

# THE 13 IKARIM

## יג עקרי אמונה של הרמב"ם

### 1 - INTRODUCTION

מכון לנדר - חורף תשע"ב

#### **A] Introduction**

1. The first [person] to begin posing principles and foundations of the Divine Torah was Maimonides, in his commentary to *Perek Helek* of Tractate Sanhedrin of the Mishnah, "All Israel have a portion in the World to Come"

<sup>1</sup>Abarbanel - Rosh Amanah Ch. 1

#### **B] What are the 13 Ikarim**

1. G-d is the Creator and Ruler of all things
2. Unity of G-d
3. Incorporeality of G-d
4. G-d is beyond time
5. One may pray only to G-d
6. All the words of the prophets are true
7. The prophecy of Moses is absolutely true
8. The entire Torah was given to Moses
9. The Torah will not be changed
10. G-d knows all of man's deeds and thoughts
11. Reward and punishment for keeping the mitzvot
12. The coming of Mashiach
13. The Resurrection of the Dead

#### **C] Where did the Rambam write them**

- *Commentary on the Mishna - Introduction to the 10th Perek (Chelek) of Sanhedrin - Primary enumeration of 13 Ikarim*
- *Mishneh Torah*
  - *Hilchot Teshuva 3:6-8 - summary list of the Ikarim*
  - *Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah Chapter 1 - Ikarim 1-4*
  - *Hilchot Avodah Zara 2:1 - Ikar 5*
  - *Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah Chapters 7,8,9 - Ikarim 6-9*
  - *Hilchot Teshuva Chapters 7,8,9 - Ikarim 10-12*
- *Sefer Hamitzvot*<sup>2</sup> - *P1 (Ikar 1), P2 (Ikar 2), N10 (Ikar 5), P172 (Ikar 6)*
- *Moreh Nevuchim* - *1:35 (some Ikarim)*
- *Treatise on the Resurrection of the Dead - Ikar 13*

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1. All English translations of Rosh Amanah are from the translation by Menachem Kellner - *Principles of Faith - Rosh Amanah*.  
Littman (2004) [http://www.amazon.com/Principles-Faith-Amanah-Isaac-Abravanel/dp/1904113133/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1313678559&sr=8-1](http://www.amazon.com/Principles-Faith-Amanah-Isaac-Abravanel/dp/1904113133/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1313678559&sr=8-1)

2. P = Positive mitzvah; N = Negative mitzvah

## D] When did the Rambam write them

- *Commentary on the Mishna - 1168 (age 30)*
- *Mishneh Torah - 1177 (age 39)*
- *Moreh Nevuchim - 1191 (age 53)*
- *Treatise on the Resurrection of the Dead - 1191 (age 53)*

The Rambam reiterates the Ikarim consistently through his works and also updated his wording of the Ikarim in the Introduction to the Mishna. (At one stage he cross-refers in the Ikarim to the Moreh Nevuchim which he wrote towards the end of his life). Almost all authorities therefore state with confidence that he maintained his position on them. However note Rav Goren's unusual (unique?) position (see later sheet for full source) that the Rambam had in fact changed his position by the time he wrote the Mishne Torah

## E] A few works on translations

The Ikarim, together with the entire Commentary on the Mishna (Kitab al-Siraj) were written in the Judeo-Arabic language in Hebrew characters so as to make them maximally accessible to the Jewish masses of the time. Given the limited knowledge almost all 21 Century Jews have of this language, almost everyone today learns the Ikarim in translation. The principal translations are as follows:-

### Classic Mediaeval Translations into Hebrew

- R. Shlomo ben Yosef ibn Yaakov of Saragossa
- R. Shmuel Ibn Tibbon (1150-1230 - Provence)
- R. Yehudah al-Harizi (1165-1225 - Spain/Mid-East)
- Abarbanel in Rosh Amanah (1437-1508 - Spain, Portugal, Italy)

### Modern Translations into Hebrew

- Rav Yosef Kapach (1917-2000 - Yemen/Israel)
- Rav Yitzchak Shilat (contemp) - Israel

Every translation is a commentary. In a text like the 13 Ikarim which seeks to define membership of the Jewish people, the words are critical. If we are using an English translation, there are thus two levels of removal from the Arabic original. One classical example is whether the Rambam's Arabic was meant to convey the Hebrew expression 'Emunah' and, if so, how are we to express that in English.

## F] Why 13?

2. בכמה דברים קדושים מצינו מספר הזה י"ג - כגון י"ג מדותיו של הקב"ה וי"ג מדות שהתורה נדרשת בהם גם הרמב"ם הניח עיקרים כמנין זה ....

מהרש"א חידושי אגדות מסכת נדרים דף מא עמוד א

The Maharsha comments here that the number 13 is associated with many connections of kedusha - 13 attributes of Hashem, 13 middot to 'darshen' the Torah, 13 Ikarim. Perhaps the association is with da'at - understanding which comes at 13 for men. (Women have a 'binah yeteirah' which accelerates their understanding to 12)

3. ומצאתי תפילה ישנה מיוסדת בשם 'טביומי', זה נוסחה: 'יהי רצון מלפניך השם, המקודש שלש עשרה, למען אברהם ויצחק הראשונים בבריתות שלש עשרה, ולמען יעקב איש תם וצאצאיו שלש עשרה, תחנני עם מקיימי תורתך הנדרשת במדות שלש עשרה, וברכני לדבק לשמרני ממקרה, ולא ימנעו ממני מדותיך השלש עשרה, והאר פניך אלי, והוציא שכלי לפועל תורה ותחנני, ואדעך בשם עם יושר עיקרם שלש עשרה, ותשא זיו שכינתך אלי, ועלי תשרה, ותשים לי שלום מהמונעים באלו השלש עשרה'

של"ה שער האותיות אות אל"ף - אמת ואמונה:מד

The Shel'ah refers to an ancient tefillah dating back to Chazal which links all of these 13's together. According to this, the concept of 13 Ikarim seems to have predated the Rambam considerably

4. Were it not for the dependence upon the verses, the number [of principles] would be smaller or greater [than 13]; for, if we counted [only] the fundamental principles we would have only three principles, while if we counted the sub-principles there would be more than 13

Rashbatz Ohev Mishpat 14a<sup>3</sup>

We will see that both the Rashbatz and R' Yosef Albo tie the Rambam's 13 Ikarim to 3 central principles (Avot). The actual number 13 (which includes the 'sub-principles' - Toladot) was arrived at by the Rambam since these are the ones which have Torah verses to back them up

**G] Versions of the Ikarim**

5. I have spent too much time on these matters, leaving the general subject of my book. But I have done so because I saw their usefulness for faith. .... You must know them well. Repeat them frequently. Meditate on them carefully. If your mind seduces you into thinking that you comprehend them after one reading - or ten readings - G-d knows you are deceived! Do not read them hurriedly, for I did not just happen to write them down. Only after careful research and introspection, when I came to see which opinions are clearly true and untrue, did I come to know what to accept ....

<sup>4</sup>Rambam - Introduction to Perek Chelek (end)

The 13 Ikarim were accepted by many subsequent authorities as the definitive position of the Rambam's dogma. The average Jew connected to them most through the many piyutim<sup>5</sup> composed to liturgise them. The two most famous today are:- (a) The 'Ani Ma'amins standardly printed in the Siddur; and (b) The hymn Yigdal;

**G1] The 13 Ani Ma'aminim**

It is not known for sure who wrote this formulation based on the Rambam's Ikarim. The Torah Temima, Rav Baruch Epstein (1860-1942) writes in his commentary on the siddur that the Rambam himself wrote these. They first appear however in the 16th Century and it is safe to assume that the Rambam did not see or write them. They are however now printed in almost every siddur (usually after Shacharit). Rav Yaakov Emden (1697-1776) writes in his siddur that a G-d-fearing person should recite these every day with kavana!

	שלשה עשר עיקרים	102
א	אני מאמין באמונה שלמה שהבורא יתברך שמו הוא בורא ומנהיג לכל העולמות, והוא לבדו עשה ועושה בעשה לכל הפעלים:	
ב	אני מאמין באמונה שלמה שהבורא יתברך שמו הוא יחיד ואין יחודות קמורה בשום שנים, והוא לבדו אלהינו הנה הנה ונהיה:	
ג	אני מאמין באמונה שלמה שהבורא יתברך שמו אינו גוף, ולא ישוגרוהו משיגי הגוף, ואין לו שום דמיון קלל:	
ד	אני מאמין באמונה שלמה שהבורא יתברך שמו הוא ראשון והוא אחרון:	
ה	אני מאמין באמונה שלמה שהבורא יתברך שמו לו לבדו ראוי להשפיל ואין ראוי להתפלל לאלתו:	
ו	אני מאמין באמונה שלמה שכל דברי נביאים אמת:	
ז	אני מאמין באמונה שלמה שנקבאת משה רבינו עליו השלום היתה אמתית ושהוא הנה אב לנביאים לקודמים לקניו ולנביאים אחריו:	
ח	אני מאמין באמונה שלמה שכל התורה המעונה עמה בדיניו היא הנתונה למשה רבינו עליו השלום:	
ט	אני מאמין באמונה שלמה שזאת התורה לא תהא מחלפת, ולא תהא תורה אחרת מאת הבורא יתברך שמו:	
י	אני מאמין באמונה שלמה שהבורא יתברך שמו יודע כל מעשה בני אדם וכל מחשבותם שנאמר היוצר יחד לבם המבין אל-כל מעשיהם:	
יא	אני מאמין באמונה שלמה שהבורא יתברך שמו גומל טוב לשומרי מצותיו ומעניש לעוברי מצותיו:	
יב	אני מאמין באמונה שלמה בקייאת המשיח ואף על פי שהחזקתה עם כללנו אמתה לל כל יום שיבא:	
יג	אני מאמין באמונה שלמה שתורה תמות המתים בעת שייעלה רצון מאת הבורא יתברך שמו ותעלה זכרו לעד ולנצח נצחים:	

3. translation M. Kellner  
 4. Translation by R. Isadore Twersky - A Maimonides Reader (1972 - Behrman)  
 5. At least 94 medieval poems have the 13 Ikarim as their subject - Israel Davidson, *Ozar ha-Shirah ve-ha-Piyut, IV* (New York 1933), 493

1. I believe with perfect faith that **G-d is the Creator and Ruler of all things**. He alone has made, does make, and will make all things.
2. I believe with perfect faith that **G-d is One**. There is no unity that is in any way like His. He alone is our G-d - He was, He is, and He will be.
3. I believe with perfect faith that **G-d does not have a body**. physical concepts do not apply to Him. There is nothing whatsoever that resembles Him at all.
4. I believe with perfect faith that **G-d is first and last**.
5. I believe with perfect faith that it is only proper to **pray to G-d**. One may not pray to anyone or anything else.
6. I believe with perfect faith that all the words of the **prophets are true**.
7. I believe with perfect faith that the **prophecy of Moses** is absolutely true. He was the **chief of all prophets**, both before and after Him.
8. I believe with perfect faith that the **entire Torah** that we now have is that which **was given to Moses**.
9. I believe with perfect faith that this **Torah will not be changed**, and that there will never be another given by G-d.
10. I believe with perfect faith that **G-d knows all of man's deeds and thoughts**. It is thus written (Psalms 33:15), "He has molded every heart together, He understands what each one does."
11. I believe with perfect faith that **G-d rewards** those who keep His commandments, **and punishes** those who transgress them.
12. I believe with perfect faith in the **coming of the Messiah**. How long it takes, I will await His coming every day.
13. I believe with perfect faith that the **dead will be brought back to life** when G-d wills it to happen

*Note that there are important differences between the Nuschaot of the Ani Ma'amins. The Sefardi Nusach has a slightly different order - Ikar 6 is Hashem's omniscience as opposed to Ikar 10 in the Ashkenazi version. It is also more truncated:-*

6.	<p>הרי אני מאמין באמונה שלמה בשלש עשרה עקרים של התורה הקדושה: א. שהקדוש ברוך הוא מצי ומשגיח. ב. והוא אחד. ג. ואין לו גוף ואין לו דמות הגוף. ד. ושהוא קדמון לכל קדומים. ה. ואין עבודה לזולתו. ו. ויודע מחשבות בני אדם. ז. ונבואת משה רבנו עליו השלום אמת. ח. ושהוא אדון לכל הנביאים. ט. ושהתורה נתונה מן השמים. י. ושלא תשתנה בשום זמן, חס ושלום. יא. ושהקדוש ברוך הוא מעניש לרשעים ומשלים שכר טוב לצדיקים. יב. ושיבוא מלך המשיח. יג. ושהמתים עתידים להחיות. והי רצון מלפניך ה' אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו שתכונן יצרנו לעבודתך כל ימי חינו תמיד, אמן כן יהי רצון:</p>
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(המשך) - נוסח ספרדי - סדר תפילת שחרית

*Compare for instance the ikarim on Torah min haShamayim:-*

נוסח ספרדי: ושהתורה נתונה מן השמים

נוסח אשכנזי: אני מאמין באמונה שלמה. שכל התורה המצויה עתה בגדינו היא הנתונה למשה רבנו עליו השלום:

*The different theological implications of the 2 versions are potentially very significant<sup>6</sup>*

**G2] Yigdal**

*It is not known for sure who composed Yigdal. Some attribute it to the paytan R. Daniel ben Yehudah who lived in Italy in the late 1300s. One opinion (quoted by R. Yaakov Emden in his Siddur) even attributes authorship to the Rambam himself, although this is considered doubtful.*

*(Interestingly, the verse in Yigdal dealing with Torah min haShamayim is much closer to the Sefardi than the Ashkenazi version of the Ani Ma'amin)*

6. I am grateful to my friend Rabbi David Sedley for pointing this out in a shiur - <http://rabbisedley.blogspot.com/2011/07/torah-from-sinai.html>

**יגדל**

אלהים חי וישתבח, נמצא ואין עת אל מציאותו.  
 אחד ואין יחיד ביוחדו, נעלם וגם אין סוף לאחדותו.  
 אין לו דמות הגוף ואינו גוף, לא נערך אליו קדשותו.  
 קדמון לכל דבר אשר נברא, ראשון ואין ראשית לראשיתו.  
 הנו אדון עולם, וכל נוצר יורה גדלותו ומלכותו.  
 שפע נבואתו נתנו אל-אנשי סגלתו ותפארתו.  
 לא קם בישראל כמושה עוד נביא ומביט את תמונתו.  
 תורת אמת נתן לעמו אל על יד נביאו נאמן ביתו.  
 לא יחליף האל ולא ימיר דתו לעולמים לזולתו.  
 צופה ויודע סתרינו, מביט לסוף דבר בקדמתו.  
 גומל לאיש חסד כמפעלו, נותן לרשע רע כרשעתו.  
 ישלח לקץ ימין משיחתנו לפדות מחבי קץ ישועתו.  
 מתים יחיה אל ברב חסדו, ברוך עדי עד שם תהלתו.

**GREAT**

is the living God and praised.  
 He exists, and His existence is beyond time.  
 He is One, and there is no unity like His.  
 Unfathomable, His oneness is infinite.  
 He has neither bodily form nor substance;  
 His holiness is beyond compare.  
 He preceded all that was created.  
 He was first: there was no beginning to His beginning.  
 Behold He is Master of the Universe; and every creature  
 shows His greatness and majesty.  
 The rich flow of His prophecy He gave  
 to His treasured people in whom He gloried.  
 Never in Israel has there arisen another like Moses,  
 a prophet who beheld God's image.  
 God gave His people a Torah of truth  
 by the hand of His prophet, most faithful of His House.  
 God will not alter or change His law  
 for any other, for eternity.  
 He sees and knows our secret thoughts;  
 as soon as something is begun, He foresees its end.  
 He rewards people with loving-kindness according to their deeds;  
 He punishes the wicked according to his wickedness.  
 At the end of days He will send our Messiah  
 to redeem those who await His final salvation.  
 God will revive the dead in His great loving-kindness.  
 Blessed for evermore is His glorious name!

**H] The 13 Ikarim and the Rambam's radical position on heresy**

7. .... וכאשר יהיו קיימים לאדם כל היסודות הללו ואמונתו בהם אמתית, הרי הוא נכנס בכלל ישראל, וחובה לאהבו ולחמול עליו וכל מה שצוה ה' אותנו זה על זה מן האהבה והאחזה, ואפילו עשה מה שיכול להיות מן העבירות מחמת תאוותו והתגברות יצרו הרע, הרי הוא נענש לפי גודל מריו ויש לו חלק, והוא מפושעי ישראל. וכאשר יפקפק אדם ביסוד מאלו היסודות הרי זה יצא מן הכלל וכפר בעיקר ונקרא מין ואפיקורוס וקוצץ בנטיעות, וחובה לשנותו ולהשמידו ועליו הוא אומר הלא משנאיך ה' אשנא וכו' פירוש המשנה לרמב"ם מסכת סנהדרין פרק י

When all these foundations are perfectly understood and believed in by a person he enters the community of Israel and one is obligated to love and pity him and to act towards him in all the ways in which the Creator has commanded that one should act towards his brother, with love and fraternity. Even were he to commit every possible transgression, because of lust and because of being overpowered by the evil inclination, he will be punished according to his rebelliousness, but he has a portion [of the world to come]; he is one of the sinners of Israel. But if a man doubts any of these foundations, he leaves the community [of Israel], denies the fundamental, and is called a sectarian, *epikoros*, and one who 'cuts among the plantings'. One is required to hate him and destroy him. About such a person it was said, 'Do I not hate them, O Lord, who hate thee?' [Ps. 139: 21].

**Maimonides Introduction to Perek Helek - Commentary on the Mishna Sanhedrin 10:1**

*The Rambam's Ikarim have enormous implications for the definition of who is and who is not a heretic. Rejection of any of the Ikarim excludes a person from Jewish society. Is this only conscious rejection or also mistaken or unintentional rejection?*

8. ו ואלו הן שאין להן חלק לעולם הבא אלא נכרתים ואובדין ונידונין על גודל רשעם וחטאתם לעולם ולעולמי עולמים: המינים ..... ז חמשה הן הנקראים מינים ..... והאומר שיש שם רבון אחד אבל שהוא גוף ובעל תמונה

רמב"ם הלכות תשובה פרק ג הלכה ו - ז

6 These are the people who have no place in the World to Come but are cut off, lost and judged for their great wickedness and transgression for ever and ever: heretics..... 7 Five types of people are called 'heretics' ..... one who says that there is one God but that he has physicality or form

Maimonides Mishne Torah Laws of Teshuva 3:6-7

9. ולמה קרא לזה מין? וכמה גדולים וטובים ממנו הלכו בזו המחשבה לפי מה שראו במקראות ויותר ממה שראו בדברי האגדות המשבשות את הדעות

ראב"ד שם

Why has he called this person a heretic!? Many people greater and better than he have taken this view because of what they saw in the verses of Scripture and, even more so, what they saw in the Aggadot which can confuse one's religious views

Glosses of R. Avraham of Posquierres ibid

10.

Every Israelite is obliged to believe that everything that is found in the Torah is absolutely true, and any one who denies anything that is found in the Torah, knowing that it is the opinion of the Torah, is an unbeliever; as the Rabbis say in chapter "Helek,"<sup>2</sup> that anyone who says, the whole Torah emanates from the divine Being except one verse, which Moses said on his own authority, is liable to the imputation charged in the biblical expression, "Because he hath despised the word of the Lord,"<sup>3</sup> and is classed among those who deny the divine inspiration of the Torah. But a person who upholds the law of Moses and believes in its principles, but when he undertakes to investigate these matters with his reason and scrutinizes the texts, is misled by his speculation and interprets a given principle otherwise than it is taken to mean at first sight; or denies the principle because he thinks that it does not represent a sound theory which the Torah obliges us to believe; or erroneously denies that a given belief is a fundamental principle, which however he believes as he believes the other dogmas of the Torah which are not fundamental principles; or entertains a certain notion in relation to one of the miracles of the Torah because he thinks that he is not thereby denying any of the doctrines which it is obligatory upon us to believe by the authority of the Torah,—a person of this sort is not an unbeliever. He is classed with the sages and pious men of Israel, though he holds erroneous theories. His sin is due to error and requires atonement.

We find such opinions expressed by some of the ancient sages of Israel.

R. Yosef Albo, Sefer HaIkarim - 1:2<sup>8</sup>

Many other traditional Jewish authorities did not draw as rigid doctrinaire lines as the Rambam on the definition of who is a heretic

8. Translation by Issac Husik, from *With Perfect Faith* - R. J David Bleich