



CONGREGATION
SHOMREI EMUNAH

WHAT MUST WE BELIEVE:
AN ANALYSIS OF RAMBAM'S
13 PRINCIPLES OF FAITH

PART III

MOTZEI SHABBOS PARSHAS VAYIKRA
9 ADAR II 5675
MARCH 19, 2005

R Fendel, p.314

ס' דברי תורה, אברהם מנחם אליהו
(מחבר'ת ס' 13)

As we have already noted in our Overview, however, contrary opinions notwithstanding, the Rambam's שלשה עשר עיקרים — the Thirteen Principles, have been accepted by all segments of the Torah community as the authentic formulation of the Fundamental Principles of Torah Faith.²⁴ It is universally recognized as definitive halacha that firm belief in, and adherence to each of these Thirteen Principles is the *sine qua non* of Torah faith, through which — in the words of the Rambam — the individual will be "accepted within the ranks of Israel."²⁵

נאמן מפיז ופיה כו תודית המצות כלי ע"כ דברי רבותינו הראשונים
ויל יתאחד האדם עם וכו' אשר שמענו כן עוד נהנה במעל ממש ככ"י
במחנה בימינו אמר: והגם כי עוד דברים נגזרו גם בפנימיות הענין
בכונת דברי הראשונים ודיל עם כל זה הדברים הם כפשוטן גם כן כרו
ואמרו מאמינים בני מאמינים בייג עקרים כפשוטן אמת לאמתן וכן יהי
רצון במחנה בימינו אמר:

The
Artscroll
Siddur

שלשה עשר עיקרים /
The Thirteen Principles of Faith

Historically, Judaism never separated belief from performance. In the Torah, the commandment to believe in God is not stated differently than the commandment to lend money to a fellow Jew in need, or to refrain from eating non-kosher food. As the centuries rolled by, however, philosophical speculation and dogmas of faith became prevalent among other religions and, in time, began to influence a number of Jews. To counteract this trend, medieval Rabbinical authorities felt the need to respond by defining the principles of Judaism. The 'Thirteen Principles of Faith' are based upon the formulation of Rambam [Maimonides] in his Commentary to Mishnah (Sanhedrin, ch. 10) and have achieved virtually universal acceptance.

It is a commendable practice to recite the Thirteen Principles every day after Shacharis. As Rambam himself writes, one does not become imbued with them from a perfunctory reading

R. Mordechai Blumenfeld, Fundamentals of Faith (1991) p.13

It should be stressed that all Torah scholars agree on the validity and significance of the Principles. However, some of the Rambam's contemporaries questioned whether a lack of awareness of or belief in several of the Principles would result in an actual estrangement from Judaism.

R. Yehuda Parnes, "Torah U-Madda and Freedom of Inquiry",
Torah U-Madda Journal vol. I (1989) p.71

Based on all of the above, Torah u-Madda can only be viable if it imposes strict limits on freedom of inquiry in areas that may undermine the אמונה. Then, Torah u-Madda will have the opportunity to represent itself as an authentic and historical tradition in Jewish thought.

Steven I Weiss,
"Author challenges
Rambam's Principles"

The Forward,
3/12/04

A religious debate over intellectual freedom is brewing in the Orthodox world, following the recent publication of a book challenging the widespread view within Orthodoxy that Maimonides's Thirteen Principles of Faith represents a binding articulation of Jewish theological dogma.

In his book, "The Limits of Orthodox Theology: Maimonides' Thirteen Principles Reappraised," Marc Shapiro, a professor of Judaic studies at the University of Scranton, argues against the contemporary Orthodox world's treatment of the principles as unimpeachable dogma, insisting that they have been the source of much dispute since Maimonides first articulated them in the 12th century. A medieval Sephardic Jewish thinker whose works ignited a wave of excommunications and book-bannings among religious Jews, Maimonides is now perhaps the most commonly cited Jewish theologian in Orthodoxy, especially among the Modern Orthodox. His principles — including the belief that the Torah was written entirely by Moses and that an incorporeal God created the world from nothing — have come to represent the cornerstones of Jewish faith for the Orthodox.

Shapiro, however, contends in his book that Maimonides's principles were never universally accepted among traditional Jews until recently. Even today, Shapiro

אולם אע"פ שראינו כי ייג העיקרים, או היסודות כלשונו של הרמב"ם בעצמו, מרוחזים (בדרך השלילה) גם ביד החזקה בה"ל תשובה, בכל זאת כנראה חזר בו מדעתו העקרונית הראשונה שחשיב את ידיעתם כיסודות האמונה והדת, וזהיר על ידיעתם באופן מיוחד וחייב כל יהודי בהם, כפי שכתב בפי חלק שם בין השאר "ואכל אני עשיתי זה לפי שראיתי בו תועלת באמונה לפי שאספתי בו דברים מועילים מפוזרים מספרים גדולים, לכן דע אותם והצלח בהם וחזור עליהם פעמים רבות וחתיכון בהם התברר נאות יפה" וכי, על אף כל זאת לא קבע אותם בצורה כזאת כחובת האמונה על כל יחיד בספרו ההלכתי "היד החזקה". זה מוכיח שבכל זאת שינה הרמב"ם לבסוף את דעתו ולא רצה לקבוע עיקר רים לאמונה, כי כל התורה כולה ומצוותיה קלות כחמורות עיקר רים הם וישנם עיקרים רבים נוספים גם באמונה. ובמאמר בריאת העולם במשנתו של הרמב"ם, בררנו את הנוסחאות האחרות של ייג העיקרים.

ס' דברי תורה
אברהם מנחם אליהו
(p.570)

The Thirteen Principles are a very conservative document, yet the sources discussed by Kellner focus overwhelmingly on disagreements with Maimonides over whether certain Principles are actually 'roots' of Judaism – an entirely semantic issue – rather than with the correctness of Maimonides' fundamental theological views. As Kellner puts it, 'the plethora of competing systems reflects not conflicting views of the nature of Judaism, but a dispute concerning the nature of dogmas or principles of faith.'⁹ For the scholars on whom Kellner concentrates, Maimonides' thirteen tenets are correct, even if many of them do not qualify as 'principles' – that is, as theological positions upon which Judaism stands or falls. My concern, in contrast, is with those scholars who thought that Maimonides' Principles were wrong, pure and simple.

שרית אגרות משה (א"ח ח"ב סי' נ)

הנה בדבר שמוכרח מע"כ בשביל הקאמפיין לעניני א"י לארגן בענקעטס ולהזמין גם את הראבאיים של הרעפארמער וקאנסערוואטיוון וגם לכבד אותם בכיבודים שונים אף בבדרכות כמו לבדך המוציא ולומר איזה תפלה, ודו"ח מע"כ לידע דעתי העניה אם אין בזה חשש איסור.

הנה לע"ד ברור שאף אם היה מברך הבדכה בתקונה ובלא הפסק לאכילה נמי כיון שהוא כופר בה' ובתורתו כדוב הראבאיים שלהם שנמצא שהזכרת השם הוא אצלו דק כדברים בעלמא לא בכונה להשי"ת, אין זה בשם ברכה כלל דהוא כבלא שם ומלכות כלל.

ומקודי הוא מרמב"ם פ"ו מ"סוה"ת ה"ח שכתב בטעם אפיקורס ישראל שכתב ס"ת ששודפין אותו עם האזכרות שבו, שהוא מפני שאינו מאמין בקדושת השם והוא מעלה בדעתו שזה כשאר הדברים והואיל ודעתו כן לא נתקדש השם, ואף שמצד זה לא היה מצוה לשודפו דמ"ש משאר דברים ונמצא שהוא טעם דק להתיר לשודפו ולא לחייב, ע"ז מסיק ומצוה לשודפו כדי שלא להניח שם לאפיקורסים ולא למעשיהם עיי"ש... חזינו מהרמב"ם דמי שאינו מאמין בקדושת השם הו' אותיות השם כשאר דברים, וא"כ פשוט שגם כשמוזכר השם נמי הוא כדברים בעלמא... ונמצא שיש איסור לכבד להראבאיים האפיקורסים שיברכו ברכת המוציא אף אם מברכים כדין משום דברכתם לא נחשב ברכה ולא יוצאו את השומעים. וגם אין צריכים לענות אמן אחר ברכתו. ידיו, משה פיינשטיין.

שרית אגרות משה (א"ח ח"ד סי' צא אות ו')

ואם לעשות מנין בחדר של ביהכ"נ שלא מתנהגין כשורה, הנה יש חלוק דבביהכ"נ של קאנסערוואטיוון / קונסרבטיבים / לא יעשו מנין אף בחדר אחר מכיון שפרסמו שהם חבורה שכופרים בכמה דיני התורה, והרחק מעליה דרכה נאמר במינים ומינות בע"ז דף י"ז ע"א, כי גם הכופרים בדבר אחד מן התורה נחשבו כופרים בתורה כדאיתא ברמב"ם פ"ג מתשובה ה"ח ודינם כמינים כדאיתא שם בה"ו, ואף שהם שוגגים כתינוקות שנשבו בין העכו"ם ע"י שהדיחום אבותיהם והסביבה שנתגדלו שם ואין עליהם הדינים שנאמרו שם בעונשין דביד"ש = דבידי שמים = ולא הדין דמורידין ולא מעלין שבפ"ד מרוצת ה"י כמפורש ברמב"ם פ"ג מממרים ה"ג, מ"מ כופרים הו' וצריך להתרחק מהן כדין הרחק מעליה דרכה, ומש"כ הרמב"ם שראוי להחזירם בתשובה ולמשכן בדברי שלום עד שיחזרו לאיתן התורה, לא שייך זה במקום קיבוץ שלהן שהוא בביהכ"נ שלהן שאין המקום ראוי לזה, וגם לא כל אדם ראוי לזה, אבל אלו בתי כנסיות של ארטודוקסים שאינם כראוי כגון בלא מחיצה דאיהו ומשתמשים במייקראפאן אינם ח"ו כופרים במצות אלו רק שמזלזלין בהו אף שמאמינים בעצם בכל מצות התורה ונעשה להו כהיתר במשך הזמן שעברו ושנו, הם בעצם יהודים כשרים וגם לפעמים הם שוגגים גמורים, ליכא ענין הרחק, ורשאיין לעשות מנין בחדר אחר, באופן שלא יחשדו שגם הם הולכין להתפלל שם דהוא כשכבר מפורסם ואף קודם שנתפרסם אם יש כניסה אחרת. ולענין למחות בהם תלוי אם יש לקוות שישמעו צריך להודיע להם ואם לא מוטב שיהיו שוגגין.

שרית אגרות משה חלק יו"ד ג סימן קמט

בדבר האשה שנקברה בבית הקברות של רעפארמער אשר כל הנקברים שם הם רשעים שכפרו בתורתנו הקדושה וגם נקברו שם גם גוים מאלו שנתחתנו עם הרעפארמער, ועתה רוצה הבעל לפנותה ולקבורה בבית הקברות של ביהכ"נ הארטאדאקסים... ואין היתר לפנותה אלא דוקא באם יקנה הבעל מקום גדול לקבוע שם שיהיה לקבר משפחה, שבזה דעת הגאון ר' מאיר שמחה זצ"ל באור שמח פ"ד מאבל ה"טו שמותר לפנות לשם, ואף שלע"ד לא ברור דינו, מ"מ באופן זה שהבעל חושב שעשה לה עולה בזה שקברה בביה"ק הרעפארמער הרי שהכיד בזה שהוא קברי רשעים שאפשר שיבא מזה לתשובה, וכשנאסור לפנותה יוכל לטעות שאינם רשעים כדהוא סובר ויתרשל מתשובה יש לסמוך ע"ז ולהתיר לו לקבוע קבר משפחה ולפנותה לשם. והנני ידיו, משה פיינשטיין.

M. Kellner, Must a Jew believe anything? (London, 1999) p114

This distinction is of cardinal importance. No one, not even Moses, has properly observed all 613 commandments. All Jews, therefore, are on the same continuum, from those who obey more to those who obey fewer. There is no absolute 'in' or 'out' here, saved or damned, orthodox or heretical. Rather, the question becomes: where on the continuum does one stand, and in which direction is one going?⁶

Kellner, p125-126

It is further important to realize that even though classical Judaism does not understand the nature of *emunah* as Maimonides does, and therefore places little value and emphasis on precise theological formulations, there are limits to what one can affirm or deny and still remain within the Jewish community. Note my terminology here: there are limits to what one can affirm or deny and still remain within the Jewish community. Denying the unity of God, for example, or that the Torah is of divine origin in some significant sense, or affirming that the Messiah has already come, are claims which place one outside the historical community of Israel. This is not to say that such persons are technically

heretics—nor is it to say that they are not: that is not the issue here—but it is to say that they have placed themselves beyond the broadest limits of historical Jewish communal consensus.

D. Berger, review pp 85-87

In light of all these reservations, I cannot endorse a proposal to rethink our assessment of Conservative and Reform Judaism through a prism which denies the existence of dogmatic benchmarks for authentic Judaism. Even from Kellner's own perspective it is very difficult to understand how he arrives at his conclusion. If I follow the book's argument correctly, we are meant to leapfrog medieval, Maimonidean approaches which examined required beliefs and go back to the Rabbinic wellsprings of Judaism where such standards were not spelled out. What then were Hazal's criteria for defining *minim*, *mamzerim*, *apikorsim* and similar categories which cannot be erased from Rabbinic sources? It is apparently Kellner's position that they were essentially behavioral. In a quest for specifics we would presumably come upon references not just to idolatry but to variants in the dating of *Shavuot*, to differences regarding Temple ritual, perhaps—if one is allowed to inject an element of belief into an analysis of law—to the principled rejection of the authority of the Oral Law across the board.

Compare this arbitrary but, I think, perfectly fair little list with a similar one appropriate to Reform Judaism: violation of the Sabbath, eating forbidden foods, and rejecting the absolute authority of both the Written and Oral Law. To sharpen an already sharp formulation, we may want to ponder a Rabbinic characterization of the despoiler of the Lord's word who is to be cut off in both this world and the next. This refers, we are told, even to "one who says that the entire Torah is from heaven except for this point of detail, except for this *kal va-homer*, except for this *gezeira shava*" (Sanhedrin 99a). While this very strong statement (which includes a principle of legal reasoning that one is permitted to apply even without a specific tradition) may require some explication, it can serve to illustrate why Kellner does not return to Hazal in his final chapter and why no Rabbinic passage other than *tannur shel Akhnai* plays any role in his discussion there. By any criterion, theological or behavioral, Kellner's approach to Reform Judaism is inconsistent not only with the views of Maimonides but also with the pronouncements of the talmudic Sages.

Regrettably, even mainstream Conservative Judaism today runs afoul of explicit Rabbinic criteria defining sectarianism in matters of both belief and practice. Much of the intellectual leadership of the Conservative movement affirms the validity of the documentary hypothesis, which maintains that the Torah contains genuine contradictions, that is, genuine errors based on the differing views of different authors. Many of these leaders also affirm that certain laws of the Torah—such as *mamzerut*—are to be done away with not through reinterpretation but through the recognition that they are morally wrong. The intellectual arguments which generate the first position and the moral intuitions which produce the second command respect, but there is no way to reconcile them with the parameters of authentic Judaism set by Hazal.

meant to deny God any leeway to consider other merits in making a final determination.⁶ I believe that we should deal with non-Orthodox movements, including their leadership, with respect and civility. And I agree that the "limits of historical Jewish consensus" are sometimes no less important than "heresy" as a criterion of acceptability; such a standard enables us to exclude a particular position from the community without declaring that its adherents are prime candidates for perdition.

Unlike Kellner, however, I use, even insist upon, terms like "legitimate" and "authentic." We have an obligation to maintain the boundaries of the faith bequeathed us by our ancestors, and we cannot do this by describing even fundamental deviations as points on a continuum. Let me illustrate this point in a very personal way. In my mid-teens, I experienced periods of perplexity and inner struggle while reading works of biblical criticism. While I generally resisted arguments for the documentary hypothesis with a comfortable margin of safety, there were moments of deep turmoil. I have a vivid recollection of standing at an outdoor *kabbalat Shabbat* in camp overwhelmed with doubts and hoping that God would give me the strength to remain an Orthodox Jew. What saved me was a combination of two factors: works that provided reasoned arguments in favor of traditional belief and the knowledge that to embrace the position that the Torah consists of discrete, often contradictory documents was to embrace not merely error but *apikorsut*. If I had been told by a credible authority that there is nothing a Jew really must believe and that the only danger was that I would move to a different point on a continuum, I am afraid to face the question of what might have happened.⁹

M Shapiro (p. 158)

While the issues I have discussed are not part of the traditional curriculum, I believe them to be central to a proper understanding of Judaism. Together with the turn to the right in Orthodoxy, which has led to increasing stringency in many areas of halakhah, an ever-increasing dogmatism in matters of belief is also apparent. Many views that were once generally considered 'acceptable' are no longer regarded in this way. If, as with the original article, controversy

I wrote this book to examine the claim that Maimonides' Principles are the last word in Jewish theology. Simply by looking at traditional Jewish sources, I believe it has been clearly demonstrated that many of his Principles were not regarded as authoritative, either before his time or afterwards. The fact that Maimonides placed the stamp of apostasy on anyone who disagreed with his Principles did not frighten away numerous great sages from their search for truth. The lesson for moderns is clear.

שורת חתם סופר (חלק ב' י"ד סי' שנו)

יקרתו הגיעני ענין הויכוח אם יש י"ג עקרין או ג' כהר"י אלבו, לא ידעתי שום נפקותא כ"א קריאת שם בלבד, ולדעת המקובלים אין כאן עיקר כי כל קוצים של תודה הם עיקרים מה בין זה לזה... והנה ר' הלל בפ' חלק צ"ט ע"א אמר אין משיח לישראל פירש"י אלא הקב"ה בעצמו יגאלם בלי שליח... דודאי גם לר' הלל יש גאולה אלא שאין משיח מלך, וגם בזה לית הלכתא כוותי והאומר אין משיח וקים לי כרבי הלל הרי הוא כופר בכלל התורה דכילי אחרי רבים להטות כיון שרבו עליו חכמי ישראל ואמרו דלא כוותי שוב אין אדם ראוי להמשך אחריו

H. Bleich (p. 4)

ters of faith, there is considerable disagreement of opinion with regard to precisely which beliefs are binding and which are not, as well as, in some instances, substantive matters of faith.

The concept of the Messiah is one example of a fundamental principle of belief concerning which, at one point in Jewish history, there existed a legitimate divergence of opinion, since resolved normatively. The Gemara, *Sanhedrin* 99a, cites the opinion of the Amora, Rav Hillel, who asserted, "There is no Messiah for Israel." Rashi modifies the literal reading of this dictum by explaining that Rav Hillel did not deny the ultimate redemption of Israel but asserted, rather, that the redemption will be the product of direct divine intervention without the intermediacy of a human agent. Nevertheless, Rav Hillel certainly denied that reestablishment of the monarchy and restoration of the Davidic dynasty are essential components of the process of redemption. Rabbi Moses

Sofer quite cogently points out that were such views to be held by a contemporary Jew he would be branded a heretic.⁴ Yet, the advancement of this opinion by one of the sages of the Talmud carried with it no theological odium. The explanation is quite simple. Before the authoritative for-

mulation of the *Halakhah* with regard to this belief, Rav Hillel's opinion could be entertained. Following the resolution of the conflict in a manner which negates this theory, normative Halakhah demands acceptance of the belief that the redemption will be effected through the agency of a mortal messiah. As is true with regard to other aspects of Jewish law, the Torah "is not in Heaven" (Deut. 30:12) and hence halakhic disputes are resolved in accordance with canons of law which are themselves part of the Oral Law.

Certainly, there remain many points regarding various articles of faith which have not been formally resolved by the sages of the Talmud. Indeed, in subsequent periods controversies did arise with regard to sig-

nificant theological issues, such as, for example, the nature of providence and freedom of the will. In the absence of a definitive ruling, the question which presents itself is, would the exponent of a certain view with regard to any of these matters consider an opponent and his followers simply to be in error, or would he view them as heretics as well? The answer is itself a matter of *Halakhah* having many ramifications, and, as proves to be the case, is the subject of considerable dispute.

H. Yitzchak Blay, review of M. Shapiro, *The Limits of Orthodox Theology*, *The TUMJ*, vol 12 (2004) 180-81

Additionally, Shapiro succeeds at proving his essential thesis. While it is popularly assumed that Rambam's thirteen principles always enjoyed universal acceptance, Shapiro shows that this was not true during either the period of the *rishonim* or of the *aharonim*. Many traditional authorities contested aspects of the principles as formulated by Rambam. For example, recognized authorities allowed prayer addressed to angels, admitted the possibility of another prophet equaling Moshe's prophetic ability, suggested that God could change the Torah if He saw fit to do so, claimed that God created the world out of pre-existing matter and did not feel the need to view the Torah in our hands today as identical to the letter with the Torah received at Sinai. Rambam's principles categorize all these positions as heretical, but Rambam's stature and the firmness of his stance did not silence opposition. In this regard, Shapiro has done a service in correcting a popular misconception.

On the book's last page, Shapiro writes of the book's significance in the context of reigning trends in Orthodoxy. "Together with the turn to the right in Orthodoxy, which has led to an increasing stringency in many areas of *halakhah*, an ever increasing dogmatism in matters of belief is also apparent" (p. 158). Shapiro apparently sees this volume as an important resource against this dogmatism, and indeed it is. If R.

However, Shapiro makes no reference to a danger found on the opposing point of the Orthodox spectrum. Under the influence of modern relativism and epistemological skeptics, many contemporary writers attempt to deny the significance of dogmas in Judaism altogether. Tamar Ross argues that Rav Kook views Jewish beliefs as having only instrumental value but not as cognitive truths.⁷ She argues for a position in which we view Buddhism, Christianity and Islam as equal manifesta-

tions of the same truth as Judaism.⁸ Menachem Kellner published a book arguing that beliefs are not a basis for deciding who is part of the religious community.⁹ In a more quixotic venture, Aryeh Botwinick tries to identify Rambam's negative theology with post-modern skepticism.¹⁰ Gili Zivan explores the post-modern implications of contemporary Jewish theologians who despair of the notion of objective truth.¹¹ David Singer compares David Berger to Torquemada for arguing that the idea of a messiah having a second coming in order to fulfill the messianic prophecies is beyond the pale.¹² While it is difficult to estimate the influence of these writers, I think it fair to say that the liberal edge of Orthodoxy is tempted by this position. Self-referential usage of the term "halakhic" in place of "Orthodox" may reflect this ideology.¹³ No doubt, adherents of the Orthoprax approach will be quick to utilize Shapiro's work as a support. Had Shapiro also kept this second extreme in mind and taken steps to more forcefully combat it, he would have written a better book.

Although the topic deserves a separate essay, I will briefly explain why the Orthoprax position is unacceptable. If Judaism demands halakhic practice without an ideology of belief to justify that practice, then such mizvah performance becomes reduced to mindless behaviorism. If we admit the need for a background structure of beliefs but hold that those beliefs radically change over time, then it becomes meaningless to talk of the ongoing tradition of Judaism. Imagine a "save the whales" organization consistently maintaining the same policies even as its ideology shifts from a concern for animals to a belief in whales as deities. Despite the group's unchanging practice, they could hardly be considered the same group as before. Likewise, a Judaism that maintains halakhic observance but drops traditional conceptions of God would actually be an entirely new entity. When kashrut changes from the command of an omniscient, benevolent God to a folk practice of the Jewish people, à la Mordechai Kaplan, the shift in ideologies justifying observance is too dramatic to talk about the continuity of Yahadut. A critic of the above

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In terms of the entire book, he said that the main problem was that Dr. Shapiro documents how many rishonim disagreed with one of the 13 Principles or another, but does not make the point that those who disagree with one generally agree with the others. Although one can find a rishon who disagrees with any specific principle, we have an overwhelming majority of rishonim who agree with the 13 Principles as they are; we find no rishon at all who claims that there are no principles or that the Rambam's 13 are completely untrue; and some even claim that the error of the Rambam is that he omitted additional important ones. Therefore, it is not only modern Orthodoxy that considers the 13 normative, it is the consensus of the rishonim.

Secondly, in many of Shapiro's examples, one can reject Rambam's specific formulation and reformulate the principle in a fashion that will unify the conflicting viewpoints. Some rishonim may believe in *beriah yesh mi-yesh*, but we can still state an overarching dogma that God preceded our world and created it at a given point in time. Even those authorities who think it possible that God could change the Torah prior to the world to come limit that possibility to an event that mirrors the wondrous miracle of Sinai with more than half a million witnesses. Thus, we can formulate a dogma that will make it almost impossible for Torah to change. The *rabbanim* who allow prayer to angels admit that angels are not beings with the power to challenge God or function inde-

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with Judaism just because one rishon was a determinist? It seems reasonable to me to suggest the following three criteria for the illegitimacy of a doctrine. We should consider a doctrine illegitimate only when all three criteria are met. 1) Almost no rabbis of stature in Jewish history taught this doctrine. 2) The doctrine conflicts with other Torah ideals or the simple thrust of *Tanakh* and *Hazal*. 3) The conflict with Torah/*Hazal* revolves around a matter of momentous import. Denying that the prophet Ovadyah existed might meet the first two criteria but be judged not monumental enough to meet the third criteria. Denying the Egyptian exodus, on the other hand, could meet all three. Although we should not be quick to employ this veto, we should reject some maverick and problematic positions taken by recognized authorities. Two

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Finally, an unanticipated consequence of the refusal to draw red lines may well be the fostering of intolerance within Orthodoxy itself. Since every orthodoxy—indeed, every coherent movement—must have boundaries, setting them in a reasonable place encourages respect for differences within those boundaries. Refusing to set them at all may well lead to the blurring of the central and the peripheral, the *ikkar* and the *tafel*, and lead to the position that virtually all deviations delegitimate. It hardly needs to be said that this danger is very much with us.