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Religious Naturalism: Human Responsibility and Divine Decree

I. Intervention and Providence

Modern medicine is often at the forefront of technological advance, a triumph of applied empirical science. Still, the goal of modern physicians is the same as that of their less successful predecessors: overcoming injury and illness. From a theistic perspective, this goal carries a potential for tension with the demands of piety. Attempts by human agents to heal the sick may appear to constitute interference with divine plans.

The Jewish theistic tradition would seem especially susceptible to such tension, for it combines a strong emphasis on the duty to rescue any threatened human being with a pervasive faith in divine providence. Amongst the various sources of human suffering, illness—insofar as it is not produced by human agency—is particularly prone to be perceived as constituting divine chastisement, as will be seen below.

An initial recognition of potential tension between human responsibility and divine determination seems to underlie a well-known talmudic statement about the "permission to heal." This "permission" is derived from a law in Exodus 21:19, which stipulates that an assailant must (among other liabilities) pay for his victim's healing:

> "and he shall cause him to be thoroughly healed"—this implies that a physician is granted permission to heal. (BT, *bava qama* 85a).

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The logic of this inference is simple: if the Torah—God's law—requires hiring a physician, then the physician's work cannot be illegitimate! D. Hartman sees in this text an endorsement of "[taking h]uman responsibility for the conditions of life." Medical practice represents human action in general: "The permission granted to the physician to heal signifies the legitimacy and importance of acting to alleviate human suffering." (Hartman 1985, 229–30). Such permission is needed because the existing state of affairs, along with the suffering it entails, is thought to be determined by God.[1] Why, then, is the physician's intervention appropriate? The Talmud simply pronounces it so, without offering any theological account.

The theological problem is openly confronted in an early medieval rabbinic discourse which draws an analogy between medical practice and other forms of human action—in the face of conditions produced by God. In the following text, two great rabbis are depicted both as physicians and as explicators of what might be termed "medical theology":

> R. Ishmael and R. Akiva were strolling in the streets of Jerusalem accompanied by another person. They were met by a sick person. He said to them, "My masters, tell me by what means I may be Healed." They told him, "Do thus and so and be healed." He asked them, "And who afflicted me?" They replied, "The Holy One, blessed be He." [The sick person] responded, "You intrude in a realm which is not yours; He has afflicted and you heal! Are you not transgressing His will?"
>
> They asked him, "What is your occupation?" He answered, "I am a tiller of the soil and here is the sickle in my hand." They asked him "Who created the orchard?" He answered, "the Holy One, blessed be He." Said they, "You too intrude in a realm which is not yours. [God] created it and you cut away its fruit!." He said to them, "Do you not see the sickle in my hand? If I did not plow, sow, fertilize and weed it nothing would grow." They said to him, "Oh you fool! Does

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> your occupation not teach you this, as Scripture says 'as for man, his days are as grass: as grass of the field, so he flourishes' (Psalms 103:15). Just as a tree, without weeding, fertilizing and plowing will not grow; and even if it grows, then without irrigation and fertilizing it will not live but will surely die—so it is with regard to the body. Drugs and medical procedures are the fertilizer, and the physician is the tiller of the soil."[2]

But are plants which require cultivation a proper analogue to sick people in need of medical aid? With respect to agricultural activity, it can perhaps be supposed that God initially created the botanical realm intending for humans to realize its potential. In order to yield bountiful fruit, plants naturally require tending. But people's natural condition is, arguably, good health; they were not created needing medical treatment. If they fall from good health, is this not a direct result of divine will, which ought not to be countered by medical intervention?

This may invite a distinction between ailments according to their origin. For under the doctrine of free will, the acts of human agents, freely chosen, are not to be attributed to divine providence. So with regard to a person injured by the wicked—say, "God's enemies"—a healer could rather easily be perceived as doing God's work. But the sick are, surely, suffering by divine decree; how can there be permission to heal them?

D.M. Feldman plausibly employs this distinction in interpreting the teaching of Bahye ben Asher (Spain, thirteenth century), who writes[3] that the physician's license to heal does not extend to internal medicine. On this view, the "permission to heal" is restricted to humanly induced wounds, while organic pathologies are "presumed to be manifestations of divine rebuke or punishment and only God may heal or remove them."[4]

This position must have appeared radically pious even in the middle ages. In modern society, with the great success and wide acceptance of medical intervention, this view and the theistic consciousness it represents may appear

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totally anachronistic. Seeking to minimize the scope of ailments barred to human intervention, M. Weinberger[5] has proposed two restrictive interpretations of the medieval opposition to the healing of ailments "induced by God."[6] First, he plausibly points out that some "internal ailments" are in fact induced by human actions, including the patient's own actions, such as, unhealthy eating. If this is granted, then the class of God-induced ailments consists of only "a congenital illness, or one resulting from the body's weakness and sensitivity, or from the weakness and disfunction of particular organs."[7]

Weinberger's second restriction, put forward somewhat tentatively, is that "any illness whose nature and cure are clear, is not considered an `internal illness induced by heaven'; that term refers only to an illness whose nature is unclear, where the cure consists in nothing but groping and experimenting." The theological basis for this distinction is not explained; possibly the idea is that only events whose causal explanation evades us are ascribed to the realm of divine providence. In another vein, Weinberger notes that attempts to cure a mysterious illness are risky; they might cause more harm than benefit, and are thus best left to God. Medical intervention is permitted only on the basis of "certain knowledge." As noted by M. Halperin,[8] the notion of certain knowledge seems, however, naive and requires some explication, since "medicine never offers certain knowledge."

These efforts at ingenious reinterpretation reflect a wish to reconcile deep theological misgivings about medicine with the mainstream endorsement of medical intervention. But contemporary Halakhists have generally resisted even such minor exclusions from the license to heal. This resistance has not, however, been accompanied by a rejection of the mode of discourse which would attribute illness to divine causation. Belief in the divine authorship of illness continues to imply a fundamental theological challenge to all medical practice.

From this religious perspective, illness and medicine seem to present us with divine cross-purposes: the

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physician is allowed by God to compete, as it were, against His own work.[9] Although the physician's vocation is thus depicted as legitimate and even heroic, there seem to be grounds for worrying about overstepping legitimate boundaries. No moral system, of course, will mandate all medical activities without limits. But a physician working under divine dispensation might need to be concerned not only about the rights or interests of his or her patient (or those of third parties), but also about possible terms and conditions of the divine license. This attitude found classical expression in the work of Nahmanides, leader of the Jewish community in Barcelona in the thirteenth century.

II. Nahmanides: Compromised Medicine

According to Nahmanides, medicine is less than fully permitted, not in terms of a circumscribed scope, but rather in terms of the degree of its legitimacy. Basically incompatible with the religious ideal, medicine is no more than a tolerated practice, a compromise with human frailty:

> In general then, when Israel are in perfection and numerous, their affairs are not governed at all by the natural order of things . . .
>
> For God blesses their bread and their water, and removes sickness from amongst them—so that they have no need of a physician nor of observing any medical regimen. Thus was the practice of the righteous in the Prophetic Era: should they become entangled in a sin, causing them sickness, they would turn not to the physicians but to the prophets—as did Hezekiah, when he got sick (Isaiah 38). . . .
>
> For he who seeks God through a prophet will not consult the physicians. Indeed, what share[10] is there for physicians in the house of those who do God's will, seeing that He has assured us, "and He will bless your bread and your water, and I [=God] will remove sick-

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> ness from amongst you" (Exodus 23:25)—while the physicians' occupation is with nought but foods and beverages, warning against some and recommending others. . . .

Nahmanides has thus marshalled biblical support for his opposition to seeking medical help. In post-talmudic Judaism, however, direct appeal to scripture is not enough, and Nahmanides knows that he will have to come to terms with the talmudic pronouncement of a permission to heal. As a preamble to that, he adduces talmudic support for his denigration of medicine:

> This is the sense of the Rabbinic comment, "Medications are not the way for people, but they have become accustomed to them" (BT *berakhot* 60a): Had they not accustomed themselves to medications, a person would have become sick in accordance with the punishment due for his sin, and would be healed at God's will. Since they, however, became accustomed to medications, God left them to the contingencies of nature.

Now the ground is laid for Nahmanides' ingenious explanation of the permission to heal. Given that the Talmud explicitly permits rendering medical treatment, how can it be supposed wrong for a patient to seek help from a physician?

> This is the intent of the Rabbis' comment: "and he shall cause him to be thoroughly healed"—this implies that a physician is granted permission to heal." They did not say that the *patient* has been granted permission to be healed, but only that, once the patient has fallen ill and has come to be healed—since he had become accustomed to medications, not being of God's faithful whose share is in life—the *physician* should not refrain from healing him, whether out of concern lest he die under his hand (assuming that he is quali-

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> fied in that profession), or through holding that "God alone is the Healer of all alive"—for they are thus accustomed.[11]

The perfectly righteous should know no illness. The faithful's reaction to sickness should be not a search for natural causes, but an examination of their personal behavior, seeking repentance rather than medicine.

Nahmanides's attitude regarding recourse to physicians is part of his general view about the incompatibility of true piety with reliance on natural causality.[12] He explicates this view in his commentary on a section in Deuteronomy (18:9–13) which includes a prohibition against turning to astrologers. For Nahmanides, astrology represented fully valid scientific knowledge, as he explains frankly at the outset:

> [God] established that the celestial [entities] control those under them. The powers of the Earth, and everything upon it, were made to depend on the stars and constellations, following their course and attitude—as demonstrated by astrological science. (commentary to Deut. 18:9)

Why, then, were Israel enjoined not to seek guidance from experts who might validly predict the future on the basis of astral observations? The set of biblical prohibitions concludes with a demand for fidelity: "You shall be wholehearted with the Eternal your God," which Nahmanides explains thus:

> [This] means that we should be inwardly dedicated to Him exclusively. We should believe that He alone does everything, and has true knowledge of all things future. From Him alone are we to enquire—through His prophets or priests[13]—regarding future events. We may not direct such enquiries to astrologers or other [diviners], nor rely on the inevitable realization of their predictions. Rather, when we learn of any

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> [such] prediction, we should say "All is in God's hands," for He is the God of Gods, exalted above all and completely omnipotent, who can alter at will the formations of the stars and constellations, who "frustrates the tokens of the impostors, and makes diviners mad."[14] We should believe that all coming events will be determined in accord with each person's [degree of] entering into God's service. (commentary to 18:13)

The issue is, then, one of reliance. Predictions according to the natural course of things are generally valid, but relying on them undercuts a person's total dependence on God. After all, God can override natural causality "at will"; the truly faithful should put their trust in God's direct providence, thereby retaining a "whole-hearted" existential dependence on God.

Seeking help from those who are experts in the world's natural order constitutes an inappropriate alternative—and thereby, a barrier—to pious trust in the Almighty. Turning to physicians is but one instance, albeit a common one, of such lack of trust.

As we shall see below, Maimonides took a diametrically opposite view. He did not share Nahmanides's reading of the prohibition against consulting astrologers, insisting instead that astrology was only prohibited because it is a sham, useless and potentially dangerous.[15] Conversely, he held that any sound knowledge could be employed without reservation, and strongly denounced "religious misgivings" about medicine. But in order to fully appreciate his remarks, we must say something about their context, a rabbinic discussion of the biblical King Hezekiah, and take note of rival Nahmanidean interpretations of the same discussion.

III. Hezekiah and the "Book of Healing"

King Hezekiah's deeds are described in the second books of Kings (Chapters 18–20) and Chronicles (Chap-

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ters 29–32). In some respects, he appears to exemplify perfect Nahmanidean trust. He rebels against the mighty Assyrian Empire, and in the critical hour, when all seems lost, puts his faith in God. Flying in the face of any reasonable expectation, a miraculous victory is promised by the prophet Isaiah and then comes to pass. This accords well with the prophetic demand to forgo military might in favor of relying directly on God.[16] Nahmanides, with the doctrine of "whole-hearted" trust, is a worthy heir to that prophetic stance. As we saw above, he cites Hezekiah's behavior as a model of true piety: "[the righteous] would turn not to the physicians but to the prophets—as did Hezekiah, when he got sick."

Hezekiah is, however, hardly a consistent model of exclusive dependence on God, for in other instances he shows a boldness of initiative. In fact, he did not meet the Assyrian threat with pious passivity. When removing the precious temple doors offered the only way to buy off the threatening Assyrian king, Hezekiah went ahead and ordered it done. In customary fashion, rabbinic legends embellished Hezekiah's biography with some further stories and details; the rabbis' divided view of his life is summed up in polarized scheme:

> Hezekiah, king of Judea, did six things;
> Three were endorsed [= by the sages[17]],
> and three were not endorsed.
> Three were endorsed:
> He dragged his father's bones on a bed of ropes—
> and it was endorsed;
> He pulverized the copper snake
> —and it was endorsed;
> And he *concealed*[18] *the Book of Healing*
> *—and it was endorsed.*
>
> And three were not endorsed:
> He detached the temple doors and sent them to the
> king of Assyria—and it was not endorsed; . . .
>
> (Mishna, *pesahim* 4:10)

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Common to the first and second items is the purpose of combatting infidelity to God. The first act took place at the beginning of Hezekiah's reign, when he carried out a religious revolution against the idolatrous practices fostered by his father Ahaz. In order to utterly denounce the dead King's deeds, his remains were subjected to flagrant indignity. The stern requirements of both royal and paternal honor were overridden by the exigencies of the political situation.[19] As to the second act, pulverizing the copper snake: although the snake was initially made by Moses himself, it had become the focus of idolatrous worship (I Kings 18:4).

Conversely, the rabbis disapprove of Hezekiah's attempt to meet a military crisis through the calculated expedient of paying tribute; he should rather have put his trust in God. That, at least, is one plausible reading, which makes fidelity to God the consistent theme of the rabbinic appraisals here, a reading fully in tune with Nahmanides's general approach. And, given Nahmanides's view of medicine, it is virtually indubitable that he understood the rabbinic praise for concealing the "Book of Healing" along similar lines, for medicine, too, constitutes a threat to pious fidelity.

We do not have explicit evidence of Nahmanides's reading of Hezekiah's deed, but we can quote here other rabbis who clearly shared his basic attitude toward medicine. For example *Rashi*, the classical commentator on the Talmud (France, eleventh century) explains that Hezekiah was reacting to the fact that the people's "heart was not humbled by illness, as they were immediately cured."[20]

A more expansive formulation of this approach is offered by *Maharsha* (Poland, sixteenth century), the most famous commentator on the *aggadic* (=non-legal) sections of the Talmud. The Talmud (*berakhot* 10b) cites Hezekiah's assertion, in praying to God, "I have done that which is good in Your eyes" (Isaiah 38:3), and in characteristic homiletical fashion seeks to spell out the specific grounds for this statement. Of all Hezekiah's meritorious deeds, it

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singles out the concealing of the "Book of Healing"; *Maharsha* explains why this deed in particular fits the Biblical phrase, "good in *Your* eyes":

> Even though, in the eyes of humans, it is not good to conceal [such a book], as they seek healing from a physician, who was indeed granted permission to heal—still in your eyes it is good, so that a person should not rely on medicine, and with humbled heart will pray for mercy.

This attitude is basically shared by commentators like R. Bahye, whose restrictive views on the permission to heal we discussed above; and as we shall presently see, it was also the target of Maimonides's polemic. Although some of its adherents antedate Nahmanides, I shall refer to their position as the "Nahmanidean view."

IV. Maimonides: Science as God's Vehicle

Maimonides, in his commentary to the Mishna in which King Hezekiah is praised for concealing the "Book of Healing," refuses to read it as endorsing a rejection of medicine. Maimonides first struggles to offer alternative accounts of Hezekiah's deed, then proceeds to strongly criticize the Nahmanidean view.

> The "Book of Healing" was some book containing manners of healing through illicit means, e.g., what the crafters of amulets imagine: that if an amulet is produced in a particular manner it will be effective regarding a certain illness—or similar forbidden things.
>
> Now its author composed it only as a study in the nature of reality; not aiming for any of its contents to be employed. This is permitted, as you will be taught, for things which God prohibited to practice may be studied and known—for God said (Deut. 18:9) "You shall not learn to practice," and the received interpre-

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tation is "But you may learn to understand and to teach."[21] So, when people deviated and employed it for healing, he concealed it.

It is [also] possible that this was a book containing prescriptions for the preparation of poisons, e.g., "poison X is prepared thus, is administered thus, induces such and such an illness, and is cured thus and so"—so that a physician observing those symptoms shall know that poison X has been administered; he will act to neutralize it and save the patient. So, when people deviated and employed it for murder, he concealed it.

The only reason I have elaborated at length upon this matter is that I have heard, and indeed the explanation was proffered to me, that Solomon composed a Book of Healing, whereby—if a person fell ill with any illness whatsoever—he would turn to this book, follow its instructions, and be healed. Hezekiah then saw that humans were putting their trust—with respect to their illnesses—not in God, but instead in medicine; therefore he decided to conceal it.

Now, apart from this proposition's being vacuous and involving delusionary elements, its proponents attribute to Hezekiah and to his circle (who endorsed his act) a measure of foolishness that ought not to be attributed to any but the worst of the multitude. According to their defective and silly fancy, if a person is hungry and seeks bread to eat—whereby he is undoubtedly healed from that great pain—should we say that he has failed to trust in God?! "What madmen!" is the proper retort to them. For just as I, at the time of eating, thank God for having provided me with something to relieve my hunger, to sustain my life and my strength—so should I thank Him for having provided a cure which heals my illness, when I use it. There would have been no need for me to refute this inferior interpretation, were it not widespread.[22]

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According to Maimonides, the notion of "forbidden medicine" can only apply to deceptive means, which are worse than useless, being the paraphernalia of idolatrous culture. The idea of a perfect cure for all ailments is, in fact, unrealistic, but prospects of enhanced human capacity to overcome illness are no threat to faith or to piety.

For Maimonides, utilization of natural causes is in no way at odds with divine works. Indeed, this is an understatement; in his view, God acts in the world chiefly or even solely through natural causality. Sound medicine, like sound technology in general, is itself an instance of God's providence; there is no alternative mode of turning directly, as it were, to divine help. So the permission to heal is no special case, no granting of a license to human agents to trespass upon a divine realm.

IV. Views of Providence and Medical Goals

This difference between Maimonides's and Nahmanides's attitudes toward natural causality implies a difference in the value-foundation of medical practice. For Nahmanides, the professed goal of medicine seems dubious at best. To the extent that, through manipulating natural causality, we can alter the patient's fate, this amounts to circumventing divine judgment. The pure religious ideal continues to beckon, inviting us to relinquish medicine in favor of repentance, falling back on God's providence. Rather than seeing himself as an agent fulfilling God's plan, the physician ought to recognize that God's plan would ideally proceed without human intervention. For if God's commandments are followed perfectly, then His providence alone will ensure the proper result.

Nahmanides's view can be a source of some embarrassment to contemporary followers of Halakha. Does he really challenge them to refrain from seeking medical help? In an effort to represent a unanimous endorsement, not only of an obligation to heal, but even of a duty to seek medical treatment, J.D. Bleich[23] seeks to harmonize the disparate views of these two medieval scholars. Nah-

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manides's radical position is domesticated, in Bleich's presentation, through two stratagems.

First, he demonstrates that "Nahmanides' statements, if taken literally, are contradicted by a number of Talmudic dicta." This finding is intended to support an alternate (and somewhat contrived) reading of Nahmanides's words, a conclusion which seems, however, hardly warranted. After all, Nahmanides explicitly bases his argument on other talmudic dicta; the talmudic sages might have simply disagreed among themselves on this issue, as on thousands of others.[24]

Bleich's second stratagem consists in pointing out that Nahmanides himself describes the eschewal of medicine as befitting either an ideal era or exceptional individuals. Ordinary people in ordinary times are, says Nahmanides, "left to the contingencies of nature." From this statement—an expression of unhappy resignation—Bleich concludes that they are obligated to avail themselves of the resources of medicine. This reading ignores Nahmanides's explicit insistence that the permission to combat illness through medicine had been granted, as a concession to non-ideal human frailty, only to the physician but *not* to the patient. More importantly, it severs Nahmanides's position on medicine from the roots of his religious orientation. For Nahmanides, the special commandment "You shall be whole-hearted with the Eternal your God" embodies a vital and perennial spiritual challenge.[25]

What Nahmanides offers amounts to an inverted, and thereby less problematic, version of the notorious "naturalistic fallacy" which confers normative status on an existing state of affairs.[26] In their crudest form, instances of this fallacy say something like "Since X is the way things are, it follows that X is the way things should be." Perhaps no one really subscribes to such faulty reasoning—at least not consciously.[27] Here, in any case, it is not the natural state that is deemed normative in and of itself, but rather the natural as a reflection of divine determination. Given that background belief, 'is' can here imply 'ought'; ideally, at least, God's intentions could be discerned from the

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actual course of events. This suggests that even if medical intervention is permitted, the physician might sometimes be able to recognize that certain of his or her efforts are opposed to God's wishes and therein be guided to stand back.

None of this is conceivable, of course, in the Maimonidean view, which encompasses medical capability itself within God's providential plan. Thus whatever is deemed desirable and appropriate constitutes the legitimate goal of medical practice; the proper outcome is not indicated by the course events would follow were it not for the medical intervention, but must be determined on some other grounds.

In the discussions that follow, we shall sometimes encounter arguments from "God's will." In the Halakhic system, this usually means the will expressed in Torah, God's revealed instruction. Since the application of Torah depends on rabbinic interpretation, the specific import of God's will with regard to any particular issue might be the subject of much debate. But apart from this (Halakhically) ordinary sense, "God's will" in Jewish bioethics is sometimes invoked in a special sense, implying that in a particular instance this will can be divined directly from the medical situation. In other statements, a given state of affairs is regarded as carrying normative force without explicit reference to divine will; still, they are often most plausibly understood as relying on a tacit assumption that God has willed the given situation.

Claims of this type appear explicitly in discussions of death and dying (see Chapter 2) and of genetic engineering. A general motto seems to be implied: "death and life ought to be left in the hands of God." But philosophical analysis shows similar claims to be implicit in a much wider array of topics, such as proposed redefinitions of parenthood (that is, the "natural/social" contrast; see Chapter 3) or the status of potential medical knowledge and consequently the force of a possible duty to acquire it (see Chapter 6).

In these various contexts, we shall closely examine arguments to the effect that God's will is evident from a

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patient's condition or from social/medical states of affairs. Part of our task as we proceed will be to relate any such argument to the fundamental debate on this theme between Maimonides and Nahmanides.[28]

Notes

1. In section II below, I cite Nahmanides, who adds an alternative explanation of why such permission is required.

2. Midrash Terumah, chapter 2 (reproduced in Jellinek 1853, Vol. I, pp. 107–8).

3. In his Bible commentary, Exodus 21:19.

4. Feldman (1986), "The Mandate to Heal," pp. 15–21 (citation from p. 17). Feldman may be too restrictive, however, in identifying God's authorship of illness as "rebuke or punishment." The rabbis also reflect on "chastenings of love" (BT, *berakhot* 5a); cf. Hartman (1985), pp. 195–200.

5. M. Weinberger, "Turning to Physicians According to the Halakha" (in Hebrew), in Halperin (1985), pp. 11–34. The first word of this essay's title is mistranslated in the English table of contents.

6. The contrast between humanly produced wounds and divinely induced illness is explicitly endorsed by an earlier commentator on the same verse, R. Abraham ibn Ezra (also discussed in Feldman, ibid).

7. Ibid, at 17.

8. Editor's comment, ibid. p. 18, note 28.

9. Employing the terms of Rabbinic theology, we might say that the patient was struck by God's "attribute of justice," while the physician is acting on behalf of God's "attribute of mercy." A theological discussion along these lines is developed by Feldman (1986), pp. 18–21.

10. More prosaically, this word might be translated "place"; the more literal "share" conveys the possible connotation of profit.

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11. Nahmanides's commentary to the Torah, Lev. 26:11; emphasis added. Nahmanides goes on to point out that the verse being explicated defines an assailant's liability for medical expenses. The Torah "does not base its laws on miracles"; the assailant should compensate the victim on the basis of accepted practice, not ideal piety.

12. For a discussion of Nahmanides's theological positions on this and related matters, see Novak (1992).

13. Literally "His holy ones," alluding to Deut. 33:8. The author explains that his mention of priests here refers to the "Urim ve-Thumim" oracle mentioned in that verse.

14. Isaiah 44:25; Nahmanides is likely also alluding to the words that follow, "Who turns wise men backward and makes their knowledge foolish."

15. See MT, Laws concerning Idolatry 11:16, and Maimonides's "Letter on Astrology," in Twersky (1972), pp. 464–73.

16. See, e.g., Isaiah 31:1–3.

17. This refers to the sages of Hezekiah's time, whose very existence is posited by a backward projection from Rabbinic Judaism. Thus these sages' endorsements and criticisms are not part of any historical record, but rather reflect the retrospective judgments of the Rabbis.

18. The Hebrew term (*ganaz*) means "hide away" or bury; with regard to texts, it denotes the drastic measure of permanent removal from circulation.

19. Why, then, did the Rabbis refuse to justify the forwarding of the temple doors, which was also dictated by (military) exigency? Clearly, they did not maintain a uniform position regarding "ends versus means." Perhaps they saw a significant difference in the nature of the goals, that is, religious purging of the nation versus mundane "state reasons."

20. Rashi on *pesahim* 56a, s.v. *ve-ganaz*; in his commentary to *berakhot* 10b, s.v. *ve-hatov*, Rashi explicates Hezekiah's purpose in positive terms: he concealed the Book of Medicines "in order that they should pray for mercy."

21. See BT, *sanhedrin* 68a.

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22. Maimonides's commentary to the mishna, *pesahim* 4:6. I thank Dr. Zvi Zohar for his meticulous examination and correction of my English version against the original Arabic.

23. "The Obligation to Heal in the Judaic Tradition: A Comparative Analysis," in Rosner & Bleich (1979), pp. 1–44.

24. Nahmanides himself emphasizes this aspect of the talmudic heritage as a major determinant of Halakhic discourse based on the Talmud. See his introduction to *milhemet hashem*, printed at the beginning of the standard (Vilna, 1881) edition of Alfasi.

25. Part of Nahmanides's critique of Maimonides's *Book of the Commandments* consists of a short alternative list of commandments which Maimonides had "failed to mention." Number 8 in this list is the commandment "to be wholehearted." For a harmonizing interpretation along similar lines, see also Weinberger (1985), pp. 21–26.

26. The precise character of the charge of "naturalistic fallacy" (originating with G.E. Moore) is an issue of some disagreement; for an argument along the lines alluded to in the text, see Hare (1952), "Description and Evaluation" (pp. 111–26).

27. Commonly, the factual observation yields its normative implication only in conjunction with normative assumptions. But these might be tacit and sometimes easily discredited when spelled out; thus people can be exposed as actually deriving 'Ought' from 'Is.'

28. Bleich's harmonization seems intended not only to blunt the Nahmanidean challenge, but also to produce the complementary suggestion that Maimonides might share a willingness to fall back, in some situations, on guidance from "God's will" in this special sense (see ibid, pp. 27–28).

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