

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.

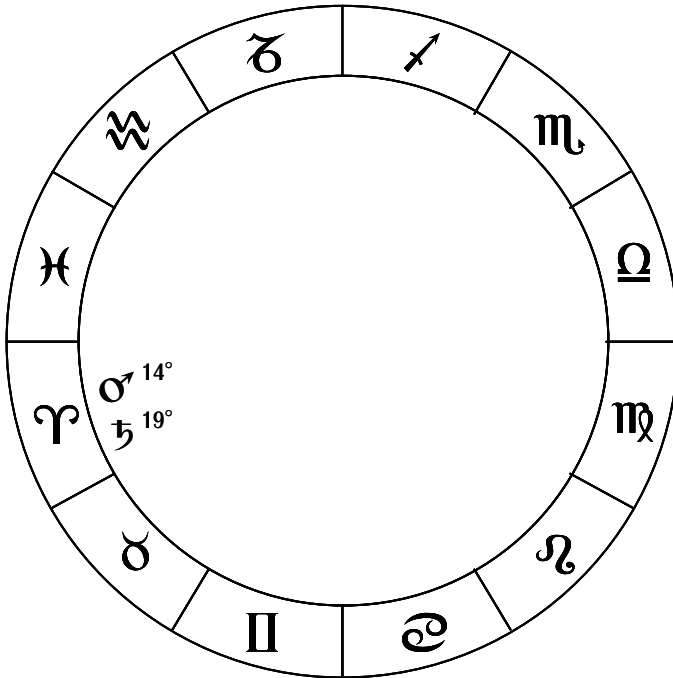


Figure 48: Mars Receiving Saturn by Domicile

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].

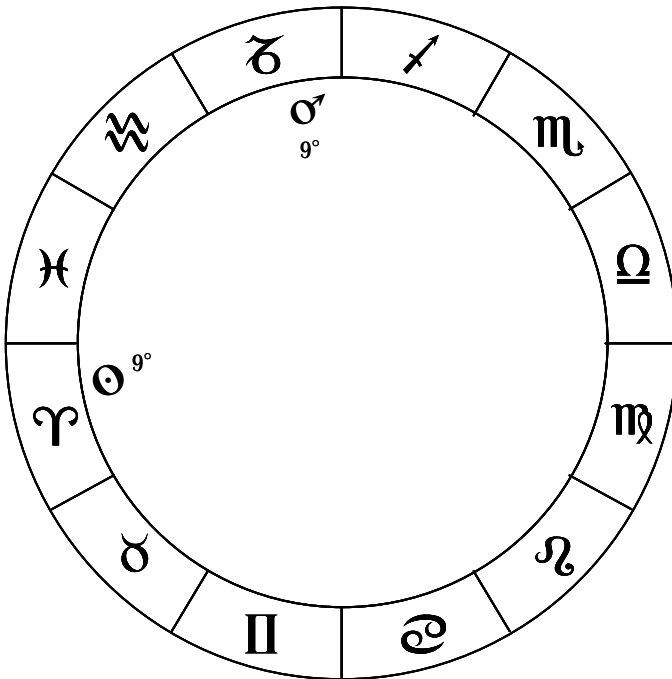


Figure 49: Mars Receiving the Sun by Domicile

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.

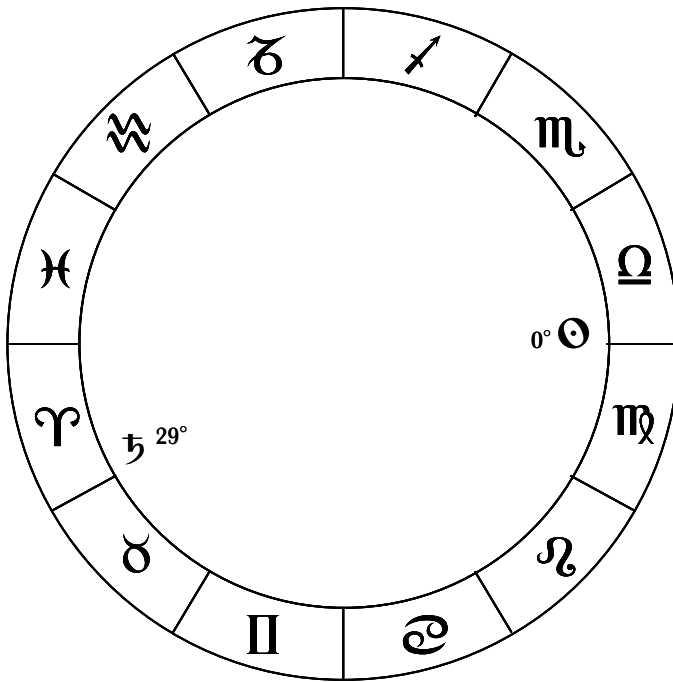


Figure 50: Saturn and the Sun Receiving Each Other by Exaltation

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.