



**Maimonides' Interpretation of "the Account of the Chariot":
A Preliminary Study of the Second of the Two Foci in
*The Guide of the Perplexed***

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Abstract: In rabbinic tradition, *ma'asehbereshith* (the Account of the Beginning or the Work of the Beginning) which is connected to Genesis 1, and *ma'asehmerkabah* (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. Meanwhile, he also states that the Account of the Beginning is identical with natural science, and the Account of the Chariot with divine science. In this sense, these two Accounts can be seen as the two foci of the *Guide*. This article attempts to decode Maimonides' esoteric interpretation of the prophet Ezekiel's visions of the Chariot in the *Guide* in the light of his discussion of the Account of the Chariot and of the Account of the Beginning in *Book of Knowledge* (*Sefer Madda'*), i.e., in the very first four chapters of his great legal work *Mishneh Torah*. The article argues that in the *Guide*, Maimonides interprets Ezekiel's visions of the Chariot as a special account of the angels, which, due to the equivocality of the term "angel" in Maimonides, connects divine science with natural science. In addition, in the *Guide*, Maimonides adopts the four-sphere model rather than the nine-sphere model, which he subscribes in *Book of Knowledge*, so that Ezekiel's visions have a more intelligible interpretation.

Key Words: Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, The Account of the Chariot, The Account of the Angels, Four, The Separate Intellects and Spheres