

הלכות דעות • פרק שלישי

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

CHAPTER PREVIEW

In this chapter, we learn how a Yid must approach the physical world. The Rambam warns us against the mistake of thinking that the way to overcome the yetzer hara and bad middos is to go to the opposite extreme of asceticism. A person might think he should completely deny himself meat, wine, a nice home, or fine clothing, and live like a hermit or a pagan priest. The Rambam teaches us that this is a bad path and is actually forbidden.

Instead, we are guided to see that Hashem wants us to live in the world and serve Him through the physical. We learn the proper Torah perspective on fasting, vows, and self-mortification, showing how our Sages discouraged us from forbidding things that the Torah has already permitted. The goal is to use everything in this world to strengthen our bodies and minds for the avodah of Hashem.

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

הליא

האסור לפרש מן העולם ולסגור את הגוף

Halacha 1 • The Prohibition Against Asceticism and Excessive Self-Mortification

שָׁמָא יֹאמֵר אָדָם הוֹאִיל וְהִקְנָאָה וְהִתְאַוָּה וְהִכְבוֹד וְכִיּוּצָא בְּהֵם דְּרָךְ רָעָה
evil a path of them and the like and honor and desire and envy since a person will say Perhaps

הֵן וּמוֹצִיִּין אֶת הָאָדָם מִן הָעוֹלָם. אֶפְרֹשׁ מֵהֶן בְּיוֹתֵר וְאֶתְרַחֵק
and I will distance exceedingly from them I will separate the world from the person — and remove they are
myself

לְצַד הָאַחֲרוֹן. עַד שֶׁלֹּא יֹאכַל בָּשָׂר וְלֹא יִשְׁתֶּה יַיִן וְלֹא יִשָּׂא אִשָּׁה
a wife he will marry and not wine he will drink and not meat he will eat that not until extreme to the side

וְלֹא יֵשֵׁב בְּדִירָה נְאֻה וְלֹא יִלְבֹּשׁ מְלָבוֹשׁ נָאָה אֶלָּא הַשֵּׁק
the sackcloth except fine clothing he will wear and not pleasant in a dwelling he will dwell and not

וְהִצְמֵר הַקָּשָׁה וְכִיּוּצָא בְּהֵן כְּגוֹן כְּהֵנִי הָעוֹבְדֵי כּוֹכָבִים. גַּם זֶה דְּרָךְ
a path this also stars the worshippers of priests of such as of them and the like coarse and the wool

רָעָה הִיא וְאָסוּר לֵילֵךְ בָּהּ. הַמֵּהֲלֵךְ בְּדִרָה זוֹ נִקְרָא חוֹטֵא. שֶׁהָרִי
for behold a sinner is called this in path the one who walks in it to walk and it is forbidden it is evil

הוּא אוֹמֵר בְּנִזִּיר כַּמְדָּבָר וַיֹּאמֶר "וְכִפֹּר עָלָיו מֵאֲשֶׁר חָטָא עַל
against he sinned for that for him and he shall atone 11 6 Bamidbar concerning a nazirite says it

הַנֶּפֶשׁ". אָמְרוּ חֲכָמִים וּמָה אִם נִזִּיר שֶׁלֹּא פָּרַשׁ אֶלָּא מִן הַיַּיִן צָרִיךְ
needs the wine from only abstained who a nazirite if and what the Sages said the soul

כִּפְּרָה הַמוֹנֵעַ עֲצָמוֹ מִכָּל דָּבָר וְדָבָר עַל אַחַת כַּמָּה וְכַמָּה.
and how much how much one upon and thing thing from every himself the one who deprives atonement

לְפִיכָּהּ צִוּוּ חֲכָמִים שְׁלָא יִמְנַע אָדָם עַצְמוֹ אֶלָּא מִדְּבָרִים שְׁמַנְעָתוּ
 that prohibited him from things except himself a person shall deprive that not the Sages commanded therefore

הַתּוֹרָה בְּלִבָּד. וְלֹא יִהְיֶה אוֹסֵר עַצְמוֹ בְּנִדְרִים וּבְשְׁבוּעוֹת עַל דְּבָרִים
 things upon and with oaths with vows himself forbidding shall he be and not alone the Torah

הַמְּתָרִים. כִּי אָמְרוּ חֲכָמִים לֹא דִיךָ מָה שְׁאַסְרָה תּוֹרָה אֶלָּא שְׂאֵתָהּ
 that you but the Torah that prohibited what enough for you is not the Sages said thus the permitted

אוֹסֵר עָלֶיךָ דְּבָרִים אֲחֵרִים. וּבְכָלֵל הֵזָה אֵלּוּ שְׁמַתְעִנִין תָּמִיד אֵינָן
 they are not constantly who fast these this and in category other things upon yourself forbid

בְּדֶרֶךְ טוֹבָה. וְאַסְרוּ חֲכָמִים שְׂיֵהָא אָדָם מְסַנֵּף עַצְמוֹ בְּתַעֲנִית. וְעַל כָּל
 all and upon with fasting himself afflicting a person that should be the Sages and forbade good on a path

הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלּוּ וְכִיּוֹצֵא בָהֶן צָוָה שְׁלֹמֹה וְאָמַר קֹהֵלֶת ז טז "אֵל תְּהִי
 be do not 16 7 Koheles and said Shlomo commanded of them and the like these the things

צַדִּיק הָרִבָּה וְאֵל תִּתְחַכֵּם יוֹתֵר לָמָּה תִּשְׁוִימוּם":
 should you make why excessively make yourself wise and do not overly righteous
 yourself desolate

The Rambam explains that Judaism rejects extreme asceticism, such as refraining from permitted pleasures like meat, wine, or marriage, and instead advocates for the middle path.

ה'י"ב

הַנְּהִגַת הָאָדָם בְּכָל מַעֲשָׂיו לְשֵׁם שְׁמִים

Halacha 2 • Directing All of One's Physical Activities and Desires Solely for the Service of Hashem

צָרִיךְ הָאָדָם שְׂיִכּוֹן לְבוֹ וְכָל מַעֲשָׂיו כָּלָם לֵידַע אֶת הַשֵּׁם בְּרוּךְ הוּא
 He blessed the Name — to know all of them his actions and all his heart that he direct the person Needs

בְּלִבָּד, וַיְהִיָּה שִׁבְתּוֹ וְקוּמוֹ וְדַבּוּרוֹ הַכֹּל לְעִמַּת זֶה הַדְּבָר. פִּיּוֹצֵד?
 How so thing this toward everything and his speaking and his rising his sitting and shall be alone

כְּשִׂישָׂא וַיִּתֵּן אוֹ יַעֲשֶׂה מְלָאכָה לְטַל שְׂכָר, לֹא יִהְיֶה בְּלָבוּ לְקַבֵּץ מָמוֹן
 money to gather in his heart shall it be not payment to take melacha does or and sells When he buys

בְּלִבָּד, אֶלָּא יַעֲשֶׂה דְּבָרִים הָאֵלּוּ כְּדִי שְׂיִמְצָא דְּבָרִים שְׁהַגּוּף צָרִיךְ לָהֶם
 they needs that the body things that he find in order these things he should do rather alone

מֵאֲכִילָה וּשְׂתִיָּה וַיִּשְׁיֵב בֵּית וַיִּנְשִׂיאת אִשָּׁה. וְכֵן כְּשִׂיאֵכֵל וַיִּשְׁתֶּה
 and drinks when he eats And so a wife and marrying of a house and dwelling of and drinking from eating

וַיִּבְעֵל לֹא יִשִּׁים בְּלָבוּ לַעֲשׂוֹת דְּבָרִים הָאֵלּוּ כְּדִי לְהִנּוֹת
 to enjoy in order these things to do in his heart should he place not and engages in
 relations

בְּלִבָּד עַד שְׁנִמְצָא שְׂאִינוֹ אוֹכֵל וּשְׂוֹתָה אֶלָּא הַמְּתוֹק לַחֹךְ
 to the palate the sweet except and drink eat that he does not it is found until alone

וַיִּבְעֵל כְּדִי לְהִנּוֹת, אֶלָּא יִשִּׁים עַל לְבוֹ שְׂיִאֲכַל וַיִּשְׁתֶּה כְּדִי
 in order and drink that he eat his heart upon he should place rather to enjoy in order and engage in relations

לְהַכְרֹת גּוּפוֹ וְאֵיבָרָיו בְּלֶבֶד. לְפִיכָּהּ לֹא יֵאָכַל כָּל שֶׁחֲהָךְ מִתְאַוָּה

desires that the palate all should he eat not Therefore alone and his limbs his body to make healthy

כְּכֶלֶב וְחִמּוֹר אֲלֹא יֵאָכַל דְּבָרִים הַמוֹעִילִים לַגּוּף אִם מְרִים אִם

whether bitter whether to the body that are beneficial things he should eat rather and a donkey like a dog

מִתּוֹקִים. וְלֹא יֵאָכַל דְּבָרִים הָרָעִים לַגּוּף אֲףֵי עַל פִּי שֶׁהֵן מִתּוֹקִים

sweet that they are though · even to the body that are bad things should he eat and not sweet

לְחָהּ. פִּיֵּצֵד? מִי שֶׁהָיָה בְּשָׂרוֹ חָם לֹא יֵאָכַל בֶּשָׂר וְלֹא דְבֶשֶׁשׁ וְלֹא

and not honey and not meat should he eat not hot his flesh whose was One How so to the palate

יִשְׁתֶּה יַיִן, כַּעֲנָנִין שֶׁאָמַר שְׁלֹמֹה דֶּרֶךְ מִשְׁלֵי מִשְׁלֵי כֹה כֹּחַ "אֲכַל

Eating of 27 25 Proverbs parable by way of Shlomo that said like the matter wine should he drink

דְּבֶשׁ" וְגו'. וְשׁוֹתָהּ מִי הָעֹלְשִׁין אֲףֵי עַל פִּי שֶׁהוּא מֵר שֶׁנִּמְצָא

so that it is found bitter that it is though · even the endives water of and he drinks and so on honey

שׁוֹתָהּ וְאוֹכֵל דֶּרֶךְ רְפוּאָה בְּלֶבֶד כְּדִי שִׁיבְרִיא וְיַעֲמִד שְׁלֵם הוּאִיל

since whole and stand that he become healthy in order alone medicine by way of and eating drinking

וְאִי אֶפְשָׁר לְאָדָם לְחַיּוֹת אֲלֹא בְּאֲכִילָה וְשִׁתָּהּ. וְכֵן כְּשִׁיבְעֵל לֹא

not when he engages in relations And so and drinking with eating except to live for a person possible and not

יִבְעֵל אֲלֹא כְּדִי לְהַכְרֹת גּוּפוֹ וְכִדִּי לְקַיֵּם אֶת הַזֵּרַע. לְפִיכָּהּ

Therefore the seed — to preserve and in order his body to make healthy in order except should he engage in relations

אֵינוֹ בּוֹעֵל כָּל זְמַן שִׁתְּאוּהָ אֲלֹא כָּל עֵת שִׂידַע שֶׁהוּא צָרִיךְ

needs that he that he knows time all rather that he desires time all engage in relations he does not

לְהוֹצִיא שְׂכֶבֶת זֶרַע כְּמוֹ דֶּרֶךְ הַרְפוּאָה אוֹ לְקַיֵּם אֶת הַזֵּרַע:

the seed — to preserve or the medicine the way of like semen emission of to emit

The Rambam explains that a person must direct all of his physical activities, including eating, drinking, business, and marital relations, toward maintaining his health so that he has the strength to serve Hashem.

ח"י ג

הַנְּהִיגָת הַגּוּף וְכָל הַמַּעֲשִׂים לְשֵׁם שְׁמַיִם

Halacha 3 · Directing All Physical Actions and Bodily Health for the Sake of Heaven

הַמְּנַהִיג עֲצָמוֹ עַל פִּי הַרְפוּאָה. אִם שָׂם עַל לְבוֹ שִׁיחָיָה כָּל

all of that should be his heart upon he places if medicine · according to himself One who conducts

גּוּפוֹ וְאֵיבָרָיו שְׁלֵמִים בְּלֶבֶד וְשִׁיחָיו לֹא בָּנִים עוֹשִׂין מְלָאכָתוֹ וְעִמְלָיו

and toiling his work doing children to him and that should be alone healthy and his limbs his body

לְצָרְכוֹ אֵין זֶה דֶּרֶךְ טוֹבָה. אֲלֹא יָשִׁים עַל לְבוֹ שִׁיחָה גּוּפוֹ שְׁלֵם

healthy his body that should be his heart upon he should place rather good a path this is not for his need

וְחִזְקָה כְּדִי שִׁתְּהִיָּה נַפְשׁוֹ יִשְׂרָה לְדַעַת אֶת ה'.

· for it is impossible Hashem — to know upright his soul that should be in order and strong

וַיִּשְׁתַּכַּל בְּחִכְמוֹת וְהוּא רָעַב וְחוֹלָה אוֹ אֶחָד מֵאֵיבָרָיו כּוֹאֵב.
 pains of his limbs one or and sick is hungry and he in the wisdoms and contemplate that he understand
 וַיָּשִׁים עַל לְבוֹ שְׂיָהָה לוֹ בֶּן אוֹלִי יִהְיֶה חָכָם וְגָדוֹל בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל.
 in Israel and great wise he will be perhaps a son to him that should be his heart upon and he should place
 נִמְצָא הַמְהֵלֵךְ בְּדַרְכּוֹ זֶה כָּל יָמָיו עוֹבֵד אֶת ה' תָּמִיד. אֲפֹלוּ בְּשָׁעָה
 at the time even constantly Hashem — serves his days all of this in a path the one who walks it turns out
 שְׁנוּשָׂא וְנוֹתֵן וְאֲפֹלוּ בְּשָׁעָה שְׁבוּעָל. מִפְּנֵי שִׂמְחַת שְׁבָתוֹ בְּכָל
 in everything that his thought because that he has marital at the time and even . that he conducts relations business
 כְּדִי שִׂמְצָא צָרָתוֹ עַד שְׂיָהָה גּוֹפּוֹ שְׁלֵם לַעֲבֹד אֶת ה'. וְאֲפֹלוּ בְּשָׁעָה
 at the time and even Hashem — to serve healthy his body that will be until his needs that he find is in order
 שֶׁהוּא יָשָׁן אִם יָשָׁן לְדַעַת כְּדִי שֶׁתְּנוּחַ דַּעְתּוֹ עָלָיו וְיִנוּחַ גּוֹפּוֹ
 his body and should rest upon him his mind that should rest in order with intent he sleeps if sleeps that he
 כְּדִי שֶׁלֹא יִחָלֶה וְלֹא יוּכַל לַעֲבֹד אֶת ה' וְהוּא חוֹלָה, נִמְצָאת שְׁנָה
 sleep it turns out is sick and he Hashem — to serve he will be able and not he fall ill that not in order
 שְׁלוֹ עֲבוֹדָה לְמָקוֹם בְּרוּךְ הוּא. וְעַל עֲנָנָן זֶה צִוּוּ חֲכָמִים וְאָמְרוּ
 and said the Sages commanded this matter and on is He blessed to the Omnipresent service his
 מִשְׁנָה אֲבוֹת בִּיב "וְכָל מַעֲשֵׂיךָ יְהִיו לְשֵׁם שָׁמַיִם". וְהוּא שָׁאֲמַר
 what said and that is Heaven for the sake of should be your deeds and all of 12 2 Avos Mishnah
 שְׁלֹמֹה בְּחִכְמָתוֹ מִשְׁלִי ג ו "בְּכָל דְּרָכֶיךָ דַּעְהוּ וְהוּא יִישר אַרְחָתֶיךָ":
 your paths will make straight and He know Him your ways in all of 6 3 Proverbs in his wisdom Shlomo

The Rambam explains that maintaining physical health and engaging in daily activities should not be done for personal pleasure, but rather to keep the body strong to serve Hashem.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

The chapter begins by condemning asceticism and self-mortification, explaining that one who abstains from permitted physical pleasures, like wine or meat, is called a sinner, just as the Torah requires a nazir to bring a sin offering. The Rambam quotes our Sages who ask if what the Torah prohibited is not already enough for us, and he warns against making vows to forbid permitted things or fasting constantly. He concludes by citing Shlomo HaMelech's warning in Koheles not to be overly righteous, showing that the true path of a chacham is to serve Hashem with a healthy, balanced body and mind without resorting to extreme self-denial.

It is easy to think that to be a good Jew, we must run away from the physical world, fast, and deny ourselves any pleasure. But the Rambam teaches us a beautiful, life-changing truth: Hashem created this world for us to live in it, not to escape it. When you deny yourself the permitted pleasures of this world, the Torah calls you a sinner! Hashem does not want you to be a hermit; He wants you to bring holiness into your everyday physical life.

The secret of this avodah is in your intention. When you eat a good meal, sleep, or go to work, do not do it just for the raw physical pleasure or to amass wealth. Do it with the conscious thought: "I am taking care of my body so that I have the strength, health, and peace of mind to learn Torah, do mitzvos, and serve Hashem." When you live this way, your physical acts are elevated. Your eating becomes a holy service, and even your sleep is considered an avodah to the Creator.

Today, before you eat a meal or go to sleep, stop for three seconds and say to yourself: "I am doing this to give my body the strength to serve Hashem."