

Moshe ben-Maimon (Maimonides)

BIO

Rabbeinu Moshe ben-Maimon (1130s-1204), commonly known as Maimonides, was a Medieval doctor and philosopher whose efforts to rationally make peace between Jewish theology and known facts about the natural world has had a profound influence on subsequent eras of Judaism. While the reaction to Maimonides' work during his lifetime was often confused or hostile, many of his central ideas have since become key tenets of what is now called Orthodox Judaism.

KEY IDEAS

- > The Thirteen Principles of Faith, which state:
 - > There is one, eternal God, who is not a physical being, and who alone deserves worship. This God communicates by way of prophecy and divine revelation, such as that given to Moses the Prophet in our perfect Torah. God will judge all human beings and reward or punish according to their actions. At the end of time, a Messiah will come to enact God's will, at which time the righteous dead will be resurrected.
- > There is no contradiction between traditional Jewish belief and scientific discovery or rational thinking.
- > 'True beliefs' are facts ordained by God at the Creation of the world, while 'necessary beliefs' (such as describing God in 'human-like' terms in the Torah) aren't exactly factual, but are still necessary for the human grasp.

RECOMMENDED TEXTS

The Guide for the Perplexed is the central text of Maimonides' philosophical outlook, and the one which garnered such controversy.

Mishnah Torah is Maimonides' 14-volume codification of Jewish law. While it certainly isn't a front-to-back read, it provides excellent insight into the rabbi's understanding of correct Jewish practice, and remains one of the definitive such texts.