

Iggeres HaRamban

An invaluable letter that the Ramban (1194–1270) wrote to his son. *A Must Read*

Listen my son to the admonitions of your father, and do not disregard the teachings of your mother. Attempt to constantly speak softly to every person, at all times, and through this you will avoid anger, which is a terrible trait, and (which) causes people to sin. The Rabbis have taught us that whoever gets angry, all forms of Gehinnom are visited upon him, as it says, “Remove anger from your heart and evil from your flesh.” This “evil” refers to Gehinnom, as it says, “Also wicked on the day of evil.” When one saves himself from anger he begins to reflect on the trait of humility, which is the best of all the wonderful traits, as it says, “The heel of humility is the fear of Hashem.”

As a result of humility you will reflect on the trait of fear, as you constantly think: from where did you come, and to where are you going? In life you are an insect and worm, and also in death. And before whom are you destined to give an accounting? Before His Honor, the King, as it says, “Behold, the Skies and heavenly skies cannot sustain you, certainly not the heart of men.” It also says, “Is it not so that I occupy the heavens and earth, says Hashem.”

When you will think of all this, you will fear your Creator and guard against sin, and with these traits you will be happy with your lot. When you will act with humility, to be ashamed before all men, and to fear from them and from sin, then, the spirit of Hashem will descend upon you, together with a halo of glory and life in the world to come.

Now, my son, know and observe, that one who is arrogant, is rebellious against the Heavenly Kingdom, as it says, “Hashem rules, dressed in arrogance, etc.” With what should man be arrogant? If with wealth – Hashem impoverishes and gives wealth; if with honor – this belongs to Hashem, as it says, “Wealth and honor are from you,” and thus how can one flaunt with the honor of his creator? If

he flaunts with his wisdom, “He takes away the speech of assured men and reasoning from the sages.”

Since everyone is equal before Hashem – who, when angry, cuts down the arrogant and with His will lifts up the downtrodden – therefore lower yourself, and Hashem will uplift you. I will therefore explain to you how to constantly act with humility; all your words should be said softly, your head should be bent, your eyes should look down to the ground and your heart should be up; do not stare at a person when talking to him; every person should, in your eyes, be greater than you. If he is wise or wealthy you must honor him; if he is lacking and you are wealthier and wiser than he, think in your heart that you are the guiltier, and he is the more innocent – since if he sins it is unintentional, while your sins are intentional.

With all your words, actions and thoughts, and at all times, think in your heart that you are standing before Hashem, and His countenance is upon you, since His glory fills the world. Your words should be with fear and trepidation like a servant before his master. Be shy before every man; if a man calls you, don't reply in a loud voice, but rather softly, like in the presence of your master.

Be careful to constantly read the Torah so that you will observe it, and when you finish your study, search out what you have learned to see if there is something you can now observe. Review your actions in the morning and in the evening, and in this way all your days will contain repentance. Remove all your worldly issues from your heart during prayers, and prepare your heart before Hashem. Purify your thoughts and think before you speak; do this all the days of your mundane life in every area, and you won't sin. In this way your words, actions and thoughts will be straight, your prayers will be pure, clean, well-intentioned and acceptable to Hashem, as it says, “Prepare their hearts – your ears will pay attention.”

Read this once a week, and not less, to observe and constantly go in the way of Hashem, so that you will succeed in all your endeavors and you will merit the World to Come that's hidden for the righteous. Every day that you read it they will

answer you from Heaven, whatever you will decide to request, forever – may it be so eternally.