

## The Rambam Review Concise overviews of each daily chapter

### Sunday, August 2nd: Hilchot Deot, Perek 2

**Overview:** Elaboration of middle path. The wise are as doctors for those with warped character. Lean towards opposite extreme to restore balance.

**Remember that?** Two major exceptions to the middle path as an ideal: a) arrogance and b) anger. One should avoid these entirely — at all costs!

### Monday, August 3rd: Hilchot Deot, Perek 3

**Overview:** Asceticism is *not* the Jewish ideal; temperate self-control is. All “mundane” actions, if done with intent to serve God, are sanctified.

**Remember that?** Investing 101: just *seconds* of forethought before sleep (refresh to best serve God tomorrow) can accrue *hours* worth of mitzvot!

### Tuesday, August 4th: Hilchot Deot, Perek 4

**Overview:** Because healthy living is both an enabler of and itself service of God, broad nutritional and hygienic guidelines are outlined.

**Remember that?** The *sole* time “Who is mighty? One who conquers his urges” is invoked in the Mishneh Torah is by controlling one’s appetite for food.

### Wednesday, August 5th: Hilchot Deot, Perek 5

**Overview:** Just as the wise are recognizable by their refined *traits*, so too must they be distinguished in all of their *mannerisms* and *deeds*.

**Remember that?** Wise people do not speak if their words will not be accepted. If they aren’t ready to hear it, then you shouldn’t be saying it!

### Thursday, August 6th: Hilchot Deot, Perek 6

**Overview:** Surroundings influence traits and behavior. Care must be taken to treat all Jews with love and dignity, even if rebuke is necessary.

**Remember that?** There is a unique prohibition to hate a fellow Jew in one’s heart. Resentment left to fester is *disastrous*; communication is key!

### Friday, August 7th: Hilchot Deot, Perek 7

**Overview:** Lashon hara is truly devastating and ranks amongst the very worst of violations. Gossip, grudges, and revenge are also pernicious sins.

**Remember that?** A ba’al lashon hara is viewed as a *heretic*, has *no share* in the World to Come, and his sin is equal to *all three* cardinal sins. Yikes!

### Shabbos Kodesh, August 8th: Hilchot Talmud Torah, Perek 1

**Overview:** Every Jewish man must study Torah (in set times, day and night), whatever his personal circumstances. He must also teach his sons.

**Remember that?** Just as Moshe was taught by God without charge, and he taught us the Oral Law without pay, so too must we transmit it for free.

## “Survey Says...”

*Rabbinic debate and consensus regarding this week’s Rambam*

Using the Nazir as a useful case-in-point, what is the proper view towards asceticism?

As is clear from his language (Hilchot Deot 3:1), Rambam sides with the view in Chazal which looked down upon this self-imposed abstinence from wine, even considering the unnecessary imposition sinful. This position is bolstered by the otherwise inexplicable sin offering a Nazir is obligated to bring when he completes the full term of his vow.

However, many others disagreed. One prominent ideological opponent, Ramban (e.g. Bamidbar 6:14), clearly viewed the Nazir as an archetype of the ideal servant of God, even comparing him to a prophet! As for the strange sin offering, Ramban’s ingenious explanation is that it is required because the Nazir is castigated for allowing this lofty experience *to come to an end* — he should have *remained* in this uplifted state! Wow.

It is important to note that Ramban and others in his camp do not think *unremitted asceticism* is an ideal; rather, it is the added restraint in *certain areas* (like alcoholism and vanity) that is specifically laudable.

## TAKE IT HOME

*A clear and powerful message from the Rambam to share with the family and apply to our lives*



When describing the incorrect way to eat or speak, the Rambam depicts the wrongful behavior with very harsh and vivid imagery, such as “tables filled with vomit and feces,” and “shrieking like wild beasts.” It’s rather demeaning and seems oddly gratuitous. For what reason is such intense language used?

It would seem these biting, throwaway phrases serve a vital role. One might easily fall prey to the notion that tables filled with all sorts of unhealthy delicacies or speech littered with explosive exclamations *are indeed attractive*, but the Torah instructs us to avoid them since they lead to sin or the like. *Wrong*. The Rambam is telling us that for one who truly sees, such base activity is *ugly*; it is *wholly loathsome*. An aspiring chacham must slowly cultivate an *emotional* distaste for grossly indulgent behavior. It is the truth, and it will also help him steer clear of it.

## הלכות דעות פרק ג הלכה ג:

... אלא ישים על לבו שיהא גופו שלם וחזק כדי שתהיה נפשו ישרה לדעת את ה', שאי אפשר שיבין וישתכל בחכמות והוא רעב וחולה או אחד מאיבריו כואב ... נמצא המהלך בדרך זו כל ימיו עובד את ה' תמיד...

## THE LASTING IMPRESSION:

*A Maimonidean formulation worth holding onto*