

MAIMONIDES ON WHO WROTE THE TORAH

From the Eighth Principle of Faith: “[T]he Torah has been revealed from heaven. This implies ... that the whole of this Torah found in our hands this day is the Torah that was handed down by Moses and that it is all of divine origin. By this I mean that the whole of the Torah came unto him from before God in a manner which is metaphorically called ‘speaking’; but the real nature of that communication is unknown to everybody except to Moses ... In handing down the Torah, Moses was like a scribe writing from dictation the whole of it.”

From the Mishneh Torah: “The Jews did not believe in Moses, our teacher, because of the wonders that he performed. Whenever anyone's belief is based on wonders, [the commitment of] his heart has shortcomings, because it is possible to perform a wonder through magic or sorcery. ... **What is the source of our belief in [Moses]? The [revelation] at Mount Sinai. Our eyes saw, and not a stranger's, and our ears heard, and not another's., the fire, thunder, and lightning. He entered the thick clouds; the Voice spoke to him and we heard, ‘Moses, Moses, go tell them the following:...** How do we know that the standing alone on Mount Sinai was a true manifestation of his prophecy in which there was no shadow of doubt? Because it is said, ‘Lo, I come to you in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with you, and believe in you for ever’ (Exodus 19:9) Before this they evidently did not believe in him with a faith that would last forever, but rather with a faith that allowed for suspicions and doubts.”

משה רבינו לא האמינו בו ישראל מפני האותות שעשה. שהמאמין על פי האותות יש בלבו דופי שאפשר שיעשה האות בלט וכשוף. ... ובמה האמינו בו? במעמד הר סיני. שעיינינו ראו ולא זר, ואזנינו שמעו ולא אחר האש והקולות והלפידים. והוא נגש אל הערפל והקול מדבר אליו ואנו שומעים, 'משה משה לך אמור להן כך וכך': ... ומנין שמעמד הר סיני לבדו היא הראיה לנבואתו שהיא אמת שאין בו דופי? שנאמר 'הנה אנכי בא אליך בעב הענן בעבור ישמע העם בדברי עמך וגם כך יאמינו לעולם'. מכלל שקודם דבר זה לא האמינו בו נאמנות שהיא עומדת לעולם אלא נאמנות שיש אחריה הרהור ומחשבה

THE THIRTEEN PRINCIPLES

1st: Existence of God

2nd: Unity of God

3rd: Incorporeality of God

4th: Priority of God (everything else is created by God)

5th: Only God may be worshipped

6th: The possibility of prophecy.

7th: The supremacy of Moses's prophecy.

8th: The Torah is from heaven.

9th: The Torah will never be abrogated or added to.

10th: God knows our deeds and cares about them.

11th: God will reward and punish our deeds.

12th: Coming of the Messiah.

13th: Resurrection of the dead.

6th: Prophecy. This implies that it should be known that among this human species there exist persons of very intellectual natures and possessing much perfection. Their souls are predisposed to receive the form of the intellect. Then this human intellect clings to the active intellect, and a glorious emanation emanates upon them. These are prophets, and this is prophecy. ... And the verses of the Torah which testify to prophecy are many.

7th. The prophecy of Moses our teacher. ... [H]e was the father of all the prophets before him and that those who came after him were all beneath him in level. He was chosen by God from the whole human species. He comprehended more of God than any man in the past or future every comprehended or will comprehend. And ... he reached a state of exaltedness beyond the sphere of humanity, so that he attained to the angelic level and became included in the level of the angels. There was no veil which he did not pierce. No material hindrance stood in his way, and no defect whether small or great mingled itself

with him. The imaginative and sensual powers of his perceptive faculty were stripped from him. His desiderative power was stilled and he remained pure intellect only. It is in this sense that it is said of him that he spoke with God without any angelic intermediary.

8th. That the Torah has been revealed from heaven. This implies our belief that the whole of this Torah found in our hands this day is the Torah that was handed down by Moses and that it is all of divine origin. By this I mean that the whole of the Torah came unto him from before God in a manner which is metaphorically called 'speaking'; but the real nature of that communication is unknown to everybody except to Moses ... In handing down the Torah, Moses was like a scribe writing from dictation the whole of it, its chronicles, its narratives, and its precepts. It is in this sense that he is termed 'lawgiver.' And there is no differences between verses like 'And the sons of Ham were Cush and Mizraim, Phut and Canaan,' or 'And his wife's name was Mehetabel, the daughter of Matred,' ... and verses like 'I am the Lord your God' and "Hear, O Israel.' They are all equally of divine origin and all belong to the 'Torah of God which is perfect, pure, holy and true.' In the opinion of the rabbis, Manasseh was the most renegade and the greatest of all infidels because he thought that in the Torah there were a kernel and a husk, and that these histories and anecdotes have no value and emanate from Moses. This is the significance of the expression 'The Torah does not come from heaven,' which, say the rabbis, is the remark of one who believes that all the Torah is of divine origin save a certain verse which (says he) was not spoken by God but by Moses himself. And of such a one the verse says, 'For he has despised the word of the Lord.' May God be exalted far above and beyond the speech of the infidels! For truly in every letter of the Torah there reside wise maxims and admirable truths for him to whom God has given understanding. ... Man has but to follow in the footsteps of the anointed one of the God of Jacob, who prayed, 'Open my eyes and I shall behold wonderful things from your Law.' ... The text in which the eighth principle of faith is indicated is 'Hereby shall you know that the Lord has sent me to do all these works; for I have not done them of my own mind.' (Num 16:28)

9th. The immutability of the Torah. This implies the this Law of Moses shall not be abrogated and that no other law will come from before God. Nothing is to be added to it nor taken

away from it, neither in the written nor oral law, as it is said, "You shall not add to it nor diminish from it." (Deut.13:1)

From the Guide for the Perplexed:

a. God doesn't speak:

G I.23: God ... does not employ any kind of speech

II.12: Some [people] ... believe that God commands an action in words consisting, like ours, of letters and sound, and that thereby the action is done. All this is the work of the imagination, which is, in fact, identical with [the] 'evil inclination.'

b. God can't change, hence can't participate in history

I.11: [God] is mutable in no way whatever; not mutable in His relations to other things; for there is no relations whatever existing between Him and any other being. ... Hence He is immutable in every respect, as He expressly declares, 'I, the LORD, do not change' (Mal. iii.6); i.e., in Me there is not any change whatever.

c. Prophecy

II.36 Prophecy is, in truth and reality, an emanation sent forth by the Divine Being through the medium of the Active Intellect, in the first instance to man's rational faculty ... it consists in the most perfect development of the imaginative faculty ... the imaginative faculty acquires such efficiency in its action that it sees the thing *as if it came from without*, and perceives it as if through the medium of bodily senses.

[A]ll [the potential prophet's] desires must aim at obtaining a knowledge of the hidden laws and causes ... in the Universe; his thoughts must be engaged in lofty matters; his attention directed to the knowledge of God, the consideration of His works, and of that which he must believe in this respect. There must be an absence of the lower desires and appetites, of the seeking after pleasure in eating, drinking, and cohabitation; and, in short, every pleasure connected with the sense of touch ... It is further necessary to suppress every thought or desire for unreal power and dominion; that is to say, for victory, increase of followers, acquisition of honour, and service from the people.

A little bit of Aristotle (from *De Anima* III.4):

If thinking is like perceiving, it must be either a process in which the soul is acted upon by what is capable of being thought, or a process different from but analogous to that. The thinking part of the soul must therefore be ... capable of receiving the form of an object Mind must be related to what is thinkable, as sense is to what is sensible.

From the *Mishneh Torah* again ("Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah," chapter 7):

7.1: Prophecy is bestowed only upon a very wise sage of a strong character, who is never overcome by his natural inclinations in any regard. Instead, with his mind, he overcomes his natural inclinations at all times. ... [H]is mind should constantly be directed upward, bound beneath [God's] throne [of Glory, striving] to comprehend the holy and pure forms and gazing at the wisdom of the Holy One, blessed be He, in its entirety ... When the spirit rests upon him, his soul becomes intermingled with the angels called *ishim*, and he will be transformed into a different person and will understand with a knowledge different from what it was previously.

7.6: All the [other] prophets cannot prophesy whenever they desire. Moses, our teacher, was different. Whenever he desired, the holy spirit would envelop him, and prophecy would rest upon him. He did not have to concentrate his attention to prepare himself [for prophecy], because his [mind] was always concentrated, prepared, and ready. ...

He was promised this by God, as [implied by [Deuteronomy 5:27-28](#)]: "Go and tell them: 'Return to your tents,' but you stand here together with Me." This should be interpreted to mean: When prophecy departs from all the [other] prophets, they return to their "tents" - i.e., the needs of the body like other people. Therefore, they do not separate themselves from their wives. Moses, our teacher, never returned to his original "tent." Therefore, he separated himself from women and everything of that nature forever. He bound his mind to the Eternal Rock. [Accordingly,] the glory never left him forever. The flesh of his countenance shone, [for] he became holy like the angels.