Maimonides’ Thirteen Principles of the Faith
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THE FIRST PRINCIPLE

The First Principle is the existence of the Creator, may He be praised; to wit, that there exists a being in the most perfect type of existence and that it is the cause of the existence of all other beings. In this being, is the source of their existence and from it, derives [their] continued existence. If we were able to eliminate its existence, then the existence of all other beings would be nullified and nothing would remain. However, if we were able to eliminate the existence of all beings other than it, His existence, may He be exalted, would not be nullified nor be lacking for He is self-sufficient, dependent upon no other for His existence. Everything other than He of the Intelligences, meaning the angels, the matter [lit., bodies] of the spheres, etc., is dependent upon Him for its existence. This First Principle is attested to by verse: “I am the Lrd, thy Gd” [Ex. 20:2; Dt. 5:6].

THE SECOND PRINCIPLE

The Second Principle is Gd’s unity, may He be exalted; to wit, that this One, Who is the cause of [the existence of] everything, is one. His oneness is unlike the oneness of a genus, or of a species. Nor is it like the oneness of a single composed individual, which can be divided into many units. Nor is His oneness like that of the simple body which is one in number but infinitely divisible. Rather He, may He be exalted, is one with a oneness for which there is no comparison at all. This Second Principle is attested to by the verse: “Hear, O Israel, the Lrd thy Gd, the Lrd is One” [Dt. 6:4].
THE THIRD PRINCIPLE

The Third Principle is the denial of corporeality to Him; to wit, that this One is neither a body nor a force within a body. None of the characteristics of a body appertain to Him, either by His essence or as an accident thereof, as, for example, movement and rest. It is for this reason that they, may they rest in peace, denied to Him division and continuity in saying: "There is no sitting, nor standing, nor 'ōref, nor 'ippui in heaven". (They meant that there is: no "division" which is 'ōref, nor is there any continuity). For 'ippui means "continuity" as it is said: ve-ṣafū be-khātēf pelishtîm, meaning, "they shall push them with their shoulders [to form a continuous mass] because they are closely packed together," as the Targum says, "they shall put their shoulders together."

The prophet has said: "To whom then will you compare Me so that I be similar" [Is. 40:25]. Were Gd a body, He would, then, resemble bodies. Everything mentioned in the Scriptures which describes Him, may He be exalted, as having the attributes of a body, such as moving from place to place, or standing, or sitting, or speaking, and so on, is all metaphors, allegories, and riddles, as they have said, "The Torah speaks in the language of man." And men have philosophized a great deal about this matter. This Third Principle is attested to by the verse "You saw no image" [Dt. 4:15] meaning, "you did not perceive Him, may He be exalted, as having an image" for He is, as we have said, neither a body nor a force within a body.

THE FOURTH PRINCIPLE

The Fourth Principle is Gd's precedence; to wit, that this One who has just been described is He Who precedes [everything] absolutely. No other being has precedence with respect to Him. There are many verses attesting to this in Scriptures. The verse attesting to it [best] is: "the Gd of eternity is a dwelling place" [Dt. 33:27].

Know that one of the great principles of the Torah of Moses, our Rabbi, is that the world is created; that God brought it into being, creating it after absolute absence. That you see me hovering around the matter of Gd's precedence in dealing with the opinions of the philosophers is [only] to liberate the proof for His existence, may He be exalted, [from the cosmological argument] as I have explained and clarified in the Guide.
THE FIFTH PRINCIPLE

The Fifth Principle is that He, may He be exalted, is He Whom it is proper to worship and to praise; and [that it is proper] to promulgate praise of Him and obedience to Him. This may not be done for any being other than Him in reality, from among the angels, the stars, the spheres, the elements, and that which is composed of them, for all these have their activities imprinted upon them. They have no power [of their own] and no free will [of their own]; rather, they have only His love [for them], may He be exalted. Do not seize upon intermediaries in order to reach Him but direct your thoughts toward Him, may He be exalted, and turn away from that which is other than He. This Fifth Principle is the prohibition against idolatry and there are many verses in the Torah prohibiting it.

THE SIXTH PRINCIPLE

The Sixth Principle is [the belief in] prophecy; to wit, it should be known that, within the species of humanity, there are individuals who have a greatly superior disposition and a great measure of perfection. And, if their souls are prepared so that they receive the form of the intellect, then that human intellect will unite with the Agent Intelligence which will cause a great emanation to flow to it. These people are prophets, this [process] is prophecy; and this is its content. The explanation of this Principle to its fullest, however, would be very long and it is not our intention to demonstrate each of its basic premises, or to explain the ways by which it is perceived for that is the epitome of all the sciences. Here, we shall mention it only in the form of a statement. The verses of the Torah testifying to the prophecy of the prophets are many.
THE SEVENTH PRINCIPLE

The Seventh Principle is the prophecy of Moses, our Teacher; to wit, it should be known that: Moses was the father of all the prophets—of those who came before him and of those who came after him; all were beneath him in rank and, that he was the chosen of Gd from among the entire species of humanity and that he comprehended more of Gd, may He be exalted, than any man who ever existed or will exist ever comprehended or will comprehend and, that he, peace be upon him, reached a state of exaltedness beyond humanity such that he perceived the level of sovereignty and became included in the level of the angels. There remained no veil which he did not pierce, no material hindrance burdened him, and no defect whether small or great mingled itself with him. The imaginative and sensible faculties in his perceptions were stripped from him, his desiderative faculty was still, and he remained pure intellect only. For this reason, they remarked of him that he discoursed with Gd without the intermediacy of an angel.

I would have been obliged to explain this strange subject, to unlock the secrets firmly enclosed in the verses of the Torah, and to expound the meaning of “mouth to mouth” [Nu. 12:8] together with the whole of this verse and other verses belonging to the same theme had I not seen that this theme is very subtle and that it would need abundant statement, introductions, and illustrations. The existence of angels would, first, have to be made clear and, then, the distinction between their ranks and that of the Creator. The soul would have to be explained and all its faculties. The circle would, then, grow wider until we should have to say a word about the images which the prophets attribute to the Creator and the angels. The Shı‘ar Qasmāh “‘divine measurements’” and its meaning would have to enter [into our survey]. And, even if I were to be as brief as possible, this purpose alone could not be attained even in a hundred pages. For this reason, I shall leave it to its place, whether in “the book of the interpretation of the discourses” which I have promised, or in “the book of prophecy” which I have begun, or in a book which I shall compose as a commentary to this Principle.

I shall now return to the purpose of this Seventh Principle and say that the prophecy of Moses is separated from the prophecy of all other prophets by four differences:

The first difference: To every other prophet that ever was, Gd did not speak except by an intermediary. But Moses had no intermediary, as it is said “mouth to mouth did I speak with him” [Nu. 12:8].

The second difference: Every other prophet received inspiration only when in a state of sleep, as He said in various places: “in a dream of the night” [Gen. 20:3], “he dreamed and he saw a ladder” [Gen. 28:12], “in a dream of a vision of the night” [Job 33:15], and in many other places with similar intent; or during the day, after a deep sleep had fallen upon the prophet and his condition had become one in which his sense-perceptions were rendered inactive and in which his thoughts were empty as in sleep. This condition is called mahazeḥ and mar‘eqh and it is referred to in the phrase “in
visions of Gd” [Ezek. 8:3, 40:2]. But to Moses, peace be upon him, discourse came in the day when “he was standing between the two cherubim”, as Gd had promised him, “And, there, I will meet with you and I will speak with you” [Ex. 25:22]. And He, may He be exalted, also said, “If there be a prophet among you, I, the Lrd, will make Myself known to him in a vision and will speak with him in a dream. Not so my servant Moses. He, in all my house, is faithful” [Nu. 12:6-8].

The third difference: Every other prophet receives inspiration only in a vision and by means of an angel [and] indeed his strength becomes enfeebled, his body becomes deranged, and a very great terror falls upon him so that he is almost broken by it, as is illustrated when Gabriel spoke to Daniel in a vision and Daniel said, “And there remained no strength in me and my dignity became destructive for me” [Dan. 10:8]. He also said, “I was in a deep sleep on my face and my face was towards the ground” [Dan. 10:9]. And, again, “In the vision, my pains turned upon me” [Dan. 10:16]. But not so with Moses. Rather, discourse came to him and no confusion of any kind overtook him, as He, may He be exalted, has said, “And the Lrd spoke to Moses face to face as a man speaks to his neighbor” [Ex. 33:11]. This means that just as no man feels disquieted when his neighbor talks with him, so he, peace be upon him, had no fright at the discourse of Gd, although it was face to face. This was so because of the strength of his union with the [Agent] Intelligence, as we have said.

The Fourth difference: Every other prophet did not receive inspiration by his own choice but by the will of Gd. The prophet could remain a number of years without inspiration or, an inspiration could be communicated to the prophet but he could be required to wait some days or months before prophesying, or not to make it known at all. We have seen that there are those among them who prepared themselves by simplifying their souls and by purifying their minds as did Elisha when he declared “Bring me, now, a minstrel” [II Kings 3:15] and, then, inspiration came to him. It was not, however, necessary that he receive inspiration after he was prepared for it. But Moses, our Teacher, was able to say whenever he wished, “Stand, and I shall hear what Gd shall command concerning you” [Nu. 9:8]. And He also said, “Speak to Aaron, your brother, that he not come at any time into the sanctuary” [Lev. 16:2]. [To this], they said, “Aaron was bound by the prohibition ‘that he not come at any time’ but Moses was not bound by that prohibition”.

\[ H Y T \]
\[ 7:6-7 \]
\[ Tash. \]
\[ 3:8 \]
THE EIGHTH PRINCIPLE

The Eighth Principle is that the Torah is from heaven; to wit, it [must] be believed that the whole of this Torah which is in our hands today is the Torah that was brought down to Moses, our Teacher; that all of it is from Gd [by] the transmission which is called metaphorically “speech”; that no one knows the quality of that transmission except him to whom it was transmitted, peace be upon him; and, that it was dictated to him while he was of the rank of a scribe; and, that he wrote down all of it—its dates, its narratives, and its laws—and, for this, he is called “the legislator” [Nu. 21:18]. There is no difference between “the sons of Ham were Cush, Mitsrayim, Fut, and Canaan” [Gen. 10:6] and “the name of his wife was Mehetabel, the daughter of Matred” [Gen. 36:39] on the one hand and “I am the Lrd, your Gd” [Ex. 20:2] and “Hear, O Israel, the Lrd, our Gd, the Lrd is One” [Dt. 6:4] on the other hand. Everything is from the mouth of the Mighty One; everything is ’the Torah of Gd: whole, pure, holy, [and] true’.

Indeed, Menasseh became, in the eyes of the Sages, the person strongest in heresy and hypocrisy for he thought that the Torah was composed of kernels and husks and that these dates and these narratives had no value and that they were composed by Moses. This is the issue of “the Torah is not from heaven”. And the Sages have said that he who believes that “the Torah is entirely from the mouth of the Mighty One except for this [i.e., any given] verse which was not said by the Holy One, blessed be He, but Moses said it on his own authority” is one to whom the following verse applies, “He disdains the word of Gd” [Nu. 15:31]. May Gd be exalted above that which the heretics say! Rather, every letter of the Torah contains wisdom and wonders for him whom Gd has given to understand it. Its ultimate wisdom cannot be perceived as it is said, “Its measure is greater than the earth and broader than the sea’ [Job 11:9]. A man can only follow in the steps of David, the anointed of the Gd of Jacob, the most pleasant singer of the hymns of Israel, who prayed saying, “Unmask my eyes that I may see wonders from Your Torah” (Ps. 119:8).

Similarly, its interpretation as it has been handed down is also “from the mouth of the Mighty One.” That which we observe today, such as the form of the Sukka, the Lulav, the Shofar, the Tsitsit, the Tefilin, and other such forms are the actual forms which Gd told to Moses and which he told to us. He is the transmitter of the Message, faithful in its transmission. The verse on the basis of which this Eighth Principle is attested is his [i.e., Moses'] saying, “By this, shall you know that the Lrd has sent me to do all these things” [Nu. r6:28]:
THE NINTH PRINCIPLE

The Ninth Principle is the [denial of the] Abrogation [of the Torah]; to wit, that this Torah of Moses; our Teacher, shall not be abrogated or transmuted; nor shall any other law come from Gd. It may not be added to, nor subtracted from—not from its text nor from its explanation—as it is said, "You shall not add to it, nor subtract from it" [Dt. 13:1]. We have already explained that which it is necessary to explain concerning this Principle in the Introduction to this book.

THE TENTH PRINCIPLE

The Tenth Principle is that He, may He be exalted, has knowledge of the acts of men and is not neglectful of them. It is not as the opinion of someone who says, "Gd has abandoned the Earth" [Ezek. 8:12; 9:9] but as the opinion of him who says, "[Gd is] great in counsel, and mighty in work; whose eyes are open upon all the ways of the sons of men" [Jer. 32:19]. It is also said, "Gd saw that the evil of man was great" [Gen. 6:5], and "the cry of Sodom and Gemorrah was great" [Gen. 18:20]. This attests to this Tenth Principle.
THE ELEVENTH PRINCIPLE

The Eleventh Principle is that He, may He be exalted, rewards him who obeys the commands of the Torah and punishes him who violates its prohibitions; and, that the greatest of His rewards is the World-to-Come while the severest of His punishments is "being cut off". We have already expounded sufficiently on this in this chapter. The verse which attests to this Principles is "... if You forgive their sin, and if not, erase me, then, from Your book which You have written" [Ex. 32:32] taken together with His answer, may He be exalted, "Him who has sinned against Me, shall I erase from My book" [Ex. 32:33]. These verses are attestation to [the fact that] the obedient person and the rebellious person will reach [a point] with Him, may He be exalted, where He will reward the one and punish the other.

THE TWELFTH PRINCIPLE

The Twelfth Principle is [the belief in] the days of the Messiah; to wit, the belief in, and the assertion of, the truth of his coming. He shall not be a long time and "if he tarries, wait for him (for he shall surely come and he will not tarry)" [Hab. 2:3]. No time for his coming may be set nor may the verses of Scripture be interpreted to reveal the time of his coming, as our Sages have said, "May the wits of those who calculate the date of the end [of the present period of time] be addled" ["Sanhedrin"; 99b]. One must believe in him by praising him, loving him, and praying for his coming according to that which has been revealed by all the prophets from Moses to Malachi. He who doubts him, or who treats his command lightly, says that the Torah, which promised his coming specifically in the readings of "Balaam" and "Atem Nitsavim", is lying. One of the general ideas of this Principle is that Israel will have no king except from David, and that he will be descended especially from the seed of Solomon. Whoever disobeys the command of this dynasty denies Gd and the verses of the prophets.

= [H.1144T]
= [Meg. 11b-12a]
= [Tash. 3:6]
THE THIRTEENTH PRINCIPLE

The Thirteenth Principle is the Resurrection and we have already explained is.

If a man is at peace with these Principles and, if his conviction concerning them has been proven, then he is a member of Klal Yisrael. To love him, to have sympathy with him, and to observe all that Gd has commanded us concerning love and brotherliness are obligatory concerning him. If he does that which may be construed as a sin in proportion to his rebellion. He has a share in the World-to-Come but he is considered "a sinner in Israel". However, if a man becomes shaken in one of these Principles, then he has left the fold, denied a Principle, and is called a sectarian, an Epi-koros, or a cutter of young plants. Disregard and banishment of him are obligatory and, of him, it is said "I shall surely despise those who despise You, Lrd" [Ps. 139:21].

I have spoken at great length of these things and I have departed from the purpose of my book. But I have done this because I thought it to be profitable in matters of the faith. I have brought together many things which are beneficial but which are dispersed in various great compositions.

Be happy with them [i.e., the Principles], review my work several times, and reflect on it well. If your thought should seek to deceive you concerning it, saying that you have attained to its purposes after one, or after ten, readings, then Gd knows that your thought had deceived you with that which is absurd. Do not hurry with it for I have not written it as it occurred to me but after reflection, verification, the study of true and false opinions, the attainment of that which ought to be believed of it, and clarification by proofs and arguments of each and every idea.

I ask Gd's blessing in pursuing that which is correct. Now, I shall return to the purpose of this chapter.