

Eight Degrees of *Tzedakah* 12th century

Moses Maimonides

Much of the writing done by Moses Maimonides has been popularized and given a central place in Judaism. The account of the levels of *tzedakah*, often represented by a ladder, is among the most popular of these writings.

1. The person who gives reluctantly and with regret.
2. The person who gives graciously, but less than one should.
3. The person who gives what one should, but only after being asked.
4. The person who gives before being asked.
5. The person who gives without knowing to whom one gives, although the recipient knows the identity of the donor.
6. The person who gives without making one's identity known.
7. The person who gives without knowing to whom one gives. The recipient does not know from whom he receives.
8. The person who helps another to support oneself by a gift or a loan or by finding employment for that person, thus helping that person to become self-supporting.

Thirteen Principles of Faith 12th century

Moses Maimonides

Many Jewish scholars have attempted to articulate the central belief system of Judaism, while others have eschewed such an attempt. This set of principles is the best known and has found its way into a variety of settings, including the Yigdal hymn. The twelfth principle is associated with those Jews who marched into the gas chambers with these words still on their lips and has been set to a variety of melodies.

1. I believe with perfect faith that the Creator, blessed be Your name, is the Author and Guide of everything that has been created, and that God alone has made, does make, and will make all things.
2. I believe with perfect faith that the Creator, blessed be Your name, is a Unity, and that there is no unity in any manner like unto You, and that You alone are our God, who was, is, and will be.
3. I believe with perfect faith that the Creator, blessed be Your name, is not a body, and that You are free from all the accidents of matter, and that You have not any form whatsoever.
4. I believe with perfect faith that the Creator, blessed be Your name, is the first and the last.
5. I believe with perfect faith that to the Creator, blessed be Your name, and to You alone, it is right to pray, and that it is not right to pray to any being besides You.
6. I believe with perfect faith that all the words of the prophets are true.
7. I believe with perfect faith that the prophecy of Moses our teacher, peace be unto him, was true, and that he was the chief of the prophets, both of those that preceded and of those that followed him.
8. I believe with perfect faith that the whole Torah, now in our possession, is the same that was given to Moses our teacher, peace be unto him.
9. I believe with perfect faith that this Torah will not be changed, and that there will never be any other law from the Creator, blessed be Your name.
10. I believe with perfect faith that the Creator, blessed be Your name, knows every deed of the human race and all of their thoughts, as it is said, "It is You who fashions the hearts of them all, that give heed to all their deeds."
11. I believe with perfect faith that the Creator, blessed be Your name, rewards those that keep Your *mitzvot*, and punishes those who transgress them.
12. I believe with perfect faith in the coming of the Messiah, and, though Messiah tarry, I will wait daily for his coming.
13. I believe with perfect faith that there will be a resurrection of the dead at the time when it shall please the Creator, blessed be Your name, and exalted be the remembrance of You for ever and ever.

Daily Prayer of a Physician 12th century

Attributed to Moses Maimonides

While Moses Maimonides probably did not write the text for this prayer, it does contain important moral and ethical standards by which a physician should order his or her professional life. Regardless of its origin, it serves as a Jewish Hippocratic Oath and has become an important part of Jewish folk literature.

Almighty God, You have created the human body with infinite wisdom. You have combined ten thousand times ten thousand organs in it that act in harmony without stopping to preserve the whole body in all its beauty—the body which is the receptacle for the immortal soul. They are always working in perfect order, agreement and accord. Yet, when the fragility of matter or the unleashing of passions obscures this order or interrupts this accord, then forces clash. As a result, the body crumbles into the primal dust from which it came. You send to humankind diseases as beneficent messengers to foretell of approaching danger and urge humans to avert it.

You have blessed Your earth, Your rivers and Your mountains with healing substances. They enable Your creatures to alleviate their suffering and to heal their illnesses. You have endowed humankind with the wisdom to relieve the suffering of one's neighbor, to recognize disorders, extract healing substances, discover their powers, and then to prepare and apply them to suit every ill. In Your Eternal Providence You have chosen me to watch over the life and health of Your creatures. I am now about to apply myself to the duties of my profession. Support me in these great labors, Almighty God, that they may benefit humankind, for without Your help not even the least thing will succeed.

Inspire me with love for my art and for Your creatures. Do not allow a thirst for profit or ambition for renown and admiration to interfere with my profession. These are the enemies of truth and of love for humankind. They can lead astray in the great task of attending to the welfare of Your creatures. Preserve the strength of my body and my soul so that they will always be ready to cheerfully help and support rich and poor, good and bad, enemy as well as friend. In the one who suffers let me see only the human being. Illumine my mind that it recognizes what presents itself and that it may comprehend what is absent or hidden. Let it not fail to see what is visible, but do not permit it to arrogate to itself the power to see what cannot be seen, for delicate and indefinite are the bounds of the great art of caring for the lives and health of Your creatures. Let me never be absent-minded. May no strange thoughts divert my attention at the bedside of the sick, or disturb my mind in its silent labors, for great and sacred are the thoughtful deliberations required to preserve the lives and health of Your creatures.

Grant that my patients have confidence in me and my art and follow my directions and my counsel. Remove from their midst all charlatans and the whole host of officious relatives and know-it-all caregivers, cruel people who arrogantly frustrate the wisest purposes of our art and often lead Your creatures to their death.

Should those who are wiser than I wish to improve and instruct me, let my soul gratefully follow their guidance; for vast is the extent of our art. Should conceited fools, however, censure me, then let love for my profession steel me against them, so that I remain steadfast without regard for age, reputation, or honor, because surrender would bring to Your creatures sickness and death.

Imbue my soul with gentleness and calmness when older colleagues, proud of their age, wish to displace me, scorn me or disdainfully teach me. May even this be of advantage to me, for they know many things of which I am ignorant, but do not let their arrogance give me pain. For they are elderly and in old age they are not masters of their passions. I also hope to attain old age upon this earth, before You, Almighty God!

Let me be content in everything except in the great science of my profession. Never allow the thought to arise in me that I have attained sufficient knowledge, but vouchsafe to me the strength, leisure and ambition to always increase my knowledge. For art is great, but the human mind is ever capable of expanding.

Almighty God! You have chosen me in Your mercy to watch over the life and death of Your creatures. I now apply myself to my profession. Support me in this great task so that it may benefit humankind. Without Your help not even the least thing will succeed.