

GUIDE 1:44 A VISION OF PROVIDENCE

The term *ayin* is homonymous in two large ways. 1) It is homonymous because it means both “fountain” and “eye.” These two are further complicated since “fountain” is understood both as a spring of water and also as a prophetic channel; while “eye” is both the organ of sight and the symbol of insight. 2) It is homonymous because when used with men it functions as the organ of the sense of sight; while with God it symbolizes both his special providential care as well as his being entirely *active*, by which we mean He is not passive or subject to passion. This second homonymity is a contrast between the *passivity* of human sensation, on the one hand, and God’s entirely *active* impassivity.

One path of interpretation, especially useful in this extremely compressed chapter, seeks where Maimonides used his proof-texts elsewhere in the Guide. From this examination, we see him deepening his understanding of divine providence, the *Maaseh Merkava*. Cross-references of this kind, together with certain other indications, lead to the following principles:

- **Preparation for prophecy:** Prophecy is a form of providence visited only upon those who are prepared intellectually to receive it, but divine will can prevent it. It does not rest upon the ignorant (Guide 2:42, 2:32).
- **Lesser versions of prophetic inspiration:** Nonetheless, the miracle of providence is that God does bestow lesser versions of prophetic inspiration upon the imaginations of the ignorant. (e.g., Hagar, Manoah, the Jewish masses at Sinai. Guide 2:42, 2:32)
- **Metaphor of praise:** To speak of God’s eyes is a metaphorical statement of providence, for God has no eyes. The Bible speaks in the “language of men.” Men use certain corporeal metaphors to praise God. It is appropriate to *interpret* such statements. Generally, they mean that God perceives or has knowledge of actions in our world. (Mishneh Torah, *Yesodei Ha-Torah* 1:9, Guide 1:46)
- **Metaphor of action:** The biblical language of prophecy uses expressions such as “His eyes behold, His eyelids try,” and “the eyes of the Lord which run to and fro,” to indicate a specific praise of God. We praise Him for always being *active*, in the sense that He is never *passive* or that anything about Him is *potential*. Potentiality “always implies non-existence.” God always acts upon, He is never acted upon. (1:46, 1:55).
- **The divine former:** A corollary of this *active* state is that God does not need senses to create sensation in His creatures. God manifests the idea of sight in thought, and from such a concept or *form* creates the miracle of sight, through His providential power to instantiate form. God also designs the “intellect which is the means of our comprehension” and endows us with it. It follows that there is “necessarily design in nature,” i.e., nature is the work of an intellectual being (3:19).
- **Universality of providence:** God’s providence extends over everything on earth. The expression “the eyes of the Lord run to and fro through the whole earth” voices this *active* characteristic. This aspect of providence results in *justice*, extending to all beings generally subject to nature, but is constrained by *love*, when met with the intellectual devotion of men. (3:17)
- **Selectivity of providence:** Despite Aristotle, who (per Maimonides) held that God only concerns Himself with universals, God can select individuals for special providential care, and individuals can, through love, increase their measure of providential blessing (3:17).

- **Love defined as post-intellectual worship:** Man brings himself under the providential wings of the *Shekhina* through *love*. Love is service man performs *after* he has arrived at “knowledge of God and His works.” One will then “try to approach Him and strengthen the intellect, which is the link that joins you to Him.” This “highest kind of worship” is a “service of the heart” where a man “concentrates all his thoughts on the First Intellect, and is absorbed in these thoughts as much as possible.” This post-intellectual meditation results in special providential selection (2:51).

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

AYIN (EYE, FOUNTAIN) Homonym

1. Fountain, well
2. Eye
3. Providence, especially when used with God
4. Perception of the mind, not that of the senses

Instance of Definition 1 Contextualized:

“But Abram said unto Sarai, Behold, thy maid [is] in thy hand; do to her as it pleaseth thee. And when Sarai dealt hardly with her, she fled from her face. And the angel of the Lord found her by a fountain (*ayn*) of water in the wilderness, by the fountain in the way to Shur. And he said, Hagar, Sarai’s maid, whence camest thou? and whither wilt thou go? And she said, I flee from the face of my mistress Sarai.” (Genesis 16:6-8)

Maimonides places well/fountain as Definition 1 of *ayin*. He does not want the bodily “eye” as the first and most material of his definitions, for he prefers progress toward the lexically more spiritual. This is so because Maimonides identifies “eye” as a popularly acceptable praise for God in Torah. By contrast, the fountain/well involves grossly physical earth and water. However, note that the Midrashic tradition makes *well* a divine channel (Midrash *Song of Songs Rabbah* 1:9). Recall the Introduction to the Guide, where “well” was a symbol for Solomonic prophecy.

Maimonides first addresses the power of *sight* lexically in Guide 1:4. His first proof-text there, Genesis 29:2, also involved a fountain, when Jacob *looked* and *beheld* a well in the field, and met Rachel, who was a divine channel. She is his “well.” Similarly, Hagar’s encounter with the well connects to the appearance of the “angel of the Lord.” How does Maimonides interpret this prophetic encounter? He does not consider Hagar prepared for prophecy: she was “was not a prophetess” (Guide 2:42). He states the reason in Guide 2:32:

“[It is a] principle that it depends chiefly on the will of God who is to prophesy, and at what time; and that He only selects the best and the wisest. We hold that fools and ignorant people are unfit for this distinction. It is as impossible for any one of these to prophesy as it is for an ass or a frog; for prophecy is impossible without study and training; when these have created the possibility, then it depends on the will of God whether the possibility is to be turned into reality.”

The speech she heard, or “imagined (*ala b’raionam*) [she] heard, was like the *bat kol*, so frequently mentioned by our Sages, and is something that may be experienced by men not prepared for prophecy” (2:42). Talmud, *Yoma* 9b, says of the *bat kol*: “After the later prophets Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi had died, the Holy Spirit departed from Israel, but they still availed themselves of the *bat kol*” (lit., “daughter of a voice”). It is not prophecy, but, rather, a lesser form of inspiration that comes in sleep or trance, even to those unprepared intellectually for prophecy. It is an echo of the divine “once removed.” Talmud, *Baba Metzia* 59b, in the famous case of the “oven of Aknin” ruled that a *bat kol* does not override the normal process of legislation. The point is that prophecy manifests itself differently along a continuum. The Guide, at 2:45, catalogues eleven degrees of

prophecy, though it seems that the *bat kol* is a degree below the first actual degree that he lists there. That Hagar, who is not a prophet, should receive a *bat kol*, is entirely a miracle of divine providence, which *selects* individuals for reward.

Instance of Definition 2, Eye, Contextualized:

“If men strive, and hurt a woman with child, so that her fruit depart [from her], and yet no mischief follow: he shall be surely punished, according as the woman’s husband will lay upon him; and he shall pay as the judges [determine]. And if [any] mischief follow, then thou shalt give life for life, *Eye for eye* (*ayin takhat ayin*), tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot (*regel takhat regel*).” (Exodus 21:22-24).

This proof-text is a clever choice, since Maimonides has no interest in *ayin* as a physical “eye.” Educated Jews recognize here that eye clearly does *not* mean eye. Compare Guide 1:28, “foot for foot,” where Maimonides similarly used this proof-text ostensibly to portray the physical meaning of *regel*, “foot.” In Mishneh Torah, *Nezikin, Hovel u’Mazik* 1:6, Maimonides rules that “eye for eye” is always interpreted, never taken literally, drawing on Talmud, *Baba Kama* 83b-84a, that it means an exchange (*takhat*) of monetary compensation. The conclusion is that we must exchange “eye for eye” when reading prophecy, by exchanging *sight* for *vision*. One understanding of “sight” unmentioned in this chapter is as a name for prophets: “seers.” In our comment to Guide 1:4, we noted a text omitted there: “Beforetime in Israel, when a man went to enquire of God, thus he spake, Come, and let us go to the *seer* (*raah*): for [he that is] now [called] a prophet was beforetime called a *seer* (*raah*)” (1 Samuel 9:9). We see with our eyes, but the *seer* sees with prophetic *vision*. He does not mention this meaning because it distracts from his focus, which is providence. His focus here is on the *giver* of providential dispensation, not the *recipient* of prophecy.

Instances of Definition 3, Providence, Contextualized:

“Now Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon gave charge concerning Jeremiah to Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard, saying, *Take him* (Jeremiah), and *look* (*v’ayneikha*) well to him, and do him no harm; but do unto him even as he shall say unto thee.” (Jeremiah 39:11-12)

Maimonides uses this proof-text to extend the corporeal eye metaphorically to the idea of providential care. Nebuzaradan keeps his providential “eye” on Jeremiah, not that he is actually looking at him. This is an interesting case of the evil gentile treating the prophet with more consideration than he got from his ostensible audience. The Midrash has it that Jeremiah refused this special favor. He chose to march in chains with his fellow Jews, until Nebuzaradan found out and restored him to privileged treatment. Observe how the ruler’s providence *selects* its special object from among the rest left to “natural” justice.

“And it came to pass, when Solomon had finished the building of the house of the Lord, and the king’s house, and all Solomon’s desire which he was pleased to do, that the Lord appeared to Solomon *the second time* (*sheinit*), as he had appeared unto him at Gibeon. And the Lord said unto him, I have heard thy prayer and thy supplication, that thou hast made before me: I have hallowed this house, which thou hast built, to put my name there for ever; and mine eyes and mine heart (*aynai v’libi*) shall be there perpetually.” (1 Kings 9:1-3)

Maimonides says here that whenever *ayin* is used with God it is always figurative (*u’l’fi ha-shala zo neemar clapei ha-shem*). Specifically, this passage is the *divine* figurative extension from the previous *human* expression of the providence of Nebuzaradan. In Mishneh Torah, *Yesodai Ha-Torah* 1:9, He explains that the phrase “eyes of the Lord” must be figurative, since God has no form or shape. He appears differently in every prophetic vision, a phenomenon that is “beyond Man’s intellect to investigate or comprehend.” Thus, it is not that God’s has physical “eyes” and “heart” on the Temple, but, as Maimonides retranslates, “My providence and My will” are on the Temple (*hashgakhti v’rtzoni*; *Targum* has “My Shekhina and My will”). These are, indeed, “beyond Man’s intellect.” When the people aligned their mind with the divine mind as much as they could, they prophetically perceived the architectural form of the Temple. They then built this Temple. Because of this act of *love*, providential care showered on them. Maimonides always pairs providential preferment with intellectual alignment. The Temple is associated with Solomon, who, in the Midrash, linked concepts together to draw

knowledge hidden deep in prophetic *wells*. Because he had aligned his mind with God's will he was vouchsafed prophecy "the second time."

"But the land, whither ye go to possess it, [is] a land of hills and valleys, [and] drinketh water of the rain of heaven: A land which the Lord thy God careth for: the eyes (*aynei*) of the Lord thy God [are] always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year. And it shall come to pass, if ye shall hearken diligently unto my commandments which I command you this day, *to love the Lord your God, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul*, that I will give [you] the rain of your land in its due season, the first rain and the latter rain, that thou mayest gather in thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil." (Deuteronomy 11:11-14)

On one level the passage is about the difference in the nature of rainfall and irrigation in Israel, as contrasted with the regimes of oriental despotism in Mesopotamia and Egypt, reliant as they were on government run irrigation. However, the passage extends the idea of the previous proof-text. Now Maimonides turns from the special providence of those who worship God in *love*, to the *selective* providence for the *land* of Israel. The rule is that God rewards devotion with rain, but punishes rebellion with exile. "The eyes of the Lord, your God, are always upon it" to see what it requires and to make for it new decrees, sometimes for good and sometimes for bad (Talmud, *Rosh Hashanah* 17b). The connection between God's providence and men's action in the land is *love*. If you love the Lord, the land gets rain. He explains the concept of love in Guide 3:51, his famous "palace" allegory, as post-intellectual meditation:

"Those, however, who think of God, and frequently mention His name, without any correct notion of Him, but merely following some imagination, or some theory received from another person, are, in my opinion, like those who remain outside the palace and distant from it. They do not mention the name of God in truth, nor do they reflect on it. That which they imagine and mention does not correspond to any being in existence: it is a thing invented by their imagination...The true worship of God is only possible when correct notions of Him have previously been conceived. When you have arrived by way of intellectual research at a knowledge of God and His works, then commence to devote yourselves to Him, try to approach Him and strengthen the intellect, which is the link that joins you to Him...The Law distinctly states that the highest kind of worship, to which we refer in this chapter, is only possible after the acquisition of the knowledge of God. For it is said, '*To love the Lord your God, and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul*,' and, as we have shown several times, man's love of God is *identical* with his knowledge of Him (*ha-ahava k'fi erekh ha-hasaga*). The Divine service enjoined in these words must, accordingly, be *preceded* by the love of God. Our Sages have pointed out to us that it is a service in the heart, which explanation I understand to mean this: man concentrates all his thoughts on the First Intellect, and is absorbed in these thoughts as much as possible."

(David Blumenthal coined the term "post-intellectual" in this context. See his excellent essay on the subject at <http://www.js.emory.edu/BLUMENTHAL/PM2.5.html>.)

"For who hath despised the day of small things? for they shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel [with] those seven [menorah lights]; they [are] the eyes of the Lord (*eynei ha-shem*), which run to and fro (*mshotetim*) through the whole earth." (Zechariah 4:10)

See essay on Zerubbabel below.

Instances of Definition 4, *Mental Perception*, Contextualized:

"And Hezekiah prayed before the Lord, and said, O Lord God of Israel, which dwellest [between] the cherubims, Thou art the God, [even] Thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; Thou hast made heaven and earth. Lord, bow down Thine ear, and hear: open, Lord, Thine *eyes*, and see (*pkakh ha-shem aynekha u'rei*): and hear the words of Sennacherib, which hath sent him to reproach the living God. Of a truth, Lord, the kings of Assyria have destroyed the nations and their lands, And have cast their gods into the fire: for they [were] no gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone: therefore they have destroyed them. Now therefore, O Lord our God, I beseech Thee, save thou us out of his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that Thou [art] the Lord God, [even] Thou only." (2 Kings 19:15-19)

Maimonides says that when the words “sight,” *raia*, and “vision,” *khazia*, (defined in Guide 1:4), are joined with *ayin*, the combination denotes non-sensible mental perception. Nonetheless, this is *not* a prayer for God to “see” since he already knows all, but for divine providential *selection*. The idea is that God should “see” that Sennacherib destroys the “gods” in the lands he conquers. Let him *not* be able to boast that he destroyed the God of the Jews by destroying the Jewish kingdom. It is an argument for selective providence, invoking God’s own point of view, an excellent example of intellectual alignment.

Schwarz and Even-Shmuel assign this quote-shard to a different verse, Daniel 9:18: “O my God, incline thine ear, and hear; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name: for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies.” They are the minority. They may have been led to this result because the proof-text is not identical to our received text of 2 Kings 19:16 (see Kafih note 11). The quote-shard appears again in 1:45 and 1:46, in similar contexts.

“To the chief Musician, [A Psalm] of David. In the Lord put I my trust: how say ye to my soul, Flee [as] a bird to your mountain? For, lo, the wicked bend [their] bow, they make ready their arrow upon the string, that they may privily shoot at the upright in heart. If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do? The Lord [is] in his holy temple, the Lord’s throne [is] in heaven: his *eyes* behold (*aynav yekhezu*), his eyelids try (*afapav yivkhanu*), the children of men. (Psalms 11:1-4)

The purpose of this passage is to show that we praise God metaphorically by attributing to Him the *activity* of sight, including even the motion of eyelids. We praise Him because He is entirely active, not the passive recipient of outside impulse from a being greater than He:

“...Everything that implies corporeality or passiveness, is to be negated in reference to God, for all passiveness implies change: and the agent producing that state is undoubtedly different from the object affected by it; and if God could be affected in any way whatever, another being beside Him would act on Him and cause change in Him. All kinds of non-existence must likewise be negated in reference to Him: no perfection whatever can therefore be imagined to be at one time absent from Him, and at another present in Him: for if this were the case, He would [at a certain time] only be potentially perfect. Potentiality always implies non-existence, and when anything has to pass from potentiality into reality, another thing that exists in reality is required to effect that transition. Hence it follows that *all perfections must really (actually) exist in God*, (*v'l'fikakh khiyuvi sh'yhu kol shlemuyotav mtzuim b'poel*) and none of them must in any way be a mere potentiality.” (Guide 1:55)

Maimonides goes on to say that all of the proof-texts in Definition 4 express intellectual apprehension, not sensory perception (*eynav elei culam ha-hasaga hasiklit, lo hasaga khushit*).

ZERUBBABEL

“Moreover the word of the Lord came unto me, saying: The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house [the second Temple]; his hands shall also finish it; and thou shalt know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto you. For who hath despised the day of small things? for they shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel [with] those seven [menorah lights]; they [are] the *eyes* of the Lord (*eynei ha-shem*), which run to and fro (*mshotetim*) through the whole earth.” (Zechariah 4:8-10)

This is a special passage for Maimonides. It reveals the nature of God’s universal cosmological providence, both in its natural regime, where it governs all creatures, as well as in its special concern for some of those endowed with intellect.

Maimonides wants to remind us of Amos’ vision of the plumb-line, which was significant in interpreting Guide 1:12. See our essay “On the Interpretation of Dreams” in that chapter. We showed there that the plumb-line is an allegory of strict justice. He makes the connection to our proof-text explicitly in 2:43:

“You must further know that the prophets see things shown to them allegorically, such as the candlesticks...of Zechariah (4:2-10)...the wall made by a plumb-line (Amos 7:7), which Amos saw...and similar allegorical objects shown to represent certain ideas.”

Both the lights of Zechariah and the plummet represent specific ideas. We know that the plumb-line stands for justice. What is the allegorical idea represented by the seven menorah lights which are the “eyes of the Lord”? We learn from Maimonides’ ancient commentators that they represent the seven planetary spheres. The subject of the proof-text then is the relation of the cosmological spheres to universal *general* providence. With the plumb-line of strict justice God emanates the natural regime through his angels, which are the minds behind the seven planets. He explains, in his *Letter on Astrology*, that general providence acts through the planetary intelligences (*sikhlim nvdalim*) to administer the natural order. (On the menorah representing planetary spheres: Josephus *Ant.* Ch. 3, 144-145. Also, Shem Tov, Efodi and Narboni *ad loc.*, pp. 62-63 of the Ibn Tibbon translation of the Guide. Abarbanel agrees, but disputes that by referring to the spheres, which control the species, it means to exclude individuals, for by *hasgakha kolelet* Maimonides means to include all forms of providence, not making it the opposite of *hashgakha pratit*).

In 3:17, he explains that, by contrast, *selective* providence extends to mankind, because only mankind is intellectual, and “Divine providence is connected with divine intellectual influence.” Otherwise, all natural beings, including men acting without intelligence, are subject to the plumb-line of nature’s justice, as the planetary eyes of providence run to and fro through the earth. Even bad things, such as maritime disasters (Maimonides’ brother died in one) are not due to chance but to judgment, “the method of which our mind is incapable of understanding.”

Then, in 3:19, he argues against the view he attributes to Aristotle that God has abandoned the earth, taking no notice of particular individuals, who are subject to chance. In response, he argues for God’s special providential rule. The argument, a variant of the *a priori* proof for God’s existence, runs as follows. To create sight in man, God need not experience sight. He conceives the form of sight, and instantiates that form. The wonder of sight expresses “design in nature.” Nature is not an intellectual being: it must be ruled by an intelligent being, which is God:

“If this intellect were incapable of perceiving or knowing any of the actions of earthly beings, how could He have created, or, according to the other theory, caused to emanate from Himself, properties that bring about those actions of which He is supposed to have no knowledge?”

Thus, He has knowledge of individuals (see also Maimonides’ tenth fundamental of faith in *Introduction to Helek*). God endowed men not only with sight but also with insight, i.e., intellectual perception. He designed us so that we can strive to comprehend Him. We, thus, bring ourselves under the special selection of providence, and thereby remove ourselves from the general dispensation of nature.

The Zerubbabel proof-text tells of those who thought that the rebuilt Temple was not impressive architecturally. They despised the “day of small things” (*l’yom ktanot*), that is, they despised the good because it was not the best. However, when they saw the plumb-line of the architect Zerubbabel, they perceived a vision of divine providence that changed their view.

This vision implies another argument advanced for the theory of forms: how could the architect, with his plumb-line, produce the Temple unless he had a *vision* of what it was to be? Zerubbabel’s vision was prophetic. Just as God instantiates the form of sight in men, so Zerubbabel substantiates the Temple from the form shown him in vision.

The name of this shadowy figure, Zerubbabel, means “scion” or “seed” from Babylon. He was an authentic prince of the Davidic line in exile. There is a tradition that he was wise, for he won a contest to determine what

was mightiest in the world. He said: “women are the mightiest in the world but truth prevails over all” (Enc. Judaica, *Zerubbabel*). He obtained from Darius of Persia a license to rebuild the Temple. He was the subject of messianic hope. There are no negative accounts of him. Maimonides identifies him as a member of the Sanhedrin (*anshei kneset ha-gedola*) in the Introduction to Mishneh Torah. This makes him one of the new “Elders of Israel” (essay, Guide 1:40).

He was, thus, a good prince who accomplished his vision of building the Temple, the place for the indwelling of the *Shekhina*. When the people saw Zerubbabel rebuilding the Temple, they perceived the vision of God’s universal providence. It is the plumb-line of justice administered by the “eyes of the Lord,” His system of cosmological emanation.

OFANIM

Explaining the Zechariah quote-shard, “They are the eyes of the Lord which run to and fro through the whole earth,” Maimonides says, “that is, His providence *is extended over everything that is on the earth*, as will be explained in the chapters in which we shall treat of providence.” Friedlander thinks that he means Guide 3:12, where Maimonides catalogues five theories on providence. This is where he asserts that special providential care aligns relative to the actualization of the human intellect.

But by saying “His providence is extended over everything that is on the earth” *kolelet gam kol ma sh’b’aretz* (Kafih), *mekifa et kol asher b’aretz* (Schwarz), he suggests a sense in which the “eyes” surround the earth, like a sphere.

When Maimonides said, “as will be explained in the chapters in which we shall treat of providence,” he also means those chapters in which he discusses the *Maaseh Merkava*, explaining the entire esoteric treatment of providence. In the Ezekiel vision that is the center of that treatment, the term “eyes” appears, but Maimonides defined it differently. Our chapter seemingly ignored the brace of meanings he gives the term in his chapters on providence, particularly Guide 3:2 and 3:3, where he interprets Ezekiel’s two visions of the *ofanim*:

“And they had backs and were tall and fearsome, and their *backs* were full of *eyes* surrounding the four of them” (Ezek. 1:18),

“And *their whole body*, their back, their hands, their wings, and their *ofanim* were full of *eyes* all around for the four of them their *ofanim*” (Ezek. 10:12).

In Guide 3:2, he defines the *eyes* of the *ofanim* as (1) “real eyes,” (2) “different colors,” (3) “likenesses,” and (4) “different properties and qualities.”

Friedlander hazards the explanation that the *ofanim* represent unformed matter within the sublunary sphere, and that the four faces of the *ofanim* are the four elements (in their perfect unmixed state). He tries to explain Maimonides’ opaque statement, “It is possible that a body covered with real eyes is here meant.” He says it means “the *materia prima* [which] contained the substance for the formation of the living beings,” i.e., that the *ofan* contained the hylic matter from which the creatures were formed.

Friedlander interprets Maimonides’ definitions for the *eyes* of the *ofanim*, Definitions (2), (3) and (4) above, as applying “to the different colors, forms and properties of the things formed out of the four elements.” I would go further to interpret “different colors” as *colorlessness*, meaning the ability of transparency to take on all colors as matter takes on all forms (Guide 1:28). The “likenesses” are the images of the supernal forms when cast into the material objects in-formed by them. On the “different properties and qualities,” *matzavim v’taarim*, Friedlander may be right that these are the specific characteristics of the actual material substances themselves. However, it is

more likely that these *eyes* are the universal characteristics shared by individuals of the same sort flowing from their particular form, as, e.g., all known triangles have their characteristic three sides.

In Guide 3:3, Maimonides discusses the differences between Ezekiel's first vision of the *ofanim* and the second. He uses the second version to establish that the *ofanim* are the spheres of the four elements below the moon. (He seems to deny, that the *ofanim* are themselves planetary spheres, attributing that view to *Targum Jonathan*, in Guide 3:4). Since the motion of the spheres causes the mixing of the elements, the motion of those elements provides both the ground and the event of the instantiation of forms emanated into matter. He says, in 3:3, about the second vision:

“A fourth point is added concerning the *ofanim*, namely, *and the four ofanim were full of eyes round about even to their four ofanim*. This has not been mentioned before.”

In other words, in the first version, the eyes were on the “backs” of the *ofanim* surrounding the four of them, while here the “whole body” of the “*ofanim were full of eyes round about*.” Friedlander takes the difference to mean that in the first vision “the prophet only perceived the variety of forms produced by the different relations each point of the sphere of the elements has to the heavenly spheres,” i.e., the relation of the spheres' movements to the forms of the particular elemental admixtures flowing therefrom. These then are immediately instantiated by the emanated forms, which, he says, “is expressed by attributing eyes only to ‘their outside’ (their ‘back’), the side exposed to the influences of the heavenly bodies.” By contrast, in the second vision, Friedlander thinks that the location of the eyes *filling* the whole body of the *ofanim*, not just external to them, means, “the great variety of forms produced by the combination of the elements and their contents.” The better interpretation is that the eyes filling the *ofan* are the actual forms *prior* to their instantiation in matter, in the soul of the sphere, in the sense that Philo called *logos*, the storehouse of forms. They could also be all the souls, like monads, in the world (On all the above, Friedlander translation of the Guide, 3:3, note 2, p. 8; note 1 and note 2, page 9. The Ezekiel translations are those he used.)

Another way Maimonides uses “eye” is in his account of the *Maaseh Merkava* when he quotes “eye of *khashmal*.” (Ezek. 1:4, 27; 8:2; Guide 3:5). As we will show in the appropriate place, *khashmal* has approximately the same meaning as “feet.” Both begin as phallic euphemisms but sublimate to become divine causation. The “eye” of the *khashmal* would be the form that divine causation instantiates in the material object, its “likeness.” This takes “eye” metaphorically as the medium of vision, what Friedlander calls the *spiritus visus* (Guide 2:29), a liquid medium in the eye which transmits motion generated by colors to the optical organ, creating images from things seen. This notion metaphorically extends to become the *process* by which the form instantiates the material object. Maimonides takes this concept to be “The ultimate perception and highest of all,” in Pines' translation.

(On *spiritus visus*, Friedlander on Guide 1:32, note 3, p. 112; and on 1:72, note 5, pp. 289-290; and Schwarz, on 1:32, note 9, p. 73. Maimonides discusses the *spiritus* again at 3:25. Maimonides wrote a “revision” of *The Perfection, Al Istikmal*, of Yusuf Al-Mutamin, 11th C., a mathematical work, which included a treatise on optics by the revolutionary optical philosopher, Abu Al-Haytham, known as Alhazen to the Latins, who married conic geometry to Aristotelian optical intromission theory in new and profound ways that transformed optics, and was enormously important to Renaissance opticians. See *Maimonides: The Life and World of One of Civilization's Greatest Minds*, by Joel L. Kraemer, 74-75, Doubleday 2008).

The difference between the definitions for *ayin* in our chapter and those in the *Maaseh Merkava* chapters is that in the former the term metaphorically extends to providence and intellectual perception, while in the latter it focuses on the *process* by which providence instantiates the form in the material object. The difference comes from the level the student has reached. Here, he learns to identify the subject matter of providence in cryptic utterances; there, he works through its metaphysical mechanics.

One major issue about forms is whether they are real existences or mere names we confer on characteristics universally shared by all individual instances of a thing. Returning to our previous example, many different triangles share the characteristics of triangularity; but is “triangularity” merely a name we give to those shared characteristics? By recognizing the esoteric meaning of the eyes of the *ofanim* and the *khashmal*, Maimonides reveals that there is a process by which real forms are instantiated in matter. Maimonides holds to some vague version of emanationism, and therefore does not adopt the nominalism of the hard Aristotelians.

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