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THE INTER-RELATIONSHIP OF SALVATION, LAW, AND SOCIETY
WITHIN THE SYSTEMS OF THE PENTATEUCH,
PLATO, ARISTOTLE, AND MAIMONIDES

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DIGEST

Salvation in the Pentateuch is seen in terms of the covenant between YHWH and the people Israel. Pentateuchal salvation is defined as a state of protection and prosperity given to the people Israel in return for their observance of the law. This salvation is seen in the narratives of the patriarchs, and reaches its most complete form with the revelation at Sinai. The promise of salvation is based on the society's observance and enforcement of the law within itself. The law, as the people's obligation in the covenant, is the primary factor in the attainment of salvation for society.

For Plato, salvation is seen as ultimate happiness expressed in well-being. It is achieved by the individual as he learns to control his self through reason, and thus create a harmony of his self and his being. Plato shows this through his theory of forms. The ideal state, as the ideal self, is a harmony of its parts, with the intellectual elite controlling the other parts. The elite create the laws which impose harmony in the state. The salvation of happiness is the beginning of the ideal state, for it is this elite group which must maintain the state, and provide for its population; and create the controls to insure harmony.

Aristotle's ethics begins with his seeking the "good" for man. This good would be the fulfillment of the end goal of his being. The end goal is a life determined by reason which brings to actualization the virtues of intellectual perfection and practical wisdom. Practical wisdom is discovered through knowledge of the "Golden Mean" of behavior

and serves as a guide to moral conduct. Rationality is thus the fundamental principle of Aristotlean morality. The importance of rational control over one's moral behavior is seen in the place of the elite in society. Since man is a political animal, he can only find true happiness, or eudaemonia, through society. The elite then have the responsibility to create a legal system which will both foster intellectual excellence, and enforce moral betterment within the society. Since moral behavior is a mean, it can never be absolute, and the legal system must take this into consideration. Salvation of the elite is a prerequisite for the well-being of the society, for it is the elite who create its laws.

Maimonides identifies the ultimate perfection of the form of man with the nature of prophecy. The highest form of prophecy is the highest state of salvation. This highest form of prophecy, which is the revelation at Sinai, created a legal system that set up a society which would bring about the realization of the double virtues of intellectual perfection and practical wisdom, which constitute the ultimate purpose of man. The Mosaic Law provided for the mean of behavior through its legal system. Maimonides saw Scripture, and particularly the Pentateuch, as expressing the ideal system for every level of man. The Mosaic Law furnished the elite with the truths they sought, the society with a judicious legal system, and the masses with a behavior model of temperance.

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CHAPTER ONE

SALVATION, LAW AND SOCIETY WITHIN THE SYSTEM OF THE PENTATEUCH

"The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple."

--Psalms 19.8

"Happy are they...who walk in the light of the Lord."

--Psalms 119.1

A. SALVATION AND THE COVENANT

Definition of Pentateuchal Salvation. As one looks in the Pentateuch to find one central theme, or one main point, it soon becomes clear that the central concept around which the Pentateuch is based is the contract which YHVH makes with the Jews, the Israelites, or the Hebrews.¹ This contract, or covenant, as we translate ברית,² was one in which the relationship of YHVH and his people was clearly defined.

To arrive at a concrete meaning of the term "salvation" in the Pentateuch, we must first understand what the covenant between YHVH and the Jews was. We will start with the definition of salvation as that ultimate state of happiness which a person attains. In the Pentateuch the Jews are constantly reminded that the "good life" for them lies in the fulfillment of the covenant. YHVH, the Lord of the Universe, is willing to grant to his chosen people the best of all lives as part of the contract, and the Jews have only to fulfill their portion of the contract to receive that best of all lives. Consequently, to find out what salvation is in the system of the Pentateuch, we must examine the covenant.

Salvation for the Patriarchs. It is with Abraham that the beginning of the covenant between YHVH and the Jews is found. If Abraham and his generations after him will circumcise their males, and follow the direction of YHVH, then YHVH will do three things for Abraham and his generations: He will make Abraham's seed numerous and powerful; He will "be God to thee and thy seed after thee"³; and He will give to Abraham's seed a good land of their own.

And I will make my covenant between Me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly. And Abram fell on his face, and God talked to him saying: 'As for me, behold my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be the father of a multitude of nations...and I will make thee exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee...and I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land of thy sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God...This is my covenant which you shall keep, between me and thee and thy seed after thee: every male among you shall be circumcised.'⁴

Abraham and his seed, his generations made a contract with YHVH: in return for circumcising all the males of the people, YHVH would grant the generations three things. He would provide for the people the best kind of life: they would have powerful and numerous generations; a good and fruitful land of their own; and YHVH would be "their God". The first two promises are simple enough to understand, but what is the meaning of the third? It is simply that with the generations and the new land, YHVH would be their protector God. For what good are numbers and land if there is no god to protect the people and provide rain and sun for the land? YHVH was providing the people with the ultimate protection and security possible by His choosing to be the God of the Hebrews. In brief, the nature of the contract between YHVH and the Hebrews was a life of comfort and security...ultimate comfort and security.

What is salvation for Abraham and his generations? It is simply a life of security and a lifetime of fulfilled physical needs. In order for Abraham to receive this salvation, he had only to circumcise all the males of the generations, thereby following the commandment of YHVH, the "mitzvah", of God.

Isaac, the son of Abraham, received this same covenant, and the same promise, for YHVH said:

Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and I will bless thee: for unto thee and thy seed, I will give thee all these lands, and I will establish the oath which I swore to Abraham; and I will multiply thy seed as the stars in the heaven, and I will give unto thy seed all these lands, and by thy seed shall all the nations of the earth bless themselves; because that Abraham hearkened to my voice, and kept my charge....⁵

Again it is the same promise that YHVH made with Abraham, and we find that it is the same promise which YHVH made to Jacob, the son of Isaac: a three-fold promise to the Hebrews for the "good" life.^{5a}

If then our first question is 'what is salvation in the system of the Pentateuch?', we have with the Patriarchs a simple system for the best of all lives. The Hebrews have only to follow the mitzvah of YHVH, and in turn, He will grant to them that most perfect life of increased and powerful generations, a good land, and the abiding protection of the most powerful God YHVH.

Salvation and the revelation at Sinai. The covenant reached its final and most complete form with Moses. And while the promises from YHVH to the people do not change, the commandment, the mitzvah, does. With Moses, and his revelation at Sinai, come a broad set of mitzvot, or commandments. It is not a "new" salvation for the people, but merely a new formulation of the salvation of the Patriarchs.

And God spoke with Moses, and said unto him: 'I am the Lord, and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, as God Almighty, but by my name YHVH I made me not known to them. And I have established my covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan...and I will take you to me as a people, and I will be to you a God, and you will know that I am the Lord your God who brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.⁶

If before there was any question as to what "being" the God of the Jews meant, it is cleared up by the above passage. For YHVH speaks of the covenant, and says that he will return the people to the land promised them, and since He is "their God", He has delivered them from under the hand of the Egyptians. Thus, "to be" their God means ultimate protection in the fulfillment of a life prosperous land and food, and of peace and happiness. The comforts of a life of salvation are guaranteed by the salvation itself: everlasting protection and security for that life.

But here is the change from the covenant with the Patriarchs to the covenant with Moses: the one mitzvah, commandment, of circumcision has been enlarged to a group of commandments. There are new laws that the people have to obey in order to attain this life of salvation. Where before there was one mitzvah, there are now "statutes, ordinances, and laws!" We even find in the Book of Leviticus a partial, yet specific list of what constitutes this life of salvation:

If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them; then I will give your rains in their season, and the land shall yield their produce, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit. And your threshing shall reach unto the vintage, and the vintage shall reach unto the sowing time; and you shall eat your bread until ye have had enough, and dwell in your land safely. And I will give peace in the land, and you shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid; and I will cause evil beasts to cease out of the land, neither shall the sword go through the land...And I will have respect unto you, and make you fruitful, and multiply you; and will establish my covenant with you.⁷

Here we find listed the basic necessities of the best life: plentiful food, victory in war, a safe and peaceful land, increase in population, and the ever-watchful YHVH to safeguard the people and their prosperity. What better life could a person seek, indeed it is the best life that YHVH could offer. This then is the salvation as YHVH was prepared to give it to the Israelites, his chosen nation.

But salvation is not something that is just "received"! There was another side to the covenant. The Jews had to uphold the laws, the mitzvot...the commandments of YHVH:

And it shall come to pass, if ye shall hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe to do all of his commandments which I command thee this day, that the Lord thy God will set thee high above the nations of the world. All these blessings will come upon thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God. Blessed shall ye be in the city, and blessed shall ye be in the field. Blessed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy land, and the fruit of thy cattle...⁸

But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe to do all of his commandments and statutes which I command thee this day, that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee. Cursed shall thou be in the city, and cursed shall thou be in the field. Cursed shall be thy basket and thy kneading-dough. Cursed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy land...⁹

The content of this long speech from Moses to the Israelites is that the blessings of salvation are there for the people to receive, but they come only after the immediate and continuing fulfillment of the laws which YHVH gave to Moses. A person's salvation is entirely dependant upon his following the laws given to Moses at the time of the revelation.

The importance of Pentateuchal salvation. At this point in this analysis of the Pentateuch, it is necessary to synthesize what has been found. The great covenant which YHVH made with the Jews, and climaxed in its final form with the revelation at Sinai, is a covenant which offers the people a great hope: a hope for salvation. For if by salvation we mean the highest form of existence that one may aspire to, that highest form of humanity, that perfection, or "wholeness" which is the root of the word salvation itself, then the Pentateuch clearly underscores this best life. It is the life that the all-powerful YHVH chooses as "best" to offer us. It is the best life because it is the life of security, for the people know that their physical needs will be taken care of. It is a life without wants, and without fears. It is a life that offers a present that is the best, and a future that will be better. It is truly a life of happiness, wholeness, and safety--a goal of salvation.¹⁰

Having reached a conclusion about the nature of Pentateuchal salvation, it should be noted that salvation here has nothing to do with an after-life, or of a future promise. Salvation in the Pentateuch consists of the "here and now". It is the immediate providing and immediate protection and fulfillment of a prosperous and secure life. We find this in the Pentateuch, and in the writings that were to come after it. The point to keep in mind is that the nature of salvation offered here is a salvation that can only come from YHVH, and only after the fulfillment of the law, the mitzvot.

B. SALVATION THROUGH LAW AND SOCIETY

Up to this point no mention has been made of the place of society in this promise of salvation. If we review the terms of the covenant with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses we find that the terms of the contract were made with the whole people. For Abraham, the mitzvah was given to him and his seed, the Hebrews. For Moses, YHWH made the covenant with the people Israel, through the representative of Moses. It is not the responsibility of only the individuals to follow the Mosaic Law, but they are also responsible for making sure that everyone in the society follows the mitzvah. If the people, the collective, do not follow the laws, then YHWH will punish them with the curses that were seen in the Deuteronomy passage.¹¹ YHWH charges the people as a whole to carry out the laws, and makes them responsible for seeing that the society both promotes and enforces the Mosaic Law.

Salvation is then to be achieved in and through society; and the individual achieves this ultimate existence not by his merely following the mitzvah of YHWH, but by living in a society which will provide him with the possibility for this existence. This society, perfect in that it can provide the individuals within it that salvation, is delineated by the Mosaic Law. The promise was not made to Abraham, or Isaac, or Jacob, or Moses, alone, but to them as the representatives of a society.

The interplay between salvation, law, and society in the Pentateuchal system is a complex one; The revelation of the Law is at the heart of the system of Pentateuchal

Judaism. That revelation provides man with the "opportunity" to achieve salvation, in his own time, and in the times of his generations. That salvation consists of a life of plenty, a life that is secure and without needs or fears. A salvation of a strong and numerous people, a fruitful agriculture, and finally the protection of the all-powerful God YHVH who will protect his people and bless them in everything they do. The "opportunity" for this lies in the application of all the mitzvot which YHVH revealed to his people. The people themselves must form a society in which these laws are followed. If such a society is set up, and the people both follow the laws, and partake in the enforcement of them, then that society will be of such a perfect nature that the salvation promised by YHVH will be granted to the collective people.

There is then a direct line relationship: for once the people as a whole create a society in which the Mosaic Law is both practiced and preserved by the society as a whole, then that society will reach a state of perfection so that it will provide the people, under YHVH's protection and with his help, with a salvation existence.

CHAPTER TWO

SALVATION, LAW, AND SOCIETY WITHIN THE SYSTEM OF PLATO

"The function which the soul performs, via its virtue of justice, is to be happy."

--Plato's Republic, p. 41

"...the end and happiness of man will only be (achieved) if those of his activities which are peculiar to him are realized in the utmost goodness and excellence. Therefore it is said in the definition of happiness that it is an action belonging to the rational soul (performed) with virtue."

--Averroes' Commentary on Plato's Republic, p. 188

A. SALVATION AS ULTIMATE HAPPINESS

Happiness as well-being. Salvation in the previous chapter was a "group effort". It was achieved by individuals working within the group. With Plato, we find a different concept of salvation. Plato was concerned with "happiness", not the happiness of pleasure, but of the ultimate happiness attainable in a person's existence. This term ultimate happiness, is here used in the following way:

(ultimate) happiness:...the view that the end of life consists in happiness, conceived of as an all-round, balanced, long-range type of well-being, in distinction from pleasure.¹

Plato said that happiness is the goal of man's life because man, as an organism, seeks as the end goal of his activity the happiness of that organism. These are, says Plato, observations of the objective facts of human nature. For this happiness in the organism to exist, the organism must achieve harmony of its various parts. In order for man, or any organism, to achieve this harmony, it is necessary to understand

the true meaning of the concept justice. A just man will achieve this harmony of his parts, and this then, will lead him to real happiness.

Plato starts his discussion of harmony with the idea of justice:

The truth being that justice is...that inward performance of (his self's actions) which truly concerns the man himself, and his own interests: so that the just man will not permit the several principles within him to do any work but their own, nor allow the distinct classes in his soul to interfere with each other.²

The highest goal of man, as Plato sees it is to achieve supreme happiness by being a just man: which means having the parts of his "soul", or "self" in harmony with each other.

The harmony of the self. Plato's self is divided into three parts. The sum of which, and their actions, make up the self. The first part is the will for things, namely the physiological functions or drives of the person. Plato calls this will the appetite which prompts actions. The second part of the self is the passion, or the emotions which in turn prompt certain reactions. The final part of the self is the reason, which makes rational decisions and thereby prompts other actions of the person. The self then is composed of will, passion, and reason. Plato discusses this proof for these being the only parts of the self in a dialogue between Socrates and Glaucon.³ The end result of this dialogue is that all three of these psychological drives must be harmonized in the interest of ultimate happiness...in the interest of the whole man. Not only does Plato explain in detail what constitutes these drives, but he "classes" them. The "lowest" drive is the will, which is lowest by virtue of the fact that it exists without man's taking part in it. A person feels hunger and thirst regardless of what

he might be doing or thinking at the time. The next class up the scale is passion. One reacts emotionally with anger, or love, because of something that is happening outside of him. One "is moved" to anger not by stimuli that are totally within himself, but by something outside. This is classed differently from will because of this "outside" influence; and it is, in turn, classed differently from reason because it is not a rational response. Reason is therefore the highest of the three parts of the self. Like passion, it moves one to action because of some outside stimulus, but instead of "reacting" to that stimulus as the passion does, the reason moves the person to understand, to become involved with the stimulus. It is this drive of reason that makes men different from all other organisms.

Harmony through the supremacy of reason. Now if harmony is to be achieved by the self, how is it to happen? Plato asserts that the only way to reach harmony is for the reason to control the will and the passion. His proof for this begins with the idea that if one were to base his actions solely on the drives of the will and passion, he would not know the truth or reality of the outside world, or of himself. Since both are reactions to data which one perceives either within him or outside of him, they do not enable the person to understand the source of those perceptions. Only reason is able to understand what is real and the truth about what is happening around us. Only reason is able to go beyond the perceptions themselves. When reason is in control of a person's will and passion, he is able to sort out what action would be the best under a specific stimulus. Reason also allows one to make

responsible actions when there are many stimuli reaching him: a person might feel love and hunger and fear, all at the same time; and if reason were not in control, then the self would be totally confused. When the different parts of the self all want to react in their own manner, the result is chaos. Therefore, it is only logical that for the self to be in harmony, and for a person to function in the best way, reason must be in control of the self.

But each of us is governed by our selves in differing manners. There are some who are controlled by will, and some by passion, and there are varying degrees all along the scale. Therefore, concludes Plato, the best man is the one whose reason totally controls his self. Since only this will produce absolute harmony, only this type of man is just, and only he will achieve that highest state of happiness.

Proof from the theory of forms. Plato makes this same point in his theory of forms: the truth of being, of what is real, is exactly equated with "good". The more real anything is, the better it is. Each thing that is real has its own particular "form", and different organisms participate in their own forms to varying degrees. An organism is then "better" the more truthful it is to its form, i.e., the more fully it participates in its form. The form of Man has as its primary drive reason, since it is its rationality which makes him different from all other forms. Individual men differ in their participation in the form Man, and we may classify some men as better than other men by their degree of participation, or truth of being, in the form Man. Those men whose selves are controlled by reason are better

than those whose selves are controlled by will or passion. Thus the first are proven better on an absolute and objective scale.⁴

In summation of the essence of Plato's theory of salvation, it is a cause and effect relation: when the reason controls the will and passion, the self can be made to act in a state of harmony; a person whose self is in harmony is a just man, and just men are able to achieve Plato's ultimate level of happiness, which we are calling salvation.

B. THE IDEAL STATE

The self and the state. Having divided the self of a person into its three parts, Plato then discusses the similarity between an individual and the state. Just as the individual consists of a "tri-partite psyche"⁵, so there is an exact correspondence to the state. All states, if they are going to exist in any kind of an orderly manner, must have a governing body. Secondly, all states must have some sort of a system to maintain that state against internal and external enemies. Finally, a state must have a producing class which will provide the society with material and esthetic goods. These classes of society, or a state, are the equivalent of the reason, passion, and will of the self. The reason is the controlling part of the self which makes sure that each of the other parts are doing their own particular job. The reason does not tell the self that it is hungry, but it makes sure that the will does. The reason does not get angry, but it makes sure that the self is aware of its anger when the time is appropriate. In a like manner the governing body of the state does not produce the food stuffs, and

then distribute them, but it makes sure that the producers do do the gathering and the distributing in the correct manner so that the state is in harmony, and thus happy. The governors in fact do not even maintain the system, but are the overseers, and they let the guardians be the policing agent, both within and without the state, in the same way which the passion stands guard to make sure that nothing gets out of hand. In both the self and the state, the passion and the guardians must answer to and take orders from the reason and the governors.

Just as Plato said that the just man is the only one who will be happy (because of the harmony of his parts), so it is with the state. For a state to work well, in fact to be the best state, the parts of the state must work in harmony, and the only way that that can happen is if it is a just state. A just state would then be one controlled by the governors who lay out the plans for the guardians to carry out, so that the producers will provide the necessities of life. The key word in both the self and the state is organization through the controls of the reason over the self, and the governors over the state.

It is justice again that Plato seeks, and the just thing for a society is to let those men who are the rational learned men of the society, the governors, have complete control over the guardians and the producers. Unless there is this complete control, there will be chaos. Plato speaks of this lack of control both in reference to the self, as below, and later regarding the state.

Must it not then, as the reverse of justice, be a state of strife between the three principles, and the disposition to meddle and interfere, and the insurrection of the part of the mind (and so too the state) against the whole, this part aspiring to supreme power within the mind (and the state), to which it has no right, its proper

place and destination being, on the contrary, to do service to any member of the rightfully dominant class? Such doings as these, I imagine, and the confusion and bewilderment of the aforesaid principles, will, in our opinion, constitute injustice, and licentiousness, and cowardice, and folly, and in one word, all vice.⁶

Society controlled through law. If then the governors are to control the state, the question arises as to how this is to be done! The answer is that the governors have the power of law. It is an unquestioned power, permitting them to create a completely harmonious, and thereby just, state.

At this point it is important to take a closer look at what Plato considered his political theory. He has set up a framework by his comparison of the self to the state; but to go further, he clarified the purpose and necessities of a "good" state.

The opening premise is that man can truly live a good life, a life which allows him to reach that ultimate happiness of salvation, in a state which is good. Man is a social animal, and therefore he has social needs, just as he has physical needs, like food and rest. Thus it is natural, though not absolutely necessary, for man to desire to live in community with other men; and if that is the case, it is just as natural to want to live in the best state, or community, possible. If a man were to strive for ultimate happiness, he should not have to worry about getting the crops in on time. Likewise he should not have to be concerned about making sure that his life is secure from internal and external threats. Therefore, the producers and guardians must make sure that the governors have that "good" life, while the governors, in turn, provide the producers and guardians with the knowledge that the

state is working in harmony. Thus the producers need not worry about threats to their safety, and can go on producing, and the guardians need not worry about getting the things they need, and can go about their job of guarding, and everyone in the society knows that everything is happening in a harmonious manner. The nature of organisms is that if a part of the organism is separated from that organism, like an arm from the body, it is no longer an arm, since "arm" means a certain extension of the "body". Since the state is an organism, each man is a part of that state, and needs the state for the realization of his own existence. Each man in the state must do his job, without interfering with the jobs of the other men of the state. Finally, Plato states, that the society is defined by its parts, and the parts are given a meaningful existence by the whole.

Law controlled by the elite. What kind of rule by the governors is best? Since it has already been decided that the best men are those who participate most fully in the form Man, it must be that the most knowledgeable men, the ones who have "learned" enough to have their reason control their self, should be the rulers. If all men would be of this highest form of Man, then all men would be controlled by their reason, and would naturally exercise the self-discipline to govern themselves in the interest of the organic whole of the state. We would then not need the guardians, or the rulers. But, Plato asserts, not all men are sufficiently rational to do this, in fact only a very few are, and so it must be that those less rational must look to those who are more rational; in this way their lives can be governed in such a way as to provide the self-discipline to participate in the state.

Thus, it is not only needed that the rational elite govern the many, but the less rational "desire" to be led by the governors, whether they realize this fully or not. In fact, says Plato, the masses should welcome the guardians, who are ordered by the governors, to enforce whatever laws and regulations the governors enact for the betterment of a harmonious society.

Law then, is the natural application which a just man imposes upon the rest of the state in order for the rational elite to achieve and maintain their ultimate happiness. The elite then must design the best possible life for the masses who, though never being able to reach the highest level of happiness, may achieve a life without fears and wants. Law is an extension of the salvation of the few so that the many of the state may have the best life that they are able to achieve. Law is the result of Plato's salvation, and a good society comes about only after those "saved" elite create and enforce their laws.

C. THE RELATIONSHIP OF SALVATION, LAW AND SOCIETY

Plato's ideal state is not a description of its benefits, as was seen in the Pentateuch, but a description of the organization and structure of that society. In Plato's system the kings, or governors, must be the philosophers who have within them the restraint to be temperate, by virtue of their selves being controlled by their reason. Since the rest of society does not have this control to be temperate, the governors must exercise their authority by placing laws as external restraints upon the people. This lack of restraint, or lack of

temperance, is evident most clearly in the producers, who might acquire and spend in excess if there were no restraints placed on them by the governors. This controlling is best achieved, according to Plato, by the use of propaganda. The governors must educate the masses in a trade, and then "educate" them in the realization that they really need and desire the ruling of the governors. The governors must know what should be taught, and certainly what should not be taught; and, since the masses are not able to comprehend these rational principles, they must be educated through the use of fables and legends.

Let us here close our discussion of the subject matter of narratives: our task, I imagine, is to investigate the question of their form; and this done, we shall have thoroughly considered both what ought to be said and the mode of saying it.⁷

The society will then be controlled and reinforced by the governors in a way in which the masses will be most apt to accept it. It would be impossible to explain to the masses the reasons which make the governors better able to run the state, for that would be an exercise in philosophy, and the masses would not understand. Thus, the people are fed selected and controlled propaganda which they both will comprehend and will convince them of the rightness of rule by the governors. Meanwhile, the governors will be able to create and enforce laws which will restrain the masses and force them into a discipline which they would not be able to enforce upon themselves.

The society, then, the "good" society, is not the direct outcome of salvation, but more exactly, a reinforcement through law of the salvation of the elite, and a means of maintaining that salvation for the elite. Since the masses cannot achieve salvation in any case, they will get the next best thing--a life free of fear, and a harmonious social system.

CHAPTER THREE

SALVATION, LAW, AND SOCIETY WITHIN THE SYSTEM OF ARISTOTLE

"Far best is he who knows all things himself;
Good he that hearkens when men counsel right;
But he that neither knows, nor lays to heart
Another's wisdom, is a useless wight."

--Hesiod, from the Nicomachean Ethics p.1095^b

A. ARISTOTLE'S ETHICS AND EUDAEEMONIA

Plato has said that the best life for a man was when his reason so controlled his self that he would know what the best thing, the just thing, was in any particular instance. That just thing was a "specific", and true happiness was achieved by a person when he lived his life according to the universal just actions. If a man was not able to achieve a state in which his reason controlled his self, then it was up to the elite, those who had achieved this happiness, to tell him exactly what he should do so that he might be as happy as possible.

Seeking the good. With Aristotle, and his ethics, we have a much more definitive and comprehensive scientific theory of morality. Aristotle said that ethics was the science of conduct, and he sought to delineate the criteria for a "good" life. Contrary to Plato, Aristotle said that we can never really know what "the good life" is because ethics can only be based on opinion.

Plato said that since ethics is based entirely on knowledge, a truly knowledgeable person is able to define exactly what the best

actions and the best life of a person should be. While Aristotle agreed that there is some act that is the right act at a given moment, that act is not known through some objective reasoning, but by men's judgements about what is good. There is no "self-evident and certain" principle as might be found in geometry, which will determine right and wrong, there is only opinion: the judgement of knowledgeable men who must make a decision of what seems to be the right action. To understand how one is to lead a good life, and certainly if we are to find out how one is to lead the best life of salvation, we have to understand that Aristotle is seeking a system that will explain the parameters of what the best life is, for he would not accept the idea that there is a certaintude to ethics.

Fulfillment of man's end is his good. This leads to Aristotle's question of how does one know what a "good" thing is? If the good must be the result of an educated opinion, on what does an educated man base such an opinion? This can be discovered by knowing what man himself is. The good is something that is the good for man, and once we know exactly what man is, we will know what is best for him. Like Plato, Aristotle uses a theory of forms to determine scientifically what man is. Everything aims at some end, and everything has a form which is its purpose or end. This fulfillment of its purpose is the good for the being. Since the good for anything is what ultimately and totally satisfies that thing, then this ultimate satisfaction can only be the thing's purpose, which is the form. This end of man being ultimate and total satisfaction is called, by Aristotle, eudaemonia.

W.D. Ross explained eudaemonia in the following way:

The conventional translation 'happiness' is unsuitable in the Ethics; for whereas 'happiness' means a state of feeling, differing from 'pleasure' only by its suggestion of permanence, depth and serenity, Aristotle insists that eudaemonia is a kind of activity; that is not any kind of pleasure, though pleasure naturally accompanies it. The more non-committal translation 'well-being' is therefore better.

H.H. Joachim adds to this definition that eudaemonia includes the "satisfaction of our nature as active beings"². And so Aristotle is here following the same line of reasoning as Plato to discover what the best life, or existence of man is. Both philosophers state that the best existence for man is an ultimate happiness, that is, well-being, which Aristotle calls eudaemonia. This can only be achieved by the actualization of the form of Man which Plato says is a life of reason, and which Aristotle says is a life in which one is trained to make knowledgeable opinions. While Plato stops here and says that the life of reason is an absolute and discoverable by truly just men, Aristotle lays out a system to train men in the making of their own decisions, their own opinions, for their own eudaemonia.

For Aristotle then, anything is happy to the extent that it is actualizing its form. This form, specifically, is the distinctive work of Man: that which sets his form apart from all other forms. In Joachim's commentary on Aristotle, he notes:

The distinctive work of man, therefore, is the expression, in a life of action, of the intelligent power in his soul: 'an active life of the element that has a rational principle.' This whole phrase taken together may be rendered 'reason', but not 'reason' alone (as in a) faculty of reason, or reasoning...on the whole and provisionally, we may render it here as 'rule'. (It) is that which discovers, originates, formulates rules--i.e., the power of thinking, reasoning, etc. In the secondary sense (it) is

that which understands and can submit itself to rules formulated by another mind or another faculty--intelligent as a dog or a child is intelligent.³

Fulfillment through the rational principle. It is at this point that we see Aristotle's break from Plato. Plato maintained that it was by following reason that brought a person to eudaemonia. Reason was for him the process itself, while for Aristotle it is the object of the process. This rational principle for Aristotle is a means of synthesizing knowledge in order to discover the opinion that is right for the individual man. For Plato, the reason discovered the universal right action, but for Aristotle, the rational principle was a means of discovering the individual right action.

If the distinctive work for man, according to Aristotle, is to live his life according to his rational principle, then it should be noted that "Man's work is not to be a live intelligent agent, but to live intensely in intelligent action"⁴. We have then the work of man, but we are here concerned with the work of the best man who might attain eudaemonia. A good man is simply a man who does well what man does! Aristotle, in defining a good man, states:

If this is the case, and we state the function of man to be of a certain kind of life, and this to be the activity or action of the soul implying a rational principle, and the function of a good man to be the good and noble performance of these, and if any action is well performed in accordance with the appropriate excellence: if this is the case, human good turns out to be the activity of the soul in accordance with virtue, and if there is more than one virtue, in accordance with the best and most complete.⁵

The activity or action of the human soul is intense living in action controlled by the intelligence. Good action would then be action

which manifests excellence in the rational principle, and eudaemonia is then achieved in such action that expresses the intelligent power of man's soul when that soul is in the best or most complete of all possible states.⁶

The rational principle and the two-fold virtue. How then does one possess a soul in this best and most complete form so that the intelligent use of it will achieve eudaemonia?

For this reason also the question is asked, whether happiness is to be acquired by learning or by habituation or some other sort of training, or comes in virtue of some divine providence or again by chance?⁷

Aristotle's query here is how does one achieve happiness? Does it come from deliberate action or effort, as in learning, discipline, or practice? Does it come from divine favor or inspiration? Does it come by chance? His first response is that there is no evidence that man receives eudaemonia from divine favor! Furthermore, since eudaemonia is of such a nature as to be desired by everyone, it is not reasonable that it be granted to those few with divine favor, or luck. Thus he argues that eudaemonia is the result of deliberate effort and learning, and not by chance. This argument of Aristotle is outlined by Joachim:

There follows an argument to show that it is reasonable to suppose that eudaemonia comes by human effort rather than by luck. I take Aristotle to reason thus: 'We have seen that it is better that eudaemonia should come by human effort: for it would place it within the reach of every normal person. And if it is better, it is reasonable--in accordance with the general tenor of things in the sphere of nature, and generally in every sphere of causation and also of human life--to suppose that happiness does come by effort. For the general rule of nature is that the best effects of every department are the result of some kind of deliberate effort or practice. Hence to suppose that eudaemonia, the best thing in the sphere of human life, is due to luck would be to admit to a startling exception to the general rule of the natural world.'⁸

Although Joachim here presents Aristotle's argument clearly, the final statement is left to Aristotle himself, who said simply:

Happiness seems, however, even if it is not god-sent but comes as a result of virtue and some process of learning or training, to be among the most god-like things; for that which is the prize and the end of virtue seems to be the best thing in the world, and something god-like and blessed...To entrust to chance what is the greatest and most noble would be a very defective arrangement.⁹

As Aristotle nears the end of Book I of Ethica Nicomachea, he again compares Nature to a craftsman who is always striving for the best, and whose successes are the result of practice or effort. Therefore, eudaemonia which is the most successful development of human life, must come with practice and effort.

As he has said above that this happiness is a life in accordance with virtue, Aristotle ends Book I with a description of this virtue, and its two-fold nature.

Since happiness is an activity of the soul in accordance with perfect virtue, we must consider the nature of virtue; for perhaps we shall then better see the nature of happiness...One element in the soul is the irrational and one has a rational principle...The irrational element appears to be two-fold. The vegetative (nutritive faculty)¹⁰ in no way shares in a rational principle, but the appetitive and in general the desiring element in a sense (does) share in it, in so far as it listens to and obeys it (the rational principle), this is the sense in which we speak of 'taking account' of one's father or one's friends....That the rational principle in some sense persuades the irrational element is indicated also by the giving of advice and by all reproof and exhortation....Virtue too is distinguished into kinds in accordance with this difference; for we say that some of the virtues are intellectual and others moral.¹¹

This two-fold virtue that a man seeking eudaemonia must have is excellence in knowledge and intelligence, guided by the rational principle; and secondly, an excellence in morals, guided also by his rational principle,

and shown in temperance. These are then, as Aristotle calls them, the philosophic wisdom and practical wisdom, the latter being good-tempered, or temperate.

The Doctrine of the Mean. Moral virtue is then a development of the rational principle in that it advises one to do things well, and become a good person. Aristotle begins his discussion of moral virtue by explaining the "mean".

Virtue then, is a state of character concerned with choice, lying in a mean, i.e., the mean relative to us, this being determined by a rational principle, and by that principle by which the man of practical wisdom would determine it. Now it is a mean between two vices, that which depends on excess and that which depends on defect.¹²

This moral virtue is not a given for all people, as Plato determined, but something relative to each of us. It is a mean between two extremes which the rational principle leads us to find. This is the basis for Aristotle's Doctrine of the Mean.

The central meaning of this doctrine is that the rightness of an action depends on the situation of that person and his desires. It is dependent on the time, the place, the circumstances, and everything surrounding the nature of that moral decision. That is why the rational principle is so important, for it has to sift through all these variables and then guide the irrational moral virtue of a person to make that "temperate" decision. It should be clear that there can never be "the" good moral action, but only "a" good moral action. Where Plato maintains that a truly just man will determine the same good action as any other truly just man, Aristotle says that this is false because there is no universal good action, since we are all different people, with different

desires, and existing in different circumstances. W.T. Jones and Joachim reflect this Aristotlean doctrine:

Since moral virtue is thus variable (even though objective), we can say no more about it universally than that it lies in a mean between extremes that err through either excess or deficiency.¹³

The mean amount in question is a relative or personal mean: not one and the same unvarying quantity, but a degree which falls somewhere along a limited scale or stretch. The stretch itself, and (in each given case of action) the point within it where the mean degree falls, are determined by a proportion: and this proportion has to be the right one, viz., the one which the state of mind of the man of practical wisdom would apply to limit the mean.¹⁴

Aristotle then extolls the "virtues" of a life in which the intelligent virtue is pursued, and of the high regard he has of the man who lives a life of contemplation. This is the highest level a person may attain, or as Plato might have said it, a life of complete harmony of the self. As for the harmony of the body, Aristotle reminds the reader that in order to attain this highest good we not only need the fulfillment of the intellectual capacity, but also the leisure and serenity to exercise and develop it. Wealth, though not a part of happiness, is essential to it.¹⁵

B. SALVATION THROUGH LEGISLATIVE SOCIETY

Man is a political animal. In order to make a transition from his ethics to his politics, Aristotle talks about the value, and kinds, of friendship. While man might be able to survive without other people, it is only through community that he might attain this level of eudaemonia that has been discussed. Aristotle distinguishes three types of friendship. 1) there are the friendships that are based on economic interdependence,

as in Plato's friendship between the governors and the producers. 2) There is the friendship for pleasure, which one forms because we take pleasure being among certain people, which corresponds to the social relationship between Plato's governors and guardians. 3) Finally there is the friendship between men who are good and alike in virtue, for example the internal friendships within the different Platonic classes.

Aristotle maintained that the life of eudaemonia, a high intellectual and moral life, can only be attained and maintained when one is in a community where all three of these types of friendships are available. While contemplation, the highest use of our intellectual faculties, is not wholly dependant upon our association with other men, Aristotle says that it is not possible to live completely a life of contemplation because we are composed of body and the irrational soul which have needs also. Therefore, since it is necessary for man to live in community to achieve eudaemonia, he must then live in a community in which he is allowed to achieve it! Merely existing with other men and women is not enough, for it must be so structured as to allow the elite to satisfy their intellectual capacity and to live their lives of temperance so that they will be men of good action.

A good state must be structured by the elite. This brings us to the place of law and society within Aristotle's system. However, before he makes that break, Aristotle emphasizes that if our men of highest virtue are to maintain themselves in society, that society must be structured by the elite. It would be folly to allow a state to be

structured by any less than the most qualified people, and the most qualified are those who both understand the truths of the world, and know the path to correct moral behavior.

Therefore, a man must first have the rational capacity, and from that potential, use the rational principle to determine his good life of moral temperance; then he must search for the truths of the universe, and then contemplate on those truths already attained; finally he must learn the art of making laws, so that he might create a society in which all men, of whatever capacities, might attain their own level of happiness. A man seeking and maintaining eudaemonia is lost without a "good" society, and a society cannot be "good" unless it is headed by such men.

As he starts his discussion on community, or society, Aristotle states that every community is formed for the sake of some good, and the state which is the "supreme and all-embracing community" must aim at the supreme good. This good is an end, as Ross explains:

The meaning and nature of everything in the world, whether a living creature, instrument, or community, is to be looked for in the end of its being. In the case of an instrument this is an end desired by its user, and the form of the instrument is in accordance with this end imposed on its matter from without. In the case of a living creature, or of a community, the end is immanent to the thing itself--for the plant the life of growth and reproduction, for the animal the life of sensation and appetite which is superimposed on the vegetative life (the end of the plant), for man and for the human community the life of reason and moral action superimposed on the two others. The explanation of things is to be found not in what they have developed from, but on what they are developing into; their nature is seen not in their origin but in their destiny.¹⁶

The nature of a society must be formed around the priorities of a "good" society, and for the best state, the priorities are those for the "supreme" society. Just as there cannot be a society or a state

without men, no one can reach the ultimate of eudaemonia without the supreme society of a state. Citing Homer, Aristotle declares:

Hence it is evident that the state is a creation of nature, and that man is by nature a political animal. And he who by nature and not by mere accident is without a state, is either a bad man or above humanity; he is like the 'Tribeless, lawless, hearthless one', whom Homer denounces.¹⁷

This supreme community of a state which Aristotle begins to lay out is very similar in outline to the one Plato discussed: it should be small, a city-state, that is governed by an elite whose leisure and necessities are made possible by the serving class. But after this point, Plato and Aristotle go different ways. As we saw above in the discussion of "right ethical actions", Plato maintained that there could be determined a specific ethical good action, while Aristotle decided that ethics was based on opinion, and so varied among different people and different circumstances. That same divergence of opinion is seen here as we look at how a state should be set up.

The ideal state. To Aristotle, the question which Plato asks of 'what is the best state?', is a question which misses the point. The correct question is 'what is the best state under such-and-such circumstances?' Since every community is formed in different places, with different people, and at different times, there is a different "best state" for each of these variables. Again, opinion based on knowledge is the key to the answer. It is not simply knowledge yielding an absolute as Plato claimed, rather it is a matter of science, of finding out, not a matter of simply "knowing". Aristotle explains this idea of government as a science in the following way:

Hence it is obvious that government too is a subject of a single science, which has to consider which government is best and of what sort it must be, to be most in accordance with our aspirations, if there was no external impediment, and also what sort of government is adapted to particular states. For the best is often the unattainable, and therefore the true legislator and statesman ought to be acquainted, not only with 1) that which is best in the abstract, but also 2) that which is best relatively to the circumstances. We should be able further to say how a state may be constituted under any given conditions 3); both how it is originally formed and, when formed, how it may be longest preserved.¹⁸

Aristotle makes a science and a scientific study of what is the best system of government, acknowledging all along that he is setting only parameters, and that the choice of a best system is wholly dependent upon its circumstances. Since it is not necessary in this thesis to discuss in detail the different systems that Aristotle discusses, we will define what Aristotle sees as a necessary part of any good system. Firstly, it must be guided by the elite, whether as as monarchy, aristocracy or polity, or any of the "perversions" of the above. The elite have not only the ability to legislate and rule, but the obligation, since it is they who have the knowledge of truth, and the knowledge of moral virtue, to provide each member of the state with his own level of happiness.

The supremacy of man, or the supremacy of the law. The elite have the responsibility of creating the laws pertinent to their particular state or society, according to the ability of their rational principle, and to see that these laws are carried out. Where Plato said that the laws thus created must be the absolute legislation of the society, Aristotle, faithful to his mean of opinion, stated:

We will begin by inquiring whether it is more advantageous to be ruled by the best men or by the best laws...the rule of law is preferable to any individual....The best men must legislate, and laws must be passed, but these laws will have no authority when they miss their mark, though in all other cases retaining their authority.¹⁹

Law is best because it is devoid of emotion; and the best men, the elite, have the responsibility of making those laws. But in cases where the law is not applicable, where there is a variable in the circumstances which makes the law "miss its mark", then the best men must take over where the law falls short. Aristotle again asserts that there are no absolutes in the affairs of men: everything must be decided according to its variables; but because there is a class of men who by virtue of their knowledge and temperance are able to lay down certain rules, those rules should be the framework for the society, while never being the absolutes.

In response to the question of who should decide the laws when the legislation from the elite is incomplete, Aristotle says that it should be decided by the group, rather than by the individual. That group and its constituency may vary from state to state, but it is a primary principle that if the "best", and the "mean" are to be found, then it is to be found through the group...the qualified group.

The law forms the framework within which the state operates, but the society must be able to provide and maintain, for an extended period, the qualities of life which will grant to each individual in the state his own level of happiness. Therefore, the state must educate and legislate a moral system which will prepare the people to live in moral excellence, even if they cannot achieve intellectual excellence. In

commenting on Aristotle's view of these excellences, Ross states:

The body develops earlier than the soul, and the appetites earlier than the reason. Therefore, education will begin with the body, go on to the appetites, and deal with the reason last. But it will train the body for the sake of the soul, and the appetites for the sake of the reason. The legislator's care for the rising generation should begin even before their birth.²⁰

The legislation by the elite must take into consideration two things: creating laws which will provide for harmony between the classes and the producing and distributing of the necessities; and the laws which will force all the people to live a life of moral betterment, if not moral excellence, so that they might be ready, at some time, to seek the excellence of the rational capacity. The elite must provide these things, the laws and facilities to have them carried out, while being aware (by virtue of their own excellence of intellect) that any law is not absolute and can be abrogated when the situation varies. It must be noted here that Aristotle appears to be saying that those who are the non-elite need not be aware that the laws of harmony and morals might be changed. It seems that the non-elite need only know that these laws are there for their betterment, both socially and morally. It is only the elite who understand, because of their intellect, that these laws are in the hands of the knowledgeable and that society's hands are not bound by them.

C. THE TOTALITY OF ARISTOTLE'S SYSTEM

Plato sought a simple outline of the place of man in ethics and society. He decided that there was an absolute for happiness, moral action, and society. Aristotle started with these conceptions, and made them into a science. His first principle was that there is no absolute, and everything must be judged in its individuality.

A good society must be patterned after the good for man: the full realization of the rational principle and the moral excellence of temperance (which is finding the mean of behavior through the use of the fulfilled rational principle.) Having achieved this, a man will have found a state of total well-being, or eudaemonia.

Since man is a political animal, he must see the realization of his eudaemonia through society. Therefore, he must take part in the creation of that society, with the end that it be the best. He must see to it that the needs of all people within it be satisfied, and their care provided for; he must see to it that the moral actions of those non-elite be directed toward the mean of behavior (the elite have of necessity already done so); and he must allow the elite the fulfillment of their rational principle through a life of contemplation.

Finally, the man who has achieved eudaemonia must be aware at all times that there is no absolute in questions of moral behavior or social regulations. The needs of man and his society must be met, but always according to the individuality of each man and each society.

CHAPTER FOUR

SALVATION, LAW, AND SOCIETY WITHIN THE SYSTEM OF MAIMONIDES

The primary quality given to man by the human form is his essence as an intellectual being. The ultimate purpose and ideal perfection of every existant is to realize his essence and act in accordance with his dictates.

--Alvin Reines, "Maimonides' Providence and Theodicy" p. 181.

The perfection, in which man can truly glory, is attained by him when he has acquired--as far as is possible for man--the knowledge of God, the knowledge of his Providence, and the manner in which it influences his creatures in their production and continued existence. Having acquired this knowledge he will then be determined always to seek loving-kindness, judgement, and righteousness, and thus to imitate the ways of God. We have explained this many times in this treatise.

--Maimonides, The Guide for the Perplexed p 397.

A. SALVATION AND PROPHECY

The perfection of man. In the Guide for the Perplexed Moses Maimonides holds aloft both the Torah and the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle, and brings them together in his theory of prophecy. Maimonides' genius lay in his application of the Aristotlean principle of salvation within the systems of the Pentateuch and traditional Judaism. What was for Plato ultimate happiness, and for Aristotle eudaemonia, was for Maimonides the ultimate prophet.

Maimonides was looking for the perfection in man, and the most perfect life attainable by him. He agreed with the philosophers that that perfection must come from within us, and that it was not the

simple "life of fulfilled needs" that was given in the Pentateuch. This salvation of inward fulfillment was echoed by the culture of Islam which surrounded Maimonides.

Muslim Salvation consists not in being saved from the consequences of our sins, by the suffering or merits of others, not in Nirvana, or annihilation or absorption, but in the achievement of perfected Personality, a bliss that grows up within us, and does not depend on external circumstances. It may require the utmost effort or striving of a lifetime or more. But it is the supreme achievement, the Attainment of all desires, the felicity in excelsis.¹

As this part of the Koran came out of the Greek philosophic tradition, so did the philosophy of Maimonides. As the philosophers before him, he started with the concept of form, knowing that perfection must be the ultimate fulfillment of form.

Maimonides makes a distinction between the substance and the form of man. All things which form the less "noble" parts of man are attributed to his substance:

His deformities and the unnatural shape of limbs; all weakness, interruption, or disorder of his actions, whether innate or not, originate in the transient substance, not in the form...Man's shortcomings and sins are all due to the substance of the body, and not through its form.²

After describing the substance of man, Maimonides writes of the nobler part, the form. This noble form, and its perfection are the things to be sought after in the quest for salvation. The following quote, and all subsequent footnotes, are taken from Maimonides' Guide for the Perplexed.

Some people constantly strive to choose that which is noble, and to seek perpetuation in accordance with the direction of their nobler part,--their form; their thoughts are engaged in the formation of ideas, the acquisition of true knowledge about everything, and the union of the divine intellect which flows down upon them, and which is the source of man's form.³

Therefore, there is within man the two parts of substance and form. It is when the substance, the body and its wants and desires, gets in the way of the better strivings of man, that we fail to choose this noble ideal. If a person is to achieve this perfection of his form he has to be able to control the substance. The person who seeks the perfection of the form must keep the desires and frailties of the substance in check. Maimonides here refers to Aristotle who in his Doctrine of the Mean clearly explained that our emotions and desires and needs must be held at the mean, in that we neither go to excess or deficiency. Since we are not "human" without these emotions, desires, and needs, we must recognize them as real, and yet strive to hold them in check as we seek the perfection of the form of Man.

Man must have control over all these desires, reduce them as much as possible, and only retain them as much as is indispensable. His aim must be the aim of man as man, viz., the formation of ideas and nothing else.⁴

This formation of ideas and seeking the nobler actions is as close as we have come in the beginning of the Guide to a definition of perfection in man, or salvation. It is when Maimonides talks of the prophet and prophecy that we begin to see how much he relied on Plato's happiness and Aristotle's eudaemonia.

The nature of prophecy. In Chapter 32 of the Guide we see quite clearly the importance of Aristotle's eudaemonia in Maimonides prophecy. Maimonides lists three opinions of the nature of prophecy. In the first opinion, of the ignorant people, God simply chooses whom he wants to be a prophet, according to His own desires, and "presto" a prophet. This

position is ridiculed, and held as untenable by Maimonides.

The second opinion is the one of the philosophers, principally Aristotle. This opinion is that prophecy is "a certain faculty of man in a state of perfection, which can only be attained by study."⁵ It is a perfection, one which is achieved through effort; it is a part of nature, in that it is not miraculously given by chance. Writing of Aristotle and his opinion, Maimonides says that it is a perfection of the intellectual and moral faculties of man that must be mastered:

But if a person, perfect in his intellectual and moral faculties, and also perfect, as far as possible, in his imaginative faculty, prepares himself in the manner which will be described, he must become a prophet; for prophecy is a natural faculty of man.⁶

This opinion, as Maimonides states it, is the opinion of the philosophers and ostensibly not his own, for in the third opinion, Maimonides "states his own case".

The difference between Maimonides and the philosophers is that Maimonides would maintain that God has the right to withhold prophecy from a man. Other than this one statement, he is in total agreement with Aristotle. However, this difference is in fact no difference! For Maimonides says here that the miracle of withholding prophecy from a man would be a miracle interfering with a natural event, and since prophecy is entirely a natural event, the "natural order" of prophecy is upheld, for it is only in the interruption that God's miracle of withholding would occur. Therefore, whenever we do have prophecy it is completely natural...exactly as Aristotle and the philosophers said in the second opinion; and only when we do not have prophecy do we have a miracle. In effect, the third opinion is exactly the same as the second.

For Aristotle, a man who seeks the salvation of eudaemonia must perfect certain aspects of himself as a human; for Maimonides, a man seeking the salvation of a prophet must perfect those same qualities. Maimonides lays out the requirements for this perfection of prophecy in the identical way as the philosophers he studied. First a man must have the potential for perfection, in that the parts of his body, mentally and physically, must not suffer from illness.

Then in addition he must have studied and acquired wisdom, so that his rational capacity passes from the state of potentiality to that of actuality; his intellect must be as developed and perfect as human intellect can be; his passions pure and equally balanced; all his desires must aim at obtaining a knowledge of the hidden laws and causes that are in force in the Universe; his thoughts must be engaged in lofty matters....⁷

Beyond this he must control his "lower desires and appetites", so that he may give over complete control to his rational faculty and its activity. This is the man who is ready for prophecy, and this is the man whom Plato and Aristotle said are ready for the ultimate happiness, that state of salvation.

But Maimonides quickly makes the point that it is rare that a man would ever reach this highest of states, and in fact such a thing has been done but once in all of history. It was for Moses to achieve this penultimate "well-being", and it is for us to come as close to this as we can. So Maimonides sets up the framework for his degrees of perfection, or eudaemonia, or salvation.

The first step on this upper end of the ladder is the philosopher. He has attained the high level of knowledge which prepares him for the ultimate in prophecy, but it is knowledge alone, and not complete

mastery of the moral aspects of his self (as Plato might have said). The true philosopher is a man who understands the truths of the universe and the goals of man, but falls short in being completely perfect. Aristotle, wrote Maimonides, was such a man, for he understood reality and could grasp the meaning of salvation, but never reached that next level of prophet.

The prophet has the knowledge and the control of his body and its desires; he is able to suspend these parts of his self in order to give himself completely over to that rational part of him. In doing so, he is able to perceive what men of lesser abilities would be unable to. His degree of prophecy is limited by the degree of absolute control that he has over his entire self. Maimonides classified the different degrees of prophet by the nature of their prophecy, however it is not germane to this discussion to go into them, except to say that each level, each degree, is manifested by the ability of the man to completely involve himself in contemplation of the truths of the universe. It is only with the highest level of prophecy that true salvation is reached, and that is the state of a Moses.

The highest form of prophecy. What distinguished Moses from all other prophets, and all other philosophers, was that he had the ability to disengage himself completely from the world of his body and the world around him. This "ability" was the result of the absolute perfection of Moses' soul, or self. Because of this highest state of perfection he was not only able to perceive the ultimate truth of reality, but was able to set up the most perfect system of life both for those who were

able to seek and understand truth (the philosophers and other prophets), and for the non-elite who will never reach that level.

Of the prophet in general, Maimonides wrote:

His knowledge will only include that which is real knowledge, and his thought will only be directed to such general principles as would tend to improve the social relations between man and man.⁸

How much greater then, the capacities of Moses, who was greater than any prophet?

B. LAW AND SOCIETY WITHIN MOSAIC PROPHECY

The purpose of the law. The product of Moses' prophecy was the Mosaic Law, the system of commandments in the Pentateuch. For those who would not be able to reach the intellectual and rational level of self-control, these laws were meant to impose upon this non-elite the Doctrine of the Mean of Aristotle, so that each, at his own level, might attain his own degree of happiness through moral control, either self-imposed, or socially enforced.

It is clear that the Law is normal in this sense; for it contains "just statutes and ordinances" (Deut. iv. 8); but "just" is here identical with "equibalanced". The statutes of the Law do not impose burdens or excesses as are implied in the service of a hermit or pilgrim or the like; but on the other hand, they are not so deficient as to lead to gluttony or lewdness, or to prevent, as the religious laws of the heathens do, the developement of man's moral and intellectual faculties.⁹

The beauty of the Law of Moses was that it allowed for the perfection of man's intellectual and moral capacities, and in fact prompted their excellence, while at the same time forced those who were unable to control and excel in them themselves the guidance and direction they

needed. Everyone would then be offered the degree of happiness attainable to them as individuals, either by self- or social-control. Plato saw happiness as a universal; Aristotle maintained that each man must find and promote his own level of well-being; and Moses created a system of law which promoted or enforced each man to this Aristotlean level.

The perfection of the law in its two-fold nature. While the laws of the politicians, or philosophers, or even other prophets, aim at this kind of system, it was only Moses, wrote Maimonides, with his highest degree of perfection, who was able to do it, and in that sense, the Mosaic Law is divine.¹⁰

The divinity of the law, or its perfection is seen in its two-fold nature:

The general object of the Law is two-fold: the well-being of the soul and the well-being of the body. The well-being of the soul is promoted by correct opinions communicated to the people according to their capacity. Some of these opinions are therefore imparted in plain form, others allegorically; because certain opinions are in their plain form too strong for the capacity of the common people. The well-being of the body is established by proper management of the relations in which we live one to another. This we can attain in two ways: first by removing all violence from our midst...Secondly by teaching every one of us such good morals as must produce a good social state.¹¹

The Mosaic Law is divine because it is universal. It instructs moral and intellectual excellence to each in his own capacity to understand. To live the best life possible, each man must achieve excellence of both his moral and intellectual virtues, and if society is to be the best society, it must foster and promote these ideals in its citizens.

While it is certain that the excellence of the Intellect is the highest in rank of importance (since this excellence means the correct

communication of truths¹²), it can only come about after the excellence of the moral faculties of men. Practically quoting Aristotle, Maimonides wrote:

...the well-being of the soul can only be obtained after that of the body has been secured. For it has already been found that man has a double-perfection: the first perfection is that of the body, and the second perfection is that of the soul. The first consists in the most healthy condition of his material relations, and this is only possible when man has all his wants supplied, as they arise;...But one man alone cannot procure all this; it is impossible for a single man to obtain this comfort; it is only possible in society, since man, as is well known, is by nature social.¹³

Thus a "good" society is mandatory for the man seeking perfection, and also for every other man, since man is a social animal. The society must promote this well-being of the soul so that men may then seek the fulfillment of their rational capacities. One must first attain good conduct, and then attain knowledge. Maimonides makes the point that a man who is hungry or thirsty cannot possibly grasp an idea or communication from another, much less arrive at that idea by his own reasoning.

But when a person is in possession of the first perfection, then he may possibly acquire the second perfection, which is undoubtedly of a superior kind, and is alone the source of eternal life. The true Law, which as we said is one, and beside which there is no other Law, viz., the Law of Moses our teacher, has for its purpose to give us the two-fold perfection. It aims first at the establishment of good mutual relations among men by removing injustice and creating the noblest feelings.¹⁴

According to Maimonides, Moses did what the philosophers had wanted to do: he set up the law and the society to promote the general welfare so that the highest levels of moral conduct, and then intellectual pursuit, could be maintained.

The first aspect of the law then is to remove injustice and teach good morals, which will then promote the well-being of the society. So

for those who are unable to lead a good moral life because they do not possess the intellect to realize the truth, they are provided with laws and commandments to "give" them that life. This was the ideal society which Plato and Aristotle sought, here, however, it is not given with the authority of a king, but with the authority of God through Moses. The Mosaic Law is a totality, a system which if followed will bring one to the discovery of "the correct opinions" (note here Maimonides' use of Aristotle's terms), as well as the correct moral and social conduct.

But the truth is undoubtedly as we have said, that every one of the six hundred and thirteen precepts serves to inculcate some truth, to remove some erroneous opinion, to establish proper relations in society, to diminish evil, to train in good manners, or to warn against bad habits.¹⁵

The law teaches the "moderation" that Plato sought, and the "Doctrine of the Mean" as explained by Aristotle. The law is perfection in that it teaches truths, moral behavior, and social conduct to every man at his own level of understanding. It has the authority of the one God of the universe, and is given as a special gift to the Chosen People. It is perfect objectively, and it is perfect subjectively!

Society and its legal system. Aristotle said that the law created by the elite must stand above men, but that it must be of a general character so as to allow for variables in time, place, and situation. Following this lead, Maimonides comes to the same conclusion about the Law of Moses:

It is also important to note that the Law does not take into account exceptional circumstances; it is not based on conditions which rarely occur. Whatever the Law teaches, whether it be of an

intellectual, a moral, or a practical character, it is founded on that which is the rule, and not on that which is the exception... [furthermore] from this consideration it also follows that the laws like medicine cannot vary according to the different conditions of persons and times...the divine guidance contained in the Law must be certain and general, although it might be effective in some cases, and ineffective in others...the statutes and the judgements must be definite, unconditional, and general.¹⁶

We have seen that Plato sought a system which would be universal in its law regarding specifics, while Aristotle sought a system which would be universal in its generalities. Maimonides saw the Mosaic Law as the ideal Aristotlean system. They were true and absolute in their general character. Since any truth is only an opinion, and that opinion must take into consideration all the variables inherent in the situation, any perfect legal code must do the same. Therefore, Aristotle and Maimonides had the problem of what to do when the laws of a society did not meet the specific needs in a given situation. What would happen when the law was ineffective?

God knew that the judgements of the Law will always require an extension in some cases and curtailment in others, according to the variety of places, events, and circumstances. He therefore cautioned against such increase and diminution...But permission is at the same time granted to the wise men, i.e., the great court (Synhedrion) of every generation to make fences round the judgements of the Law and their protection, and to introduce by-laws (fences) in order to insure the keeping of the Law.¹⁷

Thus the problem of being absolute only in generalities was solved by Moses, and Maimonides, for it permitted modifications of the law to suit the variables. But it was only for the wisest of the men of any given generation to make these modifications. As Aristotle stated, it was the elite who were able to make the legal codes, and then adjust them to the variables. Again we see the perfection in the law, in that it was

absolute, yet allowed for change; it could be molded to circumstances, yet it was safe from being molded out of existence.

The inter-relationship of salvation, law, and society. Plato's ideal society was one of harmony, and Aristotle sought a state where every man could achieve his own level of eudaemonia. Maimonides saw in the society outlined in the Pentateuch a society with these two qualities, and yet a third.

You will find that the sole object of certain laws, in accordance with the intention of their author, who well considered their effect, is to establish the good order of the state and its affairs...Their sole object is to arrange, under all circumstances, the relations of men to each other, and to secure their well-being....You will also find laws which...tried to improve the state of the faith of man, to create first correct notions of God, and of angels, and to lead then the people, by instruction and education, to an accurate knowledge of the Universe: this education comes from God, these laws are divine.¹⁸

As Maimonides noted, since the Law of Moses provided this extra benefit of improving the faith of man, it is again evidence of the ultimate perfection of Moses and of his prophecy.

C. MAIMONIDES' SALVATION AS THE KEY TO THE SCRIPTURES

The four perfections. Maimonides took his meaning of salvation from Plato and Aristotle, and he found it in the Pentateuch in the prophecy of Moses. Maimonides also noted, as Aristotle before him, that few men ever reach the level of eudaemonia that is true, or ultimate salvation, and that most of us, being human, fall short. But there are levels of salvation which we may aspire to, and as was noted above, the three highest "stations" attainable are the philosopher, prophet, and the Mosaic prophet. These levels are spelled out in length in Maimonides'

conclusion to the Guide. He writes there that there are four kinds of perfection.

The first perfection regards property: "the possession of money, garments, furniture, servants, land and the like"¹⁹, as well as the possession of a title, such as king. However, these are perfections of the "external". Aristotle and Plato noted that the man who seeks this perfection finds only transient perfection, and that they in no way, by themselves, improve the man, or give him any real level of salvation.

The second kind of perfection "includes the perfection of the shape, constitution, and form of the man's body; the evenness of temperments",²⁰ and the strengthening of the physical parts of the body. But this is a perfection that man shares with the lowliest of animals, and thus cannot be a perfection capable of granting any real salvation. The "soul" derives no benefit from this perfection.

The third is the moral perfection:

...the highest degree of excellency in man's character. Most of the precepts (of the Law) aim at producing this perfection; but even this kind is only a preparation for another perfection, and is not sought for its own sake. For all moral principles concern the relation of one man to his neighbor; the perfection of man's moral principles is, as it were, given to man for the benefit of mankind.²¹

This third perfection is the one most men are able to attain, if they put enough effort into the preparation. This preparation is the intent behind most of the "laws and statutes" of the Mosaic Law, and is a pre-requisite for the fourth perfection.

The fourth kind of perfection is the true perfection of man; the possession of the highest intellectual faculties; the possession of such notions which lead to true metaphysical opinions as regards God. With this perfection, man has obtained his final object; it gives him true human perfection; it remains to him alone; it gives him immortality, and on its account he is called man.²²

Each of these perfections can be reached through the Pentateuch. Moses, as Maimonides says, was aware of these, and the need of men to achieve them. The final genius of his creation, the Mosaic Law, was that by studying, and following the Pentateuch, a man will achieve each perfection as he is able.

The perfections and Scripture. As we saw in the first chapter concerning the Pentateuch, the satisfaction of man's needs are to be provided by God as his part of the covenant. This is the first perfection. If a man seeking only this level of salvation were to follow the laws and commandments, as his part of the covenant, he would then be provided with the first, and the lowest perfection. This is the level at which the masses see the Pentateuch. It satisfies them, while forcing them to attain second and often third kinds of perfection, for as he follows the laws, he is controlling his desires, and he is acting, through the force of the law, with good moral conduct.

Those who seek more than the first perfection, and strive for the second, and third, find true meaning in the laws and commandments which teach one the correct inward and outward behavior. For those people who have developed the rational principle, the second and third perfections are accomplished through their intellect, for they see the "rhyme and reason" of the laws. They understand that we should be acting in accordance with these precepts because they are right in themselves, and not simply because they are "the Law". The masses may not be able to perceive this distinction, and so it is up to them to follow the statutes simply because it is the law.

Finally, for those who are able to achieve the fourth perfection, who are able to begin to understand the "true opinions" of the universe, there is a fund of knowledge to be found in the Pentateuch and the rest of Scripture. Maimonides in the Guide points out many such phrases or ideas that can be interpreted so as to explain some aspect of the reality of the universe (as Maimonides and Aristotle saw this reality.²³) For the elite, those who have attained this perfection, or are in the process of doing so, the Scripture unfold the highest wisdom and knowledge available to man.

Not only does the Pentateuch, with its laws and narratives, provide a workbook for the preparation for perfection, perfection at any level, but it provides the framework for the society within which these perfections may be achieved.

Moses attained the ultimate in salvation, and from that state, his prophecy delineated and provided for the maintenance of every level of happiness that a person was capable of seeking. We each seek our own level of happiness, well-being, or eudaemonia--each according to our capabilities or potential. Maimonides found all of this in the Pentateuch as part of the prophecy of Moses, just as Plato and Aristotle said it could be formulated.

As Maimonides concludes the Guide he writes:

I hope that, by the help of God, you will, after due reflection, comprehend all the things which I have treated here. May He grant us and all Israel with us to attain what He has promised us, "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped" (Isa. xxxv. 5); "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwell in the shadow of death upon them hath the light shined." (Ibid. ix. 1)²⁴

CONCLUSION

While the major intent of this thesis has been to explore and expound upon Maimonides' concept of salvation within Judaism, it was necessary at first to define the meaning of salvation within the sources of the Pentateuch, Plato, and Aristotle.

Maimonides saw in Biblical prophecy the salvation concepts of the philosophers before him, and in that prophecy, the betterment of human society through a legal system. Therefore, it was necessary to define and explain the sources' concepts of not only salvation, but of law and society also.

After having discussed the three systems of the Pentateuch, Plato, and Aristotle, the one similarity among them all was the end-goal which each sought. Each system saw as its final result the generalized salvation of popular well-being achieved through a specialized society as delineated by the law of that society. While this end has been seen in each of the three systems, their means toward reaching that end have differed.

In the system of the Pentateuch, this generalized salvation for the populace could be achieved by the society if that society were to follow the divine, revealed, law. If this legal code were obeyed, as the society's part of the covenant, then YHWH would provide the necessities to make that society prosperous, and would protect that society as its God. The result would be a state of well-being and happiness for the people. Salvation was a concept for everyone to achieve, since it was a social well-being and prosperity, free from internal and

external fears, and free from wants and needs. The focal point was the law, divine in origin, and the pre-requisite for salvation.

The philosophies of Plato and Aristotle saw the relationship between salvation, law, and society differently. For them there was a specialized salvation which only the elite could achieve. This salvation was for Plato the highest degree of happiness, and for Aristotle it was eudaemonia. It was a state of being which required a lifetime of preparation and study. The man who embarked on this lifetime must free himself from the non-rational parts of his self, and strive to control them through temperance, or the Doctrine of the Mean. With this "moral" control, he could then commit himself to a life of study and contemplation, seeking the truths, or correct opinions, of the universe. Having achieved this salvation, the elite could enter, or create, a society which would foster their own salvation, while provide a generalized happiness for the populace, much as was seen in the Penta-teauch which sought this same generalized salvation.

It was in the relation of man to society that Plato and Aristotle differed. Plato maintained that having achieved salvation, a man could choose to enter a society with the thought of bettering it, even though it was not a necessary part of his salvation to do so. Aristotle maintained that since man is by nature a "political animal" he has to become a part of a society in order to be minimally happy, to say nothing of the maximum happiness of eudaemonia.

Having become a part of society, the man of salvation of Plato and Aristotle, would be obligated as part of the elite to create the laws.

Thus their own needs would be taken care of, while at the same time the needs of the masses would be fulfilled. This would then bring to the people of the society, at whatever their level, a well-being of fulfilled needs. In the systems of the philosophers, the focal point is the specialized salvation of the elite, for without them and their guidance, there could not be a generalized salvation for the society. The law was not the prime mover, as in the case of the Pentateuch, it was the salvation, the happiness, the eudaemonia, of the elite which was the focal point, and the deciding factor in the final well-being of the society.

Maimonides recognized the truth, or correct opinion, of the philosophers regarding perfection and salvation for man. He thought that the elite must have control of society, for the good of the entire population. As with Plato and Aristotle, Maimonides saw the role of the elite, those who have come the closest to the highest salvation state, as the interpretation of the law and the running of society. However, it was not the elite who were to create the law, for that had already been accomplished by a higher authority. The prophecy of Moses was the highest perfection that a man is capable of; and the Mosaic Law which was the result of that perfection is the perfect formulation of intellectual, moral, and behavioral virtues. This is the framework for a society which the elite have to apply and expand.

Maimonides combined the systems of the Pentateuch and the philosophers in his theory of prophecy and its relation to man. The philosophers stated that the salvation of the elite, the fulfillment of the form of

Man, must precede any formulation of the best society. While Maimonides reiterated this position, he at the same time held that the divine law of Moses must precede everything else, as was stated in the Pentateuch.

The Mosaic Law is both divine (in that it is "from" the deity), and since it is a part, or rather a product of the Mosaic prophecy, it is also a part of the ultimate state of salvation.

Maimonides was the product of two universal truths: the truth of the perfection of the Pentateuch, and the truth of the rationalist tradition of Plato and Aristotle. His Guide for the Perplexed was a creation of genius which offered to the rationalist and the traditionalist the answers they were seeking, from the truths which they believed.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER ONE

¹For the purposes of clarity in this chapter, "Jews" will be used as a descriptive term for the "descendants of Abraham" when speaking generally. "Hebrews" will refer to the people before the revelation at Sinai, and "Israelites" will refer to the people at the time of the revelation and throughout the rest of the Pentateuch.

²Although the responsibilities of each party in the covenant changed during the course of the Pentateuch, the basic formula of "the people obeying God, and God granting them 'salvation' " never changed.

³Genesis 17:7 (all translations of Biblical verses are from The Holy Scriptures, Jewish Publication Society, 1955).

⁴Genesis 17:2-10.

⁵Genesis 23:3-5.

^{5a}Genesis 28:13-15.

⁶Exodus 6:2-6.

⁷Leviticus 26:3-13.

⁸Deuteronomy 28:1-14.

⁹Deuteronomy 28:15-68.

¹⁰This was the ultimate act wherein YHWH gave to his people the gift of salvation, and it was rejected. The Psalmist decries this loss as greater than any other: the Israelites gave up the greatest of all possible lives, the gift of salvation. Note specifically Psalm 78:10-29.

¹¹Deuteronomy 28:1-68.

CHAPTER TWO

¹W.T. Jones, The Classical Mind (vol. I of A History of Western Philosophy) (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World Inc., 1969), p. 369.

²John L. Davies and David J. Vaughn (trans.) The Republic of Plato (New York: A.L. Burt Co., [no date]), p. 163

³Ibid., pp. 150 ff.

⁴Jones, op. cit., p. 173.

⁵Ibid., p. 166.

⁶Davies and Vaughn, op. cit., p. 164.

⁷Ibid., p. 92.

CHAPTER THREE

¹W.D. Ross, Aristotle (London: Methuen and Co. Ltd., 1949) p. 190.

²H.H. Joachim (comm.), The Nicomachean Ethics of Aristotle (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955), p. 28.

³Ibid., pp. 50-51.

⁴Ibid., p. 51.

⁵W.D. Ross (ed.), The Works of Aristotle (vols. IX and X) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1921), p. 1098a 12-18.

⁶Joachim, op. cit., pp. 51-52.

⁷Ross, The Works of Aristotle, p. 1099b 8-10.

⁸Joachim, op. cit., p. 57.

⁹Ross, The Works of Aristotle, p. 1099b 15-24.

¹⁰This nutritive faculty is found among all creatures, and therefore Aristotle does not consider it as having a part in making the excellence of the human soul. As Aristotle considered it mentioned, and so left, so shall we.

¹¹Ross, The Works of Aristotle, pp. 1102a 5-1103a 5.

¹²Ibid., pp. 1106b 35-1107a 3.

¹³Jones, op. cit., p. 274.

¹⁴Joachim, op. cit., p. 164.

¹⁵Jones, op. cit., p. 286.

¹⁶Ross, Aristotle, p. 237.

¹⁷Ross, The Works of Aristotle, p. 1253^a 1-5.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 1288^b 20-30.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 1286^a 7-25.

²⁰Ross, Aristotle, p. 268.

CHAPTER FOUR

¹James Robson, "Aspects of the Qur'anic doctrine of Salvation", Man and Salvation, Eric J. Sharpe and John R. Hinnells (editors) (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1973), p. 219.

²M. Friedlander (trans.), The Guide for the Perplexed (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1956), p. 261.

³Ibid., p. 261.

⁴Ibid., p. 262.

⁵Ibid., p. 219.

⁶Ibid., p. 220.

⁷Ibid., p. 226.

⁸Ibid., p. 226.

⁹Ibid., p. 232.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 232.

¹¹Ibid., p. 312.

¹²Ibid., p. 312.

¹³Ibid., pp. 312-313.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 313.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 322.

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 328-329.

¹⁷ibid., p. 347.

¹⁸ibid., pp. 233-234.

¹⁹ibid., p. 394.

²⁰ibid., p. 395.

²¹ibid., p. 395.

²²ibid., p. 395.

²³ibid., pp. 212-218; 246-247; 252-260.

²⁴ibid., p. 397.

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