



# Maimonides' Cure of Souls: Medieval Precursor of Psychoanalysis

*David Bakan, Dan Merkur, David S. Weiss*

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*Explores the unacknowledged psychological element in Maimonides' work, one which prefigures the latter insights of Freud.*

Is Moses Maimonides an unacknowledged ancestor of the psychoanalytic movement? In this book, David Bakan, Dan Merkur, and David S. Weiss look at the great medieval Jewish philosopher's prescription for the cure of souls and its psychological significance. In the *Guide of the Perplexed*, Maimonides, who was also a physician, describes the soul's illness: when sinners rationalize evil as good, they limit their capacities to reason, imagine, and behave well, which also produces physical symptoms. The cure depends on repentance in love and fear of God that is attained through philosophical knowledge, the interpretation of dreams and visions, and mystical contemplation. The authors look at the Aristotelian background of Maimonides' psychology, Maimonidean mysticism, his beliefs about prophecy and sexuality, and what is known of Maimonides' client population. A final chapter discusses Maimonides and Freud, noting that many distinctive features of the cure of souls are shared by Freud's original formulation of psychoanalysis. Indeed, the many points of convergence suggest Freud's direct or indirect contact with Maimonides' legacy.

David Bakan (1921–2004) was Professor Emeritus of Psychology at York University and the author of several books, including *Sigmund Freud and the Jewish Mystical Tradition*.

Dan Merkur is Research Reader in the Department for the Study of Religion at the University of Toronto and a psychoanalyst in private practice in Toronto. He is the author of several books, including *Crucified with Christ: Meditations on the Passion, Mystical Death, and the Medieval Invention of Psychotherapy*, also published by SUNY Press.

David S. Weiss is a Ph.D. Psychologist and a rabbi. He is the President of Weiss International, a leadership consulting firm; an Affiliate Professor at the University of Toronto; and the author of several books, including *Beyond the Walls of Conflict*.

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