

# THE 13 IKARIM

## יג עקרי אמונה של הרמב"ם

### (13) THE SEVENTH IKAR - PROPHECY OF MOSHE RABBEINU

#### PART 2

#### סמנר מדרשת רחל וחיה

1. ... ולפיכך אניחיהו למקומו, אם בספר פירוש הדרשות אשר ידעתי לחברו, או בספר הנבואה שהחילתי בו, או בספר פירוש אלו היסודות

רמב"ם - הקדמה לפ' חלק, משנה סנדורין

*The Rambam leaves over the full discussion of Moshe's prophecy to another occasion - either (i) a book on the meaning of the derashot - the derivations of Chazal from the pesukim - which the Rambam proposes to write; or (ii) a book about prophecy which he says has begun; or (iii) a book specifically on the Ikarim.*

**Q - did the Rambam fulfill his promise and write such a book about Moshe's prophecy and, if so, where?**

*After writing the Commentary on the Mishna, the Rambam wrote two other main works - the halachic codification of Oral Law - the Mishne Torah, and the philosophical Moreh Nevuchim. The most obvious candidate for an exposition on Moshe's prophecy would be the Moreh, but we find there a strange statement ....*

2. I have already described the four points in which the prophecy of Moses our Teacher was distinguished from that of other prophets, in books accessible to everyone, in the Commentary on the Mishnah (Sanhedrin 10:1) and in the Mishneh Torah (Yesodei Hatorah 7:6) ..... I need not repeat the subject here, nor is it included in the theme of this work. For I must tell you that whatever I say here of prophecy refers exclusively to the form of the prophecy of all prophets before and after Moses. But as to the prophecy of Moses, I will not discuss it in this work with one single word, whether directly or indirectly, because, in my opinion, the term prophet is applied to Moses and other men only in that both terms are homonyms

Moreh Nevuchim 2:35

*The Rambam appears to go out of his way to stress that he will NOT discuss the prophecy of Moshe in the Moreh! (Although, in fact, the Moreh does discuss Moshe in various places (see in particular 2:39 and 2:45) and below)*

3. The object of this treatise is to enlighten a religious man who has been trained to believe in the truth of our holy Law, who conscientiously fulfills his moral and religious duties, and at the same time has been successful in his philosophical studies. ....

Do not imagine that these most difficult problems can be thoroughly understood by any one of us. This is not the case. At times the truth shines so brilliantly that we perceive it as clear as day. Our nature and habit then draw a veil over our perception, and we return to a darkness almost as dense as before. We are like those who, though beholding frequent flashes of lightning, still find themselves in the thickest darkness of the night. On some the lightning flashes in rapid succession, and they seem to be in continuous light, and their night is as clear as the day. This was the degree of prophetic excellence attained by (Moses) the greatest of prophets, to whom God said, "But as for you, stand here by Me" (Deut 5:27) and of whom it is written "the skin of his face shone," etc. (Exod. 34:29). [Some perceive the prophetic flash at long intervals; this is the degree of most prophets.] For others, a flash of lightning is perceived only once during the whole night. This is the case with those of whom we are informed, "they prophesied, and did not prophesy again" (Num. 21:25).

Introduction to Moreh Nevuchim

*In the introduction to the Moreh, the Rambam writes that the purpose of the book is 'enlightenment' and 'understanding', which he compares to the flash of lightning in an otherwise black night. The ultimate enlightened soul was Moshe*

4. .... he [Moshe] did not receive prophetic inspiration through the medium of the imaginative faculty, but directly through the intellect

Moreh Nevuchim 2:36

5.

In his *Guide*, *Rambam* did not mention the four distinctive features of Moshe's prophecy stated in the *Mishneh Torah*, because all four points arise from the single concept found in the *Guide*, that Moshe's prophecy did not involve the imaginative faculty. It is the imaginative faculty that caused the cessation of the other prophets' senses, such that they could prophesy only while dreaming or in a vision, and it caused their prophetic messages to be enshrouded in metaphor and allegory. Likewise, the fear that they experienced came from the reaction of the imagination when receiving the prophetic apprehension which is frightening to it; and the need to involve their imaginative faculty led to the requirement of preparation for each prophetic event.

ואתה רואה שכל ד' הכדלים האלה ענינם אחד, והוא היות הנביאים מנבאים על ידי הכח המדמה ומשה רבנו עליו השלום בלתי, ולכן היתה נבואתם בחלום או במראה ששניהם הוא בבטול החושים, לטרת כחם הדמיוני בנבואה ... רואים מה שהם רואים במשל וחידה ... זה הוא ענין הכח המדמה ופעלתו ... היות הנביאים יראים ונבהלים ומתמוגגים אין ענינו אלא התפעלות המדמה בקבול אותה השגה המבהילה אצלו ... שאר הנביאים מפני היות האמצעי בנביאותיהם הכח הדמיוני לא היו מוכנים בכל עת.

Thus by mentioning this one fundamental concept in the *Guide*, *Rambam* effectively included the four distinctions which are written in the *Mishneh Torah* (Commentary to the *Guide*, ch. 35).

הנה הם היו ארבעה ההבדלים האלה לקוחים מפאת המקרים, האמנם ענינם עצמי הוא אחד.

Abarbanel Commentary on Moreh Nevuchim 2:35

*All aspects of Moshe's prophecy indicate total control, unlike the prophecy of other prophets. Everything points to one central issue - that Moshe's prophecy is pure intellect*

6. God .... is an intellect *in actu* and that there is absolutely no potentiality in Him .... such that He does not sometimes think and sometimes not think, but is always an intellect *in actu*. It follows necessarily that He and the thing thought are one thing, which is His essence. Moreover, the act of thinking .... is in itself the intellect, **which is His essence**. .... It is accordingly also clear that this .... is not true for the Creator only, but also for every intellect. Thus in us too, the intellectualizing subject, the intellect, and the intellectually recognized object, are one and the same thing whenever we have an intellect *in actu*. **We, however, pass intellectually from potentiality to actuality only from time to time**

Moreh Nevuchim 1:68

*The Rambam here states that (i) G-d's Essence is intellectual thought and (ii) when we actively think, we do so in the same way that G-d does. Thus the most Godly thing a person may do is to think - this is the ultimate connection with G-d*

7. We have given the definition of prophecy, stated its true characteristics, and shown that the prophecy of Moses our Teacher was distinguished from that of other prophets; we will now explain that this distinction alone qualified him for the office of proclaiming the Law, a mission without a parallel in the history from Adam to Moses, or among the prophets who came after him; it is a principle in our faith that there will never be revealed another Law. Consequently we hold that there has never been, nor will there ever be, any other divine Law but that of Moses our Teacher. ...
- It is clear that the Law is normal in this sense; for it contains "just statutes and judgments" (Deut. 4:8); and "just" is here identical with "balanced." The statutes of the Law do not impose burdens or excesses as are implied in the service of a hermit or pilgrim, and the like; but, on the other hand, they are not so deficient as to lead to gluttony or lewdness, or to prevent, as the religious laws of the heathen nations do, the development of man's moral and intellectual faculties. We intend to discuss in this treatise the reasons of the commandments, and we shall then show, as far as necessary, the justice and wisdom of the Law, on account of which it is said: "The Law of God is perfect, refreshing the heart" (Ps. 19:8)

**Moreh Nevuchim 2:39**

*Since the Torah is finely ethically balanced, only the prophecy of Moshe was fitting to communicate it*

8. .... although we believe that God created the Universe from nothing, most of our wise and learned men believe that the Creation was not the exclusive result of His will. Rather, **His wisdom**, which we are unable to comprehend, made the actual existence of the Universe necessary. ... It is not unreasonable to assume that the works of God, their existence and preceding non-existence, are the result of His wisdom, but we are unable to understand many of the ways of His wisdom in His works. **On this principle the whole Law of Moses is based;** it begins with this principle: "And God saw all that He had made, and, behold, it was very good" (Gen. 1:31); and it ends with this principle: "The Rock, perfect is His work" (Deut. 32: 4). Note this!

**Moreh Nevuchim 3:25**

*The world was created not just according to a Divine Will (which could be arbitrary) but according to a Divine Wisdom, which makes sense. This is the basis for Torat Moshe. We must try and fathom the Divine wisdom in Creation (the Pardes - Ma'aseh Bereishit and Ma'aseh Merkavah (which for the Rambam are physics and metaphysics)) and Torah (the reasons for the mitzvot). Hence the emphasis in the Moreh on ta'amei hamitzvot*

9. They say of Moses, our Teacher, that he was Father in the knowledge of the Law, in wisdom and in prophecy ..... The perfection, in which man can truly glory, is attained by him when he has acquired – as far as this is possible for man - the knowledge of God, the knowledge of His Providence, and of the manner in which it influences His creatures in their production and continued existence. Having acquired this knowledge he will then be determined always to seek loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, and thus to imitate the ways of God. We have explained this many times in this treatise.

**Moreh Nevuchim 3:54**

*The Moreh concludes with a reference to Moshe's superiority in Law, wisdom and prophecy and then ends with a summary of human perfection - knowledge of G-d, his Hashgacha and Creation ie Moshe Rabbeinu!!!*

***The entire book of Moreh Nevuchim is the Prophecy of Moshe Rabbeinu ie striving to achieving as perfect a possible intellectual understanding of G-d, Torah and Creation. This is the book that the Rambam promised to write. As such, it does not need to talk ABOUT the prophecy of Moshe. It IS the prophecy of Moshe***

10. The knowledge obtained by Moses has not been possessed by any human being before him or after him

**Moreh Nevuchim 1:54**

## 11. הפרק השביעי - במחיצות ועניינן.

.....  
 והכוונה בזה הענין, מה שאומר לך. והוא, שאנו כבר בארנו בפרק השני, כי המעלות - מהן מעלות שכליות ומהן מעלות מידות. וכן הפחיתויות - מהן פחיתויות שכליות, כסכלות, והטפשות, וקשי ההבנה; ומהן פחיתויות מידות, כרוב התאוה, והגאווה, והכעס, והקנאה, והעזות, ואהבת הממון, ומה שדומה להן, והן רבות מאד. .... ואלו הפחיתויות בכללן, הן המחיצות המבדילות בין האדם ובין ה' יתעלה. אמר הנביא, מבאר זה: "כי אם עוונותיכם היו מבדילים ביניכם לבין אלהיכם". יאמר, כי חטאינו, והן אלו הרעות, כמו שזכרנו, הן המחיצות המבדילות בינינו ובינו יתעלה.

.....  
 וכאשר ידע משה רבנו, שלא נשארה לו מחיצה שלא קרעה, ושכבר נשלמו בו מעלות המידות כולן והמעלות השכליות כולן - ביקש להשיג ה' על אמיתת מציאותו, הואיל ולא נשאר מונע, ואמר: (שמות לג:ח) **הראני נא את כבודך**. והודיעו, יתעלה, שאי אפשר לו זה בהיותו שכל מצוי לחומר, רצוני לומר: באשר הוא אדם, והוא אומר: (שמות לג:כ) **כי לא יראני האדם וחי**. הנה לא נשארה בינו ובין השגת ה' על אמיתת מציאותו אלא מחיצה אחת בהירה, והוא השכל האנושי הבלתי נבדל

שמונה פרקים לרמב"ם פרק ז

*In the Shemona Perakim (the Rambam's introduction to his commentary on Pirkei Avot) he explains that defects in our intellect and character create barriers between us and G-d. Moshe had broken down all of these barriers so that all that remained between him and G-d was the built-in limitation of the human mind*

## 12.

והי' סוד השמיני - הוא תורה מן השמים. והוא, להאמין שכל התורה הזאת המצויה בדינינו היום הנה - היא התורה הנתונה למשה, ושהיא פלה מפני הגבורה, רצוני לומר: שהגיפה אליו פלה מאת ה', בהנצח אשר תקרא על דרך ההשאלה 'דבור', ולא ידע איכות זאת ההנצח אלא הוא, עליו השלום, אשר הגיפה אליו. ושהוא במדרגת סופר, שקוראים לו והוא כותב פלה, דברי מיה<sup>44</sup> וספוריה ומצוותיה, וכך נקרא<sup>45</sup>: 'מחוקק'. ואין הכדל בין 'ובני חם כוש ומצרים ופוט

רמב"ם - הקדמה לפ' חלק, משנה סנדרין

*The 8th Ikar describes Torah Min Hashamayim. In this Moshe is described as a 'scribe' simply transmitting the Law that G-d communicated to him through a transmission that we call dibbur/'speech'*

**Q - How does this description of Moshe's role in the transmission of Torah fit with the description in the 7th Ikar of Moshe as the worlds' greatest intellect? Why is this intellect needed to be a scribe!?**

**A - The 8th Ikar is dealing with the giving of the Written Torah (and the Halacha leMoshe MiSinai?). The 7th Ikar sets up the basis for the Oral Law, which is rooted in the intellectual abilities of man.**

*Note the Rambam's approach to Oral Law (in the Shoresh Sheni to Sefer Hamitzvot and other places) that most of halacha is created through (i) the derashot of Chazal whereby Chazal use their intellectual skills and the hermeneutic principles given to them at Sinai to explain the verses of the Torah; and (ii) Rabbinic Law which is created entirely through the minds of Chazal. Both of these are (for the Rambam) included in the mitzvah of Lo Tasur (see shiurim on Oral Law)*

**The 7th Ikar is thus our commitment to the concept that the human intellect (represented at its most perfect by Moshe) is the 'kli' created by G-d for the development of Oral Law**

*Note that the Rambam does NOT invoke the concept גרונו מדבר מתוך גרונו - that G-d 'spoke through Moshe's mouth' but rather that of אספקלריא מאירה - that Moshe saw through a 'clear glass'<sup>1</sup>. This is much more in consonance with the Rambam's approach as outlined above*

1. See Shemona Perakim Chap 7