



Ani Maamin

The Dovi Steinmetz
INITIATIVE

The following is based on the best-selling
Ani Maamin: A Mission for Life,
published by ArtScroll Mesorah Publications

ANI MAAMIN *An Overview*

The 13 Ikkarim are the thirteen basic fundamental concepts of Judaism. Together, they form the foundation upon which Torah, Mitzvos, and life as a Jew are built.

- These 13 are most commonly expressed in an abridged form as the Ani Maamins, with each Ani Maamin declaring full acceptance and unwavering belief of that particular concept
- The listing of 13 was compiled by the Rambam, spelled out in detail in his commentary on Mishna, in his introduction to the 10th chapter of Maseches Sanhedrin, completing this work in the year 1168. At some later point, the Rambam's concepts were condensed, and phrased in credo "Ani Maamin" form, by an unknown author. To the best of our current knowledge, this version first appeared in the 16th century, close to 300 years after the Ramba"m.
- "Ani Maamin" has gained near-universal acceptance in the centuries since, becoming a standard feature of Jewish communities all across the globe. Many of our greatest leaders, such as the Chofetz Chaim, have urged their daily recital. Indeed, the Ani Maamins are found in the vast majority of siddurim, right after Shacharis, and many do in fact recite them daily at the conclusion of the morning tefillah.

The thirteen Ikkarim represent 13 independent ideas. They are, however, interconnected. It can truly be said that when put into perspective, they are a description of 4 distinct concepts.

- The first series describes the way we understand and relate to Hakadosh Baruch Hu himself. This series comprises the first five Ikkarim.
- The second series describes the authenticity of the Torah and commandments which instruct us on how to live our lives. This series covers the sixth through ninth Ikkarim.
- The next series lays out the concept that not only are the acts we perform inherently good or bad, but that these acts are tabulated, and each one will carry a consequence. This covers the tenth and eleventh Ikkarim.
- The final series lays out our long term vision, the world which we aspire to create. This is detailed in the twelfth and thirteenth Ikkarim.

THE FIRST SERIES

Understanding our relationship with Hakadosh Baruch Hu

אָנִי מְאֲמִין בְּאַמוּנָה שְׁלֵמָה, שֶׁהַבּוֹרָא יִתְבָּרַךְ שְׁמוֹ הוּא בּוֹרָא וּמְנַהִיג לְכָל הַבְּרוּאִים,
וְהוּא לְבַדּוֹ עָשָׂה וְעוֹשֶׂה וַיַּעֲשֶׂה לְכָל הַמַּעֲשִׂים.

I am steadfast in my absolute belief that the Creator, blessed is His Name, creates and guides all that is brought into existence, and that He alone created, creates, and will create all that is created.

- 1 | His essence is something completely different than everything we know and experience. Every single thing in our universe has a vast number of dependencies. We require all sorts of things to exist, such as nutrition, a properly hospitable climate, oxygen to breathe etc... Likewise, all physical entities or matter that we know of depend on a vast number of elements to exist. Above all, everything requires something to create it and bring it into existence.

Hakadosh Baruch Hu, on the other hand, is completely independent and requires nothing else to help Him exist. If the entire universe would destruct, it would not impact His viability in the slightest.

אָנִי מְאֲמִין בְּאַמוּנָה שְׁלֵמָה, שֶׁהַבּוֹרָא יִתְבָּרַךְ שְׁמוֹ הוּא יְחִיד וְאֵין יְחִידוֹת כְּמוֹהוּ בְּשׁוּם פְּנִים,
וְהוּא לְבַדּוֹ אֶלְקִינוּ, הֵיחָהּ הוּא וַיְהִיָּה.

I am steadfast in my absolute belief that the Creator, blessed is His Name, is One, and there is no uniqueness like His in any way, and He alone is our Lord, forever having existed, existing, and continuing to exist.

- 2 | He is One, in the sense that nothing exists without His having brought it into creation, and nothing continues to exist without His constant investing in maintaining the continued existence of that person or thing. There is no other such force. He is the Creator alone. Nothing else has the power or ability to determine what being, events, or forces should or should not exist or happen except for Him and Him alone.

אָנִי מְאֲמִין בְּאַמוּנָה שְׁלֵמָה, שֶׁהַבּוֹרָא יִתְבָּרַךְ שְׁמוֹ אֵינוֹ גּוֹף, וְלֹא יִשְׁיָגוּהוּ מִשִּׁיגֵי הַגּוֹף,
וְאֵין לוֹ שׁוּם דְּמִיוֹן בְּלָל.

I am steadfast in my absolute belief that the Creator, blessed is His Name, has no corporeality, nor can any material qualities be ascribed to Him, and there is nothing at all that is comparable to Him.

- 3 | Hakadosh Baruch Hu is not physical, and has no physical being, nor any physical emotions, feelings, or dimensions. Our entire universe, including the very existence of physical matter and forces such as rules of nature is all an invention of His. These physical elements and forces have no connection to the nature of Him himself, and as such, it is fundamentally impossible to describe him using any comparative terms.

אָנִי מְאֲמִין בְּאַמוּנָה שְׁלֵמָה, שֶׁהַבּוֹרָא יִתְבָּרַךְ שְׁמוֹ הוּא רִאשׁוֹן וְהוּא אַחֲרוֹן.

I am steadfast in my absolute belief that the Creator, blessed is His Name, is the very first and the very last [to exist].

- 4 | Hakadosh Baruch Hu is timeless, having existed when our world was yet to be brought into existence. He was always here, whereas we were brought into this world at a specific point in time to fulfill a specific role.

אֲנִי מַאֲמִין בְּאַמוּנָה שְׁלֵמָה, שֶׁהַבוֹרֵא יִתְבָּרַךְ שְׁמוֹ לוֹ לְבַדּוֹ רָאוּי לְהִתְפַּלֵּל,
וְאֵין לְזוּלָתוֹ רָאוּי לְהִתְפַּלֵּל.

I am steadfast in my absolute belief that the Creator, blessed is His Name —
to Him alone is it appropriate to pray, and it is inappropriate to pray to any other.

- 5 | Being that He and He alone controls all that exists and all that we experience, each time we look for “behind-the-scenes” controlling force, whether in praise for all that we receive, or whether in supplication for help with all our needs, we turn to Him and to Him alone.

To summarize: Hakadosh Baruch Hu is not physical, and has no physical dimensions or qualities. Though we speak of Him in human-like terms to illustrate how He runs the world, none of these descriptions are truly accurate, and are simply tools we use for comprehension. Everything we know and experience, including our very selves, is part of a system he invented and created. He alone created and maintains the system, so nobody or thing can override His decisions or otherwise control the course of life without Him. Knowing this, we direct all praise to Him, because He alone is the force behind all. Likewise, knowing this, we turn to Him alone with Tefillah and all our requests for help, because He alone has the power to help us.

THE SECOND SERIES

Understanding the truth of our Torah and Mitzvos

אֲנִי מַאֲמִין בְּאַמוּנָה שְׁלֵמָה, שְׁכָל דְּבָרֵי נְבִיאִים אֱמֶת.

I am steadfast in my absolute belief that all the words of the prophets are true.

- 6 | The concept of prophecy is absolutely true. That is to say, that HaKadosh Baruch Hu actively engages our world, and will in fact communicate directly with select human beings in highly specific situations. Because of this channel, we were able to receive instruction from Him guiding us as to our mission in life, and in laying out the parameters of good and bad.

אֲנִי מַאֲמִין בְּאַמוּנָה שְׁלֵמָה, שֶׁנְּבוֹאֵת מֹשֶׁה רַבֵּנוּ עָלָיו הַשְּׁלוֹם הִיְתָה אֱמֶתִית,
וְשֶׁהוּא הָיָה אָב לְנְבִיאִים, לְקוֹדְמִים לְפָנָיו וְלַבָּאִים אַחֲרָיו.

I am steadfast in my absolute belief that the prophecy of Moshe Rabbeinu,
may peace be upon him, was true, and that he was the archetype of prophets,
both those who preceded him as well as those who followed him.

- 7 | Of all those to receive this divine communication, Moshe Rabbeinu was the penultimate recipient, who communicated with unparalleled clarity. No other individual ever experienced, or will experience, a prophecy of greater clarity. Thus, no other individual can ever claim to have a better understanding of Hashem’s will than Moshe Rabbeinu. No one can claim to possess a more accurate Torah.

אֲנִי מַאֲמִין בְּאַמוּנָה שְׁלֵמָה, שְׁכָל הַתּוֹרָה הַמְצוּיָה עִתָּה בְּיַדֵּינוּ
הִיא הַנְּתוּנָה לְמֹשֶׁה רַבֵּנוּ עָלָיו הַשְּׁלוֹם.

I am steadfast in my absolute belief that the entire Torah now in our hands
is the same one that was given to Moshe Rabbeinu, may peace be upon him.

- 8 | The Torah given to Moshe Rabbeinu is the one in our possession today. It was faithfully transmitted, and those leaders that passed the Torah from generation to generation did not insert personal opinions, views or values. They conveyed only their fullest understanding of the word of Hashem as it was conveyed to them.

אָנִי מַאֲמִין בְּאַמוּנָה שְׁלֵמָה, שְׂוֹאֵת הַתּוֹרָה לֹא תִהְיֶה מְחֻלָּפֶת וְלֹא תִהְיֶה תּוֹרָה אַחֶרֶת
מֵאֵת הַבּוֹרֵא יִתְבָּרַךְ שְׁמוֹ.

I am steadfast in my absolute belief that this Torah [that we have received] will never be exchanged for another, nor will there be another Torah from the Creator, blessed is His Name.

9| The Torah given to Moshe, in our possession today, is not specific to a time or place. It is all encompassing, providing us Hashem's unwavering will which is relevant and in full force in all times and places. As such, no one can ever claim that there are modifications or newer versions of Hashem's will.

To summarize: Our Torah is the will of Hakadosh Baruch Hu himself. He communicated it to humanity, with unsurpassable clarity, and told us that His will is eternal, and will never be subject to change. Those that carries the Torah's message, from Moshe Rabbeinu and on, kept it true to form without adding any human-sourced intellect. With this knowledge, we can rest assured that we have our exact marching orders, with the guidance, instructions, and morals of Hakadosh Baruch Hu himself.

THE THIRD SERIES

Understanding the significance of our actions

אָנִי מַאֲמִין בְּאַמוּנָה שְׁלֵמָה, שֶׁהַבּוֹרֵא יִתְבָּרַךְ שָׂמוּ יוֹדֵעַ כָּל מַעֲשֵׂה בְּנֵי אָדָם וְכָל מַחְשְׁבוֹתָם,
שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: הַיִּצֵּר יַחַד לָבָם, הַמְבִּין אֶל כָּל מַעֲשֵׂיהֶם.

I am steadfast in my absolute belief that the Creator, blessed is His Name, knows all the deeds of human beings and all of their thoughts, as the verse states (*Tehillim 33:15*): *He Who fashions their hearts together, Who comprehends all their deeds.*

10| Hakadosh Baruch Hu is intimately aware of each and every action we do. Not merely the physical motions, but the thought process, internal challenges, and machinations of our hearts and mind are as well open to Him, allowing Him to properly, fully and accurately tabulate all that we do. These thoughts and actions are most significant to Him, and He observes and records them all.

אָנִי מַאֲמִין בְּאַמוּנָה שְׁלֵמָה, שֶׁהַבּוֹרֵא יִתְבָּרַךְ שָׂמוּ גּוֹמֵל טוֹב לְשׂוֹמְרֵי מִצְוֹתָיו
וּמַעֲנִישׁ לְעוֹבְרֵי מִצְוֹתָיו.

I am steadfast in my absolute belief that the Creator, blessed is His Name, rewards with good those who observe His commandments, and punishes those who violate His commandments.

11| Our actions do not just disappear into history. Each action brings a reaction. Much as we understand how physical actions can automatically create pain or enjoyment, all the actions we perform naturally create an effect we will come to experience. Positive actions generate rewarding consequences, negative ones generate damaging ill-effect. Full reward or retribution is something far greater than what can be experienced in this world, and therefore, will only truly be felt after we conclude our physical lives, and move on to the Next World.

To summarize: Our actions matter. Each one action might be fleeting, but each one has a very real and tangible effect. Hakadosh Baruch Hu cares tremendously about each one of us, and all that we do. With his all encompassing knowledge, He keeps perfect score of all that we do, and He in turn will ensure the ramifications of our actions.

THE FOURTH SERIES

Understanding the development of our world

אני מאמין באמונה שלמה, בביאת המשיח ואף על פי שיתמהמה,
עם כל זה אֶחַכֶּה לוֹ בְּכֹל יוֹם שְׂיָבוֹא.

I am steadfast in my absolute belief in the coming of Mashiach, and even though he may delay, nevertheless I await his arrival each day.

- 12| There will come a day when the entire world will realize the truth of Hakadosh Baruch Hu's existence. Society will no longer adhere to all sorts of assorted human-created values or random in-vogue morals. Rather, led by the guidance of Moshiach as a Torah-true monarch, all Jews will embrace the Torah and live lives guided by Hashem's directives. They will serve as a radiant beacon leading the world at large to a true sense of what is right and what is wrong, what is to be lauded and what is abhorrent. It will be a world that will truly hew to a vision of embodying Hashem's will.

אני מאמין באמונה שלמה, שתהיה תחיית המתים בעת שיעלה רצון מאת הבורא יתברך שמו
ויתעלה זכרו לעד ולנצח נצחים.

I am steadfast in my absolute belief that there will be a resurrection of the dead at the time that such will be the will of the Creator, blessed is His Name. [By doing so], His perception [in our world] will become exalted for all eternity.

- 13| At some point within the development of this new world order, there will be a point where earlier generations of Jews will be resurrected, returning to life. Throughout the story of history, Jews have struggled mightily to keep their faith, pass it on to their children, and live a life of growth in Torah and mitzvos. It's a centuries-long story of having been faced with challenges both individually and on a communal or national scale. With the return to life in a utopian era, they will be able to live the life of a Jew that they aspired to, free of the hardships and challenges that hold people back in life.

To summarize: Throughout life, there is a battle to succeed in one's own challenges, in making the right decisions. However, performing mitzvos, refraining from aveiros, and living a Torah-true life, is not merely a matter of personal success. Each person is a piece of humanity at large, and we look to a day when all of humanity will be in sync in molding their lifestyles and choices to Hashem's will. It's a question of whether the world at large is fulfilling the mission for which it was created, and ultimately, the time will come when the world will function with that vision becoming a reality. Jews throughout the ages, who aspired to reach higher, and live the life of a Jew, will be brought back to life, to experience this wonderful era, and live the life they aspired to.