

*I believe with perfect faith that God does not have a body. Physical concepts do not apply to Him. There is nothing whatsoever that resembles Him at all.*

## Yigdal

He does not have bodily form, he is not a body,  
He is beyond compare in His holiness.

## Commentary on Mishnah

The third principle is that God is totally nonphysical. We believe that this Unity [which we call God] is not a body or a physical force.

Nothing associated with the physical can apply to Him in any way. We thus cannot say that God moves, rests, or exists in a given place. Things such as this can neither happen to Him, nor be part of His intrinsic nature.

When our sages speak of God, they therefore teach that such concepts as combination and separation do not apply to Him. They say in the Talmud (*Chagiga 15a*), "On high, there is neither sitting nor standing, neither combination nor separation."<sup>2</sup>

The Prophet says (*Isaiab 40:25*), "'To whom will you liken Me? To what am I equal?' says the Holy One." If God were physical then He would resemble other physical things.

In many places, however, our holy scriptures do speak of God in physical terms. Thus, we find such concepts as walking, standing, sitting and speaking used in relation to God. In all these cases, though, scripture is only speaking metaphorically. Our sages teach us scripture is only speaking metaphorically. Our sages teach us (*Berachos 31b*), "The Torah speaks in the language of man."

The Torah teaches us this third principle when it says (*Deuteronomy 4:15*), "You have not seen any image." We cannot conceive of God as

having any image or form. This is because He is not a physical being or force, as discussed earlier.

## Code, Foundations of the Torah

(*Yad, Yesodey HaTorah*)

1:8 It is clearly expressed in both the Torah and in the Prophets that God has neither a body nor any other physical attributes.

It is thus written (*Joshua 2:11*), "The Lord your God is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath."<sup>3</sup> A physical body, however, cannot be in two places at the same time.

The Torah likewise says (*Deuteronomy 4:15*), "You have not seen any image."

God furthermore told His prophet (*Isaiab 40:25*), "'To whom will you liken Me? To what am I equal?' If God were a physical being, then He would resemble other physical things.

1:9 Once we know this to be true, we might find it difficult to understand many passages in the Torah. We thus find such expressions as (*Exodus 24:10*), "beneath His feet," and (*Ibid. 31:18*), "written with God's finger." In many places we likewise find expressions such as "the hand of God,"<sup>4</sup> "the eyes of God,"<sup>5</sup> and "the ears of God."<sup>6</sup>

All these expressions are actually adaptations to human intellect, which can only think in terms of the physical. The Torah thus speaks in the language of man.

They are all metaphors. For example, we find in the Torah such expressions as (*Deuteronomy 32:41*), "I will sharpen My flashing sword." Can we then say that God has a sword, or that He needs a sword with which to kill? We understand, however, that the expression is used allegorically. The same is true of all similar expressions.

We can substantiate this view from the fact that different prophets describe God in utterly different ways. Thus, one prophet says that he perceived God (*Daniel 7:9*), "with a garment as white as snow." Another prophet describes Him (*Isaiab 63:1*), "with His garments stained red." Moses himself saw God at the Red Sea like a mighty man waging war, while at Sinai, he visualized Him as a prayer leader, wrapped [in his Tallis].<sup>7</sup>

From all this, we see that God has no form or figure. What is seen is merely a prophetic visualization.

God's true nature is beyond the reach of human intellect. Man is simply incapable of grasping or understanding God. We thus find (*Job 11:7*), "Can you by searching fathom God? Can you fathom the Almighty to

perfection?"

1:10 We must then understand what Moses meant when he asked of God (*Exodus 33:18*), "Show me Your glory."<sup>8</sup>

What Moses desired was to know the true nature of God. He wanted to comprehend this as well as one knows a person when he sees his face. In such a case, the person's features are engraved in one's mind, and he is seen as an individual, distinct from all others.

This is what Moses desired. He wanted to comprehend God's nature to such a degree that it would be separated in his mind from everything else in existence.

God replied to Moses that this was impossible. The intellect of a living man, consisting of body and soul, could not possibly comprehend this. [He thus told Moses (*Ibid. 33:20*), "You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live."]

But God did reveal things to Moses that had never before been revealed, and which never again will be revealed. In his mind, Moses was thus able to distinguish God from everything else that exists. But it was only like seeing a person's back, where all that can be seen is his body and clothing. One can still distinguish him as an individual [but it is not the same as when one sees his face]. The Torah alludes to this when it says [that God told Moses] (*Ibid. 33:23*), "You will see My back, but My face shall not be seen."

1:11 Since God is not a body or any other kind of physical entity, it is obvious that nothing associated with the physical can apply to Him.

We cannot apply to Him such concepts as combination and separation, position and size, up and down, right and left, back and front, sitting and standing.

He likewise does not exist in time. Such concepts as beginning, end and age therefore do not apply to Him.

God furthermore does not change, since there is nothing that can cause Him to change.

We therefore cannot apply to Him such concepts as life and death in a physical sense. We cannot use such terms as wisdom and foolishness in the same sense as we do when speaking of a human being. Such states as sleep and wakefulness, anger and laughter, joy and sadness, do not apply to Him at all. He does not keep quiet, nor does He speak as a person does.

Our sages thus teach us, "On high there is neither sitting nor standing, neither combination nor separation."

1:12 We must therefore realize that whenever the Torah or Prophets

speak about God, they do so in a metaphorical and allegorical manner.

This is true of the expressions mentioned earlier. It is also true of such expressions as (*Psalms 2:4*), "He who sits in the heavens shall laugh," (*Deuteronomy 32:21*), "They have provoked Me to anger with their vanity," and (*Ibid. 28:63*), "As God rejoices..." Regarding all such statements, our sages say that "the Torah speaks in the language of man." God Himself told His prophet (*Jeremiah 7:19*), "Do they indeed provoke Me to anger?"

God told the prophet (*Malachi 3:6*), "I am God, I do not change." But if God would be happy at some times and angry at others, he would indeed change. [It is therefore obvious that none of these states can apply to Him at all.]

All these states only exist in physical beings, living in this lowly dark world. We "dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust."<sup>9</sup> God, however, is above all these things.

## Code, Repentance

(*Yad, Tsbuvab*)

3:7 Five are in the category of the nonbeliever (*Mim*): ... One who admits that there is one Master, but claims that He is physical or has a form.