*, ch. 10, concludes that even greater than resurrection is the greatest miracle of all: the divine providence that rewards the Jews’ compliance and punishes their transgressions, wholly apart from whatever their natural fate would be.

“And they went in unto Noah into the ark, two and two of all flesh, wherein [is] the breath (*ruakh*) of life.” (Genesis 7:15)

This proof-text is included to eliminate any ambiguity: the subject of Definition 3 is the respiratory process we share with the animal kingdom.

Instance of Definition 4, *Intellectual Soul*, Contextualized:

“Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern. Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the *spirit (v’ha-ruakh)* shall return unto God who gave it. Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher; all [is] vanity.” (Ecclesiastes 12:6-8)

Here we distinguish the *spirit* from the *breath* of Definition 3, which “passes away and does not come again.” For the *spirit*, in this sense, is the acquired intellect man has made of his potential intellect. This intellect will lose its bodily trappings and unify with *intellect* as a whole, returning “unto God who gave it.” While the text of Ecclesiastes seems despondent, Maimonides takes it as hopeful, and contrasts it to the animal breath in Definition 3, doomed not to persist beyond the grave.

Instances of Definition 5, Prophetic Inspiration, Contextualized:

“And the Lord said unto Moses, Gather unto me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom thou knowest to be the elders of the people, and officers over them; and bring them unto the tabernacle of the congregation, that they may stand there with thee. And I will come down and talk with thee there: and I will take of the *spirit* (*ha-ruakh*) which [is] upon thee, and will put [it] upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with thee, that thou bear [it] not thyself alone.” (Numbers 11:16-17)

“And the Lord came down in a cloud, and spake unto him, and took of the spirit that [was] upon him, and gave [it] unto the seventy elders: and it came to pass, [that], when the *spirit* (*ha-ruakh*) rested upon them, they prophesied, and did not cease (*v'yitnabu v'lo yisafu*).” (Numbers 11:25)

“Now these [be] the last words of David. David the son of Jesse said, and the man [who was] raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel, said, The *spirit* (*ruakh*) of the Lord spake by me, and his word [was] in my tongue. The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men [must be] just, ruling in the fear of God.” (2 Samuel 23:1-3)

The first two passages from Numbers 11, about the first Sanhedrin, go together. They refer to several significant issues in prophecy. The most important point for Maimonides here is the humility that must accompany the true prophet and is necessary for all students of divine science. The third passage features David, who exemplified humility, as did the members of the Sanhedrin. Because of this they both participated in the *ruakh ha-kodesh* of prophetic inspiration. See essay below, “The New Elders.”

Instances of Definition 6, Intention/Will, Contextualized:

“A fool uttereth all his *mind* (*rukho*): but a wise [man] keepeth it in till afterwards.” (Proverbs 29:11)

Maimonides understands the *ruakh* the fool utters as “his intention and will.” He quotes this passage because he wants to portray the cause of the fool’s foolishness, which he does in Guide 3:12:

“Men frequently think that the evils in the world are more numerous than the good things; many sayings and songs of the nations dwell on this idea. They say that a good thing is found only exceptionally, whilst evil things are numerous and lasting....The origin of the error is to be found in the circumstance that this ignorant man...judge(s) the whole universe by examining one single person. For an ignorant man believes that the whole universe only exists for him; as if nothing else required any consideration. If, therefore, anything happens to him contrary to his expectation, he at once concludes that the whole universe is evil. If, however, he would take into consideration the whole universe, form an idea of it, and comprehend what a small portion he is of the universe, he will find the truth.”

Job, who was a fool, comes to this illumination only after turning from his self-centered outlook. Maimonides continues:

“They wonder that a person, who became leprous in consequence of bad food, should be afflicted with so great an illness and suffer such a misfortune; or that he who indulges so much in sensuality as to weaken his sight, should be struck with blindness! and the like. What we have, in truth, to consider is this: —the whole mankind at present in existence, and *a fortiori*, every other species of animals, form an infinitesimal portion of the permanent universe. Comp. ‘Man is like to vanity’ (Psalms 144:4); ‘How much less man, that is a worm; and the son of man, which is a worm’ (Job 25:6); ‘How much less in them who dwell in houses of clay’ (Job 4:19); ‘Behold, the nations are as a drop of the bucket’ (Isaiah 40:15). ...It is of great advantage that man should know his station, and not erroneously imagine that the whole universe exists only for him. We hold that the universe exists because the Creator wills it so; mankind is low in rank as compared with the uppermost portion of the universe, viz., with the spheres and the star.”

Note the pairing of the Job quotes with the Isaiah passage (our final proof-text). Humility is the realization that the universe does not turn about me. Job complained that bad things happen to him for no reason. But it is not so.

Maimonides lists three explanations for these evils. Evils occur because men possess a physical body; because they hurt each other; and because they fail to prevent these evils. God does not cause them. His purposes in all this are to some extent discernible, but only to the humble “who keepeth it in till afterwards.” They are not apparent to the fool who is too full of himself to notice them. The wise realize that they are “a drop” in the cosmic “bucket.” They patiently pursue whatever knowledge they can attain, not complaining of what they do not yet understand.

“And I will set the Egyptians against the Egyptians: and they shall fight every one against his brother, and every one against his neighbour; city against city, [and] kingdom against kingdom. And the *spirit* (*ruakh*-intention, will) of Egypt shall fail in the midst thereof; and I will destroy the counsel thereof: and they shall seek to the idols, and to the charmers, and to them that have familiar spirits, and to the wizards.” (Isaiah 19:2-3)

Maimonides retranslates “The spirit of Egypt shall fail” to mean, “Her *intentions* will be frustrated, and her plans will be obscured.” Isaiah prophesied that the Egyptians would destroy themselves in civil war. Knowing this, Josiah thought his righteousness would allow him to prevail over these Egyptians (see my essay on Josiah, Guide 1:38, and Rashi on 2d Chron., 35:22). The connection between this Isaiah passage and Josiah is made most clearly in a *Kinnah* of Elazar ha-Kalir (7th cent. poet). Jeremiah had warned Josiah to let the Egyptians pass through the land. It was not Josiah’s destiny to stop them. They would only be defeated by themselves, “Egyptians against the Egyptians,” as Isaiah prophesied. Josiah foolishly relied on the Leviticus 26:6, “And the sword shall not go through your land,” not realizing that the Jews hid idols behind their doors.

“[But] he [Josiah] stopped his [Pharaoh’s] hordes from marching to Mesopotamia

So that ‘no sword should pass through’ Ephraim

He failed to heed the seer [Jeremiah] who said to turn back (*lashuv akhuraim*)

For it was divinely revealed that ‘I will set the Egyptians against the Egyptians...

They trapped him and made him a target for their arrows

And shot three hundred arrows into him...

The breath of his lips burst forth from his mouth:

‘It is HaShem who is righteous for I have disobeyed His utterance.’ (*Complete Artscroll Tisha B’av Service*, p. 185)

Both Josiah and the Egyptians are like the fool in the prior quote: they blurt out their own righteousness, but fail to heed the true voice of prophecy. This is because they have set their will and intention before God’s will and intention. The will and intentions of God are *masked*. The mask is theirs, not His. Their self-centered imaginations prevent their seeing anything else.

“Who hath directed the *spirit* (*ruakh*) of the Lord, or [being] his counsellor hath taught him?” With whom took he counsel, and [who] instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to him the way of understanding? *Behold, the nations [are] as a drop of a bucket*, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing.” (Isaiah 40:13-15)

Maimonides retranslates this proof-text: “Who knows the *order* fixed by His *will*, or perceives the system of His Providence in the existing world, that he may tell us?” The whole passage should remind us of the divine rebuke to Job. In Guide 3:15, he continues this thought:

“You must not be mistaken and think that the spheres and the angels were created for our sake. Our position has already been pointed out to us, ‘Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket.’ Now compare your own essence with that of the spheres, the stars, and the Intelligences, and you will comprehend the truth, and understand that man is superior to everything formed of earthly matter, but not to other beings; he is found exceedingly inferior when his existence is compared with that of the spheres, and *a fortiori* when compared with that of the Intelligences. Comp. ‘Behold, he putteth no trust in his servants: and his messengers he charged with folly: how much less in them that dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, which are crushed before the moth?’ (Job 4:18, 19)...The ‘servants’ referred to in this place are the angels; whilst by the term ‘his messengers’ the spheres are undoubtedly meant. Eliphaz

himself, who uttered the above words, explains this...saying, 'Behold, he putteth no trust in his holy ones; yea, the heavens are not clean in his sight, how much more abominable and filthy is man, who drinketh iniquity like water' (Job 15:15, 16)...Their meaning is this: How much less in man who is abominable and filthy, in whose person crookedness or corporeality is mixed up and spread through all his parts."

The three Definition 6 proof-texts for *ruakh* as "will" and "intention" compare human to divine will. Job, who represents human will, could not recognize the divine will, being too concerned with his own. God's will seems masked. Once Job achieved humility, the mask fell away. He could begin to recognize the divine will. He could enter the ranks of David and the new elders. He could then begin serious inquiry into life, death, eternal life, and the miracles of creation, providence and resurrection, the *Maaseh Bereshit* and *Maaseh Merkava*.

THE NEW ELDERS

"And the Lord said unto Moses, Gather unto me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom thou knowest to be the elders of the people, and officers over them; and bring them unto the tabernacle of the congregation, that they may stand there with thee. *And I will come down and talk with thee there: and I will take of the spirit (ha-ruakh) which [is] upon thee, and will put [it] upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with thee, that thou bear [it] not thyself alone.*" (Numbers 11:16-17)

"And the Lord came down in a cloud, and spake unto him, and took of the spirit that [was] upon him, and gave [it] unto the seventy elders: and it came to pass, [that], when the *spirit (ha-ruakh)* rested upon them, they prophesied, and did not cease (*v'yitnabu v'lo yisafu*)." (Numbers 11:25)

"Now these [be] the last words of David. David the son of Jesse said, and the man [who was] raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel, said, *The spirit (ruakh)* of the Lord spake by me, and his word [was] in my tongue. The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men [must be] just, ruling in the fear of God." (2 Samuel 23:1-3)

These passages introduce the lowest level of prophecy, *ruakh ha-kodesh*, i.e., *divine inspiration*, Definition 5. They feature the new Elders of Israel and King David, both exemplars of this level of prophecy.

Because Moses is the most humble of men, he has a special direct relationship with God. He represents the *intermediary* in prophecy. That is why God directs him to create the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin was the body of seventy-one elders who judged and legislated for Israel. The Midrash (Rashi, *ad loc.*) explains that like a candle kindling other candles, Moses inspires these men without diminishing his own prophetic light, as their intermediary. God talks with Moses, not with the elders, "And I will come down and talk with thee there" (i.e., not with them. See my notes at Guide 1:10).

The reason these elders merit this revelation is that now they too are humble. These are not the same elders of Israel who banqueted while perceiving the vision of the Throne of Glory (Exodus 24:11, see my note on the Elders, Guide 1:5). God delayed the punishment of those elders until the "burning" at Taverah (Numbers 11:3), just before the inauguration of the Sanhedrin. The surviving elders were the most distinguished of a group of very distinguished men. Pharaoh appointed them supervisors of the Hebrew slaves, but since they had mercy on the slaves, the Egyptians beat them: as it says, "the officers of the children of Israel were beaten" (Exodus 5:14). The Midrash comments, "Now they shall be chosen in their greatness, just as they had suffered in their [Israel's] distress" (*Sifrei Beha'alotekha* 1:42:16).

Maimonides notes that the historic members of the Sanhedrin possessed the intellectual and moral attainments required of the student of divine science. They were wise, judicious and humble. As David said in the proof-text above, which was his last prophecy: "He that ruleth over men [must be] just, ruling in the fear of God." The Sanhedrin's members must also know Torah and the learned sciences (*Mishneh Torah, Sanhedrin*, 2:1). They are true legislators and not mere politicians

Maimonides focuses on the *quality* of the elders' prophecy. In the Introduction to the Guide, he quotes the last three words of the verse above (KJV version): "they prophesied, and did not cease (*v'yitnabu v'lo yisafu*)." The words *lo yisafu* can be translated two contradictory ways: either they prophesied once only, or they prophesied ceaselessly. Maimonides agrees with Rashi and Midrash that they prophesied once, not with *Targum* and KJV that they "did not cease." At the lowest level of prophecy, the initiate obtains a single flash of insight rarely:

"Some perceive the prophetic flash at long intervals; this is the degree of most prophets. By others only once during the whole night is a flash of lightning perceived. This is the case with those of whom we are informed, 'They prophesied, *but they did so no more*' (Numbers 11:25, JPS 1917. "Flash" is a common Sufic term)."

Guide 2:45 is Maimonides' taxonomy of the eleven levels of non-Mosaic prophecy. He quotes this proof-text to represent the lowest level of actual prophecy, the divine inspiration of *ruakh ha-kodesh*:

"(2) The second degree is this: A person feels as if something came upon him, and as if he had received a new power that encourages him to speak. He treats of science, or composes hymns, exhorts his fellow-men, discusses political and theological problems; all this he does while awake, and in the full possession of his senses. Such a person is said to speak by the *holy spirit (ruakh ha-kodesh)*. David composed the Psalms, and Solomon the Book of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon by this spirit; also Daniel, Job, Chronicles, and the rest of the Hagiographa were written in this holy spirit; therefore they are called *ketuvim* (Writings), i.e., written by men inspired by the holy spirit. Our Sages mention this expressly concerning the Book of Esther. In reference to such holy spirit, David says: 'The spirit of the Lord spoke in me, and his word is on my tongue' (2 Sam. 33:2, the third proof-text of Definition 5); i.e., the spirit of the Lord caused him to utter these words. This class includes the seventy elders of whom it is said, 'And it came to pass when the spirit rested upon them, that they prophesied, *but they did so no more*' (Num. 11:25, the second proof-text for Definition 5)."

David is the exemplar of the new Elders of Israel. He is a "second degree" prophet (Guide 2:45—the first degree involves inspired acts, not words). This means that on rare occasions the *ruakh ha-kodesh* prophetically inspired him. Maimonides links David to the Sanhedrin in his Commentary on *Pirkei Avot*, 4:4, a chapter about the virtue of humility, which quotes this proof-text. He considers David to be one of the Sanhedrin's historic leaders. The key is that, like Moses, David is humble:

"Thus in the instance of David, 'the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel;' he is an honored king whose kingdom became great...he is the star which stepped forth out of Jacob...and he is a prophet and the greatest of the seventy elders, as it was said (2 Sam. 23:8) 'who sits as the counselor at the academy.' Nevertheless, David said (Psalms 51:190), 'a broken and contrite heart God will not despise.' There are many of these virtues which denote the ultimate of modesty." (Trans. Arthur David, *Commentary to Mishnah Aboth*, Bloch Publ., NY, 1968, p. 67-68.)

The point is that the student of divine science might expect to attain such prophetic inspiration, the *ruakh ha-kodesh*, but only if he exercises, as Job finally did, humility before contradictions in divine science. The humble student of divine science will merit the descent of divine inspiration and, perhaps, prophecy.

Note that in our proof-text, David's connection to God is not direct, but mediated by the *ruakh ha-shem*, that speaks through him: "The spirit of the Lord spake through me" *ruakh hashem diber bi*. Maimonides understands the *ruakh* as an intermediary created by God. It is the active intellect.

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