# THE FIRST COMMANDMENT: God exists or God is in charge?

Previously, we have explained that for Jewish tradition the opening statement of the Ten Commandments *"Im the Lord your God who brought you out of the land Egypt, the house of slaves"*(Ex. 20:2) should not be seen as an introduction to the commandments but as a practical commandment (precept, Mitzva, see **this**). We wondered then what was the specific order given in this commandment? Traditionally it is understood that this commandment expresses that we have to believe that God exists.

There might be a second way of understanding this commandment in a slightly different way, by exploring very carefully the words of Maimonides in Sefer HaMitzvot and MT, Yesode haTora 1:5-6. For Maimonides belief in God seems to be an *'iqar*, a principle of our faith, more than a Mitzva. We, the Jewish people, have acquired our knowledge of God's existence intuitively, i.e., by our own perception and experience. Our parents were witnesses of HaShem's presence and revelation in Mt. Sinai. And we know of God's existence because our parents transmitted their experience to us (see **this**).

But if that is so, if this commandment is not about believing in God's "existence", what is this Mitzva saying? Let us analyze the first three words: "**Anokhi**", I, who you know Me as "**HaShem**"(the existence of God is given as a intuitively known fact here!) , *I'm your* "**Elo-hekha**", Your Sovereign. Elo-hekha, should understood in this context as sovereign, highest judge or in one word: the Supreme Authority.

The differences between these two explanations might seem irrelevant. But think about this: many people, with liberal values, would be more than willing to believe in the God who created the Universe but then leaves you alone and does not tell you what to do with your life. God is displaced (or displeases some people) however, when He is also ELO-HEKHA, the Authority Who establishes what is right and what is wrong.

Accordingly, the First commandment is saying as follows: You must know that I'm in charge. "I, HaShem, the One that freed you from slavery in Egypt, I'm your ELO-HEKHA", I'm your Master. Not Pharaoh or anyone else. I'm like a father to you: I love you, you love me, but I'm also the ultimate authority for you (ELO-HEKHA).

**WATCH**

## God or Atheism, which is more rational?

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