

The 13 Foundations of Judaism

Principle I. To know the existence of the Creator

To believe in the existence of the Creator, may He be blessed, i.e., that there is an Existence that is perfect (and absolute) in all facets of existence. He is the cause of all that exists, the sustenance of all, and through Him all is maintained. There is no possibility that He does not exist because without Him, all existence would cease to be and nothing would remain. [Whereas] if we would imagine the absence of all existence other than His, the existence of God would neither cease nor diminish. For He is self-sufficient in His existence, He suffices in Himself, and His existence requires nothing other than Himself. [For] among the intelligences -- the angels and the constellations and all that they contain and all that is below them -- they all need Him for their existence. This is the first Principle, as affirmed by the verse (Exodus 20:2) "I am God, your Lord..."

Principle II. The unity of God

We believe that this Primal Cause [God] is One. [His is] not like the oneness of a pair, nor like the oneness of a species, nor like man, whose complex oneness may be divided into many units, nor like the oneness of a simple body, which is one in number but may be divided and separated without end. Rather, He is One with a Oneness that knows no parallel in any manner. This is the Second Principle, as affirmed by the verse (Deut. 6:4): "Hear O Israel, God is our Lord, God is One."

Principle III. The denial of physicality in connection with God

We believe that this Oneness is neither a body nor a bodily force, nor is He subject to any bodily characteristics -- movement, rest, or dwelling -- be they inherent or by chance. Therefore the Sages repudiated [the possibility of any] cohesion or separation [concerning Him], as they said: "Above there is no sitting, standing, division, or 'cohesion'" (a usage based on Isaiah 11:14). As the prophet (ibid., 40:18-25) said: "Who is comparable to the Almighty...?" For if He had a body, He could be compared to other bodies. All the corporeal terms used in the Scriptures to describe Him -- such as walking, standing, sitting, speaking etc. -- are metaphorical. As the Sages have said: "The Torah speaks in the language of man." This is the third Principle, as affirmed by the verse (Deuteronomy 4:15) "You have not seen any image," that is to say, you cannot conceive of Him as having any form because, as stated, He is neither a body nor a bodily force.

Principle IV. God's Antiquity

This is that God existed prior to everything, and exists after everything. All that exists other than Him is not primary in relationship to Him. There are many references in the Scriptures. This is the fourth Principle, as affirmed by the verse (Deuteronomy 33:27): "God who preceded [all existence] is a refuge..."

Principle V. That God, blessed be He is worthy that we serve Him, to glorify Him, to make known His greatness, and to do His commands

He [God], may He be blessed, is the only One whom it is proper to serve [worship], to praise, to make known His grandeur, and to fulfill His commandments. This should not be done to any entity that is subservient to Him, be it the angels, the stars, the planets, or the elements or their compounds. For their activity is programmed. They have no control, and no choice but to perform His will. Thus it is improper to serve them as intermediaries in order to come close to God. Rather, one should direct his thoughts toward the Almighty alone and abandon anything other than Him. This is the fifth Principle, warning us against idolatry, as affirmed throughout the Torah.

Principle VI. Prophecy

And this is that it is known to man that this (prophet) is a type of man who are created beings of great stature and perfection of the character traits. Who have tremendous knowledge until a different intelligence attaches to them when the intelligence of the person clings to the intelligence of God and it rests upon him. And these are the prophets; and this is prophecy; and the idea of it. The explanation of it is very long and the intention is not to bring a sign for every fundamental and to explain it all, encompassing of all knowledge (i.e. God's knowledge) but it is mentioned to us in a story form and all of the Torah attests to this.

Principle VII. The prophetic capacity of Moses our Teacher, peace be upon him

And this is that we accept that he was the father of all prophets that were before him and that will be after him. He was on a qualitatively different level than any other, and he is chosen from all other people before and after him of any that have any knowledge of God; for his was the greatest. And he, peace be upon him, rose to the levels of the angels. He was granted all areas of knowledge and prophecy and his physical attributes did not diminish. His knowledge was different and it is through this difference that it is ascribed to him that he spoke to God without any intermediary or angel.

My intention was to explain this puzzling concept and to open up the sealed areas in the Torah regarding the verses of "face to face" and other similar references, but its length would be tremendous and it would require numerous proofs from the Torah and other sources and encompass many areas. Even to write it the briefest of briefest it would require 100 pages, so I will save it and write it in another book. I will now return to the intent of this seventh fundamental that the prophecy of Moses our teacher, peace be upon him, was different from all others in 4 ways:

1) Regarding all other prophets, God spoke to them through intermediaries. Regarding Moses, it was without one, as it says, "face to face I spoke to him".

2) Regarding all other prophets, prophecy came to them at night while they were asleep in a dream as it says, “in a dream of the night” and other such references; or in the day but only after a deep sleep-like state came over them, and all their senses were shut off except their thoughts. Not so by Moses. Moses would receive a prophecy any time when he would stand between the two figures [fixed] on the ark, as God attests to it, “and I will make it known to you there” and “not so my servant Moses. Face to face I speak to him.”

3) When a prophet would receive prophecy he would not be able to stand the intense effect and he would shake and not be able to stand, as it relates regarding Daniel in his encounter with the angel Gabriel. Regarding Moses, he did not suffer from this. As it says, “Face to face do I speak to him as a person speaks to his friend”. And even though this is the greatest connection to God, still, he did not suffer.

4) All other prophets could not receive prophecy at their will, [but] only when God desired to tell them. Some would go days or months without prophecy. Even if they wanted or needed something, sometimes it would be days or months or years or even never that they would be told [a prophecy]. Some would have people play music to put them in a good mood such as Elisha. But Moses, peace be upon him, received prophecy whenever he wanted, as it says, “Stand here and listen to what God will tell you what to do” and “God said to Moses tell Aaron your brother that he can’t come to the holy of holies at any time [he wants]”. Our rabbis said, “Aaron was prohibited to come whenever he wanted, but not Moses.

Principle VIII. That the Torah is from heaven [God]

And this is that you believe that all of this Torah that was given by Moses our teacher, peace be upon him, that it is all from the mouth of God. Meaning that it was received by him entirely from God. And it is not known how Moses received it except by Moses himself, peace be upon him, that it came to him. That he was like a stenographer that you read to him and he writes all that is told to him: all the events and dates, the stories, and all the commandments. There is no difference between “And the sons of Cham were Kush, and Mitzraim, and his wife was Mehatbe’el” and “Timnah was his concubine” and “I am Hashem your God” and “Hear Israel [Hashem your God, Hashem is one]” for it was all given by God. And it is all Hashem’s perfect Torah; pure, holy, and true. And he who says that these verses or stories, Moses made them up, he is a denier of our sages and prophets worse than all other types of deniers [form of heretic] for he thinks that what is in the Torah is from man’s flawed heart and the questions and statements and the dates and stories are of no value for they are from Moses Rabbeinu, peace be upon him. And this area is that he believes the Torah is not from heaven. And on this our sages of blessed memory said, “he who believes that the Torah is from heaven except this verse that God did not say it but rather Moses himself did [he is a denier of all the Torah].” And this that God spoke this and that, each and every statement in the Torah, is from God and it is full of wisdom (each statement) and benefit to those who understand them. And its depth of knowledge is greater than all of the land and wider than all the seas and a person can only go in the path of David, the anointed of the God of Jacob

who prayed and said "Open my eyes so that I may glance upon the wonders of Your Torah" (Psalms 119). And similarly the explanation of the Torah was also received from God and this is what we use today to know the appearance and structure of the sukka and the lulav and the shofar, tzitzis, tefillin and their usage. And all this God said to Moses and Moses told to us. And he is trustworthy in his role as the messenger and the verse that teaches of this fundamental is what is written (Numbers 16) "And Moses said, with this shall you know that Hashem sent me to do all these actions (wonders) for they are not from my heart."

Principle IX. The completeness of the Torah

This Torah that Moses transcribed from the Almighty is unique and there will never be another. One must neither add to it nor subtract from it, be it the Written Law or the Oral Law. As it stated: "Neither add to it nor subtract from it" (Deuteronomy 13:1). We have already elaborated upon this Principle in the introduction to this work.

Principle X. That God knows man's actions and does not remove His eye from them

His knowledge is not like someone who says God abandoned the land but rather like it says (Jer. 32) "Great in council and mighty in deed, Your eyes are cognizant to all the ways of mankind." "And God saw for the evil of man on the land had grown greatly." (Gen. 6) And it says, "The disgust of Sodom and Amorrhah is great" and this demonstrates the 10th principle.

Principle XI. That God gives reward to he who does the commandments of the Torah and punishes those that transgress its admonishments and warnings

The Almighty rewards him who fulfills the commandments of the Torah and punishes him who transgresses its prohibitions. The greatest reward is [experiencing] the World to Come and the greatest punishment is to be cut off [from this experience]. We have already discussed this [issue] sufficiently. Scripture attests to this Principle, as it says (Exodus 32:32-33), "' Now if [only] You will bear their iniquity [concerning the Golden Calf], but if not, erase my name from Your Book.' And the Almighty responded to Moses: 'He who sins against Me will be erased from My Book.'" This [statement] affirms that [the Almighty] knows who serves [Him] and who transgresses, and rewards and punishes accordingly.

Principle XII. The era of the Messiah

We believe and affirm that the Messiah will come. One should not think he is detained. [Rather,] "If he should tarry, await him" (Habakkuk 2:3). One is not to assign him a specific time of arrival, nor should one use Scripture to deduce when he is coming. For the Sages have said, "The souls of those who calculate the end will be shattered." [One must also] believe that [the Messiah] will surpass all the kings who have ever ruled in terms of his grandeur, his greatness, and his honor. [Man should] exalt, love, and pray for him according to the prophecies prophesied about him by all the prophets from Moshe

Rabbeinu to Malachi. He who doubts or belittles [the Messiah's arrival] denies [the authority of the Torah, which explicitly promises his arrival] in the story of Bilaam and in Deuteronomy 30. Included within this Principle is [the idea] that the king of Israel must come from the House of David and the seed of Solomon. Anyone who opposes this dynasty defies the Almighty and the words of His prophets.

Principle XIII. Resurrection of the dead

The resurrection of the dead is a basic principle of the Torah of Moses. Anyone who does not believe it has no connection with the Jewish Nation. But [resurrection] is only for the righteous, as it states in Bereishis Rabbah: "Rain is for both the righteous and the wicked but resurrection is for the righteous alone." For how can the wicked be brought back to life when even during their lives they are considered dead? But the righteous, even when they die, are considered alive. –

Conclusion

And when the person will believe all these fundamentals and his faith will be clear in them he enters into the nation of Israel and it is a mitzva to love him and to have mercy on him and to act to him according to all the ways in which God commanded us regarding loving your neighbor. And even if he did all of the sins in the Torah due to desire of the emotions, and from his physical aspect's conquering him, he will be punished for his sins, but he still has a share in the world to come and is among the sinners of Israel...

I have expounded at length many things and I have left the topic of my composition but I have done it for I saw a need in the dealings of the fundamentals of faith and I have gathered together many different and spread out areas Therefore know them and succeed in understanding them and review them many times and know them very well [i.e. not just memorization but to understand fully and to be able to support them and know their proofs]. Therefore if after one or ten times you think you have understood them, God knows that you are just involved in falsehood. Therefore do not read them quickly because I have not written them as it suddenly entered into my mind. But rather, after a deep and careful study of the whole area and after I have seen many clear and true ideas and I have seen what is proper to believe of them [as the fundamentals] and I have brought proofs and logical demonstrations for each and every one of them. May it be God's will that I have been correct that He helped me through this area on the good path and now I will return to my explanation of this chapter [in the Talmud].