

הלכות עבודת כוכבים • פרק רביעי

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

CHAPTER PREVIEW

In this chapter, the Rambam guides us through the painful but necessary halachos of an Ir HaNidachas—a Jewish city that has been led astray to worship avodah zarah. We will learn about the severe punishments involved, including the stoning of the beguilers who instigated the rebellion, and the decapitation of the city's inhabitants who fell into this terrible sin. The Rambam outlines the strict scriptural requirements that must be met before a city can be given this status, emphasizing that this is not a matter for a local court, but a national tragedy that can only be judged by the supreme Sanhedrin of seventy-one sages.

We will also explore the specific conditions regarding who must lead the city astray, the required size of the population, and which cities are excluded from these laws, such as Yerushalayim and border towns. The chapter details the exact process of investigation, the call to teshuvah, and the ultimate destruction of the city's property and inhabitants if they refuse to repent, showing us the extreme measures the Torah takes to eradicate the poison of idolatry from the midst of Klal Yisrael.

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

הלכה א

Halacha 1 • The Laws of Those Who Mislead a City and Its Inhabitants

מדיחי עיר מישראל

Those who lead astray a city from Israel

הרי אלו נסקלין

behold, these are stoned by the Beis Din,

אף על פי שלא עבדו עבודת כוכבים

even though they did not themselves worship worship of stars,

אלא הדיחו את יושבי עירם

but rather they led astray the inhabitants of their city

עד שעבדו אותה.

until they worshiped it.

ואנשי העיר המדחין

And the people of the city that was led astray

נהרגין בסיה

are executed by sword,

וְהוּא שֶׁעָבְדוּ עֲבוֹדַת כּוֹכָבִים

and that is on condition that they actually worshiped worship of stars

או שֶׁקִּבְּלוּהָ עָלֵיהֶם כְּאֱלֹהִים.

or that they accepted it upon themselves as a god.

וְאִזְהָרָה לַמְּדִיחַ מִנִּין

And the Torah's warning for the one who leads astray, from where is it derived? It is

שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר לֹא יִשְׁמַע עַל פִּיהָ:

as it is said, "not shall it be heard upon your mouth."

הַלָּכָה ב

Halacha 2 · The Conditions for a Condemned City and the Law When They Are Not Met

אִין הָעִיר נֶעֱשִׂית עִיר הַנִּדְחָת

The city is not made a city condemned to be destroyed with all its property

עַד שֶׁיֵּהְיוּ מְדִיחֶיהָ מִתּוֹכָהּ וּמֵאוֹתוֹ הַשֶּׁבֶט

until its enticers will be from its midst and from that same tribe in whose territory the city lies,

שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר מִקִּרְבָּהּ "וַיֵּדִיחוּ אֶת יוֹשְׁבֵי עִירָם".

as it is said, "There went out men, sons of worthlessness, from your midst, and they led astray the inhabitants of their city."

וְעַד שֶׁיֵּהְיוּ מְדִיחֶיהָ שְׁנַיִם אוֹ יֶתֶר עַל שְׁנַיִם

And the law of a city condemned does not apply until its enticers will be two or more than two people,

שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר "יֵצְאוּ אֲנָשִׁים בְּנֵי כָל־עַל וַיֵּדִיחוּ אֶת יוֹשְׁבֵי עִירָם".

as it is said, "There went out men — in the plural, meaning at least two — sons of worthlessness, and they led astray the inhabitants of their city."

וְעַד שֶׁיֵּדִיחוּ רַבָּהּ.

And it is not condemned until they lead astray its majority of residents.

וַיֵּהְיוּ הַמְּדִיחִין מִמָּאָה וְעַד רַבּוֹ שֶׁל שֶׁבֶט.

And the enticed ones must be from one hundred residents and up to the majority of a tribe.

אֲבָל אִם הִדַּח רַבּוֹ שֶׁל שֶׁבֶט

But if the majority of a tribe was enticed,

דָּנִין אוֹתָם כְּיַחֲדִים

we judge them as individuals who served avodah zarah, and not under the laws of a city condemned,

שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר "יֹשְׁבֵי הָעִיר" לֹא כִפָּר קָטָן וְלֹא כָרָה גָּדוֹל.

as it is said, "the inhabitants of the city" — which teaches that it must be a standard city, not a small village and not a large metropolis.

וְכָל פְּחוּת מִמָּאָה כִּפָּר קָטָן.

And any settlement with less than one hundred residents is considered a small village.

וְרַבּוֹ שֶׁל שֶׁבֶט כָּרָה גָּדוֹל.

And a population that is the majority of a tribe is considered a large metropolis.

וְכֵן אִם הִדְיָחוּ נָשִׁים אוֹ קְטָנִים

And so, if women or minors enticed it,

אוֹ שֶׁהִדְיָחָה יָחִיד

or if an individual enticed it,

אוֹ שֶׁהִדְיָחָה מְעוּטָה

or if its minority was enticed,

אוֹ שֶׁהִדְיָחוּ מֵאֲלֵיהֶן

or if they were enticed on their own without any outside enticers,

אוֹ שֶׁהָיוּ מִדִּיחָיָהּ מִחוּצָה לָּהּ

or if its enticers were from outside of it,

אֵין דָּנִין בָּהּ דִּין עִיר הַנִּדְחָת

we do not judge in it the law of a city condemned;

אָלָּא הֲרִי הֵן כְּיַחֲדִים שֶׁעָבְדוּ עֲבוֹדַת כּוֹכָבִים

but behold, they are judged as individuals who served worship of stars,

וְסוֹקְלִין כָּל מִי שֶׁעָבַד

and we stone every one who served the avodah zarah,

וּמְמוֹנֵן לְיִוָּרְשִׁיהֶן כְּשֶׁאָר הֲרוּגֵי בֵּית דִּין:

and their money goes to their heirs, like the rest of those executed by the house of law (Beis Din), rather than being burnt.

אין דנין עיר הנדחת

We do not judge a city led astray

אֵלָא בְּבֵית דִּין שֶׁל אֶחָד וְשִׁבְעִים

except in a house of judgment of seventy-one judges, which is the Sanhedrin Hagadol,

שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר דְּבָרִים יז ה' "וְהוֹצֵאתָ אֶת הָאִישׁ הַהוּא אוֹ אֶת הָאִשָּׁה הַהִיא אֲשֶׁר עָשׂוּ אֶת הַדָּבָר הָרָע הַזֶּה אֶל שַׁעְרֶיהָ",

as it is said in the Torah in Devarim 17:5, "And you shall bring out — the man that or — the woman that who did — the thing evil this to your gates";

יְחִידִים נִהְרָגִים בְּבֵית דִּין שֶׁל כָּל שַׁעַר וְשַׁעַר

from here we learn that individuals are executed in the house of judgment of every gate and gate, meaning the local Bais Din of twenty-three in each city,

וְאִין הַמְרָבִים נִהְרָגִין אֵלָא בְּבֵית דִּין הַגָּדוֹל:

but the many are not executed except in the Great House of Judgment of seventy-one in Yerushalayim.

אין אחת מערי מקלט נעשית עיר הנדחת

Not one of the cities of refuge is made a city led astray,

שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר דְּבָרִים יז ב' "בְּאַחַד שַׁעְרֶיהָ" בְּאַחַת עָרֶיהָ.

as it is said in the Torah, "in one of your gates," which means in one of your ordinary cities, excluding the cities of refuge which belong to the Levi'im.

וְלֹא יְרוּשָׁלַיִם נְעֻשִׂית עִיר הַנִּדְחָת

And not even Yerushalayim is made a city led astray,

לְפִי שֶׁלֹא נִתְּחַלְקָה לְשִׁבְטִים.

because that it not was divided to the tribes as an inheritance, and the Torah refers to "your gates" which belong to your specific tribes.

וְאִין עוֹשִׂין עִיר הַנִּדְחָת בְּסָפֶר

And not do they make a city led astray on the border of the Land of Yisrael,

כִּי שֶׁלֹא יִכְנָסוּ עוֹבְדֵי כּוֹכָבִים וְיִחְרִיבוּ אֶת אֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל.

in order that not will enter worshipers of stars through the ruined border city and destroy — the Land of Yisrael.

ואין בית דין אחד עושה שלש עירות הנדחות זו בצד זו.

And not does one house of judgment, the Great Sanhedrin, make three cities led astray if they are this beside this, adjacent to one another, so as not to desolate the land.

אבל אם היו מרחקות עושה:

But if they were distant from one another, the Sanhedrin makes them cities led astray.

הלכה ה

Halacha 5 · The Conditions for a Condemned City and the Law When They Are Not Fulfilled

אין עושין עיר הנדחת

We do not make a city have the status of a condemned city

עד שידיחוה מדיחיה בלשון רבים

until its proselytizers proselytize it in the language of many, meaning they address the community in the plural,

ויאמרו להן

and they say to them:

נלה ונעבד

"Let us go and worship" avodah zarah,

או נלה ונזבח

or "let us go and sacrifice,"

או נלה ונקטיר

or "let us go and burn incense,"

או נלה וננסה

or "let us go and pour libations,"

או נלה ונשתחוה

or "let us go and bow down,"

או נלה ונקבל בפאלוה

or "let us go and accept it as a god,"

והם שומעים

and they listen to them

וְעָבְדוּ אוֹתָהּ דֶּרֶךְ עֲבֹדָתָהּ

and they worshiped it in the way of its customary worship,

אוּ בְאַחַת מֵאַרְבַּע עֲבֹדוֹת

or with one of the four primary worships even if it is not its customary way,

אוּ שֶׁקִּבְּלוּהָ בְּאֱלֹהִים.

or that they accepted it as a god.

עִיר הַנִּדְחָת שֶׁלֹּא נִתְקַיְּמוּ בָּהּ וּבְמַדִּיקֶיהָ כָּל הַתְּנָאִים הָאֵלֶּה

A condemned city that did not get fulfilled in it and in its proselytizers all of these conditions,

הֵיאָה עוֹשִׂים לָהֶם,

how do we do to them in terms of judgment?

מְתַרְיִן וּמַעֲיִדִין בְּכָל אֶחָד וְאֶחָד מֵהֶן שֶׁעָבַד עֲבֹדַת כּוֹכָבִים

We warn and testify against each and every one of them who worshiped worship of stars,

וְסוֹקְלִין אוֹתָם בִּיחִידִים שֶׁעָבְדוּ

and we stone them as individuals who worshiped avodah zarah, rather than executing them by the sword as a city,

וּמְמוֹנֵם לְיֹרְשֵׁיהֶם:

and their property goes to their heirs, instead of being burnt.

הַלָּכָה ו

Halacha 6· The Judicial Process and Punishment of a City Led Astray into Idolatry

וְהֵיאָה דִּין עִיר הַנִּדְחָת.

And how is the judgment of a city led astray carried out?

בְּזֶמַן שֶׁתִּהְיֶה רְאוּיָה לְהַעֲשׂוֹת עִיר הַנִּדְחָת.

At the time that it is fitting to be made a city led astray,

בֵּית דִּין הַגָּדוֹל שׁוֹלְחִין וְדוֹרְשִׁין וְחוֹקְרִין

the Great Court sends messengers and they investigate and probe

עַד שֶׁיֵּדְעוּ בְּרָאִיָּה בְּרוּרָה שֶׁהָדַחָה כָּל הָעִיר אוּ רִבָּהּ

until they know with clear proof that all of the city or its majority was led astray

וְחִזְרוּ לְעֲבֹדַת כּוֹכָבִים.

and they turned to the worship of stars.

אחר כן שולחים להם שני תלמידי חכמים להזהירם ולהחזירם.

After that, they send to them two disciples of Sages to warn them and to return them to the proper path.

אם חזרו ועשו תשובה מוטב

If they return and perform repentance, it is well;

ואם יעמדו באולתן

and if they stand in their folly,

בית דין מצוין לכל ישראל לעלות עליהן לצבא

the Court commands all of Israel to go up against them for the army,

והו צרין עליהם ועורכין עמהן מלחמה עד שתבקע העיר.

and they besiege them and wage war with them until the city is breached.

כשתבקע מיד מרבין להם בתי דינים אותם.

When it is breached, immediately they set up many courts of law for them and they judge them.

כל מי שבאו עליו שני עדים שעבד פוכבים אחר שהתרו אותו מפרישין אותו.

Every one against whom came two witnesses that he worshiped stars after they warned him, they separate him from the others.

נמצאו כל העובדים מעוטה סוקלין אותן ושאר העיר נצול.

If all the worshipers are found to be its minority, they stone them, and the rest of the city is saved.

נמצאו רבה מעלין אותן לבית דין הגדול וגומריין שם דינם

If they are found to be its majority, they bring them up to the Great Court and they conclude their judgment there,

והורגין כל אלו שעבדו בסתר.

and they execute all of these who worshiped, by the sword.

ומכין את כל נפש אדם אשר בה לפי חרב טף ונשים אם הדחה כלה.

And they strike every soul of man which is in it by the mouth of the sword, children and women, if all of it was led astray.

ואם נמצאו העובדים רבה מכים את כל הטף ונשים של עובדים לפי חרב.

And if the worshipers were found to be its majority, they strike all of the children and women of the worshipers by the mouth of the sword.

ובין שהדחה כלה בין שהדחה רבה סוקלין את מדיחיה

And whether all of it was led astray, or whether its majority was led astray, they stone its instigators,

ומקבצין כל שללה אל תוך רחובה.

and they gather all of its spoil into the midst of its street.

אין לה רחוב עושין לה רחוב.

If there is no street to it, they make a street for it.

היה רחובה חוצה לה בונין חומה חוץ ממנו עד שיכנס לתוכה

If its street was outside of it, they build a wall outside of it until it enters into its midst,

שנאמר אל תוך רחבה.

as it is said, "into the midst of its street."

והורגין כל נפש חיה אשר בה

And they kill every living soul which is in it,

ושורפין את כל שללה עם המדינה באש.

and they burn all of its spoil with the city in fire.

ושרפתה מצות עשה

And its burning is a positive commandment,

שנאמר דברים יג יז "ושרפת באש את העיר ואת כל שללה":

as it is said in Devarim 13:17, "and you shall burn in fire the city and all of its spoil."

הלכה ז

Halacha 7 · The Status of the Property of Righteous Inhabitants in a Condemned City

נכסי הצדיקים שבתוכה

The property of the righteous people who are within it—

והם שאר יושבי העיר שלא הדחו עם רבה

and they are the rest of the inhabitants of the city who did not go astray with its majority—

נשרפין בכלל שללה

are burned within the category of its spoil,

הואיל וישובו שם ממונן אבד.

since they dwelt there, their money is lost as a punishment for staying in such a wicked place.

וְכָל הַנִּהְנֶה מִמֶּנָּה בְּכָל שְׂהוּא

And anyone who derives benefit from it in any amount

לֹקָה אֶחַת

receives lashes once,

שְׁנָאֵמַר

as it is said in the Torah (Devarim 13:18):

וְלֹא יִדְבֶק בְּיָדְךָ מֵאוֹמָה מִן הַחֵרֶם

"And not shall cling to your hand anything from the banned property."

הַלָּכָה ח

Halacha 8 - An Ir HaNidachas Whose Witnesses Were Proven Zomemim and the Prohibition of Rebuilding It

וְעִיר הַנִּדְּחָת שֶׁהוּזְמוּ עֲדֶיהָ

And regarding a city that was led astray whose witnesses were proven to be zomemim (conspiring liars),

כָּל הַמַּחֲזִיק בְּנִכְסֶיהָ זָכָה

anyone who takes possession of its property has acquired it,

וּמִתֵּר לְהִנּוֹת בּוֹ שְׁהָרִי הוּזְמוּ.

and it is permitted to benefit from it, since they were proven to be zomemim and the city was never actually condemned.

וְלָמָּה זָכָה בָּהּ

And why did the one who took possession acquire it?

שֶׁכָּל אֶחָד וְאֶחָד כָּבַר הַפְּקִיר מִמוֹנּוֹ מִשְׁעָה שְׁנִגְמַר דִּינּוֹ.

Because each and every one of the residents already declared ownerless his property from the time that his judgment was finalized, thinking he would be executed and his property destroyed, so it became ownerless property available for anyone to acquire.

וְאֵינָה נִבְנֶיית לְעוֹלָם

And a city that was actually condemned and destroyed is not rebuilt forever,

וְכָל הַבּוֹנֶה אוֹתָהּ לֹקָה

and anyone who rebuilds it receives lashes,

שְׁנָאֵמַר "לֹא תִבְנֶה עוֹד".

as it is said, "It shall not be rebuilt anymore."

וּמִתֵּר לַעֲשׂוֹתָהּ גִּנּוֹת וּפְרָדִסִּים

And it is permitted to make it into gardens and orchards,

שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר לֹא תִבְנֶה עוֹד

as it is said, "It shall not be rebuilt anymore"—meaning,

לֹא תִבְנֶה מְדִינָה כְּמוֹ שֶׁהָיְתָה:

it shall not be rebuilt as a city like it was originally.

הִלְכָּה ט

Halacha 9 · The Law of a Passing Caravan Led Astray in an Apostate City

שִׁירָא הָעוֹבֶרֶת מִמָּקוֹם לְמָקוֹם

Regarding a caravan that passes from place to place,

אִם עָבְרָה בְּעִיר הַנִּדְחָת וְהָיְתָה עִמָּהּ.

if it passed through the city that was led astray and was led astray with it, meaning the members of the caravan also served the idols of that city,

אִם שָׁהָתָה שָׁם שְׁלֹשִׁים יוֹם

if it stayed there for thirty days, they are considered residents of the city, and therefore

נִהָרְגִין בְּסֵיף וּמְמוֹנָם אֵבֶד

they are executed by the sword and their property is destroyed just like the rest of the city's inhabitants,

וְאִם לֹא

and if not, meaning they stayed there for less than thirty days, they are not treated as residents of the condemned city; rather, they are judged as individual idolaters, and thus

הֵן בְּסָקִילָה וּמְמוֹנָם לְיִוָּרְשִׁיהֶן:

they are executed by stoning and their property is not destroyed, but rather goes to their heirs.

הִלְכָּה י

Halacha 10 · The Status of Outside Property and the Wicked Inhabitants' Property in an Er Nidachat

בְּכֵסֵי אַנְשֵׁי מְדִינָה אַחֶרֶת שֶׁהָיוּ מִפְּקָדִין בְּתוֹכָהּ

The property of the people of another city that were deposited within it, meaning within the condemned city,

אֶף עַל פִּי שֶׁקָּבְלוּ עָלֶיהֶן אַחֲרֵיכֵן

even though the residents of the condemned city **accepted upon themselves responsibility** for those items,

אין נשרפין

they **are not burned** along with the rest of the city's spoil,

אָלאַ יחזרו לבעליהן

but rather they shall return to their owners,

שנאמר "שללה" ולא שלל חברתה.

as it is said in the Torah regarding the condemned city, "its spoil"—and not the spoil of its neighbor.

נכסי הרשעים שהדחו שהיו מפקדין במדינה אחרת

Conversely, **the property of the wicked** residents of the condemned city **who were led astray**, that were deposited in another city,

אם נקבצו עמה נשרפין בכללה

if they were gathered with it, meaning if they had already been brought back and collected inside the condemned city before it was destroyed, **they are burned in its generality** as part of its spoil;

ואם לאו אין מאבדים אותם

and if not, meaning they were not gathered into the condemned city but remained deposited elsewhere, **we do not destroy** them,

אָלאַ ינתנו ליורשיהם:

but rather they shall be given to their heirs who did not stray after avodah zarah.

הלכה יא

Halacha 11 · The Status of Jointly Owned Property in a Condemned City

בהמה חציה של עיר הנדחת

Regarding **an animal, half of which belongs to** the residents of a city that is led astray

וחציה של עיר אחרת שהיתה בתוכה

and half of which belongs to a resident of another city, which was physically located within it

הרי זו אסורה.

behold, this animal is forbidden to benefit from, because a living animal cannot be divided without killing it, and the forbidden half sanctifies the whole.

ועסה שהיא כן מתרת

But dough that is so—half belonging to the city led astray and half to another—is **permitted** to the owner of the permitted half,

לפי שאפשר לחלקה:

because it is possible to divide it, and he can simply take his permitted portion.

הלכה יב

Halacha 12 · The Prohibition of Benefiting from Animals and Spoil of a Condemned City

בהמה של עיר הנדחת שנשחטה

An animal of a city that is led astray which was slaughtered

אסורה בהנאה כשור הנסקל שנשחט.

is forbidden for benefit like an ox that is stoned which was slaughtered.

שער הראש בין של אנשים בין של נשים שבה

The hair of the head, whether of men or whether of women, that is in it, meaning in the city,

מתר בהנאה

is permitted for benefit,

אבל של פאה נכרית

but the hair of a wig

הרי הוא מכלל שללה ואסור:

behold it is from the category of its spoil and is forbidden.

הלכה יג

Halacha 13 · The Status of Connected Produce and Consecrated Property in a Condemned City

פרות המחברין שבתוכה מתרין

Produce that is connected to the ground within it, meaning within the condemned city, is permitted and not destroyed,

שנאמר דברים יג יז "תקפיץ" דברים יג יז "ושרפת"

as it is said in the Torah regarding the condemned city, "you shall gather" and "you shall burn",

מי שאינו מחסר אלא קבוצ ושרפה

which implies that the Torah only forbade that which is not lacking any action except gathering and burning,

יצאו פרות המחברין שהן מחסרין תלישה וקבוצ ושרפה.

excluding produce that is connected to the ground, which lacks detaching from the soil, and then gathering and burning.

והוא הדין לשער הראש

And this is also the law for hair of the head of the inhabitants, which is considered connected and is permitted,

ואין צריך לומר האילנות עצמן שהן מתרים

and there is no need to say that the trees themselves are not destroyed, that they are permitted,

והרי הן של יורשיהם.

and behold they belong to their heirs who did not sin.

ההקדשות שבתוכה

Regarding consecrated property within it:

קדשי מזבח ומותו

consecrated items of the Altar, such as animals designated for sacrifices, cannot be offered or redeemed, but rather they shall die,

שנאמר זבח רשעים תועבה.

as it is said in Mishlei, "The sacrifice of wicked people is an abomination."

קדשי בִּדְק הַבַּיִת יִפְדּוּ

However, consecrated items of the maintenance of the Temple shall be redeemed so that they lose their sanctity,

ואחר כך שורפין אותן

and after that we burn them as part of the city's property,

שנאמר דברים יג יז "שְׂלָלָהּ" ולא שְׂלָל שָׁמַיִם:

as it is said, you shall burn "its spoil", which teaches: you must burn its own spoil, and not the spoil of Heaven, meaning consecrated property which must first be redeemed.

הַלָּכָה יד

Halacha 14 · The Status of Consecrated Animals and Terumah in a Condemned City

הבכור והמעשר שבתוכה תמימים

The firstborn and the tithe that are within it, the condemned city, which are unblemished,

הרי הן קדשי מזבח ומותו.

behold they are holy things of the altar, and since they cannot be offered as a korban nor redeemed, and they must die by being locked away.

ובעלי מומים הרי הן בכלל בהמתה ונהרגין.

And those with blemishes, which are not fit for the Mizbe'ach, behold they are in the category of its animal and are slain along with the rest of the city's livestock.

התרומות שבתוכה אם הגיעו לידי כהן ירקבו

The terumos that are within it, if they reached the hand of a Kohen who lived in the city, they must rot and cannot be used,

מפני שהם נכסיו.

because that they are his property, and the property of the city's residents must be destroyed.

ואם עדיין הן בידי ישראל

And if still they are in the hand of an Yisrael who lives in the city,

ינתנו לכהן של מדינה אחרת

they shall be given to a Kohen of another province,

מפני שהן נכסי שמים וקדשתן קדשת הגוף:

because that they are the property of Heaven and their holiness is holiness of the body, meaning they do not belong to the Yisrael, so they are not part of the city's condemned property.

הלכה טו

Halacha 15 · The Law of Second Tithe and Sacred Writings in an Apostate City

מעשר שני

Second tithe produce that was brought into the condemned city,

וכסף מעשר שני

and money of second tithe that was not yet redeemed,

וכתבי הקדש

and holy writings such as Sifrei Torah, Tefillin, and Mezuzos

שבתוכה

that are inside it,

הרי אלו יגנזו:

behold, these must be entombed and hidden away, rather than being burned with the rest of the city's spoils.

הלכה טז

Halacha 16 · The Judgment of an Ir HaNidachas and Its Spiritual Blessings

כל העושה דין בעיר הנדחת

Anyone who executes judgment on a city that is led astray by destroying it and carrying out the Torah's law,

הָרִי זֶה כְּמִקְרִיב עֹלָה כָּלִיל

behold, this is like one who offers a burnt offering that is entirely consumed on the Mizbe'ach,

שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר דְּבָרִים יג יז "כָּלִיל לַה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ".

as it is said in the Torah regarding the city's spoils: "entirely to Hashem, your God."

וְלֹא עוֹד אֶלָּא שְׂמֵסֶלֶק חֲרוֹן אַף מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל

And not only that, but doing so removes the fierce anger of Hashem from Israel,

שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר דְּבָרִים יג יח "לְמַעַן יָשׁוּב ה' מִחֲרוֹן אַפָּיו".

as it is said: "so that Hashem will turn back from the fierceness of His anger."

וּמְבִיא עֲלֵיהֶם בְּרָכָה וְרַחֲמִים

And it brings upon them blessing and mercy,

שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר דְּבָרִים יג יח "וְנָתַן לְךָ רַחֲמִים וְרַחֲמָה וְהִרְבָּה":

as it is said: "and He will grant you mercy, and He will have mercy on you, and He will multiply you."

CHAPTER SUMMARY

The chapter details the complete halachic process and execution of an Ir HaNidachas. A city can only be condemned if it is led astray by two or more men from its own tribe and city who use plural language to entice the residents, and if those led astray number between one hundred people and a majority of the tribe. If these conditions are met, the Sanhedrin sends Torah sages to call them to teshuvah; if they refuse, the nation wages war against the city. Those who worshiped are tried, and if they constitute the majority, they are executed by decapitation, while the beguilers are stoned, and all the city's property—including the property of the righteous residents who lived there—is gathered into the public square and burned completely as a mitzvah.

The laws of the Ir HaNiddachas (the city led astray) teach us a profound lesson about the power of our environment and the company we keep. The Torah reveals a striking halachah: if a righteous person lives in such a city, even though he never served the avodah zarah and remained completely faithful to Hashem, his property is still destroyed along with the spoils of the wicked. The Rambam explains the reason: "Since they lived there, their property is lost."

This is not a mere technicality; it is a fundamental principle of spiritual reality. The atmosphere we choose to immerse ourselves in, the neighborhood we live in, and the friends we surround ourselves with inevitably leave an imprint on us. We cannot remain completely unaffected by a toxic environment, even if we believe our personal faith is ironclad. By choosing to remain in a place of spiritual decay, a person binds their destiny to it.

Conversely, the Torah goes to extraordinary lengths to prevent this tragedy. Before any action is taken, the Sanhedrin sends two Torah sages to warn the people and motivate them to do teshuvah. Hashem does not desire destruction; He desires return. We must learn from this to actively seek out environments of Torah and yiras Shamayim that lift us up, and to always leave a door open for others to make teshuvah and return to the right path.

Today, take a look at your daily environment, whether it is your physical surroundings, your social circle, or the digital spaces you occupy. Identify one negative influence or environment that you can distance yourself from, and replace it with a positive, Torah-filled connection.