

Shimshon Ettinger  
**On “Precepts between Man and His Fellow Man”  
and “Precepts between Man and God” in the  
Thought of Maimonides**

This article deals with the conflict that arises in the words of Maimonides in the *Guide for the Perplexed* regarding the purpose of precepts between man and God. Within this category of precepts, Maimonides includes commandments such as charity and lending to the poor, which, in his approach, are designed to perfect the person who performs them (3:25). On the other hand, Maimonides himself establishes at the beginning of the same chapter, as well as in other places in the “Guide,” that these precepts are for the benefit of the impoverished recipient and not for the perfection of the donor.

The article argues that according to Maimonides, the purpose of these *mitsvot* must be understood on two levels. The first goal is for the perfection of the performer, while on the second level, the ultimate goal is for the welfare of society and the relationship between man and his fellow man.

In light of this position, we can explain the words of Maimonides at the end of the book, where he presents and specifies the stages of the perfection of man, the highest being intellectual attainment and superior logic. At the same time, the perfect individual must, within the context of his intellectual perfection, also continue to act, i.e., the performance of good deeds, justice, and equity as an expression of *imitatio Dei*. In other words, the personal perfection of the individual is indeed intellectual and unique to him, but behind it lies another goal for the perfect person to attain that is directed outward: walking in the ways of God in the performance of kindness, justice, and equity, as expressed by the prophet Jeremiah: “But only in this should one glory: In his earnest devotion to Me. For I the Lord act with kindness, justice, and equity in the world; For in these I delight —declares the Lord.”