

## GUIDE 1:12 RISE

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

### ***KIMA* (RISE) Homonym**

Some of the lexical chapters begin with an initial sentence declaring the term “homonymous,” *shem mshutaf*, i.e., susceptible of *completely* different meanings. This is the first such chapter in the Guide. It begins “The term *kima* is a homonym,” *kima shem mshutaf*. I indicate in the heading of my treatment of subsequent lexical chapters when Maimonides commences by saying the term is homonymous. In other chapters, Maimonides mentions that the term is homonymous, but only in the body of the text. When that is the case, I also do so. *Kima* is homonymous because Maimonides cannot dispose of the term’s physical meaning. That physical meaning is unavoidable since first use is Cain *rising* to slay Abel (Genesis 4:8, not quoted in our chapter).

1. To physically rise, the opposite of “to sit.”
2. Confirmation and verification of a thing, especially with reference to God. In law, the confirmation of legal rights
3. To resolve or agree to do a thing (Maimonides explains that we rise from our seats when we express resolve).
4. Figuratively, the execution of a divine decree of punishment.

#### Instance Of Definition 1, Contextualized:

“Then went Haman forth that day joyful and with a glad heart: but when Haman saw Mordecai in the king’s gate, that he *stood* not up (*kam*), nor moved for him, he was full of indignation against Mordecai.” (Esther 5:9)

The context, from the story of Queen Esther, is her foster-father Mordecai’s refusal to stand and bow to the evil Haman. *Kima* frequently signifies rising to show respect to a superior. This is Maimonides’ most physical definition and is therefore placed first, on the principle of *ascending in holiness* (Talmud *Berakhot* 28A, see notes on Guide 1:10).

#### Instances of Definition 2 Contextualized:

“And Elkanah her husband said unto her, Do what seemeth thee good; tarry until thou have weaned him; only the Lord *establish* (*yakem*) his word. So the woman abode, and gave her son suck until she weaned him.” (1 Samuel 1:23)

All three quotations from First Samuel continue the theme of *intellectual progeny* (see my notes, Guide 1:7, and my essay there, *Demons*). All concern the succession of leaders in Israel. The first is about the succession of Samuel to Eli’s judgeship; the last two tell of David’s succession to Saul’s monarchy. In each instance, biological progeny are passed over in favor of intellectual progeny. This particular case concerns the infancy of the prophet Samuel. Samuel’s parents donated him to the sanctuary, to be raised as Eli’s own son, his intellectual progeny. By contrast, Eli’s own biological sons, plunder and fornicate in the sanctuary.

The problem with this passage is the ambiguity of the word *yakem*, in the phrase “the Lord *establish* his word.” What exactly is established?

The barren Hannah prayed for a child. She promised God that if her prayer were granted her son would be given to the Lord’s service. Eli tells her that her prayers will be granted, whatever they are. The child is born, and Hannah tells her husband, Elkanah, that when the child is weaned he will be given to God. Elkanah replies,

obscurly, “the Lord will establish his word.” The idea is that God’s “word” is the *covenant* with Hannah, not completed until the miracle child is devoted to the sanctuary service. Jewish tradition found this convoluted. There is an interesting Rashi, whose interpretation fits into Maimonides’ theme of intellectual progeny, in this instance, to the intellectual progeny of God:

“Rabbi Nehemiah said in the name of Rabbi Samuel, the son of Rabbi Isaac: Every day, a divine voice would resound throughout the world, and say: A righteous man is destined to arise, and his name will be Samuel. Thereupon, every woman who bore a son, would name him Samuel. As soon as they saw his deeds, they would say, ‘This is not Samuel.’ When our Samuel was born, however, and people saw his deeds, they said, ‘It seems that this one is the expected righteous man.’ This is what Elkanah meant when he said, ‘May the Lord fulfill (establish) His word,’ that this be the righteous Samuel.”

Samuel, in Hebrew, Shmuel, means “God’s name,” an apt moniker for God’s intellectual progeny (Shemuel, “name of God,” i.e., the name of God is in him. But see Samuel 1:1:20, deriving Shemuel from *sha’ul me’el*, “asked of God”). The next proof-text provides another explanation of Elkanah’s statement, making it a legal term for the establishment of contractual rights.

“17: And the field of Ephron, which [was] in Machpelah, which [was] before Mamre, the field, and the cave which [was] therein, and all the trees that [were] in the field, that [were] in all the borders round about, were made *sure (va-yakom)* 18: Unto Abraham for a possession in the presence of the children of Heth, before all that went in at the gate of his city.” (Genesis 23:17-18)

The KJV divides the passage as shown above, which actually reads, “the field of Ephron rose,” *va-yakom sde efron*, with the KJV splitting that phrase with the topographical description “which [was] in Machpelah...in all the borders round about.” The meaning of the phrase “the field of Ephron rose” is that the field was established as Abraham’s property. The context is clear when read together with 23:18. This passage describes a real estate transaction. Abraham purchases the patriarchal burial ground. In this case, *va-yakom*, “it rose,” in the sense of “it was established,” is the legal term for the execution of the deed for title of the land.

Reflecting back on the prior quote, about Hannah’s prayer, Elkanah’s declaration the Lord’s “word” would “rise,” means that a legal covenant was transacted by Hannah and God, whereby the infant Samuel would be born and Hannah would, in return, devote him to God’s service.

Rashi, quoting Midrash, *Genesis Rabba* 48:8 tries to interpret “the field of Ephron rose”: “It experienced an elevation, for it left the possession of a simple person [and went] into the possession of a king.” If Maimonides was thinking of that Midrash, it relates to his definition of *alah*, “ascending” as *ascension in rank* (Guide 1:10), which would not be surprising since the words *alah* and *kima* are close in meaning.

“And if a man sell a dwelling house in a walled city, then he may redeem it within a whole year after it is sold; [within] a full year may he redeem it. And if it be not redeemed within the space of a full year, then the house that [is] in the walled city shall be *established (v’kam)* for ever to him that bought it throughout his generations: it shall not go out in the jubilee.” (Leviticus 25:29-30)

This passage also describes a legal state of affairs, in which the unredeemed house in a walled city becomes the permanent possession of the purchaser.

“And now, behold, I (Saul) know well that thou (David) shalt surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be *established (v’kama)* in thine hand.” (1 Samuel 24:20)

This is the second quote in our chapter from First Samuel. We come in just before Samuel’s death at the beginning of 1 Samuel 25. As noted, all these quotes from First Samuel concern the theme of intellectual progeny. Here David is the intellectual progeny of Samuel, the kingmaker. David demonstrates to Saul that though he is not his son, he will be king. Having the opportunity to kill Saul, David merely slices cloth from his

coat, to show Saul that he means him no harm. Saul now apologizes and admits that David “shalt surely be king.” The term *v’kama* indicates that David has now secured the legal succession of the throne.

#### Instances Of Definition 2 And 4, Contextualized

“Now shall I rise (*akum*), saith the Lord.” (Psalms 12:5 or Isaiah 33:10)

This passage presents several problems. It is not clear whether Maimonides refers to Psalms 12:5 or to Isaiah 33:10. All he ever gives us are quote-shards: he never provides actual citations. The second problem is that he makes this passage stand for both Definitions 2 and 4. That is, the verse must stand for God confirming or verifying that a thing will happen, and it must also exemplify the execution or visitation of divine punishment. Psalm 12:5 seems to work, when read with 12:3 and 4:

“The Lord shall cut off all flattering lips, [and] the tongue that speaketh proud things: Who have said, With our tongue will we prevail; our lips [are] our own: who [is] lord over us? For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, *now will I arise, saith the Lord*; I will set [him] in safety [from him that] puffeth at him.”

The cutting off the “flattering lips” refers to divine punishment (Definition 4). Rashi understands it as saying that God will “rise” to punish Saul because of his slaughter of the priests of Nob and plundering of the poor.

On the other hand, Isaiah 33:10 could also be appropriate, for it speaks of God’s resolve to punish the Assyrians: “*Now will I rise, saith the Lord*; now will I be exalted; now will I lift up myself.” I believe Maimonides was thinking of this passage rather than Psalm 12:5 since it has a lovely triplet cadence: I rise, I am exalted, I lift myself: *atah akum, yomar ha-shem, atah aromam, atah anasei*. Maimonides responds with a triplet cadence of his own. Pines translates: “What He intends to say by this is: Now will I carry out My decree, My promise, and My menace,” *r”l atah akayim pkudati v’havtakhti v’ayomi* (the Judeo-Arabic also has a triplet rhyme). Schwarz prefers the Isaiah verse; Pines, Friedlander and Kafih prefer the Psalms verse.

“Thou shalt arise (*takum*), [and] have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come.” Psalms 102:13

This passage is also supposed to satisfy Definitions 2 and 4. Definition 2 is no problem. Maimonides comments: “Thou wilt establish what thou hast promised, viz., that thou wouldst pity Zion.” As for Definition 4, I find it difficult to see who is being punished. The entire psalm is about the Jews in exile, but it only seems to say that God will remember and redeem them, not that He will punish their tormentors.

It is of greater significance that the passage is preceded by verse 12: “But Thou, O Lord, sittest enthroned for ever; and Thy name is unto all generations.” “Enthroned” is a scholarly interpretation by the KJV editors, since the text only says *l’olam teshev*, “forever seated.” We learned in Guide 1:11 that “seated” must mean “enthroned” when spoken of God. The problem is that God sits in verse 12 and rises in verse 13. This language is similar to language in the Qur’an where God sits and then rises, which some Muslims take literally. The reaction of the anti-anthropomorphic Mutazila Kalām, the early stage of Islamic theology, was to make “throne” an eternal attribute with God. Maimonides rejected that approach (see essay below).

#### Instances Of Definition 3, Contextualized:

“That all of you have conspired against me, and [there is] none that sheweth me that my son hath made a league with the son of Jesse, and [there is] none of you that is sorry for me, or sheweth unto me that my son hath stirred up (*heikim*) my servant against me, to lie in wait, as at this day?” (I Samuel 22:8)

Maimonides’ idea of this passage is that one resolves to do something by standing up. Thus “rising” (KJV “stirred up”) figuratively indicates *resolve*. Jonathan caused David to *resolve* against Saul. (Pines alone translates “resolve” in this Definition as “revolt,” writing: “whoever has revolted over some matter is said to rise up.”) This third quotation from First Samuel shows that Jonathan supported David as the true intellectual progeny

of God (or of Samuel). Saul rightly accuses Jonathan of supporting David. In his rage, Saul slaughters the priests of Nob.

Instances of Definition 4 Contextualized:

“And the high places of Isaac shall be desolate, and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste; and I will rise (*v'kamti*) against the house of Jeroboam with the sword.” (Amos 7:9)

God will punish the evildoer, in this case Jeroboam II, son of King Joash of Israel. Amos' vision of the “plumb-line” precedes this verse. See essay below on the significance for Maimonides of Amos and his prophecies. This definition carries forward the discussion of divine punishment initiated in chapter 1:10. *Yarad*, according to Definition 5 in that chapter, meant the *visitation* before the actual punishment. The two proof-texts in our chapter look to the actual future punishment, where the visitation must have already occurred. In both cases, the evildoers not only fall below the level of true intellectual progeny, but even below the level of nature, and so receive God's special punishment as demons. This is a negative sort of special providence.

“Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help; and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because [they are] many; and in horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the Lord! Yet He also [is] wise, and will bring evil, and will not call back His words: but will arise (*kam*) against the house of the evildoers, and against the help of them that work iniquity.” (Isaiah 31:1-2)

This verse is about Hoshea, who sought Egyptian assistance against Assyria (2 Kings 17). God, will “arise” to punish the ten tribes of the northern Kingdom of Israel for trusting the idolatrous nations rather than trusting God.

### ON THE INTERPRETATION OF DREAMS

The quotation from Amos calls to mind the prophecies immediately preceding and following in the text. They represent the two sides of Maimonides' theory of prophetic dreams.

The context for these prophecies is the northern kingdom's corruption by wealth. Amos foresees a dismal result for Israel in the quick succession of four prophecies. In the first (Amos 7:1-3) he is shown a plague of locusts; in the second (7:4-6), a plague of fire. Amos prays for the Jews in both instances, and the Lord relents.

God does not relent of the last two prophecies. The third prophecy tells the vision of the plumb-line, concluding in the proof-text brought by Maimonides (Amos 7:7-9):

“Thus he shewed me: and, behold, the Lord stood upon a wall (*nitzav al khomat*) [made] by a plumb-line (*anakh*), with a plumb-line in his hand. And the Lord said unto me, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A plumb-line. Then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumb-line in the midst of my people Israel: I will not again pass by them any more: And the high places of Isaac shall be desolate, and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste; and I will rise (*v'kamti*) against the house of Jeroboam with the sword.”

The plumb-line, according to Rashi, represents strict justice. The “high places” and the “sanctuaries” are not plumb: they are crooked, and they will tumble!

The fourth prophecy (8:1-3), the vision of the basket of summer fruit, is worse:

“Thus hath the Lord God shewed unto me: and behold a basket of summer fruit (*kluv kayitz*). And he said, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A basket of summer fruit. Then said the Lord unto me, The end (*ha-ketz*) is come upon my people of Israel; I will not again pass by them any more. And the songs of the Temple shall be howlings in that day, saith the Lord God: [there shall be] many dead bodies in every place; they shall cast [them] forth with silence.”

The rest of the chapter is a harrowing account of this tragedy, similar to the *tokhakha*, Deuteronomy 28:15-68, (see Guide 1:10). The fruit basket, *kluv kayitz*, a homely vision, is similar in *sound* to “the end,” *ketz*, which “is come upon my people of Israel.”

These prophecies inspire a response from Maimonides in Guide 2:43. In that chapter, he articulates a system of dream interpretation. The prophets prophesy in imagery, and in the same prophecy, the meaning of those images is given:

“In our dreams, we sometimes believe that we are awake, and relate a dream to another person, who explains the meaning, and all this goes on while we dream. Our Sages call this ‘a dream interpreted in a dream’ (*khalom sh’niftar b’tokh khalom*). In other cases we learn the meaning of the dream after waking from sleep.”

Maimonides distinguishes two kinds of images. In the first type, prophets see images that stand for certain ideas. Under this heading, he lists the vision of the plumb-line, an metaphor for justice. There is a second type of vision:

“The prophets, however, are also shown things which do not illustrate the object of the vision, but indicate it by their name through its etymology or homonymity. Thus the imaginative faculty forms the image of a thing, the name of which has two meanings, one of which denotes something different [from the image]. This is likewise a kind of allegory.”

In this second type of vision, the object of the vision does *not* represent the intended idea. We learn of the intended idea through etymological variation of the word for the object, or we learn of it by canvassing other different meanings of the word for the object. He then presents a series of examples, in which the vision of the basket of summer fruit is included:

The same is the case with the *kluv kayitz*, ‘a basket of summer fruit,’ seen by Amos, by which the completion of a certain period was indicated, ‘the end (*ha-ketz*) having come’”

One need not stop at such obvious puns. There is a third way to derive meaning from a word. We can vary it anagrammatically:

“Still more strange is the following manner of calling the prophet’s attention to a certain object. He is shown a different object, the name of which has neither etymologically nor homonymously any relation to the first object, but the names of both contain the same letters, though in a different order.”

Thus *shaked*, “staff,” becomes *shoked*, “I will watch” (Jeremiah 1:11-12); *khovelim*, “destroyers, binders,” is *transposed* to *bakhala*, “abhor” (Zechariah 11:7-8). Maimonides tells us to treat similarly a list of various prophecies strongly connected with the *Maaseh Merkava*, which conceal sexual references. By such anagrammatic, etymological and homonymic means, their prurient nature is concealed. Their meaning comes clear only to readers qualified to read them and sublimate their meaning, by recognizing the analogy between creation and procreation. Maimonides subtly points to these meanings now as he moves lexically from *kima*, “rising,” in this chapter, to *amida*, “standing,” in the next. The difference between the two terms is that “standing” implies *feet* to stand on, and foot is a euphemism for the male principle of causation.

## METATRON

At the end of our chapter, Maimonides quotes the Talmud’s assertion (*Hagigah* 15a) that *God* neither rises nor sits (“In no way should it be understood that *He* rises or sits—far be such a notion!”). It might seem like he chose

this proof-text to counter those, especially under Islamic influence, who take God's rising or sitting literally. But much more is involved.

The commentators worry that Maimonides' version of the *Hagigah* line differs from our received version, but this is a minor issue. He has said that he inherited a first edition of the Talmud, which sometimes varies from ours. Here is his version: "In the world above there is neither sitting nor standing," *ain l'maalah lo yeshiva v'lo amida*. The line is good for him because it uses the term defined in the next chapter, Guide 1:13, *amida*, "standing," in the sense of "rising," *kima*, the subject of our chapter.

The problem is that the passage is *not* about God. His statement misleads the unwary reader. The passage is actually about the angelic figure known as Metatron.

Maimonides' quotations from *Hagigah* are very important, for the second chapter of that Talmudic treatise is the *fons et origo* of Jewish mysticism. *Hagigah* 15a is a significant page, giving important information on two actors in an early drama of the soul's ascent: Ben Zoma and Akher (Elisha Ben Avuya). The subject of the page is Dualism, both in its extreme variety, like Manichaeism, and in a more restricted sense: the interplay of matter and form, God and his angels, male and female. Here is the whole passage:

"Akher mutilated the shoots (misdled youth). Of him Scripture says: Suffer not thy mouth to bring thy flesh into guilt (his misleading of youth was stereotypically Hellenic, and meant to suggest Hellenic perversions). What does it refer to? — He saw that permission was granted to Metatron to *sit* and write down the merits of Israel. Said he (Akher): It is taught as a tradition that on high [in heaven] there is no *sitting* and no emulation (Maimonides' version: 'and no *standing*'), and no back (the angels have faces in all directions), and no weariness. Perhaps, — God forbend! — there are two divinities! (taking Metatron's sitting as divine enthronement.) [Thereupon] they led Metatron forth, and punished him with sixty fiery lashes (to show he was not a deity), saying to him: Why didst thou not rise before Him when thou didst see Him? Permission was [then] given to him (Metatron) to strike out the merits of Aher (for articulating the heresy of Dualism). A *Bat Kol* (divine word) went forth and said: Return, ye backsliding children (Jeremiah 3:22) — except Akher. [Thereupon] he said: Since I have been driven forth from yonder world [the world to come], let me go forth and enjoy this world. So Aher went forth into evil courses."

Metatron is the "prince of the countenance," *sar ha-panim*, of whom it is said that "God's name is in him" (Talmud *Sanhedrin* 38b. The Karaite, non-canon, version of Talmud *Sanhedrin* reads, "This is Metatron, who is the lesser Y\*H\*V\*H"). In *Heikhalot* mysticism Enoch, who walked with God (Genesis 5:22), is taken deathlessly to heaven and becomes Metatron. Metatron has various functions in medieval esoteric literature, including the heavenly scribe, the advocate for men in divine court, the creator of the world, and the prince of the world after its creation. The *Shiur Komah*, an early kabalist text, identified the seven-lettered Metatron with divine emanation, while the six-lettered Metatron was Enoch (it could be spelled with six or seven letters). The name probably comes from the combination of the two Greek words *meta* and *thronos*, *metathronios*, in the sense of "one who serves behind the throne." R. Isaac of Acre's association "Enoch is Metatron," follows the frequent association of primordial man, *adam kadmon*, and Metatron. The primordial "body" of *adam kadmon* can be connected with the *sefirot*, the system of emanative causes of Cabala. (On all of this lore, see Gershom Scholem, in *Encyclopedia Judaica*, "Metatron")

The connections in these chapters should be obvious. We now make a transition to the word *amida*, "standing," like *kima*, "rising," but with *feet*. Foot is the male euphemism for the system of emanative form causing ongoing providential creation, identified with Metatron in Jewish esoteric thought.

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