



**Maimonides' Examination of "The Account of the Beginning":  
A Preliminary Study of One of the Two Foci in *The Guide of the Perplexed***

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**Abstract:** In rabbinic tradition, ma'aseh bereshith (the Account of the Beginning; or, the Work of the Beginning) which is connected to Genesis 1, and ma'aseh merkabah (the Account of the Chariot), which is related to Ezekiel 1 and 10, are secret knowledge of God that are prohibited to teach. In *The Guide of the Perplexed*, Maimonides points out more than once that the first purpose of his Treatise is to explain what can be explained of the Account of the Beginning and of the Account of the Chariot. In this sense, these two Accounts can be seen as the two foci of the Guide. Since Maimonides also states that the Account of the Beginning is identical with natural science and the Account of the Chariot is with divine science, some scholars interpret his discussion of the Account of the Beginning in view of his exposition of Aristotelian natural science. By a detailed reading of the different contexts of Maimonides' use of ma'aseh bereshith, this article argues that Maimonides not only relates ma'aseh bereshith with the beginning of the world, as the generally accepted view, he also establishes a connection between ma'aseh bereshith and the beginning of the Torah, that is, the revelation at Mount Sinai or Mosaic prophecy. In addition, by associating the "work of the beginning" with the unchangeable nature of natural things, Maimonides insinuates that ma'aseh bereshith is not compatible with creatio ex nihilo.

**Key Words:** Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, ma'aseh bereshith, the Beginning of the World, the Beginning of the Torah