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The following is an excerpt
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❧ הלכות יסודי התורה ❧

פרקים א', ב:ט"ו, ז:א-ו, ט:א

[א] יסוד היסודות ועמוד החכמות לידע שיש שם מצוי ראשון. והוא
ממציא כל נמצא. וכל הנמצאים משמים וארץ ומה שביניהם לא
נמצאו אלא מאמתת המצאו:

❧ HILCHOS YESODEI HATORAH ❧

CHAPTERS 1, 2:9-10, 7:1-6, 9:1

[Rambam begins *Mishneh Torah* by establishing the existence of God:]^[1]

[1] The foundation of all foundations and the pillar of all wisdoms^[2] is to know^[3] that there is^[4] an existent that is primary^[5] and He brings into existence everything that exists.^[6] And, accordingly, everything that exists other than Him, from the heavens^[7] to the earth, and that which is in between them,^[8] exists only from the truth of His existence.

1. [This chapter, which discusses God's existence, His Oneness, and His incorporeality, relates to the first three Principles.]

2. This principle is the foundation of *all* wisdom, whether religious, philosophical, or scientific. For without the recognition of the world's single primary Cause, even the entire scientific enterprise would be futile, because in that case we would not recognize nature as a single ordered predictable system; rather, it would appear to be simply a random, discordant struggle of warring forces or gods defying any discernible patterns or rules (*Divrei Yirmiyahu*). This principle is the bedrock of all theology, and is proven by Scripture [as in the following Halachos]. It is also the foundation of all wisdom, and is proven by philosophy [as in the beginning of *Moreh Nevuchim*, Vol. II] (*Abarbanel, Rosh Amanah*, Ch. 20).

The first letters of *Rambam's* opening four words form God's four-letter Name (*yud-kei-vau-kei*); thus, *Mishneh Torah* opens with God's Ineffable Name and concludes with a description of the Messianic era (*Hil. Melachim*, Ch. 12:5) when *the earth will be filled with knowledge of Hashem as water covering the seabed* (*R' Dovid HaNaggid* [*Rambam's* grandson], cited in *Seder HaDoros*, Vol. I, p. 103a, left column; see *Mefareish*).

3. Regarding the requirement to "know" rather than merely "believe" in God's existence, see the First Principle, note 13.

4. Regarding the expression *there is* [יש שם], see the First Principle, note 3.

5. *Mefareish*.

Rambam first gives no description to God other

than that He "is an Existent" (i.e., something that exists), because the only definition applicable to Him is His existence. This is unlike anything else in the world which is not defined simply as existing, because we must further define the *nature* of that thing that exists, what classification it is a part of, and how it differs from the others in that classification. Regarding God, however (Who is a member of no classification or category), the extent to which we can define Him is by His existence (*Mefareish*). *Rambam* then *adds* that this Existent is "first" or "primary," indicating that His existence has no beginning and is independent of any prior cause (*Mefareish*) or because, as a necessary existent (see Halachah 3), He is highest in rank and perfection (*Abarbanel, Rosh Amanah*, Ch. 20). We cannot truly describe He Who is above time or relation to anything else as "first" or "primary," except as a way of saying that nothing else precedes Him, or is equal or primary to Him (see *Moreh Nevuchim* 1:57). [Regarding the technical accuracy of the term "existence" with regard to God, see *Moreh Nevuchim* 1:57,58.]

6. That is, He brought everything into existence from absolute nothingness (*Mefareish; Radvaz, Sefer HaLikkutim*; see the Fourth Principle). Alternatively, *Abarbanel* (*Rosh Amanah*, Ch. 7; see also Ch. 9) explains that this line does not refer to creation *ex nihilo*, but rather to the fact that the existence of everything in the world is dependent on *His* existence.

7. This refers to the celestial bodies and the intellects (i.e., angels) that move them (*Abarbanel, Rosh Amanah*, Ch. 20).

8. This refers to the elements and that which is

[ב] וְאִם יַעֲלֶה עַל הַדַּעַת שֶׁהוּא אֵינוֹ מְצוּי אֵין דְּבָר אַחֵר יָכוֹל לְהַמְצִאות:

[ג] וְאִם יַעֲלֶה עַל הַדַּעַת שֶׁאֵין כָּל הַנִּמְצָאִים מְלַבְּדוּ מְצוּיִים הוּא לְבַדּוֹ יִהְיֶה מְצוּי. וְלֹא יִבָּטֵל הוּא לְבָטוּלָם. שֶׁכָּל הַנִּמְצָאִים צְרִיכִין לוֹ וְהוּא בְּרוּךְ הוּא אֵינוֹ צְרִיךְ לָהֶם וְלֹא לְאַחַד מֵהֶם. לְפִיכֵן אֵין אִמְתּוֹתוֹ בְּאִמְתּוֹת אֶחָד מֵהֶם:

[ד] הוּא שֶׁהַנְּבִיא אָמַר (ירמיה י) "יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים אִמְתּוֹ". הוּא לְבַדּוֹ הָאִמְתּוֹ וְאֵין לְאַחֵר אִמְתּוֹ בְּאִמְתּוֹתוֹ. וְהוּא שֶׁהַתּוֹרָה אָמְרָת (דברים ד לה)

[Rambam elaborates on the notion that the existence of everything depends on Him, but His existence depends on nothing:]

[2] And if we were to imagine^[9] that He does not exist, nothing else would be able to exist, because there would be nothing giving them existence.^[10]

[Rambam continues:]

[3] But if, on the other hand, we were to imagine^[11] that nothing other than He existed, He alone would still exist; and He would not cease to exist because of their lack of existence.

[Rambam explains why this is so:]

For everything that exists needs Him in order to exist, but He, blessed be He, does not need all of them, nor any one of them, in order to exist.^[12]

[Rambam concludes:]

Therefore, the truth of His [existence] is not like the truth of the [existence] of any one of them, for His existence is absolute and depends on nothing else, while their existence is contingent on His.^[13]

[This concept is taught by Scripture:]

[4] This is the meaning of that which the prophet said (*Yirmiyah* 10:10): *Hashem, God is true*; that is to say, He alone is the truth, and nothing else has true [existence] comparable to the truth of His [existence].^[14] And this is also the meaning of that which the Torah states (*Devarim* 4:35): *You have been shown in order to know*

made from them (*Abarbanel* loc. cit.) [In accordance with the arrangement discussed by some Rishonim, the earth is surrounded by layered spheres of elements, with the earth enveloped by a sphere of water, a sphere of air enveloping the water, and a sphere of fire enveloping all the previous spheres (see *Moreh Nevuchim* 2:30; *Ramban*, *Bereishis* 1:1).] Alternatively, *Rambam* refers to the chain of emanations from God via His angels and spheres through which He controls matters in the world, as *Rambam* describes in *Letter on Astrology* at note 69.

9. *Rambam* writes "if we were to imagine" God not existing, because such a notion, is, of course, impossible (*Abarbanel*, *Rosh Amanah*, Ch. 20; see the First Principle, note 7).

10. Even after everything was brought into

existence, if we were to imagine that God did not exist, everything else would cease to exist as well. This is because their *continued* existence depends on Him as well (*Mefareish*; see the First Principle, note 6).

11. Regarding this wording, see the First Principle, note 7.

12. *Kiryas Melech* notes that this is reflected in the following Talmudic teaching (*Berachos* 10a): The nature of the Holy One, Blessed is He, is not like the nature of one of flesh and blood. For the nature of flesh and blood is that his handiwork outlives him, but the Holy One, Blessed is He, outlives His works.

13. *Mefareish*. See further in *Divrei Yirmiyahu*, as well as in the following note.

14. "Truth" means what actually *is*. Now, there

”אין עוד מלבדו“. כלומר אין שם מצוי אמת מלבדו כמותו:
 [ה] המצוי הזה הוא אלהי העולם אדון כל הארץ. והוא המנהיג
 הגלגל בכח שאין לו קץ ותכלית. בכח שאין לו הפסק. שהגלגל
 טובב תמיד ואי אפשר שיסב בלא מסבב. והוא ברוך הוא המסבב
 אותו בלא יד ובלא גוף:

that Hashem, He is the God! There is none besides Him; that is to say, aside from Him, there is^[15] no other true existent comparable to Him.^[16]

[In addition to being the cause of the entire world, God is also the source of all power. This notion also serves as a philosophical demonstration of God’s existence:]

[5] This existent is the God^[17] of the world, Master of all the earth. And He is the

One Who guides the sphere^[18] with a force that has no end or limit,^[19] with a force that does not cease.

[The constantly revolving sphere demonstrates God’s existence:]

God must be providing the locomotive power of the spheres, **for the sphere revolves constantly and it is impossible for it to revolve without an entity causing it to revolve. And [God], Blessed is He, is the entity causing it to revolve, without the use of a hand or body.^[20]**

are three kinds of things: (1) Things that *must* be and cannot be otherwise; (2) things that *could* be; (3) things that *cannot* be. The reality of the first group is absolute truth and includes only God, because He is eternal and unconditional. The reality of the third group is absolutely false. The reality of the second group can be true or not, depending on particular conditions, such as the time and circumstances in which they happen to exist. Therefore, even if they do exist, their existence is less than, and not comparable to, the truth of God’s existence. Hence, God alone is “truth”; in this vein, the Sages state (*Shabbos 55a*): *The signet of the Holy One, Blessed is He, is “truth”* (see also *Sefer Halkkarim 2:27* and *Abarbanel, Rosh Amanah, Ch. 20*, ד”ה רצה הרב לבאר).

15. See note 4 above.

16. *Abarbanel (Rosh Amanah, Ch. 20* ד”ה ואמנם) notes that although the word “truth” [אמת] does not appear in the verse, *there is none besides Him*, *Rambam* interprets the verse to be expressing that nothing aside from God exists “truly.” *Abarbanel* explains *Rambam’s* reasoning as follows: The verse cannot mean simply that nothing other than God exists in *any* sense, for that is obviously contradicted by our senses, which inform us of numerous other entities that exist. Likewise, the verse cannot mean that there is no “god” aside from Him, for the “separate intellects” (i.e., the angels) are also called “gods” (see *Moreh Nevuchim 2:6*; cf. *Abarbanel to Yeshayah 45:5*). Accordingly, *Rambam* surmised, the words *there is none*

besides Him refer to the verse’s earlier mention of God’s Ineffable Name, indicating His absolute and non-contingent existence; that is, there is none besides Him that necessarily and “truly” exists.

Yad HaMelech ad loc. observes that *Rambam’s* interpretation of this verse aligns with that of the *Aleinu* prayer, which states *True is our King, there is nothing besides Him, as it is written in His Torah (Devarim 4:39): ...Hashem, He is the God in heaven above and on the earth below — there is none other.*

17. See *Moreh Nevuchim 2:30* (end) with commentaries, and *Radvaz, Sefer HaLikkutim*; cf. *Mefareish*.

18. According to the Ptolemaic model of astronomy that was assumed by the Rishonim, the earth is surrounded by rotating concentric spheres containing various celestial bodies (see *Hil. Yesodei HaTorah, Ch. 3* and *Moreh Nevuchim 1:70,72*). The movement of these spheres grants the elements and terrestrial entities their various natural properties (see *Hil. Yesodei HaTorah 4:6*; *Moreh Nevuchim 2:10*). *Rambam* refers here to the outermost sphere, which encompasses everything in it and compels the rest of the spheres to turn along with it (*Eved HaMelech, Hil. Yesodei HaTorah 1:7, no. 3*).

19. Unlike the power of mortals, which is limited in scope as well as in time, the power of the Divine has “no end nor limit” (*Abarbanel, Rosh Amanah, Ch. 20* ד”ה ולפי שהמופתים; *Diarei Yirmiyahu*).

20. [*Rambam* elaborates on the notion of God’s

[ו] וידיעת דבר זה מצות עשה שִׁנְאַמַר (שמות כ ב) "אֲנֹכִי ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ".
 וְכָל הַמַּעֲלָה עַל דַּעְתּוֹ שֵׁשׁ שָׁם אֱלֹהִים אַחֵר חוּץ מִזֶּה עוֹבֵר בְּלֹא
 תַעֲשֶׂה שִׁנְאַמַר (שמות כ ג) "לֹא יִהְיֶה לְךָ אֱלֹהִים אַחֲרַיִם עַל פָּנָי". וְכוּפֵר
 בְּעֵקֶר שְׂוֵהוּ הָעֵקֶר הַגָּדוֹל שֶׁהֵבֵל תְּלוּי בוֹ:
 [ז] אֱלֹהִים זֶה אֶחָד הוּא וְאֵינוּ שְׁנַיִם וְלֹא יֵתֵר עַל שְׁנַיִם. אֵלָּא אֶחָד.
 שְׂאִין פְּיחודו אֶחָד מִן הָאֶחָדִים הַנִּמְצָאִים בְּעוֹלָם. לֹא אֶחָד בְּמִין
 שֶׁהוּא כּוֹלֵל אֶחָדִים הַרְבֵּה. וְלֹא אֶחָד בְּגוֹף שֶׁהוּא נֶחְלָק לְמַחְלָקוֹת
 וְלִקְצוֹת. אֵלָּא יחוד שְׂאִין יחוד אַחֵר בְּמִוֹתוֹ בְּעוֹלָם.

[Having described what one is able to understand about God, *Rambam* now adds:]

[6] Knowledge of this concept^[21] is a positive commandment, as it is stated in the first of the Ten Commandments, *I am Hashem, your God* (*Shemos* 20:2).^[22] Furthermore, anyone who imagines^[23] that there is a god other than this One violates a negative commandment, as it is stated in the second of the Ten Commandments, *there shall not be unto you other gods in My presence* (*ibid.* v. 3).^[24] Someone who believes this has denied the very basis of our faith, for this — the existence of one God — is the great basis upon which everything depends.

[*Rambam* now teaches God's Oneness:]

[7] This God is One. He is neither two nor more than two; rather, He is only One — whose Oneness is not like the oneness of any individual entities that are found in the world. That is, God is not one like a single species, which includes many individual members, nor one like a physical object, which is divisible into sections and sides (i.e., left, right, top, and bottom). Rather, [His] Oneness is such that there is no other oneness like His in the world, for He is an absolute "One," having no disparate elements or divisions whatsoever.

incorporeality in the following Halachos; see Halachah 9 in particular.]

Rambam elaborates on this proof in *Moreh Nevuchim* 2:1. However, in order to understand it properly, one must understand a number of esoteric premises that are beyond the scope of this appendix. [The interested reader will find these premises in the introduction to the second volume of *Moreh Nevuchim*.] In simplified form, the demonstration runs as follows: The infinite motion of the sphere must be powered by an infinite force. [A force that is finite can power only a finite motion.] This infinite power cannot reside in a physical body, because a physical body is finite and limited, and therefore can contain only a finite power. Accordingly, this infinite power is incorporeal and indivisible (see *Abarbanel, Rosh Amanah*, Ch. 20 דייה הפירוש, אחר שביאור; see further in the Fourth Principle, note 8).

21. That is, there is an existent that is primary, whose existence is necessary, as explained in the previous Halachos (see *Mefareish* here).

22. *Rambam's* assertion that belief in God is counted as one of the commandments of the Torah is subject to considerable debate; see the First Principle, Insight A: The First Commandment. [This belief is unquestionably the principle upon which our faith is founded, but the question at hand is whether it is counted as a *commandment* of the Torah.]

23. *Sfas Melech* [R' Shlomo Korach] here proposes that *Rambam's* wording implies that this refers specifically to one who *willingly* raises such thoughts in his mind, rather than one in whom they rise unbidden, essentially against his will.

24. [*Rambam* interprets this verse the same way *Ramban* does, but unlike *Rashi*; see there and *Mefareish* here.]

אלו היו אלהות הרבה היו גופין וגויות. מפני שאין הנמנים השוין במציאותן נפרדין זה מזה אלא במארעין שיארעו בגופות והגויות. ואלו הנה היוצר גוף וגויה הנה לו קץ ותכלית שאי אפשר להיות גוף שאין לו קץ. וכל שיש לגופו קץ ותכלית יש לכחו קץ וסוף. ואלהינו ברוך שמו הואיל וכחו אין לו קץ ואינו פוסק שהרי הגלגל סובב תמיד. אין כחו פח גוף. והואיל ואינו גוף לא יארעו לו מארעות הגופות כדי שיהא נחלק ונפרד מאחר. לפיכך אי אפשר שיהיה אלא אחד.

[*Rambam* presents a philosophical reason for why God must be absolutely One:]^[25] If there were many gods who created the world, they would have to be physical objects or bodies,^[26] for things that are similar can be counted separately (i.e., differentiated) from one another only through the phenomena that occur to physical objects or bodies.^[27] And if you would therefore be forced to say that the creator was a group of gods with physicality or a body, it would necessarily have an end and a limit, because it is not possible to have a physical object without an end. That is, physical objects are necessarily finite. And regarding any object that has an end and a limit, its power also has an end and a termination. In that case the world would have to be conducted only through a finite power. However, this is clearly not the case.^[28] Therefore, we conclude: Regarding our God, may His Name be blessed, since there is no end to His power, and [His power] never stops — for the sphere of the world is constantly revolving^[29] — His power is not a physical power. Since His power is not limited, He cannot be limited, and since He is not limited He cannot be physical. And since He is not physical, none of the phenomena that occur to physical objects will occur to Him, so that He could be divided and separated from another. It is therefore not possible that He should be anything other than absolutely One.^[30]

[The knowledge of God's Oneness is also a commandment:]

25. [This demonstration, like Halachah 5, is based on esoteric philosophical notions that are beyond the scope of this appendix. Therefore, we will explain it only in a simplified form.]

26. The term גויה is used in Scripture to convey the body of a human or an animal. See, for example, *Bereishis* 47:18, *Shoftim* 14:8, and *I Shmuel* 31:12. *Mefareish* explains that *Rambam* is using the terms גוף and גויה essentially as homonyms.

27. If two things exist metaphysically, with, say, the same power to create and power to conduct the world, what makes them distinct entities? It is only with regard to *physical* items that even if they are absolutely identical, they remain distinct from one another by virtue of their separate bodies. For further discussion of this, see *Mefareish* and *Abarbanel*, *Rosh Amanah*, Ch. 20.

28. For the "spheres" turn constantly, as *Rambam* explains presently.

29. See above, Halachah 5.

30. To summarize: *Rambam* explains why the world could not have been created by a group of gods. (1) If there were two or more creators, they would have to be physical, for otherwise they could not be counted as more than one. (2) If they were physical, there would have to be some limit to their existence. (3) If there was a limit to their existence, there would have to be a limit to their power. (4) But we see that the world moves without a stop, indicating that it is conducted with infinite power. (5) This proves that it is not conducted by a physical power which is necessarily finite. (6) If the conductor is not physical, it could not be separated and divided into distinct entities. (7) Perforce, the Creator is absolutely One — Hashem.

וידיעת דבר זה מצות עשה שִׁנְאָמַר (דברים ו ד) "ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ ה' אֶחָד":

[ח] הרי מִפְרָשׁ בַּתּוֹרָה וּבִנְבִיאִים שְׁאִין הַקְדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא גּוֹף וּגּוּיָה שִׁנְאָמַר (יהושע ב יא) "כִּי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם הוּא אֱלֹהִים בְּשָׁמַיִם מִמַּעַל וְעַל הָאָרֶץ מִתַּחַת". וְהַגּוֹף לֹא יִהְיֶה בְּשֵׁנֵי מְקוֹמוֹת. וְנֶאֱמַר (דברים ד טו) "כִּי לֹא רְאִיתֶם כָּל תְּמוּנָה". וְנֶאֱמַר (ישעיה מ כה) "וְאֵל מִי תִדְמִינִי וְאֲשׁוּה". וְאֵלּוּ הֵיךְ גּוֹף הֵיךְ דוּמָה לְשֶׁאֵר גּוֹפִים:

[ט] אִם בֶּן מֵהוּ זֶה שֶׁכָּתוּב בַּתּוֹרָה "וְתַחַת רַגְלָיו". (שמות לא יח) "כְּתוּבִים בְּאֶצְבַּע אֱלֹהִים". "יַד ה'". "עֵינֵי ה'". "אֶזְנֵי ה'". וְכִיּוֹצֵא בְּדִבְרֵים

The knowledge of this fact is a positive commandment, as it is stated (*Devarim* 6:4): *Hashem is our God, Hashem is One.*

[*Rambam* demonstrates God's incorporeality from Scripture:]^[31]

[8] It is stated explicitly in the Torah and the Prophets that the Holy One, Blessed is He, is neither a body nor a physical form. For example, it is stated (*Devarim* 4:39): *that Hashem, He is the God — in the heavens above and on the earth below.*^[32] Hashem thus cannot be any kind of physical being, because a physical object cannot be in two places at the same time.^[33] It is also stated regarding the Revelation at Sinai (*ibid.* 4:15): *You did not see any likeness.* Thus, we see that God has no likeness, and therefore cannot be a body or physical form, which necessarily has a likeness.^[34] And it is stated (*Yeshayah* 40:25): *to whom can you liken Me, that I should be [his] equal?* Now, if [Hashem] was a physical object, He would necessarily be similar to other physical objects, in having physicality.^[35] We thus learn from these verses that He is not corporeal.^[36]

[Having demonstrated that God is not physical, *Rambam* discusses the many verses in the Torah that seem to contradict this fact:]

[9] If it is so that God is not physical, what is the meaning of this that is stated in the Torah, *under His "feet"* (*Shemos* 24:10), or *[the Tablets] were written with the "finger" of God* (*ibid.* 24:31), *the "hand" of Hashem* (*ibid.* 9:3), *the "eyes" of Hashem* (*Devarim* 11:12), *the "ears" of Hashem* (*Bamidbar* 11:1), and similar things like

31. Having demonstrated God's incorporeality from logical arguments in the previous Halachah, *Rambam* now does so from Scripture (*Mefareish*).

32. [Our translation of this verse, as opposed to the verse that appears in classic editions of *Mishneh Torah*, is in accordance with the Frankel ed.; see *Mefareish* here.]

33. *Rambam's* argues that those who say that God is corporeal do so because they wish to maintain the literal meaning of the verses that describe Him in that way (see Halachah 9); accordingly, they are forced to explain this verse literally as well! (*R' David Aramah's* commentary here). How-

ever, that is clearly impossible because a physical entity cannot be in two places simultaneously. Rather, the verse refers to God's mastery over the entire world.

34. *Mefareish*.

35. See *Mefareish*.

36. Neither is He technically "spiritual," either, because then He would be comparable to other "spiritual" beings (such as angels), and the verse in *Yeshayah* states that He cannot be compared with anything; rather, He is in a class of His own (see the Third Principle, note 8).

הָאֱלוֹ. הַכֵּל לְפִי דַעְתָּן שֶׁל בְּנֵי אָדָם הוּא שְׂאִינָן מִכִּירִין אֶלָּא (הַנּוֹפּוֹת) [הַגּוֹפּוֹת] וְדַבְּרָה תּוֹרָה כְּלָשׁוֹן בְּנֵי אָדָם. וְהַכֵּל כְּנוּיִים הֵן. שְׁנֵאָמַר (דְּבָרִים ל"ב מ"א) "אִם שְׁנוֹתַי בִּרְקַח חֲרָבִי". וְכִי חָרַב יֵשׁ לוֹ וּבְחָרַב הוּא הוֹרֵג אֶלָּא מִשָּׁל וְהַכֵּל מִשָּׁל. רְאִיָּה לְדַבָּר שְׁנֵבִיא אֶחָד אוֹמֵר שֶׁרְאָה הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא (דְּנִיָּאל ז' ט) "לְבוּשִׁיהָ כְּתֹלַג חוֹר". וְאֶחָד רְאָהּוּ (יִשְׁעִיָּה ס"ג א) "חֲמוּץ בְּגָדִים מִבְּצָרָה". מִשָּׁה רַבְּנוּ עֲצָמוּ רְאָהּוּ עַל הַיָּם כְּגִבּוֹר עוֹשֶׂה מְלַחְמָה. וּבְסִינֵי כְּשִׁלִּיחַ צְבוּר עֲטוּף. לוֹמֵר שְׂאִינָן לוֹ דְּמוּת וְצוּרָה אֶלָּא הַכֵּל בְּמַרְאֵה הַנְּבוּאָה וּבְמַחְזָה. וְאַמְתַּת הַדְּבָר אֵינָן דַּעְתּוֹ שֶׁל אָדָם מִבֵּין וְלֹא יְכוּלָה לְהַשִּׁיגוֹ וּלְחַקְרוֹ.

those mentioned in these verses? The answer is that all of these verses were stated this way in accordance to the limited intellect of humans who recognize only physical objects. The Torah speaks in the language of people,^[37] and all of these verses are actually figurative. For example, as [the verse] states (*Devarim* 32:41): *If I sharpen my flashing sword*. Now, does [God] have a sword? Does He kill with a sword? Of course not! Rather, [the verse] is allegorical. Similarly, all of the other verses that ascribe corporeal properties to God are also allegorical.

[Rambam provides support for this interpretation:]

The proof of this concept is that one prophet says that he saw the Holy One, Blessed is He, as follows: *His garment was white as snow* (*Daniel* 7:9).^[38] And yet another prophet saw Him *with a sullied*^[39] *garment [coming] from Batzrah* (*Yeshayah* 63:1). These verses apparently contradict each other: Is His garment white or soiled?^[40] And Moshe our teacher himself saw [God] in apparently contradictory ways — at the Sea of Reeds like a mighty warrior,^[41] while at Sinai He appeared like a *shaliach tzibbur* (prayer leader) wrapped with a *tallis*.^[42] This multiplicity of descriptions of God in effect says that [God] has neither likeness nor form.^[43] Rather, all of these verses refer to the appearance of God in a prophecy and a vision. God portrays Himself in prophecy based on the particular message He wants to convey. Thus, sometimes God portrays Himself as a warrior, and at other times as a *shaliach tzibbur*. The exact truth of the matter of God's nature^[44] is something that a human mind is not able to comprehend, nor attain an understanding of, nor even to properly investigate it.

37. See *Berachos* 31b et al. See also below, Halachah 12 and the Third Principle.

38. [Rambam calls *Daniel* a "prophet" even though technically he was not one [*Megillah* 3a] (see the Seventh Principle, note 31 and *Introduction to Cheilek*, note 89).]

39. [That is, reddish, stained with the blood of His enemies (see *Radak* to the verse, and *Mefareish* here).]

40. And the corporealists cannot respond that His garments changed in appearance (God forbid), because Scripture states (*Malachi* 3:6): *I, Hashem, have not changed!* (*R' David Aramah's*

commentary, see Halachah 12; cf. *Mefareish*).

41. See *Mechilta* to 20:2, cited by *Rashi* to *Shemos* there; cf. *Chagigah* 14a.

42. See *Rosh Hashanah* 17b.

43. Thus, He is unlike even the angels who have form, but not matter or substance (see *Hil. Yesodei HaTorah* 2:3).

44. *Mefareish* to Halachah 10. [Although in *Shemonah Perakim* Ch. 8 (and similarly in *Moreh Nevuchim* 3:23) Rambam applies this verse to the subject of God's knowledge, that is synonymous with His essence, as Rambam explains in *Hil. Yesodei HaTorah* 2:10.]

וְזֶה שֶׁאָמַר הַפְּתוּב (איוב יא ז) "הַחֲקֹר אֱלֹהִים תִּמְצָא אִם עַד תִּכְלִית שְׂדֵי תִמְצָא":
 [י] מֵהוּ זֶה שֶׁבִקֵּשׁ מֹשֶׁה רַבְּנוּ לְהַשִּׁיג בְּשֵׁאמַר (שמות לג יח) "הֲרֵאֲנִי נָא אֶת כְּבֹדְךָ". בִּקֵּשׁ לִידַע אֲמַתַּת הַמְצָאוֹ שֶׁל הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא עַד שִׁיְהִיָּה יָדוּעַ בְּלִבּוֹ כְּמוֹ יְדִיעַת אֶחָד מִן הָאֲנָשִׁים שֶׁרָאָה פָּנָיו וְנִחְקְקָה צוּרְתוֹ בְּלִבּוֹ שֶׁנִּמְצָא אוֹתוֹ הָאִישׁ נִפְרָד בְּדַעְתּוֹ מִשְׁאֵר הָאֲנָשִׁים. כִּן בִּקֵּשׁ מֹשֶׁה רַבְּנוּ לְהִיּוֹת מְצִיאֹת הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא נִפְרָדָת בְּלִבּוֹ מִשְׁאֵר הַנִּמְצָאִים עַד שֶׁיִּדַע אֲמַתַּת הַמְצָאוֹ כַּאֲשֶׁר הִיא. וְהַשִּׁיבּוֹ בְּרוּךְ הוּא שֶׁאֵין כַּח בְּדַעַת הָאָדָם הַחַי שֶׁהוּא מִחֲבַר מְגוּף וְנִפְּשׁ לְהַשִּׁיג אֲמַתַּת דְּבַר זֶה עַל בְּרִיו.

This is what the verse means when it states (*Iyov* 11:7): *Can you achieve an understanding of God? Can you fathom the extent of the Almighty?*^[45]

[In light of the principle that God has no form, *Rambam* asks:]

[10] What is it that Moshe our teacher requested to comprehend when he said to God, *Show me now Your glory*^[46] (*Shemos* 33:18)? It appears that Moshe was asking to see some form of God!

[*Rambam* explains what Moshe actually meant to ask:]

[Moshe] requested to know the true existence of the Holy One, Blessed is He. Moshe, of course, knew that God has no physical form. Rather, he wanted to comprehend the truth of God's existence to the extent that it would be known in his heart like the knowledge of a certain person whom he saw face to face, whose form was thus etched within him.^[47] For it would emerge that this person was distinct in his mind from other people and he therefore would not confuse this one with another.^[48] Similarly, Moshe our teacher sought that knowledge of the existence of the Holy One, Blessed is He, should be distinct in his heart from the existence of other beings, to the extent that he would know the truth of [God's] existence as it truly is.^[49] And the Holy One, Blessed is He, answered him that the intelligence of a living person, which is a blend of both a body and a soul, lacks the ability to comprehend the truth of this matter of God's existence with complete clarity.^[50]

45. In the words of a sage cited by *Derashos HaRan* (*Derush* 4, p. 325 [ArtScroll ed.]) and *Sefer Halkkarim* 2:30 [end]: If I knew Him, I would be Him!

46. In some cases, such as this one, "glory" is a respectful reference to God Himself (*Moreh Nevuchim* 1:64).

47. That is, Moshe meant *show me* in a figurative sense, as in *let me perceive intellectually* (*Moreh Nevuchim* 1:4).

48. [Elucidation in accordance with *Shemonah Perakim* Ch. 7.]

49. Some authorities object to *Rambam's*

explanation of Moshe's request, for surely Moshe knew that it is impossible for a human being to comprehend the infinite God! In the words of *Abarbanel* (to *Moreh Nevuchim* 1:54): "How can [*Rambam* suggest that Moshe,] the master of the wise men and teacher of the prophets, did not know what the smallest philosopher comprehends [i.e., that God's essence is beyond mortal intellect]?" *Ran* (*Derashos HaRan*, *Derush* 4, pp. 324-325 [ArtScroll ed.]) makes this argument as well.

Mefareish explains that Moshe asked God to bestow this esoteric wisdom on him *miraculously* [דְּרַךְ מוֹפֵת].

50. According to *Mefareish* (cited in the previous

והודיעו ברוך הוא מה שלא ידע אדם לפניו ולא ידע לאחוריו. עד שהשיג מאמתת המצאו דבר שנפרד הקדוש ברוך הוא בדעתו משאר הנמצאים. כמו שיפרד אחד מן האנשים שראה אחוריו והשיג כל גופו ומלבושו בדעתו משאר גופי האנשים. ועל דבר זה רמז הכתוב ואמר (שמות לג כג) "וראית את אחרי ופני לא יראו":

[יא] וכיון שנתברר שאינו גוף וגויה יתברר שלא יאירע לו אחד ממארעות הגופות. לא חבור ולא פרווד. לא מקום ולא מדה. לא עליה ולא ירידה. ולא ימין ולא שמאל. ולא פנים ולא אחור. ולא ישיבה ולא עמידה. ואינו מצוי בזמן עד שיהיה לו ראשית ואחרית ומנין שנים. ואינו משתנה שאין לו דבר

[Rambam explains the knowledge that Moshe was granted and able to comprehend:] However, the Holy One, Blessed is He, did inform [Moshe] of His existence in such a way that no person before him knew, and no one afterward will ever know. This knowledge reached the point that [Moshe] comprehended the truth of the existence of the Holy One, Blessed is He, in his mind as distinct from the existence of other beings similar to how the body of one man is distinct from the bodies of other men in [one's] mind from having seen only his back and thereby perceiving the impression of his entire body and clothing. However, it was not like the distinction attained from seeing the man face to face. It is regarding this notion that the verse hints, by saying (Shemos 33:23): *You will see My back, but My face may not be seen.*

[Rambam adds that since God is incorporeal, certain descriptions cannot be applied to Him:]

[11] Once it has been clarified that [God] is neither a body nor a physical form, it becomes clear that He is also not subject to any physical phenomena. This means that He is subject neither to joining together nor division,^[51] neither to location nor measure,^[52] neither to ascent nor descent;^[53] He has neither a right side nor a left side, neither a back nor a front,^[54] and is subject neither to sitting nor standing.

[Another dimension that does not apply to God:]

He does not exist in time, such that He would have a beginning, an end, or exist for a number of years.^[55] He also does not change, because He has nothing that can

note), Hashem answered that [even through a miracle] it is impossible for man to truly comprehend Him.

51. Since He is not a composite of different parts (*Mefareish*).

52. Since location and measurement are physical properties (*Mefareish*).

53. Since movement is possible only for something physical (*Mefareish*).

54. Since only something physical has sides (*Mefareish*).

55. Rambam (*Moreh Nevuchim*, Introduction to Vol. II, Premise 15) explains that time exists only in connection with movement. Accordingly, since Rambam already noted that movement does not apply to Him, it follows that time also cannot apply to Him.

Alternatively, *Mefareish* explains that if He existed in time, that would mean that time preceded Him. That would contradict His character as the existent that is *primary* [first], as stated in Halachah 1. [Possibly, this means to say that time itself is a created quality, and as such cannot apply to its Creator.]

שִׁינְגָרָם לֹא שְׁנוּי. וְאֵין לוֹ לֹא מוֹת וְלֹא חַיִּים בְּחַיֵּי הַגּוֹף הַחַי. וְלֹא סִבְלוֹת
וְלֹא חֲכָמָה בְּחֲכַמַת הָאִישׁ הַחֶכֶם. לֹא שְׁנָה וְלֹא הַקִּיצָה. וְלֹא פֶעַס וְלֹא
שְׁחוֹק וְלֹא שְׂמֻחָה וְלֹא עֲצָבוֹת. וְלֹא שְׁתִּיקָה וְלֹא דְבוּר בְּדְבוּר בְּנֵי אָדָם.
וְכִּי אָמְרוּ חֲכָמִים אֵין לְמַעַלָּה לֹא יִשְׁיבָה וְלֹא עֲמִידָה וְלֹא עֶרְף וְלֹא עִיפוּי:
[יב] וְהוֹאִיל וְהִדְבֵּר בֶּן הוּא. כֹּל הַדְּבָרִים הַלְלוּ וְכִיּוֹצֵא בָהֶן שֶׁנֶּאֱמָרוּ
בַּתּוֹרָה וּבְדִבְרֵי נְבִיאִים הַכֹּל מְשָׁל וּמְלִיצָה הֵן. כְּמוֹ שֶׁנֶּאֱמָר (תהילים
ב ד) "יּוֹשֵׁב בְּשָׁמַיִם יִשְׁחָק". (דברים לב כא) "כִּעֲסוֹנֵי בְּהֵבְלִיהֶם". (דברים כח סג)
"כִּי־אֲשֶׁר שָׁשׁ ה'" וְכִיּוֹצֵא בָהֶן. עַל הַכֹּל אָמְרוּ חֲכָמִים דְּבָרָה תּוֹרָה כְּלִשׁוֹן
בְּנֵי אָדָם.

cause a change in Him.^[56] He has neither death nor life like the life of a living physical being.^[57]

[God is furthermore not subject to the characteristics or states that affect humans:]
God has neither foolishness nor wisdom, even like the wisdom of a wise person.^[58]
He has neither sleep nor wakefulness, neither anger nor laughter, neither joy nor
sorrow, neither silence nor speech like the speech of people.^[59]

[Rambam concludes:]

And indeed the Sages said (*Chagigah* 15a): Above there is neither sitting nor standing, neither division nor joining together.^[60]

[In light of this, *Rambam* explains how to interpret verses in Scripture that ascribe human emotions to God:]

[12] Since this is so, that God is not subject to these human phenomena, all of those things, and those similar to them, that were stated in the Torah and in the words of the Prophets seeming to ascribe such things to Him, are intended as metaphors and figures of speech.^[61] For example, it is stated: *He Who "sits" in heaven will "laugh"* (*Tehillim* 2:4), *they "angered" Me with their vanities* (*Devarim* 32:21), *as Hashem "rejoiced"* (*ibid.* 28:63), and the like. About all of these kinds of cases, as well, the Sages stated, the Torah speaks in the language of people.^[62]

56. Change is possible only where there is a disparity, either between internal aspects of an entity, or between the entity and something external to it. [For example, two items of differing temperatures.] Accordingly, since God is absolute oneness and does not "encounter" or "contact" anything else, so to speak, He cannot change (see *Mefareish* and *Derashos HaRan*, *Derush* 3, pp. 211-212 [ArtScroll ed.]).

57. The notion of "life" with regard to a "living physical being" refers to an added quality that it has, aside from its essence. God, however, can be called "alive" only insofar that He exists, but not that He has an added quality of "life" (*Mefareish*). [This broader issue of what attributes may and may not be applied to God forms a major part of the first volume of *Moreh Nevuchim*, in Chapters 51-59. Regarding the attributes of "life" and

"wisdom" with regard to God, see *Kuzari* 2:2.]

58. Here too, the attribute of "wisdom" is an added quality that a person attains. God's wisdom, however, is identical with His essence and existence, [as explained in *Hil. Yesodei HaTorah* 2:10] (*Mefareish*).

59. That is, by emitting sounds through the organs of speech, such as the lips, tongue, and throat. When God "speaks" to man, that is a figurative reference to His influence [שְׁפַעַי] reaching a person through an angel or created sound (*Mefareish*; see the Third Principle, Insight B).

60. These definitions of עֶרְף [division] and עִיפוּי [joining together] follow *Rambam* in the Third Principle; cf. *Mefareish* here.

61. Stylistic reference to *Mishlei* 1:6.

62. In *Halachah* 9, *Rambam* applied this principle

וְכֵן הוּא אוֹמֵר (ירמיה ז ט) "הֲאֵתִי הֵם מְכַעְסִים". הֲרִי הוּא אוֹמֵר (מלאכי ג
 (ו) "אֲנִי ה' לֹא שָׁנִיתִי". וְאֵלֹ הִיָּה פְעָמִים כּוֹעֵס וּפְעָמִים שְׂמֵחַ הִיָּה מִשְׁתַּנֵּה.
 וְכָל הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֹ אֵינָן מְצוּיִין אֶלָּא לְגוֹפִים הָאֶפְלִים הַשְּׁפִלִים שׁוֹכְנֵי בְּתֵי
 חֹמֶר אֲשֶׁר בְּעֶפְר יְסוּדִם אֲבָל הוּא בְרוּךְ הוּא יִתְבָּרַךְ וַיִּתְרוֹמֵם עַל כָּל זֶה:

פֶּרֶק ב'

[ט] כָּל הַנִּמְצָאִים חוּץ מִן הַבוֹרָא מְצוּרָה הֲרֵאשׁוּנָה עַד יְתוֹשׁ קָטָן שְׂיֵהִיָּה
 בְּטַבּוֹר הָאָרֶץ הַכֹּל מִכַּח אֲמַתּוֹתוֹ נִמְצְאוּ. וּלְפִי שֶׁהוּא יוֹדֵעַ עֲצוּמוֹ
 וּמִכִּיר גְּדֻלָּתוֹ וְתַפְאֲרָתוֹ וְאֲמַתּוֹתוֹ הוּא יוֹדֵעַ הַכֹּל וְאֵינן דְּבַר נֶעְלָם מִמֶּנּוּ:
 [י] הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא מִכִּיר אֲמַתּוֹ וַיּוֹדֵעַ אוֹתָהּ כְּמוֹ שֶׁהִיא. וְאֵינּוּ יוֹדֵעַ

[Rambam proves this point:]

[The verse] similarly states (*Yirmiyah* 7:19): *Is it Me they are provoking?* This apparently indicates that God can be “provoked” or angered. But [a verse] also says (*Malachi* 3:6): *I, Hashem, have not changed! Now, if [Hashem] is sometimes angry and sometimes joyful, He is thereby changing!* Perforce, descriptions of such emotions or characteristics are not intended literally. Rather all of these matters (i.e., physical phenomena, such as anger or joy) are found only in lowly, dark physical bodies, those who dwell in clay houses, whose foundation is in the dust.^[63] But [Hashem], may He be blessed, is elevated and exalted from above all of this.

CHAPTER 2

[Rambam discusses the nature of existence, and of God’s knowledge of all that exists:]

[9] All existing beings other than the Creator, from the highest angelic form^[1] of the *Chayos*^[2] to the tiniest mosquito on the face of the earth^[3] — all exist through the force of the truth of His [existence].^[4] And because He knows Himself, and recognizes His greatness, His glory, and the truth of His existence, He knows everything; nothing is concealed from Him.

[Rambam elaborates on the nature of God’s Oneness, and that His knowledge is one with Him:]

[10] The Holy One, Blessed is He, recognizes the truth of His [existence] and knows it completely as it is. It is not that He knows the truth of His existence and, as

to verses that seem to portray God as a physical entity. Here he applies it to the verses that seem to ascribe physical characteristics to God.

[Rambam does not mean to say that the Sages themselves applied this principle to these sorts of verses (as his wording seems to indicate), because in fact they stated this principle in a different context (see, e.g., *Berachos* 31b). Rather, Rambam means only to say that just as the Sages applied the principle to other cases, it applies here as well (*Diarei Yirmiyahu* to Halachah 7; cf.

Or *Same’ach* here).]

63. Stylistic reference to *Iyov* 4:19.

1. The angels (“intellects”) exist as pure form without matter; see Halachah 3.

2. These angels are represented in prophetic visions as being directly beneath the Throne of Glory, and nothing but God is loftier than they (*Halachah* 7).

3. Translation based on *Maaseh Roke’ach*.

4. See the first four Halachos in Chapter 1.