Maimonides (Cordoba 1138–Fustat 1204) was one of the most prestigious physicians and medical authors of medieval Jewish cultures. However, as Gerrit Bos stressed in the preface to *On Asthma*—the first of the volumes of his praiseworthy project to edit and translate into English Maimonides’ medical works—and some other researchers have stated, whereas the many aspects of Rambam’s life, thought and intellectual production have deserved substantial attention from scholars, his medical work has apparently been neglected.\(^1\) This is especially true regarding the sphere of medical theory and practice in which I am interested, that is, the care of women’s health, which has been virtually ignored but for a few exceptions.\(^2\) My past and present research has been and continues to be focused on the analysis of the reception and transmission of ideas on women’s healthcare as portrayed in Hebrew written texts. Thus, I am particularly interested in Maimonides’ views on female physiology, health and disease, their reception within Hebrew medical literature, and their influence, if any, over his co-religionists.

Maimonides did not write a gynaecological treatise, but included some gynaecological material, as well as numerous references to and mentions of women, in most of his ten medical works. The analysis of these references is of great interest from the perspective of medieval natural philosophy, since Maimonides integrated medical views derived from the Islamic tradition with Aristotelian notions, which were to have a significant weight in the articulation of theories on female physiology and sexual difference throughout and beyond the Middle Ages.\(^3\)

\(^1\) Maimonides (2002) xxi.
\(^2\) Steinberg and Muntner (1965); Bercovy (1966); Barkai (1998) 64–67.
\(^3\) On Maimonides’ stance regarding medicine see Davidson (2005), Sezgin (1996) and Maimonides (2002). For an analysis of the impact of Aristotelian philosophy on the articulation of notions on women throughout the Middle Ages, see Allen (1997) and Cadden (1995).
However, I have focused my present analysis on Maimonides’ views on women’s healthcare and diseases of genital organs, as collected and expressed in the sections of his work devoted more specifically to women’s ailments, that is, his *Commentary on the Aphorisms of Hippocrates* and the Sixteenth Chapter of his own *Aphorisms*, known as *Medical Aphorisms of Moses*, entirely dedicated to women’s medical problems. I would like to stress that this paper should be considered a work-in-progress that is still in a preliminary stage, within the framework of broader, long-term, ongoing research on Hebrew textual production on women’s healthcare.

**Maimonides on Women and Islamic Medicine**

Maimonides’ gynaecological ideas shared the same origin and development as those expressed by other Arab authors. Putting aside his other writings, as a medical writer Moses Maimonides belonged to the Islamic medical tradition. His work is an example of what has been called the “Galenization” of Islamic medicine. His heavy reliance on Galen’s medical theories, known to him from the numerous medieval Arabic translations, is noticeable in his writings. In fact, his *Compendia of Galen’s Books*, which remains so far unpublished, is described by Maimonides himself as a collection of passages that he copied verbatim from Galen. Also profoundly “Galenic” are, as we shall see, his *Commentary on the Aphorisms of Hippocrates*, where he follows Galen’s commentary, and his own *Medical Aphorisms*, which is an extensive synthesis of contemporary medical knowledge, for the most part Galenic.

Arabic gynaecological treatises rarely circulated independently. Nevertheless, women’s conditions were treated at length within medical encyclopaedias, on account of which Arab understanding of this sphere of medicine achieved wide dissemination. According to Monica Green, the “Galenization” of medicine was especially strong in the field of gynaecology, which paradoxically had nevertheless attracted little atten-

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5 Maimonides (1959); Steinberg and Muntner (1965). I am deeply indebted to Gerrit Bos, who has generously shared with me his unpublished English translation from the Arabic of Chapter Sixteen of Maimonides’ *Medical Aphorisms*.