

# HALACHIC AND HASHKAFIC ISSUES IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

## SERIES 2: 51 - JUDAISM AND THE OCCULT

### ASTROLOGY - PART 2

#### OU ISRAEL CENTER - WINTER 2022/23

- In Part 1 we began to examine approaches to astrology in the Chumash, Tanach and Chazal
- In this part we will conclude our analysis of Chazal's perspective and look at the approaches in the Rishonim and halachic implications.

#### A] ASTROLOGY & MAZAL IN CHAZAL

1. מניין שאין שואלין בכלדיים - שנאמר (דברים יח) תמים תהיה עם ה' אלקיך

פסחים קיג:

*The Gemara includes a specific prohibition on consulting astrologers.*

- In Part 1 we saw the Gemara in Shabbat 156a which quotes at length the view of R. Yehoshua b. Levi that the mazal of the day on which one is born will determine one's life in a significant manner. R. Chanina takes the position that it's the mazal of the hour of birth which determines one's life.
- We also saw the Gemara in Moed Katan 28a that both Raba and Rav Chisda were tzadikim, yet the former had a short life of pain and grief while the latter had a long and good life. Each of these was caused by their respective mazal.

2. איתמר, רבי חנינא אומר: מזל מחכים, מזל מעשיר, ויש מזל לישראל. רבי יוחנן אומר: אין מזל לישראל.

שבת קנו.

*The Amoraim debate whether the Jewish people is subject to mazal or not. R. Yochanan's view (which is normative) maintains that there is no mazal over the Jews. This is also the position of Rav and we saw in Part 1 the continuation of this source which draws a proof to 'ein mazal leYisrael' from the life of Avraham. But does that mean that our lives are entirely free of influence from the mazal or just that we can break out of it if we have the zechut?*

3. ויש מזל לישראל - שאין תפלה ולדקה משנה את המזל

אין מזל לישראל - דעל ידי תפלה וזכות משתנה מזלו לטובה.

רש"י שבת קנו.

*Rashi understands that, according to the view 'yesh mazal leYisrael', prayer and tzedaka cannot change the mazal. However, according to the view 'ein mazal leYisrael' prayer and tzedaka can change the mazal.*

4. תנו רבנן: בזמן שהחמה לוקה - סימן רע לעובדי כוכבים, לבנה לוקה - סימן רע לשונאיהם של ישראל, מפני שישראל מונין ללבנה ועובדי כוכבים לחמה. לוקה במזרח - סימן רע ליושבי מזרח, במערב - סימן רע ליושבי מערב, באמצע הרקיע - סימן רע לכל העולם כולו. .... ובזמן שישראל עושין רצונו של מקום אין מתיראין מכל אלו, שנאמר כִּהְיֶה אֶל־דָּרֶךְ הַגּוֹיִם אֶל־תִּלְמָדוֹ וּמֵאֲתוֹת הַשָּׁמַיִם אֶל־תִּנְחָתוֹ כִּי־יִתְחַתּוּ הַגּוֹיִם מִהֶמָּה. גויים יחתו, ואין ישראל יחתו.

סוכה כט.

*Chazal discuss the 'siman ra' - bad omen - of eclipses of the sun and moon and explain how they could affect the Jewish and non-Jewish nations. Nevertheless, when the Jewish people are connected to God through Torah and mitzvot, they need not fear these omens. Presumably they will then have a special hashgacha which protects them.*

5. דתניא: את מספר ימך אמלא - אלו שני דורות, זכה - משלימין לו, לא זכה - פוחתין לו, דברי ר' עקיבא; וחכמים אומרים: זכה - מוסיפים לו, לא זכה - פוחתין לו.

במות נ.

*Chazal state that our lives can be extended or not as a result of our merits.*

- Tosafot comment on all of these Gemarot and seek to harmonize the sugyot:

6. אלא הכל לפי זכותו - פירוש לפי מזלו דבני וחיי ומזוני לאו בזכותא תליא מילתא אלא במזל תליא מילתא.

תוספות קידושין פב.

*Tosafot in Kiddushin explain that even when Chazal say that everything depends on a person's merit, they really mean his mazal!*

7. אין מזל לישראל - והא דאמר רבא צשילכי מו"ק (דף כח. ושם) 'בני חיי ומזוני לאו בזכותא תליא מילתא אלא במזל תליא מילתא', מכל מקום על ידי זכות גדול משתנה. אבל פעמים שאין המזל משתנה.....

תוספות שבת קנו.

*Tosafot in Shabbat explain that, even according to the view 'ein mazal beYisrael', mazal is still a very significant factor<sup>1</sup>. Through a large merit the mazal might be changed, but that is not guaranteed and the mazal may NOT change.*

8. אלא במזלא תליא מילתא - והקשו בתוספות הא דאמרן צסוף שצת (דף קנו. ושם) אין מזל לישראל. וי"ל דלפעמים משתנה ע"י מזל כי הנכו דהתם ופעמים שאין משתנה....

תוספות מועד קטן כח.

*Similarly, Tosafot in Moed Katan explain that, even if we say 'ein mazal beYisrael', this is not a guarantee. Sometimes the mazal can still have an impact on the situation.*

9. מוסיפין לו - והא דאמר צמועד קטן (דף כח. ושם) 'בני חיי ומזוני לאו בזכותא תליא מילתא אלא במזל תליא מילתא', פשיטא דזכות גדול מועיל כדאמר צשצת (דף קנו. ושם) 'אין מזל לישראל'. ומיהו לא שכיח שיסתנה המזל כדמוכח צתענית (דף כה). גבי עוצדא דר"א צן פדת.

תוספות יבמות נ.

*Again, Tosafot in Yevamot explain that, even according to the position 'ein mazal leYisrael', it takes a large merit to override mazal and, even then, it may not work, as with the poverty of R. Elazar ben Pedat.*

10. רבי אלעזר בן פדת דחיקא ליה מילתא טובא. עבד מלתא ולא הוה ליה מידי למטעם, שקל ברא דתומא ושדייה בפומיה, חלש לביה וניס. אזול רבנן לשוילי ביה, חזיוהו דקא בכי וחייך, ונפק צוציתא דנורא מאפותיה. כי אתער אמרו ליה: מאי טעמא קבכית וחייכת? - אמר להו: דהוה יתיב עמי הקדוש ברוך הוא, ואמרי ליה: עד מתי אצטער בהאי עלמא? ואמר לי: אלעזר בני, נחא לך דאפכיה לעלמא מרישא? אפשר דמתילדת בשעתא דמזוני. אמרי לקמיה: כולי האי, ואפשר? אמרי ליה: דחיי טפי או דחיינא? אמר לי: דחיי. אמרי לקמיה: אם כן, לא בעינא.

תענית כה.

Rabbi Elazar ben Pedat was hard-pressed for money. Once an act of bloodletting was performed on him, but he did not have anything to taste afterward. He took a clove of garlic and put it in his mouth. His heart became weak and he fell asleep. The Sages came to inquire about his welfare. They saw him weeping and laughing, and a ray of light was shining from his forehead. When he awoke they said to him: What is the reason that you were laughing and crying? He said to them: The reason is that in my dream the Holy One, Blessed be He, was sitting with me, and I said to Him: Until when will I suffer such poverty in this world? And He said to me: Elazar, My son, is it more convenient for you that I return the world to its very beginning? Perhaps you will be born in an hour of sustenance and not be poor. I said before Him: You suggest doing all this, to return the world to its beginning, and even then is it only a possibility that things will be different, not a certainty? I said to Him: Are the years that I have already lived more numerous, or are that I will live more numerous? He said to me: Those years that you have lived are greater. I said before Him: If so, I do not want You to recreate the world for the sake of a brief few years.

11. משנכנס אב ממעטין בשמחה וכו'. אמר רב יהודה בריה דרב שמואל בר שילת משמיה דרב: כשם שמשנכנס אב ממעטין בשמחה - כך משנכנס אדר מרבין בשמחה. אמר רב פפא: הלכך בר ישראל דאית ליה דינא בהדי נכרי - לישתמיט מיניה באב דריע מזליה, ולימצי נפשיה באדר דבריא מזליה.

תענית כט.

*Even if the Jewish people can rise above mazal, in the case of Adar and Av, mazal appears to have a stronger influence.*

1. Interestingly, Tosafot do not simply attribute the statement אלא במזלא תליא מילתא to the position of R. Chanina - 'yesh mazal leYisrael', but seek to harmonize it with the dominant position of R. Yochanan (and Rav and Shmuel) that 'ein mazal leYisrael'.

12. מהו לא בשמים היא? שמואל אמר אין התורה מצויה באיסטרולוגין שאומנותן בשמים. אמרו לשמואל הרי אתה איסטרולוגין וגדול בתורה! אמר להן לא הייתי מביט באיסטרולוגים אלא בשעה שהייתי פנוי מן התורה. אימתי? כשהייתי נכנס לבית המים.

דברים רבה (וילנא) (פרשת נצבים) פרשה ח סימן ו

*Shmuel was known to be an expert in astronomy and astrology. Yet he warns that the study of astrology does not always fit well with the study of Torah!*

13. ואמר שמואל: נהירין לי שבילי דשמיא כשבילי דנהרדעא, לבר מכוכבא דשביט דלא ידענא מאי ניהו.

ברכות נח:

*Shmuel said of himself that he recognized the movements of the stars as well as the streets of Nehardea.<sup>2</sup>*

14. ומדשמואל נמי, אין מזל לישראל. דשמואל ואבלט הוו יתבי, והוו קאזלי הנך אינשי לאגמא. אמר ליה אבלט לשמואל: האי גברא אזיל ולא אתי, טריק ליה חיויא ומיית. אמר ליה שמואל: אי בר ישראל הוא - אזיל ואתי. אדיתבי אזיל ואתי. קם אבלט, שדיה לטוניה אשכח ביה חיויא דפסיק ושדי בתרתי גובי. אמר ליה שמואל: מאי עבדת? - אמר ליה: כל יומא הוה מרמינן ריפתא בהדי הדדי ואכלינן. האידנא הוה איכא חד מינן דלא הוה ליה ריפתא, הוה קא מיכסף. אמינא להו: אנא קאימנא וארמינא. כי מטאי לגביה שואי נפשאי כמאן דשקילי מיניה, כי היכי דלא ליכסיף. אמר ליה: מצוה עבדת! נפק שמואל ודרש: (משלי ז) וצדקה תציל ממות ולא ממיתה משונה, אלא ממיתה עצמה. ומדר"ע נמי, אין מזל לישראל. דר"ע הויה ליה ברתא, אמרי ליה כלדאי: ההוא יומא דעיילה לבי גנא - טריק לה חיויא ומיתא. הוה דאיגא אמילתא טובא. ההוא יומא שקלתא למכבנתא, דצתא בגודא, איתרמי איתבי בעיניה דחיויא. לצפרא כי קא שקלה לה - הוה קא סריך ואתי חיויא בתרה. אמר לה אבוה: מאי עבדת? - אמרה ליה: בפניא אתא עניא, קרא אבבא, והוו טרידי כולי עלמא בסעודתא, וליכא דשמעיה. קאימנא, שקלתי לריסתנאי דיהבית לי, יהבתיה ניהליה. אמר לה: מצוה עבדת! נפק ר"ע ודרש: וצדקה תציל ממות ולא ממיתה משונה, אלא ממיתה עצמה.

שבת קנו.

From Samuel too [we learn that] Israel is immune from planetary influence. For Samuel and Ablat were sitting, while certain people were going to a lake. Said Ablat to Samuel: That man is going but will not return, [for] a snake will bite him and he will die. If he is an Israelite, replied Samuel. he will go and return. While they were sitting he went and returned. [Thereupon] Ablat arose and threw off his [the man's] knapsack, [and] found a snake therein cut up and lying in two pieces. Said Samuel to him, What did you do? Every day we pooled our bread and ate it; but to-day one of us had no bread, and he was ashamed. Said I to them, "I will go and collect [the bread]". When I came to him, I pretended to take [bread] from him, so that he should not be ashamed. You have done a good deed, said he to him. Then Samuel went out and lectured: But charity delivers from death; and [this does not mean] from an unnatural death, but from death itself.

From R. Akiva too [we learn that] Israel is free from planetary influence. For R. Akiva had a daughter. Now, astrologers told him, On the day she enters the bridal chamber a snake will bite her and she will die. He was very worried about this. On that day [of her marriage] she took a brooch [and] stuck it into the wall and by chance it penetrated [sank] into the eye of a serpent. The following morning, when she took it out, the snake came trailing after it. What did you do? her father asked her. A poor man came to our door in the evening. she replied, and everybody was busy at the banquet, and there was none to attend to him. So I took the portion which was given to me and gave it to him. You have done a good deed, said he to her. Thereupon R. Akiva went out and lectured: But charity delivers from death: and not [merely] from an unnatural death, but from death itself.

*The continuation of that Gemara clearly understands that Jews too are subject to mazal, but have a way to break out of the predetermined path by the performance of mitzvot.*

15. אותו מלאך הממונה על ההריון לילה שמו, ונוטל טפה ומעמידה לפני הקב"ה, ואומר לפניו: רבש"ע, טפה זו מה תהא עליה? גבור או חלש, חכם או טיפש, עשיר או עני? ואילו רשע או צדיק - לא קאמר, כדר' חנינא; דא"ר חנינא: הכל בידי שמים - חוץ מיראת שמים.

נדה טז:

*Even if other things are predetermined, freedom of choice to be righteous or wicked is not subject to mazal. However, this statement on predetermination is by R. Chanina (see above), whose view is rejected in favour of R. Yochanan's!*

2. Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach commented that this apparently superfluous detail actually teaches an important halacha. Shmuel was also a doctor on call to emergencies and, as the local 'hatzalah', he needed to know the local streets very well!

**B] THE RAMBAM'S POSITION**

16. ח: איזהו מעונן אלו נותני עתים שאומרים באצטגנינות יום פלוני טוב יום פלוני רע יום פלוני ראוי לעשות בו מלאכה פלונית שנה פלונית או חדש פלוני רע לדבר פלוני  
 ט: אסור לעונן אע"פ שלא עשה מעשה אלא הודיע אותן הכוזבים שהכסילים מדמין שהן דברי אמת ודברי חכמים, וכל העושה מפני האצטגנינות וכיון מלאכתו או הליכתו באותו העת שקבעו הוברי שמים הרי זה לוקה שנאמר לא תענונו, וכן האוחז את העינים ומדמה בפני הרואים שעושה מעשה תמהון והוא לא עשה הרי זה בכלל מעונן ולוקה.  
 טז: ודברים האלו כולן דברי שקר וכזב הן והם שהטעו בהן עובדי כוכבים הקדמונים לגויי הארצות כדי שינהגו אחריהן, ואין ראוי לישראל שהם חכמים מחוכמים להמשך בהבלים אלו ולא להעלות על לב שיש תועלת בהן ... כל המאמין בדברים האלו וכיוצא בהן ומחשב בלבבו שהן אמת ודבר חכמה אבל התורה אסרתן אינן אלא מן הסכלים ומחסרי הדעת ... אבל בעלי החכמה ותמימי הדעת ידעו בראיות ברורות שכל אלו הדברים שאסרה תורה אינם דברי חכמה אלא תהו והבל ...

רמב"ם הלכות עבודת כוכבים פרק יא הלכה ח, ט, טז

*The Rambam rules in the Mishne Torah that astrology and magic are utter nonsense and the prohibition in the Torah is essentially to stop Jews from involvement in such foolishness.*

17. Know, my masters, that it is not proper for a man to accept as trustworthy anything other than one of these three things. The first is a thing for which there is a clear proof deriving from man's reasoning—such as arithmetic<sup>1</sup> geometry, and astronomy. The second is a thing that a man perceives through one of the five senses—such as when he knows with certainty that this is red and this is black and the like through the sight of his eye; or as when he tastes that this is bitter and this is sweet; or as when he feels that this is hot and this is cold; or as when he hears that this sound is clear and this sound is indistinct; or as when he smells that this is a pleasing smell and this is a displeasing smell and the like. The third is a thing that a man receives from the prophets or from the righteous. Every reasonable man ought to distinguish in his mind and thought all the things that he accepts as trustworthy, and say: "This I accept as trustworthy because of tradition, and this because of sense-perception, and this on grounds of reason."

Anyone who accepts as trustworthy anything that is not of these three species, of him it is said: "The simple believes everything" (Prov. 14:15). Thus you ought to know that fools have composed thousands of books of nothingness and emptiness. Any number of men, great in years but not in wisdom, wasted all their days in studying these books and imagined that these follies are science. They came to think of themselves as wise men because they knew that science.

The thing about which most of the world errs, or all of it - save for a few individuals, "the remnant of whom the Lord shall call" (Joel 3:5) - is that thing of which I am apprising you. The great sickness and the "grievous evil" (Eccles. 5:12, 15) consist in this: that all the things that man finds written in books, he presumes to think of as true - and all the more so if the books are old. And since many individuals have busied themselves with those books and have engaged in discussions concerning them, the rash fellow's mind at once leaps to the conclusion that these are words of wisdom ...

Rambam's Letter to the Chachamim of Marseilles<sup>3</sup>

18. Know, my masters, that every one of those things concerning judicial astrology that (its adherents) maintain - namely, that something will happen one way and not another, and that the constellation under which one is born will draw him on so that he will be of such and such a kind and so that something will happen to him one way and not another - all those assertions are far from being scientific; they are stupidity. There are lucid, faultless proofs refuting all the roots of those assertions. Never did one of those genuinely wise men of the nations busy himself with this matter or write on it, no (nation) wrote such compositions or committed the error of calling it a science, other than the Chasdeans, Chaldeans, Canaanites, and Egyptians, for that was their religion in those days. But the wise men of Greece—and they are the philosophers who wrote on science and busied themselves with all the species of science—mock and scorn and ridicule these four nations that I have mentioned to you, and they rally proofs to refute their entire position .....

And know, my masters, that the science of the stars that is genuine science is knowledge of the form of the spheres, their number, their measure, the course they follow, each one's period of revolution, their declination to the north or to the south, their revolving to the east or to the west, and the orbit of every star and what its course is. On all this and the like, the wise men of Greece, Persia, and India wrote compositions. This is an exceedingly glorious science. ....

ibid

*In his letter on astrology, the Rambam reiterates that the whole system of astrology is nonsense, in contrast to astronomy which is a proper science.*

3. Translation from R' Isadore Twersky, A Maimonides Reader (New York: Behrman House, Inc., 1972) pp. 463-473

19. All these, then, are the three sects into which the wise men of the world fall, from the earliest antiquity down to now.
- (i) Those who maintain that the sphere is not a created thing, but that it eternally has been and will be just as it is.
- (ii) Those who maintain that the Deity has created it out of that matter which always exists by Him.
- (iii) Those who maintain—just as all the prophets did—that there is no other thing that is with the Deity, just He Himself, and that when He wished, He brought forth this world out of nothing, in conformity with His will.
- All of these three sects are in accord on the following point. Everything that comes into being in this lower world — namely, every "living soul" (Gen. 1:30) and every tree and every species of grass and every one of the species of minerals — the whole has the Deity as its maker, through a power coming from the spheres and the stars. And they are in accord that the power of the Creator flows first upon the spheres and the stars; from the spheres and the stars it flows and spreads through this (lower) world — everything that is, thereby coming into being. Just as we maintain that the Holy One, blessed be He, performs signs and wonders through the angels, so do these philosophers maintain that all these occurrences in the nature of the world come through the spheres and the stars. They maintain that the spheres and the stars possess souls and knowledge. All these things are true. I myself have already made it clear, with proofs, that all these things involve no damage to religion. And not only this, but what is more I have understood from the sayings of the sages in all of the Midrashim that they maintain as the philosophers maintained. There is no controversy whatever between the sages of Israel and the philosophers on these matters, as I have made clear in those chapters [in the Guide of the Perplexed, a philosophical treatise].

ibid

*Nevertheless, Rambam understands that all positions on the issue of Creation agree that the creation of the sub-lunar world is effected through the medium of the stars and super-lunary spheres.*

20. Three disagreements are to be found in these matters. Imagine this situation. Here is Reuben, a tanner, poor, and his children have died in his own lifetime. And here is Simon, a perfumer, rich, and his children stand before him.
- (1) The philosopher will maintain that this is due to chance. It is possible that Reuben could become a perfumer, grow rich, and have children; and it is possible that Simon could become impoverished, turn into a tanner, and witness his children's death. All this is simply fortuitous. There is no nature in the world and no power emanating from a star that caused this individual to be or not to be thus. This is the position of the philosophers.
- (2) The second position is that of those who believe in judicial astrology and whose sayings you have heard and whose follies are widespread among you. They maintain that it is impossible that a given thing should ever change. Never will Reuben be anything other than a tanner and poor and childless, for it was thus fixed by the power of the sphere at the time of his birth. Similarly, it is impossible for Simon to be anything other than a perfumer and rich and with surviving children, just as it was fixed by the power of the sphere at the time of his birth.
- ... These two ways, or these two positions, are regarded as falsehoods by us. The position of the astrologers is given the lie by reason, for correct reasoning has already refuted, by means of lucid proofs, all those follies that they have maintained. It also is regarded as a falsehood by us because of the religious tradition, for if the matter stood thus, of what utility would the Torah and the commandment and the Talmud be to a particular individual? For in that event, every single individual would lack the power to do anything he set his mind to, since something else draws him on— against his will—to be this and not to be that; of what use then is the command or the Talmud? The roots of the religion of Moses our Teacher, we find, refute the position of these stupid ones—in addition to reason's doing so with all those proofs that the philosophers maintain to refute the position of the Chasdeans and the Chaldeans and their associates. The position of the philosophers who maintain that these things are due to chance is also regarded as a falsehood by us because of the religious tradition.
- (3) The true way upon which we rely and in which we walk is this: We say regarding this Reuben and Simon, that there is nothing that draws on the one to become a perfumer and rich, and the other to become a tanner and poor. It is possible that the situation will change and be reversed, as the philosopher maintains. But the philosopher maintains that this is due to chance. We maintain that it is not due to chance, but rather that this situation depends on the will of "Him who spoke, and (the world) came into being" (Ps. 33:9); all of this is a (just) decree and judgment. We do not know the end of the Holy One's wisdom so as to know by what decree and judgment He required that this should be this way and that that should be the other way; "for His ways are not like our ways, neither are His thoughts like our thoughts" (Is. 55:8). We rather are obliged to fix in our minds that if Simon sins, he will be punished with stripes and impoverished and his children will die and the like. And if Reuben repents and mends his ways and searches his deeds and walks in a straight path, he will grow rich and will succeed in all his undertakings and "see (his) seed and prolong (his) days" (ibid. 55:10). This is a root of the religion. If a man says, "But look, many have acted in this way and yet have not succeeded," why this is no proof. Either some iniquity of theirs caused this, or they are now afflicted in order to inherit something even better than this.

ibid

*The Rambam's rejection of astrology is not only based on its lack of any authentic intellectual or scientific authority but also because it undermines the fundamental Torah principle of free will. The position of the philosophers (which is also rejected by the Rambam) is that there is no direct Providence at all on any individual person but only general Providence on the human species as a whole. The position of the astrologers is the opposite extreme - that the life of a person is directly determined by higher forces and they have no free choice or ability to break out of this. The Rambam paints the Torah position as a combination of a person's free will and Providence from God<sup>4</sup>.*

21. The summary of the matter is that our mind cannot grasp how the decrees of the Holy One, blessed be He, work upon human beings in this world and in the world to come. What we have said about this from the beginning is that the entire position of the star gazers is regarded as a falsehood by all men of science. I know that you may search and find sayings of some individual Sages in the Talmud and Midrashim whose words appear to maintain that at the moment of a man's birth, the stars will cause such and such to happen to him. Do not regard this as a difficulty, for it is not fitting for a man to abandon the prevailing law and raise once again the counterarguments and replies (that preceded its enactment).

Similarly it is not proper to abandon matters of reason that have already been verified by proofs, shake loose of them, and depend on the words of a single one of the Sages from whom possibly the matter was hidden. Or there may be an allusion in those words; or they may have been said with a view to the times and the business before him. You surely know how many of the verses of the holy Law are not to be taken literally. Since it is known through proofs of reason that it is impossible for the thing to be literally so, the translator [of the Aramaic Targum] rendered it in a form that reason will abide. A man should never cast his reason behind him, for the eyes are set in front, not in back ....

ibid

*Rambam also rejects any proof from Chazal who appear to take astrology seriously as follows: either (i) these opinions are minority and are rejected by halacha; or (ii) those individual sages did not appreciate a crucial point; or (iii) what they said is not to be taken literally; or (iv) the statement was made in a certain context or for a certain purpose which is irrelevant to us now.*

22. והלא המעוננים והקוסמים אומרים מה שעתיד להיות. ומה הפרש יש בין הנביא ובנינו? אלא שהמעוננים והקוסמים וכיוצא בהן מקצת דבריהם מתקיימין ומקצתן אין מתקיימין כענין שנאמר *וַיִּשְׁעַד הַבְּרִי שְׁמַיִם הַחַיִּים בְּכּוֹכְבֵּי מוֹדִיעִים לַחֲדָשִׁים מֵאֲשֶׁר יָבֹאוּ עֲלֵיךְ - מֵאֲשֶׁר וְלֹא כֹל אֲשֶׁר. וְאִפְשָׁר שֶׁלֹּא יִתְקִיִּם מִדְּבָרֵיהֶם כְּלוּם אֲלֵא יִטְעוּ בְּכֹל כְּעֵנִין ... אֲבֵל הַנְּבִיא כֹל דְּבָרָיו קִיִּימִין שֶׁנֶּאֱמָר (מַלְכִים ב' י"ג) כִּי לֹא יִפְלֵ מִדְּבָרְךָ ה' אֲרָצָה. וְכֵן הוּא אֹמֵר הַנְּבִיא (ירמיהו כ"ב:ח) הַנְּבִיא אֲשֶׁר-אֲתוּ חֲלוּם יִסְפֵּר חֲלוּם וְאֲשֶׁר דְּבָרֵי אֲתוּ יִדְבַּר דְּבָרֵי אֲמֶת מֵהַלְתֵּבֶן אֶת-הַבֵּר נְאֻם-ה'. כְּלוּמָר שֶׁדְּבָרֵי הַקּוֹסְמִים וְהַחֲלוּמוֹת כֹּתֵבן שֶׁנִּתְעַרְבּוּ בּוֹ מֵעַט בֵּר וְדָבַר ה' כִּבְרֵי שֶׁאֵין בּוֹ תֵּבֶן כֹּלל.*

רמב"ם הלכות יסודי התורה פרק י הלכה ג

*However, the Rambam himself accepts that astrologers get it right some of the time!! How does that fit with his total rejection of astrology? Some suggest that the Rambam accepts that some individuals have supernatural talents and has no issue with the existence of the paranormal. He simply wishes to debunk the science of astrology as nonsense.*

### C] THE RAMBAN'S POSITION

23. וּבַחֲשׂוֹבָה לְהַרְמִצֵּין סִימָן רַפ"ג כֵּתֵב וּבִזְדוּאֵי מִשְׁמַע שֶׁאֵין הַאֲלֹטְגִינִיּוֹת כֹּלְלֵי נַחֵשׁ ... וְעוֹד דְּרָצִי חֲנִינָא סָבַר (שֵׁבַת קָוָה) מִזֵּל מַעֲשֵׂי וַיֵּשׁ מִזֵּל יִשְׂרָאֵל. וְהֵעִיג דְּלִית לְהַכְתֵּא כּוּוֹתִיָּה מְכַל מְקוֹם מִשְׁמַע דְּלֹאֵו נִיחּוֹשׁ הוּא ... וּמֵהֵבִיא שְׁמַעְתִּין דְּפָרַק מִי שֶׁחֲשִׁיךְ (שֵׁס) נְמִי מִשְׁמַע דְּמוֹתָ לְשִׁמּוֹעַ לְהֵם וְלְהַחְמִין דְּזַרְיָהֶם מֵאֲזַרְהֵם דְּחֹמֵר נִסְתַּכְלָתֵי בַּאֲלֹטְגִינִיּוֹת וּמִדְּרָצִי עֵקִיבָא דְּכּוּבָה דְּחֵיג אֲמִילְתָּא דְּזַרְתִּיָּה טוּבָא. וְלֵאחֲרֵי שְׁנִינְלָה דְּרַשׁ דְּמִשּׁוֹם לְדָקָה נִינְלָה מִמִּיתָה מִמֵּשׁ שְׁמַע מִינֵה מֵחֲמִין הִיָּה זְבֵהם ... אֲלֵא שְׁפַעְמִים הַקְּצִ"ה עוֹשֶׂה גַם לִירָאִיו לְזַטְל מֵהֵם גְּזַרְתָּ הַכּוּכָבִים ... לְפִיכָךְ אֵין שׁוֹאֲלִים זְבֵהם אֲלֵא מֵהַלָּךְ בְּתַמִּימוֹת שְׁנֵאֲמָר (דְּבָרִים שֵׁס) תַּמִּים תְּהִיָּה עִם ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ. וְהֵם רָאִה זְבֵהם דְּזַרְתָּ שֶׁלֹּא כִרְאוּנוֹ עוֹשֶׂה מִנּוּחַ וּמִרְצֵה בְּתַפִּילָּה. אֲבֵל אֵם רָאִה בַּאֲלֹטְגִינִיּוֹת יוֹם שֶׁאֵין טוּב לְמַלְאכְתּוֹ נִשְׁמַר מִמֵּנוּ וְאִינוּ סוֹמֵךְ עַל הַנֶּס. וְכַסְּבוֹר אֵינוּ שֶׁאֲסוֹר לְצוּרָה נֶגַד הַמַּזְלוֹת וְלִסְמוּךְ עַל הַנֶּס ... וְהַרְמִצִּים ז"ל כֵּתֵב ... שֶׁדְּבָרֵי הַבַּבֵּל וְשִׁטּוֹת הֵם וְהַמֵּחֲמִין שֵׁשׁ זְבֵהם מִמֵּשׁ כֹּלְלֵי נְשִׁים וְעַמִּי הָאֲרָץ וְשִׁמְעַתָּא כּוּלָּה לִיתָא הֵכִי וְעוֹד דְּאִפְלוּ בְּנִיחּוֹשׁ לֹא מִשְׁמַע הֵכִי ...

תשובות המיוחסות להרמב"ן מובא בבית יוסף יורה דעה סימן קעט

*The Ramban totally rejects the view of the Rambam. He not only takes astrology and its powers seriously, but he also rules in practice that, while a person should not consult with astrologers but rather have confidence in God, if one does see something negative in an astrological prediction, one may not ignore it and rely on miracles.*

4. The Rambam does not go into greater detail here but in fact his position is that Divine Providence takes effects as a combination of Hashgacha Klalit, Hashgacha Pratit on the individual and Hashgacha Pratit on other people which indirectly impacts that individual. We will be'H look at this in more depth in a future shiur.

24. והנה לדעת הרמב"ם אין זו שאלה כלל. כי הוא נמשך לדעת החכמים הטבעיים שסוברים שאין כוכבים כוכב טוב או רע כלל, ושאינם בעלי איכויות כלל, וכל מה שיחשבוהו האמוריים צדירים ההם דבר בטל. ושלא נחסר מאומה כשלא נשתמש צחותן העניינים, ושכל מה שיגזרוהו בעלי משפט הכוכבים אינו נמשך מלד הכוכבים כלל. אצל הוא נמשך אחר דמיון האדם, וכל מה שיעוררו על זה מלד הכוכבים אינו אלא מלד דמיונם זו, כמו אלו שישתמשו בגורלות החול או צולתו מהדברים. ויש צדבריו ספק שמן הנראה שאינו כן דעת רבותינו ז"ל, שהרי הזכירו צפרק מי שהחשיך מעשים רבים שהעולה מהם שהמזל פועל צאדם אם לא שיטבו סיצת המלות.

דרשות הר"ן הדרוש האחד עשר ד"ה אבל יש

*The Ran claims that the Rambam was influenced by natural sciences to reject astrology in favour of astronomy. Like the Ramban, however, he feels that Chazal did indeed give credence to astrology*

## D] SHULCHAN ARUCH AND PSAK

25. א: אין שואלים בחוזים בכוכבים ולא בגורלות. הגה: משום שנאמר: תמים תהיה עם ה' אלהיך (דברים יח, יג) דאסור לשאול צקוסמים ומנחשים ומכשפים  
 ב: צמה שאדם יודע שהוא כנגד המזל לא יעשה ולא יסמוך על הנס, אלא שאין לחקור אחר זה משום תמים תהיה (תשובת רמב"ן סימן רפ"ג) כמו שנתבאר. ....  
 ו: מי שנשכו עקרב מותר ללחוש עליו, ואפילו בשבת. ואף על פי שאין הדבר מועיל כלום הואיל ומסוכן הוא התירו כדי שלא תטרף דעתו עליו.

שולחן ערוך יורה דעה סימן קעט

*The Shulchan Aruch rules a straight prohibition on seeking astrological advice. The Rema however rules in accordance with the Ramban that a negative astrological prediction must be taken seriously. What happened to the position of the Rambam?*

26. (יג) ואף על פי כו'. הרמב"ם וכ"כ צפי' המשנה לפ"ד דעבודת כוכבים. אצל כל הצאים אחריו חלקו עליו שהרי הרצה לחשים מאלרו בגמרא והוא נמשך אחר הפילוסופיא. לכן כתב שכשפים ושמות ולחשים ושדים וקמטיות הכל הוא שקר. אצל כזר הכו אותו על קדקדו שהרי מלינו הרצה מעשיות בגמרא ע"פ שמות וכשפים .... והפילוסופיא הטתו צרוצ לקחה לפרש הגמרא הכל צדריך הלציי ולעקור אותם מפשטם. וח"ו איני מאמין צהם ולא מהם ולא מהמונס אלא כל הדברים הם כפשטם אלא שיש צהם פנימיות לא פנימיות של בעלי הפילוסופיא שהם חילונית אלא של בעלי האמת.

באור הגר"א יורה דעה סימן קעט ס"ק יג

*The Vilna Gaon totally rejects the Rambam's view as having been misled by Greek philosophy and accepts a normative position based on kabbalistic understandings.*