

FROM MAIMONIDES' "MISHNA TORAH"

HILCHOT DE'OT

THE LAWS OF PERSONALITY [DEVELOPMENT]

[This text describes] eleven mitzvot: five positive commandments and six negative commandments, as follows:

- a) to imitate His ways
- b) to cling to those who know Him
- c) to love others¹
- d) to love converts
- e) not to hate one's fellow Jews
- f) to admonish [a wrongdoer]
- g) not to shame
- h) not to oppress the unfortunate
- i) not to bear tales
- j) not to take revenge
- k) not to bear a grudge.

These mitzvot are explained in the following chapters.

הִלְכוֹת דְּעוֹת

יש בכללן אחת-עשרה מצוות: חמש מצוות עשה, ושש מצוות לא תעשה.
ונתנו פרטן:

- (א) להדמות בדרכיו.
- (ב) להדבק ביודעיו.
- (ג) לאהב את רעים.
- (ד) לאהב את הגרים.
- (ה) שלא לשנא אחים.
- (ו) להוכיח.
- (ז) שלא להלבין פנים.
- (ח) שלא לענות אמללים.
- (ט) שלא להלך רכיל.
- (י) שלא לנקם.
- (יא) שלא לנטר.

ובאור פל מצוות אלו בפרקים אלו:

¹ The Rambam uses the term מרעים, which means friends. His choice of terminology is based on Leviticus 19:18: וואהבת לרעך כמוך. This verse is the source for the mitzvah to love one's fellow Jew, and applies to all Jews, regardless of whether they are friends in the conventional sense or not. (See Chapter 6, Halachah 3.)

ruling as this appears in the Talmud. His older contemporary, Abraham ben David, known as the Rabad, is very critical of this methodology, arguing that Maimonides has reduced the openness and flexibility of the Talmudic halakha to a bare, uniform series of categorical decisions with no room for legal maneuver. The Rabad is similarly critical of many other statements in the *Mishnah Torah* and his strictures accompany the text in most editions of the work.

Later scholars called the *Mishnah Torah* the *Yad Ha-Hazakah* ("Strong Hand") adapting the verse: "And for the strong hand and awesome power that Moses [i.e. Moses Maimonides] displayed before all of Israel" (Deuteronomy 34:12). There is a pun here on the word *yad*, which has the numerical value of 14, since the work is divided into fourteen books.

Unlike other codes, the *Mishnah Torah* does not only include practical law for the guidance of Jews after the destruction of the Temple but also laws that were in operation in Temple times, such as the whole sacrificial system, in the Messianic hope that these laws, too, will one day come into operation.

The *Mishnah Torah* has received standard commentaries of its own in which Maimonides' sources are uncovered and in which the sage is defended against Rabad's strictures. It became a challenge to keen students of the Halakhah to defend Maimonides against the charge that he was either misunderstood or ignored Talmudic formulations, thus creating a new branch of Halakhic studies...

THE LAWS OF PERSONALITY AND CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

Introduction

Judaism places far greater emphasis on the performance of mitzvot than on intellectual or emotional expression. The word mitzvah is related to the word *tzavta*, connection. When a Jew puts on Tefillin in the morning, he steps beyond the sphere of limited human activity and enters into a bond with God's essence. In contrast, meditation on the greatness of God and the feelings of love and awe it arouses, however profound, are still bound by the finiteness of man's mind and emotions and can never unite with God in His infinity.

The emphasis on the fulfillment of mitzvot is not intended, however, to obscure the need for intellectual and emotional development. Just as there are mitzvot which deal with deed and action, there are also mitzvot that involve the development of our thoughts and feelings and the dedication of them to the service of God. Our Sages (*Makkot* 23b, See also the Rambam's Introduction to the *Mishneh Torah*) explain that there are 248 positive commandments which correspond to the 248 components (אברים) in the human body, indicating that the mitzvot give every aspect of our being an opportunity to relate to God.

The definition of our intellectual and emotional development in terms of mitzvot (as described in *Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah*, *Hilchot De'ot*, and *Hilchot Talmud Torah*) has two implications:

- a) Personal growth is associated with commandments that we are obligated to fulfill and is not merely a matter of individual conscience or choice.
- b) Man need not search for a program of personal growth alone. Rather, God, in His kindness, shows man a path that will enable him to grow intellectually and emotionally and use his potentials for the service of God.

The name of this text, *Hilchot De'ot*, the Laws of Personality Development, reflects these concepts. The development of our personalities is treated as a matter of objective law and not subjective experience. This text outlines a course of behavioral development structured by God to enable us to become more sensitive and more refined people, and thus, capable of serving Him in a more complete manner.

CHAPTER ONE

פֶּרֶק רֵאשׁוֹן

1. Each and every man possesses many character traits. Each trait is very different and distant from the others.

One type of man is wrathful; he is constantly angry. [In contrast,] there is the calm individual who is never moved to anger, or, if at all, he will be slightly angry, [perhaps once] during a period of several years.

There is the prideful man and the one who is exceptionally humble. There is the man ruled by his appetites - he will never be satisfied from pursuing his desires, and [conversely,] the very pure of heart, who does not desire even the little that the body needs.

There is the greedy man, who cannot be satisfied with all the money in the world, as [Ecclesiastes 5:9] states: "A lover of money never

א יַעֲזֹב הָרֶבֶה יֵשׁ לְכָל אֶחָד וְאֶחָד מִבְּנֵי-אָדָם, וְזוֹ מִשְׁנָה מְזוֹ, וּרְחוּקָה מִמֶּנָּה בְּיֹתֵר.

יֵשׁ אָדָם, שֶׁהוּא בֹעֵל חֲמָה, כּוֹעֵס תָּמִיד; וְיֵשׁ אָדָם, שְׂדַעְתּוֹ מִיִּשְׁבַּת עָלָיו וְאִינוֹ כּוֹעֵס כָּלֵל; וְאִם יִכְעַס, יִכְעַס בְּעֵס מְעֻט בְּכֶמֶה שָׁנִים.

וְיֵשׁ אָדָם, שֶׁהוּא גְבוּה־לֵב בְּיֹתֵר, וְיֵשׁ שֶׁהוּא שְׂפִל־רוּחַ בְּיֹתֵר.

וְיֵשׁ שֶׁהוּא בֹעֵל תַּאֲוָה, לֹא תִשְׁבַּע נִפְשׁוֹ מִהֵלֶךְ בְּתַאֲוָה; וְיֵשׁ שֶׁהוּא בֹעֵל לֵב טָהוֹר מְאֹד, וְלֹא יִתַּאֲוֶה אֶפְלוֹ לְדַבָּרִים מַעֲשִׂים שֶׁהַגּוֹף צָרִיךְ לָהֶן.

וְיֵשׁ בֹּעֵל נִפְשׁ רְחֹבָה, שֶׁלֹּא תִשְׁבַּע נִפְשׁוֹ מִכָּל מָמוֹן הָעוֹלָם, כְּעִנְיַן שְׁנָאֲמַר:

There is the prideful man and the one who is exceptionally humble. - Chapter 2, Halachah 3, also deals at length with the contrasts between pride and humility.

There is the man ruled by his appetites, who will never be satisfied from pursuing his desires - *Kohelet Rabbah* 1:34 states: "No person will die having accomplished [even] half of what he desires." This statement is difficult to comprehend since there appear to be many successful individuals who achieve their desires. Nevertheless, their accomplishments do not necessitate that their desires will be satisfied. As the Midrash continues: "A person who possesses 100 silver pieces desires 200. One who possesses 200 desires 400."

Desire itself is never satisfied. Instead, it puts the person on a constantly moving treadmill, with ever-increasing aims. As soon as one reaches one goal, he instinctively begins the pursuit of another.

and [conversely,] the very pure of heart, who does not desire even the little that the body needs. - This pair of contrasting personality types deal with a person's appetites which can be satisfied by sensual experience. For example, gluttony is stimulated and satisfied by taste. In contrast, the traits mentioned below - the desire for money or the lack of desire for it - do not involve the senses.

There is the greedy man, who cannot be satisfied - Literally, "whose soul is not satisfied." Perhaps the Rambam uses "soul," both here and with regard to the man ruled by his sensual appetites, because it is the desire that characterizes the man, not the performance of an action as such. A man may never indulge his passion for food, or actually amass money and yet, be gluttonous or greedy. Though, in practice, his ability to gratify his ambitions may be limited by external factors, the desires of his soul are, nonetheless, unlimited.

with all the money in the world, as [Ecclesiastes 5:9] states: "A lover of money

Commentary, Halachah 1

Each and every man possesses many character traits. Each trait is very different and distant from the others. - Many commentaries assume that the Rambam means that there are many personality types, which he proceeds to describe: e.g., the angry man, the calm man, etc. They quote various sources in support of this viewpoint, among them *Berachot* 58a: "Whoever sees a multitude of Jews recites the blessing: 'Blessed is...the wise who knows the hidden secrets,' because just as their natures are not similar, neither are their faces."

However, by stating that the many character traits are possessed by "each and every man," the Rambam is implying more than that there are people with different traits. Though in *Moreh Nevuchim* (The Guide to the Perplexed) 2:40 the Rambam himself elaborates upon that idea, here his intent is different. He is emphasizing the degree to which each individual's personality is a combination of different traits, which may be unrelated and even distant from each other. Anger, generosity, and modesty, for example, can be found together in the same person, much in the same way that tenants of all sorts - unrelated to each other - can be housed in a common building.

To illustrate these traits, the Rambam employs concrete examples of extreme personalities, so that the contrasts can be appreciated more easily.

One type of man is wrathful; he is constantly angry. [In contrast,] there is the calm individual who is never moved to anger - Obviously, anger or passivity are not these individuals' only traits. Surely, they share the full spectrum of human emotions. However, in these individuals, these traits are most prominent.

See Halachah 2:3 for a further discussion of anger.

or, if at all, he will be slightly angry, [perhaps once] during a period of several years.

With regard to all the traits: a man has some from the beginning of his conception, in accordance with his bodily nature. Some are appropriate to a person's nature and will [therefore] be acquired more easily than other traits. Some traits he does not have from birth. He may have learned them from others, or turned to them on his own. This may have come as a result of his own thoughts, or because he heard that this was a proper trait for him, which he ought to attain. [Therefore,] he accustomed himself to it until it became a part of himself.

3. The two extremes of each trait, which are at a distance from one another, do not reflect a proper path. It is not fitting that a man should behave in accordance with these extremes or teach them to himself.

are many intermediate points of temperament between the extremes. After-all, that is self-evident. Furthermore, in each set of associated temperaments - for example, stinginess and freehandedness - only three points on the line are of importance to the Rambam in clarifying his view of personality development: the two extremes and the midpoint. Why should he mention all the other intermediate possibilities?

Thus, it appears that the Rambam is telling us that there is a midpoint temperament between each pair of contrasting extremes. Given the entire range of human temperaments, there are a number of midpoints which are not necessarily related to each other. For example, the midpoint for generosity may be very different from the midpoint for humility. Thus, in Halachah 1, the Rambam stated that our personality traits are "different and distant;" in this halachah, he makes a parallel statement about the midpoints.

With regard to all the traits: a man has some from the beginning of his conception - i.e., the Rambam distinguishes between genetic traits and those that are acquired.

in accordance with his bodily nature. - Here, we see an interrelation between body and soul. Certain temperaments are produced by or relate to particular physical characteristics.

[In *Shemonah Perakim*, Chapter 4, the Rambam states: "From the outset of a person's [life], he has neither virtues nor vices..." However, there is not necessarily a contradiction between *Shemonah Perakim* and this halachah. The possession of certain character traits does not determine whether one will use them for a vice or a virtue.]

Some are appropriate to a person's nature and [therefore,] will be acquired more easily than other traits. - i.e., these traits are not transferred genetically. However, a person is born with a tendency towards them.

In *Shemonah Perakim*, Chapter 4, the Rambam elaborates on this issue at length. He explains that some people are born with a brain whose internal chemistry is prone to intellectual achievement. However, if this person does not develop this tendency, he will not automatically become a thinker.

Similarly, others have leanings towards courage or cowardice. Nevertheless, these are merely tendencies, and they will not manifest themselves unless consciously developed.

וכל הדעות, יש מהן דעות שהן לאדם מתחלת ברייתו לפי טבע גופו; ויש מהן דעות, שטבעו של אדם זה מכון ועתיד לקבל אותם במהרה יותר משאר הדעות.

ויש מהן, שאינן לאדם מתחלת ברייתו, אלא למד אותם מאחרים, או שנפנה להן מעצמו לפי מחשבה שעלתה בלבו; או ששמע, שזו הדעה טובה לו ובה ראוי לילף, והנהיג עצמו בה עד שנקבעה בלבו.

ג שתי קצוות הרחוקות זו מזו שבכל דעה ודעה אינן דרך טובה, ואין ראוי לו לאדם ללכת בהן ולא ללמדן לעצמו.

Also, these tendencies are, at all times, subject to man's control. We are granted free will, and choose our course of behavior.

Some traits he does not have from birth. He may have learned them from others - In *Shemonah Perakim*, Chapter 4, the Rambam writes: "From his youth, one becomes accustomed to acting in accordance with the accepted behavior of one's family and locale." In these few words, the Rambam includes all the people who might influence a person's character development: his parents, siblings, teachers, peers, and others. Also, note Chapter 6, Halachah 1.

or turned to them on his own. - There are two ways of acquiring such traits

a) This may have come as a result of his own thoughts - i.e., an intuitive realization of the correctness of a certain course of behavior stemming from one's own creative thought.

b) or because he heard that this was a proper trait for him, which he ought to attain. - i.e., through study a person understands the value of a certain character trait and sets out to acquire it.

[Therefore,] he accustomed himself to it until it became a part of himself. - Unlike the inborn or easily acquired traits, these qualities must first be accepted intellectually. Then, through habitual actions, they become part of the personality. (See Halachah 7 for a detailed explanation of such a process of behavioral modification.)

Commentary, Halachah 3

The two extremes of each trait, which are at a distance from one another, do not reflect a proper path - i.e., the path described in this and the following halachot.

It is not fitting - except in certain cases, as explained in Chapter 2, Halachah 3.

that a man should behave in accordance with these extremes - if that his nature or teach them to himself - and modify his behavior in this direction.

In *Shemonah Perakim*, Chapter 4, the Rambam elaborates on this concept, contrasting hedonism with asceticism, and pointing out how neither represents a healthy and mature approach to life.

If he finds that his nature leans towards one of the extremes or adapts itself easily to it, or, if he has learned one of the extremes and acts accordingly, he should bring himself back to what is proper and walk in the path of the good [men]. This is the straight path.

4. The straight path: This [involves discovering] the midpoint temperament of each and every trait that man possesses [within his personality.] This refers to the trait which is equidistant from either of the extremes, without being close to either of them.

Therefore, the early Sages instructed a man to evaluate his traits, to calculate them and to direct them along the middle path, so that he will be sound {of body}.

For example: he should not be wrathful, easily angered; nor be like the dead, without feeling, rather he should [adopt] an intermediate

If he finds that his nature leans towards one of the extremes - i.e., a genetic trait, as mentioned in the previous halachah

or adapts itself easily to it - a trait which is easily acquired because of the individual's natural tendencies, as mentioned in the previous halachah.

or, if he has learned one of the extremes - the third type of trait mentioned in the previous halachah.

and acts accordingly, he should bring himself back to what is proper - See Chapter 2, Halachah 2, for an extensive description of the process of correcting one's excesses of temperament.

and walk in the path of the good [men]. - i.e., the path that good men follow. This translation is based on the fact that the word "path" is in the singular, while the modifier "good" is in the plural.

That is the straight path. - Perhaps the Rambam is borrowing a biblical phrase here: "That you walk in the path of the good, and guard the way of the righteous" (Proverbs 2:20).

The nature of "the straight path" is explained in detail in the following halachah.

Commentary, Halachah 4

The straight path - This expression is also used in *Avot* 2:1. In his commentary on that Mishnah, the Rambam cites his explanation of the middle path in the fourth chapter of *Shemonah Perakim*.

This [involves discovering] the midpoint temperament of each and every trait that man possesses [within his personality.] - i.e., a path develops out of a series of midpoints.

This refers to the trait which is equidistant from either of the extremes, without

ואם מצא טבעו נוטה לאחת מהן או מוכן לאחת מהן, או שכבר למד אחת מהן ונהג בה - יחזיר עצמו למוטב וילך בדרך הטובים, והיא הדרך הישרה.

ד הדרך הישרה היא מדה בינונית שבכל דעה ודעה מכל הדעות שיש לו לאדם, והיא הדעה, שהיא רחוקה משתי הקצוות רחוק שנה, ואינה קרובה, לא לזו ולא לזו.

לפיכך ציוו חכמים הראשונים, שיהא אדם שם דעותיו תמיד ומשער אותם ומכונן אותם בדרך האמצעית, כדי שיהא שלם בגופו.

פיצוד? לא יהא בעל חמה נוח לכעס, ולא כמת שאינו מרגיש, אלא בינוני.

being close to either of them. - These statements echo the opening remarks of the fourth chapter of *Shemonah Perakim*:

The good acts are those balanced ones midway between two extremes. Both of the extremes are bad - one reflects excess and the other, want. The virtues [good traits] are temperaments and habits which are midway between these two bad tendencies.

These actions [good actions] are produced as a result of these [the good] traits.

Despite the similarity between the Rambam's statements here and those quoted, there is a slight difference. Here, the Rambam focuses on good traits, while in *Shemonah Perakim*, he emphasizes good actions.

Therefore, the early Sages instructed a man to evaluate his traits - The Rambam appears to be referring to *Sotah* 5b: "Whoever evaluates his paths in this world will merit and witness God's salvation."

to calculate them and to direct them along the middle path - At the conclusion of Chapter 4 of *Shemonah Perakim*, the Rambam writes:

When a man weighs his actions constantly and directs them towards their midpoints, he will be on the most elevated human plane possible. He will thereby approach God and grasp His will. This is the most perfect path in the service of God.

Constant introspection is a necessary element in any program of personal and spiritual growth. Even when a person has the highest goals, unless he frequently looks himself squarely in the mirror and examines his behavior, he may make gross errors.

so that he will be sound {of body}. - We have enclosed the words "of body" with brackets because they are not found in authoritative manuscripts of the *Mishneh Torah* and are problematic. Though a properly balanced temperament may also lead to physical health, this does not appear to be the Rambam's intent.

If the Hebrew כגוף is omitted as suggested, the meaning of שלם would be altered from "sound" to "complete" or "perfect."

For example: he should not be wrathful, easily angered; nor be like the dead, without

course; i.e., he should display anger only when the matter is serious enough to warrant it, in order to prevent the matter from recurring. Similarly, he should not desire anything other than that which the body needs and cannot exist without, as [Proverbs 13:25] states: "The righteous man eats to satisfy his soul."

Also, he shall not labor in his business except to gain what he needs for immediate use, as [Psalms 37:16] states: "A little is good for the righteous man."

He should not be overly stingy nor spread his money about, but he

feeling, rather he should [adopt] an intermediate course; i.e., he should display anger - Our translation is based on Chapter 2, Halachah 3. (Note also the commentary of the *Knesset HaGedolah*.)

only when the matter is serious enough to warrant it - The Rambam appears to be referring to matters which evoke personal feelings. Nevertheless, the *Misrat Moshe* interprets this passage as referring to an instance in which Torah law would require a display of anger - e.g., a colleague's transgression of Torah law.

in order to prevent the matter from recurring.

Similarly, he should not desire - This refers to physical desire.

anything other than that which the body needs and cannot exist without, as [Proverbs 13:25] states - The Rambam quotes supporting verses for only two of the "intermediate traits;" perhaps, because his description of the middle-of-the-road position for these traits might appear to veer toward one extreme. We might expect the intermediate point between gluttony and its opposite extreme to be eating to one's satisfaction. However, here we are told that we should desire only what is sufficient in order to exist.

However, the Rambam is not telling us to deny ourselves satisfaction. Deuteronomy 8:10 teaches: "You shall eat and be satisfied, and bless God, your Lord." Based on that verse, *Berachot* 48b explains that we are obligated to recite grace only when we feel physically satisfied. (The Rambam quotes this concept in *Hilchot Berachot* 1:1.) In Chapter 3, Halachah 1, and in *Shemonah Perakim*, Chapter 4, he elaborates on the negative aspects of asceticism.

Thus, his intent cannot be that we deny our desires, but rather that we school ourselves to desire and feel satisfied with what we need, without excess. This is a dominant theme in the sections on diet in Chapter 4, and those describing the conduct of a Torah sage in Chapter 5.

"The righteous man eats to satisfy his soul." - The verse continues: "But the belly of the wicked will want." The commentaries note that the contrast between the two does not center on the quantity of food they eat, but on the attitude with which they eat it. Because the righteous are not given over to pursuit of gratification, they can be satisfied. Conversely, it is the gluttony of the wicked which actually causes their want.

Note also the Midrashic interpretations of this verse:

"The righteous..." This refers to Eliezer, who said to Rebecca: "Let me sip a little water" (Genesis 24:17) - a single sip.

לא יכעס, אלא על דבר גדול שראוי לכעס עליו, כדי שלא יעשה כיוצא בו פעם אחרת.

וכן לא יתאנה אלא לדברים שהגוף צריך להן ואי אפשר לחיות בזולתן, כענין שנאמר: "צדיק אכל לשבע נפשו".

וכן לא יהיה צמל בעסקו, אלא להשיג דבר שצריך לו לחיי-שעה, כענין שנאמר: "טוב מצט לצדיק".

ולא יקפץ ידו ביותר, ולא יפזר ממונו; אלא נותן צדקה כפי מסת ידו, ומללה כראוי למי שצריך.

"And the belly of the wicked will want." This refers to Esau, who said to Jacob: "Stuff me..." (Genesis 25:30). Rabbi Yitzchak ben Zeira said: he opened his mouth agape like a camel and said: "I will open my mouth and you put it in" (*Tanchumah; Pinchas* 13; *BaMidbar Rabbah* 21:18).

Also, he shall not labor in his business except to gain what he needs for immediate use, as [Psalms 37:16] states: - Here again, the Rambam quotes a Biblical verse, because his definition of an intermediate path may seem extreme. The verse also clarifies that the Rambam is not denigrating the idea of work, but excessive preoccupation with one's profession as a means of acquiring possessions.

It is highly unlikely that the Rambam would criticize work per se. Note Proverbs 6:6: "Sluggard, go to the ant, see its ways and become wise;" and *Berachot* 8a:

He who enjoys the toil of his hands is greater than one who fears God..., as it is stated: "If you eat of the work of you hands, you are fortunate and will possess the good" (Psalms 128:2).

"You are fortunate" - in this life, and "will possess the good" - in the world to come.

The Rambam, himself, quotes the latter passage in *Hilchot Talmud Torah* 3:11. Thus, the Rambam is not criticizing a person for working hard, but rather teaching us that work and its profits should not be our greatest priorities.

"A little is good for the righteous man." - The verse in its entirety expresses a contrast: "A little is better for the righteous man than the great wealth that many [of the] wicked possess." Note the commentary of ibn Ezra: "The righteous man will be happier with his small lot than the wicked with their great wealth."

He should not be overly stingy - The printed editions of the *Mishneh Torah* have יקפץ (close his hand). However, most manuscripts use the term: יקבץ (gather).

יקבץ recalls Deuteronomy 15:7: "Do not close your hand from your needy brother." Thus, the contrasting extreme would be freehandedness. יקבץ, like וקובץ in Halachah 1, reflects miserly behavior, the opposite of which is being a spendthrift. The variant texts might reflect a difference of opinion as to which opposing extremes the Rambam had in mind.

nor spread his money about, but he should give charity according to his capacity - See *Hilchot Erachin* 8:12-13, which places restrictions on the extent of one's generosity.

should give charity according to his capacity and lend to the needy as is fitting. He should not be overly elated and laugh [excessively], nor be sad and depressed in spirit. Rather, he should be quietly happy at all times, with a friendly countenance. The same applies with regard to his other traits.

This path is the path of the wise. Every man whose traits are intermediate and equally balanced can be called a "wise man."

5. A person who carefully [examines] his [behavior], and therefore deviates slightly from the mean to either side is called pious.

What is implied? One who shuns pride and turns to the other

and lend to the needy as is fitting - Lending is also a form of charity. In *Hilchot Matnot Ani'im* 10:7, the Rambam lists eight degrees of charity. The highest is the support of a fellow Jew who has become poor by giving him loans or the like.

He should not be overly elated and laugh [excessively] - Such expressive "happiness" is often a sign of inner discontent and suffering.

nor be sad and depressed in spirit. Rather, he should be quietly happy at all times - his joy should be a composed sense of satisfaction.

[In this context, see the Ramah's conclusion of his notes to *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim* (697:1) in which he quotes Proverbs 15:15: "A good-hearted person is always celebrating."]

with a friendly countenance. - In his commentary on *Avot* 1:14, the Rambam defines "a friendly countenance" as "a spirit of will and gentility."

The same applies with regard to his other traits. - In *Shemonah Perakim*, Chapter 4, the Rambam mentions many other "intermediate traits." Among them:

Courage is the midpoint between arrogance and fear. Humility is the intermediate between pride and meekness. Earnestness is the intermediate between boasting and lowliness....Patience is the intermediate between rashness and insensitivity...

This path is the path of the wise. - i.e., those whose behavior is controlled by their intellect

Every man whose traits are intermediate and equally balanced can be called a "wise man." - Note the contrast to the "pious" of the following halachah. Though the published editions of the *Mishneh Torah* include this line as the final concept in our halachah, many of the authoritative manuscripts place it as the beginning of Halachah 5.

Commentary, Halachah 5

A person who carefully [examines] his [behavior] - in an effort to achieve the desired intermediate path

and therefore, deviates slightly from the mean - to compensate for a possible error in calculating that mean.

to either side is called pious. - In *Shemonah Perakim*, Chapter 4, the Rambam

ולא יהא מהולל ושוחק, ולא עצב ואונן, אלא שמח כל ימיו בנחת, בסבר פנים יפות. וכן שאר דעותיו.

ודרך זו היא דרך התקמים. כל אדם שדעותיו דעות בינוניות, ממצעות, נקרא חכם.

זה ומי שהוא מדקדק על עצמו ביותר, ויתרחק מדעה בינונית מעט לצד זה או לצד זה - נקרא חסיד.

פירוש? מי שיתרחק מגובה הלב עד הקצה האחרון ויהיה שפל-רוח ביותר, נקרא חסיד, וזה היא מדת חסידות.

explains that one can refine and correct his behavior by balancing a tendency for excess in one direction by intentionally forcing oneself to adopt the opposite extreme. (See Chapter 2, Halachah 2.) He continues:

Therefore, the pious did not allow themselves to fix their traits at the midpoint, but would bend slightly to the side of excess or want as a hedge and a guard.

He goes on to explain that, even for the pious, these extremes are not ends in themselves, but means to help them overcome natural tendencies. Thus, both the pious and a person of underdeveloped character may act in an extreme manner. However, the difference between them is that the behavior of the pious is carefully calculated with the intent of refining his personality, while the underdeveloped person does so without thought, as a natural response to his whims and fancies.

What is implied? - i.e., how is this concept exemplified?

One who shuns pride - At first glance, the choice of pride as an example is rather problematic, because in Chapter 2, Halachah 3, the Rambam states:

There are traits for which it is forbidden for a person to follow an intermediate path.... Such a trait is pride...

The proper path is not that a person should merely be humble, but rather hold himself very lowly...

Therefore, our Sages commanded: "Be very, very humble of spirit."

It is possible to explain that because of the negative aspects of the quality of pride, the middle path that one should follow in regard to it does not resemble the middle paths of the other traits and may appear as an extreme. Pride represents one extreme, its converse being absolute lack of concern for self to the extent that one walks around in rags. Between these extremes are a number of intermediate points: modesty - which might normally be considered as the intermediate level; humility - which the Rambam considers as the true middle path; and extreme humility - which is pious behavior (*Lechem Mishneh*). See also the commentary on the halachah cited above.

Possibly, it is the exaggerated contrasts in this set of traits that make it the most fitting example to demonstrate the principle of the middle path that the Rambam espouses. These gross differences allow for the possibility of clear distinctions.

and turns to the other extreme - The *Lechem Mishneh* emphasizes that one need

extreme and carries himself lowly is called pious. This is the quality of piety. However, if he separates himself [from pride] only to the extent that he reaches the mean and displays humility, he is called wise. This is the quality of wisdom. The same applies with regard to other character traits.

The pious of the early generations would bend their temperaments from the intermediate path towards [either of] the two extremes. For some traits they would veer towards the final extreme, for others, towards the first extreme. This is referred to as [behavior] beyond the measure of the law.

We are commanded to walk in these intermediate paths - and they

not actually adopt the other extreme, but rather, he should tend his behavior in that direction.

and carries himself lowly is called pious. This is the quality of piety - which represents a deviation from the mean.

However, if he separates himself [from pride] only to the extent that he reaches the mean and displays humility, he is called wise. This is the quality of wisdom. - In his commentary on *Avot* 5:6, the Rambam contrasts the wise and the pious:

A boor is one who lacks both intellectual and ethical development...

A wise man possesses both these qualities in a complete way, as is fitting.

A pious man is a wise man who increases his piety - i.e., his emotional development - until he tends toward one extreme, as explained in Chapter 4 [of *Shemonah Perakim*], and his deeds exceed his wisdom.

Thus, the wise man is one whose ethical behavior has been developed to the point at which it reflects his intellectual sophistication. He is able to appreciate the mean of each trait and express it within the context of his daily life. The pious man also possesses this quality, but due to his desire for ultimate self-refinement, he is willing to sacrifice himself and tend slightly to the extreme in certain instances.

Although in this halachah, the Rambam differentiates between the middle path - the path of the wise - and "beyond the measure of the law" - the path of the pious, in *Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah* 5:11 he describes how, "according to the greatness of the Sage, should be the care he takes to go beyond the measure of the law." Thus, it appears that a truly wise man will ultimately seek pious ways.

The same applies with regard to other character traits. - i.e., there is a mean which is the path of wisdom, and a deviation from that course with a positive intent, which is the path of piety.

The pious of the early generations - This expression is borrowed - out of context - from the Mishnah, *Berachot* 5:1.

would bend their temperaments from the intermediate path towards [either of] the two extremes. For some traits, they would veer towards the final extreme - excess (*Shemonah Perakim*, Chapter 4)

for others, towards the first extreme - lack (ibid.). Depending on the circumstances involved, deviation to either extreme can produce positive results.

This is referred to - by our Sages...

ואם נתרחק עד האמצע בלבד ויהיה ענו - נקרא חכם, וזו היא מדת חכמה.

ועל דרך זו שאר כל הדעות.

וחסידים הראשונים היו מטין דעות שלהן מדרך האמצעית כנגד שתי הקצוות:

יש דעה שמטין אותה כנגד הקצה האחרון, ויש דעה שמטין אותה כנגד הקצה הראשון, וזהו לפנים משורת הדין.

ומצוין אנו ללכת בדרךים אלו הבינונים, והם הדרךים הטובים והישרים, שנאמר: "והלכת בדרךיו".

as [behavior] beyond the measure of the law. - We find this expression used in a number of Talmudic passages. For example, *Bava Metzia* 30b relates that Rabbi Yishmael, Rabbi Yossi's son, was on a journey. A porter traveling the same road asked him to help lift a load of wood. Rabbi Yishmael was a distinguished scholar, and, therefore, this base task would have been demeaning for him. Nevertheless, rather than refuse the porter entirely, Rabbi Yishmael purchased his entire load from him. This was considered as behavior beyond the measure of the law.

See also *Berachot* 7a and 45b, *Bava Kama* 100a, *Bava Metzia* 24b. However, in these and other Talmudic passages where the term is used, the emphasis appears to be on the ethical or legal imperative involved, without stressing the aspect of character development. [Note *Hilchot Aveidah* 11:7, the *Shulchan Aruch*, *Choshen Mishpat* 259:3 and 263:3, and *Sefer Mitzvot Katan* (Positive Commandment 49), which mention our obligation to go beyond the measure of the law.]

Thus, the Rambam appears merely to be borrowing the term used by the Sages without referring to any specific instance. The path of behavior prescribed by one's intellect corresponds to law, and an intentional deviation from that course for the sake of piety is "beyond the measure of the law."

We are commanded - The *Sifre* (on Deuteronomy 13:5) states: "'You shall walk after God, your Lord' - this is a positive commandment." The *Zohar* (*Ki Tetze*, p. 270) also makes a similar statement. However, neither source elaborates.

Among the *Geonim*, the *Ba'al Halachot Gedolot* does list it as a commandment. Rav Sa'adiah Gaon does not include it as a specific commandment.

Sefer HaMitzvot (positive mitzvah 8) and *Sefer HaChinuch* (mitzvah 610) include this as one of the Torah's 613 mitzvot. However, the Rambam's inclusion of this commandment as one of the 613 mitzvot is somewhat problematic. In *Shores* 4 of his introduction to *Sefer HaMitzvot*, he states that he does not include any "general mitzvah" which does not involve a specific activity in his reckoning of the 613 mitzvot. For this reason, "Observe My statutes" (Leviticus 19:19) or "Be holy" (Leviticus 19:2) are not included in the 613 mitzvot. On the surface, the command the Rambam mentions here also seems to be an all encompassing charge to develop ourselves spiritually without any specific activity.

are good and straight paths - as [Deuteronomy 28:9] states: "And you shall walk in His ways."

6. [Our Sages] taught [the following] explanation of this mitzvah:

Just as He is called "Gracious," you shall be gracious;

Just as He is called "Merciful," you shall be merciful;

Just as He is called "Holy," you shall be holy;

In a similar manner, the prophets called God by other titles: "Slow to anger," "Abundant in kindness," "Righteous," "Just," "Perfect,"

Rav Avraham, the Rambam's son, was asked this question, and he explained that here the specific activity implied by this commandment is the development of our emotions and character traits. A somewhat deeper perspective can be gained from the Rambam's own description of the mitzvah. When listing the mitzvot at the beginning of these halachot, he states that the mitzvah is "to imitate God's ways" and in *Sefer HaMitzvot*, he defines the mitzvah as "to imitate Him, blessed be He, according to our potential."

The implication of these statements is that man has a constant obligation to carry out all of his deeds and guide the progress of his emotional development with the intent of imitating God. (See *Likkutei Sichot*, Tavo 5748, and note the commentary on the following halachah.)

to walk in these intermediate paths - Despite the Rambam's praise of piety, his very description of it as "beyond the measure of the law" implies that, though it is desirable, it cannot be considered as obligatory.

and they are good and straight paths - as [Deuteronomy 28:9] states: "And you shall walk in His ways." - The Rambam describes this mitzvah in the following halachah. Indeed, the authoritative manuscripts of the *Mishneh Torah* include the paragraph we have just explained as the beginning of Halachah 6.

Commentary, Halachah 6

As emphasized in the introduction to this text, the Rambam has structured the *Mishneh Torah* with the intent of "revealing all the laws to the great and to the small with regard to each and every mitzvah." He does not mention philosophical and ethical concepts unless they are halachot - i.e., practical directives for our behavior.

In this context, we can understand the structure of this chapter. The Rambam set out to describe the mitzvah of following God's ways. As stated in this halachah, he perceives this to mean developing our personalities by emulating the qualities which the Creator reveals. As he states in the following halachah, those qualities are identical with the middle path of human behavior. Therefore, in the initial halachot of this chapter, the Rambam sets out to describe the nature of human personality and the ideal temperaments - the middle path - that man should seek to achieve. Having laid down this foundation, he is able to define that mitzvah in this halachah and begin offering directives for its fulfillment in Halachah 7.

[Our Sages] taught [the following] explanation of this mitzvah - The Rambam appears

ו כף למדו בפרוש מצוה זו:

מה הוא נקרא חנון, אף אתה היה חנון;

מה הוא נקרא רחום, אף אתה היה רחום;

מה הוא נקרא קדוש, אף אתה היה קדוש.

ועל דרך זו קראו הנביאים לאל בכל אותן הפנויות: 'ארץ אפים ורב חסד',

to be referring to the *Sifre*, Ekev 11:22, which he quotes in *Sefer HaMitzvot* (ibid.). That explanation is also paralleled in the *Mechiltah* (Exodus 14:2) and *Shabbat* 133b.

It must be noted that other Talmudic and Midrashic sources interpret the commandment to imitate God in a different light. Note *Sotah* 14a:

[Deuteronomy 13:5 states]: "You shall walk after God, your Lord." Is it possible for man to walk after the Divine Presence? Has it not been stated: "Behold, God, your Lord, is a consuming fire" (Deuteronomy 4:24)?

Rather, [it means] one should follow the qualities of God.

Just as He dresses the naked..., you, too, should dress the naked;

God visited the sick...; you, too, should visit the sick;

God comforted the bereaved...; you, too, should comfort the bereaved;

God buried the dead...; you, too, should bury the dead.

In *Sefer HaMitzvot*, the Rambam mentions emulating both God's deeds and His qualities. Similarly, *Sefer HaChinuch*, in its description of this mitzvah, and the *Kiryat Sefer* in his commentary - both here in *Hilchot De'ot* and also in *Hilchot Eivel* - mention both deeds and qualities.

There is not necessarily a contradiction between these two emphases. As mentioned above, our actions reflect our personalities. Therefore, it follows that developing our characters in the manner outlined by the Rambam in this halachah will ultimately produce the good deeds mentioned by our Sages in the passage from *Sotah*.

Nevertheless, deed is often not a reflection of character. A person with many severe character faults may still do good deeds. Hence, for the "resemblance of God" to be complete, it is not sufficient merely to perform positive deeds. Rather, a person must undergo internal change by developing his character. Therefore, the Rambam focuses more on this aspect of the commandment.

Just as He is called "Gracious," you shall be gracious; Just as He is called "Merciful," you shall be merciful; Just as He is called "Holy," you shall be holy; - Neither the *Sifre* nor the other sources quoted above mention the trait of holiness. Rather, the third trait mentioned is "piety." Perhaps, since the Rambam gave a specific definition for piety in the previous halachah within his conception of personality development, he does not mention it in the present context to prevent any possible confusion.

In a similar manner, the prophets - The Rambam's choice of words is somewhat surprising since many of these expressions are also found in the Torah as well as in the prophetic works. However, in the Torah these titles are mentioned by Moses or the other prophets. Perhaps this is the Rambam's intent.

called God by other titles: "Slow to anger," "Abundant in kindness," "Righteous," "Just," "Perfect," "Almighty," "Powerful," and the like. - In *Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah* 1:11-12 and in detail in *Moreh Nevuchim* (Guide to the Perplexed), Vol.

"Almighty," "Powerful," and the like. [They did so] to inform us that these are good and just paths. A person is obligated to accustom himself to these paths and [to try to] resemble Him to the extent of his ability.

7. How can one train himself to follow these temperaments to the extent that they become a permanent fixture of his [personality]?

He should perform - repeat - and perform a third time - the acts which conform to the standards of the middle road temperaments. He

I, Chapters 53 and 54, the Rambam explains that these names are not descriptions of God, who cannot be defined by any specific quality. To do so would limit Him and detract from His infinite and transcendent state of being.

Rather, the use of these titles must be understood as follows: God brings about activities, which, had they been carried out by man, would have been motivated by these emotional states. For example, instead of utterly destroying the Jews after the sin of the Golden Calf, God allowed our people to continue. Were such a deed to have been performed by a human ruler, we would describe him as "slow to anger." Though that term cannot serve as a description for God - for He cannot be described - the Torah and the prophets referred to Him by such terms with the following intent.

[They did so] to inform us that these are good and just paths. - i.e., God acted in ways which we identify with these qualities - and the Torah and the prophets mention these actions - because these are attributes which man should strive to achieve.

A person is obligated to accustom himself to these paths and [to try to] resemble Him - *Likkutei Sichot* (ibid.) states that with the latter phrase, the Rambam is adding a new thought. As explained above, God cannot be described by any particular quality. If He manifests a quality, it is for a specific intent.

In *Moreh Nevuchim* (ibid., Chapter 54), the Rambam mentions that the leader of a country should act in a similar manner.

Sometimes he will be merciful and generous to some people - not because of his feelings and natural compassion, but because they are deserving of such treatment.

Sometimes he will bear a grudge, seek revenge, and rage against certain people - not out of feelings of anger... - but in order to produce positive results....

The ultimate ideal man can achieve is to imitate God according to his potential... i.e., to have our deeds resemble His deeds.

For this reason, human behavior should not be motivated by the spontaneous expression of emotion. Rather, man's emotions should arise as the result of a deliberate process of thought.

This reflects themes brought out in the previous halachot of this chapter: that a person must constantly evaluate and review his emotions (Halachah 4); that it is a wise man who is able to appreciate the middle path (Halachah 5).

This is what is meant by the imitation of God: that a person not be controlled by the unchecked expression of his emotions. Rather, he should control his feelings and, motivated by his desire to resemble God, search to find the correct and proper quality, the middle path, appropriate to the situation at hand.

צדיק וישר, תמים, גבור וחזק, ויבוצא בהן -
להודיע שהן דרכים טובים וישרים, וחיב אדם להנהיג עצמו בהן
ולהדמות אליו כפי כחו.

ז וכיצד ירגיל אדם עצמו בדעות אלו עד שיקבעו בו?
יעשה וישנה וישלש במעשים שעושה על-פי הדעות האמצעיות, ויחזור

to the extent of his ability. - for man is ultimately finite in nature, and no true resemblance to God is possible.

Commentary, Halachah 7

How can one train himself to follow these temperaments to the extent that they become a permanent fixture of his [personality]? - Having established personality development as a mitzvah in the previous halachah, the Rambam begins his explanation of how this mitzvah is fulfilled.

He should perform - repeat - and perform a third time - Thus, a person's deeds will shape his character traits.

In this process of personal change, the stress is on the repetition of an act, and not on its quantity or intensity. In his Commentary on the Mishnah, *Avot* 3:15, the Rambam writes that giving a thousand coins to one person at one time is not as effective in stimulating feelings of generosity as giving a single coin one thousand times.

As mentioned in Halachah 4, though the Rambam's explanations in this chapter parallel those of the fourth chapter of *Shemonah Perakim*, the texts differ in stressing actions (as the opening lines of that chapter imply), or on character development, which is the theme of our text.

For this reason, the two texts also perceive the process of causation differently. In *Shemoneh Perakim*, the Rambam states: "These actions [good actions] are produced as a result of these [the good] traits," while here he sees the traits being produced by the actions.

Nevertheless, the two texts do not actually contradict each other. Both statements are true. Our deeds reflect our personalities, and they also help shape those personalities. Generally, this means that a person's behavior will reinforce and strengthen the character traits that motivated those very deeds. However, this chapter - and more particularly, this halachah - deals with a person who has made a commitment to change and refine his character. Therefore - based on his intellect and the directives of the Torah, rather than his spontaneous feelings - he chooses to perform deeds that will bring about this process of inner change.

which conform to - reflect and are motivated by...

the standards of the middle road temperaments - described in Halachot 4 and 5.

He should do this constantly, until these acts are easy for him and do not present any difficulty. - A trait possessed by a person produces activities naturally and

should do this constantly, until these acts are easy for him and do not present any difficulty. Then, these temperaments will become a fixed part of his personality.

Since the Creator is called by these terms and they make up the middle path which we are obligated to follow, this path is called "the path of God." This is [the heritage] which our Patriarch Abraham taught his descendants, as [Genesis 18:19] states: "for I have known Him so that he will command his descendants...to keep the path of God."

One who follows this path brings benefit and blessing to himself, as [the above verse continues]: "so that God will bring about for Abraham all that He promised."

CHAPTER 2

1. To those who are physically sick, the bitter tastes sweet and the sweet bitter. Some of the sick even desire and crave that which is

spontaneously. However, if one has not acquired a trait as yet, certain actions will be foreign to his nature, and one must trouble himself to perform them.

For example, a liberal man gives charity naturally; the miser must force himself to give. The action for each is the same, but not the inner feelings.

Then, these temperaments will become a fixed part of his personality. - If the miser continues to give frequently, he will find that he no longer feels like a miser, but has become liberal in heart as well as in hand.

Since the Creator - The Rambam uses the term יוצר (*yotzer*) - literally "the One who forms" - (which appears only one other time in the *Mishneh Torah: Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah* 1:7).

The Rambam describes God as the Creator with reference to the Divine qualities he describes in these halachot. Before the existence of the world and man, there would be no purpose for God to reveal these qualities, for until man's creation, no one could learn from or emulate them.

[The word יוצר may also be used because of its connection to the word יצר, meaning drive or inclination. (See Rashi, Genesis 2:7.)]

is called by these terms and they make up the middle path which we are obligated to follow, this path is called "the path of God." - As stated in the commentary on the previous halachah, "the path of God" involves controlling our emotions by using our intellect, so that our behavior is, to the extent that is possible for man, an objective response to a situation. In this manner, our behavior bears a resemblance to God's transcendence of worldly matters.

This is [the heritage] which our Patriarch Abraham taught his descendants - See the *Midrash Tanchumah, Shofetim* 15:

בהם תמיד, עד שיהיו מעשיהם קלים עליו, ולא יהיה בהם טרח עליו, ויקבעו הדעות בנפשו.

ולפי שהשמות האלו נקרא בהן היוצר, והם הדרך הבינונית שאנו חייבין ללכת בה - נקראת דרך זו "דרך השם".

והיא שלמד אברהם אבינו לבניו, שנאמר: "כי ידעתיו למען אשר יצוה וגו'".

וההולך בדרך זו, מביא טובה וברכה לעצמו, שנאמר: "למען הביא ה' על אברהם את אשר דבר עליו".

פֶּרֶק שְׁנִי

א חולי הגוף טועמים המר מתוק ומתוק מר.

ויש מן החולים מי שמתאווה ותאב למאכלות שאינן ראויין לאכילה, כגון

And what are the ways of God? Righteousness and justice, as it is stated: "And they will keep the path of God to do righteousness and justice" (Genesis 18:19).

as [Genesis 18:19] states: "for I have known Him so that he will command his descendants...to keep the path of God." - Since the path of God is mentioned in the context of Abraham's service, it appears that walking in those ways is not synonymous with the performance of the 613 commandments - for they had not been given in Abraham's time. Rather, it must refer to ethics, qualities like righteousness and justice, which are mentioned in that verse.

One who follows this path brings benefit and blessing to himself, as [the above verse continues]: "so that God will bring about for Abraham all that He promised." - The Rambam concludes his description of the obligation to develop our characters with the assurance that, ultimately, this course of behavior will bring us benefit and blessing.

Commentary, Halachah 1

In the previous chapter, the Rambam defines the mitzvah of imitating God's ways as seeking the middle path of personal behavior. He explains how that path can be achieved: through repetition of proper deeds. However, there are some individuals whose previous behavior or natural tendencies prevent them from following or benefiting in a complete way from such a course of action. The Rambam now addresses himself to their situation:

To those who are physically sick, the bitter tastes sweet and the sweet bitter. - i.e., sickness distorts a person's sensitivity and prevents him from appreciating the true nature of reality. At times, the distortion reaches extremes... (*Shemonah Perakim*, Chapter 3).

Some of the sick even desire and crave that which is not fit to eat, such as earth

person who swayed in the direction of one of the extremes should move in the direction of the opposite extreme, and accustom himself to that for a long time, until he has returned to the proper path, which is the midpoint for each and every temperament.

3. There are temperaments with regard to which a man is forbidden to follow the middle path. He should move away from one extreme and adopt the other.

Among these is arrogance. If a man is only humble, he is not following a good path. Rather, he must hold himself lowly and his spirit very unassuming. That is why [Numbers 12:3] describes our

A person who swayed in the direction of one of the extremes should move in the direction of the opposite extreme, and accustom himself to that for a long time, - The commentaries note that the course of behavior suggested here is reminiscent of the acts of penitence mentioned by *Sanhedrin* 25b with regard to certain transgressions. The Rambam quotes this passage in *Hilchot Eduv* 5:9:

When [can we be certain] of the penitence of those who lend at interest? When they freely tear up their promissory notes and fully repent and do not lend even to non-Jews at interest.

When [can we be certain] of the penitence of dice-throwers? When they have broken their dice, fully repent and do not play even when there are no money stakes.

When [can we be certain] of the penitence of those who race pigeons? When they break the instruments with which they capture the [pigeons] and do not follow their practice, even in the desert....

So too, a butcher who examines the animal and sells it, and sold a non-kosher animal [as kosher]...he is invalid as a witness until his deeds bear witness that he has repented. He should dress in black and cover his head with a black garment, go to a place where he is unknown and return a valuable lost object....

The Meiri comments on this Talmudic passage: Middle of the road ways cannot cure the morally ill. The only remedy is to tend toward the opposite extreme.

until he has returned to the proper path, which is the midpoint for each and every temperament.

Commentary, Halachah 3

There are temperaments with regard to which a man is forbidden to follow the middle path. He should move away from one extreme and adopt the other. - In the previous halachot, the Rambam explained how to correct excessive tendencies in certain temperaments and return to a middle path. In this and the remainder of the halachot of this chapter, the Rambam provides guidance regarding particularly acute character difficulties.

[Among these] is arrogance. - Pride is also included in this quality.

אם היה רחוק לקצה האחד — ירחיק עצמו לקצה השני וינהג בו זמן רב, עד שיחזור בו לדרך הטובה, והיא מדה בינונית שפכל דעה ודעה.

ג ויש דעות שאסור לו לאדם לנהג בהן בבינונית, אלא יתרחק מן הקצה האחד עד הקצה האחר,

והוא גבה לב,

שאין דרך הטובה, שיהיה אדם ענו בלבד, אלא שיהיה שפל-רוח ותהיה רוחו נמוכה למאד.

If a man is only humble, he is not following a good path. Rather, he must hold himself lowly and his spirit very unassuming. - The commentaries note the apparent contradiction between these statements and Chapter 1, Halachah 5, which states:

One who shuns pride and turns to the other extreme and carries himself lowly is called pious....However, if he separates himself [from pride] only until he reaches the mean and displays humility, he is called wise... We are commanded to walk in these intermediate paths.

Similarly, in the previous halachah, the Rambam describes the middle path of humility as an ideal, yet in this halachah he states that one should overstep that middle path and tend toward excessive humility.

The *Lechem Mishneh* attempts to resolve this difficulty by explaining that the middle path for the qualities of arrogance (and, similarly, anger) differs from that of the other qualities. (See our commentary on Chapter 1, Halachah 5.) *Avodat HaMelech* offers a different solution, based on the Rambam's Commentary on the Mishnah, *Avot* 4:4:

Humility is one of the more elevated qualities and is the middle path between arrogance and lowliness...

It is fitting that a person always...find himself in the middle path with regard to all emotional qualities, with the exception of this quality, arrogance. The nature of this fault was so severely regarded by the Sages because they knew the damage that it could cause. Therefore, they removed themselves from it to the opposite extreme and tended to the quality of lowliness, so that even the slightest impression of pride would not remain within their souls.

Thus, what the Rambam is describing for us is not the ideal position, but the necessary stance. There is a midpoint - humility - that is a reflection of God's qualities which would be ideal for man to emulate. However, since man is man, the Sages ruled that it is better not to seek this ideal measure, lest we err in our estimation of it and show a degree of arrogance.

That is why [Numbers 12:3] describes our teacher Moses as "very humble" and not simply "humble". - In his Commentary on the Mishnah (ibid.), the Rambam explains that Moses was the most developed of all men, and yet he displayed humility to this degree.

Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak of Lubavitch (*Sefer Ma'amarim* 5710, p. 236) explains that the use of Moses as a paradigm of humility leads to a further concept. Though Moses