

חומש עם רש"י • עקב • שני

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EIKEV • 2ND ALIYAH

CHAPTER PREVIEW

In this aliyah, Moshe Rabbeinu warns Klal Yisrael about the great spiritual danger of prosperity. When we enter Eretz Yisrael, eat and are satisfied, build beautiful homes, and see our wealth multiply, there is a major nisayon of the heart becoming haughty. Moshe cautions us not to forget Hashem and fall into the trap of thinking "my own power and the strength of my hand made me this wealth."

Instead, we must always remember that it is Hashem who gives us the koach to achieve success, in order to fulfill His covenant with the Avos. Moshe also prepares the nation for the upcoming conquest of Eretz Yisrael, reminding them that although the nations they will face are mighty giants, Hashem Himself is leading the way to destroy the enemies before them.

All introductions, summaries, and contextual notes are the editor's commentary and are not part of the original text.

פסוק א

Pasuk 1

הַשְׁמֹר לְךָ פֶּן תִּשְׁכַּח אֶת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְבִלְתִּי שְׁמֹר מִצְוֹתָיו
His commandments keep not to your God Hashem — you forget lest yourself Guard
וּמִשְׁפָּטָיו וְחֻקֹּתָיו אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מְצַוְךָ הַיּוֹם:
today command you I which and His statutes and His ordinances

פסוק ב

Pasuk 2

פֶּן תֹּאכַל וּשְׂבַעְתָּ וּבָתִּים טוֹבִים תִּבְנֶה וְיָשַׁבְתָּ:
and dwell you will build fine and houses and be satisfied you will eat lest

רש"י

גְּדֻלָּה וְעֲצָמִים מִמֶּנּוּ. אֵתָּה עָצוּם וְהֵם עֲצוּמִים מִמֶּנּוּ סִפְרֵי דְבָרִים י"א:
11 Devarim Sifrei than you are mightier and they are mighty you than you and mightier greater

רש"י

רש"י

פסוק ג

Pasuk 3

וּבְקָרְךָ וּצְאֲנֶךָ יִרְבִּין וְכֶסֶף וְזָהָב יִרְבֶּה לְךָ וְכָל אֲשֶׁר לְךָ
is yours that and all for you will increase and gold and silver will multiply and your flocks and your herds

יִרְבֶּה:

will increase

פסוק ד

Pasuk 4

וְרָם לִבְכָּךְ וְשָׁכַחְתָּ אֶת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ הַמוֹצִיאֲךָ מֵאֶרֶץ
from the land of Who brought you out your God Hashem — and you will forget your heart and will grow haughty
מִצְרַיִם מִבֵּית עֲבָדִים:
bondage from the house of Mitzrayim

פסוק ה

Pasuk 5

הַמוֹלִיכְךָ בַּמִּדְבָּר הַגָּדֹל וְהַנּוֹרָא נָחַשׁ שָׂרָף וְעַקְרָב וְצִמְאוֹן אֲשֶׁר
where and thirst and scorpion fiery serpent and the awesome the great through the wilderness who led you
אֵין מַיִם הַמוֹצִיא לְךָ מִמֵּי מַצּוֹר הַחֲלָמִישׁ:
the flint from the rock of water for you who brought forth water there is no

פסוק ו

Pasuk 6

הַמֵּאֲכִילְךָ מִן בַּמִּדְבָּר אֲשֶׁר לֹא יָדְעוּ אֲבֹתֶיךָ לִמְעַן עֲנֹתְךָ וּלְמַעַן
and in order to afflict you in order your fathers knew not which in the wilderness manna who fed you
נִסְתָּה לְהִיטִבְךָ בְּאַחֲרִיתָהּ:
in your end to benefit you to test you

פסוק ז

Pasuk 7

וְאָמַרְתָּ בְּלִבְכָּךְ כֹּחִי וְעֲצָם יָדִי עָשָׂה לִי אֶת הַחֵיל הַזֶּה:
this the wealth — for me made my hand and the strength of my power in your heart and you say

פסוק ח

Pasuk 8

וְזָכַרְתָּ אֶת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ כִּי הוּא הַנּוֹתֵן לְךָ כֹּחַ לַעֲשׂוֹת חֵיל
wealth to make strength to you is the One Who gives He that your God Hashem — And you shall remember
לְמַעַן הִקִּים אֶת בְּרִיתוֹ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע לְאֲבוֹתֶיךָ כִּי הוּא הַזֶּה:
day as this to your forefathers He swore which His covenant — to establish in order

פסוק ט

Pasuk 9

וְהָיָה אִם שָׁכַח תִּשְׁכַּח אֶת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ וְהִלַּכְתָּ אַחֲרֵי אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים
other gods after and you go your God Hashem — you will forget forgetting if And it shall be

וְעַבַּדְתֶּם וְהִשְׁתַּחֲוִיתֶם לָהֶם הַעֲדָתִי בְּכֶם הַיּוֹם כִּי אֶבְדֹּתֶם תִּאֲבָדוּן׃
you will perish perishing that today against you I warn to them and you bow down and you serve them

פסוק י

Pasuk 10

כַּגֹּוִים אֲשֶׁר יְהוָה מֵאֲבִיד מִפְּנֵיכֶם כֵּן תִּאֲבָדוּן עֲקֹב לֹא תִשְׁמָעוּן
you would hearken not because shall you perish so from before you causes to perish Hashem that Like the nations
בְּקוֹל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם׃
your God Hashem to the voice of

פסוק יא

Pasuk 11

שִׁמַּע יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶתְּהָ עֲבַר הַיּוֹם אֶת הַיַּרְדֵּן לָבֹא לְרִשְׁתָּ גֹוִים גְּדֹלִים
greater nations to dispossess to come the Yarden — today are crossing you Yisrael Hear
וְעֲצָמִים מִמֶּנּוּ עָרִים גְּדֹלֹת וּבְצֻרֹת בְּשָׁמַיִם׃
to the heavens and fortified great cities than you and mightier

פסוק יב

Pasuk 12

עִם גְּדוֹל וָרֵם בְּנֵי עֲנָקִים אֲשֶׁר אֶתְּהָ יָדַעְתָּ וְאַתְּהָ שָׁמַעְתָּ מִי יִתְיַצֵּב
can stand who have heard and you have known you whom Anakites children of and tall great a people
לִפְנֵי בְנֵי עֲנָק׃
Anak the children of before

פסוק יג

Pasuk 13

וַיַּדְעַתְּ הַיּוֹם כִּי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ הוּא הָעֹבֵר לִפְנֵיךָ אֵשׁ אֹכֶלֶת הוּא
He consuming a fire before you is the One crossing He your God Hashem that today And you shall know
יִשְׁמִידֵם וְהוּא יִכְנִיעֵם לִפְנֵיךָ וְהוֹרֶשֶׁתָּם וְהִאֲבַדְתֶּם מְהֵרָ כַּאֲשֶׁר
as quickly and you shall destroy and you shall drive before you will humble them and He will destroy them
דִּבֶּר יְהוָה לָךְ׃
to you Hashem spoke

CHAPTER SUMMARY

The aliyah begins with a strong warning to guard ourselves against forgetting Hashem once we enjoy the material abundance of the land. Moshe Rabbeinu describes how Hashem lovingly sustained us through the dangerous wilderness with manna and water from the rock, proving that our sustenance comes entirely from Him. He warns that forgetting Hashem and turning to avodah zarah will lead to total destruction, just like the nations of Canaan. Finally, Moshe reassures Klal Yisrael that as they

cross the Yarden to face the formidable Anakites and their fortified cities, they should not fear, because Hashem is crossing before them like a devouring fire to subdue the enemy.

למעשה WHAT TO TAKE HOME

The Torah is warning us here about one of the biggest spiritual dangers a Yid faces, and that is the subtle trap of "kochi v'otzem yadi", the feeling that my own smarts, my own hard work, and my own talents are what brought me my success. When things are going well, when we have eaten and are satisfied, when the business is growing and the bank account is comfortable, the yetzer hara whispers that we did this ourselves. We forget that we are completely dependent on Hashem for every single breath.

Lichoira, the Torah does not tell us to stop working or to not use our talents. We have to do our hishtadlus. But the chiddush of the sugya is that even the very strength to do that hishtadlus, the energy to get out of bed, the sharp mind to make a good decision, the stamina to work, is a direct gift from Hashem. As the pasuk says, "He is the One who gives you the power to make wealth." The moment we think we are the ones running the show, we slip into a dangerous state of "ram levavecha," where our hearts become haughty and we lose our connection to the true Source of everything.

To fight this, we have to actively train ourselves to see Hashem's hand in our daily successes, big and small. When a deal goes through, when we find a great parking spot, or when we successfully navigate a difficult meeting, our immediate reaction must not be self-congratulation. Instead, we must pause and recognize that Hashem just gave us the strength and the siyata d'shmaya to make it happen.

Today, the moment you experience any small success or finish a productive task, pause for three seconds and say out loud or in your heart: "Thank you Hashem for giving me the strength and the ability to do this."

דף יומי • חלין • דף פ"ח

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THE SUGYA

We begin the daf by wrapping up the previous discussion regarding the tumah of liquids. The Gemara is bothered by a contradiction between our Mishnah and a Braisa regarding whether liquids that come from a corpse are tamei. The Gemara resolves this by distinguishing between a corpse and a zav, explaining the specific Rabbinic gezeirah that applies to a zav's liquids but not to a corpse's liquids, based on how people naturally keep their distance from them. From there, the Gemara transitions back to the halachos of kisuy hadam, discussing the source in the pesukim for whether one is obligated to cover blood that spurts or remains on the knife, bringing a machlokes between the Rabbis, Rabbi Yehuda, and Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel regarding what constitutes the main blood of the shechitah.

Next, we learn a new Mishnah that defines the materials kosher for kisuy hadam. The Mishnah lists various substances, such as fine sand, crushed potsherds, and fine manure, while excluding coarse materials or simply overturning a vessel over the blood. The Gemara analyzes the definitions of these materials, specifically what constitutes fine versus coarse sand, and brings a Braisa that expounds the pesukim of "and he shall cover it" and "with earth" to show how the Torah includes certain dust-like substances while excluding others.

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עמוד א' DAF 88A

MISHNAH

MISHNAH

וְאֵלּוּ וְאֵלּוּ אֵין מְטַמְּאִין,

And both these, the liquids that issue from a tevil yom, and those, the liquids that touch him, do not impart any severe ritual impurity to other things, as they are only a sheni l'tumah;

MISHNAH

וְשֶׁאֵר כָּל הַטְּמֵאִין, בֵּין קָלִין בֵּין חֲמֻרִין – מְשַׁקִּין הַיּוֹצֵאִין מֵהֶן כְּמִשְׁקָה הַנוֹגֵעַ בָּהֶן,

and with regard to all other ritually impure sources, whether minor sources of impurity or major sources of impurity, the liquids that issue from them have the same status as liquids that touch them,

MISHNAH

וְאֵלּוּ וְאֵלּוּ תַּתְּקָה, חוּץ מִן הַמִּשְׁקָה שֶׁהוּא אֶב הַטּוֹמְאָה.

and both these and those have the status of a first-degree of ritual impurity, except for a liquid that is itself a primary source of ritual impurity, such as the bodily fluids of a zav.

QUESTION

מאי קליו ומאי חמורין?

The Gemara asks: **What** is the meaning of **minor** sources and **what** is the meaning of **major** sources?

OBJECTION

מאי לאו: קליו – שרץ וזב, וחמורין – מת?

Is it not that **minor** sources refers to a **creeping animal** or a **zav**, and **major** sources refers to a **corpse**? If so, the Mishnah implies that all liquids issuing from a corpse are tamei, which contradicts a Braisa!

ANSWER

לא, קליו – שרץ, וחמורין – זב.

The Gemara answers: **No**, the term **minor** sources refers to a **creeping animal**, such as urine found inside its body, and **major** sources refers to a **zav**, whose bodily fluids are indeed a primary source of impurity. But liquids issuing from a corpse are actually tahor, except for its blood.

QUESTION

מאי שנא זב, דגזרו ביה רבנן, ומאי שנא מת דלא גזרו ביה רבנן?

The Gemara asks: **What is different** with regard to a **zav**, that the Rabbis decreed impurity on all liquids that issue from him, and **what is different** with regard to a **corpse**, that the Rabbis did not decree a similar impurity on all liquids that issue from it?

ANSWER

זב דלא בדילי אינשי מיניה – גזרו ביה רבנן, מת דבדילי אינשי מיניה – לא גזרו ביה רבנן.

The Gemara answers: In the case of a **zav**, since people do not naturally separate themselves from him while he is alive, the Rabbis decreed a gezeirah on his other liquids so that people would not come to touch his main impure fluids; whereas in the case of a **corpse**, since people naturally separate themselves from it out of respect and fear, the Rabbis did not decree any extra restrictions.

STATEMENT

דם הניתז ושעל הסכין, תנו רבנן: "וכסהו" – מלמד שדם הניתז ושעל הסכין חייב לכסות.

Regarding the Mishnah's ruling about **blood that spurts** and that which is **on the knife**, the Rabbis taught in a Braisa: The verse says, "And he shall cover it"—this teaches that **blood that spurts** and that which remains on the knife, one is **obligated to cover**.

STATEMENT

אמר רבי יהודה: אימתי? בזמן שאין שם דם אלא הוא, אבל יש שם דם שלא הוא – פטור מלכסות.

Rabbi Yehuda said: **When** is this the halacha? **At a time** when there is no other blood there except for that spurted blood; but if there is other blood there besides that spurted blood, such as the main blood in the pit, then one is exempt from covering the spurted blood.

STATEMENT

תְּנִינָא אִידָּהּ: "וְכָסָהּ" – מִלְּמַד שְׁכָּל דָּמוּ חַיִּיב לְכַסּוֹת, מִכָּאֵן אָמְרוּ: דָּם הַנִּיחָז וְשֶׁעַל אֲגָפִיִּים חַיִּיב לְכַסּוֹת.

It was taught in another Braisa: The verse says, "And he shall cover it"—this teaches that all of its blood, one is obligated to cover. From here they said: Blood that spurts and that which is on the sides of the neck, one is obligated to cover.

STATEMENT

אָמַר רַבִּין שִׁמְעוֹן בֶּן גַּמְלִיאֵל: בְּמָה דְּבָרִים אֲמוּרִים – שֶׁלֹּא כָּסָה דָּם הַנֶּפֶשׁ, אֲבָל כָּסָה דָּם הַנֶּפֶשׁ – פְּטוּר מִלְּכַסּוֹת.

Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel said: In what case are these words said? In a case where one did not yet cover the blood of the soul, which is the main life-blood that flows at slaughter; but if one already covered the blood of the soul, he is exempt from covering the remaining spurted blood.

QUESTION

בְּמַאי קָא מִיפְלָגִי?

The Gemara asks: With regard to what principle do they disagree?

ANSWER

רַבִּין וְרַבִּי יְהוּדָה סְבֵרִי: "דָּמוֹ" – כָּל דָּמוֹ, רַבִּי יְהוּדָה סְבֵר: "דָּמוֹ" – וְאִפְּלוּ מִקְצֵת דָּמוֹ, וְרַבִּין שִׁמְעוֹן בֶּן גַּמְלִיאֵל סְבֵר: "דָּמוֹ" – הַמְּיוּחָד.

The Gemara answers: The Rabbis hold that the word "its blood" implies all of its blood must be covered. Rabbi Yehuda holds that "its blood" implies even a portion of its blood is sufficient to fulfill the mitzvah, so if there is other blood, this spurted blood is exempt. And Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel holds that "its blood" refers to the unique blood, which is the blood of the soul.

MISHNAH מִשְׁנָה

MISHNAH

מִתְּנִי בְּמָה מְכַסִּין וּבְמָה אֵין מְכַסִּין?

MISHNAH: With what substances may one cover the blood, and with what substances may one not cover the blood?

MISHNAH

מְכַסִּין בְּזָבָל הַדֵּק, וּבְחוּל הַדֵּק, בְּסִיד, וּבְחֶרְסִית, וּבְלִבְנָה וּבְמִגּוּפָה שֶׁכָּתָשׁוּ,

One may cover with fine manure, and with fine sand, with lime, and with crushed potsherd, and with a brick or with the lid of a jar that one crushed into dust;

MISHNAH

אֲבָל אֵין מְכַסִּין לֹא בְּזָבָל הַגָּס, וְלֹא בְּחוּל הַגָּס, וְלֹא בְּלִבְנָה וּבְמִגּוּפָה שֶׁלֹּא כָּתָשׁוּ, וְלֹא יִכְפֶּה עָלָיו אֶת הַכָּלִי.

but one may not cover, neither with coarse manure, nor with coarse sand, nor with a brick or with the lid of a jar that one did not crush, and one may not overturn a vessel over it to merely hide it.

MISHNAH

כָּלֵל אָמַר רַבִּין שְׁמַעוֹן בֶּן גַּמְלִיאֵל: דָּבָר שֶׁמִּגִּידֵל בּוֹ צִמְחִים – מְכַסִּין בּוֹ, וְשֶׁאֵינוֹ מִגִּידֵל צִמְחִים – אֵין מְכַסִּין בּוֹ.

Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel stated a general rule: Any substance in which plants grow, one may cover with it; and that which does not grow plants, one may not cover with it.

גְּמָרָא GEMARA

QUESTION

גְּמ' הֵיכִי דְּמִי חוֹל הִדֵּק?

GEMARA: What is considered fine sand?

ANSWER

אָמַר רַבָּה בַּר בַּר חַנָּה אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן: כָּל שֶׁאֵין הַיּוֹצֵר צָרִיף לְכַתְּשׁוֹ.

Rabba bar bar Chana said that Rabbi Yochanan said: Any sand that the potter does not need to crush before using it to make vessels.

STATEMENT

וְאִיכָא דְּמַתְנִי לֵה אֲסִיפָא: אָכֵל אֵין מְכַסִּין לֹא בְּזֶכֶל הַגָּס וְלֹא בְּחוֹל הַגָּס.

And there are those who teach this statement of Rabbi Yochanan on the latter clause of the Mishnah: But one may not cover, neither with coarse manure, nor with coarse sand.

QUESTION

הֵיכִי דְּמִי חוֹל הַגָּס?

On this, the Gemara asks: What is considered coarse sand?

ANSWER

אָמַר רַבָּה בַּר בַּר חַנָּה אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן: כָּל שֶׁהַיּוֹצֵר צָרִיף לְכַתְּשׁוֹ.

Rabba bar bar Chana said that Rabbi Yochanan said: Any sand that the potter needs to crush before using it.

QUESTION

מַאי בִּינְיָהוּ?

The Gemara asks: What is the practical difference between them, i.e., between these two versions of Rabbi Yochanan's statement?

ANSWER

אִיכָא בִּינְיָהוּ דְּצָרִיף וְלֹא צָרִיף, דְּמִיפְרִיף אִיפְרוּכִי.

The Gemara answers: **There is a difference between them** regarding sand **that is needed and yet not needed** for crushing, namely, sand **that crumbles** easily by hand without a tool. According to the first version, this is kosher because it does not require formal crushing; according to the second version, it is invalid because it still requires some crumbling.

BRAISA

תנו רבנן: "וְכִסְּהוּ", יָכוֹל יְכַסְּנוּ בְּאֲבָנִים אוֹ יִכְפֶּה עָלָיו אֶת הַכֶּלִי?

The Rabbis taught in a Braisa: The verse says, "And he shall cover it." One might think he may cover it with stones, or overturn a vessel over it;

BRAISA

תלמוד לומר: "בְּעֶפֶר".

therefore, the verse teaches: "With earth."

BRAISA

וְאֵין לִי אֶלָּא עֶפֶר, מִנֵּיין לְרִבּוֹת זָבָל הַדֶּק, וְחֹל הַדֶּק, וְשִׁחִיקַת אֲבָנִים, וְשִׁחִיקַת חֲרָסִית, וְנִעּוֹרָת
כִּשְׁתֵּי דִקָּה,

And I only have a source for earth; from where do we derive to include fine manure, and fine sand, and crushed stones, and crushed potsherd, and fine flax-chaff?

עמוד ב' DAF 88B

BRAISA

וְנִסּוּרַת שֵׁל חֲרָשֵׁין דִּקָּה, וְסִיד, וְחֲרָסִית לְבָנָה וּמְגוּפָה שְׁכַתְּשָׁן?

The Baraita continues: And what is the source that we may cover the blood with fine sawdust of carpenters, and lime, and crushed potsherd, and a brick or the lid of an earthenware barrel that one crushed?

EXPLANATION

תלמוד לומר: "וְכִסְּהוּ".

The verse states: "And cover it," which is an inclusive term implying that one may cover it with any substance.

EXPLANATION

יָכוֹל שְׂאֲנֵי מְרִיבָה אֶף זָבָל הַגָּס, וְחֹל הַגָּס, וְשִׁחִיקַת כֶּלִי מַתְכוֹת, וּלְבָנָה וּמְגוּפָה שֶׁלֹּא כִתְשָׁן, וְקִמָּח,
וְסוּבִין, וּמוֹרְסִין?

One might have thought that I will include even thick manure, and thick sand, and filings of metal vessels, and a brick or a lid that one did not crush, and flour, and bran, and coarse bran?

EXPLANATION

תלמוד לומר: "בְּעֶפֶר".

Therefore, the verse states: "With earth," to exclude these.

QUESTION

ומה ראית לרבות את אלו ולהוציא את אלו?

The Baraita asks: **And what did you see that led you to include these substances and to exclude those?**

ANSWER

אחר שריבה הכתוב ומיעט, מרבה אני את אלו שהן מין עפר, ומוציא אני את אלו שאינן מין עפר.

The Baraita answers: **After the verse included** with the term "and cover it" **and excluded** with the term "with earth," **I include these** substances, such as fine sand, **which are a type of earth** in which plants can grow, **and I exclude those** substances, such as thick sand, **which are not a type of earth** because plants do not grow in them.

QUESTION

אימא: "וכסחו" – כלל, "עפר" – פרט, כלל ופרט – אין בכלל אלא מה שבפרט, עפר – אין, מידי אחריןא – לא!

The Gemara asks: Why not say that the term "and cover it" is a **generalization**, and the term "earth" is a **detail**? And we have a rule that in a **generalization and a detail, there is only what is in the detail** itself. If so, **earth, yes**, you may use, but **any other thing, no**, you may not use at all!

ANSWER

אמר רב מרי: משום דהנה כלל הצריה לפרט, וכל כלל הצריה לפרט – אין דנין אותו בכלל ופרט.

Rav Mari said in response: We do not learn it this way **because it is a generalization that requires a detail** to explain how the mitzvah is performed, **and any generalization that requires a detail is not evaluated by the** rules of **generalization and detail**. The word "cover" is vague, so the Torah had to write "earth" to teach us that the covering must be done with a substance that absorbs the blood, and not just by placing a vessel over it.

STATEMENT

דרש רב נחמן בר רב חסדא: אין מכסים אלא בדבר שזורעין בו ומצמיח.

Rav Nachman bar Rav Chisda expounded: One may not cover the blood except with a substance in which one sows seeds and it sprouts.

OBJECTION

אמר רבא: האי בורכא!

Rava said: **This is an absurdity!** Our Mishnah and Baraitas explicitly permit substances in which seeds do not sprout.

ANSWER

אמר ליה רב נחמן בר יצחק לרבא: מאי בורכתיה? אנא אמריתה ניה ליה, ומחא מתניתא אמריתה ניה ליה:

Rav Nachman bar Yitzchak said to Rava: What is its absurdity? I said this ruling to him, and from this following Baraita I said it to him:

BRAISA

היה מה לה במדבר, ואין לו אפר לכסות – שוחק דינר זהב ומכסה.

If a person was traveling in the desert, and he does not have earth to cover the blood, he may grind a gold dinar and cover the blood with its dust.

BRAISA

הָיָה מְהֵלֵךְ בְּסַפִּינָה, וְאֵין לוֹ עֹפֶר לְכִסּוֹת – שׁוֹרֵף טְלִיתוֹ וּמְכַסֶּה.

If he was traveling on a ship, and he does not have earth to cover the blood, he may burn his garment and cover the blood with the ashes. Now, if desert sand, which does not sprout seeds, were permitted, why would he need to grind a gold dinar?

EXPLANATION

בְּשִׁלְמָא שׁוֹרֵף טְלִיתוֹ וּמְכַסֶּה, אֲשֶׁכֶּחַן אֶפֶר דְּאִיקְרֵי עֹפֶר,

The Gemara analyzes the Baraita: **Granted**, that he may burn his garment and cover the blood, because we find that ashes are called "afar" (earth),

QUESTION

אֵלָּא דִּינָר זָהָב מִנָּלָן?

but regarding a gold dinar, from where do we know that its dust is called "afar"?

ANSWER

אָמַר רַבִּי זֵירָא: "וְעִפְרוֹת זָהָב לוֹ".

Rabbi Zeira said: The verse says, "And it has dust of gold," showing that gold dust is called "afar."

BRAISA

תָּנוּ רַבָּנֵינוּ: אֵין מְכַסִּין אֵלָּא בְּעֹפֶר, דְּבָרֵי בֵּית שַׁמַּי.

The Rabbis taught in a Baraita: One may not cover the blood except with actual earth; these are the words of Beit Shammai.

BRAISA

וּבֵית הֵלֵל אוֹמְרִים: מְצִינוּ אֶפֶר שְׁקָרוּי עֹפֶר, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר "וְלָקַחוּ לְטָמֵא מִעֹפֶר שְׂרִיפֹת".

And Beit Hillel say: We find that ashes are called "afar," as it is stated regarding the Red Heifer: "And for the contaminated person they shall take from the dust of the burning of the purification from sin."

BRAISA

וּבֵית שַׁמַּי: עֹפֶר שְׂרִיפָה אִיקְרֵי, עֹפֶר סֵתְמָא לָא אִיקְרֵי.

And Beit Shammai respond: It is called "dust of burning," but ordinary "dust" it is not called.

BRAISA

תָּנָא: הוֹסִיפוּ עֲלֵיהֶן הַשְּׁחוֹר, וְהַכָּחוּל, וְנִקְרָת בִּיסוּלִין, וְיֵשׁ אוֹמְרִים: אֵף הַזָּרְנִיָּה.

A Tanna taught: They added to the list of permitted substances coal dust, and stibium, and shavings from chiseling stones, and some say: even arsenic.

STATEMENT

אָמַר רַבָּא: בְּשָׂכָר שְׂאֵמַר אַבְרָהָם אָבִינוּ "וְאֵנֹכִי עָפָר וָאֵשׁ", זָכוּ בָנָיו לְשְׁתֵּי מִצְוֹת: אֶפְרַח פָּרָה, וְעָפָר
סוֹטָה.

Rava said: As a reward for that which Avraham Avinu said, "And I am but dust and ashes," his children merited two mitzvos: the ashes of the Red Heifer, and the dust of the Sotah.

QUESTION

וְלִיחְשׁוֹב נָמִי עָפָר כְּסוֹי הַדָּם?

The Gemara asks: **But let him also count the earth of covering the blood?**

ANSWER

הֵתֵם הַכֶּשֶׁר מִצְוָה אֵיכָא, הִנָּאָה לֵיכָא.

The Gemara answers: **There**, in covering the blood, **there is only the preparation of a mitzvah, but there is no** active benefit that comes from it. The ashes of the Parah Adumah purify, and the dust of the Sotah brings peace between husband and wife.

STATEMENT

וְאֵמַר רַבָּא: בְּשָׂכָר שְׂאֵמַר אַבְרָהָם אָבִינוּ

And Rava said: As a reward for that which Avraham Avinu said to the king of Sodom, "If from a thread to a shoe strap..."

SUMMARY

In this daf, the Gemara clarifies that while the Rabbis decreed tumah on all liquids of a zav to prevent people from touching his primary impure fluids, they did not make a similar decree for a corpse because people naturally keep their distance out of respect. Regarding kisuy hadam, the Gemara presents a nachlokes Tanna'im on whether spurted blood must be covered if the main life-blood (dam hanefesh) has already been covered. Finally, the Gemara defines the kosher materials for covering the blood, explaining that any substance resembling earth or in which plants can grow is kosher, provided it is fine and does not require crushing, while coarse materials, metal filings, and food items like flour are excluded.

The Gemara brings down a beautiful teaching of Rava: in the merit of Avraham Avinu saying "And I am but dust and ashes" (עפר ואפר), his children merited two great mitzvos: the ashes of the Parah Adumah and the dust of the Sotah. Think about this chiddush for a moment. Avraham Avinu was the father of the Jewish nation, a giant of giants, yet he looked at himself and saw absolute nothingness. He didn't just act humble; he truly felt like dust and ashes. And because he made himself small, Hashem made his descendants eternal, giving us mitzvos that bring purity and peace.

This is the yesod of all avodas Hashem. The world tells you to make yourself big, to show off your strengths, and to demand respect. But the Torah teaches us the exact opposite. True greatness comes from bittul, from realizing that everything we have is a gift from Hashem and that on our own, we are nothing. When a Yid humbles himself, he doesn't lose anything; on the contrary, he creates a vessel to receive Hashem's blessings and holiness.

Today, when you feel the urge to assert your honor, to win an argument, or to show someone that you are right, stop and remember Avraham Avinu. Take a deep breath, make yourself a little smaller, and let Hashem's presence fill the space instead.

הלכות עבודת פוכבים • פרק י"א

Learned like the daf, the literal words in bold, flowing with the elucidation

CHAPTER PREVIEW

In this chapter, the Rambam teaches us the vital importance of keeping ourselves separate and distinct from the non-Jewish nations. Hashem separated us to be His holy nation, and therefore we must not follow their chukim (statutes), whether in our style of dress, our haircuts, or our deeds. We will learn the specific prohibitions against trying to resemble them, including the laws of the blorit, and the rare exception made for those who must serve in the royal courts of gentile kings.

We will also delve into the Torah's strict prohibitions against various forms of superstition and occult practices that stem from dark, idolatrous roots. This includes the prohibitions of soothsaying (using omens to guide our actions), divination (entering trances to predict the future), fortunetelling through astrology, and casting meaningless spells. Through these halachos, the Rambam guides us to keep our emunah pure and untainted.

All introductions, summaries, and contextual notes are the editor's commentary and are not part of the original text.

הלכה א

Halacha 1 • The Prohibition of Following the Statutes of Idolaters and Resembling Them

אין הולכין בחקות העובדי פוכבים

We do not follow the statutes of the idolaters

ולא מדמין להן

and we do not resemble them,

לא במלבוש ולא בשער וכיוצא בהן

not in dress, and not in haircuts, and the like to them,

שנאמר "ולא תלכו בחקות הגוי".

as it is said in the Torah, "And do not follow the statutes of the nation."

ונאמר "ובחקותיהם לא תלכו".

And it is said, "And in their statutes do not follow."

ונאמר "השמר לך פן תנמק אחריהם".

And it is said, "Guard yourself lest you be ensnared after them."

הכל בענין אחד הוא מזהיר שלא ידמה להן.

The whole of these verses is in one matter; it warns that a Jew should not resemble them.

אֵלָא יִהְיֶה הַיִּשְׂרָאֵל מְבָדָל מֵהֶן וְיָדוּעַ בְּמַלְבוּשׁוֹ וּבְשָׂאָר מַעֲשָׂיו

Rather, the Jew shall be separated from them and recognizable in his dress and in the rest of his deeds,

כְּמוֹ שֶׁהוּא מְבָדָל מֵהֶן בְּמַדְעוֹ וּבְדַעוֹתָיו.

just as he is separated from them in his thoughts and in his character traits.

וְכֵן הוּא אוֹמֵר "וְאַבְדַּל אֶתְכֶם מִן הָעַמִּים".

And so He says, "And I have separated you from the nations."

לֹא יִלְבֹּשׁ בְּמַלְבוּשׁ הַמִּיחָד לָהֶן.

Therefore, a Jew shall not wear a garment that is unique to them.

וְלֹא יִגְדֵּל צִיצִית רֹאשׁוֹ כְּמוֹ צִיצִית רֹאשָׁם.

And he shall not grow the tresses of his head like the tresses of their head.

וְלֹא יִגְלַח מִן הַצַּדִּדִּין וְיִנִּיחַ הַשָּׁעַר בְּאֶמְצַע כְּמוֹ שֶׁהֵן עוֹשִׂין

And he shall not shave from the sides and leave the hair in the middle just as they do,

וְזֶה הַנִּקְרָא בְּלוֹרִית.

and this is what is called a blorit.

וְלֹא יִגְלַח הַשָּׁעַר מִכַּנְגַּד פָּנָיו מֵאָזֶן לְאָזֶן וְיִנִּיחַ הַפָּרַע מִלְּאַחֲרָיו כְּדֶרֶךְ שֶׁעוֹשִׂין הֵן.

And he shall not shave the hair from opposite his face from ear to ear and leave the long hair behind him, like the way that they do.

וְלֹא יִבְנֶה מְקוֹמוֹת כְּבִנְיַן הַיְכָלוֹת שֶׁל עֲכו"ם כִּדְּי שִׁיכְנֶסוּ בָּהֶן רַבִּים כְּמוֹ שֶׁהֵן עוֹשִׂין.

And he shall not build places like the building of temples of idolaters in order that many may enter into them, just as they do.

וְכָל הָעוֹשֶׂה אֶחָת מֵאלוֹ וְכִיוּצָא בָּהֶן לֹקָה:

And anyone who does one of these and the like to them receives lashes.

הַלָּכָה ב

Halacha 2· Cutting the Hair of an Idolater Near the Blorit

עֲכו"ם שֶׁהָיָה מְסַתֵּפֵר מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל

In the case of an idolater who was getting a haircut from a Jew,

כִּיּוֹן שֶׁהִגִּיעַ לְבְּלוֹרִיתוֹ

once the Jewish barber reached his pagan forelock (the hair grown long for idolatrous purposes),

קרוב שלש אצבעות לכל רוח

at a distance **close** to **three fingerbreadths to every direction** around the forelock,

שומט את ידו:

the barber must **withdraw** — **his hand** and stop cutting, so as not to assist in preparing an idolatrous hairstyle.

הלכה ג

Halacha 3 · Permission to Wear Gentile Clothing and Shave for One Close to the Government

ישראל שהיה קרוב למלכות

An Israelite who was close to the government

וצריך לישב לפני מלכיהם

and needs to sit before their kings,

והיה לו גנאי לפי שלא ידמה להן

and it would be to him a disgrace because he does not resemble them,

הרי זה מתר ללבש במלבושיהן

behold this person is permitted to wear their garments

ולגלח פגד פניו כדרך שהן עושין:

and to shave the front of his face in the manner that they do.

הלכה ד

Halacha 4 · The Prohibition of Soothsaying and Relying on Omens

אין מנחשין כעכו"ם

We do not practice soothsaying like the idolaters do,

שנאמר ויקרא יט כו "לא תנחשו".

as it is said in the Torah in Vayikra 19:26, "Do not practice soothsaying."

כיצד הוא הנחש.

How is this prohibition of soothsaying defined?

כגון אלו שאומרים

It is for example, those who say,

הואיל ונפלה פתי מפי

"Since my bread fell from my mouth,

או נפל מקלי מִיָּדִי

or my staff fell from my hand,

אִינִי הוֹלֵךְ לְמָקוֹם פְּלוֹנִי הַיּוֹם

I am not going to such-and-such a place today,

שָׂאֵם אֵלֶּה אֵין חֲפָצַי נַעֲשִׂים.

for if I go, my desires will not be accomplished."

הוֹאִיל וְעָבַר שׁוּעַל מִיְּמִינִי

Or those who say, "Since a fox passed on my right,

אִינִי יוֹצֵא מִפֶּתַח בֵּיתִי הַיּוֹם

I am not going out from the entrance of my house today,

שָׂאֵם אֵצֶא יִפְגְּעַנִי אָדָם רָמָאִי.

for if I go out, a deceitful man will meet me."

וְכֵן אֵלּוּ שְׁשׁוּמְעִים צִפְצוּף הָעוֹף

And likewise, those who hear the chirping of a bird

וְאוֹמְרִים יִהְיֶה כֹּה וְלֹא יִהְיֶה כֹּה.

and say, "It will be so, and it will not be so;

טוֹב לַעֲשׂוֹת דָּבָר פְּלוֹנִי וְרַע לַעֲשׂוֹת דָּבָר פְּלוֹנִי.

it is good to do such-and-such a thing, and bad to do such-and-such a thing."

וְכֵן אֵלּוּ שְׁאוֹמְרִים שְׁחַט תִּרְנָגוֹל זֶה שֶׁקְּרָא עֶרְבִית.

And likewise, those who say, "Slaughter this rooster because it crowed in the evening,"

שְׁחַט תִּרְנַגְלָת זוֹ שֶׁקְּרָאָה כְּמוֹ תִּרְנָגוֹל.

or "Slaughter this hen because it crowed like a rooster."

וְכֵן הַמַּעֲשִׂים סִמְנִים לַעֲצָמוֹ

And likewise, one who sets omens for himself, saying,

אִם יֵאָרֵעַ לִי כֹה וְכֹה אֶעֱשֶׂה דָּבָר פְּלוֹנִי

"If such-and-such happens to me, I will do such-and-such a thing,

ואם לא יאֶרַע לִי לא אֶעֱשֶׂה,

and if it does not happen to me, I will not do it,"

כִּי־לִיעֶזֶר עֲבַד אַבְרָהָם.

acting like Eliezer, the servant of Avraham.

וְכֵן כָּל כִּיּוֹצֵא בְּדִבְרִים הָאֵלֵּוּ הִכָּל אָסוּר.

And likewise, anything similar to these matters, everything is forbidden.

וְכָל הָעוֹשֶׂה מַעֲשֶׂה מִפְּנֵי דָבָר מִדִּבְרִים אֵלֵּוּ לֹקָה:

And anyone who does an action because of a matter from these matters receives lashes.

הִלְכָּה ה

Halacha 5 · Permitted Omens Regarding Events That Have Already Occurred

מִי שֶׁאָמַר דִּירָה זֶה שְׂכֻנָּתִי סִימָן טוֹב הִיתָה עָלַי.

One who said, "This dwelling that I built was a good omen for me,"

אָשָׁה זֶה שֶׁנִּשְׂאָתִי וּבְהֶמָּה זֶה שְׂכֻנָּתִי מְבֹרָכַת הִיתָה מֵעַתָּה שְׂכֻנָּתִי עֲשֵׂרֶתִי.

or "this woman whom I married, and this animal that I purchased, was blessed; from the time that I purchased it, I became rich,"

וְכֵן הַשּׁוֹאֵל לְתִינוּק אִי זֶה פְּסוּק אֶתָּה לוֹמֵד

and so too, one who asks a child, "Which verse are you learning?"

אִם אָמַר לוֹ פְּסוּק מִן הַבְּרָכוֹת יִשְׂמַח וַיֹּאמֶר זֶה סִימָן טוֹב

if the child said to him a verse from the blessings, he may rejoice and say, "This is a good omen,"

כָּל אֵלֵּוּ וְכִיּוֹצֵא בָהֶן מִתֵּר

all these and similar to them are permitted.

הוֹאִיל וְלֹא כֵּן מַעֲשָׂיו וְלֹא נִמְנַע מִלַּעֲשׂוֹת

Since he did not direct his actions based on this, and did not refrain from doing something because of it,

אֶלָּא עָשָׂה זֶה סִימָן לְעֲצָמוֹ לְדַבֵּר שְׂפָכָר הָיָה הָרִי זֶה מִתֵּר:

but rather he made this a sign for himself for a matter that already was, behold, this is permitted.

הִלְכָּה ו

Halacha 6 · The Definition of a Diviner and the Various Methods of Predicting the Future

אִיזְהוּ קוֹסֵם

Who is a diviner that the Torah prohibits?

זֶה הַעוֹשֶׂה מַעֲשֵׂה מִשְׁאָר הַמַּעֲשִׂיּוֹת

This is one who does an action from other actions

כְּדִי שִׁישׁוּם

in order that he will be entranced

וְתִפְנָה מִחֲשַׁבְתּוֹ מִכָּל הַדְּבָרִים

and will be cleared his mind from all things

עַד שֶׁיֹּאמֶר דְּבָרִים שְׁעֵתִידִים לִהְיוֹת

until that he says things that are destined to be,

וַיֹּאמֶר דָּבָר פְּלוֹנִי עֲתִיד לִהְיוֹת אוֹ אֵינוֹ הוֹנֵה

and he says, "Such and such a thing is destined to be," or "it is not happening,"

אוֹ שֶׁיֹּאמֶר שְׂרָאוּי לַעֲשׂוֹת כֵּן וְהִזְהָרוּ מִכָּה.

or that he says that "it is proper to do so, and be careful from this."

יֵשׁ מִן הַקּוֹסְמִין שֶׁמַּשְׁמִשִּׁים בַּח ל אוֹ בְּאֲבָנִים.

There are of the diviners who use sand or stones to cast lots.

וַיֵּשׁ מִי שֶׁגוֹהֵר לָאָרֶץ וְיִנּוּעַ וְצוּעָה.

And there are some who bend down to the ground and sway and scream to enter a trance.

וַיֵּשׁ מִי שֶׁמִּסְתַּכֵּל בְּמִרְאָה שֶׁל פְּרֹזֶל אוֹ בַּעֲשָׂשִׂית וּמִדְמִין וְאוֹמְרִים.

And there are some who look in a mirror of iron or in a glass lantern and imagine and speak their predictions.

וַיֵּשׁ מִי שֶׁנוֹשֵׂא מַקֵּל בְּיָדוֹ וְנוֹשֵׁעַ עָלָיו וּמַכָּה בוֹ עַד שֶׁתִּפְנָה מִחֲשַׁבְתּוֹ וּמִדְבָּר.

And there are some who carry a staff in his hand and lean on it and strike with it until that is cleared his mind and he speaks.

הוא שֶׁהַנְּבִיא אוֹמֵר הוֹשֵׁעַ ד יב "עַמִּי בָּעֲצוֹ יִשְׁאֹל וּמִקְלוֹ יַגִּיד לוֹ":

This is what the prophet says in Hoshea 4:12, "My people of its wood inquires, and its staff tells it."

הַלְכָה ז

Halacha 7 · The Prohibition of Divination and Inquiring of a Diviner

אָסוּר לְקַטֵּם

It is forbidden to divine

ולשאל לקוסם

and to inquire of a diviner,

אֲלֵא שֶׁהַשּׂוֹאֵל לְקוּסִים

except that the inquirer of a diviner does not receive Torah-mandated lashes; rather, the Beis Din strikes him with

מִכֵּין אוֹתוֹ מִכַּת מִרְדּוּת

stripes of rebelliousness.

אֲבָל הַקּוֹסֵם עַצְמוֹ

But the diviner himself,

אִם עָשָׂה מַעֲשֵׂה מִכָּל אֵלֵי וְכִיּוֹצֵא בָהֶן

if he performed an action of any of these and similar to them,

לוֹקָה

receives lashes from the Torah,

שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר

as it is said in the Torah (Devarim 18:10):

לֹא יִמָּצֵא בָּךְ מַעֲבִיר בְּנוֹ וְגו'

"There shall not be found among you one who passes his son" etc.,

קֹסֵם קְסָמִים

and the end of the verse states: "one who practices divination."

הַלָּכָה ח

Halacha 8 · The Definition of a Fortuneteller Who Predicts Auspicious Times

אִיזְהוּ מַעֲוִין

Who is a fortuneteller who is forbidden by the Torah?

אֵלֵי נֹתְנֵי עֵתִים

These are those who set times,

שֶׁאֹמְרִים בְּאַצְטְרוֹלֹגְיָא

who say through astrology and star-gazing:

יוֹם פְּלוֹנִי טוֹב

day so-and-so is good for a certain activity,

יום פלוני רע

day so-and-so is bad,

יום פלוני ראוי לעשות בו מלאכה פלונית

day so-and-so is proper to do on it melacha such-and-such,

שנה פלונית או חודש פלוני רע לדבר פלוני:

or year such-and-such or month so-and-so is bad for a matter such-and-such.

הלכה ט

Halacha 9: The Prohibition of Telling Fortunes, Astrology, and Optical Illusions

אסור לעונן

It is forbidden to tell fortunes

אף על פי שלא עשה מעשה

even though the person did not do an action,

אלא הודיע אותן הכוזבים

but merely made known those falsehoods

שהפסילים מדמיון שהן דברי אמת ודברי חכמים.

that the fools imagine that they are words of truth and words of wisdom.

וכל העושה מפני האצטגנינות

And anyone who acts because of astrology,

וכיון מלאכתו או הליכתו באותו העת

and directed his work or his travel to that time

שקבעו הכרי שמים

that the astrologers, the stargazers of heaven, set,

הרי זה לוקה

behold, this one receives lashes,

שנאמר "לא תעוננו".

as it is said in the Torah, "Do not tell fortunes."

וְכֵן הָאוֹחֵז אֶת הָעֵינַיִם

And likewise, one who holds the eyes of people through sleight of hand

וּמַדְמָה בְּפָנֵי הָרוֹאִים שְׁעוֹשֶׂה מַעֲשֵׂה תַמְהוֹן

and creates an illusion before the onlookers that he does an act of wonder,

וְהוּא לֹא עָשָׂה

and he did not actually do anything,

הָרִי זֶה בְּכֹל לְמַעוֹן וְלוֹקָה:

behold, this one is in the category of one who tells fortunes and receives lashes.

הַלָּכָה י

Halacha 10 · The Prohibition of Casting Spells and Chanting Incantations

אִיזְהוּ חוֹבֵר

Who is a spell-caster that the Torah forbids? This is one

שֶׁמְדַבֵּר בְּדִבְרִים שְׂאִינָן לְשׁוֹן עַם

who speaks with words that are not the language of any people

וְאִין לָהֶן עֲנָן

and there is not to them any logical meaning,

וּמַעֲלָה עַל דַּעְתּוֹ בְּסִכְלוּתוֹ שְׂאוֹתָן הַדִּבְרִים מוֹעִילִין.

and he brings up upon his mind in his foolishness that those words are effective to accomplish things.

עַד שֶׁהֵן אוֹמְרִים שְׁהָאוֹמֵר כֶּה וְכֶה עַל הַנָּחָשׁ אוֹ עַל הָעֶקְרָב אֵינוֹ מַזִּיק

It goes to the point that they say that one who says such and such upon the snake or upon the scorpion, it does not harm,

וְהָאוֹמֵר כֶּה וְכֶה עַל הָאִישׁ אֵינוֹ נִזְזָק.

and one who says such and such upon the man, he is not harmed by any danger.

וּמִהֶן אוֹחֵז בְּיָדוֹ בְּעֵת שֶׁמְדַבֵּר מִפֶּתַח אוֹ סֶלַע

And of them, there is one who holds in his hand at the time that he speaks a key or a stone

וְכִיוְצֵא בְּדִבְרִים הָאֵלֶּה אָסוּר.

and similar to things these; everything is forbidden as the practice of spell-casting.

וְהַחֹכֵר עֲצָמוֹ שְׁאֵחֵז בְּיָדוֹ כָּלֹם

And the spell-caster himself who held in his hand anything

אוֹ שְׁעָשָׂה מַעֲשֶׂה עִם דְּבוּרוֹ

or who did an action with his speech,

אֲפִלּוּ הִרְאָה בְּאֶצְבָּעוֹ

even if he merely pointed with his finger,

הֲרִי זֶה לוֹקָה

behold this one receives lashes mid'Oraisa,

שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר דְּבָרִים יח י "לֹא יִמָּצֵא בָךְ" וְגו' דְּבָרִים יח יא "וְחֹכֵר חֶכֶר".

as it is said in the Torah, "There shall not be found among you..." etc. "and a caster of spells."

אָבֵל אִם אָמַר דְּבָרִים בְּלִבֹּד

But if he said words alone

וְלֹא הִנִּיד לֹא אֶצְבָּע וְלֹא רֹאשׁ

and did not move not a finger and not a head,

וְלֹא הָיָה בְּיָדוֹ כָּלֹם.

and there was not in his hand anything, he does not receive Torah lashes, though it is still forbidden.

וְכֵן אָדָם שֶׁאָמַר עָלָיו הַחֹכֵר אוֹתָן הַקּוֹלוֹת

And likewise, a person whom was said upon him by the spell-caster those sounds,

וְהוּא יוֹשֵׁב לְפָנָיו וּמַדְמָה שֵׁישׁ לוֹ בְּזֶה הַנֶּאֱחָה

and he sits before him and imagines that there is to him in this some benefit,

מִכֵּין אוֹתוֹ מַכַּת מִרְדּוּת

we strike him stripes of rebelliousness as a Rabbinic punishment,

מִפְּנֵי שֶׁנִּשְׁתַּתַּח בְּסִכְלוֹת הַחֹכֵר.

because that he participated in the foolishness of the spell-caster.

וְכָל אוֹתָן הַקּוֹלוֹת וְהַשְּׁמוֹת הַמְשָׁנִים הַמְכַעְרִים

And all those sounds and the names, strange and ugly,

לֹא יָרְעוּ וְגַם הֵיטֵב אֵין אוֹתָם:

do not do harm, and also good there is not in them at all, for they are completely empty and false.

הלכה יא

Halacha 11 · Permissibility of Whispering Incantations Over a Snake Bite to Settle the Victim's Mind

מי שנשכו עקרב או נחש

One whom a scorpion or a snake has bitten,

מותר ללחש על מקום הנשיכה

it is permitted to whisper a charm upon the place of the bite,

ואפילו בשבת

and even on Shabbos,

כדי לישב דעתו ולחזק לבו.

in order to settle his mind and to strengthen his heart so he does not panic.

אף על פי שאין הדבר מועיל כלום

Even though the matter does not help at all from a medical standpoint,

הואיל ומסכן הוא

since he is in danger of his life,

התירו לו

the Sages permitted this to him

כדי שלא תטריף דעתו עליו:

in order that his mind will not be distracted and overwhelmed by fear, which could worsen his physical condition.

הלכה יב

Halacha 12 · The Prohibition of Using Words of Torah for Physical Healing

הלוחש על המכה וקורא פסוק מן התורה.

One who whispers a charm over a wound and recites a verse from the Torah as a cure,

וכן הקורא על התינוק שלא יבצע

and likewise one who recites a verse over a child so that he will not be frightened,

והמנחם ספר תורה או תפלין על הקטן בשביל שיישן.

and one who places a Sefer Torah or tefillin upon a minor for the sake of helping him sleep,

לא די להם שהם בקלל מנחשים וחוכרים

it is not enough for them that they are in the category of soothsayers and charmers,

אלא שהן בקלל הפופרים בתורה

but rather they are in the category of those who deny the Torah,

שהן עושין דברי תורה רפואת גוף

because they make the words of Torah a healing of the body,

ואינן אלא רפואת נפשות

whereas they are not intended for this, but only as a healing of souls,

שנאמר משלי ג כב "ויהיו חיים לנפשך".

as it is said in Mishlei, "And they shall be life for your soul."

אבל הכריא שקרא פסוקין ומזמור מתהלים

But a healthy person who reads verses and a psalm from Tehillim

כדי שתגן עליו זכות קריאתו

in order that the merit of their reading will protect him,

וינצל מצרות ומנזקים

and that he will be saved from troubles and from damages,

הרי זה מותר:

behold, this is permitted.

הלכה יג

Halacha 13 · The Prohibition of Seeking Information from the Dead and the Forbidden Methods

איזהו דורש אל המתים

Who is the Torah referring to when it forbids one who seeks to the dead?

זה המרעיב את עצמו

This is one who starves himself

והולך ולן בבית הקברות

and goes and sleeps in a cemetery

כדי שיבוא מת בללום

in order that a dead person will come to him in a dream

וְיִדְּעֵהוּ מִה שֶׁשָּׁאֵל עָלָיו.

and inform him of the answer to what he asked about.

וְיֵשׁ אֲחֵרִים שֶׁהֵם לּוֹבָשִׁים מְלִבוּשִׁים יְדוּעִים

And there are others who wear specific garments

וְאוֹמְרִים דְּבָרִים וּמְקַטִּירִין קִטְרֶת יְדוּעָה

and say certain words and burn specific incense

וְיֵשְׁנִים לְבֶדֶן

and sleep alone

כְּדֵי שֶׁיָּבוֹא מֵת פְּלוֹנִי

in order that a specific dead person will come

וְיִסְפֹּר עִמּוֹ בְּחִלּוֹם.

and speak with him in a dream.

כָּלֹּל שֶׁל דְּבָר

The general rule of the matter is:

כָּל הָעוֹשֶׂה כְּדֵי שֶׁיָּבוֹא הַמֵּת וְיִדְּעֵהוּ

anyone who does an action in order that the dead person will come and inform him of something,

לוֹקָה

receives lashes,

שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר "לֹא יִמָּצֵא בָּךְ מַעֲבִיר" וְגו' "וְיִדְרֹשׁ אֶל הַמֵּתִים":

as it is said, "There shall not be found among you one who passes his son or daughter through the fire... and one who seeks to the dead."

הַלָּכָה יד

Halacha 14 · The Prohibition of Inquiring of an Ov or Yid'oni and Its Punishment

אָסוּר לְשָׁאֵל בְּעַל אוֹב אוֹ בְּעַל יִדְעֹנִי

It is forbidden to inquire of a master of an ov or a master of a yid'oni,

שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר דְּבָרִים יח י "לֹא יִמָּצֵא בָּךְ מַעֲבִיר" וְגו' דְּבָרִים יח יא "וְשָׁאֵל אוֹב וְיִדְעֹנִי".

as it is said in the Torah, "There shall not be found among you one who passes his son or daughter through the fire..." etc., and then the verse continues, "and one who inquires of an ov and a yid'oni."

נמצאת למד שבעל אוב וידעני עצמן בסקילה

You find yourself learning from the Torah's warnings that a master of an ov and a master of a yid'oni themselves, who perform these sorceries, are punished by stoning if they acted willfully with witnesses and warning,

והנשאל בהן באזהרה

and the one who inquires of them is in violation of a prohibition,

ומכין אותו מכת מרדות.

and they strike him with lashes of rebelliousness, which is the Rabbinic punishment for violating a negative commandment that does not carry the Torah punishment of lashes.

ואם כוון מעשיו ועשה כפי מאמרו לוקה:

And if he directed his deeds and acted according to their word, thereby performing a physical action based on their sorcery, he receives lashes from the Torah.

הלכה טו

Halacha 15 · The Punishment of a Sorcerer and One Who Deludes the Eyes

המכשף חייב סקילה

The sorcerer is liable to the penalty of stoning,

והוא שעשה מעשה כשפים.

and this is specifically he who did an actual act of sorcery.

אבל האוחז את העינים

But one who holds the eyes, meaning an illusionist,

והוא שיראה שעשה והוא לא עשה

and this is he who appears to the onlookers that he did an action, and yet he did not actually do anything,

לוקה מכת מרדות.

is lashed lashes of rebelliousness mid'Rabbanan.

מפני שלא זו שנאמר במכשף

This is because the Torah's negative prohibition, this which is said regarding a sorcerer,

בכל דברים יח י"לא ימצא בך" הוא

is in the category of the general warning in Devarim 18:10, "not shall be found among you" any sorcerer, it is the source for the prohibition;

וְלֹא שְׁנִיתָן לְאַזְהַרֶּת מִיתַת בֵּית דִּין הוּא

and it is a prohibition which is given for the warning of death of the House of Judgment, meaning it is a negative commandment that carries a capital punishment, it is so,

וְאִין לֹקִין עָלָיו

and the rule is that not do they lash upon it with Torah malkus, since any prohibition carrying a death penalty does not receive lashes,

שְׁנַאמַר שְׁמוֹת כֹּב יִז "מְכַשְׁפָּה לֹא תַחֲיֶה":

as it is said in Shemos 22:17, "a witch not you shall let live".

הַלָּכָה טז

Halacha 16 · The Vanity of Sorcery and Divination and the Obligation of Perfect Faith in God

וּדְבָרִים הָאֵלֹו בְּלֹן דְּבָרֵי שְׁקָר וְכֹזֵב הֵן

And all of these matters of divination and sorcery, all of them are words of falsehood and lies,

וְהֵם שֶׁהִטְעוּ בָּהֶן עוֹבְדֵי כּוֹכָבִים הַקְדָּמוֹנִים לְגוֹיֵי הָאֲרָצוֹת כְּדֵי שִׁינְהֻגוּ אַחֲרֵיהֶן.

and they are the very notions with which the ancient idolaters misled the nations of the lands, in order that they should follow after them and submit to their authority.

וְאִין רְאוּי לְיִשְׂרָאֵל שֶׁהֵם חֲכָמִים מְחַכְמִים לְהִמָּשֵׁךְ בַּהֲבָלִים אֵלֹו

And it is not fitting for Israel, who are wise and exceedingly wise, to be drawn after these vanities,

וְלֹא לְהַעֲלוֹת עַל לֵב שִׁישׁ תּוֹעֵלֶת בָּהֶן.

and not to bring up upon their heart that there is any real benefit in them,

שְׁנַאמַר "כִּי לֹא נִחַשׁ בְּיַעֲקֹב וְלֹא קָסָם בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל".

as it is said in the Torah, "For there is no divination in Yaakov, and no soothsaying in Israel."

וְנִאֲמַר "כִּי הַגּוֹיִם הָאֵלֶּה אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה יוֹרֵשׁ אוֹתָם אֶל מַעֲנָנִים וְאֶל קְסָמִים יִשְׁמָעוּ וְאַתָּה לֹא כֵן" וְגו'.

And it is said, "For these nations whom you are driving out, to astrologers and to diviners they listen, but you, Hashem your God has not allowed you so," etc.

כָּל הַמֵּאֲמִין בַּדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֹו וְכִיּוֹצֵא בָּהֶן

Anyone who believes in these matters and similar to them,

וּמַחֲשֵׁב בְּלִבּוֹ שֶׁהֵן אֱמֶת וּדְבַר חֲכָמָה אֲבָל הַתּוֹרָה אָסְרָתָן

and thinks in his heart that they are truth and a matter of wisdom, but that the Torah merely forbade them as a decree,

אִינָן אֵלֶּה מִן הַסְּכָלִים וּמַחֲסְרֵי הַדַּעַת

is not except from the fools and those lacking understanding,

ובכלל הנשים והקטנים שאין דעתן שלמה.

and in the category of the women and the children whose intellect is incomplete and easily swayed.

אבל בעלי החכמה ותמימי הדעת ידעו בראיות ברורות

But masters of wisdom and those of perfect understanding know with clear proofs

שכל אלו הדברים שאסרה תורה אינם דברי חכמה אלא תהו והבל

that all these matters which the Torah forbade are not matters of wisdom, but emptiness and vanity,

שנמשכו בהן חסרי הדעת ונטשו כל דרכי האמת בגללן.

that those lacking understanding were drawn after them, and abandoned all paths of the truth because of them.

ומפני זה אמרה תורה כשהזהירה על כל אלו ההבלים

And because of this, the Torah said when it warned against all these vanities:

"תמים תהיה עם ה' אלהיך:"

"Wholehearted you shall be with Hashem your God."

CHAPTER SUMMARY

The chapter begins by forbidding us from imitating the dress, hairstyles, and building styles of the gentiles, establishing that a Jew must remain distinct in his appearance and conduct, with lashes as the penalty for violations. The Rambam then details the prohibitions against soothsaying (acting based on superstitious omens, though noting that merely looking back at past events as a good sign or asking a child for a pasuk is permitted) and divination (using trances, sand, or staffs to predict the future). Finally, the chapter defines and prohibits fortunetelling through astrology, performing optical illusions and magic tricks, and casting meaningless spells, emphasizing that relying on these foolish practices is strictly forbidden by the Torah.

The Torah is teaching us a profound lesson about where a Yid looks for direction and identity. The Rambam describes how the nations of the world look to external signs, astrology, and omens to guide their steps, or try to find security by blending into the crowd. But a Jew is meant to be completely different. We do not let a dropped stick, a passing animal, or the 'lucky' days of the calendar dictate our choices. Our identity is anchored from within, in our connection to Hashem, and our steps are guided solely by His Torah and mitzvos.

When we look for 'signs' or try to copy the ways of the world to feel secure, we are forgetting who we are. A Yid is 'mevudal', distinct and elevated. We don't need to look at what the street is wearing or what the stars are saying to know how to live. True peace of mind and real success come from living with simple emunah, knowing that everything comes directly from Hashem, not from coincidences or external forces.

Today, catch yourself if you start relying on a superstitious thought or feel the urge to blend in just to fit the surrounding culture. Instead, make one conscious decision based purely on ratzon Hashem, showing that your steps are guided by emunah alone.

תהלים • חמשה קאפיטלער

The Five Daily Kapitlach

CHAPTER PREVIEW

These are the five kapitlach of Tehillim said every single day: 32, 43, 83, 121, and 130, each set word for word with its English meaning. They are gathered here as one section so the whole daily Tehillim can be said and downloaded together.

All introductions and contextual notes are the editor's commentary and are not part of the original text.

פֿאַרק ל"ב CHAPTER 32

לְדוֹד מִשְׁכִּיל אֲשֶׁרִי נָשׁוּי פֶּשַׁע כָּסוּי חֲטָאָה:
אֲשֶׁרִי אָדָם לֹא יַחֲשֹׁב יְהוָה לוֹ עֹז וְאִין בְּרוּחוֹ רַמְיָה:
כִּי הִחַרְשָׁתִּי בָּלוּ עֲצָמַי בְּשֹׁאֲגָתִי כָּל הַיּוֹם:
כִּי יוֹמָם וּלְיָלָה תִּכְבֵּד עָלַי יְדָה נִהַפָּה לְשׁוֹדִי בַּחֲרַבְנִי קִיץ סָלָה:
חֲטָאתִי אוֹדִיעָה וְעוֹנִי לֹא כִסִּיתִי אֲמַרְתִּי אוֹדָה עָלַי פֶּשַׁעִי לִיהוָה וְאַתָּה נִשְׂאָתָּ עֹז חֲטָאתִי סָלָה:
עַל זֹאת יִתְפַּלֵּל כָּל חֹסֶיד אֱלֹהִים לְעֵת מִצָּא רַק לְשֹׁטֵף מִיָּם רַבִּים אֱלֹהִים לֹא יִגִּיעוּ:
אַתָּה סֹתֵר לִי מִצָּר תִּצְרֵנִי רָנִי פִּלַּט תְּסוּבְּבֵנִי סָלָה:
אֲשַׁכִּילָה וְאוֹרָה בְּדֶרֶךְ זוֹ תִּלְךָ אֵינִי עֹלָה עֵינִי:
אֵל תִּהְיוּ כָּסוּס כְּפָרֵד אִין הִבִּין בְּמִתְּג וְרָסוֹן עֲדִיו לִבְלוֹם בַּל קָרַב אֱלֹהִים:
רַבִּים מִכְּאוּבִים לָרָשָׁע וְהַבּוֹטֵחַ בִּיהוָה חֲסֵד יְסוּבְּבֵנוּ:
שִׁמְחוּ בִיהוָה וְגִילוּ צְדִיקִים וְהִרְנִינוּ כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵב:

פֿאַרק מ"ג CHAPTER 43

שָׁפֹטֵנִי אֱלֹהִים וְרִיבָה רִיבִי מִגּוֹי לֹא חֹסֶיד מֵאִישׁ מִרְמָה וְעוֹלָה תִּפְלֹטֵנִי:
כִּי אַתָּה אֱלֹהִים מְעוּזִי לָמָּה זִנְחָתָנִי לָמָּה קֹדֶר אֶתְהַלֵּךְ בְּלַחַץ אוֹיֵב:
שְׁלַח אוֹרָה וְאַמְתָּה הַמָּה יִנְחוּנִי יְבִיאוּנִי אֶל הַר קוֹדֶשְׁךָ וְאֶל מִשְׁכְּנוֹתֶיךָ:
וְאֲבֹאָה אֶל מִזְבֵּחַ אֱלֹהִים אֶל אֵל שְׁמֹחַת גִּילִי וְאוֹדָה בְּכִנּוֹר אֱלֹהִים:
מִה תִּשְׁתַּחֲוֶה נַפְשִׁי וּמִה תִּתְהַמֵּי עָלַי הוֹחִילִי לֵאלֹהִים כִּי עוֹד אוֹדְנוּ יְשׁוּעַת פָּנֶי וְאֱלֹהִים:

שִׁיר מִזְמוֹר לְאַסָּף:

אֱלֹהִים אֵל דָּמִי לָךְ אֵל תַּחֲרַשׁ וְאֵל תִּשְׁקֹט אֵל:

כִּי הִנֵּה אוֹיְבֶיךָ יִהְיֶינָיִם וּמִשְׁנֵאֶיךָ נִשְׂאוּ רֹאשׁ:

עַל עֲמָךְ יַעֲרִימוּ סוֹד וַיִּתְּעֲצּוּ עַל צָפוֹנֶיךָ:

אָמְרוּ לָכֵן וְנִכְחֵידֶם מִגּוֹי וְלֹא יִזְכָּר שֵׁם יִשְׂרָאֵל עוֹד:

כִּי נִוָּעְצוּ לֵב יַחֲדוּ עָלֶיךָ בְּרִית יִכְרֹתוּ:

אֱהִי אָדוֹם וַיִּשְׁמְעֵאלִים מוֹאֵב וְהַגָּרִים:

גָּבַל וַעֲמֹן וַעֲמֶלֶק פָּלְשֶׁת עִם יִשְׁבִּי צוּר:

גַּם אֲשׁוּר נִלְוָה עִמָּם הָיוּ זִרְעַ לִבְנֵי לוֹט סָלָה:

עֲשֵׂה לָהֶם כְּמִדְיָן כְּסִיסְרָא כְּיִבִּין בְּנַחַל קִישׁוֹן:

נִשְׁמְדוּ בְּעֵין דָּאֵר הָיוּ דָמָן לְאַדְמָה:

שִׁיתֵּמוּ נְדִיבֵמוֹ כְּעֶרֶב וְכִזְאָב וְכִזְבַּח וְכִצְלָמְנָע כָּל גְּסִיכְמוֹ:

אֲשֶׁר אָמְרוּ נִירְשָׁה לָנוּ אֵת גְּאוֹת אֱלֹהִים:

אֱלֹהֵי שִׁיתֵּמוּ כַּגִּלְגַּל כְּקֶשׁ לִפְנֵי רוּחַ:

כְּאֵשׁ תִּבְעֵר יָעַר וְכִלְהֶבֶה תִּלְהַט הָרִים:

כֵּן תִּרְדָּפֶם בְּסַעֲרָךְ וּבְסוּפֹתֶךָ תִּבְהַלֵּם:

מִלֵּא פְּנֵיהֶם קִלּוֹן וַיִּבְקְשׁוּ שְׁמֶךָ יְהוָה:

יִבְשׁוּ וַיִּבְהַלּוּ עָדִי עַד וַיַּחֲפְרוּ וַיֵּאבְדּוּ:

וַיִּדְעוּ כִּי אַתָּה שְׁמֶךָ יְהוָה לִבְדָּךְ עֲלִיוֹן עַל כָּל הָאָרֶץ:

שִׁיר לַמַּעֲלוֹת אֶשָּׂא עֵינֵי אֶל הַהָרִים מֵאֵין יָבֹא עֲזָרִי:

עֲזָרִי מֵעַם יְהוָה עֲשֵׂה שְׁמִים וְאָרֶץ:

אֵל יִתֵּן לַמוֹט רִגְלָךְ אֵל יָנוּם שְׁמֹרֶךָ:

הִנֵּה לֹא יָנוּם וְלֹא יִישָׁן שׁוֹמֵר יִשְׂרָאֵל:

יְהוָה שְׁמֹרֶךָ יְהוָה צִלָּךְ עַל יַד מִיִּנְךָ:

יוֹמָם הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ לֹא יִכָּכֶה וַיֵּרַח בִּלְיָלָהּ:

יְהוָה יִשְׁמְרֶךָ מִכָּל רָע יִשְׁמַר אֶת נַפְשְׁךָ:

יְהוָה יִשְׁמַר צִאתְךָ וּבואְךָ מֵעַתָּה וְעַד עוֹלָם:

פָּרָק ק"ל CHAPTER 130

שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת מִמַּעַמְקִים קִרְאתֶיךָ יְהוָה:

אֲדֹנָי שְׁמֶעָה בְּקוֹלִי תַהֲיֶינָה אָזְנֶיךָ קִשְׁבוּת לְקוֹל תַּחֲנוּנִי:

אִם עֲוֹנוֹת תִּשְׁמַר יְהוָה אֲדֹנָי מִי יַעֲמֵד:

כִּי עָמַךְ הִסְלִיכָה לְמַעַן תִּזְרָא:

קוֹיָתִי יְהוָה קִוְּתָה נַפְשִׁי וְלִדְבָרוֹ הוֹחֵלְתִּי:

נַפְשִׁי לֹאֲדֹנָי מִשְׁמָרִים לְבָקֶר שׁוֹמְרִים לְבָקֶר:

יַחַל יִשְׂרָאֵל אֵל יְהוָה כִּי עִם יְהוָה הַחֲסֵד וְהַרְבֵּה עֲמוֹ פְדוּת:

וְהוּא יַפְדֶּה אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל מִכָּל עֲוֹנֹתָיו:

לְמַעֲשֶׂה WHAT TO TAKE HOME

When you feel weighed down by your mistakes, do not keep silent or try to hide them. Open your heart to Hashem in honest confession, and then immediately shift your focus to absolute trust in His forgiveness and constant protection, knowing that He never slumbers and is always guarding your steps.

Today, the moment you feel a heavy heart or a sense of spiritual distance, stop what you are doing, speak to Hashem in your own words to acknowledge your mistake, and then say out loud: 'My help is from Hashem, who forgives and guards my soul.'