

## The Rambam Review Concise overviews of each daily chapter

Sunday, July 26th: **Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah, Perek 5**

**Overview:** Every Jew must sanctify God's name, even if it costs his life, if to avoid a cardinal sin or an attempt to undermine the religion.

**Remember that?** If Jews are surrounded by enemies and are told to give over one of them or all will die, they must die and not betray a fellow Jew.

Monday, July 27th: **Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah, Perek 6**

**Overview:** It is forbidden to destroy God's name in any form. It is also forbidden to destroy a part of the Beit HaMikdash or kitvei hakodesh.

**Remember that?** If a Sefer Torah has been written by a Jewish heretic, there is a mitzvah to burn it; the names of God have no imbued sanctity.

Tuesday, July 28th: **Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah, Perek 7**

**Overview:** To prophesy, one must be truly wise, sanctified, and refined. There are four distinctions between the prophecy of Moshe and of others.

**Remember that?** Though a would-be prophet can *prepare* for revelation (such as by playing music and meditating), he cannot *ensure* prophecy.

Wednesday, July 29th: **Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah, Perek 8**

**Overview:** Belief in Moshe's prophecy is based on *our* own prophetic experience of his prophecy. Any counterclaim is thus evidently false.

**Remember that?** Though a later prophet may produce a sign or wonder, the real reason we believe him is because Moshe commanded us to do so.

Thursday, July 30th: **Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah, Perek 9**

**Overview:** A prophet is not allowed to *permanently* add or detract to the Torah; however, he can *temporarily* (with the exception of idolatry).

**Remember that?** If a person violates a prophet's command, or a prophet himself does, or he withholds a message, the penalty is death by Heaven.

Friday, July 31st: **Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah, Perek 10**

**Overview:** To validate an apparent prophet, he must predict a future *positive* event successfully without inaccuracy. Failure proves falsehood.

**Remember that?** While a positive prediction will never be rescinded — in God's mercy, a negative one certainly can be (e.g. with proper teshuva)!

Shabbos Kodesh, August 1st: **Hilchot Deot, Perek 1**

**Overview:** All humans have a range of character traits, acquired by both nature and nurture. Ideally, a middle path should be taken in all of them.

**Remember that?** There is a positive command to form one's character to emulate God's ways; it is achieved by repeated action developing this end.

## "Survey Says..."

*Rabbinic debate and consensus regarding this week's Rambam*

When is one permitted to give up one's life for the sake of sanctifying God's name?

According to the Rambam, unless there is a *demand* to do so (such as for a cardinal sin, or if government persecutions attempt to undermine mitzvot), there is an absolute *prohibition* to forfeit one's life unnecessarily (Yesodei HaTorah 5:1,4).

However, many other Rishonim disputed this ruling, most notably amongst the Baalei HaTosafot. They argued one *is* permitted to voluntarily give up one's life for the sake of an ordinary mitzvah, and some even viewed doing so as an act of piety (e.g. S'mak, #3).

This more permissive attitude permeated other related areas of Tosafist thought and rulings. In fact, with even more expansive permissions regarding suicide or even killing others, Prof. Haym Soloveitchik suggests any ruling to the contrary would: "[deny] their deepest feelings, and more significantly, their deepest religious intuition. Any interpretation that would retain the lofty status of ... the holy martyrs ... would prove far more persuasive to their mind than the straightforward reading of the law."

## TAKE IT HOME

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



In the end of his discussion of the core mitzvot of kiddush and chillul Hashem, the Rambam is explicit that these principles far extend martyrdom. In fact, a known talmid chacham must do his utmost to avoid even the slightest action or word which might lead to any unfavorable view of him, and in turn, of God and His Torah (Yesodei HaTorah 5:11).

While it is clear that the degree to which this caution must be exercised is in direct correlation with one's lofty stature, it is also obvious that today we, in essence, are *all* equally charged with these core demands. Why? Well, because if you wear a kippa in the street, then you are deemed a "rabbi" to many who see you, and that means they will judge God and His Torah based on *your* language and conduct. *The responsibility to sanctify God's name may be enormous, but it also enormously sanctifies our routines.*

## הלכות דעות פרק א הלכה ד:

הדרך הישרה היא מדה בינונית שבכל דעה ודעה מכל הדעות שיש לו לאדם, והיא הדעה שהיא רחוקה משתי הקצוות ריחוק שוה ואינה קרובה לא לזו ולא לזו ...

## THE LASTING IMPRESSION:

*A Maimonidean formulation worth holding onto*