

## הלכות דעות • פרק ראשון

Complete Word-for-Word Interlinear • Navy &amp; Gold Edition

## CHAPTER PREVIEW

In this opening chapter of Hilchos De'os, the Rambam introduces us to the fundamental landscape of the human neshama and its character traits, the de'os. We learn how Hashem created people with a vast spectrum of different temperaments and tendencies. The Rambam contrasts the extreme ends of various traits—such as anger versus absolute passivity, pride versus extreme lowliness, and miserliness versus wasteful spending—showing how these midos manifest in our daily lives.

We are then introduced to the essential path of the "golden mean," the middle path in all traits, which is the way of the Chacham (the wise man). The Rambam guides us in how to navigate our natural inclinations, explaining that while some traits are inborn, a person has the power to shape and change his midos through constant practice and avodah, ultimately walking in the ways of Hashem.

*All introductions, summaries, and contextual notes are the editor's commentary and are not part of the original text.*

ה'א

ה'דעות השונות בכל אדם והקצוות השונים שלהן

Halacha 1 • The Diverse Character Traits of Man and Their Extreme Opposites

דעות הרבה יש לכל אחד ואחד מבני אדם וזו משנה מזו  
from this different and this man of the children of and one one for each there are many Traits

ורחוקה ממנה ביותר. יש אדם שהוא בעל חמה פועם תמיד. ויש  
and there is always angry wrath a master of who is a man there is exceedingly from it and distant

אדם שדעתו מישבת עליו ואינו פועם כלל ואם יכעס יכעס  
he will be angry he will be angry and if at all angry and he is not upon him is settled whose mind a man

פעם מעט בכמה שנים. ויש אדם שהוא גבה לב ביותר. ויש  
and there is exceedingly heart haughty of who is a man and there is years in several slight an anger

שהוא שפל רוח ביותר. ויש שהוא בעל תאוה לא תשבע נפשו  
his soul will be satisfied not desire a master of who is and there is exceedingly spirit humble of who is

מהלך בתאוה. ויש שהוא בעל לב טהור מאד ולא יתאוה אפלו  
even he will desire and not very pure heart a master of who is and there is in desire from walking

לדברים מעטים שהגוף צריך להן. ויש בעל נפש רחבה שלא  
that not broad soul a master of and there is them needs that the body few for things

תשבע נפשו מכל ממון העולם, כענין שנאמר קהלת ה ט "אוהב  
A lover of 9 5 Koheles as it is said like the matter the world the money of from all his soul will be satisfied

כסף לא ישבע כסף". ויש מקצר נפשו שדין אפלו דבר  
a thing even that enough for him his soul who restricts and there is money will be satisfied with not money

מַעֲט שְׁלֹא יִסְפִּיק לוֹ וְלֹא יִרְדֹּף לְהַשִּׁיג כָּל צָרָתוֹ. וַיֵּשׁ שֶׁהוּא מְסַגֵּף  
afflicting who is and there is his needs all to attain he will pursue and not for him will suffice that not small  
עַצְמוֹ בְּרָעַב וְקוֹבֵץ עַל יָדוֹ וַאֲיֵנוֹ אוֹכֵל פְּרוּטָה מִשְׁלוֹ אֲלֵא בְּצַעַר  
with pain except of his own a penny eat and he does not his hand to and gathering with hunger himself  
גָּדוֹל. וַיֵּשׁ שֶׁהוּא מַאֲבֵד כָּל מָמוֹנוֹ בְּיָדוֹ לְדַעְתּוֹ. וְעַל דְּרָכִים אֵלּוּ  
these ways and upon by his own will with his hand his money all destroying who is and there is great  
שָׂאָר כָּל הַדְּעוֹת כְּגוֹן מְהוֹלָל וְאוֹנָן וְכִילִי וְשׁוֹעַ וְאֶכְזָרִי  
and the cruel and the generous and the stingy and the depressed the overly elated such as the traits all the rest of  
וְרַחֲמָן וְרַךְ לֵב וְאִמִּיץ לֵב וְכִיוֹצֵא בָּהֶן:  
of them and the like of heart and the courageous of heart and the soft and the merciful

The Rambam introduces the wide spectrum of human character traits, illustrating how different individuals possess contrasting extremes of temperament, desire, and behavior.

ה'י"ב

## הַדְּעוֹת הַבִּינוּנִיּוֹת וּמְקוֹר הַתְּכוּנוֹת בְּאָדָם

Halacha 2: Intermediate Character Traits and the Origins of Human Temperament

וַיֵּשׁ בֵּין כָּל דְּעָה וְדְעָה הֶרְחֻקָּה מִמֶּנָּה בִּקְצֵה הָאַחֵר דְּעוֹת בִּינוּנִיּוֹת  
intermediate traits the other at the end from it that is distant and trait trait every between And there are  
זו רְחוּקָה מִזֹּו. וְכָל הַדְּעוֹת יֵשׁ מֵהֶן דְּעוֹת שֶׁהֵן לְאָדָם מִתְחִלָּת  
from the beginning of to a person that they are traits of them there are the traits And all from this distant this  
בְּרִיתוֹ לְפִי טִבַּע גּוֹפּוֹ. וַיֵּשׁ מֵהֶן דְּעוֹת שֶׁטִּבְעוֹ שֶׁל אָדָם זֶה  
this a person that the nature of traits of them and there are his body the nature of according to his creation  
מְכוּן וְעֵתִיד לְקַבֵּל אוֹתָם בְּמַהֲרָה יוֹתֵר מִשָּׂאָר הַדְּעוֹת. וַיֵּשׁ מֵהֶן  
of them and there are the traits than the rest of more quickly them to receive and destined is disposed  
שֶׁאֵינָן לְאָדָם מִתְחִלָּת בְּרִיתוֹ אֲלֵא לָמַד אוֹתָם מֵאַחֲרֵים אוֹ שֶׁנִּפְנָה  
that he turned or from others them he learned rather his creation from the beginning of to a person that are not  
לָהֶן מִעַצְמוֹ לְפִי מַחֲשָׁבָה שֶׁעָלְתָה בְּלִבּוֹ. אוֹ שֶׁשָּׁמַע שֶׁזוֹ הַדְּעָה טוֹבָה  
is good trait that this that he heard or in his heart that arose a thought according to on his own to them  
לוֹ וְכֵן רָאוּי לֵילֵךְ וְהִנְהִיג עַצְמוֹ בָּה עַד שֶׁנִּקְבְּעָה בְּלִבּוֹ:  
in his heart it became fixed until in it himself and he accustomed to walk it is proper and in it for him

The Rambam explains that intermediate traits exist between extremes, and that character traits are either inborn, easily acquired by nature, or learned through habituation.

ה'י"ג

## הַנִּטְיָה מִן הַקְּצוֹת אֶל הַדֶּרֶךְ הַיְשָׁרָה

Halacha 3: Avoiding Extremes of Character and Walking in the Straight Path

שְׁתֵּי קְצוֹת הֶרְחֻקוֹת זוֹ מִזֹּו שֶׁבְּכָל דְּעָה וְדְעָה אֵינָן דֶּרֶךְ  
a path are not and character trait character trait which are in every from this this that are distant extremes Two  
טוֹבָה וְאֵין רָאוּי לוֹ לְאָדָם לָלֶכֶת בָּהֶן וְלֹא לְלַמְּדָן לְעַצְמוֹ. וְאִם  
and if to himself to teach them and not in them to walk for a man for him fitting and it is not good

מָצָא טָבְעוֹ נוֹטֶה לְאַחַת מֵהֶן אוֹ מוֹכֵן לְאַחַת מֵהֶן אוֹ שָׂכָבָר לָמִיד  
he learned that already or of them to one disposed or of them to one leaning his nature he found  
אֶחָת מֵהֶן וְנִהְגָּה בָּהּ יִחְזִיר עַצְמוֹ לְמוֹטֵב וְיֵלֶךְ בְּדֶרֶךְ הַטּוֹבִים  
the good ones in the path of and walk to the better himself he should return in it and behaved of them one  
וְהִיא הַדֶּרֶךְ הַיִּשְׁרָה:  
the straight is the path and it

The Rambam explains that the extremes of any character trait are undesirable, and one must train oneself to follow the middle path.

ה'ל"ד

#### הַנְּהִיגַת הָאָדָם בַּמִּדָּה הַבִּינּוֹנִית וְהַדֶּרֶךְ הַיִּשְׁרָה

Halacha 4 · Guiding One's Character Traits and Actions Along the Balanced Middle Path

הַדֶּרֶךְ הַיִּשְׁרָה הִיא מִדָּה בִּינּוֹנִית שֶׁבְּכָל דָּעָה וְדָעָה מִכָּל  
from all and temperament temperament which is in every intermediate a trait is straight The path  
הַדַּעוֹת שֵׁשׁ לוֹ לְאָדָם. וְהִיא הַדָּעָה שֶׁהִיא רְחוּקָה מִשְׁתֵּי  
from two distant that is the temperament and it to man to him that there are the temperaments  
הַקְּצוּוֹת רְחוּק שׁוֹה וְאֵינָה קְרוּבָה לָא לָזוֹ וְלֹא לָזוֹ. לְפִיכָךְ צִוּוּ  
commanded Therefore to this one and not to this one not close and is not equal a distance the extremes  
חֲכָמִים הָרְאוּשׁוֹנִים שֶׁיְהִי אָדָם שֶׁ יְדַעוּתוֹ תָּמִיד וּמִשְׁעָר אוֹתָם  
them and calculate always his temperaments evaluate man that should the first Sages  
וּמִכּוּן אוֹתָם בְּדֶרֶךְ הָאֲמֻצָּעִית כְּדִי שֶׁיְהִי שָׁלֵם בְּגוּפוֹ. כִּי צַד. לֹא  
not How so in his body sound that he will be so the middle in the path them and direct  
יְהִי בַּעַל חֲמָה נוֹחַ לְכַעַס וְלֹא כִּמְת שְׂאִינוֹ מְרַגֵּשׁ אֶלָּא  
rather feel who does not like a dead person and not to anger easy wrath a master of should he be  
בִּינּוֹנִי. לֹא יִכְעַס אֶלָּא עַל דָּבָר גָּדוֹל שָׂרְאוֹי לְכַעַס עָלָיו כְּדִי שֶׁלֹּא  
that not so upon it to anger that is fitting great a matter upon unless should he anger not intermediate  
יַעֲשֶׂה כִּיּוֹצֵא בּוֹ פַּעַם אַחֶרֶת. וְכֵן לֹא יִתְאַוֶּה אֶלָּא לְדָבָרִים שֶׁהַגּוֹף  
that the body for things unless should he desire not And so another time it like will be done  
צָרִיךְ לָהֶן וְאִי אֲפָשָׁר לְהִיּוֹת בְּזוּלָתָן כְּעֵנֶן שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר מִשְׁלִי יֵג כֹּה  
25 13 Mishlei as is said like the matter without them to be possible and if them needs  
"צָדִיק אָכַל לְשֹׂבַע נַפְשׁוֹ". וְכֵן לֹא יִהְיֶה עֹמֵל בְּעֵסְקוֹ אֶלָּא לְהַשִּׁיג  
to obtain unless in his business toiling should he be not And so his soul to satisfy eats A righteous man  
דָּבָר שֶׁצָּרִיךְ לוֹ לְחַיֵּי שָׂעָה כְּעֵנֶן שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר תְּהִלִּים לוֹ טַז "טוֹב מֵעֵט  
a little Better is 16 37 Tehillim as is said like the matter the hour for life of for him that is needed a thing  
לְצָדִיק". וְלֹא יִקְפֹּץ יָדוֹ בְּיוֹתֵר. וְלֹא יִפְזֹר מָמוֹנוֹ אֶלָּא נוֹתֵן  
giving unless his money should he scatter and not exceedingly his hand should he close And not to the righteous man  
צָדָקָה כְּפִי מִסֵּת יָדוֹ וּמִלֹּוה כְּרָאוֹי לְמִי שֶׁצָּרִיךְ. וְלֹא יְהִי  
should he be And not needs to whoever as is fitting and lending his hand the measure of according to charity

מְהוֹלֵל וְשׂוֹחֵק וְלֹא עָצֵב וְאוֹיֵן אֶלָּא שְׂמִיחַ כָּל יָמָיו בְּנִחָת

with pleasantness his days all happy rather and mourning sad and not and laughing elated

בְּסִפּוּר פָּנִים יְפוֹת. וְכֵן שְׂאָר דְּעוּתָיו. וְדֶרֶךְ זֶה הִיא דֶּרֶךְ

the path of is this And path his temperaments the rest of And so friendly faces with a countenance of

הַחֲכָמִים. כָּל אָדָם שֶׁדְּעוּתָיו דְּעוֹת בֵּינוֹנִית בֵּינוֹנִית מְמַצְעוֹת נִקְרָא

is called balanced intermediate intermediate temperaments whose temperaments man Every the wise

חָכָם:

wise

The Rambam defines the middle path of character traits, which avoids extremes and maintains physical and spiritual health.

ה'ה

הַהֲבָדֵל בֵּין חָכָם לְחָסִיד וְהַמְצָוָה לִלְכֹּת בְּדֶרֶךְ הַשֵּׁם

Halacha 5 · The Distinction Between the Wise and the Pious and the Mitzvah to Walk in God's Ways

וּמִי שֶׁהוּא מְדַקְדֵּק עַל עֲצָמוֹ בְּיוֹתֵר וְיִתְרַחֵק מִדַּעַה בֵּינוֹנִית

intermediate from a temperament and distances himself exceedingly himself upon is precise that he And whoever

מַעֲט לְצַד זֶה אוֹ לְצַד זֶה נִקְרָא חָסִיד. כִּיצַד. מִי שֶׁיִּתְרַחֵק

who distances himself one How so pious is called this to the side of or this to the side of slightly

מִזְבָּה הַלֵּב עַד הַקְּצָה הָאֲחֵרוֹן וְיִהְיֶה שְׂפָל רוּחַ בְּיוֹתֵר נִקְרָא חָסִיד

pious is called exceedingly spirit lowly of and is ultimate the extreme until the heart from haughtiness of

וְזוֹ הִיא מִדַּת חֲסִידוּת. וְאִם נִתְרַחֵק עַד הָאֲמִצָּע בְּלִבָּד וְיִהְיֶה עָנּוּ

humble and is only the middle until he distanced himself And if piety the trait of is and this

נִקְרָא חָכָם וְזוֹ הִיא מִדַּת חָכְמָה. וְעַל דֶּרֶךְ זֶה שְׂאָר כָּל

all are the rest of this the path of And upon wisdom the trait of is and this wise is called

הַדְּעוּת. וְחֲסִידִים הָרִאשׁוֹנִים הָיוּ מִטֵּיִן דְּעוֹת שֶׁלָּהֶן מִדֶּרֶךְ

from the path of theirs temperaments bending were the first generations And the pious ones of the temperaments

הָאֲמִצָּעִית כִּנְגַד שְׁתֵּי הַקְּצוֹת. יֵשׁ דְּעָה שְׂמִטִּין אוֹתָהּ כִּנְגַד הַקְּצָה

the extreme towards it that they bend a temperament there is extremes the two towards middle

הָאֲחֵרוֹן וְיֵשׁ דְּעָה שְׂמִטִּין אוֹתָהּ כִּנְגַד הַקְּצָה הָרִאשׁוֹן. וְזֶהוּ

and this is first the extreme towards it that they bend a temperament and there is ultimate

לְפָנֵים מִשּׁוֹרֵת הַדִּין. וּמִצְוִין אֲנִי לִלְכֹּת בְּדֶרֶכִּים הָאֵלֹהִים הַבֵּינוֹנִים וְהֵם

and they the intermediate these in the paths to walk are we And commanded the law the line of beyond

הַדֶּרֶכִּים הַטּוֹבִים וְהַיִּשְׁרִים שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר דְּבָרִים כֹּחַ ט "וְהִלַּכְתָּ בְּדֶרֶכָיו":

in His ways and you shall walk 9 28 Devarim as it is said and the straight the good are the paths

The Rambam defines the difference between a wise person who follows the middle path and a pious person who goes beyond the measure of the law, and explains the mitzvah of walking in God's ways.

ה'ו

כך למדו בפרוש מצוה זו. מה הוא נקרא חנון אף אתה יהיה חנון.  
gracious be you even Gracious is called He just as this mitzvah in the explanation of they learned So

מה הוא נקרא רחום אף אתה יהיה רחום. מה הוא נקרא קדוש אף אתה  
you even Holy is called He just as merciful be you even Merciful is called He just as

יהיה קדוש. ועל דרך זו קראו הנביאים לאל בכל אותן הכנויות ארך  
Slow the descriptions those by all the Almighty the prophets called this path and on holy be

אפים ורב חסד צדיק וישר תמים גבור וחזק וכיוצא בהן.  
to them and similar and Strong Mighty Perfect and Just Righteous kindness and abundant in to anger

להודיע שהן דרכים טובים וישרים וחייב אדם להנהיג עצמו בהן  
in them himself to guide a person and is obligated and upright good paths that they are to make known

ולהדמות אליו כפי כחו:  
his ability according to Him and to resemble

*The Rambam explains that the prophets describe Hashem with various character traits to teach us the proper paths we must emulate to the best of our ability.*

הלי ז

## הנהגת האדם בדרך הבינונית ודרך ה'

Halacha 7· Training Oneself in the Middle Path and the Way of Hashem

וכיצד ירגיל אדם עצמו בידעות אלו עד שיקבעו בו.  
in him they are established until these with temperaments himself a person shall accustom And how

יעשה וישנה וישלש במעשים שעושה על פי הידעות  
the temperaments according to that he does the actions and perform a third and repeat He should perform time

האמצעיות ויחזר בהם תמיד עד שיהיו מעשיהם קלים עליו ולא  
and not upon him easy their actions will be until constantly them and repeat the middle ones

יהיה בהם טרח עליו ויקבעו הידעות בנפשו. ולפי  
And because in his soul the temperaments and will be established upon him difficulty in them there will be

שהשמות האלו נקרא בהן היוצר והם הדרך הבינונית שאנו חייבין  
are obligated that we the middle the path and they the Creator by them is called these the names

ללכת בה. נקראת דרך זו דרך ה'. והיא שלמד אברהם אבינו  
our father Avraham is what taught and it Hashem the path of this path is called in it to walk

לבניו שנאמר בראשית יח יט "כי ידעתיו למען אשר יצוה"  
he will command that in order I have known him For 19 18 Bereishis as it is stated to his children

וגו'. והחולף בדרך זו מביא טובה וברכה לעצמו שנאמר  
as it is stated to himself and blessing goodness brings this in the path of And the one who walks etc.

בראשית יח יט "למען הביא ה' על אברהם את אשר דבר עליו":  
concerning him He spoke that which — Avraham upon Hashem to bring In order 19 18 Bereishis

*This halacha explains how a person can internalize the middle path of character traits through repeated action until it becomes second nature.*

#### CHAPTER SUMMARY

The chapter outlines the diverse nature of human character traits, explaining that while some tendencies are inborn, others are acquired through habit or environment. The Rambam establishes that the ideal path for a person is the intermediate path, which represents balance and emotional health. He contrasts the Chacham, who maintains this perfect middle ground, with the Chasid, who acts lifnim mishuras hadin (beyond the strict line of the law) by leaning slightly toward the extreme of modesty or generosity. Ultimately, we are commanded to emulate the middos of Hashem—to be merciful, gracious, and holy—which we accomplish by consciously refining our character and walking in His ways.

#### לְמַעַשָּׂה WHAT TO TAKE HOME

We often look at our middos, our character traits, as if they are permanent fixtures of who we are. We say, "I am just a naturally angry person," or "I am just a worrywart by nature." But the Rambam is teaching us a profound secret of our avodah: your personality is not a life sentence. Hashem created us with different tendencies, and we might have picked up bad habits from our surroundings, but we are never stuck. The middle path, the "derech Hashem," is always within our reach.

How do we actually change a deeply ingrained trait? The Rambam gives us a practical, psychological roadmap: "He shall do, repeat, and do a third time." You cannot simply think your way into becoming a calmer or more generous person. You have to act your way there. If you have a tendency to be tightfisted, you must force yourself to give tzedakah, over and over again, even in small amounts, until the act of giving becomes natural and light.

By consciously steering our actions toward the balanced middle, we are not just improving our behavior; we are fulfilling the mitzvah of "v'halachta b'drachav", walking in His ways. Just as Hashem is patient and kind, we train ourselves to act with patience and kindness until these middos are permanently engraved upon our very neshama.

Today, identify one area where you tend to go to an extreme, whether it is reacting too quickly in anger, or being overly stingy with your time or money. Force yourself to perform three small, concrete actions that pull you back toward the gentle middle path.