2.1.1.5 I

EXTREMISM; MODERATION

One of the most brilliant and underestimated rabbinic figures of the pre-World War II East European generation, Rabbi Joseph Engel, once said the following, in commenting on the well known Midrash that וירא אלקים את כל אשר עשה והנה טוב (מאוד, "טוב מאוד" זה המות that this is a general principle of Torah: מאוד, "טוב מאוד" זה המות הוא במאודיות -all extremes, all "veryism," is deadly! (See his מ"מ")

He mentions two exceptions, both related to the term מאוד humility and gratitude. The first is based on the dictum in Avot that מאוד מאוד הוי שפל רוח and accords with one of the two exceptions cited by Maimonides (the other being גאוה). The second, gratitude, is based on the dictum that:בכל מאודך.