



INTRODUCTION TO MISHNEH TORAH

THE Mishneh Torah, the first serious attempt, since the redaction of the Mishnah by R. Judah the Prince, at a comprehensive survey, classification, and codification of Jewish law, changed the entire landscape of rabbinic literature. Although it did not attain its goal—it was not adopted as the universal Jewish code nor were its really novel features (scope and arrangement) imitated by later codifiers—the Mishneh Torah did become the *pièce de résistance* of all Talmudic study through the ages. Any advanced student of the Talmud would invariably consult the Mishneh Torah, attempt to reconstruct the latent processes of Maimonides' reasoning, and compare his formulations with alternative constructions. The Mishneh Torah was like a prism through which practically all Talmudic study had to pass.

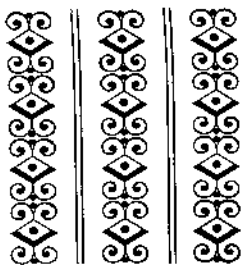
Although confident about the need, value, and ultimate acceptance of his code, Maimonides anticipated criticism and opposition on the grounds of his (a) having omitted source references and presented unilateral, unsubstantiated decisions and (b) having included a heady dose of philosophic exposition and comment. He also felt that jealous people "would defame its praiseworthy features and pretend" that such a summary was totally superfluous for them. Such criticism was indeed forthcoming and it markedly influenced the spread and study of the Mishneh Torah.

Maimonides' introduction to the code contains a brief history of

the Oral Law and its transmission, and explains the reasons for the eventual emergence of a literary corpus (Mishnah and Talmud) embodying the oral tradition. A suggestive parallel is drawn between the socio-political conditions which necessitated the compilation of the Mishnah and those of Maimonides' own time. Maimonides was convinced that there is a significant correlation between political decline and intellectual atrophy. His survey includes a dispassionate, mildly pejorative, evaluation of the literary achievements of the Geonim and calls attention to the role of regionalism and local custom in Jewish law. Only Talmudic law represents a consensus and is universally binding for the entire Jewish people; post-Talmudic developments in halakha—e.g., Geonic ordinances or communal enactments—are restricted in their application.

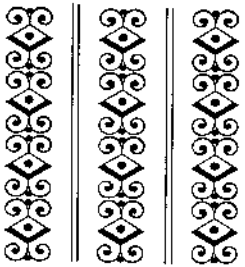
The following selections from the Mishneh Torah illustrate for the most part Maimonides' original interpretations, new emphases, striking formulations, or interpolations of ethical and philosophical motifs into Talmudic material. I have included a few sections which show Maimonides' organization and rephrasing of standard halakhic material in his own clear, vigorous prose, and through which Maimonides emerges as an effective mouthpiece for historical Judaism. There are also sections where well-known Talmudic material is interpreted and presented in such a way that a new pattern of meanings seems to emerge.

MAIMONIDES' INTRODUCTION TO MISINEH TORAH



ALL the precepts which Moses received on Sinai, were given together with their interpretation, as it is said, "And I will give to you the tables of stone, and the law, and the commandment" (Ex. 24:12). "The law" refers to the Written Law; "the commandment," to its interpretation. God bade us fulfill the Law in accordance with "the commandment." This commandment refers to that which is called the Oral Law. The whole of the Law was written by Moses our Teacher before his death, in his own hand. He presented a scroll to each tribe and deposited one in the Ark for a testimony, as it is said, "Take this book of the law and put it by the side of the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord your God, that it may be there for a witness against you" (Deut. 31:26). "The commandment," which is the interpretation of the Law, he did not write down but gave a charge concerning it to the Elders, to Joshua, and to the rest of Israel, as it is said, "All this which I command you, that shall you do; you shall not add to, nor diminish from it" (*ibid.* 4:2). Hence, it is styled the Oral Law.

See *Book of Commandments*, introduction; Letter to Joseph Ibn Gabir, *Guide of the Perplexed*, introduction and I, ch. 71.



MAMMONIDES explains that he could not compose a comprehensive work on the details of practical precepts while ignoring the fundamentals of essential beliefs; he felt compelled to prefix a philosophical-theological prolegomenon to his code, thereby underscoring the unity of the philosophical and the legal components of Judaism. Book I contains Maimonides' summary of the essential beliefs and guiding concepts which provide the ideological and experiential substructure of Judaism.

The reader should be especially attentive to the following points:

(1) The identification of physics and metaphysics with classical rabbinic teachings (Basic Principles, II, 12; IV, 10-13) and the inclusion of these sciences in the Oral Law (Study, I, 11-12). Generally the chapters on Study—especially chapter III—throb with vitality. Maimonides' usual reticence and restrained formulation are slackened; the statements about the universality of the obligation of study and its absolute precedence are emphatic and vigorous.

(2) One sanctifies God's name not only by martyrdom but by leading a dedicated life of integrity and honesty (Basic Principles, V, 11; Moral Dispositions, ch. VI). Even in normal circumstances

religion does not demand extremism or self-mortification; indeed, the doctrine of the golden mean is a most poignant, barbed repudiation of all forms of monasticism and asceticism, including Islamic Sufism whose spiritual claims apparently fascinated many Jews (Moral Dispositions, chs. I-III; see Eight Chapters, ch. IV).

(3) Maimonides' conception of the history of religion, affirming—contrary to the modern evolutionary view—that monotheism was the original state of belief and idolatry a corruption of it (Idolatry, ch. I). Abraham is depicted as a vigorous iconoclast, crusading against the rampant polytheism of his day, engaging people in ideological debate and argumentation. His life is a paradigm of ethical activism. (Cf. Guide, II, ch. 39; III, chs. 29 and 51.) In rejecting astrology and other superstitious practices or beliefs, Maimonides insists that this rejection be motivated by rational conviction; routine conformity without absolute conviction is inadequate (Idolatry, ch. XI).

(4) The description of a disinterested love of God, with no desire for any kind of reward, as the highest and purest form of religious commitment (Repentance, ch. X). In this context, Maimonides introduces the stunning interpretation of the Song of Songs as an allegory of the soul's relation to or communion with God.



BASIC PRINCIPLES OF THE TORAH

Chapter 1

(1) The basic principle of all basic principles and the pillar of all sciences is to realize that there is a First Being who brought every existing thing into being. All existing things, whether celestial, terrestrial, or belonging to an intermediate class, exist only through His type existence.

(2) If it could be supposed that He did not exist, it would follow that nothing else could possibly exist.

(3) If, however, it were supposed that all other beings were non-existent, He alone would still exist. Their non-existence would not

involve His non-existence. For all beings are in need of Him; but He, blessed be He, is not in need of them nor of any one of them. Hence, His real essence is unlike that of any of them.*

¶ 4 This is what the prophet means when he says, "But the Eternal is the true God" (Jer. 10:10); that is, He alone is real, and nothing else has reality like His reality. The same thought the Torah expresses in the text: "There is none else besides Him" (Deut. 4:35); that is: there is no being besides Him, that is really like Him.

¶ 6 To acknowledge this truth is an affirmative precept, as it is said, "I am the Lord your God" (Ex. 20:2; Deut. 5:6). And whoever permits the thought to enter his mind that there is another deity besides this God, violates a prohibition; as it is said, "You shall have no other gods before Me" (Ex. 20:3; Deut. 5:7), and denies the essence of religion—this doctrine being the great principle on which everything depends.

¶ 8 That the Holy One, blessed be He, is not a physical body, is explicitly set forth in the Pentateuch and in the Prophets, as it is said "(Know therefore) that the Lord, He is God in Heaven above, and upon the Earth beneath" (Deut. 4:39); and a physical body is not in two places at one time. Furthermore, it is said, "For you saw no manner of similitude" (*ibid.* 4:15); and again it is said, "To whom then will you liken Me, or shall I equal?" (Is. 40:25). If He were a body, He would be like other bodies.

¶ 9 Since this is so, what is the meaning of the following expressions found in the Torah: "Beneath His Feet" (Ex. 24:10); "Written with the finger of God" (*ibid.* 31:18); "The hand of God" (*ibid.* 9:3); "The eyes of God" (Gen. 38:7); "The ears of God" (Num. 11:1); and similar phrases? All these expressions are adapted to the mental capacity of the majority of mankind who have a clear perception of physical bodies only. The Torah speaks in the language of men. All these phrases are metaphorical, like the sentence "If I whet my glittering sword" (Deut. 32:41). Has God then a sword and does He slay with a sword? The term is used allegorically and all these phrases are to be understood in a similar sense. That this view is correct is proved by the fact that one prophet says that he had a vision of the Holy One, blessed be He, "Whose garment was white as snow" (Dan. 7:9), while another says that he saw Him "with dyed

*See *Guide*, I, ch. 69.

garments from Bozrah" (Is. 63:1). Moses our Teacher himself saw Him at the Red Sea as a mighty man waging war (Ex. 15:3) and on Sinai, as a congregational reader wrapped (in his tallit)—all indicating that in reality He has no form or figure. These only appeared in a prophetic vision. But God's essence as it really is, the human mind does not understand and is incapable of grasping or investigating. And this is expressed in the scriptural text "Can you, by searching, find out God? Can you find out the Almighty to perfection?" (Job 11:7).*

¶ 12 This being so, the expressions in the Pentateuch and books of the Prophets already mentioned, and others similar to these, are all of them metaphorical and rhetorical, as for example, "He that sits in the heavens shall laugh" (Ps. 2:4), "They have provoked Me to anger with their vanities" (Deut. 32:21), "As the Lord rejoiced" (*ibid.* 28:63), etc. To all these phrases, applies the saying "The Torah speaks in the language of men." So too, it is said "Do they provoke Me to anger?" (Jer. 7:19); and yet it is said "I am the Lord, I change not" (Mal. 3:6). If God were sometimes angry and sometimes rejoiced, He would be changing. All these states exist in physical beings that are of obscure and mean condition, dwelling in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust. Infinitely blessed and exalted above all this, is God, blessed be He.

Chapter 2

¶ 1 This God, honored and revered, it is our duty to love and fear; as it is said "You shall love the Lord your God" (Deut. 6:5), and it is further said "You shall fear the Lord your God" (*ibid.* 6:13).

¶ 2 And what is the way that will lead to the love of Him and the fear of Him? When a person contemplates His great and wondrous works and creatures and from them obtains a glimpse of His wisdom which is incomparable and infinite, he will straightway love Him, praise Him, glorify Him, and long with an exceeding longing to know His great Name; even as David said, "My soul thirsts for God, for the living God" (Ps. 42:3). And when he ponders these matters, he will recoil frightened, and realize that he is a small creature, lowly and obscure, endowed with slight and slender intelligence, standing in the presence of Him who is perfect in knowledge. And so David said "When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers—what

*See *Guide*, I, chs. 26, 33, and 46.

is man that You are mindful of him?" (Ps. 8:4-5). In harmony with these sentiments, I shall explain some large, general aspects of the works of the Sovereign of the Universe, that they may serve the intelligent individual as a door to the love of God, even as our sages have remarked in connection with the theme of the love of God, "Observe the Universe and hence, you will realize Him who spoke and the world was."*

¶ 9 All beings, except the Creator, from the highest angelic form to the tiniest insect that is in the interior of the earth, exist by the power of God's essential existence. And as He has self-knowledge, and realizes His greatness, glory, and truth, He knows all, and nothing is hidden from Him.

¶ 10 The Holy One, blessed be He, realizes His true being, and knows it as it is, not with a knowledge external to Himself, as is our knowledge. For our knowledge and ourselves are separate. But as for the Creator, blessed be He, His knowledge and His life are One, in all aspects, from every point of view, and however we conceive Unity. If the Creator lived as other living creatures live, and His knowledge were external to Himself, there would be a plurality of deities, namely: He himself, His life, and His knowledge. (This however, is not so. He is One in every aspect, from every angle, and in all ways in which Unity is conceived. Hence the conclusion that God is the One who knows, is known, and is the knowledge (of Himself)—all these being One. This is beyond the power of speech to express, beyond the capacity of the ear to hear, and of the human mind to apprehend clearly. Scripture, accordingly says "By the life of Pharaoh" and "By the life of your soul" but not "By the life of the Eternal." The phrase employed is "As God lives"; because the Creator and His life are not dual, as is the case with the life of living bodies or of angels. Hence too, God does not apprehend creatures and know them because of them, as we know them, but He knows them because of Himself. Knowing Himself, He knows everything, for everything is attached to Him, in His Being.†

¶ 11 What has been said on this topic in these two chapters is but a drop in the ocean, compared with what has to be elucidated on this subject. The exposition of all the principles alluded to in these two

*See Guide, III, ch. 28.

†See Guide, I, ch. 68.

chapters forms the so-called *Maaseh Merkavah*—"Account of the Divine Chariot" (Ezek. 1).

¶ 2 The ancient sages enjoined us to discuss these subjects privately, with only one individual, and then only if he be wise and capable of independent reasoning. In this case, the chapter headings are communicated to him, and he is instructed in a minute portion of the subject. It is left to him to develop the conclusions for himself and to penetrate to the depths of the subject. These topics are exceedingly profound, and not every intellect is able to grasp them. Solomon, in his wisdom, said, in regard to them, by way of parable: "The lambs will be for your clothing" (Prov. 27:26). Thus have the sages said, in the exposition of this parable, "matters that deal with the mystery of the universe shall be for your garment, that is, for you alone; do not expound them in public." So too, Solomon said concerning these topics "Let them be for you alone and not for strangers with you" (*ibid.*, 5:17).

And he further said concerning these subjects, "Honey and milk are under your tongue" (Song of Songs 4:11). This text the ancient sages have thus explained, "The things that are like milk and honey shall be under your tongue."*

Chapter 4

¶ 10 The matters just discussed are like a drop in a bucket, and are very deep, but are not as deep as those treated in the First and Second Chapters. The exposition of the topics dealt with in the Third and Fourth Chapters, is termed *Maaseh Bereshit* (cosmogony). Our ancient sages enjoined us that these matters are not to be expounded in public, but should be communicated and taught to an individual privately.

¶ 11 What distinction is there between the *Maaseh Merkavah* (Ezek. 1) and the *Maaseh Bereshit*? The subject matter of *Maaseh Merkavah* is not expounded even to an individual unless he is wise and able to draw conclusions independently; and then, only the chapter headings are communicated to him. But the topics of the *Maaseh Bereshit* are taught to an individual, and even if he is unable to form independent conclusions we nevertheless teach him as much as he is capable of learning on these matters. Why is the subject not

*See Guide, introduction.

taught in public? Because not every one possesses the breadth of intellect requisite for obtaining an accurate grasp of the meaning and interpretation of all its contents.*

¶ 12 When a man reflects on these things, studies all these created beings, from the angels and spheres down to human beings and so on, and realizes the Divine Wisdom manifested in them all, his love for God will increase, his soul will thirst, his very flesh will yearn to love God. He will be filled with fear and trembling, as he becomes conscious of his own lowly condition, poverty, and insignificance, and compares himself with any of the great and holy bodies; still more when he compares himself with any one of the pure forms that are incorporeal and have never had association with corporeal substance. He will then realize that he is a vessel full of shame, dishonor, and reproach, empty and deficient.

¶ 13 The topics connected with these five precepts, treated in the above four chapters, are what our wise men called *Pardes* (*Paradise*), as in the passage, "Four went into *Pardes*" (*Hagigah* 14). And although those four were great men of Israel and great sages, they did not all possess the capacity to know and grasp these subjects clearly. Therefore, I say that it is not proper to dally in *Pardes* till one has first filled oneself with bread and meat; by which I mean knowledge of what is permitted and what forbidden, and similar distinctions in other classes of precepts. Although these last subjects were called by the sages "a small thing" (when they say "A great thing, *Maasch Merkavah*; a small thing, the discussion of *Abbayye and Rava*"), still they should have the precedence. For the knowledge of these things gives primarily composure to the mind. They are the precious boon bestowed by God, to promote social well-being on earth, and enable men to obtain bliss, in the life hereafter. Moreover, the knowledge of them is within the reach of all, young and old, men and women; those gifted with great intellectual capacity as well as those whose intelligence is limited.†

Chapter 5

¶ 1 All the members of the house of Israel are commanded to sanctify the great name of God, as it is said, "But I will be hallowed

**Guide*, introduction; I, chs. 33 and 71; II, ch. 29; III, introduction.

†See *Guide*, III, ch. 51; also, I, chs. 31-34 (on prerequisites for the study of metaphysics); *Commentary on the Mishnah*, *Avot* 3:9.

among the children of Israel" (*Lev.* 22:32). They are furthermore cautioned not to profane it, as it is said, "Neither shall you profane My holy name" (*Lev.* 22:32). How are these precepts to be applied? Should an idolater arise and coerce an Israelite to violate any one of the commandments mentioned in the Torah under the threat that otherwise he would put him to death, the Israelite is to commit the transgression rather than suffer death; for concerning the commandments it is said, "which, if a man do them, he shall live by them" (*Lev.* 18:5): "Live by them, and not die by them." And if he suffered death rather than commit a transgression, he himself is to blame for his death.

¶ 2 This rule applies to all the commandments, except the prohibitions of idolatry, in chastity and murder. With regard to these: if an Israelite should be told: "Transgress one of them or else you will be put to death," he should suffer death rather than transgress. The above distinction only holds good if the idolater's motive is personal advantage; for example, if he forces an Israelite to build him a house or cook for him on the Sabbath, or forces a Jewess to cohabit with him, and so on; but if his purpose is to compel the Israelite to violate the ordinances of his religion, then if this took place privately and ten fellow-Israelites were not present, he should commit the transgression rather than suffer death. But if the attempt to coerce the Israelite to transgress was made in the presence of ten Israelites, he should suffer death and not transgress, even if it was only one of the remaining commandments that the idolater wished him to violate.

¶ 3 All the foregoing applies to a time free from religious persecution. But at a period when there is such persecution, such as when a wicked king arises, like *Nbuchadnezzar* and his confederates, and issues decrees against Israel, with the purpose of abolishing their religion or one of the precepts, then it is the Israelite's duty to suffer death and not violate any one, even of the remaining commandments, whether the coercion takes place in the presence of ten Israelites or in the presence of idolaters.

¶ 4 When one is enjoined to transgress rather than be slain, and suffers death rather than transgress he is to blame for his death. Where one is enjoined to die rather than transgress, and suffers death as not to transgress, he sanctifies the name of God. If he does so in the presence of ten Israelites, he sanctifies the name of God publicly, like *Daniel*, *Hananayah*, *Mishael*, and *Azariah*, *Rabbi Akiva* and

taught in public? Because not every one possesses the breadth of intellect requisite for obtaining an accurate grasp of the meaning and interpretation of all its contents.*

¶ 12 When a man reflects on these things, studies all these created beings, from the angels and spheres down to human beings and so on, and realizes the Divine Wisdom manifested in them all, his love for God will increase, his soul will thirst, his very flesh will yearn to love God. He will be filled with fear and trembling, as he becomes conscious of his own lowly condition, poverty, and insignificance, and compares himself with any of the great and holy bodies; still more when he compares himself with any one of the pure forms that are incorporeal and have never had association with corporeal substance. He will then realize that he is a vessel full of shame, dishonor, and reproach, empty and deficient.

¶ 13 The topics connected with these five precepts, treated in the above four chapters, are what our wise men called *Pardes* (Paradise), as in the passage, "Four went into *Pardes*" (Hagigah 14). And although those four were great men of Israel and great sages, they did not all possess the capacity to know and grasp these subjects clearly. Therefore, I say that it is not proper to dally in *Pardes* till one has first filled oneself with bread and meat; by which I mean knowledge of what is permitted and what forbidden, and similar distinctions in other classes of precepts. Although these last subjects were called by the sages "a small thing" (when they say "A great thing, *Maasch Merkavah*; a small thing, the discussion of *Abhayye* and *Rava*"), still they should have the precedence. For the knowledge of these things gives primarily composure to the mind. They are the precious boon bestowed by God, to promote social well-being on earth, and enable men to obtain bliss, in the life hereafter. Moreover, the knowledge of them is within the reach of all, young and old, men and women; those gifted with great intellectual capacity as well as those whose intelligence is limited.†

Chapter 5

¶ 1 All the members of the house of Israel are commanded to sanctify the great name of God, as it is said, "But I will be hallowed

* *Guide*, introduction; I, chs. 33 and 71; II, ch. 29; III, introduction.

† See *Guide*, III, ch. 51; also, I, chs. 31-34 (on prerequisites for the study of metaphysics); *Commentary on the Mishnah*, Avot 3:9.

among the children of Israel" (Lev. 22:32). They are furthermore enjoined not to profane it, as it is said, "Neither shall you profane my holy name" (Lev. 22:32). How are these precepts to be applied? Should an idolater anse and coerce an Israelite to violate any one of the commandments mentioned in the Torah under the threat that otherwise he would put him to death, the Israelite is to commit the transgression rather than suffer death; for concerning the commandments it is said, "which, if a man do them, he shall live by them" (Lev. 18:5): "Live by them, and not die by them." And if he suffered death rather than commit a transgression, he himself is to blame for his death.

¶ 2 This rule applies to all the commandments, except the prohibitions of idolatry, in chastity and murder. With regard to these: if an Israelite should be told: "Transgress one of them or else you will be put to death," he should suffer death rather than transgress. The above distinction only holds good if the idolater's motive is personal advantage: for example, if he forces an Israelite to build him a house or cook for him on the Sabbath, or forces a Jewess to cohabit with him, and so on; but if his purpose is to compel the Israelite to violate the ordinances of his religion, then if this took place privately and ten fellow-Israelites were not present, he should commit the transgression rather than suffer death. But if the attempt to coerce the Israelite to transgress was made in the presence of ten Israelites, he should suffer death and not transgress, even if it was only one of the remaining commandments that the idolater wished him to violate.

¶ 3 All the foregoing applies to a time free from religious persecution. But at a period when there is such persecution, such as when a wicked king anses, like Nebuchadnezzar and his confederates, and issues decrees against Israel, with the purpose of abolishing their religion or one of the precepts, then it is the Israelite's duty to suffer death and not violate any one, even of the remaining commandments, whether the coercion takes place in the presence of ten Israelites or in the presence of idolaters.

¶ 4 When one is enjoined to transgress rather than be slain, and suffers death rather than transgress he is to blame for his death. Where one is enjoined to die rather than transgress, and suffers death as not to transgress, he sanctifies the name of God. If he does so in the presence of ten Israelites, he sanctifies the name of God publicly, like Daniel, Hananyah, Mishael, and Azaryah, Rabbi Akiva and

his colleagues. These are the martyrs, whom none ranks higher. Concerning them it is said, "But for Your sake are we killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter" (Ps. 44:23). And to them also, the text refers, "Gather my saints together to Me, those that have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice" (Ps. 50:5). Where one is enjoined to suffer death rather than transgress, and commits a transgression and so escapes death, he has profaned the name of God. If the transgression was committed in the presence of ten Israelites, he has profaned the name of God in public, failed to observe an affirmative precept—to sanctify the name of God—and violated a negative precept—not to profane His Name. Still, as the transgression was committed under duress, he is not punished with flogging, and, needless to add, he is not sentenced by a court to be put to death, even if, under duress, he committed murder. For the penalty of death or flogging is only inflicted on one who transgresses of his own free will, in the presence of witnesses and after due warning.

¶ 11 There are other things that are a profanation of the Name of God. When a man, great in the knowledge of the Torah and reputed for his piety does things which cause people to talk about him, even if the acts are not express violations, he profanes the Name of God. As, for example, if such a person makes a purchase and does not pay promptly, provided that he has means and the creditors ask for payment and he puts them off; or if he indulges immoderately in jesting, eating, or drinking, when he is staying with ignorant people or living among them; or if his mode of addressing people is not gentle, or he does not receive people affably, but is quarrelsome and irascible. The greater a man is the more scrupulous should he be in all such things, and do more than the strict letter of the law requires. And if a man has been scrupulous in his conduct, gentle in his conversation, pleasant toward his fellow-creatures, affable in manner when receiving them, not retorting, even when affronted, but showing courtesy to all, even to those who treat him with disdain, conducting his commercial affairs with integrity, not readily accepting the hospitality of the ignorant nor frequenting their company, not seen at all times, but devoting himself to the study of the Torah, wrapped in *talit*, and crowned with phylacteries, and doing more than his duty in all things, avoiding, however, extremes and exaggerations—such a man has sanctified God, and concerning him, Scripture says, "And He said to me, 'You are My servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified'" (Is. 49:3).



LAWS RELATING TO MORAL DISPOSITIONS AND ETHICAL CONDUCT

Chapter 1*

¶ 1 Every human being is characterized by numerous moral dispositions which differ from each other and are exceedingly divergent. One man is choleric, always irascible; another sedate, never angry; or, if he should become angry, is only slightly and very rarely so. One man is haughty to excess; another humble in the extreme. One is a sensualist whose lusts are never sufficiently gratified; another is so pure in soul that he does not even long for the few things that our physical nature needs. One is so greedy that all the money in the world would not satisfy him, as it is said, "He who loves silver shall not be satisfied with silver" (Eccles. 5:9). Another so curbs his desires that he is contented with very little, even with that which is insufficient, and does not bestir himself to obtain that which he really needs. One will suffer extreme hunger for the sake of saving and does not spend the smallest coin without a pang, while another deliberately and wantonly squanders all his property. In the same way, men differ in other traits. There are, for example, the hilarious and the melancholy; the stingy and the generous, the cruel and the merciful, the timid and the stout-hearted, and so forth.

¶ 2 Between any moral disposition and its extreme opposite, there are intermediate dispositions more or less removed from each other. Of all the various dispositions, some belong to a man from the beginning of his existence and correspond to his physical constitution. Others are such that a particular individual's nature is favorably predisposed to them and prone to acquire them more rapidly than other traits. Others again are not innate, but have been either learned from others, or are self-originated, as the result of an idea that has entered the mind or because, having heard that a disposition is good for him, and should be cultivated by him, one trained himself in it till it became part of his nature.

*See Eight Chapters.