CONTENTS

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"Theoretical Grounds for Tolerance in the Jewish Tradition," in *Tolerance, Dissent and Democracy*, ed. Moshe Sokol (New York: Jason Aronson, 2002).

"What Are the Ethical Implications of the Jewish Theological Conceptions of the Natural World?," in *Judaism and the Natural World : Philosophical and Ethical Perspectives*, ed. Hava Tirosh Samuelson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).

"Is There a 'Halakhic' Response to the Problem of Evil?," *Harvard Theological Review* 92:3 (1999).

"Maimonides on Freedom of the Will and Moral Responsibility," *Harvard Theological Review* 91:1 (1998).

"What Does a Jewish Text Mean? Theories of *E'lu—Ve'Elu Divrei Elohim Hayyim* in Rabbinic Literature," *Da'at* 13:1 (1994).

"*Ger ve –Toshav Anokhi*: Modernity and Traditionalism in the Life and Thought of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik," *Tradition* 29:1 (1994).

"Personal Autonomy and Religious Authority," in *Personal Autonomy and Rabbinic Authority*, ed. Moshe Sokol (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, 1992), 169-216.

"How Do Modern Thinkers Interpret Religious Texts?" *Modern Judaism* 13 (1993): 25-48.

"Mitzvah as Metaphor: Towards a Philosophical Theory of *Ta'amei Ha- Mitzvot*," in *A People Apart: Chosenness and Ritual in Jewish Phillosophical Thought*, ed. Daniel Frank (Albany: SUNY Press, 1993).

"Attitudes Towards Pleasure in Jewish Thought: A Typological Proposal," in *Reverence, Righteousness and Rahmanut*, ed. Jacob J. Schacter (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, 1992).

"The Allocation of Scarce Medical Resources: A Philosophical Analysis of the Halakhic Sources," *AJS Review* XV:1 (Spring 1990): 63-83.

"The Autonomy of Reason, Revealed Morality and Jewish Law," *Religious Studies* 22 (1986): 423-427.

"Joseph B. Soloveitchik: Lonely Man of Faith," with David Singer, *Modern Judaism* 2 (1982): 227-272.

"Some Tensions in the Jewish Attitude Toward the Taking of Jewish Life," *Jewish Law Annual* VII (1988): 97-114.

"Master or Slave? Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik on Human Autonomy in the Presence of God," in *Turim: Studies in Jewish History and Literature Presented to Dr. Bernard Lander*, ed. Michael Shmidman (Jersey City, NJ: Touro College Press/Ktav, 2007), 275-330.

INTRODUCTION

Most, although by no means all, scholars of Jewish philosophy approach the field primarily from the perspective of intellectual Jewish history. What does a particular thinker maintain, how were his ideas influenced by those of his predecessors and contemporaries and the general cultural milieu in which he lived and worked, and how did his ideas influence others? This is surely a valuable mode of inquiry. Nevertheless, it hardly exhausts the range of possibilities.

This is so in several senses. First, what has sometimes been called "constructive" Jewish thought is by very definition not the province of history. Those who wish to make creative and contemporary contributions to the very same problems that have long preoccupied Jewish thinkers, or to new problems never even envisioned in the past, are hardly engaged in an historical task. While what they do often is, and should be, informed by the past, its very ambition is to liberate itself from that past and approach questions anew.

Second, even when great Jewish thinkers are studied, they can and should be considered not only as historical artifacts embedded in the past, but in active dialogue with the present. After all, they wanted to be taken seriously, took themselves to be engaged in a quest for the truth, and believed in the eternal truth of what they wrote. But this would require them to be open to active and critical conversation not only with their contemporaries, but with their successors as well. Such a conversation will raise questions about the clarity of the ideas of these thinkers, their justification, and their internal coherence, and apply the conceptual frameworks and ideas of recent and contemporary philosophers to bear on those great efforts of the past.

The essays in this volume endeavor to contribute to these two tasks, and they do so from a particular perspective, that of analytic philosophy, the method in which their author was trained. Much scholarship in the field of Jewish philosophy is either historical or grounded in other methods, from continental to post-modern. Analytic philosophy, which dominated the field of philosophy for decades in the United States and Britain, and continues to be influential, is nevertheless relatively underrepresented in Jewish philosophy, although certainly present. This volume is designed to help develop further this important perspective.

The subjects of these essays can be organized in a variety of ways. Some are more historical in nature, and some more constructive. However, the principle of organization I chose is topical. The first set of essays takes up aspects of the challenge of living a Jewish life, from historical and contemporary perspectives. What is the meaning of joy? What are Jewish attitudes towards pleasure? How does the Jewish philosopher live his or her life? What is the meaning of mitzvot? Are there fresh ways to deal with the perennial human problem of suffering?

The second category of essays takes up a series of related themes, central concerns of the western intellectual tradition, especially but not exclusively during the modern period. These themes are human autonomy, freedom of the will, and tolerance.

Another group of essays includes further studies in the thought of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, supplementing essays included in the first two sections of the book. Two essays in this section explore topics in hermeneutic theory, of fundamental importance in modern Jewish thought. Finally, the remaining three essays examine problems in applied Jewish ethics. These take up the crucial conversation between Jewish thought and Jewish law, central to the whole enterprise of modern Jewish ethics. Both because of a common method and the interconnection amongst topics, there is, in the end, a deeper unity running throughout the entire volume. But that should not be surprising, for philosophers, like all human beings, share certain preoccupations, emerging from a life of the mind and a mind engaged in life.

CHAPTER I

MAIMONIDES ON JOY

My aim in this essay is to examine closely a number of Maimonidean texts, many halakhic in nature, in an effort to unravel Maimonides' conception of joy. My argument is that when these texts are considered in the context of Maimonides' philosophical views, frequently as articulated in the *Guide*, they yield a rich and fascinating portrait of joy and the avenues to its achievement.

It should first be pointed out that this essay is quite different in subject than that of Hava Tirosh Samuelson's book on *eudaemonia* in the Jewish sources.[1] While that learned work contains a detailed chapter on Maimonides, it does not cite the texts considered here, primarily because it addresses Jewish conceptions of the *summum bonum*, and focuses little on the emotional dimension of happiness. Moreover, there is an intuitive distinction between happiness or *eudaemonia,* on the one hand, and joy or *simha* on the other. Recent empirical studies of what psychologists now call "subjective well-being," a state that correlates with at least part of *eudaemonia,* flesh this distinction out. Joy is purely emotional, while subjective well-being is a far broader condition, which, scholars argue, includes not only the presence of positive emotions, such as joy and affection, but also the relative absence of negative emotions, such as sadness and anxiety, as well as judgments about personal life satisfaction, which are cognitive in nature. Thus happiness, construed as subjective well-being, is a far more inclusive state than joy, which is no more than one if its many constituents.[2]

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1 Hava Tirosh Samuelson, *Happiness in Pre-Modern Judaism* (New York: Hebrew Union College Press, 2003).

2 There is a considerable philosophical literature on happiness. For a fuller discussion, see, for example, Deal W. Hudson, *Happiness and the Limits of Satisfaction* (London:

While Maimonides mentions joy in numerous contexts, all catalogued and carefully discussed in a comprehensive article by Gerald Blidstein,[3] I shall focus here on what are the most important halakhic manifestations of joy, the Jewish holidays, where the experience of joy, according to the halakha, is sometimes biblically mandated. I shall also examine a particularly significant set of texts related to the holiday of *Purim*, where joy is likewise of fundamental importance.[4] While these sources may not give us a complete picture of Maimonides on joy, they will, I believe, shed considerable light on important aspects of it.

I. THE THREE FESTIVALS

Maimonides asserts in *Hilkhot Yom Tov* 6:17 that there is a biblical obligation to rejoice during *Shalosh Regalim: Pesach*, *Sukkot*, and *Shavuot*. In Temple times this was fulfilled by bringing certain sacrifices. Nevertheless it included, and according to Maimonides continues to include to this day, a series of other behaviors, which he famously describes in the next halakha:

> 18 Thus children should be given parched ears, nuts and other dainties; women should have clothes and pretty trinkets bought for them,

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Rowman and Littlefield, 1996), especially chapter 4, and the bibliography included at the end of the book. For a survey of the extensive empirical literature on subjective well-being from which my comments were drawn, including a comprehensive bibliography, see Ed Diener, Eunkook M. Suh, Richard Lucas, and Heidi Smith, "Subjective Well-Being: Three Decades of Progress," *Psychological Bulletin 125 (*March 1999), 276-301.

3 Gerald Blidstein, "*Ha-Simha Be-Mishnato Ha-Musarit shel Ha-Rambam*," *Eshel Be-er Sheva* 2 (1980), 145-163. David Blumenthal offers a brief linguistic analysis of the term *simha* as Maimonides uses it, in his essay "Maimonides: Prayer, Worship and Mysticism," in *Approaches to Judaism in Medieval Times,* ed. David Blumenthal (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 1-16. The role of the emotions in religious life according to Maimonides has been examined by Menachem Kellner in "Is Maimonides' Ideal Person Austerely Rationalist?" *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 76:1 (2002), 125-143, although he does not discuss joy there.

4 Some of these texts have been analyzed by Isadore Twersky in "On Law and Ethics in the *Mishneh Torah*: A Case Study of *Hilkhot Megillah* 2:17" in *Tradition* 24:2 (Winter 1989), 138-149, and in a brief follow-up essay by Lawrence Kaplan, "*Hilkhot Megillah* Revisited: A Halakhic Analysis," *Tradition* 26:1 (Fall 1991), 14-21. My approach in this essay is broader, and provides a different perspective on the texts in question, and on others.

> according to one's means; and men should eat meat and drink wine, for there can be no real rejoicing without meat to eat and wine to drink. And while one eats and drinks himself, it is his duty to feed the stranger, the orphan, the widow, and other poor and unfortunate people, for he who locks the doors to his courtyard and eats and drinks with his wife and family, without giving anything to eat and drink to the poor and the bitter in soul—his meal is not a rejoicing in a divine commandment, but a rejoicing in his own stomach. (*Hilkhot Yom Tov* 6:18)[5]

Whatever one's reaction to Maimonides' view of the divergent needs of men and women delineated here, several points should be stressed. First joy is largely associated here with material well-being—with eating, drinking and fine clothing, falling squarely under what Maimonides in *Guide* III:27 calls well-being of the body. This is consistent with (although not quite identical to) Maimonides' generic explanation for the Three Festivals in *Guide* III:43, where he says "the festivals are all for rejoicings and pleasurable gatherings, which in most cases are indispensable for man; they are also useful in the establishment of friendship, which must exist among people living in political societies."[6] Here the stress is on material and now social well-being.

Given this material conception of joy in *Hilkhot Yom Tov,* Maimonides is greatly concerned about the potential for selfishness in a holiday focused around food, drink, and fine clothing, and he insists on the importance of caring for the needy and poor. And again, because of his material conception of joy, Maimonides is equally concerned about the likelihood of frivolity implicit in that account, and a concomitant absence of spirituality. Here is what Maimonides writes in the next two paragraphs:

> 19 Although eating and drinking on festivals are included in the positive commandment to rejoice on those days, one should not eat and drink all day long, the proper procedure being as follows: In the

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5 *MT Repose on Festivals* 6.18, trans. Solomon Ganz and Hyman Klein (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961), 303.

6 *The Guide of the Perplexed,* Moses Maimonides, translated by Shlomo Pines (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), 570.

> morning, people should go early to the synagogue or the house of study, recite the prayers and read the lesson in the Law appropriate to the day, and then return home and eat. Then they should return to the house of study, and study Scripture or Mishnah until noon. After noon they should recite the afternoon prayer, and then return home and eat and drink for the rest of the day until nightfall.
>
> 20 When one eats and drinks and rejoices on a festival day, he should not overindulge in wine, merriment, and frivolity, in the belief that the more he does of this the more he is fulfilling the commandment to rejoice. For drunkenness, excessive merrymaking, and frivolity are not rejoicing but madness and folly, and we were commanded to indulge not in madness and folly but in the kind of rejoicing which partakes of the worship of the Creator of all things.[7]

Maimonides thus insists not only on the importance of caring for the needy, but also (1) that much of the holiday be spent in prayer and study; and (2) that the joy itself be contextualized by divine service. Despite these many constraints designed in some sense to "elevate" the holiday, it is nevertheless still true that rejoicing on the festivals is halakhically associated most closely with material well-being, or well-being of the body. Let us now examine Maimonides' account of one of the Three Festivals in particular, Tabernacles, or *Sukkot*.

II. *SUKKOT*

In the rabbinic tradition, the festival of *Sukkot* was an especially joyous holiday. Maimonides writes in *Hilkhot Lulav* 8:12 that "in the Temple there was extra joy." In the *Guide* III:43 he goes much further, writing that *Sukkot* "aims at rejoicing and gladness."[8] This implies that joy is the whole point of the holiday, a striking claim that requires some explanation.

In *Hilkhot Lulav* 8:13-15 Maimonides describes the joyous festivities at the Temple during *Sukkot*.

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7 *MT Repose on Festivals* 6.19-20, Ganz and Klein, 303-304.

8 *Guide* III:43 (Pines, 571).

13 What form did this rejoicing take? Fifes sounded, and harps, lyres, and cymbals were played. Whoever could play a musical instrument did so, and whoever could sing, sang. Others stamped their feet, slapped their thighs, clapped their hands, leaped, or danced, each one to the best of his ability, while songs and hymns of praise were being recited.

14 It was a religious duty to make this rejoicing as great as possible, but participation in it was not open to non-scholars or anyone else who wished to take part. Only the great scholars in Israel, heads of academies, members of the Sanhedrin, elders, and men distinguished for their piety and good deeds—these only danced and clapped, made music, and rejoiced in the Temple during the Feast of Tabernacles. Everyone else, men and women, came to watch and listen.

15 Rejoicing in the fulfillment of the commandment and in love for God who has prescribed the commandment is a supreme act of divine worship. One who refrains from participation in such rejoicing deserves to be punished.... If one is arrogant and stands on his own dignity and thinks only of self-aggrandizement on such occasions, he is both a sinner and a fool... Contrariwise, one who humbles and makes light of himself on such occasions achieves greatness and honor, for he serves the Lord out of sheer love... True greatness and honor are achieved only by rejoicing before the Lord, as it is said, "King David leaping and dancing before the Lord," etc.[9]

The joy described here is not material or social, like that of the Three Festivals generally, but ecstatic in nature. It was associated with music and dancing, which, interestingly, were spiritual practices important for the Sufi mystics of Maimonides' own day. Moreover, the celebrations were limited to the elite, while the average citizen merely stood by and observed. Indeed, the practices described here are not social, as was Maimonides' characterization of the Three Festivals generally, but in certain respects even *antisocial*. For not only are the masses excluded from them, but King David was criticized by his own wife for his excesses while dancing in honor of the ark, and King David serves as Maimonides' model for ecstatic dancing and singing.

9 See *Guide* III:43 (Pines, 572-574).

Thus in the *Mishneh Torah* the joy associated with this aspect of the *Sukkot* observance moves in an entirely different direction from the joy associated with the Three Festivals generally, and indeed even stands in tension with it. This too requires some explanation.

Maimonides' peroration about the importance of joy in the performance of mitzvot is certainly consistent with his comments cited earlier about the Three Festivals generally. Nevertheless, the emphasis given here on this point, and the stress on the ecstatic and on the moral and social implications of ecstatic worship, are striking. Also significant is the introduction of a phrase which does not appear in *Hilkhot Yom Tov*, "*ahavat ha-El*," "love of God." It is surely worth asking why this phrase first makes its appearance here. At one level, of course, the answer is obvious. Love of God may be exactly the kind of passionate experience linked to the ecstatic states Maimonides describes here. But is there more to it? In numerous places Maimonides associates love of God with knowledge of Him, the former flowing from the latter.[10] Moreover, it is precisely the knowers of God, the intellectual elite, who participate in these ecstatic celebrations. But what might be behind the special role of knowledge of God for *Sukkot* in particular, more so than the other two festivals?

In the *Guide*, III:43, Maimonides draws a comparison between *Sukkot* and *Pesach*, its closest analogue. *Sukkot* is like *Pesach* in that both teach a moral quality as well as a belief. The moral quality in both cases is gratitude for God's redemption and protection of Israel. The belief is in God's capacity for miracles, performed in liberating Israel from Egypt, a memory sustained by these celebrations.

Sukkot is distinctive, however. Maimonides first focuses on its season. Recognizing that *Sukkot* originates as a harvest festival, he provides his own original reading of its significance. He references the *Nicomachean Ethics* (VIII 9, 1160a 25-28) where Aristotle explains that it was a general practice in ancient times to celebrate and offer sacrifices after the harvest, when people were at leisure. *Sukkot*, too, "a season of leisure when one rests from necessary labors," affords ample and appropriate opportunity for "rejoicing and gladness." This

10 For example, *MT, Yesodei Ha-Torah* 2:2 and *Hilkhot Teshuva* 10:6.

stress on *Sukkot* as a season of leisure is, so far as I know, Maimonides' original contribution. That he allies this interpretation with Aristotle 's understanding of harvest festivals is surely not without interest.[11]

Later in the same chapter of the *Guide* Maimonides takes up another major feature of the festival, the obligation to take the Four Species. After discussing the homilectical and poetic character of midrashic rationales of the symbolism of the four, he proposes that the purpose of the Four Species is to signify or indicate the joy and gladness felt by the Jews on leaving the desert, a land barren of such verdure, and entering the Land of Israel, which was blessed with fruit-bearing trees and rivers in abundance. The Four Species, themselves fragrant, fresh, and enduring products of a fertile land, are thus understood by Maimonides to provide a vehicle for celebrating the agricultural blessings of the Land of Israel.

What emerges from Maimonides' analysis in the *Guide*? Two transitions seem central. First, there is the transition from the labors of farming and its deprivations to a post-harvest leisure blessed with plenty, silos bursting with produce. This takes place on the plane of the individual. Then there is the transition from the deprivations of traveling through a barren desert to a life of relative wealth in the fertile Land of Israel. This takes place on the national plane. The two transitions mirror one another. I would like to suggest that the end states of each of these transitions, individual and national, are what might be termed *proto-messianic*. Here is how Maimonides characterizes the messianic era in the famous concluding two paragraphs of *Mishneh Torah,* in *Hilkhot Melakhim* 12:4-5 (and echoed in his *Introduction to Perek Ha-Helek* and elsewhere).

> 4 The sages and prophets did not long for the days of the Messiah that Israel might exercise dominion over the world, or rule over the heathens, or be exalted by the nations, or that it might eat and drink and rejoice. Their aspiration was that *Israel be free to devote itself to the law and its wisdom*, [italics mine] with no one to oppress or disturb it, and thus be worthy of life in the world to come.

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11 For a study of Maimonides' citations of Aristotle's *Ethics* in the *Guide* see Shmuel Harvey, *"Mekoran shel Ha-Muvaot min Ha-Etica Le-Aristo Be-Moreh U-be-Moreh Le-Moreh,"* in *Meromei Le-Yerushalayim,* ed. A. Ravitzky (Jerusalem: 1989), 87-101.

> 5 In that era there will be neither famine nor war, neither jealousy nor strife. Blessing will be abundant, comforts within the reach of all. The one preoccupation of the whole world will be to know the Lord. Hence Israelites will be very wise, they will know the things that are now concealed and will attain an understanding of their Creator to the utmost capacity of the human mind, as it is written: "For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Is. 11:9).[12]

Note Maimonides' assertion that in the messianic era "Israel will be *free* to devote itself to the Law and its wisdom." The Hebrew term is "*penu'im*," "free" or "at leisure." The material ease described in the last paragraph about the messianic era echoes the phrases Maimonides uses in the *Guide* III:43 and elsewhere to describe the Land of Israel. Thus, for example, Maimonides writes in III:43 that *Sukkot* cultivates the moral quality of gratitude, in that Jews are obligated by the Torah to live in discomfort in the huts of *Sukkot* to commemorate how they lived as "wretched inhabitants of deserts and wastelands." However, with the benefaction of God they "went over to dwell in richly ornamented houses in the best and most fertile place on earth." This is a reference to the Land of Israel. Describing the messianic state, Maimonides in his *Introduction to Perek Ha-Helek* cites the passage in *TB Shabbat* 30b that the Land of Israel will in the future give forth delicate cakes and fine woolen clothing.[13] It turns out, then, that the extraordinary natural fertility and richness of the Land of Israel as described in the *Guide* III:43 bears the potential for a *proto*-messianic state even in *pre*-messianic history. Maimonides in *Hilkhot Teshuva* 8 interprets the significance of the material blessings promised in the Torah to those who obey God's will as providing a this-wordly opportunity to engage undistractedly in the pursuit of wisdom. This too is proleptic for the messianic era.[14]

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12 *MT Hilkhot Melakhim*, 12.4-5, trans. A.M. Hershman (New Haven: Yale University Press, 245).

13 *Mishneh im Perush Ha-Rambam,* translated by David Kapach (Jerusalem: 1965), vol. III, 139.

14 For a general overview of Maimonides on the Land of Israel, see Isadore Twersky, "Maimonides and Eretz Yisrael, Halakhic, Philosophic and Historical Perspectives," in *Perspectives on Maimonides,* ed. Joel Kramer (London: 1996), 257-290. There is a

Maimonides knew Aristotle's view, famously enunciated in the *Nichomachaean Ethics* (X:7, 1177b 1-15), that leisure provides the possibility of the contemplative life, which Aristotle sees as the *summum bonum*. Maimonides shares with Aristotle this commitment to the importance of the contemplative life, although in my view not to the same extent as Aristotle.[15] Maimonides' reliance on *Nichomaechean Ethics* in *Hilkhot Sukkot* may thus be part of a much larger conceptual framework laid out by Aristotle that is adopted and adapted by Maimonides. The plenty and consequent leisure of life in the Land of Israel as it should be, and the plenty and consequent leisure of the post-harvest season, on the national and individual planes, provide just the context necessary for a life of contemplation. And that indeed is exactly how Maimonides describes life in the messianic era made possible by messianic plenty. Leisure, and the opportunity for contemplation it provides, are thus essential features of *Sukkot*, especially in the Land of Israel, exactly as they are an essential feature of the messianic era.

Sukkot, because of its harvest season roots, is the only biblical holiday designed to mimic and pre-figure this messianic state. This theme underlies the ecstatic joy Maimonides describes in the *Mishneh Torah*. His use of the phrase "love of God" there signals the role of philosophical knowledge in the celebrations, in which, as we saw, only the intellectual and spiritual elite participated directly, because only they could appreciate that knowledge, and experience it. This too would explain why Maimonides asserts only in the case of *Sukkot* that joy is the purpose of the holiday. For it is joy that arises in the contemplation of God which the harvest season uniquely makes possible.

But this needs a more careful formulation. What exactly would foster this joy which Maimonides says is the *raison d'etre* of the holiday? First, it was probably conditioned by the simple, normal joy anyone

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voluminous literature on messianism in Maimonides' writings. For a good overview which touches upon some of the sources cited here see Joel Kramer, "On Maimonides' Messianic Posture," in *Studies in Medieval Jewish History and Literature* II, ed. Isadore Twersky (Cambridge, MA: 1984), 109-142.

15 Note the concluding paragraph of the *Guide,* and the various interpretations to which it gave rise, as well as the far-reaching role of practical *mitzvot* in Jewish life. See note 24 below.

would feel once a difficult job was finally accomplished, and with food and livelihood secured at the completion of labors on the farm. But for Maimonides this connection provides no more than a psychological backdrop for the joy which is ultimately the purpose of the holiday. This "higher" joy may have sprung, in part, from newly acquired, deeper knowledge of God afforded by the leisure of the holiday itself, which Maimonides describes as spent in prayer and study. It may also have sprung from knowing that the opportunity to spend far more time seeking such knowledge was nigh, with the post-harvest leisure to follow. It may have sprung, too, from the messianic intimations of the holiday. Finally, and this is a point Maimonides himself stresses, it may also have flowed from thinking about the miracles that God performed for the Jewish people that the holiday celebrates, and that yield so much insight into the mysterious workings of the divinity. As we shall see later on, this is of special importance, for it relates to the crucial role of understanding divine providence in the experience of Maimonidean joy.

Direct textual evidence linking joy to knowledge for Maimonides may be found in *Hilkhot Teshuva* 8:2. Maimonides there describes the world to come as a non-physical state in which there are no material bodies. What then do the rabbis mean when they assert that in the world to come the righteous will sit with crowns on their heads taking pleasure from the radiance of the divine presence? How can the crowns be physical if the world to come is non-physical? Not surprisingly, Maimonides interprets this figuratively—"*derekh hidah*." "Their crowns," he says, are a metaphor for the knowledge they have acquired. Maimonides next quotes the verse from the Song of Songs (3:11) that mentions King Solomon's crown, and adds a verse from Isaiah (51:11) stating, "eternal joy rests on their heads." Maimonides observes that joy is not an object that can literally rest on someone's head. Thus, Maimonides concludes, "the crown to which the wise men referred is knowledge." But what Isaiah said is that *joy* sits upon their heads, not knowledge. Thus joy and knowledge are used interchangeably when described as resting on someone's head. From this it clearly follows that joy and knowledge can be used in some contexts interchangeably.

For more evidence linking joy to knowledge of God, and for a deeper understanding of why joy follows knowledge of God, we must turn to

the final portion of our analysis, Maimonides' discussion of the holiday of *Purim*. But before doing so it is worth observing that Maimonides' discussion of the Three Festivals generally focuses our attention on the ways in which they contribute to the well being of the body. Our analysis of *Sukkot* has focused on its distinctive role in contributing to the well being of the soul. But *Sukkot* is one of the Three Festivals as well. Taken together, *Sukkot* thus contributes to both dimensions, to well being of the body and well being of the soul.

III. *PURIM*

Maimonides in *Hilkhot Megillah* 2:14 describes *Purim* as "… a day of joy [*simha*] and celebration, of sending gifts to friends and to the poor." This reference to *Purim* as a day of joy and celebration derives from *Megillat Esther* itself, and goes considerably further than Maimonides' characterization of the Three Festivals, and even of *Sukkot*. While there is an obligation to experience joy on those days, even extra joy, they are not called "days of joy," as is *Purim*. What lies behind this crucial difference?

Let us read further, now *halakha* 17.

> 17 It is preferable to spend more on gifts to the poor than on the *Purim* meal or on presents to friends. For no joy is greater or more glorious than the joy of gladdening the hearts of the poor, the orphans, the widows, and the strangers. Indeed, he who causes the hearts of these unfortunates to rejoice, emulates the Divine Presence, of whom Scripture says, "to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones" (Is. 57:15).[16]

The similarity to Maimonides' emphasis on helping the poor in *Hilkhot Yom Tov* regarding the Three Festivals is obvious. But consider these differences:[17]

1. Notice that strictly speaking the obligation in *Hilkhot Megillah* is not to feed the poor, as it was in *Hilkhot Yom Tov*, but to make them happy. This one happens to accomplish by feeding them,

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16 Isadore Twersky (Cambridge, MA: 1984), 118.

17 See Twersky and Kaplan, op. cit., n. 4, for different approaches to these differences.