

הלכות עבודת פוכבים • פרק שני

Complete Word-for-Word Interlinear • Navy & Gold Edition

CHAPTER PREVIEW

In this chapter, we delve into the very heart of the prohibition against avodah zarah, learning that Hashem forbade us from serving any created being whatsoever. Even if a person knows in his heart that Hashem is the true Elokim, bowing down to a star, an angel, or any of the elements as an intermediary—just as the generation of Enosh mistakenly did—is still considered actual idol worship. The Torah warns us to guard our thoughts with great yiras Shamayim, so that the "eye of the heart" does not lead us astray to view these creations as independent powers.

To protect our neshamos from the spiritual poison of heresy, the Torah also commands us to distance ourselves completely from the books and ideas of the idolaters. We are forbidden from reading their texts, contemplating their practices, or even looking at the images of their idols. The Rambam teaches us that we must not inquire about their rites even out of mere curiosity, as such thoughts can easily drag a person down and cause him to copy their ways, chas v'shalom.

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

הליא

האסור לעבד לכל נברא ואפלו באמצעי

Halacha 1 • The Prohibition to Worship Any Creation Even as an Intermediary

עקר הצווי בעבודת פוכבים שלא לעבד אחד מכל הברואים

the creations of all one to serve is not stars regarding worship of the commandment The essence of

לא מלאך ולא גלגל ולא פוכב ולא אחד מארבעה היסודות ולא אחד

one and not elements of the four one and not a star and not a sphere and not an angel not

מכל הנבראים מהן. ואף על פי שהעובד יודע שה' הוא האלהים

is the God He that Hashem knows the worshiper though · and even from them the entities created of all

והוא עובד הנברא הזה על דרך שעבד אנוש ואנשי דורו

his generation and the people of Enosh that worshiped the manner in this the creation serves and he

תחלה הרי זה עובד פוכבים. וענין זה הוא שהזהירה תורה עליו

about it the Torah what warned is this and the matter of stars is a worshiper of this behold originally

ואמרה דברים ד יט "ופן תשא עיניך השמימה וראית את השמש" וגו'

etc. the sun" — and you see heavenward your eyes you lift "And lest 19 4 Devarim and said

דברים ד יט "אשר חלק ה' אלהיה אתם לכל העמים". כלומר

meaning to say the nations" to all them your God Hashem apportioned "which 19 4 Devarim

שמה תשוט בעין לבך ותראה שאלו הן המנהיגים את העולם

the world — are the leaders of they that these and you see your heart with the eye of you wander lest

והם שחלק ה' אותם לכל העולם להיות חיים והוים ואינם

and not and existing alive to be the world to all them Hashem are what apportioned and they

נִפְסְדִים כְּמִנְהֲגוֹ שֶׁל עוֹלָם וְתֹאמַר שְׂרָאוּי לְהִשְׁתַּחֲוֹת לָהֶם

to them to bow down that it is worthy and you will say the world of like the custom perishing

וְלַעֲבֹדוֹ. וּבַעֲנֵן הַזֶּה צִוָּה וְאָמַר דְּבָרִים יָא טז "הִשְׁמְרוּ

"Be careful 16 11 Devarim and said He commanded this and regarding the and to serve them matter

לָכֶם פֶּן יִפְתֶּה לְבַבְכֶּם". כְּלוּמָר שֶׁלֹּא תִטְעוּ בְּהִרְהוּר הַלֵּב לַעֲבֹד

to serve the heart in the thought of you err that not meaning to say your heart" will be enticed lest for yourselves

אֱלֹהֵי הַחַיּוֹת סֶרְסוֹר בֵּינֵיכֶם וּבֵין הַבּוֹרֵא:

the Creator and between between you an intermediary to be these

The Rambam defines the core prohibition of idolatry as serving any created entity, even if one acknowledges Hashem as the supreme God and only intends to use the creation as an intermediary.

ה'יב

אָסוּר קְרִיאָה בְּסִפְרֵי עֲבוֹדָה זָרָה וַחֲקִירַת עֲבוֹדָתָהּ

Halacha 2 · The Prohibition of Reading Books of Idol Worship and Inquiring into Its Rites

סִפְרִים רַבִּים חִבְרוּ עוֹבְדֵי כּוֹכָבִים בְּעֲבוֹדָתָהּ הֵיאָךְ עֶקֶר עֲבוֹדָתָהּ

its service the essence of how concerning its service stars the worshipers of composed many Books

וַיֹּמַר מִצְוָהּ וּמִשְׁפָּטֶיהָ. צִוָּנוּ הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא שֶׁלֹּא לִקְרוֹת בְּאוֹתָן

in those to read not is He blessed the Holy One commanded us and its statutes its practices and what

הַסִּפְרִים כָּלֵל וְלֹא נִהְרָהּ בָּהּ וְלֹא בְּדָבָר מִדְּבָרֶיהָ. וְאַפְלוּ לְהִסְתַּכֵּל

to look and even of its matters about a matter and not about it to think and not at all books

בְּדַמּוֹת הַצּוּרָה אָסוּר שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר וַיִּקְרָא יי ד "אַל תִּפְנוּ אֶל הָאֱלִילִים".

the idols to turn Do not 4 19 Vayikra as it is said is forbidden the image at the likeness of

וּבַעֲנֵן הַזֶּה נֶאֱמַר דְּבָרִים יב ל "וּפֶן תִּדְרֹשׁ לְאֱלֹהֵיהֶם לֵאמֹר אֵיכָּה

how saying concerning their gods you seek and lest 30 12 Devarim it is said matter and in this

יַעֲבֹדוּ", שֶׁלֹּא תִשְׁאַל עַל דֶּרֶךְ עֲבוֹדָתָהּ הֵיאָךְ הִיא אַף עַל פִּי שְׂאִין

that not though even it how its service the way of about you shall inquire that not did they serve

אֹתָהּ עוֹבְדָהּ, שֶׁדָּבָר זֶה גּוֹרֵם לְהִפְנוֹת אַחֲרֶיהָ וְלַעֲשׂוֹת כְּמָה שֶׁהֵן עוֹשִׂין

do that they like what and to do after it turning causes matter for this serve it you

שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר וְאַעֲשֶׂה כֵן גַּם אֲנִי:

I also so and I will do as it is said

This halacha prohibits reading books about idol worship, contemplating its practices, or even looking at idolatrous images, lest it lead to practicing idolatry.

ה'יג

הָאָסוּר לְתוֹר אַחֵר מִחֻשְׁבוֹת הַלֵּב וּמִיָּנוּת

Halacha 3 · The Prohibition Against Straying After Heartfelt Thoughts and Heresy

וְכָל הַלְּאוֹיִן הָאֵלֹהִים בַּעֲנֵן אֶחָד הֵן וְהוּא שֶׁלֹּא יִפְנֶה אַחֵר עֲבוֹדָת

worship of after one should turn is that not and it are one in concept these the prohibitions And all

כוכבים וְכָל הַנִּפְנָה אַחֲרֶיהָ בְּדֶרֶךְ שֶׁהוּא עוֹשֶׂה בּוֹ מַעֲשֵׂה הָרִי זֶה
this one behold an action in it does that he in a way after it who turns and anyone stars

לוֹקָה. וְלֹא עֲבוּדַת כּוֹכָבִים בְּלֶבֶד הוּא שְׂאִסוּר לְהַפְנוֹת אַחֲרֶיהָ
after it to turn is that is forbidden it alone stars worship of And not receives lashes

בְּמַחְשָׁבָה אֵלָּא כָּל מַחְשָׁבָה שֶׁהוּא גּוֹרֵם לוֹ לְאָדָם לְעֹקֵר עֹקֵר
a principle to uproot to a person to him causes that it thought any rather in thought

מֵעֲקָרֵי הַתּוֹרָה מְזַהְרִין אָנוּ שֶׁלֹּא לְהַעֲלוֹתָהּ עַל לִבֵּנוּ וְלֹא נִסְיָח
we shall divert and not our heart upon to bring it up not are we warned the Torah from the principles of

דַּעַתְנוּ לְכֹךְ וְנִחַשְׁבִּי וְנִמְשָׁךְ אַחֵר הַרְהוּרֵי הַלֵּב. מִפְּנֵי שֶׁדַּעַתּוֹ שֶׁל אָדָם
man of that his mind because the heart the thoughts of after and be drawn and think to this our mind

קִצְרָה וְלֹא כָּל הַדַּעוֹת יְכוּלִין לְהַשִּׁיג הָאֱמֶת עַל בְּרִיו. וְאִם יִמְשָׁךְ כָּל
every will be drawn and if its clarity upon the truth to comprehend are able the minds all and not is limited

אָדָם אַחֵר מַחְשָׁבוֹת לְבּוֹ נִמְצָא מַחְרִיב אֶת הָעוֹלָם לְפִי קִצְרֵי
the limitation of according to the world — destroying he is found his heart the thoughts of after man

דַּעַתּוֹ. פִּיצֵד. פְּעָמִים יָתוּר אַחֵר עֲבוּדַת כּוֹכָבִים וּפְעָמִים יִחַשְׁבִּי
he will think and sometimes stars worship of after he will stray sometimes How so his mind

בְּיַחֲוֹד הַבּוֹרֵא שָׂמָּה הוּא שָׂמָּה אֵינוֹ. מָה לְמַעְלָה וּמָה לְמַטָּה מָה
what is below and what is above what He is not perhaps He perhaps the Creator about the oneness of

לְפָנִים וּמָה לְאַחֹר. וּפְעָמִים בְּנְבוּאָה שָׂמָּה הִיא אֱמֶת שָׂמָּה הִיא אֵינָה.
is not it perhaps is truth it perhaps in prophecy and sometimes is behind and what is before

וּפְעָמִים בַּתּוֹרָה שָׂמָּה הִיא מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם שָׂמָּה אֵינָה. וְאֵינוֹ יוֹדֵעַ הַמִּדּוֹת
the measures knowing and he is not it is not perhaps the heaven is from it perhaps in the Torah and sometimes

שִׁידִין בִּהְיוֹת עַד שֶׁיֵּדַע הָאֱמֶת עַל בְּרִיו וְנִמְצָא יוֹצֵא
going out and he is found its clarity upon the truth that he will know until with them that he should judge

לְיָדֵי מִינּוּת. וְעַל עֲנָן זֶה הִזְהִירָה תּוֹרָה וְנֶאֱמַר בָּהּ בַּמִּדְבָּר טו לט
39 15 Numbers in it and it is said the Torah warned this matter And upon heresy to the hands of

"וְלֹא תִתְּרוּ אַחֲרֵי לְבַבְכֶּם וְאַחֲרֵי עֵינֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר אַתֶּם זִנִּים". כְּלוּמָר לֹא
not meaning go astray you which your eyes and after your heart after stray and do not

יִמְשָׁךְ כָּל אֶחָד מֵכֶּם אַחֵר דַּעַתּוֹ הַקִּצְרָה וַיִּדְמָה שֶׁמַּחְשַׁבְתּוֹ מַשְׁגָּת
comprehends that his thought and imagine the limited his mind after of you one each shall be drawn

הָאֱמֶת. כֹּךְ אָמְרוּ חֲכָמִים גִּמְרָא בְּרֻכּוֹת יב ב "אַחֲרֵי לְבַבְכֶּם זֶה מִינּוּת"
is heresy this your heart after b 12 Berachot Gemara the Sages said Thus the truth

וְאַחֲרֵי עֵינֵיכֶם זֶה זִנּוּת. וְלֹא זֶה אֵף עַל פִּי שֶׁהוּא גּוֹרֵם לְאָדָם
to a person causes that it though · even this And prohibition is immorality this your eyes and after

לְטַרְדּוֹ מִן הָעוֹלָם הַבֹּא אֵין בּוֹ מְלָקוֹת:
lashes in it there is not the coming the world from to banish him

This halacha explains that the prohibition of straying after one's heart forbids entertaining thoughts that undermine the foundations of the Torah, such as doubting God's oneness, prophecy, or the divine origin of the Torah.

ה'ל' ד

חמורת עבודת כוכבים פנגד כל התורה

Halacha 4 • The Severity of Idol Worship as Equivalent to the Entire Torah

מצות עבודת כוכבים פנגד המצות כלן היא שנאמר

as it is said it all of them the commandments is equivalent to stars worship of The commandment of

במדבר טו כב "וכי תשגו ולא תעשו את כל המצות" וגו'

etc. the commandments all of — perform and not you err And if 22 15 Numbers

ומפי השמועה למדו שעבודת כוכבים הכתוב מדבר. הא

Behold speaks the verse stars that regarding worship they learned the tradition And from the mouth of of

למדת שכל המודה בעבודת כוכבים כופר בכל התורה כלה

entirely the Torah all of denies stars worship of who acknowledges that anyone you have learned

ובכל הנביאים ובכל מה שנצטוו הנביאים מאדם ועד סוף

the end of and until from Adam the prophets that were commanded what and all of the prophets and all of

העולם שנאמר במדבר טו כג "מן היום אשר צוה ה' והלאה

and onward Hashem commanded which the day from 23 15 Numbers as it is said the world

לדורתיכם". וכל הכופר בעבודת כוכבים מודה בכל התורה כלה

entirely the Torah all of acknowledges stars worship of who denies And anyone for your generations

ובכל הנביאים ובכל מה שנצטוו הנביאים מאדם ועד סוף

the end of and until from Adam the prophets that were commanded what and all of the prophets and all of

העולם והוא עקר כל המצות כלן:

all of them the commandments all of is the root of and it the world

This halacha establishes that denying idolatry is equivalent to accepting the entire Torah, while practicing it is a denial of all commandments and prophets.

ה'ל' ה

הדין של עובד עבודה זרה ואפיקורוס מ ישראל

Halacha 5 • The Halachic Status of a Jewish Idolater and a Heretic

ישראל שעבד עבודת כוכבים הרי הוא כעובד כוכבים לכל דבריו

his matters for all stars is like a worshiper of he behold stars worship of who served A Jew

ואינו כ'ישראל שעובר עברה שיש בה סקילה. מומר לעבודת

to worship of An apostate stoning in it that has a transgression who transgresses like a Jew and he is not

כוכבים הרי הוא מומר לכל התורה כלה. וכן האפיקורסים

the heretics And likewise entirely the Torah for all of is an apostate he behold stars

מישראל אינו כ'ישראל לדבר מן הדברים ואין מקבלים אותם

them accept and we do not the matters of for any matter like a Jew are not from Israel

בְּתִשׁוּבָה לְעוֹלָם שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר מִשְׁלִי ב יט "כָּל בָּאִיָּה לֹא יִשׁוּבוֹן

return will not who come to her all 19 2 Proverbs as it is said ever in repentance

וְלֹא יִשְׁיִגּוּ אַרְחוֹת חַיִּים". וְהָאֶפִיקוֹרְסִים הֵם הַתֵּרִים אַחֵר

after are those who stray they And the heretics life the paths of attain and they will not

מִחֲשָׁבוֹת לָבָם בְּסִכְלוֹת דְּבָרִים שֶׁאֲמַרְנוּ עַד שֶׁנִּמְצְאוּ עוֹבְרִים עַל

against transgressing they are found until that we said matters in the foolishness of their heart the thoughts of

גּוֹפֵי תוֹרָה לְהַכְעִיס בְּשֹׂאֵט נֶפֶשׁ בֶּיַד רָמָה וְאוֹמְרִים שְׂאִין בְּזָה

in this that there is not and they say high with a hand soul with contempt of to anger Torah the bodies of

עוֹן. וְאָסוּר לְסַפֵּר עִמָּהֶן וּלְהָשִׁיב עֲלֵיהֶן תִּשׁוּבָה כָּלֹל שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר מִשְׁלִי ה

5 Proverbs as it is said at all an answer to them and to return with them to speak And it is forbidden sin

ח "וְאֵל תִּקְרַב אֶל פֶּתַח בֵּיתָהּ". וּמִחֲשָׁבָה שֶׁל אֶפִיקוֹרוֹס לְעִבּוֹדַת

is for worship of a heretic of And the thought her house the entrance of to draw near and do not 8

כּוֹכָבִים:

stars

This halacha defines the status of a Jewish idol worshiper and a heretic, explaining that they are excluded from the Jewish community and their repentance is not accepted.

ה'ל"ו

הַמוֹדָה בְּעִבּוֹדַת כּוֹכָבִים וְדִין הַמִּגִּידָה

Halacha 6 - One Who Acknowledges Idolatry and the Law of the Blasphemer

כָּל הַמוֹדָה בְּעִבּוֹדַת כּוֹכָבִים שֶׁהִיא אֱמֶת אֵף עַל פִּי שְׂלֹא עֲבָדָה

he worshipped it that not though · even truth that it is stars the worship of who acknowledges Any

הָרִי זֶה מִחֲרַף וּמִגִּידָה אֶת הַשֵּׁם הַנּוֹכָד וְהַנּוֹרָא. וְאֶחָד הָעוֹבֵד

the one who worships and both and the awesome the glorious the Name — and blasphemes disgraces this one behold

עִבּוֹדַת כּוֹכָבִים וְאֶחָד הַמִּגִּידָה אֶת ה' שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר בַּמִּדְבָּר טו ל

30 15 Bamidbar as it is said Hashem — the one who and both stars the worship of blasphemes

"וְהַנֶּפֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר תַּעֲשֶׂה בְּיָד רָמָה מִן הָאֶזְרָח וּמִן הַגֵּר אֶת ה' הוּא

he Hashem — the convert and from the native from high with a hand acts that and the soul

מִגִּידָה". לְפִיכָּה תוֹלִין עוֹבֵד עִבּוֹדַת כּוֹכָבִים כְּמוֹ שֶׁתוֹלִין אֶת הַמִּגִּידָה

the blasphemer — we hang just as stars the worship of a worshipper of we hang therefore blasphemes

וּשְׁנֵיהֶם נִסְקָלִין. וּמִפְּנֵי זֶה כָּלִלְתִּי דִּין הַמִּגִּידָה בְּהִלְכוֹת עִבּוֹדַת

the worship of in the Laws of the blasphemer the law of I included this and because of are stoned and both of them

כּוֹכָבִים שֶׁשְׁנֵיהֶם כּוֹפְרִים בְּעֶקֶר הֵם:

they are the fundamental deny since both of them stars principle

This halacha equates one who accepts idolatry as true with a blasphemer, as both deny the fundamental principle of faith and are executed by stoning and hanging.

ה'ל"ז

ואלו הן דיני המגדף. אין המגדף חייב סקילה עד שיפירש את
— that he pronounces until stoning liable to is the blasphemer not the blasphemer the laws of are And these

השם המיוחד של ארבע אותיות שהוא אָלֶּף דָּל תִּנוּן יוֹד ויברך
and curses Yod Nun Dalet Aleph which is letters four of the Unique the Name

אותו בשם מן השמות שאינם נמחקים שנאמר ויקרא כד טז
16 24 Vayikra as it is said erased that are not the Names from with a Name it

"ונקב שם ה'", על השם המיוחד חייב סקילה ועל שאר
the rest of and for stoning he is liable to the Unique the Name for Hashem the Name of and he who blasphemes

הכנויים באזהרה. ויש מי שמפירש שאינו חייב אלא על שם יוֹד
Yod the Name for except liable that he is not who explains one and there is with a prohibition the appellations

ה"א וא"ו ה"א ואני אומר שעל שניהם הוא נסקל:
stoned he is both of them that for say and I Heh Vav Heh

This halacha defines the specific Divine Names that a blasphemer must utter and curse to incur the death penalty of stoning.

ה"ה

סדר חקירת עדי המגדף וקריעת בגדי הדיינים

Halacha 8: The Warning Against Blasphemy and the Procedure for Examining the Witnesses

אזהרה של מגדף מנין שנאמר שמות כב כז "אלהים לא תקלל".
shall you curse not God 27 22 Shemos as it is said from where a blasphemer of The warning

בכל יום ויום בודקין את העדים בכנויים יפה יוסי את יוסי.
Yosse — Yosse May strike with nicknames the witnesses — they examine and day day On every

נגמר הדין מוציאים את כל אדם לחוץ ושואלים את הגדול
the greatest — and they ask outside person every — they remove the judgment Finished is

שבעדים ואומרים לו אומר מה שמענת בפרוש והוא אומר והדיינים
and the judges says and he explicitly that you heard what Say to him and they say who is among the witnesses

עומדים על רגליהם וקורעין ולא מאחיז. והעד השני אומר אף
Even says the second And the witness mend and do not and rend their feet on stand

אני כמותו שמעתי. ואם היו עדים רבים צריך כל אחד ואחד מהן
of them and one one every needs many witnesses there were And if heard like him I

לומר כזה שמעתי:
I heard like this to say

This halacha outlines the biblical source prohibiting blasphemy and details the courtroom procedure for examining the witnesses without repeating the actual curse until the final verdict.

ה"ט

דין מגדף שחזר בו והמגדף בשם עבודת כוכבים

מַגִּיד שְׁחָזַר בּוֹ בְּתוֹךְ כִּדֵּי דְבוּר אֵינוֹ כְּלוּם אֶלָּא כִּיּוֹן שְׁגִידָה
 he blasphemed once rather anything is not speaking the time of within · who retracted A blasphemer
 בְּעֵדִים נִסְקָל. מִי שְׁגִידָה אֶת הַשֵּׁם בְּשֵׁם עֲבוֹדַת כּוֹכָבִים קִנְאִים
 zealots stars worship of with the name of the Name — who blasphemed One he is stoned with witnesses
 פּוֹגְעִים בּוֹ וְהוֹרְגִים אוֹתוֹ. וְאִם לֹא הִרְגוּהוּ קִנְאִים וּבָא לְבֵית
 to the house of and he came zealots did they kill him not and if him and kill him strike
 דִּין אֵינוֹ נִסְקָל עַד שִׁיְבִירָה בְּשֵׁם מִן הַשְּׁמוֹת הַמִּיחָדִּים:
 that are unique the Names from with a name he blesses until stoned he is not judgment

This halacha teaches that a blasphemer cannot escape punishment by retracting mid-speech, and details the law of one who curses God using an idol's name.

ה'י

דִּין קְרִיעָה עַל בְּרַכַּת הַשֵּׁם וּסְמִיכַת יָדֵי הָעֲדִים

Halacha 10· The Obligation to Rend Garments for Blasphemy and Placing Hands on the Condemned

כָּל הַשּׁוֹמֵעַ בְּרַכַּת הַשֵּׁם חַיֵּב לְקַרֵּעַ וְאֶפְלוּ עַל בְּרַכַּת הַכְּנוּיִין
 the descriptive terms blasphemy of upon and even to rend is obligated the Name blasphemy of who hears Any
 חַיֵּב לְקַרֵּעַ וְהוּא שִׁישְׁמָעָנָה מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל. אֶחָד הַשּׁוֹמֵעַ וְאֶחָד הַשּׁוֹמֵעַ
 the one who hears or the one who hears whether from a Jew is when he hears it and this to rend is obligated
 מִפִּי הַשּׁוֹמֵעַ חַיֵּב לְקַרֵּעַ. אֲבָל הַשּׁוֹמֵעַ מִפִּי הָעוֹבֵד
 the worshiper of from the mouth of one who hears but to rend is obligated the hearer from the mouth of
 כּוֹכָבִים אֵינוֹ חַיֵּב לְקַרֵּעַ. וְלֹא קָרְעוּ אֶלְיָקִים וְשֶׁבְנָא אֶלָּא מִפְּנֵי שְׂרַבְשָׁקָה
 that Ravshakeh because except and Shevna Elyakim did rend and not to rend obligated is not stars
 הָיָה יִשְׂרָאֵל מוֹמֵר. כָּל הָעֲדִים וְהַדִּינִים סוֹמְכִים אֶת יְדֵיהֶם אֶחָד אֶחָד עַל
 upon by one one their hands — place and the judges the witnesses All apostate a Jew was
 רֹאשׁ הַמַּגִּיד וְאוֹמֵר לוֹ דָּמָה בְּרֹאשָׁה שְׂאֵתָה גְרַמְתָּ לָּהּ. וְאִין
 and there is not to yourself caused it for you on your head your blood is to him and say the blasphemer the head of
 בְּכָל הָרוּגֵי בֵּית דִּין מִי שְׁסוּמְכִים עָלָיו אֶלָּא מַגִּיד בְּלִבְד
 alone the blasphemer except upon him that they place hands anyone law house of those executed by among all
 שְׁנֵאמַר וְסִמְכוּ כָּל הַשְּׁמָעִים אֶת יְדֵיהֶם:
 their hands — the hearers all and shall place as it is said

This halacha details the requirement to rend one's garments upon hearing blasphemy and the unique procedure of placing hands on the head of the condemned blasphemer before execution.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

The chapter outlines the strict prohibitions against engaging with avodah zarah in thought, speech, or deed. We learn that any action showing interest in these false beliefs is forbidden, and one who performs an action reflecting this concern receives

lashes. Ultimately, the Torah warns us to guard our minds from any thoughts or philosophical inquiries that could uproot the fundamental principles of our holy faith, ensuring our hearts remain entirely pure and devoted to Hashem alone.

למעשה? WHAT TO TAKE HOME

The core of the prohibition against avodah zarah is not just about bowing to a physical statue; it is about the subtle temptation to look for intermediaries. The Torah warns us, 'Be very careful that your heart not be tempted,' which Chazal explain as a warning not to let our thoughts wander after our own limited understanding. When we look at the natural systems of the world, our careers, our doctors, our financial efforts, or even spiritual forces, and treat them as independent powers that we must appease, we are falling into the very trap that Enosh and his generation fell into. We must remember that every single force in creation is merely an axe in the hand of the hewer, completely subservient to Hashem.

Furthermore, the Rambam teaches us a profound rule about the human mind: 'the mind of man is short.' We are forbidden from filling our heads with foreign philosophies, secular skepticism, or looking at things that pull our hearts away from pure emunah. The yetzer hara tries to convince us that we can explore every doubt and read every cynical book without being affected. But the Torah knows our nature. If you let your mind wander into places of doubt, wondering 'maybe it is true, maybe it is not', you will eventually be drawn after the desires of your heart and damage your yiras Shamayim. Guarding our thoughts is the ultimate boundary that keeps our relationship with Hashem pure.

To live this today, choose one area where you feel anxious or dependent on a human intermediary, whether it is a business partner, a medical treatment, or a personal connection, and consciously declare: 'This is only a vessel. Hashem alone is the source of my blessing, and I trust in Him directly without any intermediaries.'