



Maimonides

Aren't I a handsome fellow? Let me introduce myself. Everyone calls me Maimonides, but my parents named me Moshe ben Maimon – I guess I was named after that other famous Moses!

I was born on March 30, 1135 in Cordoba, Spain – the end of the golden age of Spain, that period of time when Jews had a great deal of freedom and were accepted by the Spanish people. But this freedom didn't last very long – in 1148, some people conquered my area and told Jews that they had to either convert or be killed or leave. My family and friends and I all chose to leave and we didn't have a permanent home again for ten years. We eventually settled in Morocco where I studied at a local university.

After school, I went to live in the Holy Land, but I eventually settled in Egypt. I became the doctor to a really important man – the Sultan Saladin of Egypt – and eventually I became known as the greatest physician of my time. But that's not all I did. I am best known for writing the *Mishnah Torah* – which was a complete code of Jewish law. It took me ten years to write it! It is made up of 14 books and it details all Jewish observances, including laws that we don't even follow any more since the holy temple was destroyed. I wrote my *Mishnah Torah* in Hebrew and I'm really glad I didn't write it in Aramaic because almost no one knows that language now. Many years later, another famous Jew, Joseph Caro, used my *Mishnah Torah* as a model when creating his *Shulchan Aruch*.

Another thing that I wrote that lots of people know about is called *The Guide to the Perplexed*. This one isn't so easy to understand because it's all about philosophy. And, I am the one responsible for creating the *Thirteen Articles of Faith* which is included in a prayer we chant at the end of *erev Shabbat* services (Friday night services) called *Yigdal*. I also wrote a book called *Sefer HaMitzvot* in which I list and explain all of the 613 commandments found in the Torah.

In addition to being a physician, a Torah scholar, and a philosopher, I had some other hobbies. I wrote articles about astronomy (the stars) and medicine, on hygiene (keeping clean), on poisons and their antidotes, and on asthma. I died in my 70th year and I have heard that the Jewish community worldwide mourned me. Even the non-Jewish community was in mourning for three days. I was buried in Tiberias which is in Israel.

Do you have a nickname? Lots of people called me Rambam which is an acronym for my name (Rabbi Moshe Ben Maimon) And because people loved my writings and valued my wisdom, there was another saying that arose about me: "From Moshe (Moses) to Moshe, there arose no one like Moshe." Pretty high compliment, huh?