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Resume of a Prophet

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1.

RAMBAM ON PROPHECY

In Rambam's *Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah*,¹ which discusses prophecy — “Among the foundations of the faith is to know that Hashem conveys prophecy to humanity” — Rambam says:

Prophecy is bestowed only upon an exceptionally wise person of strong character whose natural inclinations never overcome him. Instead, with his mind, he constantly overcomes his natural inclinations. He possesses very broad mental acuity.

Next, Rambam details the order of the prophet's practical conduct, etc.

Commentators ask:² In tractate *Nedarim*,³ Rabbi Yochanan says, “The Holy One imbues His *Shechinah*⁴ only in someone strong, wealthy, wise, and humble. All of these qualities are derived from Moshe.” (The Gemara there derives each quality from a verse, including humility, “as it says,⁵ ‘Now the man Moshe was exceedingly humble.’”) The inference from these (prooftexts) is that “strong” and “wealthy” are understood straightforwardly (physically strong and financially wealthy). {Why, then, does Rambam say “strong **character**”?} Also, why doesn't Rambam mention “wealthy” (according to its plain meaning) or “humble”?

The *Kesef Mishneh* clarifies that the qualities Rambam lists are based on “his own reasoning and not the teaching of Rabbi Yochanan.”⁶ The *Kesef Mishneh* clarifies that Rambam does not cite the aforementioned qualities because Rabbi Yochanan's teaching (“the Holy One imbues His *Shechinah*”) discusses the **permanent** designation of a prophet. This is accomplished by the *Shechinah* imbuing the person, as the *Rosh* explains in *Nedarim*. All those qualities listed by Rabbi Yochanan are necessary for this to unfold. However, when the *Shechinah* imbues someone only temporarily, “A person can prophesy,

¹ *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah*,” ch. 7, par. 1.

² See *Kesef Mishneh* and *Lechem Mishneh*, “*Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah*,” ch. 7, par. 1, et al.

³ *Nedarim* 38a.

⁴ {Divine presence.}

⁵ *Bamidbar* 12:3.

⁶ The version in *Kesef Mishneh* and in *Derashos HaRan*, beginning of sec. 5. However, our version in Gemara and *Ein Yaakov* is “Rabbi Yochanan,” as mentioned above in the *sichah*.

even though he does not possess all these character traits (that Rabbi Yochanan lists — “strong, wealthy, wise, and humble”). Our teacher {Rambam} only comes here to clarify the minimum requirements for a prophet to prophesy, even if his prophetic status is not permanent.”

However, this answer is not smooth.

[Firstly, on this basis, it emerges that physical virtues (such as being physically strong and wealthy according to their plain meaning) are more important for the *Shechinah* to imbue a person than virtuous character traits, “Strong character...”! {This seems counterintuitive} for, at first glance, the opposite is true: Spiritual virtues should be more germane to the *Shechinah* permanently imbuing a person than physical strength or wealth. Also, the following poses a difficulty:]

Why does Rambam speak only of a **temporary** resting of the *Shechinah*-prophecy? Why does he not discuss the necessary traits for being permanently imbued? After all, **this** was the prophetic state of Moshe, Yeshayahu, Yirmiyahu, **etc.** — the prophets mentioned explicitly in Scripture!

In addition, clarifying {the conditions necessary for attaining} a permanent prophetic state should seemingly be more critical than clarifying how to attain a one-time or temporary prophetic revelation.

Furthermore, and primarily, the implication from the simple understanding of Rambam’s words in this halachah and the subsequent halachos is that Rambam is speaking (a) about the *Shechinah* imbuing a person permanently (he is speaking about a permanent prophet); and (b) about the halachos concerning **all** types of prophets.

2.

EXAMINING RAMBAM

Some commentators answer that, on the contrary, Rambam maintains that the halachah does not conform to Rabbi Yochanan's position. So, strength and wealth (according to the plain meaning of these terms) are unnecessary for being imbued by the *Shechinah*. The proof is that some prophets were neither strong nor wealthy.

In the Gemara, it is also evident that the *Shechinah* can imbue even someone who is not wealthy :

In several places, the Gemara⁷ records the narrative about a Heavenly voice that announced: "One individual here is worthy for the *Shechinah* to imbue him as Moshe, our teacher, was imbued. However, the generation of this individual is undeserving." Upon hearing this Heavenly disclosure, "the Sages who were present set their eyes upon Hillel, the Elder," even though Hillel was known⁸ to be **poor**.

However, the question remains why Rambam doesn't mention "humble." On the contrary, this narrative concerning Hillel the Elder implies that he was fitting for prophecy primarily because of his humility. The Gemara elaborates:⁹ "After Hillel died, it was said about him... this humble man...."

We can infer the same from our *parshah*. The verse says,¹⁰ "Now the man Moshe was exceedingly humble, more than any person on the face of the earth." Scripture¹¹ records this verse to introduce¹² the following passage :¹³ "Not so is

⁷ *Sanhedrin* 11a; *Sotah* 48b; *Yerushalmi*, "Sotah," ch. 9, par. 13; *Tosefta*, "Sotah," ch. 13, par. 4-5.

⁸ *Yoma* 35b.

⁹ *Sanhedrin* 11a; *Sotah* 48b.

¹⁰ {*Bamidbar* 12:3.}

¹¹ See *Iyun Yaakov* on *Ein Yaakov*, *Nedarim*, loc cit., where he explains; "The verse implies that Moshe's humble nature enabled him to merit receiving this prophecy permanently"; see also *Chiddushei Aggados*, *Bava Basra* 134a.

¹² And we infer from this with regard to the other prophets, as the Gemara above {*Nedarim* 38a} states, "And all of these qualities are derived from Moshe."

¹³ {*Bamidbar* 12:7-8.}

My servant Moshe. In My entire house, he is trusted. Mouth to mouth, I speak with him in vision and not in riddles. At the image of Hashem, he will behold” — Hashem extols Moshe’s superior level of prophecy.

3.

A POSSIBLE SOLUTION

Simply, we could suggest that Rambam includes the condition that a person must be “humble” when he says, “of a strong character whose natural inclinations never overcome him...,” since humility is (also) included among virtuous character traits.¹⁴ Similarly, “strong physically” is included in the continuation of Rambam’s words: “A person who is full of all these qualities and is **physically fit**.”

However, (a) even if we assume that by saying “physically fit,” Rambam intends to include a healthy and physically sound body according to its plain meaning,¹⁵ it still does not include the quality of being “strong.” And in any case, we still need to clarify why Rambam includes and alludes to this **further** in this halachah and not explicitly at the beginning as a precondition for prophecy.

(b) Similarly, regarding humility: Since the Gemara records humility as a distinct quality, why does Rambam not list humility on its own {rather than including it in another trait}?

¹⁴ See *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Deos*,” ch. 2, par. 3; *Shemonah Perakim*, ch. 4; see *Merkeves HaMishneh* and *Avodas HaMelech* on *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah*,” ch. 7, par. 1.

¹⁵ As he discusses in the end of ch. 3 and beg. of ch. 4 of “*Hilchos Deos*.”

4.

A SIMILAR GEMARA

The Gemara mentioned above also appears in tractate *Shabbos*.¹⁶ However, it says, “The *Shechinah* only imbues a person who is wise, strong, wealthy, and tall.” This requires clarification (as the *Lechem Mishneh* asks):¹⁷ We can posit that the Gemara includes “tall” because this trait is connected with and is an interpretation of being “strong” (which is especially relevant for the discussion in tractate *Shabbos*, which discusses the **height** of the *Levi'im*). However, this poses difficulties: (a) Why does the Gemara in tractate *Shabbos* omit “humble”; and (b) why does the Gemara here deviate from the order in tractate *Nedarim* (“strong, wealthy, wise”)? Instead, it begins here with “wise, strong.”

Another difference between the wording in these Talmudic passages is that the Gemara in tractate *Nedarim* says, “The Holy One imbues his *Shechinah*....” In contrast, in tractate *Shabbos*, the passage begins, “the *Shechinah* only imbues....”

¹⁶ *Shabbos* 92a.

¹⁷ *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah*,” ch. 7, par. 1.

5.

THE PRINCIPLE OF PROPHECY

We can posit the following explanation for all of the foregoing:

In defining the qualifications for prophecy, Rambam says in his “Thirteen Principles of Faith”:¹⁸

A person should know that among humanity, some naturally possess highly elevated character traits and great perfection. Their souls are so developed that they acquire “the form of the intellect.” Subsequently, this human intellect merges with the “Active Intellect,”¹⁹ emanating a lofty effusion to the person. These are the prophets, and this is prophecy.

This is also implied by the words of Rambam in *Sefer HaYad*,²⁰ where Rambam says,²¹ “Among the foundations of the faith is the obligation to know that Hashem conveys prophecy to humanity.” Rambam immediately continues to list the characteristics and conditions for prophecy — “Prophecy is bestowed only....” He also explains how the prophet attains prophecy, “the paths of prophecy”²² (as he continues in the halachah, “A person... when he enters into the ‘orchard’...”) and how prophecy is practiced. —

By explaining it this way, Rambam does not intend just to describe and teach prophecy’s characteristics and methodology. Instead, he presents them as matters, the knowledge of which — “to know” — is “among the foundations of the faith”:

Among the foundations of the faith is not (only) knowing that prophecy can be bestowed upon humanity,²³ **revealing His secret** to His servants, the

¹⁸ Rambam’s *Commentary on Mishnah*, ch. “*Chelek*” — the sixth (foundational belief) principle.

¹⁹ {According to Rambam’s metaphysics, the Active Intellect (*Sechel ha-Poel*) is the last rung in a hierarchy of transcendent, incorporeal entities that are subordinate to G–d. The Active Intellect continually “emanates” a whole range of abstract human thoughts which the human mind can then tap into, according to the individual’s mental disposition. While the Active Intellect is the immediate source, the emanation does, in fact, come from G–d, who is found at the upper end of the hierarchy. Prophecy occurs when a human mind receives the emanation of the Active Intellect in a particular manner. See *Moreh Nevuchim* 2:4; 3:8.}

²⁰ {An alternate title for Rambam’s *Mishneh Torah*.}

²¹ {*Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah*,” ch. 7, par. 1.}

²² See *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah*,” ch. 7, par. 7.

²³ *Amos* 3:7.

prophets” **in general** — but also knowing the manner and parameters of prophecy — that prophecy is linked with the prophet’s mind and knowledge. Thus, the prophecy becomes absorbed within the prophet’s knowledge. As Rambam continues (concerning prophets in general),²⁴ “And all of them — when they prophesy — their limbs tremble; their physical strength weakens; they lose control of their senses; and thus, **their minds are free to comprehend** what they see.”

Since prophecy is a divine revelation that coalesces with the prophet’s being (intellect to the extent that²⁵ “ he is not as he was previously, but that he transcends the level of other wise men”), it is also important to be aware of — “to know” — the ways of prophecy, which (as Rambam continues at length) are in the following manner:

As he enters the “orchard” and immerses himself in these profound and abstract concepts, if he has the **mental capacity to understand and grasp them**, he will become holy and set himself apart from the masses who muddle their way through the darkness of their time. He continues and diligently trains himself not to dwell on futile matters or the vanities and intrigues of the times but instead **to always keep his mind open**, directed upward, bound beneath the Throne, to **fathom** the holy and pure forms and contemplate the **wisdom** of the Holy One in its entirety, from the most exalted form to the depths of the earth, and to **know** His greatness through them.

Then, “The divine spirit will immediately rest upon him.” All these details are relevant and are a component of “(the foundations of the faith) **to know.**”

²⁴ *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah*,” ch. 7, par. 2.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, par. 1.

6.

CLARIFYING RAMBAM

On this basis, the conditions for prophecy and why Rambam specifies these conditions (that he brings) in particular and not the other characteristics mentioned in the Gemara, “Strong, wealthy, humble,” is understood.

Rambam is not coming to discuss all the conditions necessary for the *Shechinah* to imbue the prophet. Instead, he only discusses what is necessary “to know” as “a foundation of the faith,” which is: “Prophecy is bestowed only upon an exceptionally wise person of strong character whose natural inclinations never overcome him. Instead, with his mind, he overcomes his natural inclinations.... He must possess very broad mental acuity.”

This is because these characteristics relate to the essential definition of prophecy and contribute to understanding the foundation of prophecy — prophecy affects the prophet’s mind. Consequently, it is important {to know about} the state of his mind and disposition when the person is imbued with prophecy.

In contrast, the other elements, “strong, wealthy, and humble,” are necessary conditions for the *Shechinah* to imbue the **prophet** from Above. However, these characteristics are not part of the core of prophecy; consequently, they are not important “to know” for the foundation of faith — the principle of prophecy.

Strength and wealth manifest the ideal of man’s physicality, a precondition for being imbued with the *Shechinah*. It is essential to be “humble” to remove impediments preventing the *Shechinah* from imbuing the person. After all²⁶ “concerning an arrogant person, the Holy One says, ‘He and I cannot dwell together in the world,’” and it is as if he denied the core belief {of Hashem’s existence}.²⁷

²⁶ *Sotah* 5a.

²⁷ See *Sotah* 4b; *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Deos*,” ch. 2, par. 3.

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE GEMARAS

On this basis, we can clarify the difference between the teaching found in tractate *Nedarim* and the teaching recorded in tractate *Shabbos*:

Regarding the difference between the two categories mentioned above — (a) strength and wealth and (b) humility — although, in a general sense, to be imbued with the *Shechinah*, humility is more important than strength or wealth. Still, in one detail, strength and wealth are more directly related to prophecy (the *Shechinah* imbuing the person).

This is because “humility” is something overarching that does not only affect prophecy, enabling Hashem to convey prophecy to humanity. Instead, humility is **broadly** relevant to the connection and presence of the Holy One in a general sense. As the Gemara explains, “The Holy One says, ‘He and I cannot **dwell** together in the world.’” Furthermore, this accords with the well-known²⁸ dictum, “Hashem dwells only on what surrenders itself to Him.”

In contrast, strength and wealth are only crucial for prophecy. Just as prophecy requires ultimate perfection of a person’s character traits — “an exceptionally wise person of strong character...,” as mentioned above — the ultimate perfection of a person’s physical qualities is also necessary, {including} bodily strength and wealth.

[One might add that this idea accords with what Rambam says in *Hilchos Teshuvah*²⁹ concerning the material promises recorded in the Torah: They will not come about as a *reward for* observing Torah and mitzvos. Instead, they *help* people achieve perfection in Torah study and mitzvah observance. Hashem will remove “all obstacles that **prevent** us” from learning Torah and fulfilling mitzvos. Hashem will grant “all the good that will **reinforce** our performance of the Torah, such as plentitude, peace, and **an abundance of silver and gold**

²⁸ *Tanya*, “*Likkutei Amarim*,” ch. 6.

²⁹ *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Teshuvah*,” ch. 9, par. 1.

so that we not be preoccupied our entire lives in satisfying our bodily needs. Instead, undistracted, we will be enabled to learn wisdom and perform mitzvos....”

Something similar applies to prophets. When do a person’s virtuous character traits — wisdom, strong character, etc. — reach the acme state of perfection? When the person also possesses the physical virtues of strength³⁰ and wealth.]

8.

LEVELS OF PROPHECY

To resolve the prominent differences between these two passages in the Gemara’s discussions, we can posit that the passage in tractate *Shabbos* speaks about **prophecy** (at a higher level). In contrast, the passage in tractate *Nedarim* speaks about (a lower level of prophecy than mentioned above) the resting of the *Shechinah* **in a general sense**.

— To preface: **Many** degrees of “the *Shechinah* may imbue a person.” It ranges from {the highest degree —} Moshe’s prophecy (in a state of perfection) to {a much lower degree —} “**on every gathering of ten the *Shechinah* rests,**”³¹ and “even though they are not speaking words of Torah.”³² Even concerning Moshe’s prophecy itself, there were several levels: Moshe’s consummate prophetic status (as in our *parshah*, as it says,³³ “Never again has there arisen in Israel a prophet like Moshe...); the manner of his prophecy **before** Moshe became wealthy (from the precious residue when he hewed the *luchos*)³⁴ — (which includes even some time after receiving the Torah from Sinai!); the 38 years that the Jewish people were in the desert, before “all the

³⁰ This echoes what Rambam writes in the beg. of “*Hilchos Deos*,” “Since maintaining a healthy and sound body is among the ways of Hashem — for one cannot understand or have any knowledge of the Creator, if he is ill.”

³¹ *Sanhedrin* 39a.

³² *Tanya*, “*Iggeres HaKodesh*,” ch. 23.

³³ *Devarim* 34:10.

³⁴ *Nedarim* 38a. {The Gemara relates that the Tablets were made out of precious stones. According to some, sapphire.}

men of war finished dying”³⁵ when, “the speech {of Hashem} was not directed at him privately in terms of endearment, face-to-face and with his mind at ease”,³⁶ and other levels. —

On this basis, the difference in wording between the two Talmudic mentioned above passages is also understood (“the *Shechinah* only imbues”; “the Holy One imbues His *Shechinah*...”):

There is a well-known axiom³⁷ that “the more sublime” resides within “the more lowly.” Therefore, in tractate *Nedarim*, which discusses a person who is of a lower rank — this person does not possess all the qualities enumerated in tractate *Shabbos* (and thus, he only possesses [a lower grade of prophecy, or] a **general** influence of the *Shechinah*), the *Shechinah* emanates from a more “more sublime” level — “**the Holy One imbues His *Shechinah*.**” [In contrast, tractate *Shabbos* speaks about an exalted level of prophecy, “the *Shechinah* is imbued,” on its own accord.]³⁸

9.

ORDER OF VIRTUES

On this basis, we also understand the reasons for the other differences in diction between these passages:

Since tractate *Shabbos* discusses imbuing prophetic ability in a person, the Gemara says that the primary prerequisite for prophecy is that a person must be “wise.” —

[Broadly speaking, this includes all intellectual qualities and virtuous character traits³⁹ (since even the perfection of character traits results from a

³⁵ *Devarim* 2:16.

³⁶ Rashi on *Devarim* 2:17; see *Taanis* 30b, and Rashi there; *Bava Basra* 121a and *Rashbam* beginning of 121b; see *Guide for the Perplexed*, vol. 2, ch. 36.

³⁷ *Shaarei Orah*, s.v., “*yaviu levush malchus*,” ch. 12 ff, 30 ff.

³⁸ See *Likkutei Levi Yitzchak*, “*Iggros*,” p. 405.

³⁹ See *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Deos*,” ch. 1, par. 4.

person's effort: "**With his mind**, he overcomes his natural inclinations...." Only then, when he is "never overcome by his natural inclinations," do his intellectual qualities reach perfection).]

— Being wise qualifies the person as fit to be imbued with prophecy, as elucidated above.

Subsequently, the Gemara continues: "Strong, wealthy, and tall" — physical characteristics and qualities that are preconditions and specific factors that **help** and contribute toward a person perfecting his virtue of wisdom. (For this reason, "humble" is not listed. Humility is a general prerequisite for securing a relationship with Hashem, not a prerequisite specifically for being imbued with prophecy.)

However, the Gemara in *Nedarim* does not speak about the necessary conditions for a person to become a prophet, per se. Instead, it (primarily) speaks about the conditions necessary to receive Hashem's general influence and for Him to establish a relationship with humanity below. Thus, the Gemara also lists being "humble" as a requirement. For this reason, the Gemara does not begin with "wise" (since wisdom is mainly related to the qualifications of a prophet).

10.

RAMBAM'S PRINCIPLES OF FAITH

Based on the clarification provided above in Section 5 regarding prophecy as a foundation of faith, another difficult teaching of Rambam is resolved:

*Sefer HaIkarim*⁴⁰ clarifies why he lists the Divine origin of Torah as a "principle" {of Judaism} and prophecy as a "root that extends from it": Prophecy is not bestowed to enable a person to know "matters that relate to mankind developing in the world, or to procure, through prophecy, signs and miracles

⁴⁰ *Sefer HaIkarim*, "Maamar 3," ch. 12.

regarding a specific event....” Instead, prophecy is conferred “so that through it, Divine directives to humanity can be given, which is analogous to the principle of the Divine origin of Torah....”

On this basis, the following requires clarification: Rambam himself says,⁴¹ “If so, what is meant when the Torah says,⁴² ‘I will appoint a prophet for them from among their brethren like you’? He does not **come** to establish a new faith **but rather** to give instruction about Torah precepts and to caution the nation not to transgress these precepts. As the last prophet proclaimed,⁴³ ‘Remember the Torah of Moshe, My servant.’” (Only that, “**similarly, should it happen** that a prophet commands us to do something normally neutral, it is a mitzvah to obey him. Anyone who violates any of his directives is liable for death.”⁴⁴ But this is not the reason that “he is coming.”) — In light of the above, the order in which Rambam lists the thirteen principles (in his commentary on the mishnah in chapter “*chelek*”) is confusing: Why does Rambam sandwich the principles of prophecy and Moshe’s prophecy between the first five principles, which discuss Hashem’s existence, after saying that “it is fitting to serve Hashem” (the fifth principle), and the eighth and ninth principles discussing the Torah’s Divine origin and the immutability of Torah, respectively?

Rambam maintains that all thirteen beliefs are **principles** (unlike the opinion of *Sefer HaIkarim*). Nevertheless, some of these principles are more fundamental than others. Based on what was mentioned above, according to Rambam’s own words, they (the sixth principle regarding prophecy and the seventh principle regarding the prophecy of Moshe, our teacher) should have been listed **after** the fundamentals regarding Torah!

Additionally, how is it relevant to *Sefer HaYad* to know that “Hashem conveys prophecy to humanity” is considered “among the foundations of the faith”?

⁴¹ *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Yesodei Torah*,” ch. 9, par. 2.

⁴² *Devarim* 18:18.

⁴³ *Malachi* 3:22.

⁴⁴ *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Yesodei Torah*,” ch. 9, par. 2.

Seemingly, to ensure that we obey a prophet's directives, it is only necessary to know that it is a "mitzvah to listen to him." It is a mitzvah because "**the verse says**,⁴⁵ 'Listen to him.'" This verse speaks about a new specific command {and not a general principle of faith}.

11.

AN ABSOLUTE UNION

We can clarify this in light of the explanation above: Prophecy is revealed to prophets in a manner that the prophet becomes attached and unified with Hashem's word to the extent that Hashem's word clothes itself "in their intellect and comprehension in the prophetic vision, as well as in their thought and speech, as it says,⁴⁶ 'The spirit of Hashem spoke in me, and His word upon my tongue.'⁴⁷ This is emphasized by Rambam⁴⁸ and expounded upon at length in *Kabbalah*⁴⁹ and *Chassidus*.⁵⁰

In general, there are two (or three) elements to prophecy:

- a) The **Torah** says,⁵¹ "*I will appoint a prophet for them from among their brethren like you... — to command the people regarding the precepts of the Torah.*"⁵²
- b) It is a unique positive mitzvah to follow a prophet's instructions — it is one of the 613 mitzvos:⁵³ "*Listen to him — and anyone who violates his directives is liable for death at the hand of Heaven....*"⁵⁴

⁴⁵ {*Devarim* 18:15.}

⁴⁶ *Shmuel II* 23:2.

⁴⁷ *Tanya*, "*Shaar HaYichud VeHa'emunah*," ch. 2, in the name of *Arizal*.

⁴⁸ Discussed above in Section 5.

⁴⁹ See (beginning of) *Arizal's Shaar Ru'ach HaKodesh and Shaar HaYichudim*.

⁵⁰ See *Sefer HaLikkutim Dach – Tzemach Tzedek*, "*Nevuah*."

⁵¹ {*Devarim* 18:18.}

⁵² *Mishneh Torah*, "*Hilchos Yesodei Torah*," ch. 9, par. 2.

⁵³ {*Devarim* 18:15.}

⁵⁴ *Mishneh Torah*, "*Hilchos Yesodei Torah*," ch. 9, par. 2.

c) It is “among the foundations of the faith,” not just the fulfillment of the positive mitzvah, “Listen to him.” Instead, this foundation is “**to know** that Hashem conveys prophecy to humanity, and prophecy is bestowed only...” — to know that Hashem reveals himself, “revealing His secret.”⁵⁵ He “conveys prophecy to humanity” in a way that His word becomes one with the mind of the prophet — “**It becomes clothed** in their intellect and comprehension...” — including in its most consummate form as exemplified by the prophecy of Moshe our teacher, who,⁵⁶ “would prophesy while awake and standing...; so, too, Moshe’s mental power was sufficient to comprehend the words of prophecy while he was standing in a composed state,” including all of the details Rambam discusses at length in the continuation of the chapter in *Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah*⁵⁷ (and in the seventh principle in the chapter of “*Chelek*”), until, “He bound **his mind** to the Eternal Rock, and the glory never left him forever. The flesh of his countenance shone, for he became holy like the angels.”

In light of this, we understand why the foundational beliefs regarding prophecy immediately follow the foundational beliefs (and principles) regarding Hashem’s existence (and directly follow the fifth foundational belief, “That it is fitting to serve Hashem alone”) —

as well as why Rambam maintains in *Sefer HaYad* that this is “among the foundations of the faith.” —

This knowledge is an essential extension of our knowledge of Hashem’s existence, revelation, and His overt interaction with the world—“revealing His secret.”

— From a talk delivered on Shavuos, 5734 (1974)

⁵⁵ {Amos 3:7.}

⁵⁶ *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah*,” ch. 7, par. 6.

⁵⁷ Notably, Rambam did not devote a separate chapter to the discussion of Moshe’s prophecy, unlike in his *Commentary on Mishnah*, where he formulates belief in Moshe’s prophecy as a separate principle.