

The Rambam Review *Concise overviews of each daily chapter*

Sunday, July 19th, 2020: **Mitzvot Lo Taaseh 4 (276-365)**

Overview: Picked up with proper adjudication of law, interpersonal conduct, rest on holidays, and concluded with illicit relationships.

Remember that? The injunction not to embarrass another is found by giving rebuke (Mitzvat Lo Taaseh 303). Words must be selected *very* wisely!

Monday, July 20th, 2020: **Introduction to Mishneh Torah**

Overview: Delineated chain of transmission of the Oral Law along with its history of development, as well as his reasons for authoring this work.

Remember that? All of Klal Yisrael are *absolutely bound* by the rulings of the Babylonian Talmud; not so by later, localized edicts or customs.

Tuesday, July 21st, 2020: **Conceptual Breakdown of the Books**

Overview: 1) HaMadda 2) Ahava 3) Zmanim 4) Nashim 5) Kedusha 6) Haflaah 7) Zeraim 8) Avodah 9) Korbanot 10) Tahara 11) Nezikin 12) Kinyan 13) Mishpatim 14) Shoetim

Remember that? Haflaah has sections culled from three sederim of the Mishna: (Shevuot [Nezikin], Nedarim & Nezirut [Nashim], Arachin [Kodshim]).

Wednesday, July 22nd, 2020: **Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah, Perek 1**

Overview: God exists. His existence is a necessary existence. He is one, incorporeal and unchanging, but is described in terms we can relate to.

Remember that? When Moshe asked to “see God’s glory,” he requested to comprehend God’s existence. God acquiesced partially, but not fully.

Thursday, July 23rd, 2020: **Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah, Perek 2**

Overview: There is both a mitzvah to love and to be in awe of God. Both can be engendered by contemplating His magnificent, endless wisdom.

Remember that? God’s knowledge is not distinct from His existence (as ours is from ours). This explains His omniscience over all of His creation.

Friday, July 24th, 2020: **Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah, Perek 3**

Overview: Because scientific realia demonstrate God’s wisdom and can thereby engender deep love and awe of God, key principles are outlined.

Remember that? When the pasuk (e.g. Tehillem 148:7-8) says various elements “praise” God, it means by demonstrating His vast power to all.

Shabbos Kodosh, July 25th, 2020: **Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah, Perek 4**

Overview: The subjects in these first four perakim are called “Pardes.” One shouldn’t delve into them until one has attained mastery of Torah.

Remember that? Man being created in “God’s image” means that he has a soul with the potential to acquire profound wisdom.

“Survey Says...”

Rabbinic debate and consensus regarding this week’s Rambam

Though Rambam seems to count belief in God as the very first mitzvah, various others (notably, Bahag) didn’t see things that way.

Led by Rambam (who, to be clear, *agreed* with Rambam, but defended the opposing stance), many stressed some key issues with Rambam’s approach. To summarize two:

a) What value is there in a command to believe? Either one does or one does not; belief is not easily legislated!

b) If one recognizes the command, then one inherently recognizes a commander, thereby rendering a command to believe in Him entirely unnecessary; and if one does not, then one does not, and the command is nonetheless equally futile!

Some therefore concluded this is *not* a command, but rather a **prerequisite basis** for religion; or else, reworked it differently (for example, Ran [Derasha 9] viewed it as a mitzvah to believe in Torah mi’Shamayim).

Ultimately, Rambam had ample defenders too. Below is one meaningful explanation:

TAKE IT HOME

A clear and powerful message from the Rambam to share with the family and apply to our lives



It is commonly understood that Rambam viewed belief in God as the first mitzvah.

However, in his own writings, Rambam always uses the Hebrew term “leida,” “to know,” that there is a God (e.g. Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah 1:1,6) when describing this specific commandment. Thus, along with a few other indications, one can suggest an alternate interpretation of this first mitzvah. Rather than a command about “belief,” a better perspective might be about **“awareness.”**

Seen in this light, the mitzvah aims not at abstract belief alone, but rather at cultivated, experiential **awareness** of God’s being, felt in both the sense of His imminent presence and in the deep awe this engenders. Though philosophical inquiry can be effective too (on occasion), this awareness is best developed **by truly opting to be more mindful.**

Properly fulfilled, this can change our lives.

[Moreover, this resolves the two questions above:

- a) the goal is not to believe, but to *develop awareness*, which can be legislated; and
- b) the command is no longer redundant].

THE LASTING IMPRESSION:

A Maimonidean formulation worth holding onto

היאך היא הדרך לאהבתו ויראתו, בשעה שיתבונן האדם במעשיו וברואיו הנפלאים הגדולים ויראה מהן חכמתו שאין לה ערך ולא קץ מיד הוא אוהב ומשבח ומפאר ומתאוה תאוה גדולה לידע השם הגדול ...

הלכות יסודי התורה פרק ב הלכה ב: