



Likkutei Sichos

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Prophet of the People

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1.

BELIEF IN A PROPHET

Regarding the commandment,¹ “You shall listen to him” — to listen to and obey a prophet — “who will arise in any era,”² Rambam says:³

Any prophet who arises after Moshe, our Teacher — we do not believe in this prophet because of the wonder {he performs} alone.... Rather, we believe in him because it is a mitzvah that Moshe commanded {and recorded} in the Torah. Moshe said that if he performs a wonder, “you shall listen to him.”

It would seem that the statement, “We do not believe him because of the wonder alone” is simple logic, because a wonder can also be done by “magic or sorcery.”⁴ But if the command were simply based on logic, it would turn out that if a case arose where we were **certain** that magic or sorcery was not being used by the person, it would mean he was a true prophet. In such a case, we would be obligated to obey him, even without the command that “you shall listen to him,” since the word of a prophet is “the word of Hashem.”

However, as is known regarding those precepts that were commanded before the Giving of the Torah {and were reiterated at Mount Sinai}, when we fulfill these mitzvos nowadays, “we perform them only on the authority of Hashem’s command through Moshe, our Teacher, and not because Hashem told the prophets before him.”⁵ It is understood, then, that the same is true regarding the commandments that Hashem gave through the prophets after the Giving of the Torah: **On their own**, they do not have the force of the mitzvos that were “commanded at Sinai.”

[Similarly, there was lightning and thunder, etc., at the Giving of the Torah. Nevertheless {although this was impressive}, this was not why “Israel

¹ *Devarim* 18:15 {Moshe is speaking to the Jewish people and has warned them against listening to sorcerers and the like. He now tells them to only listen to a true prophet like Moshe himself. The full verse reads: “Hashem your L-rd will set up a prophet from among you, from your brothers like me. You shall listen to him.”}

² See the list of mitzvos at the beginning of *Mishneh Torah*, positive mitzvah 172.

³ *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah*,” ch. 8, par. 2.

⁴ *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah*,” beg. of ch. 8; see also ch. 8, par. 3.

⁵ Rambam’s *Commentary on Mishnah*, “*Chulin*,” end of ch. 7.

believed in him.” Were this the reason for their belief in him, the prophecy and words of Moshe {would be believed} because of a wonder alone (and would not have the authoritative force of Torah)! Rather, “the revelation to the Jewish nation at Mount Sinai⁶ alone is proof.” **It says clearly**⁷ how will “they believe in you {Moshe} forever,” when — “Behold, I will come to you in a thick cloud, so that the people will hear Me speaking to you.”]

Therefore, Rambam is very precise in his wording: “Because it is a mitzvah that Moshe commanded {and is recorded} **in the Torah**... you shall listen to him.” Since it is a mitzvah in the Torah, it carries a unique force, unlike a command that Hashem communicated through a prophet. So much so, in fact, in Jewish law, there is a fundamental difference between words of the Torah and words of the prophets.⁸

2.

TORAH IS AUTHORITY

If our reason for obeying the directives of a prophet is because the **Torah** commands us to do so (and not because the **prophet** who has proven himself by performing a wonder tells us to do so), then the order of Chapter 8 in *Mishneh Torah (Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah)* is problematic. There, Rambam elaborates, and states that the Jews believed in Moshe not “because of the wonders that he performed” (because “when someone's belief is based on wonders, he harbors doubts”). But “what is the basis of our belief in Moshe? The Divine revelation when the Jewish nation stood at Mount Sinai. Our eyes saw, and not a stranger's; our ears heard, and not someone else's.” Subsequently, Rambam concludes the chapter:⁹

Therefore, should a prophet arise and deny Moshe's prophecy by performing great signs and wonders, we should ignore him... because Moshe's prophecy is not based on wonders, so that we could compare these wonders, one against the other. Rather, we saw with our own eyes and heard with our own ears....

⁶ {In the original Hebrew, “*maamad Har Sinai*”; lit., “the convocation at Mt. Sinai.”}

⁷ *Shemos* 19:9, quoted by Rambam at the end of the proof (ch. 8, par. 1).

⁸ *Chagigah* 10b.

⁹ *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah*,” ch. 8, par. 3.

Seemingly, since the reason we believe and obey a true prophet (and not another prophet) is because of the strength of the **Torah's commandment** ("You shall listen to him," and, "Do not listen to the words of that prophet"),¹⁰ and **not** because of the (greater) certainty that his words are from Hashem, then {we understand why} **this point** (that it is completely a different category), should have been {and is} written in *Mishneh Torah*, (which is a book of **laws**) and thus an appropriate place for halachic proofs. However, **logical** proof as to why repudiating Moshe's prophecy makes someone a false prophet ("he denies what you saw with your own eyes") is better suited to be presented in Rambam's *Guide*.¹¹

Rambam, here, could have outlined the law in **brief**. Namely, we believe in a prophet and obey him (not "because of the wonder alone," but) "because it is a mitzvah that Moshe commanded {and is recorded} in the Torah... even though we do not know whether the wonder was real or was performed by magic or sorcery." And "if a prophet arises, and he denies Moshe's prophecy by performing great signs and wonders," and thus, repudiates the truth of **the Torah**, then even "if the sign or wonder comes about, 'do not listen to the words of that prophet.'"¹²

3.

BUT HE IS DENYING TORAH?

Furthermore, in the following chapter, Rambam connects the matter of Torah, in general, with the **prophecy** of Moshe:

If a person says "that Hashem sent him to add a mitzvah, rescind a mitzvah, interpret a mitzvah in a manner that differs from the tradition received from Moshe; or if he says that the mitzvos commanded to the Jews are not forever, for all generations, but were given for a limited time," Rambam says that

¹⁰ {*Devarim* 13:4.}

¹¹ {That is, the *Guide for the Perplexed*, known in Hebrew as *Moreh Nevuchim*.}

¹² {*Mishneh Torah*, "*Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah*," ch. 8, par. 3, citing *Devarim* 13:4.}

he is a “false prophet, because he denies Moshe’s **prophecy**.”¹³ [Rambam says the same thing at the end of the chapter¹⁴ regarding someone who says “Hashem commanded him to engage in idolatry just today or only at this hour” — he “denies Moshe’s **prophecy**.”]

The question now is, since a false prophet denies (not only Moshe’s prophecy, but) a **Torah** commandment [“Do not add to it, and do not subtract from it,”¹⁵ and, “the revealed things are for us... **forever**”¹⁶], Rambam should have said {he is a false prophet} “because he denies **the Torah**,” which {places such a person into a} unique and new category, which is far worse than “[denying] “Moshe’s **prophecy**.” [We explained in Section One that the commands given by the prophets (including the **prophecy** of Moshe) do not have the unique force of the **Torah** mitzvos given at Mount Sinai.]

4.

THE POSSIBLE ANSWER

Seemingly, we could answer that this explains why Rambam says, “denies Moshe’s prophecy” (and not, “denies the Torah”) — because this is specifically the proof “that he is a false prophet” (and automatically, all the laws pertaining to a false prophet apply to him).

Rambam explains in the previous chapter (mentioned above) that since “the prophecy of Moshe, our Teacher, is not dependent on wonders... rather, we saw with our own eyes,” it follows that by denying the prophecy of Moshe, “he denies what you saw with your own eyes.”

Meaning, if Rambam was only speaking about the **severity of the prohibition** of a prophet who alleges that “Hashem sent him to add a mitzvah...,” then Rambam would have said, “denies Torah.” However, by saying,

¹³ *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah*,” ch. 9, par. 1.

¹⁴ *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah*,” ch. 9, par. 5.

¹⁵ *Devarim* 13:1.

¹⁶ *Devarim* 29:28.

“he denies,” Rambam offers a reason — “because” of which he is a **false prophet** and its laws {apply to him}. Rambam, therefore, says, “he denies Moshe’s **prophecy**.”

However, this answer is very strained since we already know that a person who denies Moshe’s prophecy also denies something that “we saw” and “we heard.” In other words, he is denying the Torah, as explained in the **previous** chapter {of *Mishneh Torah*}. So, seemingly, this is the reason for the severity of **the halachos and judgments** pertaining to a false prophet.

Accordingly, shouldn’t Rambam have said: “...denies the Torah”?

5.

IS IT TORAH OR MOSHE?

The conundrum is even greater. We find in the same chapter that Rambam actually uses the expression “denies the **Torah**.” He says:¹⁷

If a “prophet” uproots a concept that was transmitted by oral tradition, or states with respect to one of the Torah’s laws that Hashem commanded him to render such a judgment... he is a false prophet... because he denies the **Torah**, which says, “It is not in heaven.”¹⁸

The **change** in wording is confusing: Regarding a prophet who comes to “add a mitzvah, rescind a mitzvah... {or says} mitzvos were given for a limited time,” [and also {one who permits} idolatry], Rambam describes {the prophet as one who} “denies Moshe’s **prophecy**.” Regarding {a “prophet” who} “uproots a concept..., or he [says] that Hashem commanded him to render such a judgment,” Rambam says that he “denies the **Torah**”!

Furthermore, when someone claims “that Hashem sent him to interpret a mitzvah in a manner that differs from the tradition received from Moshe”

¹⁷ *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah*,” ch. 9, par. 4.

¹⁸ *Devarim* 30:12.

(regarding which Rambam says {such a person} “denies Moshe’s **prophecy**”), seemingly he denies that which the **Torah** says, “the Torah is not in Heaven,” (from where we derive that “a prophet is not allowed to innovate”).¹⁹ This is the same verse being repudiated by a prophet who says, “Hashem commanded him to render such a judgment” (and regarding this, Rambam says he “denies the Torah”).

Since both deny the truth of the same verse, why do we make a distinction between the two and say that a prophet who says “Hashem sent him...to interpret” “denies **Moshe’s prophecy**,” but the one who says “Hashem commanded him to render such a judgment... denies the **Torah**”?

6.

THERE IS A DIFFERENCE WHEN YOU HEAR THE PROPHECY

At the end of the chapter, Rambam uses the expression “denies Moshe’s prophecy” with respect to a person who says that “Hashem commanded him to engage in idolatry.” We can seemingly explain this by prefacing with *Sifri*’s remark on the verse {discussing prophecy}, “He will speak to them”²⁰ — “Do not set up a translator.” Accordingly, a person who defies a prophet only incurs death by the hand of Heaven when he hears {prophecy} from the prophet directly, and not through a translator.

The Rogatchover²¹ adds that even when he hears {prophecy} from the prophet directly, he is only liable if he hears it while the prophet is prophesying. If he hears it from the prophet only at a later time, however, it is equivalent to hearing it through a translator.

Accordingly, we could say that if someone **in the generation of Moshe** defied a commandment that he heard from Moshe, there would be a difference if

¹⁹ *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah*,” ch. 9, par. 1.

²⁰ *Devarim* 18:18 {“I will set up a prophet for them from among their brothers like you, and I will put My words into his mouth, and he will speak to them all that I command him”}.

²¹ *Tzafnas Paaneah* on *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Matnos Aniyim*,” ch. 5, par. 18 (top of 62d).

he violated the command regarding idolatry or regarding another issue. With respect to idolatry, since he heard “I am {Hashem your L-rd}” and, “There shall not be unto you {the gods of others}”²² from Moshe while he was prophesying,²³ he has (also) transgressed the prohibition of acting against the words of a prophet. However, regarding other commandments, since he only heard them from Moshe at a later time, after Moshe had heard them from Hashem, then he (even someone living in the generation of Moshe) would not have been liable for disobeying the words of a prophet.

Now we can explain why Rambam uses different expressions, as mentioned above. Regarding idolatry, Rambam says, “denies Moshe’s prophecy.” This indicates that (in addition to being a commandment in Torah, like all others) Moshe’s command not to serve idols was unique in that it falls into the category of a command given by prophet while prophesying. Therefore, a person who defied this command (in the generation of Moshe) would have incurred death by the hand of Heaven. And since **this** law only applies to idolatry, as mentioned, Rambam uses this expression only for a prophet who says “Hashem commanded him to engage in idolatry.” With respect to a prophet who “uproots a concept...,” Rambam says {he} “denies the Torah.”

7.

DIFFICULTIES WITH THIS EXPLANATION

Aside from the fact that it remains difficult to understand why Rambam says “he denies Moshe’s prophecy” at the beginning of the chapter (where it does **not** speak about idolatry), the entire explanation [that by saying, “denies Moshe’s prophecy,” Rambam alludes to the death penalty by the hand of Heaven in force during Moshe’s generation] is very difficult for several reasons:

- a) Since this law only applies to the generation of Moshe — “whatever happened, happened” {it makes no difference to us}.

²² {*Shemos* 20:2-3; the first two of the Ten Commandments.}

²³ Seemingly, this is implied by Rambam in *Moreh Nevuchim*, part 2, ch. 33.

b) Based on what was explained, the death penalty by the hand of Heaven (in the generation of Moshe) for worshipping idols was not connected with the sin of false prophecy but of idolatry. If someone (in the generation of the desert) worshiped idols, even if no one had told him that “Hashem commanded him to,” he would still incur death by the hand of Heaven.

If Rambam wanted to allude to this law, he should have done so in the laws dealing with idolatry and not in the laws dealing with false prophets. Why does Rambam discuss this here?

8.

WHAT MITZVOS REALLY ARE

We can understand all of the above by at least briefly prefacing with what was discussed earlier (in Section 1) — that Torah commandments (given at Mount Sinai) enjoy an advantage over the commands given by the prophets, with respect to their legal ramifications (and from the perspective of the Pardes²⁴ of Torah in general):

The Talmud says²⁵ regarding the word “Anochi, אנכי” — the first word of the Ten Commandments, which incorporates all of Torah — that it is an acronym for “I have inserted Myself into the writings, אָנֹכִי נִפְשִׁי כְּתַבִּית יְהִיבִית.” Hashem, so to speak, wrote Himself, i.e., infused Himself into the Torah. The Midrash comments that {Hashem is declaring that} through the Torah, “you are taking Me.”²⁶

Therefore, clearly, the mitzvos of the Torah are not only a “medium” through which to receive reward, or to attain the virtue of being a “treasure... a

²⁴ {Lit. “orchard”; the metaphorical term used to refer to the four levels of Torah interpretation: *pshat* (the simple meaning of the text), *remez* (its allusions), *derush* (the homilies that can be derived from it), and *sod* (its mystical secrets).}

²⁵ *Shabbos* 105a.

²⁶ See *Shemos Rabbah*, ch. 33, sec. 6; *Tanchuma*, “*Terumah*,” sec. 3.

kingdom of priests and a holy nation,”²⁷ “to refine people’s character,”²⁸ etc., but rather (and primarily), mitzvos are in and of themselves the ultimate purpose.

[Just as it is inappropriate to say about Hashem (“I, Myself”) that He is, G-d forbid, a “medium” for something else, it is inappropriate to say so about the mitzvos of the Torah, which have “I, Myself” in them.]

This is also why the mitzvos of the Torah are “forever and ever,”²⁹ and they can never be changed — detracted from or added to. Since Torah and mitzvos have, within them, Hashem’s “I, Myself,” they cannot possibly be changed, just as Hashem Himself can never change.

[In other words, if Hashem willed the mitzvos of the Torah only in order to provide a reward, or to achieve a benefit, etc., then it would make sense to say that a change (for better or worse) in those doing the mitzvos should also bring about a change in the mitzvos.

Since, however, Hashem desired for the mitzvos is an **intrinsic** will, He Himself wants them, so it is inconceivable for there to be a change in them, G-d forbid.]

Likewise, this applies to the advantage of the Torah over prophecy. The commands given by prophets [“Go to that certain place,” or, “Do not go,”³⁰ and the like] were said for the benefit that they will **bring about**. Therefore, they were temporary.

Even those commands whose purpose was “to command {the people to obey} the words of Torah and to warn the people not to transgress them” [such as, “Remember the Torah of Moshe My servant,”]³¹ their intent and purpose was

²⁷ *Shemos* 19:5-6.

²⁸ *Bereishis Rabbah*, beg. of ch. 44; *Tanchuma*, “*Shemini*,” sec. 7.

²⁹ *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Yesodei Hatorah*,” ch. 9.

³⁰ *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Yesodei Hatorah*,” ch. 9, par. 2.

³¹ {*Malachi* 3:22;} *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Yesodei Hatorah*,” ch. 9, par. 2.

(not for themselves, but) “to command {the people to obey} **the words of Torah....**”³²

The words of the Torah are different, as they are (primarily) the will of Hashem — an intrinsic will.

This is also the reason that “a prophet is not allowed to innovate” (in Torah) — because the word of Hashem in Torah is higher than the word of Hashem in prophecy.

9.

THE ADVANTAGE OF PROPHECY

Although the strength of the Torah is greater than the strength of prophecy, and it is specifically Torah that “lasts forever and ever,” from a human perspective, prophecy has an advantage over Torah.

Since Torah conveys the essential desire of Hashem, it is incomparably higher than the human realm, who are unable to really grasp and comprehend the essence of the Torah. Prophecy, on the other hand, which enables G-dliness to be revealed to **people**, to “reveal his secrets”³³ on **their** level (as long as a prophet satisfies the qualifications of being wise, strong, etc.)³⁴ is revealed in a way that imbues Jews here in this world with a fortified faith in Hashem.

On this basis, we understand Rambam’s lengthy explanation (in Chapter 8) how a Jew believes in the prophecy of Moshe (and his Torah), because this is (not just a biblical narrative, but it is) a **law**. There are two facets of this law:

- a) The faith in which a Jew needs to believe in the prophecy of Moshe needs to be with absolute certainty, a complete faith that “leaves no doubt” ; and,

³² Of note, in this regard: *Ikkarim*, “*Maamar 3*,” ch. 12.

³³ *Amos 3:7*.

³⁴ *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Yesodei Hatorah*,” ch. 7, par. 1.

- b) In order to have this sort of faith, it must come about (not “because of wonders,” but) because “Our eyes saw... and our ears heard.” Only then can faith be complete and leave no doubt.

Similarly, when Rambam explains why we should **not** believe or obey a prophet who “denies Moshe’s prophecy” even if he shows “signs and great wonders,” he explains that this is because “the prophecy of Moshe is not dependent on wonders, so that we could compare these wonders, one against the other. Rather, we saw with our own eyes and heard with our own ears... he denies what you saw with your own eyes.” This is not just an **explanation and proof** of why “we should not listen to him.” Rather, it is a **law**, and there are also two facets of this law:

- a) The absolute certainty in the faith must be such that even “great signs and wonders” will not cause doubt in the faith; and,
- b) So that the faith should not be weakened by “signs and wonders,” a Jew must explain to himself that these signs and wonders repudiate “the prophecy of Moshe **that we saw and heard.**” Then, even “signs and wonders” are unable to raise a doubt about something that “you saw with your eyes.” This means that the complete, absolute strength to “not listen to him” results from {a Jew understanding that the false prophet} “denies the prophecy of Moshe that we saw and heard.”

10.

SEEING IS KNOWING

An example of, and a practical halachic difference regarding, the superiority of what we see with our eyes {over what we merely hear with our ears} is the halachah that a witness cannot become a judge. This is because a witness sees with his own eyes. The superior evidence of seeing something makes him unable to {judge objectively and to try to} “save”³⁵ him.³⁶

In contrast, if he {a judge} heard with his ears from one hundred upright witnesses who heard or saw {the judge could still adjudicate objectively}.

11.

THE VERACITY OF TORAH

We can posit that the deeper reason why Hashem validated the prophecy of Moshe (in a manner of “our eyes saw”) specifically at “**the revelation to the Jewish nation at Mount Sinai**” (as Rambam tells us at length) is because the purpose of Moshe’s prophecy is to cause the Jews to **experience** not only the truth of Hashem — of G-dliness in general — but also the truth of **Torah** (which is intrinsically) higher than the realm of created beings.

Since “our eyes saw... our ears heard” the **prophecy** of Moshe, we have a complete faith that “leaves no doubt” in the truth of **Torah** as well (which is loftier than prophecy).

[We could say that the reason that our absolute faith in Torah is specifically due to the prophecy of Moshe,³⁷ is because in both respects, his prophecy was of the highest level and rank: Regarding prophetic revelation,

³⁵ {*Bamidbar* 35:25, referring to judging an unintentional murderer favorably.}

³⁶ *Rosh Hashanah* 26a.

³⁷ See *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah*,” ch. 1, par. 4 (The sources are noted in commentaries on *Jerusalem Talmud*, “*Berachos*,” ch. 1, *halachah* 5.)

G-dliness was revealed in the most sublime manner (“in a vision, and not in riddles”).³⁸ On the other hand, Moshe would prophesy “while standing in a composed state.”³⁹ Meaning, prophetic messages were revealed to him while he was in the world, perfectly whole.⁴⁰ Therefore, his prophecy was a “medium” to draw Torah down (from beyond the realm of created beings) into the realm of created beings and evoke in people an intense faith in the Torah, and its truth.]

In light of this, we can also explain why in a later chapter, where Rambam writes about someone who claims that “Hashem sent him to add a mitzvah...”⁴¹ (meaning, he denies the truth of Torah), Rambam uses the expression, “He is a false prophet because he denies **Moshe’s prophecy.**”

This is not just **proof** that such a person is a false prophet, but by means of this teaching, Rambam innovates a new **law**. Although the prophecy of Moshe is subordinate to Torah, however, since the prophecy of Moshe authenticates a person’s faith that Torah “cannot change,” and, “no prophet can innovate anything new in it,” therefore, the conviction that Torah cannot to be repudiated (to ignore a “sign or wonder”) must also come specifically from **Moshe’s prophecy.**

12.

GETTING BACK TO RAMBAM

On the basis of the entire discussion above, we can derive a unique way of explaining the order and the division of chapters in the *Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah* that discuss prophecy.

In Chapter 7, Rambam speaks about prophecy, in general; and also how the prophecy of Moshe is the most superior type (the details of which Rambam discusses at length).

³⁸ {*Bamidbar* 12:8.}

³⁹ *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah*,” ch. 7, par. 6.

⁴⁰ {I.e., none of his physical faculties, etc., needed any modulation to facilitate Moshe’s prophesying.}

⁴¹ {*Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah*,” ch. 9, par. 1.}

After telling us about the superiority of Moshe's prophecy, Rambam continues in the following chapter to discuss an even greater quality possessed by Moshe's prophecy. Namely, "What is the source of our belief in him? **The revelation to the Jewish nation at Mount Sinai.**" His **prophecy** was in a manner in which "we saw and heard."

After relating that Moshe's prophecy is connected with "standing at Mount Sinai," Rambam says in the next chapter that on account of this, Moshe's prophecy also serves to ratify faith in the veracity of Torah which is **loftier** than prophecy — the fact that Torah "lasts forever and ever," and "a prophet has no permission to innovate in it." Naturally, if a prophet comes and says "that Hashem sent him to add a mitzvah..." he is "denying the prophecy of Moshe."

13.

TWO DIFFERENT FALSE PROPHETS

However, Rambam only uses the expression "denies Moshe's prophecy," about a prophet who says that "Hashem sent him to add a mitzvah..." [and also with respect to one who says that "Hashem commanded him to engage in idolatry..."]. In contrast, concerning someone who "uproots a concept that was transmitted by oral tradition or he said... that Hashem commanded him to render such a judgment..." Rambam says (not that the person "denies Moshe's prophecy" but) that he "denies the **Torah.**"

The explanation:

When a prophet says "that Hashem **sent him to add** a mitzvah or **to rescind** a mitzvah... or to interpret a mitzvah in a manner **that differs from the tradition received from Moshe**" [and certainly, if he says that "Hashem commanded him to **engage in idolatry**"], his intention is to undermine the foundation of "the revelation to the Jewish nation at Mount Sinai": Hashem chose Moshe, and through **him**, He gave the Jewish people **the entire** Torah, "forever and ever."

Since Jews believe in the truth of “the revelation to the Jew nation at Mount Sinai” because “our eyes saw... and our ears heard” the prophecy of Moshe {i.e., we can personally corroborate Moshe’s prophecy}, it turns out that by adding or rescinding a mitzvah, a person “denies the prophecy of Moshe.”

However, in the case of one who “uproots a concept... or says... that Hashem commanded him to render such a judgment...,” he is not denying the foundation of the Torah, but he is just speaking about a particular law in Torah, falsely prophesying that the law is such and such. [On the basis of his purported prophecy, it may even turn out that “he decides the law, declaring the impure to be impure and the pure to be pure.”⁴² Meaning, correctly validates the Torah law.] However, **how** he decided and rendered the law is contrary to the Torah’s directive, for the Torah instructs us that “it is not in heaven.”

Therefore, Rambam doesn’t say “denies Moshe’s prophecy,” but rather, “denies the Torah,” because this person denies only a **law** of Torah, and not “the revelation to the Jewish nation at Mount Sinai” (which is the foundation of Torah). This revelation was authenticated by the prophecy of Moshe, the truth of which we saw and heard.

-Based on talks delivered on Shavuos and Shabbos *parshas Nasso*, 5734 (1974)

⁴² See *Kesef Mishneh on Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah*,” ch. 9, par. 4.