

RAMBAM

PART THREE:
EGYPT, MISHNAH
TORAH, AND THE
CONTROVERSY



Dear Friend,

It is with great pleasure that I introduce to you our latest project.

In our quest to provide a first-class learning experience to you, one that you will find enjoyable, satisfying, and leave you coming back for more.

We have decided to create a Curriculum from scratch.

We have incorporated the following features:

- Exciting and stimulating topics
- An overview describing what you will be learning
- Learning material in English appropriately measured to fit into a 40 minute session
- A Language and layout that will not leave you struggling with the text.
- A summary at the end

At the end of the booklet you will find a challenging question to be answered by you

It is our hope that this project serves to broaden your knowledge of key Jewish understandings and inspires you to search for more.

We look forward to providing you with more cutting edge learning experiences in the near future.

Sincerely,

Yehoshua Werde

Director

For all comments and suggestions please feel free to email me:
Director@Torahlp.com



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Lesson Overview

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Introduction

In the first two parts of the series we discussed the sages in the time that preceded the Rambam, his travels in other lands, his study of the sciences and medicine and his early writings. In this book we present the Rambam in the height of his fame, the time he served in Egypt and the authorship of his two greatest works, the Mishneh Torah and the Moreh Nevuchim. We also introduce the controversy around the Rambam's views and works during his lifetime and in the years that followed.

Rambam in Egypt

SEDER HADOROS

וברח רבנו מימון ושני בניו עמו לאלכסנדריא של מצרים ומשם עלה לירושלים ונפטר רבינו מימון הדיין בירושלים. ואח"כ ירד רבינו משה בנו למצרים ושם גדל מאד בחכמה ובתורה ובמעלה עם המלך צלאח אל דין אבן איוב ועם משנהו שופט השופטים אל פאצל ושם כתב רוב חבוריו.

RABBI MAIMON AND HIS TWO SONS FLED TO ALEXANDRIA IN EGYPT AND FROM THERE WENT TO JERUSALEM AND RABBI MAIMON THE JUDGE DIED IN JERUSALEM. LATER, RABBI MOSHE HIS SON RETURNED TO EGYPT AND EARNED HIMSELF A GREAT NAME IN WISDOM AND IN TORAH AND IN STATURE WITH THE SULTAN SALADIN AND WITH HIS VIZIER AL FATZEL AND THERE HE WROTE MOST OF HIS WORKS.

While in Seder Hadoros is tells us that the Rambam travelled from Morocco to Alexandria and from Alexandria to Israel, from the Rambam's own account (in part two of this series) we know he travelled directly to Israel and then travelled to Alexandria in Egypt. Alexandria was a busy port city with a large Jewish community, however, at the time when the Rambam was there, it was not a place of scholars and intellectuals (as it had been under Greek and Roman rule). After a while of living in Alexandria the Rambam travelled to the capital of Egypt which is now called Cairo (then it was called Fustat). Cairo is actually near Fustat, Fustat is the "old town" where the people

lived and Cairo was where the royal palace of the sultan was located.

In Fustat was a fairly large community of Jews (for the time) and a well established congregation. The "Naggid" was the leader of Egyptian Jewry and of all Jews in the Sultan's empire. Later, the Rambam would hold this title, although he at first tried to avoid it so as not to meddle in politics and be able to devote his time to his studies and works.

Shortly after arriving in Egypt, the Rambam completed the commentary on the Mishnah and began writing his magnum opus, the Mishneh Torah.

Mishneh Torah

Unlike his other works which were written in Arabic using Hebrew script, the Rambam wrote the Mishneh Torah in a very basic Hebrew, the like of which you find when you read the Mishnah. The reason for this was to make the work accessible to people who lived in non-Arabic lands as well as people who didn't speak Aramaic (the language of the Gemorah) or even an advanced Biblical Hebrew.

In the introduction, the Rambam explains that he wrote the Mishnah Torah so people can learn one book and know the entire Oral Torah.

When the Rebbe launched the campaign to learn Rambam, the Rebbe cited the fact that there is a mitzvah to study and know the entire Torah and this can be accomplished to an extent by following the 3-chapter-a-day study a program.

INTRODUCTION TO MISHNEH TORAH

ומפני זה נערתני חצני אני משה בן מיימון הספרדי ונשענתי על הצור ברוך הוא ובינותי בכל אלו הספרים וראיתי לחבר דברים המתבררים מכל אלו החיבורים בענין האסור והמותר הטמא והטהור עם שאר דיני התורה. כולם בלשון ברורה ודרך קצרה עד שתהא תורה שבעל פה כולה סדורה בפי הכל בלא קושיא ולא פירוק. לא זה אומר בכה וזה בכה. אלא דברים ברורים קרובים נכונים על פי המשפט אשר יתבאר מכל אלו החיבורים והפירושים הנמצאים מימות רבינו הקדוש ועד עכשיו. עד שיהיו כל הדינין

גלויין לקטן ולגדול בדין כל מצוה ומצוה ובדין כל הדברים שתיקנו חכמים ונביאים. כללו של דבר כדי שלא יהא אדם צריך לחיבור אחר בעולם בדין מדיני ישראל אלא יהא חיבור זה מקבץ לתורה שבעל פה כולה עם התקנות והמנהגות והגזירות שנעשו מימות משה רבינו ועד חבור הגמרא וכמו שפירשו לנו הגאונים בכל חיבוריהם שחיברו אחר הגמרא. לפיכך קראתי שם חיבור זה משנה תורה. לפי שאדם קורא בתורה שבכתב תחלה ואחר כך קורא בזה ויודע ממנו תורה שבעל פה כולה ואינו צריך לקרות ספר אחר ביניהם.

ON ACCOUNT OF THIS, I, MOSHE BEN RABBI MAIMON, THE SPANIARD, ROUSED MYSELF [SEE NECH. 5:13], AND RELYING ON THE ROCK (BLESSED BE HE), MEDITATED IN ALL THESE BOOKS [SEE DAN. 9:2]. I HAD IN VIEW COMPILING THE THINGS THAT HAVE BECOME CLEAR FROM ALL THESE COMPILATIONS AS CONCERNS THE FORBIDDEN AND THE PERMITTED, AND THE UNCLEAN AND THE CLEAN, ALONG WITH THE REST OF THE LAWS OF THE TORAH—ALL THIS IN CLEAR LANGUAGE AND SUCCINCTLY SO THAT THE WHOLE OF THE ORAL LAW MIGHT BE SET FORTH FOR ALL. [ALL THIS WHILE] LEAVING ASIDE ARGUMENT AND COUNTER ARGUMENT, OR THAT ONE SAYS THIS AND THE OTHER SAYS THAT, BUT RATHER [LIMITING THE EXPOSITION TO] CLEAR, PLAUSIBLE, JURIDICALLY CORRECT THINGS, AS MADE CLEAR FROM ALL THOSE COMPILATIONS AND INTERPRETATIONS THAT HAVE EXISTED FROM THE DAYS OF OUR HOLY TEACHER DOWN TO NOW. [ALL THIS] SO THAT ALL THE LAWS MIGHT BE EVIDENT TO MINOR AND ADULT ALIKE, BOTH AS TO EACH AND EVERY COMMANDMENT AND AS TO ALL THE THINGS INSTITUTED BY SAGES AND PROPHETS. IN SHORT, SO THAT NO MAN WOULD EVER HAVE NEED OF ANOTHER COMPILATION AS REGARDS ANY ONE OF THE LAWS OF ISRAEL. RATHER, THIS COMPILATION WILL GATHER TOGETHER

THE ENTIRE ORAL LAW INCLUDING THE ORDINANCES, CUSTOMS, AND DECREES MADE FROM THE DAYS OF MOSHE OUR MASTER UNTIL THE COMPILATION OF THE TALMUD, JUST AS THE GEONIM INTERPRETED FOR US IN ALL THE COMPILATIONS THAT THEY MADE SUBSEQUENT TO THE TALMUD. ACCORDINGLY, I HAVE TITLED THIS COMPILATION "MISHNEH TORAH" [I.E., REPETITION OF THE TORAH], BECAUSE A MAN WHO FIRST READS THE WRITTEN LAW AND AFTER THAT READS THIS, WILL KNOW FROM IT THE ENTIRE ORAL LAW AND WILL HAVE NO NEED TO READ ANY OTHER BOOK BESIDES THEM.

Rambam's Wife, Children, and Brother

The Rambam was about thirty years old and single when he came to Egypt, he only married later on and had a daughter who passed away as a child and then Avraham who became the famous R' Avraham the son of the Rambam. The Rambam's brother, Dovid, had married in Morocco and he was the one who supported the Rambam by trading in precious gems (investing the Rambam's money as well as his own). Like other merchants in Fustat, he would travel to distant places to buy new merchandise and bring them back to sell in Egypt. He would borrow money from

R' Dovid's Travels

The Rambam was very concerned every time his brother left on a voyage. Sea travel included many life-threatening dangers and it was common for ships to capsize or be looted by pirates. Often there were no survivors, and all the merchandise was lost. We can see the Rambam's fear of his brother's travel from the following letter found in the Cairo Geniza in which the Rambam wishes his brother farewell and safe passage and looks forward to his return.

ב"ר(בשמך רחמנא)

כי ה' יהיה בכסלך ושמר רגלך מלכד שלום לרחוק ולקרוב אמר ה' וגו'. ואמרתם כה לחי ואתה שלום וביתך שלום וגו'. ה' יתעלה הוא היודע מה שבלבי מן הצער והשממון מפרידת האח מבטן והידיד הרחום, ישמרני ה' מן הרעות בו, ויחבר ביני ובינו

במצרים, אם ירצה ה' ואשר אודיעך - שהנני בשלום גמור

משה בר' מימון זצ"ל

IN YOUR NAME, MERCIFUL ONE

FOR HASHEM WILL BE YOUR CONFIDENCE AND WILL GUARD YOUR FOOT FROM BEING CAUGHT. PEACE, PEACE, TO HIM THAT IS FAR OFF AND TO HIM THAT IS NEAR SAYS HASHEM ETC. AND SO SHALL YOU SAY, LISTEN ALL, PEACE TO YOU, AND PEACE BE TO YOUR HOUSE, AND PEACE BE TO ALL THAT YOU HAVE.

HASHEM ALMIGHTY, HE KNOWS THAT WHICH IS IN MY HEART OF THE PAIN AND THE ANGUISH FROM THE DEPARTURE OF MY BROTHER FROM THE WOMB AND MERCIFUL FRIEND, HASHEM SHOULD SAVE ME FROM EVIL BEFALLING HIM, AND CONNECT BETWEEN ME AND HIM IN EGYPT, WITH HASHEM'S WILL I WILL INFORM YOU THAT I AM IN COMPLETE PEACE.

MOSHE BEN R' MAIMON ZT"L

In one of the sea voyages in the Indian Ocean, R' Dovid's boat got caught in a storm and capsized and everyone on board drowned.

The Rambam could not bear the loss of his brother and took ill for an entire year. Several years later he describes the severity of the incident in his letter to Rabbi Yeffes of Acco:

LETTER TO RABBI YEFFES

לכבוד גדולת מר יפת החכם המבין הדיין המשכיל בן כבוד גדול
מרנא ורבנא אליהו הדיין החסיד זצ"ל מאת אוהבו המתפלל
להוסיף כבודו משה בר מימון הרב זצ"ל...ועוד שמאחר שנפרדנו
מת אבא מארי ז"ל, ובאו כתבי התנחומין מקצה ארץ אדום ומערב
מהלך כמה חדשים ואתה לא שמת לבך לזאת. גם ארעוני צרות
רבות גלויות בארץ מצרים מחליים והפסד ממון ועמידת מוסרים
עלי להרגני. והרעה הגדולה שבאה עלי באחרונה, שהוא רעה מכל

רעה מיום היותי עד היום הזה והיא פטירת הצדיק ז"ל שטבע בים הודו, ובידו ממון רב לי ולו ולאחרים, והניח בת קטנה ואלמנותו אצלי, ונשארתי אחריו כמו שנה מיום שהגיעה השמועה הרעה, נופל על המטה בשחין רע ובדלקת ובתמהון לבב, וכמעט קט הייתי אובד. ואח"כ עד היום הזה כמו שמונה שנים, אני מתאבל ולא התנחמתי. ובמה אתנחם והוא היה על ברכי גדל, והוא היה האח והוא היה התלמיד והוא היה נושא ונותן בשוק ומרויח, ואני הייתי יושב לבטח, והבין בתלמוד ובמקרא, והבין בדקדוק הלשון, ולא היתה לי שמחה אלא בראותו. ערבה כל שמחה והלך לחיי העולם והניחני נבהל בארץ נכריה. כל עת שאראה כתב ידו או ספר מספריו, יהפך עלי לבי ויעורו יגוני, כללו של דבר כי ארד אל בני אבל שאולה. ולולי התורה שהיא שעשועי, ודברי החכמות שאשכח בהם יגוני, אז אבדתי בעניי. ואני בכל זה איני קובל לא על החכם ולא על תלמיד ולא על רע ומיודע. וראוי לקבול עליך יותר מכולם, שאני והוא ואבא מארי ז"ל ארבעתנו הלכנו בבית ה' ברגש, ולא שאלת ולא דרשת, ומן הדין היה שלא אשיבך על כתב זה שהגיע עתה בעבור ההרשאה. אבל אהבתי ערוכה ושמורה, ולכתינו יחד במדברים וביערות אחרי השם לא אנשה, ולא אחשוב לך עון ועל כל פשעים תכסה אהבה...

TO THE HONORABLE AND GREAT MASTER YEFES THE WISE, WHO UNDERSTANDS, THE JUDGE, THE THINKER, SON OF THE VERY HONORABLE TEACHER AND RABBI ELIYAHU THE JUDGE, THE PIOUS ONE ZT"L, FROM HIS FRIEND WHO PRAYS TO INCREASE HIS HONOR, MOSHE THE SON OF RABBI MAIMON ZT"L.

MOREOVER, A FEW MONTHS AFTER WE DEPARTED [FROM THE LAND OF ISRAEL], MY FATHER AND MASTER ZT"L DIED. LETTERS OF CONDOLENCES ARRIVED FROM THE FURTHEST WEST AND FROM

THE LAND OF EDOM, A DISTANCE OF SEVERAL MONTHS, YET YOU DISREGARD THIS.

FURTHERMORE, I SUFFERED MANY WELL KNOWN CALAMITIES IN EGYPT, INCLUDING SICKNESS, FINANCIAL LOSS, AND THE ATTEMPT BY INFORMERS TO HAVE ME KILLED.

THE WORST DISASTER THAT STRUCK ME OF LATE WAS THE PASSING OF THAT UPRIGHT MAN ז"ל (MY BROTHER DOVID), WHO WAS DROWNED IN THE INDIAN OCEAN WHILE IN POSSESSION OF MUCH MONEY BELONGING TO ME, TO HIM, AND TO OTHERS, LEAVING A YOUNG DAUGHTER AND HIS WIDOW IN MY CARE.

FOR ABOUT A YEAR AFTER THE DAY THE EVIL TIDINGS REACHED ME, I REMAINED PROSTRATE IN BED WITH SEVERE INFLAMMATION, FEVER, AND A MENTAL CONFUSION, AND VERY NEARLY PERISHED. FROM THEN UNTIL THIS DAY, THAT IS, ABOUT EIGHT YEARS, I HAVE BEEN IN A STATE OF DISCONSOLATE MORNING. HOW CAN I BE CONSOLED? FOR HE WAS MY SON; HE GREW UP UPON MY KNEES; HE WAS MY BROTHER, MY PUPIL. IT WAS HE WHO DID BUSINESS IN THE MARKETPLACE EARNING A LIVELIHOOD, WHILE I DWELLED IN SECURITY.

HE HAD A READY GRASP OF TALMUD AND A SUPERB MASTERY OF GRAMMAR. MY ONLY JOY WAS TO SEE HIM. "THE SUN HAS SET ON ALL JOY" (YESHAYAHU 24:11). FOR HE HAS GONE ON TO ETERNAL LIFE, LEAVING ME DISMAYED IN A FOREIGN LAND. WHEN I SEE HIS HANDWRITING OR ONE OF HIS BOOKS, MY HEART IS CHURNED INSIDE OF ME AND MY SORROW IS REKINDLED. IN SHORT, "I WILL GO DOWN MORNING TO MY SON IN THE GRAVE" (BEREISHIS 37:35). AND WERE IT NOT FOR THE TORAH, WHICH IS MY DELIGHT, AND FOR SCIENTIFIC MATTERS, WHICH LET ME FORGET MY SORROW, "I WOULD HAVE PERISHED IN MY AFFLICTION." (TEHILLIM 119:92).

IN SPITE OF THIS, WHILE I COMPLAIN NOT OF ANY SAGE, DISCIPLE, FRIEND, OR ACQUAINTANCE, I SHOULD COMPLAIN ABOUT YOU ABOVE ALL OTHERS. FOR I, ME AND MY FATHER, MY TEACHER, MAY THE MEMORY OF THE RIGHTEOUS BE A BLESSING, AND YOU -- ALL FOUR OF US -- WALKED TOGETHER IN HASHEM'S HOUSE IN FEAR AND TREPIDATION. BUT YOU DID NOT SEEK OR INQUIRE. I WOULD BE JUSTIFIED IN NOT ANSWERING YOUR LETTER THAT HAS NOW ARRIVED PERTAINING TO POWER OF ATTORNEY BUT MY AFFECTION IS DRAWN UP IN FULL AND SECURED. I SHALL NOT FORGET OUR WANDERING TOGETHER IN WASTELANDS AND FORESTS AFTER HASHEM, AND THEREFORE I DO NOT ASCRIBE TO YOU SIN AND TRANSGRESSION. "LOVE COVERS UP ALL FAULTS" MISHLEI 10:12. HASHEM KNOWS HOW MUCH I AM DISTRESSED BY THE HARD TIMES YOU MENTION. THE WHOLE MATTER GRIEVED ME DEEPLY UNTO DEATH. IF YOU WERE HERE WITH ME, I WOULD CARE FOR YOU PROPERLY, AND I WOULD HONOR AND PLEASE YOU ACCORDING TO MY ABILITY.

I REJOICE GREATLY OVER THE SON WHOM HASHEM HAS GIVEN YOU - RABBI ELIAHU THE ASTUTE PUPIL. I HEARD THAT HE STUDIES TORAH AND THAT HE IS A CLEVER FELLOW, AND TREADS THE RIGHT PATH. "YOUR SONS WILL SUCCEED YOUR ANCESTORS, YOU WILL APPOINT THEM PRINCES THROUGHOUT THE LAND" (TEHILLIM 45:17). MAY THIS BE HASHEM'S WILL.

SHEVAT 1496 (OF MINYAN SHITAROS -- COUNTING SINCE ALEXANDER THE GREAT, 1185)

Rambam's Medical Practice

The loss of his brother forced the Rambam to take up a profession to earn money for the family. The Rambam could have easily earned money being a rabbi or a local dayan, but the Rambam had a policy that people who studied Torah and served as a communal leader should not earn money from their Torah knowledge. He therefore fell back on his knowledge of medicine and decided to open a medical

practice. It was at this time that the Rambam also got married.

In addition to serving common patients, the Rambam's fame spread and he was invited to become the physician of the Sultan's vizier and eventually the Sultan Saladin's own court physician. The Rambam kept this position in the court of Saladin's two sons who became sultans after Saladin's passing.

At one point the Rambam was invited by King Richard the Lionheart of England to become his private physician, but declined the offer, probably because the Rambam disliked life in Christian lands.

The Rambam describes his busy schedule in a famous letter to R' Shmuel Ibn Tibbon who lived in Southern France and was working to translate the Rambam's Moreh Nevuchim from Arabic into Hebrew to make it accessible to Jews living in Christian lands. R' Shmuel Ibn Tibbon expressed his wish to come visit the Rambam in Egypt so the Rambam could help him work through some of the parts of the Moreh Nevuchim that he was having difficulty with.

The Rambam writes to him that even if he came to Egypt he wouldn't have time to explain to him what he is looking to understand because of his busy schedule and he goes on to describe what his schedule looks like:

LETTER TO R' SHMUEL IBN TIBBON

ואמנם מה שזכרת מענין בוארך אצלי, בוא ברוך ה' ומבורך שבבאים, ואני שש ועלז ושמה בזה, וחפץ ונכסף ומשתוקק לחברתך, ותאב ומתאוה לראות פניך הנעימים יותר משמחתך בי, ואף על פי שיקשה עלי רכבך סכנת הים. ואמנם אודיעך ואיעצך שלא תסתכן על עצמך, כי לא יגיעך מבואך אלי זולת ראות פני ומה שתגיעך מני כפי יכולתי. אמנם תועלת חכמה מן החכמות או להתייחד ולהתבודד עמי אפילו שעה אחד ביום או בלילה אל תוחיל בזה כלל, כי תוכן ענייני כמו שאספר לך.

אני וכן במצרים והמלך שוכן באל קאירה ובין שני המקומות שני תחומי שבת, ולי על המלך מנהג כבד מאד אי אפשר לי מבלתי ראותו בכל יום בתחלת היום, אמנם כשימצאהו חולשה או יחלה א' מבניו או אחת מפלגשיו לא אסור מאלקא"ירה ואני רוב היום בבית המלך. ואי אפשר לי גם כן מפקיד אחד או שני פקידים יחלו ואני צריך להתעסק ברפואתם, כללו של דבר כל יום ויום אני עולה לאלקאייר"ה בהשכמה וכשלא יהיה שם שום מכשול ולא יתחדש שם שום חדוש אשוב למצרים אחר חצי היום, על כל פנים לא אגיע קודם, ואני מתרעב ואמצא האכסדראות כלם מלאות בני אדם גוים ויהודים בהם, חשוב ובלתי חשוב, ושופטים ושוטרים ואוהבים ושונאים ערב רב ידעו את עת שובי, ארך מעל הבהמה וארחץ ידי ואצא אליהם לפייסם ולרצות ולחלות פניהם כדי למחול על כבודם להמתין אותי עד כדי שאוכל אכילת עראי והיא מעת לעת ואצא לרפאתם ולכתוב להם פתקות ונוסחאות רפואות חליהם, לא יסור הנכנס והיוצא עד הלילה, ולפעמים באמונת התורה עד סוף שתי שעות מן הלילה או יותר אספר להם ואצום ואדבר עמהם, ואני שוכב פרקדן מרוב העיפות, וכנס הלילה ואני בתכלית החולשה לא אוכל לדבר. סוף דבר לא יוכל אחד מישראל לדבר לי או להתחבר ולהתבודד עמי זולת יום השבת, אז יבאו כל הקהל או רובם אחר התפלה, אנהיג הצבור במה שיעשה כל ימי השבוע, ויקראו קריאה חלושה עד הצהרים וילכו לדרכם וישבו קצתם ויקראו שנית אחר תפלת המנחה עד עת תפלת מעריב, זה תוכן ענייני היום.

ולא ספרתי לך אלא קצת מה שתראהו אם תבא בעזרת האל יתעלה. וכשתשלים לאחינו פירוש והעתק מה שהתחלת בו שאחר שהתחלת במצוה תגמור אותה [ותעתיק הוראת הנבוכים לאחינו

ושמו הזכר נאות יותר ויהיה בערבי דליל אל אחורין כאשר ערבי
של הוראת הנבוכים דלאלה אל אחורין והטבת לראות בכבודך
לקראו בשם הצורה]. ואחרי כן בא תבא ברנה על דרך הבקור לא
לקבל תועלת הלמוד כי יצר זמני מאד:

AS FAR AS WHAT YOU MENTION ABOUT COMING TO VISIT ME,
COME BLESSED OF VISITORS. I REJOICE AT THE PROSPECT, WISH,
YEARN, AND DESIRE, AND SHALL BE HAPPIER TO SEE YOUR FACE
THAN YOU WILL BE TO SEE MINE, ALTHOUGH YOUR RISKING
THE DANGER OF A SEA VOYAGE WOULD DISTRESS ME. INDEED, I
ADVISE YOU NOT TO RISK YOUR LIFE, FOR BY COMING YOU WILL
ONLY GAIN BY SEEING MY FACE AND WHAT YOU OBTAIN OF MY
HOSPITALITY ACCORDING TO MY ABILITY. BUT DO NOT HOPE TO
STUDY ANY SCIENCE OR BE ALONG WITH ME FOR EVEN A SINGLE
HOUR, DAY, OR NIGHT, FOR MY AFFAIRS ARE AS I SHALL RELATE TO
YOU.

I DWELL AT MIZR (FOSTAT) AND THE SULTAN RESIDES AT KAHIRA
(CAIRO); THESE TWO PLACES ARE TWO SHABBAT DAYS' JOURNEY
(ABOUT A MILE AND A HALF) DISTANT FROM EACH OTHER. MY
DUTIES TO THE SULTAN ARE VERY HEAVY. I AM OBLIGED TO VISIT
HIM EVERY DAY, EARLY IN THE MORNING; AND WHEN HE, OR ONE
OF HIS CHILDREN, OR ONE OF HIS CONCUBINES BECOME WEAK
OR ILL, I DARE NOT QUIT KAHIRA, BUT MUST STAY DURING THE
GREATER PART OF THE DAY IN THE PALACE. IT ALSO FREQUENTLY
HAPPENS THAT ONE OR TWO OF THE ROYAL OFFICERS FALL
SICK, AND I MUST ATTEND TO THEIR HEALING. HENCE, AS A
RULE, I REPAIR TO KAHIRA VERY EARLY IN THE DAY, AND EVEN IF
NOTHING UNUSUAL HAPPENS, I DO NOT RETURN TO MIZR UNTIL
THE AFTERNOON. THEN, I AM ALMOST DYING WITH HUNGER. I
FIND THE ANTE-CHAMBER FILLED WITH PEOPLE, BOTH JEWS AND

GENTILES, NOBLES AND COMMON PEOPLE, JUDGES AND BAILIFFS, FRIENDS AND FOES -- A MIXED MULTITUDE WHO AWAIT THE TIME OF MY RETURN.

I DISMOUNT FROM MY ANIMAL, WASH MY HANDS, GO FORTH WITH MY PATIENTS, AND ENTREAT THEM TO BEAR WITH ME WHILE I PARTAKE OF SOME LIGHT REFRESHMENTS, THE ONLY MEAL I TAKE IN THE TWENTY-FOUR HOURS. THEN I ATTEND TO MY PATIENTS, AND WRITE PRESCRIPTIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR THEIR SEVERAL AILMENTS. PATIENTS GO IN AND OUT UNTIL NIGHTFALL, AND SOMETIMES EVEN, I SOLEMNLY ASSURE YOU, UNTIL TWO HOURS AND MORE IN THE NIGHT. I CONVERSE WITH AND PRESCRIBE FOR THEM WHILE LYING DOWN FROM SHEER FATIGUE, AND WHEN NIGHT FALLS I AM SO EXHAUSTED THAT I CAN SCARCELY SPEAK. IN CONSEQUENCE OF THIS, NO JEW CAN HAVE ANY INTERVIEW WITH ME, EXCEPT ON SHABBOS. ON THAT DAY THE WHOLE CONGREGATION, OR, AT LEAST THE MAJORITY OF THE MEMBERS, COME TO ME AFTER THE MORNING SERVICE, WHEN I INSTRUCT THEM AS TO THEIR PROCEEDINGS DURING THE WHOLE WEEK; WE STUDY TOGETHER A LITTLE UNTIL NOON, WHEN THEY DEPART. SOME OF THEM RETURN, AND READ WITH ME IN THE AFTERNOON SERVICE UNTIL EVENING PRAYERS. IN THIS MANNER I SPEND THAT DAY.

Rabbinics

The Rambam was not only involved in his Torah works and medical practice, but also maintained a position as the local dayan and leader of Jewish affairs.

The Rambam combatted the Karaites that had a fairly large population of members living in Fustat. He required them to follow all the Mitzvos the way they were done according to the sages and even instituted penalties for not following certain mitzvos. He did acknowledge them as Jews and did not forbid the wine they touched.

The Rambam saw that people would not remain silent during the repetition of Shmoneh Esrei, so he decreed that they recite the quiet shmoneh esrei together with the Chazan.

Another decree banned anyone who gave permission to officiate at marriages and divorces to anyone who is not well versed in them. This is from the original signed decree that was found in the Cairo Geniza:

הסכמנו והחרמנו כל מי שיתן רשות לאדם שאינו יודע בטיב גיטין וקדושין כדכתיב "רבים חללים הפילה" דרשו רז"ל: זה ת"ח שאינו יודע בטיב גיטין וקדושין. והיה זה בשליש אחרון של חדש טבת שנת אלף ותצ"ח לשטרות בפסטאט מצרים דעל גילוס והכא מותבא.

וכתב: משה בר מימון דיין. יצחק בר ששון דיין, שמואל בר סעדיא דיין. מנשה בר יוסף דיין.

WE HAVE AGREE AND SANCTIONED ANYONE WHO GIVES PERMISSION TO A PERSON WHO ISN'T WELL VERSED IN THE LAWS OF DIVORCE AND MARRIAGE AS IT SAYS "FOR HE CAST DOWN MANY WOUNDED" (MISHLEI 7:26) OUR SAGES INTERPRETED: THIS REFERS TO A SAGE WHO IS NOT WELL VERSED IN THE LAWS OF DIVORCE AND MARRIAGE. THIS WAS IN THE LAST THIRD OF THE MONTH OF TEVES OF THE YEAR 1498 TO THE COUNT OF DOCUMENTS (TO AROUND THE TIME OF ALEXANDER THE GREAT) IN FUSTAT, EGYPT ON THE NILE RIVER AND HERE WE SIT: WRITTEN BY: MOSHE BAR MAIMON, JUDGE. YITZCHOK BAR SASSON, JUDGE. SHMUEL BAR SADIAH, JUDGE. MENASHE BAR YOSEF, JUDGE.

Moreh Nevuchim

The Moreh Nevuchim, the Guide for the Perplexed, is the last of the Rambam's works and his most famous contribution to the world of philosophy and is what he is remembered for in the secular academic circles. The Moreh Nevuchim was written for people who were

confused by differences between Torah, science, and philosophy. In Moreh Nevuchim, the Rambam weaves together the different worlds to show how there is no contradiction. In Moreh Nevuchim, the Rambam quotes a lot of Aristotelean philosophy as well as lots of Torah to create an innovative and harmonious outlook on life in general, the physical and the spiritual.

R' Yosef ibn Akinin

The Moreh Nevuchim was written for the Rambam's closest student, R' Yosef Ibn Akinin, who, like the Rambam, also originated from Spain and also spent time in Fez, Morocco. They spent much time studying together in Egypt and then R' Yosef moved to Aleppo in Syria. At the time, Syria had been annexed by the Sultan Saladin of Egypt and the two countries were in many ways considered like one big kingdom.

When R' Yosef moved to Aleppo, the Rambam continued to teach him via frequent letters through which they corresponded.

The Moreh Nevuchim was written part by part and was sent to R' Yosef in small parts in tens of letters.

Here is the letter to R' Yosef that was attached to the first instalment of Moreh Nevuchim. In this letter, the Rambam recounts their studies together and how the Rambam came to respect his adeptness as a student. The Rambam also tells him a little about the Moreh Nevuchim which he is about to send him:

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION TO MOREH NEVUCHIM

הנה מאז באת אלי, וכונת מקצות הארץ לקרות לפני, גדלה מעלתך בעיני, לרוב זריזותך על הדרישה ולמה שראיתי בשיריך מחוזק התשוקה לדברים העיוניים. והיה זה אחר הגיע אלי כתביך וחרוזיך מן האסכנדריה, קדם שאבחון ציורך. והייתי אומר, אולי תשוקתו גדולה מהשגתו? וכאשר קראת עמי מה שקראתו מחכמת התכונה ומה שקדם לך - ממה שאי אפשר מבלעדיו הצעה לה - מן החכמות הלמודיות, הוספתי בך שמחה, לטוב שכלך ומהירות ציורך. וראיתי תשוקתך לחכמות הלמודיות עצומה, והנחתך להתלמד בהם, לדעתי מה אחריתך. וכאשר קראת עמי מה שקראתו ממלאכת

ההגיון, נקשרה תוחלתי בך וראיתך ראוי לגלות לך סודות ספרי הנבואה, עד שתשקיף מהם על מה שצריך שישקיפו עליו השלמים, והחלתי לרמז לך ברמיזות. וראיתך מבקש ממני תוספת באור ופוצר בי לבאר לך דברים מן הענינים ההם מופתיים, ואם לא - מאיזו מלאכה הם. וראיתך יודע מעט ממנו - מאשר למדת מזולתי. ואתה נבון, כבר דפקתך הבהלה, ונפשך החשובה תבקש ממך 'למצוא דברי חפץ'. ולא סרתי לדחותך מזה ולצוותך לקחת הדברים על הסדר; כונה ממני - שיתאמת לך האמת בדרכיו, לא שיפול האמת במקרה. ולא נמנעתי, כל ימי התחברך עמי, כשהזכר 'פסוק' או דבר מדברי ה'חכמים' שיש בו הערה על ענין זה, לבאר לך:

וכאשר גזר האלוה בפרידה ופנית אל אשר פנית, העירוני החיבורים ההם אל הסכמה כבר שקטה, ועוררתני פרידתך לחבר המאמר הזה, אשר חברתיו לך ולדומים לך - ואם הם מעט. ושמתיו פרקים מפרדים, וכל מה שיכתב ממנו, הוא יגיעך ראשון ראשון באשר תהיה. ואתה שלום:

To R' YOSEPH (MAY HASHEM PROTECT HIM!), SON OF R'
YEHUDAH A"H:--

MY DEAR PUPIL, EVER SINCE YOU RESOLVED TO COME TO ME, FROM A DISTANT COUNTRY, AND TO STUDY UNDER MY DIRECTION, I THOUGHT HIGHLY OF YOUR THIRST FOR KNOWLEDGE, AND YOUR FONDNESS FOR SPECULATIVE PURSUITS, WHICH FOUND EXPRESSION IN YOUR POEMS.

I REFER TO THE TIME WHEN I RECEIVED YOUR WRITINGS IN LITERATURE AND VERSE FROM ALEXANDRIA. I WAS THEN NOT YET ABLE TO TEST YOUR POWERS OF APPREHENSION, AND I

THOUGHT THAT YOUR DESIRE MIGHT POSSIBLY EXCEED YOUR CAPACITY. BUT WHEN YOU HAD GONE WITH ME THROUGH A COURSE OF ASTRONOMY, AFTER HAVING COMPLETED THE [OTHER] ELEMENTARY STUDIES WHICH ARE INDISPENSABLE FOR THE UNDERSTANDING OF THAT SCIENCE, I WAS STILL MORE GRATIFIED BY THE ACUTENESS AND THE QUICKNESS OF YOUR APPREHENSION.

OBSERVING YOUR GREAT FONDNESS FOR MATHEMATICS, I LET YOU STUDY THEM MORE DEEPLY, FOR I FELT SURE OF YOUR ULTIMATE SUCCESS. AFTERWARDS, WHEN I TOOK YOU THROUGH A COURSE OF LOGIC, I FOUND THAT MY GREAT EXPECTATIONS OF YOU WERE CONFIRMED, AND I CONSIDERED YOU FIT TO RECEIVE FROM ME AN EXPOSITION OF THE ESOTERIC IDEAS CONTAINED IN THE PROPHETIC BOOKS, THAT YOU MIGHT UNDERSTAND THEM AS THEY ARE UNDERSTOOD BY MEN OF CULTURE.

WHEN I COMMENCED BY WAY OF HINTS, I NOTICED THAT YOU DESIRED ADDITIONAL EXPLANATION, URGING ME TO EXPOUND SOME METAPHYSICAL PROBLEMS; TO TEACH YOU THE SYSTEM OF THE WONDERS; TO TELL YOU WHETHER THEIR ARGUMENTS WERE BASED ON LOGICAL PROOF; AND IF NOT, WHAT THEIR METHOD WAS.

I PERCEIVED THAT YOU HAD ACQUIRED SOME KNOWLEDGE IN THOSE MATTERS FROM OTHERS, AND THAT YOU WERE PERPLEXED AND BEWILDERED; YET YOU SOUGHT TO FIND OUT A SOLUTION TO YOUR DIFFICULTY. I URGED YOU TO DESIST FROM THIS PURSUIT, AND ENJOINED YOU TO CONTINUE YOUR STUDIES SYSTEMATICALLY; FOR MY OBJECT WAS THAT THE TRUTH SHOULD PRESENT ITSELF IN CONNECTED ORDER, AND THAT YOU SHOULD NOT HIT UPON IT BY MERE CHANCE.

WHILST YOU STUDIED WITH ME I NEVER REFUSED TO EXPLAIN DIFFICULT VERSES IN THE BIBLE OR PASSAGES IN RABBINICAL LITERATURE WHICH WE HAPPENED TO MEET. WHEN, BY THE WILL OF GOD, WE PARTED, AND YOU WENT YOUR WAY, OUR DISCUSSIONS AROUSED IN ME A RESOLUTION WHICH HAD LONG BEEN DORMANT.

YOUR ABSENCE HAS PROMPTED ME TO COMPOSE THIS TREATISE FOR YOU AND FOR THOSE WHO ARE LIKE YOU, HOWEVER FEW THEY MAY BE. I HAVE DIVIDED IT INTO CHAPTERS, EACH OF WHICH SHALL BE SENT TO YOU AS SOON AS IT IS COMPLETED. FAREWELL!"

Opening Poem

The Rambam opens Moreh Nevuchim with a short poem in which he point out that the function of Moreh Nevuchim is to help anyone veering off the way and set him back onto the straight path.

OPENING OF MOREH NEVUCHIM

MY KNOWLEDGE GOES FORTH TO POINT OUT THE WAY,
TO PAVE STRAIGHT ITS ROAD.

LO, EVERYONE WHO GOES ASTRAY IN THE FIELD OF TORAH,
COME AND FOLLOW ITS PATH.

THE UNCLEAN AND THE FOOL SHALL NOT PASS OVER IT;
IT SHALL BE CALLED THE SACRED WAY.

Topics Discussed in Moreh Nevuchim

Among the topics discussed in Moreh Nevuchim are explanations of different words used in the Torah, methods of interpreting words of the Torah, Divine attributes, the subject of creation vs. eternity, prophecy, providence, the mitzvos, and human perfection.

The themes are divided into two distinct parts:

- 1) maaseh bereishis - account of creation or physics that deals with natural phenomena, and
- 2) maaseh merkavah - account of chariot or metaphysics that deals

with the spiritual and the supernatural

R' Shmuel ben Ali

In the correspondence between Yosef ibn Aknin and the Rambam, we are told about R' Zechariah ben Berachal who had come to Aleppo from Baghdad to collect money for the yeshivah in Baghdad (the yeshivah was struggling so badly they were forced to borrow money from goyim to support it).

R' Zechariah was the closest student to the Rosh Yeshiva of Baghdad, R' Shmuel ben Ali and he would make remarks that challenged the Rambam's authority in Halacha and many of his pirushim in his Commentary to the Mishnah. R' Yosef was upset about this and wrote to the Rambam, asking him what to do about R' Zechariah. The Rambam told him not to engage in dispute.

Some of the tension between the students may have come from the fact that Syria had recently become under Egyptian rule and R' Yosef believed the Rambam, who was the leader of Egyptian Jewry should be followed in Syria as well. Whereas R' Zecahriah believed that Syria should be under the jurisdiction of the Yeshivos of Bavel as it always had been.

In 1190 R' Yosef ibn Aknin moved to Bahgdad to open a Yeshivah that studied in the comprehensive method of the Rambam of not getting caught up in extended Talmudic discussion and debate.

In Bavel until this point there was a Reish Galusa, the exilarch, a person from a family that descended from Dovid Hamelech who was recognized by Jews and local rulers alike as the leader of the Jewish people in Bavel. R' Shmuel ben Ali . the Rosh Yeshiva of Bahgdad was opposed to the position of Reish Galusa, because he felt Jews should be governed by Torah leadership from the Yeshivas and not by political leaders. Once, when one Reish Galusa passed away, R' Shmuel ben Ali campaigned to stop the position altogether.

At the same time, a new Reish Galusa had been appointed and sent letters to the Rambam asking for his endorsement, since he was the recognized Jewish leader of the time.

The Reish Galusa's letter was read in the Rambam's home with great ceremony, a sign that the Rambam did endorse him. R' Shmuel ben Ali

sent a letter to the Rambam declaring that he had no right to endorse him.

Back in Baghdad, R' Yosef Ibn Akinin had supported the new Reish Galusa, and it is likely that he would not have been appointed were it not for R' Yosef's efforts. This obviously created even more tensions between R' Shmuel and R' Yosef.

R' Shmuel sharply criticized the Rambam's view on Olam Habah, the world to come, since the Rambam understood it to mean a spiritual world in which the body leaves the soul. This was different to R' Shmuel's understanding of Techiyas Hameisim being the final stage in Olam Habah, in which souls will return to bodies and remain alive with a body for all eternity.

R' Shmuel somewhat misunderstood the Rambam's approach to preclude the notion of a physical Techiyas Hameisim where neshamos return to bodies that would precede Olam habah. When he challenged the Rambam on this, the Rambam was forced to write a lengthy explanation clarifying his position on the matter.

Question from R' Avraham Hakohen of Bahgdad

One major dispute in halacha between R' Shmuel ibn Eli and the Rambam followed the response of the Rambam to a question sent to him from R' Avraham Hakohen of Bahgdad.

In those days, a sea journey lasted for many weeks and sometimes even months. It could involve travelling on major rivers as well. For example, to travel from Fustat where the Rambam lived, you would take a boat that travelled on the Nile River until you reached the sea. R' Avraham asked the Rambam is it was permitted to travel on such rivers on Shabbos since travelling more than a mile and a half on land (outside of the city) violates the prohibition of travelling outside of techum Shabbos.

Notice all the flowery titles people would extend to the Rambam in addressing him:

RAMBAM RESPONSA 308

שאלה מה תאמר הדרת יקרת צפירת תפארת מוריני ורבינו הרב

הגדול בישראל המובהק פטיש החזק נר המערבי דגל הרבנים אות
העולם ופלאו ממזרח שמש עד מבואו יהי שמו לעולם כירה יכון
לעולם במאמר אלהי עולם ויעמד כלל קהל הקדש בחייו ובאריכות
ימיו. בהליכה בנהרות הגדולות כנהר מצרים וחדקל ופרת והדומים
להם אם הוא מותר או אינו מותר.

QUESTION: WHAT WILL YOU SAY, GLORIFIED SPLENDOR, THE
SOUND OF BEAUTY, OUR TEACHER AND MASTER, THE RABBI, GREAT
ONE IN ISRAEL, THE EXCEPTIONAL, MIGHTY HAMMER, LIGHT OF
THE WEST, FLAG OF THE RABBIS, SIGN OF THE WORLD, AND WHOSE
WONDERS ARE FROM THE EAST OF THE SUN TO ITS SETTING [IN
THE WEST], MAY HIS NAME BE FOREVER LIKE THE MOON STANDING
FOR ALL ETERNITY IN THE SAYING OF THE G-D OF THE WORLD,
AND WHO WILL RAISE THE ENTIRE HOLY CONGREGATION IN HIS
LIFETIME AND IN THE LENGTH OF HIS DAYS. IS IT PERMISSIBLE TO
TRAVEL (ON SHABBOS) ON THE GREAT RIVERS LIKE THE NILE OF
EGPYT, THE TIGRIS AND EUPHRATES AND THE LIKE?

The Rambam's Answer

The Rambam answered R' Avraham that it was permitted to travel on
the big rivers since the water was deeper than ten tefachim, and when
travelling above this height there is no prohibition of techum Shabbos.

RAMBAM RESPONSA 308

תשובה אין הפרש בין ההליכה בימים המלוחים ובין אלו הנהרות
שמימיהם מרובים הכל מותר אין בו אסור כלל... אלא אם כן לא יהיו
עמוקים ויהיה בין שטחם ובין שטח הארץ פחות מעשרה טפחים
ואז תהיה ההליכה באלו המי' בשבת אסור ואין ההליכה באלו כדין
ההליכה בארץ ויתלה בזה אסור תחומין (עירובין מ"א ב' ומ"ג א').
ואמנם המים הרבים שגבהם עשרה טפחים או יותר ההליכה על
גבם מותר בשבת לפי שאין אסור תחומין למעלה מעשרה (שם)

בכרמלית ומפני זה היה מותר ללכת בימים המלוחים תמיד.

ANSWER: THERE IS NO DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TRAVELLING IN SALTY SEAS TO THOSE RIVERS OF ABUNDANT WATER, IT IS ENTIRELY PERMISSIBLE, THERE IS NO PROHIBITION AT ALL... UNLESS THE [WATERS] ARE NOT DEEP AND THERE ARE LESS THAN TEN TEFACHIM, BETWEEN THE SURFACE [OF THE WATER] AND THE GROUND, THEN TRAVELLING ON SUCH WATERS ON SHABBOS WOULD BE FORBIDDEN. AND TRAVELLING ON THESE WATERS IS NOT LIKE TRAVELLING ON THE GROUND WHERE THE PROHIBITION OF SHABBOS BOUNDARIES (TECHUM) WOULD APPLY. HOWEVER, ABUNDANT WATER THAT IS TEN TEFACHIM IN HEIGHT OR MORE, TRAVELLING UPON THEM IS PERMITTED ON SHABBOS SINCE THERE IS NO PROHIBITION OF SHABBOS BOUNDARIES HIGHER THAN TEN (TEFACHIM) IN A KARMELIS, AND FOR THIS REASON, IT WOULD BE PERMISSIBLE TO TRAVEL ON THE SALTY SEAS CONTINUALLY.

When R' Shmuel ibn Eli in Baghdad heard about the Rambam's reply to R' Avraham (also of Baghdad), he wrote a letter criticizing the Rambam's ruling and calling it a mistake, since the Rambam's ruling disagreed with the opinions of some of the Geonim from centuries prior to the Rambam's time.

He disagreed with the Rambam on the basic question of whether Techum Shabbos is from the Torah or is of rabbinic origin. This is a matter that is disputed in the Talmud and was continually disputed throughout the ages. It became one of the points of contention in Halachah between R' Shmuel and the Rambam:

RAMBAM RESPONSA 309

הראנו הזקן הישר הכהן יקירנו מר אברהם יצ"ו הוראה באה מכבוד גדולת קדושת הדרת אדירנו רבינו משה הדיין המובהק הגבור חכם הדור... בהתרת ההליכה בנהרות הגדולות כדגלת ופרת בשבת... ונאמר שההקדמה האחת נפסדת והוא אמרו תחומין דרבנן וממנה

נכנס הטעות

THE UPRIGHT ELDER, THE KOHEN, OUR ACQUAINTANCE, MAR AVRAHAM SHOWED US AN INSTRUCTION FROM THE HONORABLE, GREAT, SAINTLY, SPLENDOR OF OUR TEACHER RABBI MOSHE THE EXPERT DAYAN, THE MIGHTY SAGE OF THE GENERATION IN PERMITTING TRAVEL ON THE GREAT RIVERS SUCH AS THE TIGRIS AND EUPHRATES ON SHABBOS...AND I SAY THAT ONE PREMISE WAS LOST AND THAT IS SAYING THAT SHABBOS BOUNDARIES ARE ONLY PROHIBITED BY THE SAGES, AND FROM THERE CAME THE MISTAKE

Controversy over the Rambam

During the Rambam's lifetime as well as for many years afterwards, the Rambam was victim to many attacks.

Some of the allegations against the Rambam included:

- The fact that the Mishneh Torah did not cite sources
- The fact that the Mishneh Torah rendered the study of Talmud obsolete (claiming to be the only book you should learn after Tanach)
- The Rambam considered people who believed that Hashem had a form to be heretics in a time when several prominent Jewish opinions existed that believed that Hashem can have a form.
- The rabbis saw Greek philosophy as a threat to Jewish beliefs

The attack was not only on the Rambam, but on everyone who advocated the study of philosophy. They were charged with:

- Denying miracles
- Regarding prophecy as natural phenomenon
- Undermining the authority of Torah
- Rejecting the literal belief of what will be at the end of times
- Treating scripture as allegory
- Denying the historical truths of biblical persons and events
- Laxity in observance of the Mitzvos

In 1232, 28 years after the Rambam's passing, the rabbis of Northern France placed a ban on the study of philosophy including the Rambam's Moreh Nevuchim and Sefer Hamada of Mishneh Torah.

In 1232, the Rambam's books were also burned by Dominican monks as a result of the controversy.

The fight about the Rambam died down for some time from 1242 when it became clear that the burning of the Rambam's books led to the burning of the Talmud in Paris by King Louis IX.

The Rambam's Passing

The Rambam passed away in 1204 at the age of 66 (or 69) and instructed to be buried in Eretz Yisroel. There is a story about how a band of Bedouins attempted to stop the procession and tried to throw the coffin into the sea, but it miraculously became too heavy and they were unable to move it.

Despite the controversy, the Rambam became known as one of the greatest Jewish personalities that ever lived. On his tomb it is inscribed "from Moshe to Moshe there arose none like Moshe."

Concluding Question:

What makes the Rambam's Mishneh Torah different to all other books of halachah?

Main Points

- In Egypt, the Rambam wrote the Mishneh Torah, a recording of the entire Oral Torah as it relates to practice.
- The Rambam didn't marry until later in life and had one daughter who died as a child, and a son, R' Avrohom.
- When the Rambam's brother, R' Dovid, passed away, the Rambam was forced to take up medicine to support the family and eventually became the Sultan's court physician.
- The Rambam was very active in community affairs, enacting many communal rulings and decrees, particularly against Karaites
- The Rambam wrote Moreh Nevuchim for his closest student, R' Yosef Ibn Aknin from Aleppo, Syria (and for people like him)
- Moreh Nevuchim was written for people who are having trouble aligning Torah and science/philosophy and includes ideas from Torah and Aristotle
- The Rambam's works and opinions were considered controversial in the other Torah centers in Babylonia and Southern France, but ultimately the Rambam prevailed.

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