

And now, I shall declare to you a general principle in the reason of many commandments. Beginning with the days of Enosh, when idol worship came into existence, opinions in the matter of faith fell into error. Some people denied the root of faith by saying that the world is eternal; *They denied the Eternal, and said: It is not He.* (Who called forth the world into existence). Others denied His knowledge of individual matters, *and they say, How doth G-d know? and is there knowledge in the Most High?* Some admit His knowledge but deny the principle of providence *and make men as the fishes of the sea*, (believing) that G-d does not watch over them and that there is no punishment or reward for their deeds, for they say *the Eternal hath forsaken the land.* Now, when G-d is pleased to bring about a change in the customary and natural order of the world for the sake of a people or an individual, then the voidance of all these (false beliefs) becomes clear to all people, since a wondrous miracle shows that the world has a

G-d Who created it, and Who knows and supervises it, and Who has the power to change it. And when that wonder is previously prophesied by a prophet, another principle is further established, namely, that of the truth of prophecy, *that G-d doth speak with man*, and that *He revealeth His counsel unto His servants, the prophets*, and thereby the whole Torah is confirmed. This is why Scripture says in connection with the wonders (in Egypt): *That thou (Pharaoh) mayest know that I am the Eternal in the midst of the earth*, which teaches us the principle of providence, i.e., that G-d has not abandoned the world to chance, as they (heretics) would have it; *That thou mayest know that the earth is the Eternal's*, which informs us of the principle of creation, for everything is His since He created all out of nothing; *That thou mayest know that there is none like Me in all the earth*, which indicates His might, i.e., that He rules over everything and that there is nothing to withhold Him. The Egyptians either denied or doubted all of these (three) principles, (and the miracles confirmed their truth).

Accordingly, it follows that the great signs and wonders constitute *faithful witnesses* to the truth of the belief in the existence of the Creator and the truth of the whole Torah. And because the Holy One, blessed be He, will not make signs and wonders in every generation for the eyes of some wicked man or heretic, He therefore commanded us that we should always make a memorial or sign of that which we have seen with our eyes that we should transmit the matter to our children, and their children to their children, to the generations to come, and He placed great emphasis on it, as is indicated by the fact that one is liable to extinction for eating leavened bread on the Passover, and for abandoning the Passover-offering, (i.e., for not taking part in the slaughtering thereof). He has further required of us that we inscribe upon our arms and between our eyes all that we have seen in the way of signs and wonders, and to inscribe it yet upon the doorposts of the houses, and that we remember it by recital in the morning and evening—just as the Rabbis have said: "The recital of the benediction *True and firm*, (which follows the *Sh'ma* in the morning and which terminates with a blessing to G-d for the redemption from Egypt), is obligatory as a matter of Scriptural law because it is written, *That thou mayest remember the day when thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt all the days of thy life*." (He further required) that we make a booth every year and many other commandments like them which are a memorial to the exodus from Egypt. All these commandments are designed for the purpose that in all generations we should have testimonies to the wonders so that they should not be forgotten and so that the heretic should not be able to open his lips to deny the belief in (the existence of) G-d. **He who buys a *Mezuzah* for one *zuz* (a silver coin) and affixes it to his doorpost and has the proper intent of heart on its content, has already admitted to the creation of the world, the Creator's knowledge and His providence, and also his belief in prophecy as well as in all fundamental principles of the Torah, besides admitting that the mercy of the Creator is very great upon them that do His will, since He brought us forth from that bondage to freedom and to great honor on account of the merit of our fathers who delighted in the fear of His Name.** It is for this reason that the Rabbis have said, "Be as heedful of a light commandment as of a weighty one," for they are all exceedingly precious and beloved, for through them a person always expresses thankfulness to his G-d. **Ramban's Commentary to Exodus 13:16**

Through the great open miracles, one comes to admit the hidden miracles which constitute the foundation of the whole Torah, for no one can have a part in the Torah of Moses, our teacher, **unless he believes that all our words and our events, (as dictated in the Torah), are miraculous in scope**, there being no natural or customary way of the world in them, whether affecting the public or the individual. Instead, if a person observes the commandments, His reward will bring him success, and if he violates them, His punishment will cause his extinction. It is all by decree of the Most High, as I have already mentioned. The hidden miracles done to the public come to be known as is mentioned in the assurances of the Torah on the subject of the blessings and imprecations, as the verse says: *And all the nations shall say: Wherefore hath the Eternal done thus unto this land? Then men shall say: Because they forsook the covenant of the Eternal, the G-d of their fathers.* Thus it will become known to all nations that their punishment came from G-d. And of the fulfillment of the commandments it says, *And all the peoples of the earth shall see that the name of the Eternal is called upon thee.* I will yet explain this, with the help of G-d. **Ibid.**

We have yet another mystic tradition that **the whole Torah is comprised of Names of the Holy One, blessed be He, and that the letters of the words separate themselves into Divine Names when divided in a different manner**, as you may imagine by way of example that the verse of *Bereshith* divides itself into these other words: *berosh yithbareh Elokim*. This principle applies likewise to the entire Torah, aside from the combinations and the numerical equivalents of the Holy Names. Our Rabbi Shlomo (Rashi) has already written in his commentaries on the Talmud concerning the manner in which the Great Divine Name of seventy-two letters is derived from the three verses: *And he went, And he came, And he stretched out*. It is for this reason that a Scroll of the Torah in which a mistake has been made in one letter's being added or subtracted is disqualified (even though the literal meaning remains unchanged), for this principle (that

the whole Torah comprises Names of the Holy One, blessed be He), obligates us to disqualify a scroll of the Torah in which one letter *vav* is missing from the word *otham*-of which there are thirty nine fully-spelled ones in the Torah-(despite the fact that the same word appears many times without a *vav*), or if he (the Scribe) were to add *vav* to any of the other deficient ones (that is, words which could be written with an additional *vav* but are not so written). So it is in similar cases even though it matters not one way or another on cursory thought. It is this principle which has caused the Biblical scholars to count every full and defective word in the Torah and Scripture and to compose books on the Masoretic text, going back as far as Ezra the Scribe and Prophet, so that we should be heedful of this, as the Sages derived it from the verse, *And they read in the book in the Law of G-d, distinctly; and they gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading*. It would appear that the Torah "written with letters of black fire upon a background of white fire" was in this form we have mentioned, namely, that the writing was contiguous, without break of words, which made it possible for it to be read by way of Divine Names and also by way of our normal reading which makes explicit the Torah and the commandment. It was given to Moses our teacher using the division of words which expresses the commandment, and orally it was transmitted to him in the rendition which consists of the Divine Names. Thus, masters of the Kabbalah write the letters of the Great Name I have mentioned (namely, the Name containing seventy-two letters) all close to each other, and then these are divided into words consisting of three letters and many other divisions, as is the practice among the masters of the Kabbalah. **Prologue to Ramban's Commentary on Genesis**