

INTRODUCTION

§1: Sahl and Māshā'allāh

The sixteen works translated in this volume were written by two of the most important and famous astrologers in the Arabic period of traditional astrology, Sahl bin Bishr and Māshā'allāh bin Atharī (or simply Māshā'allāh). Little is known about their biographies, but both were Jews of Persian descent working in the 8th and 9th Centuries AD, and many of the works here were fundamental for later astrologers, who quoted them often (and sometimes copied their work without attribution). Some of these works have never been translated into any modern language; for others, it is their first English translation; for yet others, these are updated English translations based on cross-referencing between all of the works and access to some critical editions in Arabic. Collected together for the first time, they represent a huge contribution to astrological theory and practice, and will prove to be of great benefit to modern astrologers interested in traditional thought and techniques.

Māshā'allāh's¹ work represents some of the most important work to be produced in the early Arabic period. He was born in ca. 740 AD in Basra, Iraq, and died ca. 815 AD. As a young man he participated in a team of astrologers who cast the electional chart for the foundation of Baghdad for Caliph Al-Mansūr (dated July 31, 762), along with Nawbakht the Persian and 'Umar al-Tabarī. His output was large, covering at least 28 works by Pingree's count, but since some of the larger Arabic works were divided up and copied in smaller chunks, it is hard to know their exact number. An additional problem is that most of his work survives only in Latin, and other works are lost altogether.

Māshā'allāh represents a period in which Indian and Persian astrological practices were consciously informed with Hellenistic ones (primarily from Ptolemy and Dorotheus). From the Indian and Persian side there are mainly works of mundane astrology, and from the Hellenistic side there are nativities and elections. But as I will point out below, Māshā'allāh's writings also

¹ My biographical information is based primarily on Holden 1996 and Pingree 1974.

include both what we would recognize as traditional horary astrology, and an earlier type which casts “consultation” charts to divine the client’s intention.

As we look from our perspective at long-term influences in astrology, it is perhaps not too much of an overstatement to say that true medieval astrology begins with Māshā’allāh, or at least with his circle. For reasons of Islamic imperial politics, the effort to translate other scientific materials into Arabic, and through the influence of his pupil Abu ‘Ali (whose *Judgments of Nativities* was so important to the medieval Latins), Māshā’allāh stood at the end of an era and the beginning of a new one, and his name and work were well-known and respected. It is a shame that so little of his work has been translated into modern languages. Apart from the eleven works translated here, there are approximately 6-10 others in Latin which should be translated in the future. According to Pingree, some of the works attributed to Māshā’allāh also appear in the list for Abū Ma’shar, so there is some dispute about authorship.

Sahl bin Bishr, known better by the Latinized names *Zael* or *Zabel*, was a Persian Jew who flourished in the first half of the 9th Century. So he was a contemporary of Māshā’allāh’s, and while he knows Māshā’allāh’s work, we do not know if they ever met. From the sources I have consulted, we know next to nothing about him, but Stegemann says he was an attendant of al-Hasan, the vizier under the Caliph al-Ma’mun, in Khurasan.

If Māshā’allāh and his circle formed the true beginning of medieval astrology from a linguistic and cultural-contribution perspective, Sahl’s work stands out as a kind of reader-friendly repackaging of traditional material which made his work extremely influential for many centuries. His *Introduction* is notable for its list of technical terms, which reappears again and again in various forms in later astrologers’ works. His clear principles of horary and electional astrology, the topics covered and his delineations, are all drawn on by later astrologers. (Māshā’allāh’s own horary methods were not as popular as Sahl’s.) His *Fifty Judgments* is a collection of handy sayings and principles which are reflected in both style and content in works by ibn Ezra, Bonatti, and collections of centiloquys. Two works I have not included in this volume (for various reasons) are his work on the magical use of precious stones, and a work on mundane astrology and weather prediction, known in Latin as the *Fatidica* or “Prophetic Sayings.”

§2: *Stegemann and Dorotheus*

In 1939 and 1942, two books on ancient and medieval astrology were published by the German scholar and philologist Viktor Stegemann. The first was his attempt at reconstructing the transmission and authentic work of Dorotheus from whatever Latin, Arabic, and Greek quotations and summaries he could find.² Stegemann already believed that much medieval natal and electional astrology is based on only a few sources, chief among them Dorotheus. In 1942 he continued work on this thesis, publishing a critical Arabic, Greek, and Latin edition (with German translations of the Arabic) of Sahl's *Introduct.* §5, the list of technical terms with explanations and some examples.³ Through references to the *CCAG* and other sources, and drawing on his Dorotheus work, Stegemann felt justified in his earlier belief about the centrality of Dorotheus to the medieval tradition.

Stegemann was more right than perhaps he knew. As the reader will see in my footnotes, I have cited, wherever possible and obvious, the passages in Pingree's *Carmen* on which Sahl depends. It turns out that principles and passages from Dorotheus form part or even a large bulk of material from *Introduct.*, *On Quest.*, *On Elect.*, and the *Fifty Judgments*. But as I mentioned before, Sahl's ability to reorganize and repackage, and to isolate theoretical statements from exposition, allowed him to reshape much of this material in a form recognizable as medieval astrology today. In fact, based on Stegemann and the translations in this book, it seems to me that pretty much all medieval astrology can be boiled down to three or four central books or types of books. The first two are real and known: Ptolemy's *Tetrabiblos* and Dorotheus's *Carmen*.⁴ We could add to this a hypothetical Persian-style work on mundane astrology (perhaps even Māshā'allāh's own work *On Conjunctions, Religions, and Peoples*), and possibly another work on horary. If we had all three or four of these books (even apart from other sources like Valens and Antio-

² Some of the many authors used by Stegemann include Hephaestio, al-Qasrani, al-Rijāl, Rhetorius, Abu Bakr, Abraham ibn Ezra, Leopold of Austria, 'Umar al-Tabarī, and many other authors and compilations. Pingree's later edition of Dorotheus's *Carmen* (dedicated to Stegemann) was not a continuation of Stegemann's project, but rather a translation of 'Umar al-Tabarī's Arabic version, which differs in certain respects from other versions.

³ As I explain below, I use Stegemann's edition in parallel with the Latin. I also draw on Crofts's Arabic edition of *On Elect.*, and have provided a translation of Māshā'allāh's Arabic *Chap. Rains*.

⁴ I note here that Crofts argues Sahl uses a totally different edition of *Carmen*. See my notes to *On Elect.* in §12 below.

thus), we could possibly reconstruct all of the main points of medieval astrology retrospectively—though of course it took them centuries of practice, reading, experimenting, commentary, and so on.

I had originally planned to include as footnotes all of Stegemann's commentary on the individual sections, which offer extensive references to many Hellenistic astrologers; but the commentary itself runs to almost thirty pages, and it really deserves its own translation, especially due to the numerous Greek quotations and references to the *CCAG*. But as a point of interest, I have here translated portions of Stegemann's own Introduction, to give the reader a sense of his thought. First we begin with some comments on the transmission of materials:

“The Arabic terminology of the planetary positions, based on conjoining and flowing away,⁵ is found in situational horoscopy⁶ (which works with the Moon and its position relative to the planets and the zodiacal signs), systematically handled openly for the first time in the *Textbook* of the Jew Sahl ibn Bishr ibn Habib (ca. 785—845? in Khurasan, an attendant of al-Hasan, the Vizier under the Caliph al-Ma'mun). Sahl wrote in Arabic. We definitely have his textbook in a copy in the original language, as it was translated and excerpted by the Byzantines as well as in the West, in Latin transmissions in the Middle Ages, [and] enjoyed great respect—Zahel, as the author is called here, is afterwards much cited in the emergent astrological works in the West—the corresponding chapter is a suitable departure point for a small study that should be instructive for the connection of the Arabic with the ancient astrology, and the adoption of these terms in the medieval astrology of the Byzantines and the occidental West.”

After a brief description of the structure of his own book, Stegemann continues:

“The outcome of this investigation into sources should be presented here to a certain extent only as theses. Everything (or very much) of what this terminological chapter of Sahl contains, goes for the most part back to the Greek astrologer Dorotheus of Sidon. He lived around

⁵ *Defluxion*. That is, “separation.”

⁶ *Augenblickshoroskopie*, lit. “moment-horoscopy.”

Christ's birth, and reached to the time of Tiberius. His influence on the astrology of late antiquity (possibly through the mediation of Theophilus of Edessa, as he came to Baghdad) allowed the Arabs to be attentive to him. Dorotheus's significance for the beginnings of Arabic astrology appears even greater (according to the results of this work) than I hitherto was able to make plausible.⁷

“In a succession of works I have hitherto been able to explain that, in the astrological literature of the Arabs from the Greeks, next to Ptolemy's *Tetrabiblos*, for great stretches the poet Dorotheus is written out and often also presented there, [even] where he is not expressly cited.

“The little writing at hand produces another example for this question, which the results I obtained earlier confirm; and it puts me in the [right] situation to append some further fragments of the hitherto arranged material. In essence, the interpretation applies only to one chapter of the *Introduction*; but according to the results one must suspect that Sahl has written his entire *Introduction* as an extensive application of Dorotheus. I believe we are now permitted to argue that the beginnings of astrology in the Arabic language rest on very few ancient writers. Systematic researches into the still unedited mass of the Arabic astrologers' manuscripts can definitely expect further results along the lines of this inquiry.

“With the importance that one allots to Sahl's writings in the area of the Mediterranean and in middle Europe (between the 13th and 16th/17th Centuries), it again appears impressive how dependent one still was, in these times of the reorganization of the Western spirit in the direction of modern natural science, on antiquity, except that those times could visualize the connection more than in general outlines. The Middle Ages in the occidental West, like in Byzantium, stands here in an unmediated contact with Hellenism, above all that of Ptolemaic Egypt and the astrology published there in the *Hermetica* and in the work of Nechepso-Petosiris. From these writings Dorotheus took most of his material. It wandered over the late antique East (Syria) to-

⁷ Stegemann is referring to his 1939 compilation of Dorothean fragments.

ward Baghdad and the Middle East and into Arabian Egypt, in order to reach from there over north Africa (Tunisia) to Spain (Toledo) and Sicily, from where it was brought further to middle Europe and eastern Europe; then also manuscripts with the Latin translation of the *Introduction* can be found in the libraries of St. Petersburg and Krakow. The printed edition in the late 15th and early 16th Centuries completed what the manufacturers of astrological manuscripts had begun. Since then, printings of Sahl's works can be found in many great and small libraries in all of Europe. A great part of what they convey belongs, without it being recognizable, to the ancient astrologer Dorotheus of Sidon."

For the Arabic basis of his text, Stegemann used Manuscript #V 799 (formerly D.C. 116), at the Universitätsbibliothek in Leipzig. For his Latin, he relied on three manuscripts⁸ and the 1493 printed edition (the same one I am using for other parts of Sahl). Following are some comments he makes about the middle Latin transmission:

"Writings of Sahl ibn Bishr, among them the *Book of Judgments*, belong to the earliest ones that were made accessible to the West in middle Latin translations. Of these translations, we already have manuscripts from the 12th Century; they were copied up to the 15th Century in increasing numbers, which suggests [both] their widespread use and—in the understanding of that time—their practical reliability in the study of astrology in western Europe.

"The Western translator of Sahl's work is unknown. We must seek him in western Europe, in Spain or southern France. Of the translators of the time, possibilities are Hermann of Dalmatia⁹ (who made a name for himself through his transmission of the *Great Introduction* of Abū Ma'shar (1120 AD?)), Plato of Tivoli, and John of Spain; above all the

⁸ They are: (1) Clm. 130 21, from the 12th Century (Catalogue #9264), and (2) Clm. 189 27, from the 13th Century (Catalogue #9265), both at the Staatsbibliothek in Munich. (3) "Soest, the Stadtbibliothek 24 #12, from the 13th Century (Catalogue #9266)."

⁹ Now often called Hermann of Carinthia.

last-named had translated numerous astrological books into Latin, among them likewise the *Great Introduction* of Abū Ma‘shar.”¹⁰

Following this Stegemann discusses the transmission of manuscripts and the quality of various editions, and why he chose 1493 as his printed source (it is the earliest, for one thing). Further discussion need not detain us here.¹¹

For now I turn to other topics of interest to astrologers in this volume (§§3—11). After discussion these other topics, I will provide information and interesting details on each of the works, including my source texts for each (§§12—13).

§3: *Five Relations to Domiciles*

In these texts we see several configurations and conditions which Sahl and Māshā’allāh consider important, but which lack either formal definitions or clear statements about their theoretical background or practical value. But if we pay close attention to what Sahl and Māshā’allāh say throughout their works, we can find valuable hints and comments. In this section I would like to lay out briefly five relationships that planets have to the twelve domiciles, explaining what Sahl and Māshā’allāh say about them, what I believe their underlying concept is, and how they may be used. The five relationships are: (a) being the Lord of a domicile; (b) being in a domicile of one’s own or another’s; (c) aspecting one’s own domicile by whole-sign aspect; (d) aspecting one’s own Lord by whole-sign aspect; and (e) reception. These relations may not be very tightly interconnected, but they share certain features in common. I believe that if we can harness these relationships properly, our understanding of traditional astrology will increase greatly, and our practice will improve.

(a) Being the Lord of a domicile. This is the simplest and most abstract relation. All planets rule at least one domicile. And it is telling that the typical Arabic word for what we call the domicile Lord (*dominus domus*) is *ṣāhib*,

¹⁰ If we are confined to these three choices, there is no doubt it must be John of Spain. The styles of Hermann and Plato of Tivoli are very different from John’s and this edition of Sahl.

¹¹ Stegemann also does much to compare the Arabic, Latin, and Greek editions of the *Introduction*. Hopefully it will be possible in the future to have complete translations of all of Stegemann’s works, especially his reconstructed edition of Dorotheus (1939).

“owner.” The basic concept behind being a domicile Lord is *ownership*. A related notion is that of *management*. The domicile Lord *owns* the domicile, and is its chief *manager*, much as we think of someone who owns his own home and is the head of the household. The domicile Lord is in charge and sets the rules for the home (even though the exalted Lord is in some sense higher still), so it is the default planet we look to in deciding how to judge a matter.

(b) Being in a domicile. This relationship runs a spectrum between being in one’s own domicile or exaltation, to intermediate states such as being in a domicile of one’s own triplicity, or perhaps the domicile of a sect-mate, to the other extreme of being peregrine (lit. “foreigner, pilgrim”), in a domicile in which one has no rulership. For now I wish to minimize the intermediate states. The contrast between a planet being in its own domicile (or exaltation) and being peregrine is one between being (1) independent, self-reliant and in control, and (2) being dependent and in a relative state of helplessness—i.e., reliant on the Lord of the domicile one is in. This is a logical extension of the concept of ownership and management.

These first two relationships are basic in traditional astrology, and they are found in plenty of other texts. But these works of Sahl and Māshā’allāh also speak of three other relationships, to which I now turn.

(c) Aspecting one’s own domicile by whole-sign aspects. There are no references in these works to aspecting intermediate cusps, and references to planets aspecting the angular degrees are still somewhat speculative. But it is very clear that Sahl and Māshā’allāh are interested in whether or not a Lord aspects its own domicile by a whole-sign aspect. One of the key texts is *On Elect.* §§23b-c, where Sahl says “a planet which does not aspect its own domicile is like a man absent from his own house, who cannot repel nor prohibit anything from it. Indeed if a planet aspected its own domicile, it is like the master of a house who guards it: for whoever is in the house, fears him, and he who is outside fears to come to it.” For Sahl, when a planet aspects its own domicile, it is able to *protect* it,¹² and *provide* for it in the sense that the aspect allows a matter to be perfected, and quickly so.¹³ In one case he says that a planet aspecting its own domicile will show someone with a good family stock.¹⁴

¹² *On Elect.* §§23b-c.

¹³ *On Quest.* §§10.1, 10.2, 13.11.

¹⁴ *On Quest.* §10.5.

But if the planet does *not* aspect its own domicile (that is, if it is in the 2nd, 6th, 8th, or 12th from it), it can show that the person signified will be in some other land not his own;¹⁵ or it shows someone not staying at home;¹⁶ the Lord will be “inimical” to its own domicile, leading to duress and complications for the matter (so that even if the Lord can perfect a matter, it will not be in the way expected or desired);¹⁷ the Lord will be “in need,” craving and desiring and weak;¹⁸ it will be poor, not able to do much,¹⁹ or not even be able to provide what it signifies,²⁰ its abilities slow;²¹ if it represents a clime in a mundane chart, that clime will suffer detriment.²² Moreover, it will show someone of low stock,²³ as though the person signified is cut off from his roots, having no recognizable lineage; and it can show someone mischievous and deluding,²⁴ as though he is unreliable, departs from established norms, and is unconnected to normal lines of support and responsibility.

In other words, the aspect to one’s own domicile shows a two-way relation to one’s home and roots. On the one hand, the aspect from the Lord shows his protection of it, providing for its signification, and perfecting it. But this connection also shows that he is supported by it, and not in need. When he is not aspecting, he is in need, with the danger of mischief, he is weakened and cut off from home. *Providing* and *protection* seem to be the key concepts here, and they, too, are related to the notions of home, ownership, belonging.

It seems to me that the contrast here can be shown more vividly if we imagine the difference between (1) a head of household who goes out into the world but keeps in close contact with his family and his responsibilities there, being supported and acting as a provider and protector. This benefits both him and the home. But (2) a head of household who disappears for long periods of time, who does not support the home and cannot or will not take care of crises there, is cut off from its support and appears aimless, irresponsible, his background and morality under suspicion.

¹⁵ *On Quest.* §10.8.

¹⁶ *On Elect.* §46.

¹⁷ *On Quest.* §10.2.

¹⁸ *On Rev.* Chs. 11-12.

¹⁹ *On Quest.* §13.11.

²⁰ *On Quest.* §4.2.

²¹ *On Quest.* §9.6.

²² *On Rev.* Intro.

²³ *On Quest.* §10.5.

²⁴ *On Elect.* §35.

So if the Lord of the Ascendant in a nativity is in the 2nd, 6th, 8th or 12th domiciles, then it will not aspect its own domicile. By its location it will show a key area of life the native finds himself in. But since the Lord wants to produce the native's life and well-being, being cut off from the rising sign means that he will be slower to realize the native's happiness, will find difficulty in doing so, will feel a lack of support or rootedness, might perhaps find himself surrounded by mischief or subject to matters not in his direct control. Now, all of this must be taken in context, and it may not apply equally easily to all situations. For instance, if the Lord of the 11th were in the 10th, then the native's friends will be involved in his advancement, profession, and honor. Although the Lord of the 11th is not aspecting the 11th domicile, it would not necessarily mean that the friends are ineffective. After all, the Lord is still aspecting the rising sign, and so we would still expect the friends to affect the native productively. But perhaps the delineation could be refined on the basis of this lack of aspect to the 11th, along with other features in the chart.

(d) The fourth relation is that of aspecting one's own dispositor by whole signs. I emphasize whole signs, because if the texts meant an aspect by orbs or exact degree, then it would immediately be a case of reception proper—but in these cases the texts never speak of reception, only aspecting one's own Lord (and especially the Moon aspecting her own Lord). So I take this to be a whole-sign aspect, just as in aspecting one's own domicile above.

In the case of the Moon, the indications are relatively straightforward and general, probably because she is the universal significatrix for everything on earth. If she aspects her Lord (by whole signs), then matters will go well, quickly, and smoothly for what she signifies (Sahl emphasizes this in elections).²⁵ But for other planets, there are few passages in the texts, and there seems to be a distinction. In general, a planet aspecting its Lord (by whole signs) will have its strength doubled for its task;²⁶ have joy and security;²⁷ and the person signified will be bold and faithful to his master; but if it did not aspect, the person signified will not be faithful.²⁸ However, in issues of conflict, imprisonment, and so on, if a planet aspects its Lord, then that Lord will have *control* over that planet, and it will not be good for it.²⁹

²⁵ *On Elect.* §§35, 46, 47b, 51, 53, 59c, 104b, 126a, 138c, 140a; *On Quest.* §13.11.

²⁶ *On Quest.* §7.25.

²⁷ *On Rev.* Ch. 19.

²⁸ *On Quest.* §7.25.

²⁹ *On Quest.* §§7.25, 13.10.

MĀSHĀ'ALLĀH'S BOOK ON RECEPTION

Of which these are the chapters:

The first chapter: what is reception?

The second chapter: on a matter which is hoped for, whether it would come to be or not

The third chapter: whether an infirm person would be liberated or die

The fourth chapter: a question concerning an infirm person

The fifth chapter: on substance

The sixth chapter: on substance lent

The seventh chapter: on things left behind by a certain dead person

The eighth chapter: on a kingdom, whether it would be acquired

The ninth chapter: a question about a kingdom

The tenth chapter: a question about a kingdom

The eleventh chapter: on discovering the *hīlāj* of the native

The twelfth chapter: a question about a kingdom

Māshā'allāh's book on reception begins:

A certain man from among the sages discovered a book from the books of the secrets of the stars, concerning those things which kings treasured. And he expounded it, and laid bare its intention in all things of which men are in need in their own affairs concerning questions. And it was in accordance with that, that he put down and laid bare in the matters of questions, whether the matter would be or not, and when it will be (if it ought to come to be), and when it will be apparent that it is not (if it ought not to come to be), and what would prohibit it so that it is not, and by whom, and whence it is (if it ought to come to be).

And the knowledge of this matter, and the exposition of it, is on the seven planets, and in their twelve domiciles, and in the seven exaltations, and in their descensions,¹ moreover their conjunctions and separations, and in the receptions toward one another, and in the rendering of reception, and the

¹ Māshā'allāh omits the detriments.

pushing of their disposition to each other. And the one to whom the disposition arrives, will be the significator (by the command of God):² which if it were in the nature of the effecting of the matter, it will signify its effecting. And if it were in the nature of prohibiting, it will signify its prohibition (by the command of God).

² Let us call this the “final dispositor.”

Chapter 1: What is reception?

Know that reception comes to be from the exaltations and the domiciles, in the causing of matters, whether they are or not: this is, that some planet of the seven is in the exaltation of another planet, or in its domicile, and it is joined to it from the seven known aspects; or, were both in one sign, and some one of them is in the exaltation [or domicile] of its associate, joined to it. Therefore, then it will be joined to it by its own body, an example of which matter is [this]: if Saturn is in Aries, in the twentieth degree, and Mars in the fifteenth degree of the same.

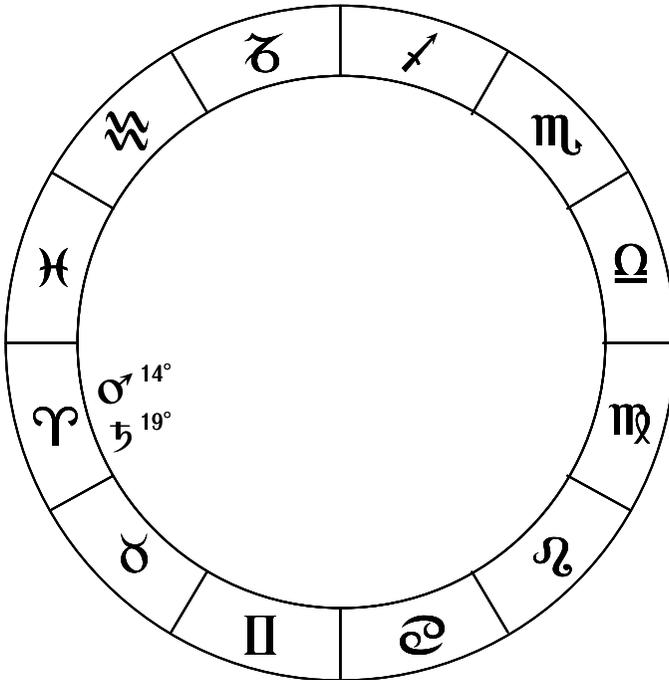


Figure 48: Mars Receiving Saturn by Domicile

Then Mars is being joined to Saturn by his own body, and Mars receives Saturn in his own domicile, but Saturn does not receive Mars. This comes to be if some planet were not in the known aspects, who is closer to the conjunction of Saturn (namely degree by degree), in front of Mars. Which if there were a planet in the known aspects (or in Aries) who is closer to the

conjunction of Saturn, that one will be more worthy for the conjunction of Saturn than Mars is, for a true conjunction is degree by degree (both for a [corporal] conjunction and an aspect).

And there is another example of reception: if Saturn were in Aries, the twentieth degree, and Mars in the tenth degree of Capricorn, and none of the planets is closer than Mars to the conjunction of Saturn (namely, degree by degree). And when Mars would be joined to Saturn degree by degree, then they receive each other mutually in their domiciles, for Mars receives Saturn (because [Saturn] is in [Mars's] domicile), and Saturn receives Mars (because [Mars] is in [Saturn's] domicile).

Likewise the exaltations are just like the domiciles, but the exaltations are of greater authority in a kingdom—namely if [something] is done concerning a king, the Lord of the exaltation is stronger than the Lord of the domicile. Therefore, if the Sun were in Aries in the tenth degree, and Mars in Capricorn in the tenth degree, then the Sun is being joined to Mars, and Mars receives the Sun because [the Sun] is in [Mars's] domicile; but the Sun does not receive Mars, because [Mars] is not in the domicile of [the Sun].

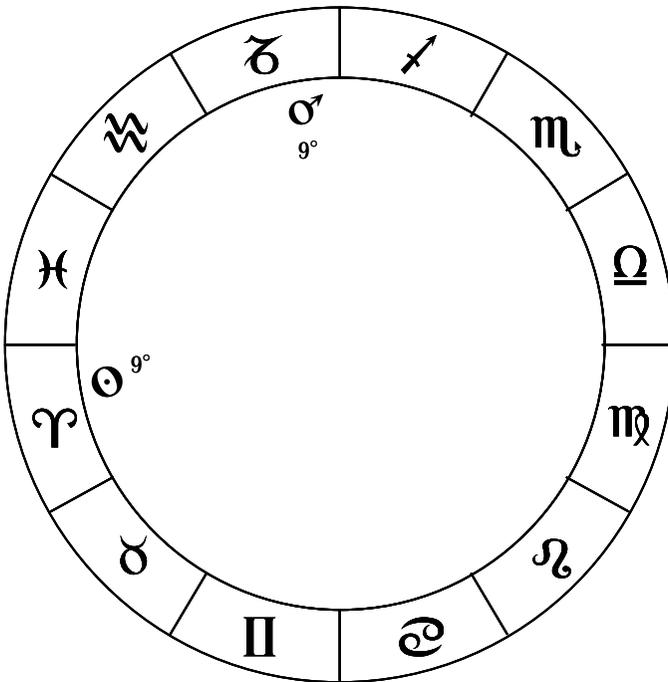


Figure 49: Mars Receiving the Sun by Domicile

Likewise³ the rest of the seven planets, whichever one of them were joined to its associate from its domicile or exaltation in the known aspects, or in one of the signs, and it projected or committed its disposition, [then] if the one to whom it is committed receives [the disposition],⁴ it will perfect the matter, by the command of God. And the Sun in this aspect [above] does not receive Mars, because [Mars] is not in [the Sun's] domicile, nor in [the Sun's] exaltation; and Mars receives the Sun because [the Sun] is in [Mars's] domicile.

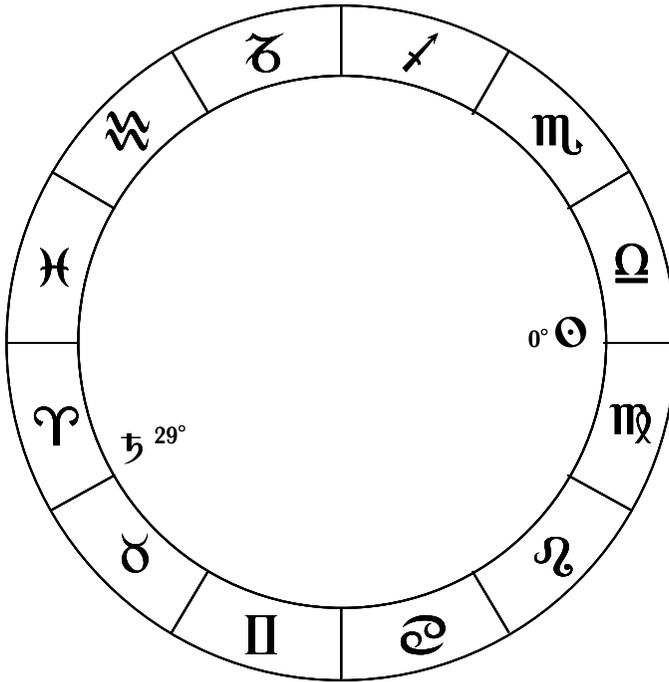


Figure 50: Saturn and the Sun Receiving Each Other by Exaltation

³ This paragraph is ambiguous. First, it seems strange that after these examples Māshā'allāh would feel the need to mention the other planets specifically—could this be a new topic? Besides, this new discussion of committing disposition is also ambiguous because it is unclear to me whose dignities we are in.

⁴ Remember that reception proper is not the same as receiving a disposition which is pushed to a planet.

And if the Sun were in Libra in the first degree, and Saturn in Aries in the thirtieth degree, and no planet were in Aries, nor [one] in all of the aspects closer than the Sun to the conjunction of Saturn, nor did Saturn go out from Aries until the Sun is joined to him degree by degree, [then] the Sun receives Saturn, and Saturn the Sun: each one receives his associate in this place by exaltations.⁵ And if it were in the square aspect or the opposition, it signifies labor and error, and anxiety, and contrariety; and in the trine and sextile aspect, and in the conjunction, smoothness and piety and loftiness. And if the Sun were joined to Saturn, and [Saturn] received the Sun, with [Saturn] even being received in turn by the Sun, from their own domiciles or exaltations, they will make peace⁶ and perfect the matter, by the command of God.

Likewise, all of the benefic planets with benefics increase the good.

And the malefics with malefics come to be good on account of withdrawal—that is, they make good, and their evil and impediment withdraws.⁷

And the benefics with malefics make an agreement, and their evil recedes, and the matter is perfected—unless they were in the square aspect or opposition, because there is a certain labor and error in this.

But if the Sun were in Aries, and Saturn in Libra (just as I told you before about the conjunction), there will be enmities and contrarieties, ignorances,

⁵ Note the ambiguity here, based on this statement about Saturn leaving the sign before reception. Do they receive each other *already* because the aspect *will* perfect while they are in their own signs (in which case the perfection of the aspect is merely preferable to being in a whole-sign reception), or are they not in reception at all *until* the aspect actually perfects?

⁶ Here and elsewhere two related verbs are being used: *pacifio*, “to conclude peace, make peace, pacify,” and *pacifior*, “to enter into an agreement.” Both of these suggest that reception makes planets discard their differences and come to an agreement (even if certain aspects make this agreement brief and unstable).

⁷ Abū Ma’shar discusses this (and attributes the concept to certain “ancients”) in *Gr. Intr.* VII.4.483ff. According to him, if Saturn and Mars were joined by corporal conjunction, they would help to temper their respective cold and hot qualities (which could be further changed by their sign placement or solar phase, *etc.*). But this seems hard to square with the claim that the Saturn-Mars conjunction in Cancer is a terrible thing—as Māshā’allāh says in *On Roots* Ch. 11 and Abū Ma’shar describes at length in *OGC* II.8.

and refusals, because [neither] of them receives its associate.⁸ And all of the planets do likewise.

For a conjunction⁹ comes to be from the known aspects (namely from the opposition, trine, square and sextile aspect) and from the [corporal] conjunction. And this comes to be in the noted domiciles. And whatever would be less than two signs, is being separated from conjunction. This comes to be if a planet entered the following sign before a planet who is going toward it, would be joined to it—nor is it [then] joined to it.¹⁰

And know that the conjunction comes to be in this way, whichever of the seven planets it was: a light one is joined to a heavy one, and a heavy one is not joined to a light one, because a light one overtakes a heavy one, and a heavy one does not overtake a light one. For a conjunction comes to be from degree by degree when they are conjoined (namely the light to the heavy): then they are joined from degree by degree, and [the light one] commits its own disposition to [the heavy one]. After this, [the light one] is separated from [the heavy one], and does not stop aspecting him (from [the aspect by which]) he is being joined to it, until he is separated from it. But a conjunction is an aspect, because however long a planet were going to another planet, it will aspect it with its own light and own nature, until it projects its own light upon it, from degree by degree: than it will be a true conjunction, and [the light one] will commit its own matter to the other.¹¹ After that, it is being separated from it, and the end of its aspect is in this way.

And a planet, if it were going to the conjunction of another, will indicate what does not yet exist. And the one who is being separated from [the conjunction] will indicate what is past and is already done. Namely, a star will indicate what is past from the star from which it is being separated; but what is going to be will be indicated by the star to which it is being joined.

⁸ Both planets are in their own exaltations. In fact one might say their opposition is made worse, because each will be proud, powerful, and puffed-up—not a good situation for people seeking agreements.

⁹ Here and elsewhere the translator (and probably Māshā'allāh) uses “conjunction” equivocally, sometimes meaning any conjoining of the planets whatsoever, and sometimes only the corporal conjunction.

¹⁰ This situation assumes that the planets are in the same sign, and one planet goes to the next sign. But we still have the same ambiguity as above, due in part to the use of the subjunctive. For while the conjunction cannot be *perfected*, does reception exist at all, or does it not exist because it will *never* be perfected?

¹¹ This suggests that committing disposition only takes place when the aspect perfects—which raises the further question, whether the disposition can be committed at all if the aspect will not be perfected while they are in their current signs.

**Chapter 2: On a matter which is hoped for,
whether it would come to be or not**

Therefore if you were asked, about some matter, whether it would be perfected or not, or, about some rumor, whether it is¹² or not, you will take the shadow immediately, at that hour when the word goes out of the mouth of the one seeking the matter. And let the man who seeks the matter be asking on his own behalf, or let him write to you in letters of his own hand (which if he did not know how to write, let him send you such a person who is anxious about his matter), and let him not seek another matter besides [this one] with it, until you comprehend [this one]; and let this not be except in a matter about which there is great anxiety, or in a very necessary matter. However, it is not consistent with the wise person that he should ask for himself, but it behooves him to ask another.

And once the ascending sign and its degree were laid out for you, and the sign of the Midheaven and its degree,¹³ and you took note of the seven planetary dispositors (by the command of God) in their own degrees, and in the domiciles in which they were, and in their minutes, with a most precise and pure number, from which nothing shorter nor greater fell,¹⁴ then look at the Lord of the Ascendant and the Moon, and the one of them whom you found stronger, operate through that one, and the other will participate with it. That is, you will begin to look at the Lord of the Ascendant: which if he aspected the ascending sign, this will be in accordance with¹⁵ the strength of his testimony—therefore operate through him, and the Moon will participate with him, in whatever place she was. And if the Lord of the Ascendant did not aspect the Ascendant, you should look to see whether he would be joined to a planet who aspects the ascending sign from *its* own place, and renders [the Lord of the Ascendant's] light to the Ascendant itself; or [if the Lord of the Ascendant] would be joined to a planet cadent from the Ascendant,¹⁶ and that cadent planet would be joined to another one aspecting the

¹² That is, whether the content of the rumor or news is *true* or not.

¹³ Note he does not mention the intermediary cusps.

¹⁴ That is, do not estimate the planetary positions, but calculate the positions exactly.

¹⁵ *Ex.* It could also be translated as “of” or “from,” but the idea is that the strength of his testimony (in the search for the querent’s significator) goes along with, or is caused by, the aspect to the rising sign.

¹⁶ I.e., not aspecting the rising sign.

ascending sign, who lifts it up¹⁷ and render its light to the ascending sign. Thus if the Lord of the Ascendant is being joined to a planet aspecting the ascending sign, or that planet is being joined to another who renders its light to the ascending sign, it will lift up [the Lord]. And if there were a conjunction from a planet to the seven planets, the work in these will be by means of a system,¹⁸ namely where one renders and lifts up the light of one to another, until it arrives at the last of them. But as I said, if the Lord of the Ascendant pushes his own light to the ascending sign, operate simply through him, and let the Moon participate with him.

And if the Lord of the ascending sign did not aspect the Ascendant, nor were he joined to a planet aspecting the Ascendant, and to one rendering his light to it, and pushing it (because the push is its aspect to the Ascendant), then his fall is there:¹⁹ when he neither aspects the Ascendant, nor renders the light to an aspecting planet.

Which if the Lord of the Ascendant did not aspect the Ascendant, either through himself or through another to whom he renders his light, then he will be impeded²⁰ and bad. Wherefore then, operate through the Moon in the same way you operated through the Lord of the Ascendant: which if she aspected the Ascendant, or some one of the planets rendered her light to the Ascendant, operate through her, and the Lord of the Ascendant will participate with her.²¹ (And know that, according to the quantity of the impediment which has entered in upon him—that is, upon the Lord of the Ascendant—that same amount of impediment will enter in upon the matter about which it is asked.)

Therefore, operate through the Moon if she aspected the ascending sign, and the Lord of the Ascendant will participate with her—namely under the condition that the Lord of the Ascendant did not aspect the Ascendant, nor were he joined to some planet who would render his own light to the Ascen-

¹⁷ Remember that if a planet does not aspect the rising sign, then it is cadent or “falling from” (or “falling away from”) the Ascendant—therefore if such a planet can somehow get its own light over to the Ascendant through a second planet, it is as though the second planet is “lifting” the first planet up from its falling away.

¹⁸ *Ratione.*

¹⁹ That is, since no planet will lift it up (by rendering its light to the rising sign), the Lord of the Ascendant has fallen completely away from the rising sign and has little or no control over it.

²⁰ He will not be impeded in himself, but insofar as he wants to have control over the affairs of the Ascendant.

²¹ Obviously, though his participation will be weak, since he is now impeded.

dant. Afterwards, see to which of the seven planets the Moon would be joined, and operate through her, even with the Lord of the Ascendant adjoined.²²

And if [1] the Moon did not aspect the Ascendant, nor were she joined to some planet who would render her own light to the Ascendant—or even if she did aspect the Ascendant and she was not joined to any planet (which happens while she is void in course), and [2] likewise the Lord of the Ascendant did not aspect the Ascendant, and he were void in course in the same way, then look to see which of them ought to go out more quickly from the sign in which it is, and which one would have fewer degrees for going out. After this, you will change the Moon to the following sign from her own place. After this, you will look to see to which of the planets she²³ would first be joined, and judge through that. And all of the planets are changed, but the lighter planet is more worthy in a change than a heavy one. In this way, Saturn, if he were void in course, will be worse than all the rest, because the emptying of the course of the planets (that is, when they are being joined to none) indicates the malice of the matter and its slowness. And every planet, with the emptying of its course, indicates a multitude of slowness. Also, the fewness of the degrees (or the multitude of them) of the planet which it ought to walk through in the sign in which it was, after the question, indicates the slowness or quickness of the effecting of the matter.

Therefore the one who goes out more quickly from the sign in which it is, will be quicker in the matter; but a light one and heavy one, if they were void in course, indicate the slowness of matters, and their worthlessness.²⁴ Therefore, if you found the Lord of the Ascendant and the Moon void in course, joining themselves to no one, foretell the slowness of the matter, and its prolonging, and that it ought to be postponed²⁵ according to what you saw.

²² This probably means, “along with the Lord of the Ascendant.” Then we have three planets participating.

²³ The Latin could just as easily read “it,” i.e., whichever the quicker planet was. But the instruction is ambiguous. In almost every case the Moon would be the one to leave her sign more quickly, which accounts for the instruction to change her specifically. But then the whole point seems moot, since the instruction also implies that one could use the Lord of the Ascendant as well.

²⁴ So, even if we can change the planets into the next sign and look for perfection there, there will still be slowness and difficulty due to their hindrance in their *current* signs.

²⁵ This “ought” pertains to the planets, not to the querent. That is, it is not as though the *querent* ought to postpone things, but that the planets *will* postpone the matter because of *their* situation.