



## THOUGHT OF MAIMONIDES: CODE – LAWS OF CHARACTER TRAITS

### CHAPTER ONE

This chapter explains that there are many different temperaments and that the intermediate ways are best, and explains how to achieve them.

1) There are many temperaments, all of which are different and each of which is distinct, and which are possessed by different people. There are people of angry disposition who are always annoyed, and there are those who are even-tempered and are never angry, and if they do get angry, it is only slightly and rarely. There are people who are excessively haughty, and there are people who are excessively meek. There are those with many desires who are never satisfied with what they receive, and there are those with a very pure heart and do not desire even the simplest things that the body needs. There are those with an open heart who would not be satisfied with even all the money in the world, as it is written, "He who loves silver shall not be satisfied with silver", and there are those with a short heart for whom small amounts are enough and sufficient, and will not persevere to fulfil all their needs. Then there are those who mortify themselves with hunger and collect by hand, and will not even eat from a perutah of their own except with great suffering, and there are those who waste all their money without thinking. Other temperaments, such as profligacy, mourning before the burial of the deceased, miserliness, nobility, cruelty, mercy, cowardice, courage, et cetera, also follow this pattern [of extremes].

2) Between the extremes of each temperament are the intermediate temperaments, each of which is also distinct. Of the temperaments, there are those which one has from the moment of one's creation [and] according to the one's nature, and there are those temperaments which direct one's nature and which one will quickly acquire in magnitudes greater than that of the other temperaments. Then there are those temperaments which one does not have from the moment of one's creation but which one learns from others, or which release themselves upon one depending upon one's thoughts, or which one heard is a good temperament to have and which is fitting to follow and accustom oneself to until it becomes fixed in one's behaviour.

3) There are two opposite extremes to each and every temperament, one of which will not be a good mannerism and which is not fitting to follow or to teach to oneself. If one finds that one's nature is tending to one of these temperaments or is being directed by one of them, or that one has already learnt about it and accustomed

oneself to it, then one should return to good and go in the ways of good - this is the way of the upright.

4) The way of the upright is [to adopt] the intermediate characteristic of each and every temperament that people have. This is the characteristic that is equidistant from the two extremes of the temperament of which it is a characteristic, and is not closer to either of the extremes. Therefore, the first Sages commanded that one's temperaments should always be such, and that one should postulate on them and direct them along the middle way, in order that one will have a perfect body. How is this done? One should not be of an angry disposition and be easily angered, nor should one be like a dead person who does not feel, but one should be in the middle - one should not get angry except over a big matter about which it is fitting to get angry, so that one will not act similarly again. Likewise, one should not have lust except for those things which the body needs and without which cannot survive, as it is written, "The righteous eat to satisfy his soul". Similarly, one should not labour at one's business, but one should obtain what one needs on an hourly basis, as it is written, "A little that a righteous man has is better, et cetera". Nor should one be miserly or wasteful with one's money, but one should give charity according to what one can spare, and lend as fitting to whoever needs. One should not be [excessively] praised or merry, and nor should one be sorrowful or miserable, but one should be happy for all one's days in satisfaction and with a pleasant expression on one's face. One should apply a similar principle to the other temperaments - this is the way of the wise.

5) Any man whose temperaments are intermediate is called wise. One who is particular with himself and moves away from the middle ways to either extreme is called pious. What does this mean? One who distances himself from pride by moving to its complete opposite of meekness is called pious, for this is a characteristic of piety. But if he distances himself only half-way and becomes humble he is called wise, for this is a characteristic of wisdom. The first pious people kept their temperaments from the middle ways and towards one of the extremes - one temperament they would bias one way, and another the other way [and as appropriate], but this is going beyond what the law requires.

6) We are commanded to go in these middle ways, the good and upright ways, as it is written, "And walk in His ways, et cetera". As an explanation of this commandment, we have learnt that just as God shows mercy so also should we show mercy, that just as God is merciful so also should we be merciful, and that just as God is holy so also should we be holy. It was with this in mind that the first Prophets called the Almighty with the Attributes of: long-suffering, magnanimous, righteous, upright, faultless, mighty, strong, et cetera, in order to make it known that these are good and upright

ways, and that one is obligated to accustom oneself to them, and to make one's ways as similar to them as possible.

7) How should one regulate oneself with these temperaments so that one is directed by them? One should do, change one and change one's actions which one does according to the intermediate temperaments and always go back over them, until such actions are easy for one to do and will not be troublesome for one, and until such temperaments are fixed in one's soul. This way is known as the way of the Lord, for the reasons that the Creator has been called by them and that they are the intermediate characteristics which we are obligated to adopt. This is what Abraham taught his sons, as it is written, "For I know him, that he will command his children, et cetera". One who goes in this way will bring upon himself good and blessings, as it is written, "...that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which He has spoken of him".

## CHAPTER TWO

This chapter explains that extreme temperaments are sometimes best.

1) Bodily sicknesses [can] cause bitter things to taste sweet and sweet things to taste bitter. There are some sicknesses which cause a desire to eat things which are not suitable for eating, such as dust and coal, and also cause a dislike of normal foods, such as bread and meat - it all depends upon the seriousness of the sickness in question. Such is man, that his sick soul desires and loves the bad temperaments, and hates the good ways and tries to avoid going in those ways, for their sickness makes it difficult. About such people Isaiah said, "Woe to those people who call bad good and good bad, put dark for light and light for dark and put the sweet for bitter and the bitter for sweet", and about them it is written, "...who leave the paths of uprightness to walk in the ways of darkness". So what is a remedy for sicknesses of the soul? Go next to wise people, for they are healers of the soul, healing it by means of temperaments which they teach until they have returned the soul to the good ways. Concerning those who recognise in themselves bad temperaments but do not amongst wise people Solomon said, "Fools despise wisdom and instruction".

2) How do they cure? They tell someone who is of an angry disposition to establish himself, and that if he is hit or cursed he should not react, and he should follow this way until his angry disposition has left him. If he was haughty, he should subject himself to a lot of disgrace and sit low down, and should dress in torn rags which are a discredit to normal clothes, and do similar things until his haughtiness has left him and he returns to the middle way, which is the good way. Once he has returned to the middle way he should follow it for the rest of his life. Other temperaments should

be treated in this manner - if one was far over to one extreme, one should move oneself to the other extreme and accustom oneself to it for a long time, until one has returned to the good way, which is the intermediate characteristic that each and every temperament has.

3) There are some intermediate temperaments which one is forbidden to have, but one should adopt one of the extremities of such temperaments. One of these is the temperament of haughtiness. It is not good [enough] for one to be just modest, but one should be meek, and one's spirits should be low. Therefore, concerning Moses our Teacher it is written, "...very meek", and not just, "meek". Therefore, the Sages commanded that one should be very meek. They said further that anyone who raises his spirits is denying the essence, as it is written, "...then your heart be lifted up and you forget the Lord your God". They also said that all those with haughty airs should be excommunicated, even if they are only slightly haughty. It is the same with anger, which is an extremely bad temperament and from which it is fitting for one to distance oneself as far as its opposite extreme. One should teach oneself not to get angry, even over something about which it would be normal to get angry. If one wanted to instill fear in one's sons or members of one's household, or in the community if one was their leader, and one wants to be angry at them in order that they will return to the good [ways], then one should show them that one is being angry at them just to correct them, and, when displaying such anger, one should bear in mind that one is like a man who is similar to being angry, and that one is not really angry. The first Sages said that if one is angry, it is as if one has worshipped idols. They also said that when a man gets angry, then if he was wise his wisdom leaves him, and if he was a prophet his prophecy leaves him, and that the life of angry people is not [really] a life. Therefore, they commanded us to distance ourselves from anger until one is accustomed to not getting any angry feelings at even annoying things. This is the good way. The way of the righteous is to be humble without being humbled, not to answer back when disgraced, to do things out of love and to be joyous in suffering. Scripture says about them, "...but let them who love Him be as the sun when it comes out in its might".

4) One should always be silent and not speak, except in matters of wisdom or in matters which are necessary for one to live. It has been said about Rav, our holy instructor, that he never made unnecessary conversation in all his life, but such is the conversation of the majority of people. Even on bodily matters one should not speak too much. About this the Sages commanded us and said that anyone who speaks excessively brings sin, and they [also] said that they have found nothing better for the body than silence. Similarly in Torah matters and in matters of wisdom; one's words should be few but should say a lot. The Sages commanded us in this respect, and said that one should always speak to one's students concisely. If one's words are

many and their content little then they are foolishness, and about this it is written, "For a dream comes through a multitude of business, and a fool's voice is known by a multitude of words".

5) Silence is the maturation of wisdom. Therefore, one should not be hasty in answering, and one should not speak excessively. One should teach one's students calmly and with satisfaction, without shouting and without being verbose. Solomon said, "The words of wise men heard in quiet are better, et cetera".

6) It is forbidden to associate with matters of disagreement and temptation, and one should not express one opinion while really holding another, but what one expresses should be what one holds, and that what one thinks should be what one says. It is forbidden to mislead other people, even if they are gentiles. For example, one may not sell a carcass of an animal to a gentile saying that it is the body of a slaughtered animal, nor may one sell to a gentile shoes made from the skin of a carcass and saying that they are made from the skin of a slaughtered animal, nor may one insist to eat at one's friend's house when one knows that he has no food [to spare], nor should one give refreshments to someone whom one knows won't take them, nor may one make someone open just for the sake of opening a barrel [of, for example, wine] which he wants to sell, et cetera. Even a single word of temptation or misleading is forbidden. One should have lips of truth, correct airs and a pure heart at all times.

7) One should not habitually laugh or joke, nor be sad or miserable, but one should be just happy. The Sages said that laughing and light-headedness accustom one to nakedness, and they commanded that one should not be licentious with jest, nor sad and mournful, but that one should receive all people with a pleasant expression on one's face. Similarly, one should not be greedy or scared of riches, nor should one be lazy and missing work, but one should have a good appearance, minimise one's work, and occupy oneself with Torah. One who minimises his share of things is happy. One should not be quarrelsome, envious or lustful, and nor should one pursue honour. The Sages said that [one's] envy and lust remove one from the world. The general rule of the matter is to go with the intermediate characteristics that each and every temperament has, so that all one's temperaments will be fixed in the middle ways. Solomon said, "Make even the path of your foot, and let all your ways be firm".

### CHAPTER THREE

This chapter explains that one should not impose on oneself more than the Torah has.

1) In case one would think that envy, lust, honour and similar things are bad ways and remove a man from the world, and that one should separate oneself from them and go to the opposite extreme, so that one won't eat meat, drink wine, marry, live in a nice house or dress in fine clothes, but dress only in sackcloth and hard wool, et cetera, like the priests of the gentiles do, which is also a bad way and one who follows this way is a sinner, for regarding a nazir it is written, "...and atone for him for that which he sinned by the dead, et cetera"; the Sages said that if a nazir, who separated himself from just wine, requires atonement, then how much more so anyone who separates himself from all things requires atonement. Therefore, the Sages commanded that one should not separate oneself from anything, except from things which the Torah has forbidden, and one should not refrain from using permitted things by means of vows and oaths. The Sages said, 'Is it not what the Torah has forbidden enough that you have to forbid for yourself other things?!'. According to this rule, those who always restrict themselves are not on the path of good. About these and similar things Solomon said, "Don't be excessively righteous, nor make yourself overwise; why should you destroy yourself?".

2) One has to adjust one's heart and actions to recognise only the Lord, blessed be He. One's resting, rising, speaking, and indeed everything else, should be for this end. How is this done? When one works for payment, it should not be one's intention just to amass money, but one should be working for money in order to be able to obtain things which one needs, such as food, drink, a house and a wife. Similarly, when one eats and drinks, one should not be doing so just for the benefit of it, because then one will eventually be eating just to sweeten one's palate and for the joy of it, but one should eat and drink just for the sake of the health of one's body and limbs. Therefore, one should eat only what the body will use, whether it is bitter or sweet, and one should not eat those things which are bad for the body, even if they are sweet. What does this mean? Somebody who has a temperature should not eat meat or honey, or drink wine, as Solomon said as an analogy to this, "It is not good to eat a lot of honey", but he should drink endive juice, even though it is bitter, for it is being consumed as a cure so that he will recover and be healthy - but it is impossible for one to exist without eating and drinking. Similarly, when one copulates, one should not do so just for the health of one's body and the creation of seed. Therefore, one should not copulate whenever one gets the lust for it, but one should do so whenever it is necessary to eject seed, such as a cure for some illness, or to produce children.

3) If one leads oneself in medicine only so that one's body and limbs will be complete and that one's children will do one's work and attend to one's needs, then one is not on the good path, but one should fix it in one's heart that one's body will be complete and strong in order that one's soul will be upright in recognising the Lord, for it is impossible to understand and think in wisdom if one is hungry or unwell, or if one of

one's limbs hurts. One should have the intention to have a son, who might become a great sage of Israel. It would transpire that someone who follows this path throughout his life, and always worships the Lord, even when working or copulating, and has the intention to do everything in order to find all that one's body needs so that one will be able to be complete in serving the Lord; and even when sleeping; if one slept in order to rest one's mind and body in order not to become unwell, for one will be unable to serve the Lord if one is unwell, then one's sleeping is a form of serving God. Concerning this the Sages commanded that all one's actions should be for the sake of serving God. Solomon said in his wisdom, "Acknowledge Him in all your ways, and He shall direct your paths".

#### CHAPTER FOUR

This chapter discusses bodily health, and those services which a learned sage should make sure are available in his town.

1) The body being healthy is of the ways of the Lord, for it is impossible to understand or know the knowledge of the Creator while unwell. Therefore, one should keep away from things which destroy the body, and accustom oneself to healthy and curing matters, which are as follows: One should never eat unless one is hungry, nor drink unless one is thirsty, and nor should one hold oneself back for even a single moment from relieving oneself, for whenever one feels the need to pass water or to defecate, one should do so immediately.

2) One should not eat until one's stomach is [very] full, but one should [only] eat until one's stomach is three-quarters full. Nor should one drink water during a meal, except a little mixed with wine, but once the food begins to digest one should what one needs to drink, but one should never drink too much, even when the food digests. One should nor eat unless one has checked oneself to make sure that one does not need to relieve oneself. One should not eat unless one has first relieved oneself, or until one's body gets warm, or unless one has worked at something else first. The general rule of the matter is that one should always answer one's body. In the morning, one should work until one's body gets warm, then one should wait until one's soul has settled, and then one may eat. It is good to wash in hot water after having worked, then wait a while, and then eat.

3) When one eats, one should always sit in one's place, or recline on one's left side, and one should not ride, work or agitate one's body until the food has been digested. Someone who goes for a walk, or works, after eating will bring upon himself bad and difficult illnesses.

4) The day and night [together] are twenty-four hours long. It is sufficient to sleep for a third of this, i.e. eight hours, which should be at the end of the night, so that there will be eight hours from when one goes to sleep to sunrise. One should get up before sunrise.

5) One should not sleep on one's front or on one's back, but on one's side; at the beginning of the night one should sleep on one's left side, and at the end of the night on one's right side. One should not sleep close to having eaten, but one should first wait three or four hours. One should not sleep during the day.

6) One should not eat at the beginning of a meal things which purge one's bowels, such as grapes, figs, strawberries, pears, water melons or types of cucumber. One should not mix one's foods, but one should wait until the first course has passed from one's upper stomach before eating the second course. Those things, such as pomegranates, quinces, apples or small pears, which exert the bowels should [only] be eaten at the end of a meal, and one should not eat too many of them.

7) If one wants to eat poultry and animal meat together at the same meal, one should eat the poultry first. If one wanted to eat poultry and eggs together, one should eat the eggs first. If one wanted to eat lean animal meat and fat animal meat together, one should eat the lean meat first. One should always eat the lighter foods before the heavier foods.

8) In summer, one should eat cold foods without excessive amounts of spices, and one should also eat vinegar. In the winter, one should eat hot foods with lots of spices, and small quantities of mustard and Assa foetida as well. One should also follow this rule in hot or cold places, and in any place where it is suitable to do so.

9) There are some foods which are exceedingly bad, and it is fitting never to eat them. Such foods include big fish, old salted cheese, morels, truffles, old slated meat, wine straight from the wine-press, and a cooked food which has been allowed to give off a smell. Similarly, any food which has a bad smell or which is bitter is like poison to the body. There are some bad foods which are not as bad as those already mentioned. Therefore, it is fitting to eat only a little of them, and even then only rarely, and also to accustom oneself not to having with, or as, one's food things such as big fish, cheese, milk which is more than twenty-four hours old, the meat of big

oxen or big goats, broad beans, lentils, sappir, barley bread, matzah, cabbage, hay, onions, garlic, mustard and radish - all these are bad foods. It is only fitting to eat a little of them and in the winter, but in the summer one should not eat of them at all. It is not fitting to eat broad beans or lentils in both the summer and the winter, and one should eat gourds only in the winter.

10) There are some foods which are not as bad as those mentioned [above], and they include water-fowl, young doves, dates, bread which has been roasted in oil, bread which has been kneaded in oil, fine flour which has been baked until it no longer has the smell of grain, brine and pickles. It is not fitting to eat a lot of these foods. Someone who is wise and abides by the Creator, is not pulled by his desires and does not eat these foods except as a medicine, is mighty.

11) One should always refrain from [eating] the fruits of the trees, and one should not eat of them excessively, even if they have been dried and especially if they are moist; before they have been boiled they are like swords to the body. Similarly, carob and all sour fruits are bad foods, and one should not eat of them except in summer or in hot places. Figs, grapes and almonds are always good [to eat], whether they are moist or dried, and one may eat of them all that one wants to, but one shouldn't persist in eating them even though they are the best of the fruits of the trees.

12) Honey and wine are bad for children but good for adults, and especially in the winter. In the summer, one should eat two-thirds of the amount that one eats in the winter.

13) One should always endeavour to have healthy bowels throughout one's life, and one should always be close to [having] a slight diarrhoea. This is a very important general rule in health - whenever faeces is avoided or is passed with difficulty, a bad illness will follow. If one has to exert oneself [when defecating], one can cure one's bowels in the following ways: If one is a young lad one should eat salty foods early in the morning, well-cooked and mixed with olive oil, brine and salt, without bread, or one should drink the water in which spinach or cabbage has been boiled, together with olive oil, brine and salt. If, however, one is an older person, one should drink honey dissolved in hot water in the morning, wait four hours, and then eat one's meal. This procedure should be followed for one day, or three or four days if necessary, until one's bowels have been cured.

14) The Sages stated another general rule about bodily health: Whenever one exercises and works but is not satisfied with what one eats and one's bowels are healthy, one will not become sick and one's strength will increase, even if one eats bad foods.

15) Anyone who does not exercise, or holds back from relieving himself, or who has hard bowels, will have a painful life and his strength will weaken, even if he eats good foods and looks after himself medicinally. Overeating is like poison to the body, and is the cause of many illnesses. Most illnesses are caused by bad foods and overeating, even if one overeats good foods. Solomon said in his wisdom, "He who guards his mouth and his tongue keeps his soul from troubles", that is to say that one should guard one's mouth from eating either bad foods or unnecessarily, and one's tongue from speaking except when necessary.

16) One should wash oneself every seven days. One should not enter a wash-house shortly after having eaten, nor when one is hungry, but one may when one's food has just started to digest. One should wash with hot water whose temperature is below scalding temperature, and one should wash one's head with water that would scald one's body. Then, one should rinse oneself with lukewarm water, then with cooler water, and so on, until one is washing with cold water. One should not pour lukewarm or cold water over one's head. One should not wash with water that is so cold that one will sweat and [thereby] dehydrate. One shouldn't stay for too long in a wash-house - once one feels that one is beginning to sweat and that one is beginning to dehydrate, one should rinse oneself and then leave. One should check oneself before entering a wash-house to see that one does not need to relieve oneself. One should carry out similar checking before and after eating, before and after copulation, upon getting tired, before doing exercise and before and after sleeping. The total number [of times that one should check oneself] is ten.

17) When one leaves a wash-house one should put on one's clothes and cover one's head externally, so that one won't catch a cold. One has to be particular about this even in the summer. After coming out, one should wait until one's soul has settled and one's body has rested and become warm again before eating. One should not drink cold water after leaving the wash-house, and it need not be said that one shouldn't drink in the wash-house itself. If, however, one was thirsty when one came out of the wash-house, one should mix the water with wine or honey before drinking. In the winter it is good to anoint oneself with oil in the wash-house.

18) One should not accustom oneself to letting blood frequently, for one should not let blood unless absolutely necessary. One should not let blood in the summer or winter, but one should let a little during Nissan and Tishrei. Once one has reached the age of fifty one should not let blood at all. One should not let blood and go to the wash-house on the same day, nor should one let blood before travelling, and nor on the day when one completes a journey. One should rest on the day of letting, and one should not tire oneself, do exercises or even go on excursions on the day of letting.

19) Semen is the strength of the body, its life and the light of its eyes. If one ejaculates excessively then one's body and strength will come to an end, and one's life will be lost. Solomon said in his wisdom, "Do not give your strength to women". If one indulges [excessively] in copulation, one will age rapidly, one's strength will disappear, one's eyes will dim, a bad smell will give off from one's mouth and armpits, the hair of one's head, eyebrows and eyelashes will thin, the hair of one's beard, armpits and legs will grow [a lot], one's teeth will fall out, and many sources of suffering apart from these will befall one. The doctoring Sages said that [of people who die because of illness] one in a thousand die of miscellaneous illnesses, whereas the rest die because of excessive copulation. Therefore, one has to be careful in this matter if one wants to live well, and one should copulate only when one's body is healthy and at its strongest. If one's organ erects often without one's having thought about it, or it erects while one is thinking about other things, or one finds that one's lower loins heavy as if the vas deferens is being drawn, and the flesh is hot, then one has to copulate, for the cure for this condition is copulation. One should not copulate when full or when hungry, but only when one's food has begun to digest. One should check oneself before and after copulation to see that one doesn't need to relieve oneself. One should not copulate while standing or while sitting, nor in a wash-house or on the day when one is scheduled to go to the wash-house, nor on a day when one lets blood, nor on a day when one starts or finishes a journey. and nor on the days preceding or following such days.

20) I can guarantee that anyone who accustoms himself to these ways which we have discussed will not become sick throughout his whole life, and will never need to take any medicines. His body will be perfect and healthy for his entire life, except if his body was imperfect from birth, or if he had been accustomed to a bad habit from birth, or if a plague, pestilence or drought occurred.

21) All of these good habits which we have mentioned are suitable only for those who are healthy. If someone is ill, or has a limb which is ill, or has been accustomed to a bad habit for many years, then there is for each one [of such conditions] other ways and habits [for a cure], depending upon the condition in question, as explained in the Book of Medicines. A change in the menstrual period [other than during pregnancy] is the beginning of sickness.

22) It is not suitable for a healthy or sick person in any town where there is no doctor to deviate from any of the ways mentioned in this chapter, for every one [of these ways] brings good.

23) It is not permitted for a learned sage to live in a town which does not have the following ten things: a doctor, a blood-letter, a wash-house, a toilet, naturally

occurring water such as a river or spring, a synagogue, a midwife, a scribe, a warden of charity and a Court of Law which imprisons people.

## CHAPTER FIVE

This chapter explains how a learned sage should conduct himself, and that he should be an outstanding example in all he does.

1) Just as a wise person is recognisable in his wisdom and temperaments and is differentiated by them from other people, so also should he be recognisable in his actions: his manner of eating, drinking, copulation, relieving himself, speaking, walking, dressing and the conducting of his affairs with his work and his giving [should all be exemplary]. All of these actions should be as fine and as correct as possible. What does this mean? A learned sage should not be a glutton, but should eat foods according to the health of his body, and should not eat of them more than is necessary to fill himself, and he should not rush to fill his stomach like those who fill themselves with food until they burst do. This is explained in Kaballah when it says, "...and spread dung on your faces, even the dung of your feasts". The Sages have said that concerning those people who eat and drink [perpetually] and make all their days festivities it has been said, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we shall die" - this is referring to wicked people eating. These tables are the ones which Scripture has denounced when it said, "For all tables are full of vomit and filth, so that there is no place clean". A wise person, however, should eat only one or two foods, and should eat of them just sufficiently to support life. Solomon said, "The righteous eats to satisfy his soul".

2) When a wise person eats the little that is suitable for him, he should eat only in his house and at his table, and he should not eat in a shop or in the market, except in time of great need, so that he won't be abandoning health. He should eat with ignoramuses, or at those tables which are full of 'vomit and filth'. He should not increase [the number of] his meals in any place, even with wise men, and he should not join in a meal at which there is a large gathering of people. It is not fitting to eat someone else's food, except at a feast of a mitzvah such as the feasts of betrothal and marriage, but only if a learned sage married the daughter of a learned sage. The early righteous people and Sages did not partake of any meal that was not theirs.

3) When a wise person drinks wine he should drink only enough to soften the food that is in his stomach. Anyone who gets drunk is sinning, and is disgracing and losing his wisdom. Getting drunk in front of ignoramuses is a desecration of God's Name. It is forbidden to drink wine in the afternoon, even in small quantities, except if it was

included in a meal, for wine included in a meal does not inebriate. One only has to be particular about wine that is not drunk during a meal.

4) Even though a man's wife is always permitted to him, it is fitting for a learned sage to accustom himself to holiness and not to [continually] be his wife like a chicken, except on Friday nights if he has the strength. When he has relationships with his wife, he should have them with her at the beginning of the night, when he is still full, and nor at then of night, when he is hungry, but he should have them in the middle of the night, when his food has been digested in his stomach. He should not be excessively frivolous, and nor should he use unsuitable language on meaningless matters, even between himself and her, for in the Kabbalah it is written, "...and declare to man what is his thought". The Sages said that even light conversation between a man and his wife will, in the future, be judged. The two of them should not be drunk, lazy or sad, and even one of them should not be so. She should not be asleep, and he should not have relationships with her against her will, but only when both of them are willing and happy. He should tell her stories to make her laugh, in order that her soul will be settled. He should copulate in shame and not in brazenness, and should withdraw immediately.

5) For anyone who is accustomed to this practice, it is not sufficient for him to sanctify his soul, purify himself and [make] correct his temperaments, but if he had sons they should be fine and shameful, and suitable for wisdom and piety. Anyone who accustoms himself to the customs of the rest of the people who do in darkness will have children like those people.

6) Learned sages should be accustomed to many big modesties: they shouldn't despise or uncover their heads or bodies. Even when they entered the toilet they would be modest, and would not uncover themselves until they had sat down. They wouldn't wipe themselves [afterwards] with their right hands. They would draw away from everyone else, and go into absolute privacy before relieving themselves. If a learned sage wanted to relieve himself behind a fence he would position himself such that he wouldn't [be able to] hear someone on the other side sneezing. If he relieved himself in a valley [or some other open place] he would position himself such that he wouldn't be able to see his friend's uncovered body. He should not speak while relieving himself, even for a great need. When going to the toilet at night one should follow the same procedure as when going to the toilet by day. One should teach oneself to relieve oneself in the morning and in the evening so that one won't have to go out of one's way.

7) A learned sage should not shout or scream like an animal or beast when speaking, and should not excessively raise his voice, but should speak to everybody in repose,

and when he does so he should be careful that it should not sound like haughtiness. One should always be first in extending greetings so that one's mood will always be inclined towards oneself, and one should always judge others to the side of merit. One should always speak up for the benefit of one's friend and never to his detriment, and one should always love and adore peace. If one sees that what one wants to say will be useful and listened to one should say it, and if not then one shouldn't. What does this mean? One should not reconcile one's friend when one is angry, nor ask him about his vow when he makes it, until one's temperament has cooled and settled. Furthermore, one should not comfort one's [bereaved] friend while the deceased is in front of him, for he is hard-pressed until the burial. One should not change what one says, or add and detract [from one's words], except in words of peace and similar things. The general rule is not to speak except in connection with wisdom, charitable acts and similar things. One also should not chat with women in the market, even if the woman in question is one's wife, sister or daughter.

8) A learned sage should not walk at his full height, and nor with an a raised head, in accordance with the verse, "...and walk with outstretched necks and ogling eyes", and nor should he walk bent over to one side like the women and haughty people do in accordance with the verse, "...walking and mincing as they go, and making a tinkling with their foot"<sup>6</sup>. He also should not run in the public domain in the way that crazy people do, and nor should he hunch himself over as though he had a hump, but he should look downwards [while walking] as though he were standing in prayer. He should walk in the market like one who is [fully] occupied with his business. One can tell from the way a man walks whether he is wise and possesses sense, or whether he is a fool and stupid. Solomon in his wisdom said, "Also, when a fool walks by the way his understanding fails him, and he reveals to everyone that he is a fool" - i.e. he informs everyone about himself that he is a fool.

9) The clothing of a learned sage should be pleasant and clean, and it is forbidden for him to [be able to] find a stain or fattiness. He should not wear a the clothing of royalty, such as gold or purple [colours], and similar things, for the reason that everyone looks at them, and nor should he dress like a poor person, for the reason that this disgraces his dress, but he should wear clothes of an average fineness. One's flesh should not be visible through or seen from under one's clothing, as is possible with the clothes of very thin linen made in Egypt, and nor should one's clothes trail on the ground like the clothes of those with haughty airs, but one's clothes should reach one's ankles, and one's sleeves should reach one's knuckles. One should not let down one's cloak for the reason that this would appear haughty, but one may do so on the Sabbath if one does not have a change of cloak. One should not put on patched shoes which have patches on top of patches in the summer, but in the winter one may if one is a poor person. One should not go to the market wearing perfume, and

nor with perfumed clothes. One should not put spices in one's hair, but it is permitted to rub spices into one's skin as a method of cleaning. Similarly, one should not go out alone at night unless one had a fixed time at which one goes out to one's students. All of these matters are a precaution against suspicion.

10) A learned sage should maintain his things according to [his] judgement: he should eat, drink and feed the members of his household according to his finances and luck, but he should not bother himself excessively. The Sages commanded that, as good manners, one should only eat meat when hungry, for it is written, "...because you long to eat meat, you may eat meat to your heart's desire". It is enough for health to eat meat from one Friday to the next, and if one is rich enough to be able to eat meat every day one may do so. The Sages commanded that one should always eat less than one can afford, but should dress accordingly, and should respect one's wife and children more than accordingly.

11) It is the way of sensible people to obtain a job that will support them, then to buy accommodation and then to get married, for it is written, "Who has built a house and has not yet dedicated it? Who has planted a vineyard and has not eaten of it? Who has betrothed a wife and has not yet taken her?". Stupid people start by getting married, then buying a house if they can afford one, and then, towards the ends of their lives, try to find a job, or else support themselves by charity. It is written in the curses, "You shall betroth a wife and another man shall lie with her; you shall build a house but shall not dwell in it; you shall plant a vineyard but shall not gather its grapes". This is to say that if one's actions are in the wrong order one will not be successful. As a blessing, it is written, "And David succeeded in all that he did, and the Lord was with him".

12) It is forbidden to disown or sanctify all one's property and then bother other people [for support]. One should not sell one's field and/to buy a house, or one's house and/to buy moveable objects, or make merchandise worth as much as one's house, but one may sell moveable objects and/to buy a field. The general rule is that one should adjust one's tendencies to save one's belongings, and to change at the end of one's existence. One's intention should not be to get minimum benefit with each hour, and nor to argue or lose out excessively.

13) The purpose and lot of a learned sage is truth and belief: on something negative he should say no and on something positive he should say yes; he should be particular on himself regarding accounts; and he should abolish other people's debts to him and should not be particular about them. He should give the [full] value of a purchased item immediately [upon purchase], and should not make himself a guarantor or guardian of belongings, and should not use them without permission. He should not

make himself liable in business matters where the Torah didn't make him liable, so that people will honour his word and not hate him. If others made him liable in court he should forgive them, and should lend to them [if the need arises], and should be compassionate. He should not enter his friend's profession, and never in his life should he desire [the possessions] of other people. The general rule is that one should be amongst the pursued and not amongst the pursuers, and amongst the humiliated and not amongst the humiliators. Concerning a man who does these and similar things Scripture says, "You, Israel, are My servant, in whom I will be glorified".

## CHAPTER SIX

This chapter tells us to leave wicked people and join upright ones, to love all creations, and to be extra careful regarding orphans and widows.

1) The nature of man is to be pulled by his temperaments and actions after his friends, and to accustom himself to the customs of the people of his country. Therefore, one has to associate with righteous people and to sit always amongst learned people, so that one will learn from their actions. One should distance oneself from wicked people, who go in darkness, so that one will not learn from their actions. Solomon said, "He who walks with wise men shall be wise, but a companion of fools shall suffer harm". It is also written, "Happy is the man who does not follow the counsel of the wicked, nor adopts the way of sinners, nor sits amongst scorners". Similarly, if one was in a country where there were bad customs and whose citizens did not follow the straight path, then one should go to a place whose citizens are righteous and who have good customs. If one heard about every country that one knows that it has bad customs, or if, for reasons of mobilisation, one was unable to move to a country with good customs, then one should live alone [and in isolation], as it is written, "Let him sit alone and keep silence". If there were bad people and sinners around one who would not leave one alone unless one mixes with them and follows their bad customs, then one should go and live in a cave, or amongst the bushes or in the wilderness, and one should not accustom oneself to the ways of sinners, as it is written, "Oh, that I were in the wilderness in an inn for travellers!".

2) It is a positive commandment to associate with wise people and their students in order to learn from their actions, as it is written, "...and you shall hold fast to him" - this 'him' is not God, for how can one associate with the Divine Presence? In explaining this commandment, the Sages said that one has to associate with wise people and their students. Therefore, one should endeavour to marry the daughter of a learned sage, to marry one's daughter to a learned sage, to eat and drink with learned sages, to trade with them and to join with them in all matters in which one can join, as it is written, "...and to hold fast to him". The Sages similarly commanded



that one should join with the dust of their feet, and to listen enthusiastically to their words.

3) One is commanded to love each and every Jew as one does oneself, for it is written, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself". Therefore, one has to count other people's gains and to be as careful with their money as one is with one's own and according to one's self-respect. Anybody who does not respect his fellow has no share in the World To Come.

4) Loving a convert who has entered under the Wings of the Divine Presence involves two commandments - one because he is included amongst one's fellows, and the other because he is a convert. The Torah says, "Love therefore the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt". The commandment to love a convert is similar to the commandment to love God, for it is written, "Therefore you shall love the Lord your God". The Holy One, blessed be He, Himself loves converts, for it is written, "...and [He] loves the convert".

5) Anyone who secretly hates another Jew is transgressing a negative commandment, for it is written, "You shall not hate your brother secretly". Transgressing this commandment does not make one liable to flogging, because no physical action is involved. The Torah warned only against hating secretly, but one who aggravates his fellow and strikes him (even though this is not permitted) has not transgressed this commandment.

6) If one is sinned against by someone else, then one should not hate him secretly, for regarding wicked people it says, "And Absalom spoke neither good nor bad to his brother Amnon, for Absalom hated Amnon". It is a commandment to make one's hatred known to the person who wronged one and to ask him why he did what he did and why he wronged one in the way that he did, for it is written, "You shall definitely rebuke your fellow"<sup>12</sup>. If he request forgiveness, one has to forgive him. One who forgives should not be too harsh, for it is written, "So Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech, his wife and his maidservants, and they bore children".

7) Upon seeing someone else committing a sin or following a way which is not good, it is a commandment to return him to doing good and to make it known to him that he is sinning against himself, for it is written, "You shall definitely rebuke your fellow"<sup>12</sup>. When rebuking someone, whether in matters between him and others or between him and God, one should do so in private, speak to him in repose and soft tones, and make sure that he understands that one is speaking to him for his own good, and [thereby] to bring him to life in the World To Come. If one's words are

accepted then it is good, but if not then one should rebuke him a second and third time [or as many times as necessary]. Similarly, one is obligated to rebuke a sinner until he hits one and tells one that he isn't listening. Anyone who has the opportunity to protest but doesn't is transgressing these sins, for he could have protested against them.

8) When rebuking someone for the first time, one should speak to him [so] harshly that he will be humiliated, for it is written, "...and not suffer on his account". The Sages said: 'Can you rebuke him and his face will not change?!'. This teaches us that the words, 'and not suffer on his account' teach us that it is forbidden to [insult or] humiliate a Jew, especially in public. Even though humiliating someone does not make one liable to flogging, it is nevertheless a great sin. The Sages said that anyone who humiliates someone else in public has no share in the World To Come. Therefore, one has to be careful not to shame someone else in public, whether he is a child or an adult, nor to call him by an embarrassing name, and nor to tell him anything which will cause him embarrassment. This is talking about matters concerning Man and his Fellow, but concerning matters between Man and God, if he did not repent [when one rebuked him] in private, one should rebuke him in public, publicise his sins, and aggravate him to his face. We should pour scorn on him and curse him until he returns to the ways of good. The Prophets of Israel used to do this.

9) If one was sinned against by someone else but did not want to rebuke him or speak [about it] to him for the reason that the sin was very small or because one's senses were faulty, but one forgave him in one's heart and one does not hate or rebuke him, then one has the characteristic of piety. The Torah was particular only about hating.

10) One is obligated to be careful regarding orphans and widows, for their spirits are very low indeed, even though they may be very rich. Even regarding the widow and orphans of a king one has to be careful, for it is written, "You shall not distress any widow or orphan". So how does one associate with them? One should speak to them in soft tones only, treat them with respect, not cause them any physical pain by way of work or mental anguish by way of harsh words, and one should be more careful with their money than one is with one's own. Anyone who teases them, or causes them to be angry, or causes them mental anguish, or tyrannises them, or wastes their money, is transgressing a negative commandment - how much more so one who strikes or curses them is. Even though committing this sin does not make one liable to flogging, the Torah mentions its punishment: "And My anger shall be inflamed, and I will kill you with the sword; then your wives shall be widows and your children orphans". The Creator made a covenant with them, stating that whenever they cry because they were insulted they will be answered, as it is written, "...and they cry to Me, I shall surely hear their cry". This is talking about when one hurts them for one's

own reasons, but is permitted for a Rabbi or Master to hurt them in order to teach them Torah or a trade, or to make them follow the straight path - even so, one should not make them accustomed to the ways of all men, but one should treat them differently and with great repose, mercy and respect, for it is written, "For their redeemer is mighty; He shall plead their cause with you" - one is fatherless and the other is motherless. Orphans are referred to as orphans in connection with this matter until they have reached the age when they no longer need an adult to support, assist and teach a trade to them, and they can do all they need to do on their own, like other adults.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

This chapter warns us against slander, tale-bearing, taking revenge and bearing a grudge.

1) If one speaks slanderously about someone else one is transgressing a negative commandment, for it is written, "You shall not go around as a tale-bearer amongst your people". Even though this sin is not punishable by flogging, it is nevertheless a great sin and can cause many Jewish deaths, which is why this commandment is mentioned next to that of, "...nor shall you stand aside when trouble befalls your fellow"<sup>1</sup>. Learn from what happened to Do'eg the Edomite.

2) Who counts as a slanderer? One who carries matters from one [person] to another and says that so-and-so did such-and-such, or that he heard such-and-such regarding so-and-so is counted as a slanderer. Even though what he says may be true, it [still] destroys the world. This is a very great sin, and is under the heading of tale-bearing, which is telling about someone else's dishonour, even if it is the truth, but one who tells lies publicises a bad name about his fellow. A tale-bearer is one who says that so-and-so did such-and-such, or that his ancestors were like that, or that he heard such-and-such about him, and relates bad things. Concerning this Scripture said, "May the Lord cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaks proud things".

3) The Sages said that there are three sins which 'collect' of a man in this world and deprive him of a share in the World To Come. These sins are idolatry, adultery and murder, but tale-bearing is above all. The Sages further said that tale-bearing is like denying God, for it is written, "Who have said, 'With our tongue we will prevail; our lips are our own; who is lord above us?'". The Sages further said that three types of tale-bearing kill - telling, listening and slandering. The sin of listening is worse than that of telling.

4) There are things which are similar to tale-bearing. What does this mean? For example, one who says to someone else that he should be like him, or one who says that he has nothing to say about so-and-so and doesn't care what happens to him [are comparable to tale-bearers]. Similar things also count. Telling about someone else's goodness because one hates him is also similar to tale-bearing, for it will cause the listeners to tell it [to other people] in a bad way. Concerning this Solomon said, "He who blesses his friend in a loud voice, rising early in the morning, shall have it counted as a curse to him", for out of good will come bad. Similarly, concerning tale-bearing with laughter and frivolity and showing no hatred Solomon said in his wisdom, "As a madman who throws firebrands, arrows and death, so is a man who tricks his fellow and says, 'But I was only joking!'". Similarly, one who bears tales by swindling, i.e. by telling to his surprise as if he doesn't know that what he is saying is tale-bearing and that when he is rebuked he says that he didn't know that it was tale-bearing, or that so-and-so also does it [is also like a tale-bearer].

5) Bearing tales in the subject's presence or absence, telling something that can cause damage and hearing from someone else to damage someone else in physical or financial matters (even to trouble or frighten him) are also counted as tale-bearing. If one said it in front of three people, then it becomes a known matter. If one related the matter to one of the three on another occasion then it is not tale-bearing, provided that he did not intend to publicise or reveal the matter further.

6) It is forbidden to live in a neighbourhood of tale-bearers, and how much more so sit with them and listen to what they say. A verdict was made on our ancestors in the wilderness because of tale-bearing.

7) One who takes revenge on someone else is transgressing a negative commandment, for it is written, "You shall not take revenge". Even though committing this sin does not make one liable to flogging, it is nevertheless a very bad characteristic. It is fitting to forgive everything, for all matters of adepts are nonsense and not worth taking revenge over. What is revenge? If [for example] one's friend asked to borrow one's axe [and one refused to give it to him], and then later one went to him and asked to borrow his axe and he says that just as one did not lend him one's own axe so he will not lend one his axe, then he is taking revenge. He should really lend with a complete heart, and not recompense one in the way that he was treated. Similar situations have the same law. David said about his good temperaments, "Indeed, I have rescued him that is without cause my enemy".

8) Similarly, anyone who bears a grudge against another Jew is also transgressing a negative commandment, for it is written, "...nor bear any grudge against the children of your people"<sup>7</sup>. What is a grudge? If [for example] Reuben asked Simon to rent him

his house or lend him his ox, and Simon refused, and then after some time Simon asked a loan or rental of Reuben, and Reuben gives it to him but tells him that unlike him he does lend, then Reuben is transgressing the injunction against bearing a grudge. Reuben should really erase the matter [of having being refused] from his heart and should not bear a grudge, for so long as he bears a grudge he may take revenge. Therefore, the Torah is particular against bearing a grudge, so much so that one should totally forget the matter and not remember it at all. This is the correct temperament, for with it one can fulfil the commandments of settling the Land of Israel and helping other people.