

## 1. Rabbi Dr. Marc Shapiro, “Reuven Elitzur, Saul Lieberman, and Response to Criticism, Part 2”, The Seforim Blog

On pp. 40-42, Grossman deals with my suggestion that the Rambam abandoned his Thirteen Principles of Faith as the summation of Jewish dogma in favor of his more detailed formulation in the Mishneh Torah. In support of this suggestion I point out that not only does the Rambam pretty much ignore the Thirteen Principles in his later works, but in discussing what to teach a convert, he also does not mention the Thirteen Principles. (Regarding converts, he only states that they should be instructed in the oneness of G-d and the prohibition of idolatry.) I also note that both R. Joseph Schwartz and R. Shlomo Goren argued that in his later years the Rambam no longer felt tied to his early formulation of the Thirteen Principles. Readers should examine Limits for more details. My thoughts in this matter were in the way of a suggestion, not an absolute conclusion, that I thought worthy of bringing to the attention of readers.

In response to my point that when evaluating the significance of the Thirteen Principles for the Rambam it is noteworthy that he does not require a future convert to be taught these Principles, Grossman states that the Rambam derived his ruling, that the convert is instructed in the oneness of G-d and prohibition of idolatry (but not other Principles), from the talmudic recounting (Yevamot 47b) of the dialogue between Naomi and Ruth: Naomi says that Jews are prohibited to serve idolatry, and Ruth replies “Your G-d is my G-d.”

The Rambam understands this discussion as referring to the Principles of idolatry and G-d’s unity. Apparently, adopting these two Principles is the essence of conversion to Judaism. These might be a mere sample of other laws and ideas that we also mention—as implied by the Rambam’s concluding phrase [Hilkhot Issurei Biah 14:2], “and we elaborate (u-ma’arichin) on this.” The Rambam is codifying that which the Talmud prescribes as integral to the conversion process, thus, one cannot ask why the Rambam did not mention other Principles of faith—which is a different topic entirely.

This is a perfect example of how Grossman’s review could have been written, namely, present my points and then explain why he reads the texts differently and why my reading is forced, inconsistent with what the Rambam says elsewhere or with the Rambam’s sources, or just flat out wrong because I misread a text. In this case, I would only note that I still believe that my point about the Rambam not returning to the Thirteen Principles in his later works, even when he discusses the fundamentals of faith, is more than a little curious and leads to my original suggestion that at the time he wrote the Mishneh Torah he had adopted a more detailed list of required beliefs... Before concluding this section of my reply, I want to return to a point I made in the book (p. 7), that the Rambam’s formulation that a convert be instructed in theological matters is something the Rambam added on his own without a specific talmudic source. Grossman rejects this and notes that the Vilna Gaon and others see the Rambam’s source as Yevamot 47b, where Naomi is recorded as telling Ruth that Jews are prohibited in idolatry, and Ruth responded that “your G-d is my G-d”.

The first thing I would say is that I am not certain if in this case the Vilna Gaon sees this as the source for the Rambam, or if he is simply citing a source that can be brought in support of what the Rambam, followed by the Shulhan Arukh, write. Chaim Tchernowitz writes about the Gaon’s commentary:

לפעמים הוא מוצא לדין השו"ע סמך או רמז בכתוב עצמו, דבר שלא עלה על דעת שום איש ואף לא על דעת אותו המחבר בעצמו, אחד מן האחרונים, שהמציא את הדין או המנהג ההוא על דעת עצמו, על סמך דיוק בגמרא או באיזה ראשון שהמציא בפלפולו, והגר"א מראה לדין זה מקור מן התורה, מן הנביאים או מן הכתובים או מתרגומים עתיקים על פי רמז דק מן הדק

Nevertheless, even if the Gaon is not citing Yevamot 47b as the actual source of the Rambam’s requirement for theological instruction for a convert (and I am not sure about this), there are indeed others who do cite this text, so Grossman’s point is well taken.

My response to this is that there are also authorities who do not identify Yevamot 47b as the Rambam’s source, and who instead see the Rambam’s mention of the necessity of instruction of converts in theological truths as something the Rambam added on his own, and not based on any talmudic text. Rather, they believe that the Rambam regarded the necessity of theological instruction as so basic and implicit that there does not need to be a specific talmudic text as a source. This is a dispute among the commentators, so it makes no sense to criticize me for advocating one side of this debate...

## 2. Yevamot 47b (modified Davidson Edition translation)

(ומודיעים אותו עון שכחה ופאה): ואין מרבים עליו ואין מדקדקים עליו: אמר רבי אלעזר מאי קראה דכתיב (רות א, יח) ותרא כי מתאמצת היא ללכת אתה ותחדל לדבר אליה אמרה לה אסיר לך תחום שבת (רות א, טז) באשר תלכי אלך אסיר לך יחוד (רות א, טז) באשר תליני

אלין מפקדינן שש מאות וי"ג מצות (רות א, טז) עמך עמי אסיר לן עבודת כוכבים (רות א, טז) ואלקיך אלקי ארבע מיתות נמסרו לב"ד (רות א, יז) באשר תמותי אמות ב' קברים נמסרו לב"ד (רות א, יז) ושם אקבר מיד ותרא כי מתאמצת היא וגו'.

And they inform him of the sin of neglecting the mitzva to allow the poor to take gleanings, forgotten sheaves, and produce in the corner of one's field. And they do not overwhelm him with threats, and they are not exacting with him about the details of the mitzvot. Rabbi Elazar said: What is the verse from which this ruling is derived? As it is written: "And when she saw that she was steadfastly minded to go with her, she left off speaking with her" (Ruth 1:18).

Naomi said to her: On Shabbat, it is prohibited for us to go beyond the Shabbat limit. Ruth responded: "Where you go, I shall go" (Ruth 1:16), and no further. Naomi said to her: It is forbidden for us to be alone together with a man with whom it is forbidden to engage in relations. Ruth responded: "Where you lodge, I shall lodge" (Ruth 1:16), and in the same manner. Naomi said to her: We are commanded to observe six hundred and thirteen mitzvot. Ruth responded: "Your people are my people" (Ruth 1:16). Naomi said to her: Idolatrous worship is forbidden to us. Ruth responded: "Your G-d is my G-d" (Ruth 1:16). Naomi said to her: Four types of capital punishment were handed over to a court with which to punish those who transgress the mitzvot. Ruth responded: "Where you die, I shall die" (Ruth 1:17). Naomi said to her: Two burial grounds were handed over to the court, one for those executed for more severe crimes and another for those executed for less severe crimes. Ruth responded: "And there I shall be buried" (Ruth 1:17). Immediately following this dialogue, the verse states: "And when she saw that she was steadfastly minded she left off speaking with her" (Ruth 1:18).

### 3. Rambam Hilchot Issurei Biah 14:2 (Chabad.org translation)

ומודיעין אותו עקרי הדת שהוא ייחוד השם ואסור עבודה זרה. ומאריכין בדבר הזה. ומודיעין אותו מקצת מצוות קלות ומקצת מצוות חמורות. ואין מאריכין בדבר זה. ומודיעין אותו עון לקט שכחה ופאה ומעשר שני [ענין]. ומודיעין אותו עונשן של מצוות...

We inform him of the fundamentals of the faith, i.e., the unity of G-d and the prohibition against the worship of false deities. We elaborate on this matter. We inform him about some of the easy mitzvot and some of the more severe ones. We do not elaborate on this matter. We inform him of the transgression of [not leaving] leket, shichachah, pe'ah, and the second tithe. And we inform him of the punishment given for [violating] the mitzvot...

### 4. Maggid Mishnah to Hilchot Issurei Biah 14:1-2

כיצד מקבלין גירי הצדק וכו'. ברייתא בהחולץ (דף מ"ז) והכל מפורש שם חוץ ממ"ש ומאריכין בדבר זה בייחוד השם ובאיסור ע"א שאינו מבואר שם שיארכו עמו בזה אבל הדבר פשוט שכיון שאלו הם עיקרי הדת והאמונה צריך להאמינם בברור ולהודיעם ולהאריך עמם בזה שהוא עיקר היהדות והדת והגירות:

### 5. Ma'aseh Rokeach to Hilchot Issurei Biah 14:2

ומודיעין אותו וכו'. זה לא הוזכר בברייתא והרב המגיד ז"ל כתב דהאריכות הוא מדברי רבינו נראה שגם הוא היתה גירסתו כך להדיא.

### 6. Mishnat Yaakov to Hilchot Issurei Biah 14:2

צ"ע למה כתב הרמב"ם עיקרי הדת שהוא ייחוד השם ואיסור עכו"ם, ולמה לא כתב כל הי"ג עיקרים שכתבן בפירוש המשניות בפ"י דסנהדרין, וז"ל: שעיקרי דתנו ויסודותיה שלשה עשר יסודות, וראה שם בהמשך הדברים, ולמה כתב כאן: עיקרי הדת שהוא ייחוד השם ואיסור עכו"ם, וצ"ע.

### 7. Rambam Hilchot Issurei Biah 13:14 (Chabad.org translation)

... שהמצוה הנכונה כשיבא הגר או הגירת להתגייר בודקין אחריו שמה בגלל ממונו שיטל או בשביל שררה שיזכה לה או מפני הפחד בא להכנס לדת. ואם איש הוא בודקין אחריו שמה עיניו נתן באשה יהודית. ואם אשה היא בודקין שמה עיניה נתנה בנכחור מבחורי ישראל. אם לא נמצא להם עלה מודיעין אותן כבד על התורה וטרח שיש בעשייתה על עמי הארצות כדי שיפרשו. אם קבלו ולא פרשו וראו אותן שחזרו מאהבה מקבלים אותן שנאמר (רות א יח) "ונתרא כי מתאמצת היא ללכת אתה ונתחדל לדבר אליה:"

...The proper way of performing the mitzvah is when a male or a female prospective convert comes, we inspect his motives for conversion. Perhaps he is coming for the sake of financial gain, in order to receive a position of authority, or he desires to enter our faith because of fear. For a man, we check whether he focused his attention on a Jewish woman. For a woman, we check whether she focused her attention on a Jewish youth. If we find no ulterior motive, we inform them of the heaviness of the yoke of the Torah and the difficulty the common people have in observing it so that they will abandon [their desire]. If they accept [this introduction] and do not abandon their resolve and thus we see that they are motivated by love, we accept them, as [indicated by Ruth 1:18]: "And she saw that she was exerting herself to continue with her and she ceased speaking with her."