



SICHA – 24 TEVES 5741

The connection between the Alter Rebbe and Maimonides is obvious from many stories.

First of all, each of them was a leader of his generation. Each of them was the legal authority in their generation, whose rulings illuminated the path for the people of their times. In fact, we still go “in the ways that they showed us, and will continue to follow in their paths for all eternity,” throughout all of the generations since; this is true both of the Rambam and of the Alter Rebbe.

There is also a specific and obvious connection. When one mentions the Rambam, the first reaction of a Jew, —since Jews are connected to the Torah— is to look for how everything is expressed in Torah.

When the Rambam is mentioned, the first discussion is not about his public service, or his spreading Judaism and strengthening it.

Though he achieved wonderful and amazing feats in those areas.

Yet, when one meets a “Torah-Jew,” especially a Yeshiva student who studied Torah while still young, he may not know about all those details. But he does know very clearly of the Rambam’s written works

The Rambam wrote many books: There are those that are famous and known to all, such as the book always referred to as “Rambam.” When one says “Rambam,” it means his Mishne Torah —known as Yad HaChazaka.

When one asks about issues of prayer and world outlook —about matters relating to the emotions of the heart, one is immediately reminded of his “Guide to the Perplexed.”

When one mentions the Alter Rebbe, or—as he was called in Poland—“the Rav,” the first thing which comes to mind are his books: Shulchan Aruch and Tanya.

It is clear that the Alter Rebbe’s Shulchan Aruch corresponds to Maimonides’ clear legal rulings in his “Rambam.”

And how the Tanya is similar to his “Guide to the Perplexed.” As the Alter Rebbe explains in his Introduction and Compiler’s Forward that Tanya gives advice to those who are confused and “perplexed.”

Another connection: The Rambam faced very strong opposition, even stronger persecution than the Alter Rebbe, as seen in the letters and responsa of the Rambam and those of his contemporaries.



פרשת שמות

Nevertheless, ever since it was clarified exactly what suspicions the opposition had been based on, nobody would dare “lift a hand or a foot” to say anything against the Rambam!

The foremost teacher of Jewish ethics in the Rambam’s generation, or the following generation —Rabbenu Yonah— began with a very negative opinion of the Rambam.

However, after he studied the matter and he did not rest until he did so —for he could not rest— he reached the true and proper conclusion, which he publicized, and he became one of the most staunch admirers and a follower of the Rambam.

Those who were, at the time, for reasons that are not important now, hostile to the Ba’al Shem Tov, and later to the Alter Rebbe, immediately and clearly stated their reasoning: The Halacha is that when a decree or ruling is passed with a stated reason, if the reasoning no longer applies, the legal ruling is voided as well.

How much more so in this case, since it turned out, as we know from stories from the time of the Alter Rebbe, that many of these detractors made peace with the Alter Rebbe and his teachings, though at first they were not in agreement with his ways.

Their reasoning was simple: Since their objections had been based upon a reason, a concern, and that concern had been proven to have no basis in fact, there was no longer any reason for their opposition.

The practical lesson that this teaches us is not to be bothered by obstacles. Theoretically, it may be hard to understand how there could have been such-and-such a person in the time of the Alter Rebbe, who said whatever it was that he said.

But the same thing happened to the Rambam! We know how events later played out in his case, and we know how his detractors were transformed from one extreme to the other, until they had the “additional light” and “additional wisdom” —a special connection and excitement to everything connected with the Rambam.

