The Guide for the Perplexed by Maimonides (1135-1204), known as Rambam, is perhaps the most well known Jewish medieval philosophical text. As Shlomo Pines notes it is purposively organized in 7 sections. Rambam’s earlier magnum opus, the Mishneh Torah (MT.), purposely organized in 14 sections, is known by the name yad (yod+daleth=14) hazakah i.e. the “strong hand” as in “with strong hand I freed you from Egypt” also the numerical equivalent (14) of the name David, Rambam’s brother who financially supported the Rambam.

Touro hosts a library guide on Rambam at http://libguides.tourolib.org/rambam Since the Rambam was a philosopher, halakhist, ethicist, and physician other related TC. Library guides in which Rambam plays a major role include those on (1) Jewish philosophy at http://libguides.tourolib.org/jewishphilosophy, (2) Evolution of Halakhah at http://libguides.tourolib.org/codification, (3) Jewish Ethics http://libguides.tourolib.org/jewishethics and (4) science and Torah at http://libguides.tourolib.org/scienceandtorah and (5) philosophy of science at http://libguides.tourolib.org/philosophyofscience The scope of Rambam’s wide intellectual interests is documented by noting that Rambam’s works can classify in the diverse areas of the LC. System: (1) B Logic & Philosophy (Sefer HaHigayon), (2) BF Ethics, (3) BM halakhah (MT. and pirush al ha-mishnah), (3) LB Education (Shemoneh Perakhim), (4) M Music Therapy (Responsa on listening to Music), and (5) WZ Medical Writings.

Rambam who read Aristotle’s Posterior Analetics, Categoria, and Topica was interested also in classification theory (see: http://databases.jewishlibraries.org/node/17678). Rambam drew on his knowledge of abstract classification theory to sublimely organize the architectonic of the Mishneh Torah topically, as if every section fits together as a part in an intricate clock. This skill that contributed to the Rambam’s genius can also be noted in the organization of the levels of prophecy, ranks of angeology, and categorization of proofs for the existence of G-d in the Guide.

In a section of the MT. titled Hilchot Teshuvah (the laws of Repentance) the Rambam asserts that the reward in the next world where there is no eating, drinking, or anything physical is proportional to the intellectual virtue gained lishmah in this world (see: http://libguides.tourolib.org/philosophyeducation).

Leo Strauss argued that the Guide is Maimonides esoteric philosophic work, while visa versa Rabbi Isidore Twersky characterizes Rambam’s Mishneh Torah as Rambam’s esoteric work and Rambam’s Guide as the exoteric work.

In part what makes the Guide and MT. esoteric works is the treatment of the subjects ma’aseh merkvah (doings of the chariot) which Rambam insists requires the pre-requisite understanding of metaphysics and ma’aseh bereshit (doings of the divine Creation ex nihilo) requiring the pre-requisite of science. The mysteries of the chariot specifically refer to Elijah the prophet ascending in a fiery chariot to G-d’s throne in heaven, Isaiah’s vision of this throne (Isa. ch. 6), and Ezekiel’s vision of G-d’s chariot in Babylon (Ezek. Ch.1).

Throughout history, the Guide and parts of the Mishneh Torah, were censored (see: AJL Proceedings 35 (2000) 172-177 2000). Chapter 51 of Part II of the Guide in part prompted Rambam’s work to be censored given the Rambam’s high estimation of the importance of philosophy including the works of Aristotle, Plato, Al Farabi, Al Kindi, etc, who influenced to Rambam’s (1) understanding of Biblical
anthropomorphisms philosophically (2) denial of the corporeality of the Godhead (ain lo demut ha guf ve-aino guf) (3) virtue as a mean, (4) G-d as the Unmoved Mover First Cause who set in motion the heavenly bodies

The Guide was originally written in Judeo Arabic: دلالة الحائرین, in Hebrew characters דלאלתא הحالריין. Rabbi Yehudah ibn Tibbon from Provence France traveled to Cairo Fostat to meet with the Rambam to discuss the art of translating the Guide into Hebrew.

The wondrous power of the Guide is suggested when the Rambam compares his act of writing down the secrets of Torah as that of a deep sea diver who has brought up precious pearls of wisdom by sounding and fathoming the depths of thought. Secondly the Rambam likens the Guide itself to a key (mafteach) that potentially may allow the reader to open gates in G-d’s 7 palaces in heaven, whereby the pilgrim soul may enter, be refreshed and delighted by celestial angelic discourses of wisdom that harmonize the perplexities and contradictions that “appear” to exist between science and torah, but can be reconciled for the sake of truth whereby science may walk in not hand in hand then alongside Torah in the march of the righteous who as the Psalmist says in the Ashrei prayer, “He is near to all who call upon him in truth (bi-emet).”