

הלכות דעות • פרק רביעי

Learned like the daf, the literal words in bold, flowing with the elucidation

CHAPTER PREVIEW

In this chapter, the Rambam teaches us a fundamental principle of avodas Hashem: keeping the body healthy and strong is not a secular pursuit, but a holy path to knowing the Creator. Since a person cannot properly understand or serve Hashem when he is ill, maintaining one's physical well-being is a direct fulfillment of Hashem's will.

To guide us in this essential avodah, the Rambam lays out practical, daily guidelines for eating, drinking, sleeping, and physical exertion. He teaches us how to master our physical desires, showing that true strength lies in eating only when hungry, stopping before we are full, and engaging in healthy habits that keep the body pure and ready for Torah study.

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

הלכה א

Halacha 1 • Maintaining a Healthy Body as Part of Serving Hashem

הואיל והיות הגוף בריא ושלם מדרכי השם הוא.

Since maintaining the body in a healthy and whole state is a fundamental part of the ways of Hashem,

שהרי אי אפשר שיבין או ידע דבר מידיעת הבורא והוא חולה.

for behold, it is impossible for a person to understand or know any matter of the knowledge of the Creator when he is ill and weak,

לפיכך צריך להרחיק אדם עצמו מדברים המאבדין את הגוף.

therefore, a person must distance himself from things that destroy the body,

ולהנהיג עצמו בדברים המברין והמחלימים.

and instead accustom himself to things that make him healthy and strengthen the physical frame.

ואלו הן:

And these are they:

לעולם לא יאכל אדם אלא כשהוא רעב.

Forever, a person should not eat unless he is hungry,

ולא ישתה אלא כשהוא צמא.

and he should not drink unless he is thirsty,

ואל ישתה נקביו אפלו רגע אחד.

and do not let him delay his excretions even one moment,

אֶלָּא כָּל זְמַן שֶׁצָּרִיךְ לְהַשְׁתִּין אוֹ לְהִסֵּךְ אֶת רַגְלָיו יַעֲמֵד מִיָּד:

rather, any time that he needs to urinate or to cover his feet, meaning to relieve his bowels, he should stand up and go immediately.

הלכה ב

Halacha 2: Proper Eating Habits and Preparing the Body Through Physical Exertion

לֹא יֹאכַל אָדָם עַד שֶׁתִּמְלֵא כְּרוֹסוֹ

A person should not eat until his stomach is filled completely,

אֶלָּא יִפְחַת כְּמוֹ רְבִיעַ מִשְׂבָּעָתוֹ.

rather, he should diminish his eating by about a quarter from his satiety, leaving himself slightly hungry.

וְלֹא יִשְׁתֶּה מִיָּם בְּתוֹךְ הַמְּזוֹן

And he should not drink water during the meal,

אֶלָּא מְעֻט וּמְזוּג בַּיַּיִן.

except a little, and even then, mixed with wine so it does not chill the stomach.

וּכְשִׁיתְחִיל הַמְּזוֹן לְהִתְעַכֵּל בְּמַעֲיוֹ

And when the food begins to digest in his intestines,

שׁוֹתֶה מֶה שֶׁהוּא צָרִיךְ לְשָׁתוֹת.

he may drink what he needs to drink.

וְלֹא יִרְבֶּה לְשָׁתוֹת מִיָּם וְאָפְלוּ כִּשְׂיִתְעַכֵּל הַמְּזוֹן.

And he should not increase to drink water, even when the food is digested.

וְלֹא יֹאכַל עַד שֶׁיִּבְדֹּק עֲצָמוֹ יָפֶה יָפֶה

And he should not eat until he checks himself very well

שָׁמָּה יִהְיֶה צָרִיךְ לְנַקְבּוֹ.

lest he be in need of his excretory organs, as eating while needing to relieve oneself is harmful to the body.

לֹא יֹאכַל אָדָם עַד שֶׁיֵּלֶךְ קֹדֶם אֲכִילָה

A person should not eat until he walks before eating

עַד שֶׁיִּתְחִיל גּוּפוֹ לְחַם.

until his body begins to warm up from the physical exertion,

או יַעֲשֶׂה מְלַאכְתּוֹ או יִתְיַגַּע בְּיָגַע אֲחֵר.

or until he does his work, or exerts himself with other exertion.

כָּל־לֹו שֶׁל דָּבָר יַעֲנֶה גּוּפוֹ וְיִיגַע כָּל יוֹם בַּבֹּקֶר

The general rule of the matter: he should afflict his body and exert himself every day in the morning

עַד שִׁיתְחִיל גּוּפוֹ לָחֵם

until his body begins to warm up,

וַיִּשְׁקַט מְעַט עַד שֶׁתִּתְיַשֵּׁב נַפְשׁוֹ וְאוֹכִיל.

and then he should rest a little until his mind settles, and only then he eats.

וְאִם רָחֵץ בְּחֹמִין אַחֵר שֶׁיִּגַּע הָרִי זֶה טוֹב

And if he bathed in hot water after he exerted himself, behold, this is good for his health,

וְאַחֵר כִּךְ שׁוֹהָה מְעַט וְאוֹכִיל:

and after that, he waits a little and then eats.

הִלְכָּה ג

Halacha 3 - Proper Physical Conduct During and Immediately After Eating

לְעוֹלָם כְּשִׂיאֵכֶל אָדָם

Always, when a person eats,

יָשֵׁב בְּמָקוֹמוֹ

he should sit in his place

או יִטֵּה עַל שְׂמָאלוֹ.

or recline on his left side to aid digestion.

וְלֹא יֵהָלֵךְ

And he should not walk,

וְלֹא יִרְכַּב

and he should not ride,

וְלֹא יִיגַע

and he should not exert himself,

וְלֹא יִזְעֹזַע גּוּפוֹ

and he should not shake his body,

וְלֹא יִטֵּיל

and he should not stroll,

עַד שִׁיתַּעֲכַל הַמֶּזֶן שֶׁבִּמְעֵיו.

until the food that is in his intestines digests.

וְכָל הַמֵּטִיל אַחֵר אַכִּילָתוֹ

And anyone who strolls after his eating,

אוֹ שִׁיגַעַ

or who exerts himself,

הֲרִי זֶה מְבִיא עַל עַצְמוֹ

behold, this person brings upon himself

חֲלָאִים רָעִים וְקָשִׁים:

illnesses that are bad and harsh.

הַלָּכָה ד'

Halacha 4 · The Proper Conduct of Sleep and Its Required Hours

הַיּוֹם וְהַלַּיְלָה כ'

The day and the night together consist of twenty-four hours.

דִּי לוֹ לְאָדָם לֵישׁוֹן שְׁלִישׁוֹן שֶׁהוּא שְׁמוֹנֶה שָׁעוֹת.

It is sufficient for a person to sleep a third of them, which is eight hours, to maintain his physical health.

וַיְהִיוּ בְּסוֹף הַלַּיְלָה

And these hours of sleep should be at the end of the night,

כְּדִי שֶׁתְּהִיָּה מִתְחִלַּת שְׁנָתוֹ עַד שֶׁתַּעֲלֶה הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ שְׁמוֹנֶה שָׁעוֹת.

so that there will be, from the beginning of his sleep until the sun rises, eight hours.

וְנִמָּצָא עוֹמֵד מִמִּטָּתוֹ קֹדֶם שֶׁתַּעֲלֶה הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ:

And it turns out that he rises from his bed just before the sun rises, ready to begin his avodas Hashem with the new day.

לא יישן אדם

A person should not sleep

לא על פניו

not on his face, meaning face down,

ולא על ערפו

and not on his back,

אלא על צדו.

but rather on his side.

בתחלת הלילה על צד שמאל.

At the beginning of the night he should sleep on the left side, which is beneficial for digestion,

ובסוף הלילה על צד ימין.

and at the end of the night he should roll over and sleep on the right side.

ולא יישן סמוך לאכילה

And a person should not sleep close to eating,

אלא ימתין אחר אכילה

but instead he should wait after eating

כמו שלש או ארבע שעות.

about three or four hours before going to sleep.

ולא יישן ביום:

And he should not sleep during the day.

דברים המשלישין את פני מעים

Things that loosen — the bowels,

כגון ענבים ותאנים ותותים ואגסים ואבטיחים ומיני הקשואים ומיני מלפפונות

such as grapes and figs and mulberries and pears and watermelons and types of cucumbers and types of melons,

אוכל אותם האדם בתחלה קדם אכילה.

eats them a person at the beginning before the meal.

ולא יערבם עם המזון.

And not should he mix them with the food,

אלא שוהה מעט עד שיצאו מבטן העליון ואוכל מזונו.

but waits a little until they exit from the stomach upper and eats his food.

ודברים שמאמצין את בני מעים

And things that constipate — the bowels,

כגון רמונים ופרישים ותפוחים וקרוסטומולין

such as pomegranates and quinces and apples and crustumenian pears,

אוכל אותן תכף למזונו.

he eats them immediately after his food.

ולא ירבה לאכל מהן:

And not should he increase to eat of them.

הלכה ז

Halacha 7 - The Proper Order of Eating Light and Heavy Foods for Health

כשירצה אדם לאכל בשר עוף ובשר בהמה באחד.

When a person desires to eat meat of poultry and meat of an animal as one, meaning at the same meal,

אוכל בתחלה בשר העוף.

he should eat at the beginning the meat of the poultry, which is lighter and easier to digest.

וכן ביצים ובשר עוף אוכל בתחלה ביצים.

And so too, if he is eating eggs and meat of poultry, he should eat at the beginning the eggs.

בשר בהמה דקה ובשר בהמה גסה אוכל בתחלה בשר דקה.

If he is eating meat of a small animal, like a sheep or goat, and meat of a large animal, like an ox, he should eat at the beginning the meat of the small animal.

לעולם יקדים אדם דבר הקל ומאחר הכבד:

Always should a person advance the thing that is light to digest, and delay eating the heavy food.

בימות החמה אוכל מאכלים הקרים

In the days of the sun, meaning during the hot summer season, a person **should eat foods** that are **cold** in temperature or cooling in nature,

ולא ירבה בתבליים

and he **should not increase** his use of **spices** which heat up the body,

ואוכל את החמץ.

and he **should eat** foods seasoned with **vinegar** because of its cooling properties.

ובימות הגשמים אוכל מאכלים החמים

And in the days of the rains, during the cold winter season, **one should eat foods** that are **warm** and heating,

ומרבה בתבליים

and **increase** the use of **spices**,

ואוכל מעט מן החרדל ומן החלתית.

and **eat a little of mustard and of chilitit**, which are sharp and warming herbs.

ועל דרך זו הולך ועושה במקומות הקרים ובמקומות החמים

And according to this way, a person **should go and act** in cold places and in hot places around the world,

בכל מקום ומקום הראוי לו:

adjusting his diet **in every place and place** to eat **what is appropriate for it** and its climate.

יש מאכלות שהם רעים ביותר עד מאד

There are foods that are exceedingly bad, to the utmost degree,

וראוי לאדם שלא לאכלן לעולם.

and it is proper for a person not to eat them ever.

כגון הדגים הגדולים המלוחים הישנים.

These are, for example, large, salted, aged fish;

והגבינה המלוחה הישנה.

and aged, salted cheese;

וְהַכֶּמְהִין וּפְטָרִיּוֹת

and truffles and mushrooms;

וְהַכָּשֵׁר הַמְּלִיחַ הַיָּשָׁן.

and aged, salted meat;

וְיֵין מִגָּתוֹ.

and wine fresh from its press;

וְתַבְשִׁיל שֶׁשָּׂהָא עַד שֶׁנֶּדְף רִיחוֹ.

and cooked food that remained until its odor spoiled;

וְכֵן כָּל מֵאֵכָל שֶׁרִיחוֹ רַע אוֹ מֶר בְּיוֹתֵר.

and likewise, any food whose odor is bad, or which is exceedingly bitter.

הֲרִי אֵלֹו לַגּוֹף כְּמוֹ סֵם הַמָּוֶת.

Behold, these are to the body like a deadly poison.

וַיֵּשׁ מֵאֵכָלוֹת שֶׁהֵן רָעִים אֲבָל אֵינָן כְּמוֹ הָרָאוּשׁוֹנִים לְרָע.

And there are foods that are bad, but they are not like the first ones for badness.

לְפִיכָה רָאוּי לֶאֱדָם שֶׁלֹא לֶאֱכֹל מֵהֶן אֶלָּא מְעַט וְאַחֵר יָמִים הַרְבֵּה.

Therefore, it is proper for a person not to eat of them except a little, and only after many days have passed between eating them;

וְלֹא יִרְגִּיל עֲצָמוֹ לְהִיּוֹת מְזוֹנוֹ מֵהֶם אוֹ לֶאֱכָלָן עִם מְזוֹנוֹ תָּמִיד.

and he should not accustom himself to make his food from them, or to eat them with his regular food constantly.

כְּגֹוֶן דָּגִים גְּדוֹלִים וְגַבְיָנָה

These are, for example, large fish, and cheese,

וְחֶלֶב שֶׁשָּׂהָא אַחֵר שֶׁנֶּחֱלַב כ"ד שָׁעוֹת.

and milk that remained after it was milked for twenty-four hours;

וּבֶשֶׁר שְׁוֹרִים גְּדוֹלִים וְתִישִׁים גְּדוֹלִים

and the meat of large oxen, and large he-goats;

וְהַפּוֹל וְהָעֶדְשִׁים וְהַסְּפִיר

and the horse-bean, and lentils, and the chickpea;

וְלֶחֶם שְׁעוּרִים וְלֶחֶם מִצּוֹת

and barley bread, and unleavened bread;

וְהַכְּרוֹב וְהַחֲצִיר וְהַבֶּצֶלִים וְהַשּׁוּמִים וְהַחֲרָדֵל וְהַצָּנוֹן.

and cabbage, and leeks, and onions, and garlic, and mustard, and radishes.

כָּל אֵלוֹ מֵאֲכָלִים רָעִים הֵם

All of these are bad foods;

אִין רָאוּי לָאֲדָם לֶאֱכֹל מֵאֵלּוֹ אֶלָּא מְעַט עַד מְאֹד וּבִימֹת הַגֶּשְׁמִים.

it is not proper for a person to eat of these except a very little, and only in the rainy season.

אָבֵל בִּימֹת הַחֶמָּה לֹא יֵאָכֵל מֵהֶן כָּלֵל.

But in the summer season, he should not eat of them at all.

וְהַפּוֹל וְהַעֲדָשִׁים בְּלֹבֵד אִין רָאוּי לֶאֱכֹלָן לֹא בִימֹת הַחֶמָּה וְלֹא בִימֹת הַגֶּשְׁמִים.

And the horse-bean and lentils alone, it is not proper to eat them, neither in the summer season nor in the rainy season.

וְהַדְּלוּעִין אוֹכְלִין מֵהֶן בִּימֹת הַחֶמָּה:

And as for squashes, one may eat of them in the summer season.

הִלְכָּה י

Halacha 10 · Foods that are Slightly Harmful and the Wise Person's Conduct Regarding Them

וְיֵשׁ מֵאֲכָלוֹת שֶׁהֵם רָעִים וְאִינָן כְּמוֹ אֵלּוּ.

And there are foods that are bad, but they are not like these extremely harmful ones mentioned previously.

וְהֵם עוֹף הַמַּיִם וּבְנֵי יוֹנָה הַקְּטָנִים וְהַתְּמָרִים

And they are: waterfowl, and small young pigeons, and dates,

וְלֶחֶם קָלוּי בְּשֶׁמֶן אוֹ לֶחֶם שְׁנֵלוּשׁ בְּשֶׁמֶן

and bread roasted in oil, or bread that was kneaded with oil,

וְהַסֵּלֶת שֶׁנִּפְּסוּ אוֹתָהּ כָּל צֶרֶף עַד שֶׁלֹּא נִשְׁאַרָה בָּהּ רֵיחַ מוֹרֶסָן.

and fine flour that they sifted thoroughly, until not even a trace of bran remained in it,

וְהַחֲצִיר וְהַמוֹרִיִּס.

and fish brine, and pickled fish oil.

אין ראוי להרבות מאכלות אלו.

It is not proper to consume much of these foods.

ואדם שהוא חכם וכובש את יצרו

And a person who is wise and conquers his evil inclination,

ולא ימשך אחר תאוותו

and does not draw after his desire,

ולא יאכל מן הנזכרים כלום אלא אם נצרך להם לרפואה

and does not eat anything from these mentioned foods unless he needs them for healing,

הרי זה גבור:

behold, this one is a hero in his service of Hashem.

הלכה יא

Halacha 11 · The Proper Consumption of Tree Fruits and Those That Harm the Body

לעולם ימנע אדם עצמו מפרות האילנות.

Always should withhold a person himself from fruits of the trees, as they are generally not ideal for digestion.

ולא ירבה מהן

And not should he eat much of them,

ואפילו יבשין

and even when they are dried,

ואין צריך לומר רטבים.

and there is no need to say that he should not eat much of them when they are fresh.

אבל קדם שיתפשלו כל צרכן

But before they ripen all their need,

הרי הן כחרבות לגוף.

behold they are like swords to the body because they are so harmful.

וכן החרובים רעים לעולם.

And likewise, carobs are bad always for a person's health.

וכל הפרות הנמוצין רעים

And all fruits that are sour are bad,

וְאִין אוֹכְלִין מֵהֶן אֶלָּא מְעַט

and one does not eat of them except a little,

בְּיָמֹת הַחֶמָּה וּבְמָקוֹמוֹת הַחֹמִים.

and only in the days of the heat and in places that are hot.

וְהַתְּאֵנִים וְהָעֲנָבִים וְהַשְּׁקָדִים לָעוֹלָם טוֹבִים

And figs and grapes and almonds always are good,

בֵּין רְטֹבִין בֵּין יָבֵשִׁין

whether fresh whether dried,

וְאוֹכֵל אָדָם מֵהֶם כָּל צָרְכוֹ.

and may eat a person of them all his need.

וְלֹא יִתְמִיד אֲכִילָתָם

But not should he make constant their eating,

אֲף עַל פִּי שֶׁהֵן טוֹבִים מִכָּל פְּרֵי הָאֵילָנוֹת:

even though they are better than all fruit of the trees.

הַלָּכָה יב

Halacha 12 · The Effects of Honey and Wine and Seasonal Adjustments to Food Intake

הַדְּבַשׁ וְהַיַּיִן רַע לְקֹטָנִים

Honey and wine are bad for the young, as they generate too much heat in their already warm temperaments,

וְיָפֶה לְזָקֵנִים

and they are good for the old, whose bodies are naturally colder and need warming,

וְכָל שָׁכֵן בְּיָמֹת הַגֶּשְׁמִים.

and all the more so are they beneficial for them in the days of the rains, during the cold winter season.

וְצָרִיךְ אָדָם לֵאכֹל בְּיָמֹת הַחֶמָּה

And a person needs to eat in the days of the sun, during the hot summer months,

שְׁנֵי שְׁלִישִׁים מֶה שֶׁהוּא אוֹכֵל בְּיָמֹת הַגֶּשְׁמִים:

only two thirds of what he eats in the days of the rains, because the digestive system is weaker when the weather is hot.

לְעוֹלָם יִשְׁתַּדֵּל אָדָם שֶׁיְהִיוּ מַעֲיו רַפִּין כָּל יָמָיו

Always should strive a person that should be his bowels loose all his days,

וְיִהְיֶה קָרוֹב לְשִׁלְשוֹל מְעֻט.

and he should be close to diarrhea slightly.

וְזֶה כָּלֵל גָּדוֹל בְּרִפּוּאָה

And this is a principle great in medicine:

כָּל זְמַן שֶׁהָרָעִי נִמָּנֵעַ אוֹ יוֹצֵא בְקוֹשִׁי

any time that the stool is withheld or comes out with difficulty,

חֲלָאִים רָעִים בָּאִים.

illnesses bad come.

וּבִמָּה יִרְפָּה אָדָם מַעֲיו אִם יִתְאַמְצוּ מְעֻט.

And with what shall loosen a person his bowels if they become constipated slightly?

אִם הָיָה בַּחוּר

If he is a young man,

יֵאָכֵל בְּבֹקֶר בְּבֹקֶר מְלֻחִים שְׁלֻקִּים

he should eat in the morning in the morning salted herbs boiled,

מְתֻבָּלִין בְּשֶׁמֶן זַיִת וּבְמוֹרָאִים וּבְמֶלַח בְּלֹא פֶת.

seasoned with oil of olives and with fish brine and with salt without bread.

אוֹ יִשְׁתֶּה מִי שֶׁלֵק שֶׁל תְּרֵדִין אוֹ כְרוֹב

Or he should drink water of boiled vegetables of spinach or cabbage,

בְּשֶׁמֶן זַיִת וּבְמוֹרָאִים וּמֶלַח.

with oil of olives and fish brine and salt.

וְאִם הָיָה זָקֵן

And if he is an old man,

יִשְׁתֶּה דְּבַשׁ מְזוּג בְּמֵי חַמִּים בְּבֹקֶר

he should drink honey diluted with water hot in the morning,

וְיִשָּׁהָ כְּמוֹ אַרְבַּע שָׁעוֹת

and he should wait about four hours,

ואַחֲרַי כִּי יֵאָכֵל סְעֻדָּתוֹ.

and after so he should eat his meal.

וְיַעֲשֶׂה כֵן יוֹם אֶחָד אוֹ שְׁלֹשָׁה אוֹ אַרְבָּעָה יָמִים אִם צָרִיךְ לָכֶּה

And he should do so day one or three or four days if he needs to do so,

עַד שֶׁיִּרְפוּ מַעֲיוֹ:

until that loosen his bowels.

הַלָּכָה יד

Halacha 14 · Maintaining Physical Health through Exercise and Moderate Eating

וְעוֹד כָּלֵל אַחֲרֵי אֲמָרוֹ בְּבִרְיאוֹת הַגּוֹף.

And another general principle the Sages said concerning the health of the body:

כָּל זְמַן שֶׁאָדָם מְתַעֲמֵל וְיֹגֵעַ הִרְבֵּה

All the time that a person exercises and exerts himself much,

וְאֵינוֹ שָׂבֵעַ וּמַעֲיוֹ רַפִּינָא

and is not completely satiated, and his bowels are loose and functioning properly,

אֵין חֲלִי בָּא עָלָיו וְכֹחוֹ מִתְחַזֵּק.

no sickness comes upon him, and his strength grows stronger.

וְאִפְּלוּ אוֹכֵל מֵאֲכָלוֹת הָרָעִים:

And this is true even if he eats foods that are bad for him.

הַלָּכָה טו

Halacha 15 · The Danger of Overeating and the Importance of Physical Exercise

וְכָל מִי שֶׁהוּא יוֹשֵׁב לְבִטָּח וְאֵינוֹ מְתַעֲמֵל.

And anyone who sits idle and does not exercise,

אוֹ מִי שֶׁמְשָׁהָ נִקְבָּיו.

or one who delays his excretions,

אוֹ מִי שֶׁמַּעֲיוֹ קָשִׁין.

or one whose bowels are hard and constipated,

אִפְלוּ אָכַל מֵאֲכָלוֹת טוֹבִים וְשָׁמַר עֲצָמוֹ עַל פִּי הָרְפוּאָה.

even if he ate good foods and guarded himself according to the rules of medicine,

כָּל יָמָיו יִהְיוּ מְכָאוֹבִים וְכחוֹ תֵּשֵׁשׁ.

all his days will be filled with pains and his strength will weaken.

וְאֲכִילָה גֹסֶה לְגוֹרֵף כָּל אָדָם כְּמוֹ סֵם הַמָּוֶת.

And overeating is to the body of every man like a deadly poison,

וְהוּא עֶקֶר לְכָל הַחֲלָאִים.

and it is the root of all illnesses.

וְרֹב הַחֲלָאִים שֶׁבָּאִים עַל הָאָדָם אֵינָם אֶלָּא אוֹ מִפְּנֵי מֵאֲכָלִים רָעִים.

And most of the illnesses that come upon a person are only either because of bad foods,

אוֹ מִפְּנֵי שֶׁהוּא מְמַלֵּא בִטְנוֹ וְאוֹכֵל אֲכִילָה גֹסֶה אִפְלוּ מִמֵּאֲכָלִים טוֹבִים.

or because he fills his belly and overeats, even of good foods.

הוּא שֶׁשְׁלֹמֹה אָמַר בְּחֻמְתּוֹ מִשְׁלֵי כֹא כֹג "שֹׁמֵר פִּיו וּלְשׁוֹנוֹ שֹׁמֵר מִצָּרוֹת נַפְשׁוֹ".

This is what Shlomo said in his wisdom in Mishlei 21:23, "He who guards his mouth and his tongue guards his soul from troubles."

כְּלוּמַר שׁוֹמֵר פִּיו מִלֵּאכֹל מֵאֲכָל רָע אוֹ מִלְשָׁבַע

Meaning to say, he guards his mouth from eating bad food or from overeating,

וּלְשׁוֹנוֹ מִלְדַּבֵּר אֶלָּא בְּצָרְכּוֹ:

and his tongue from speaking except for his necessary needs.

הִלְכָּה טז

Halacha 16 · The Proper Manner of Bathing and Examining One's Bodily Needs

דְּרָה הִרְחִיצָה.

The way of bathing that is healthy for the body is as follows:

שִׁיבְנִים אָדָם לְמַרְחֵץ מִשְׁבָּעָה יָמִים לְשָׁבָעָה יָמִים.

that a person should enter the bathhouse once from seven days to seven days, meaning once a week.

וְלֹא יִכְנֹס סְמוּךְ לְאֲכִילָה.

And he should not enter the bathhouse close to eating a meal,

וְלֹא כִּשְׁהוּא רָעֵב.

and not when he is hungry,

אֲלָא כְּשִׁיתְחִיל הַמְּזוֹן לְהִתְעַפֵּל.

but rather when the food begins to digest in his stomach.

וְרוֹחֵץ כָּל גּוּפוֹ בְּחֹמִין שְׂאִין הַגּוֹף נִכְוָה בָּהֶן.

And he washes all of his body in hot water by which the body is not scalded.

וְרֹאשׁוֹ בְּלֵבֶד בְּחֹמִין שֶׁהַגּוֹף נִכְוָה בָּהֶן.

And he may wash his head only in hot water by which the body is scalded, as the head can tolerate hotter water.

וְאַחֵר כֶּה יֶרַחֵץ גּוּפוֹ בְּפוֹשְׁרִין

And after that, he should wash his body in luke warm water,

וְאַחֵר כֶּה בְּפוֹשְׁרִין מִן הַפוֹשְׁרִין

and after that in luke warm water that is cooler than the first luke warm water,

עַד שֶׁיֶרַחֵץ בְּצוֹנֵן.

until he washes in cold water.

וְלֹא יַעֲבֹר עַל רֹאשׁוֹ מִים לֹא פוֹשְׁרִין וְלֹא צוֹנֵן.

And he should not pour over his head water that is neither luke warm nor cold, but only hot water.

וְלֹא יֶרַחֵץ בְּצוֹנֵן בַּיָּמֹת הַגֶּשְׁמִים.

And he should not wash in cold water in the days of the rains, during the cold winter season.

וְלֹא יֶרַחֵץ עַד שֶׁיִּזְיַע וַיִּפְרֹךְ כָּל גּוּפוֹ.

And he should not wash with water until he sweats and massages all of his body to loosen the pores.

וְלֹא יֵאָרִיד בְּמֶרְחֵץ

And he should not linger in the bathhouse unnecessarily;

אֲלָא כְּשִׁיזְיַע וַיִּפְרֹךְ גּוּפוֹ יִשְׁתַּטֵּף וַיֵּצֵא.

but when he sweats and massages his body, he should rinse off and leave.

וְבוֹדֵק עֲצָמוֹ קֹדֶם שֶׁיִּכְנֶס לְמֶרְחֵץ וְאַחֵר שֶׁיֵּצֵא

And he must examine himself to see if he needs to relieve himself before he enters the bathhouse and after he leaves,

שָׁמָּה יִהְיֶה צָרִיד לְנִקְבֵּיו.

lest he will be needing his orifices, as holding it in is harmful.

וְכֵן בּוֹדֵק אָדָם עֲצָמוֹ תָּמִיד

And so a person should always examine himself for this need:

קֹדֶם אֲכִילָה וְאַחֵר אֲכִילָה.

before eating and after eating,

וְקֹדֶם בְּעִילָה וְאַחֵר בְּעִילָה.

and before intercourse and after intercourse,

וְקֹדֶם שְׂיִיגָע וְיִתְעַמֵּל וְאַחֵר שְׂיִיגָע וְיִתְעַמֵּל.

and before he exerts and exercises, and after he exerts and exercises,

וְקֹדֶם שְׁיִישׁוֹן וְאַחֵר שְׁיִישׁוֹן.

and before he sleeps and after he sleeps.

וּבְשְׁעוֹר הַכֹּל עֲשָׂרָה:

And in the total of everything, these times of self-examination are ten.

הִלְכָּה יז

Halacha 17 • Proper Conduct Upon Leaving the Bathhouse and the Prohibition of Drinking Cold Water

כְּשִׁיצֵא אָדָם מִן הַמְּרִחֵץ

When a person leaves the bathhouse,

יִלְבָּשׁ בְּגָדָיו וְיִכְסֶה רֹאשׁוֹ בְּבֵית הַחִיצוֹן

he should dress in his clothes and cover his head in the outer room,

כְּדִי שֶׁלֹא תִשְׁלֹט בּוֹ רוּחַ קָרָה.

so that a cold wind will not rule over him and make him ill.

וְאַפְּלוּ בַּיָּמֹת הַחֶמָּה צָרִיף לְהוֹזִיָּה.

And even in the days of the sun, during the hot summer, he needs to be careful about this.

וַיִּשְׁתּוּ אַחֵר שִׁיצֵא

And he should wait after he leaves the bathhouse

עַד שֶׁתִּתְיַשֵּׁב נַפְשׁוֹ וְיָנוּחַ גּוּפוֹ וְתִסּוּר הַחֲמִימוֹת

until his soul settles, and his body rests, and the warmth of the bathhouse departs from him,

ואחר כך יאכל.

and after that he should eat.

ואם ישן מעט כשיצא מן המרחץ קדם אכילה

And if he sleeps a little when he leaves from the bathhouse, before eating,

הרי זה יפה מאד.

behold, this is very good for his health.

ולא ישקה מים קרים בצאתו מן המרחץ

And he should not drink cold water upon his leaving from the bathhouse,

ואין צריך לומר שלא ישקה במרחץ.

and there is no need to say that he should not drink cold water while still in the bathhouse itself.

ואם צמא כשיצא מן המרחץ

And if he is thirsty when he left from the bathhouse

ואינו יכול למנע עצמו

and he is not able to restrain himself from drinking,

יערב המים ביין או בדבש וישקה.

he should mix the water with wine or with honey and then drink.

ואם סך בשמן במרחץ בימות הגשמים אחר שישתטף

And if he anoints with oil in the bathhouse in the days of the rains, after he rinses off with water,

הרי זה טוב:

behold, this is good.

הלכה יח

Halacha 18• The Proper Conduct of Bloodletting and Guarding One's Health

לא ירגיל אדם להקז דם תמיד.

A person should not accustom himself to let blood constantly, as a regular health practice.

ולא יקז אלא אם יהיה צריך לו ביותר.

And he should not let blood unless there will be an urgent need for him to do so exceedingly.

ולא יקז לא בימות החמה ולא בימות הגשמים

And he should not let blood, neither in the days of the sun, which is the hot summer, nor in the days of the rains, which is the cold winter,

אֶלָּא מְעַט בַּיָּמִי נִסָּן וּמְעַט בַּיָּמִי תִּשְׁרֵי.

but rather only a little in the days of Nisan, during the spring, and a little in the days of Tishrei, during the autumn, when the weather is moderate.

וּמֵאַחֵר חֲמִשִּׁים שָׁנָה לֹא יִקְיֹז כָּלֵל.

And after fifty years of age, he should not let blood at all, because his body is weaker.

וְלֹא יִקְיֹז אָדָם דָּם וְיִכְנֹס לְמִרְחֵץ בּוֹ בַּיּוֹם.

And a person should not let blood and enter the bathhouse on that very day, as the heat is dangerous right after bloodletting.

וְלֹא יִקְיֹז וְיֵצֵא לְדֶרֶךְ.

And he should not let blood and immediately go out on a journey.

וְלֹא בַּיּוֹם שֶׁיָּבוֹא מִן הַדֶּרֶךְ.

And likewise, he should not let blood on the day that he comes back from the journey.

וַיֹּאכַל וַיִּשְׁתֶּה בַּיּוֹם הַהֶקְזָה פָּחוֹת מִמָּה שֶׁהוּא רָגִיל.

And he should eat and drink on the day of the bloodletting less than what he is normally accustomed to consume.

וַיִּנּוּחַ בַּיּוֹם הַהֶקְזָה

And he should rest on the day of the bloodletting,

וְלֹא יִיגַע וְלֹא יִתְעַמֵּל וְלֹא יִטְוֶה:

and he should not exert himself, and he should not exercise, and he should not even stroll.

הַלְכָּה יט

Halacha 19 · Proper Conduct Regarding Marital Relations for Maintaining Physical Health

שְׂכֵבֶת זֶרַע הִיא כַח הַגּוֹף וְחַיּוֹ וּמֵאוֹר הָעֵינַיִם

Semen emission is the strength of the body and its life and the light of the eyes,

וְכָל שֶׁתִּצָּא בְּיוֹתֵר הַגּוֹף כָּלָה וְכַחוֹ כָּלָה וְחַיּוֹ אֹבְדִים.

and whenever it goes out excessively, the body is depleted and its strength is depleted and its life is lost.

הוּא שֶׁאָמַר שְׁלֹמֹה בְּחֻמְתּוֹ מִשְׁלִי לֹא ג' "אַל תֵּתֵן לְנָשִׁים חֵילְךָ".

It is as said Shlomo in his wisdom in Mishlei, "Do not give to women your strength."

כָּל הַשְּׁטוּף בְּבַעֲלִיָּה זְקֵנָה קוֹפְצֶת עָלָיו.

Anyone who is steeped in intercourse, old age springs upon him prematurely,

וכחו תִּשָּׁשׁ. וְעֵינָיו כְּהוֹת.

and his strength is weakened, and his eyes become dim,

וְרִיחַ רַע נוֹדֵף מִפִּיו וּמִשְׁחָיו.

and an odor bad emanates from his mouth and from his armpit,

וּשְׁעַר רֹאשׁוֹ וְגִבּוֹת עֵינָיו וְרִיסֵי עֵינָיו נוֹשְׁרוֹת.

and the hair of his head and the brows of his eyes and the lashes of his eyes fall out,

וּשְׁעַר זָקְנוֹ וְשִׁחָיו וּשְׁעַר רַגְלָיו רֵבָה.

and the hair of his beard and his armpit and the hair of his legs increases,

שָׁנָיו נוֹפְלוֹת. וְהִרְבָּה כְּאֲבִים חוּץ מֵאלוֹ בָּאִים עָלָיו.

his teeth fall out, and many pains besides these come upon him.

אָמְרוּ חֲכָמֵי הָרופָאִים אֶחָד מֵאַלֶּף מֵת בְּשָׂאָר חֲלָאִים וְהָאֶלֶף מֵרַב הַתִּשְׁמִישׁ.

Said the wise of the doctors: one from a thousand dies from other illnesses, and the thousand remaining die from the excess of intercourse.

לְפִיכָה צָרִיךְ אָדָם לְהִזָּהֵר בְּדַבָּר זֶה אִם רָצָה לְחַיּוֹת בְּטוֹבָה.

Therefore must a person be careful in this matter if he wishes to live in wellness.

וְלֹא יִבְעַל אֶלָּא כְּשִׁימָצָא גּוּפוֹ בָּרִיא וְחֲזָק בְּיֹתֵר

And not should he engage in intercourse except when is found his body healthy and strong exceedingly,

וְהוּא מְתַקְּשָׁה הִרְבָּה שֶׁלֹּא לְדַעְתּוֹ.

and he has an erection much, not by his intent,

וּמִסִּית׃ עֲצָמוֹ לְדַבָּר אַחֵר וְהַקְּשׁוּי בּוֹ כְּשִׁחָיָה.

and he diverts himself to a matter other and the erection remains in him as it was,

וְיִמָּצָא כְּכֹד מִמֶּתְנֵיוֹ וּלְמַטָּה וּכְאִלוֹ חוּטֵי הַבִּיצִים נִמְשָׁכִים וּבָשָׂרוֹ חָם.

and there is found a heaviness from his loins and below, and as if the cords of the testicles are stretched, and his flesh is warm.

זֶה צָרִיךְ לְבַעַל וּרְפוּאָה לוֹ שִׁיבְעָל.

This one needs to engage in intercourse, and it is a cure for him that he engage in intercourse.

לֹא יִבְעַל אָדָם וְהוּא שֶׁבַע וְלֹא רָעַב

Not should engage in intercourse a person while he is full, and not when he is hungry,

אֶלָּא אַחֲרֵי שִׁיתְעַכֵּל הַמֶּזֶן שֶׁבִּמְעִיו.

except after that is digested the food that is in his bowels.

וְיִבְדֹּק נִקְבֵּיו קֹדֶם בְּעִילָה וְאַחֲרֵי בְּעִילָה.

And he should check his orifices before intercourse and after intercourse.

וְלֹא יִבְעַל מֵעֵמֶד וְלֹא מִיָּשֵׁב.

And not should he engage in intercourse standing, and not sitting,

וְלֹא בְּבֵית הַמְּרֻחָץ וְלֹא בְּיוֹם שִׁיכְנָס לְמִרְחָץ.

and not in the house of the bath, and not on the day that he enters the bathhouse,

וְלֹא בְּיוֹם הַקָּזָה.

and not on the day of bloodletting,

וְלֹא בְּיוֹם יְצִיאָה לְדֶרֶךְ אוֹ בִּיאָה מִן הַדֶּרֶךְ לֹא לְפָנֵיהֶם וְלֹא לְאַחֲרֵיהֶם:

and not on the day of departure on a journey or arrival from the journey, not before them and not after them.

הַלָּכָה כ

Halacha 20 · Healthy Conduct and the Guarantee of Freedom from Illness

כָּל הַמְנַהִּיג עֲצָמוֹ בְּדַרְכִּים אֵלּוּ שֶׁהוֹרִינוּ

Anyone who conducts himself in these ways that we have instructed in this chapter,

אֲנִי עֹרֵב לוֹ שֶׁאֵינּוּ בָּא לְיָדַי חֲלִי כָּל יָמָיו

I guarantee to him that he will not come to the hands of illness all his days,

עַד שִׁיזְמִין הַרְבֵּה וְיָמוּת

until he ages much and dies of natural old age,

וְאֵינּוּ צָרִיךְ לְרוֹפֵא.

and he will not need a doctor.

וְיִהְיֶה גּוֹפּוֹ שָׁלֵם וְעוֹמֵד עַל בְּרִיו כָּל יָמָיו.

And his body will be whole and standing upon its health all his days.

אֶלָּא אִם כֵּן הָיָה גּוֹפּוֹ רַע מִתְחִלַּת בְּרִיתוֹ.

This is guaranteed unless his body was bad from the beginning of his creation, having been born with a weak constitution,

או אם היה רגיל במנהג מן המנהגות הרעים מתחלת מולדתו.

or if he was accustomed to a habit from the bad habits from the beginning of his birth, which damaged his health early on,

או אם תבוא מפת דבר או מפת בצרת לעולם:

or if a plague of pestilence or a plague of drought comes to the world, which affects everyone regardless of their personal health practices.

הלכה כא

Halacha 21 · Healthy Habits Apply Only to the Healthy and the Danger of Sudden Change

וכל המנהגות הטובים האלו שאמרנו

And all of these good habits that we have said and detailed until now,

אין ראוי לנהג בהן אלא הבריא.

it is not proper to behave with them except for the healthy person.

אבל החולה או מי שאחד מאיבריו חולה

But the sick person, or one whose one of his limbs is sick,

או מי שנהג מנהג רע שנים רבות.

or one who behaved in a bad habit for many years,

יש לכל אחד מהם דרכים אחרים והנהגות כפי חליו

there is for each one of them other ways and conducts according to his illness and specific situation,

כמו שיתבאר בספר הרפואות.

just as will be explained in the book of the medicines.

ושנוי וסת תחלת חלי:

And a change of habit is the beginning of illness, so one must always be careful when altering his bodily routines.

הלכה כב

Halacha 22 · The Conduct of the Healthy and Sick Where No Doctor is Available

כל מקום שאין בו רופא.

In any place that there is not in it a doctor to guide people on their specific physical needs,

אחד הבריא ואחד החולה

both the healthy person and both the sick person,

אין ראוי לו לזוז מכל הדרכים האלו שנאמרו בפרק זה.

it is not proper for him to budge from all these ways that were said in this chapter,

שכל אחד מהן לאחרית טובה מביא:

for each one of them brings to a good end and leads to lasting health.

הלכה כג

Halacha 23: Ten Essential Communal Institutions Required for a Torah Sage to Dwell in a City

כל עיר שאין בה עשרה דברים האלו

Any city that does not have in it these ten things,

אין תלמיד חכם ראוי לדור בתוכה.

a disciple of a Sage is not permitted to dwell within it.

ואלו הן:

And these are they:

רופא.

a doctor,

ואמון.

and a bloodletter,

ובית המרחץ.

and a bathhouse,

ובית הכסא.

and a privy,

ומים מצויין כגון נהר ומעין.

and available water, such as a river or a spring,

ובית הכנסת.

and a synagogue,

ומלמד תינוקות.

and a teacher of children,

ולבקר.

and a scribe,

וגבאי צדקה.

and a charity collector,

ובית דין מכים וחובשים:

and a court of law that has the authority to administer lashes and imprison wrongdoers.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

The Rambam begins by outlining the proper times and measures for eating and drinking, emphasizing that one should never overeat and must always attend to his bodily needs immediately. He details the importance of physical exertion and sweat-producing tasks before meals, followed by proper rest, and explains the correct posture for eating and sleeping, including the ideal eight hours of sleep. Finally, he categorizes various foods—ranging from highly beneficial fruits like figs and grapes, to extremely harmful foods that act like poison, to seasonal adjustments for summer and winter—urging the wise person to overcome his desires and eat solely for the sake of maintaining a healthy body to serve Hashem.

למעשה WHAT TO TAKE HOME

The Rambam is teaching us a profound, life-altering chiddush here: taking care of your physical health is not a distraction from your avodah, nor is it merely a worldly necessity. It is 'mi-darchei Hashem', an actual path of serving the Creator. When you eat mindfully, sleep properly, and care for your body, you are not just engaging in physical maintenance; you are building the very vessel required to hold yiras Shamayim and Torah knowledge. A sick or exhausted body simply cannot sustain the deep mental clarity needed to know and serve Hashem.

This means we must stop viewing our physical habits as separate from our spiritual lives. The table where you eat is an altar, and the way you treat your sleep and digestion is a direct reflection of your ratzon to serve Hashem with a clear mind. When you restrain yourself from overeating, or when you make sure to get enough sleep so you can rise before the sun, you are acting as a true gibor who conquers his yetzer hara for the sake of Heaven.

Today, treat one physical act of self-care as a holy avodah. Before you eat your next meal, pause, check that you are actually hungry, and resolve to stop eating when you are three-quarters full, consciously dedicating the physical strength you gain to the service of Hashem.