

הלכות עבודת כוכבים • פרק נשי

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

CHAPTER PREVIEW

In this chapter, the Rambam takes us deeper into the specific, dark practices of the ov and yid'oni, showing us the exact nature of these forbidden sorceries and the severe punishments they carry. We will learn how the ov involves whispering incantations over wands or skulls, while the yid'oni uses a bird's bone to fall into a trance, both being forms of avodah zarah that the Torah strictly forbids us to turn after.

We then move on to the terrible practice of Molech, where a father hands over some of his children to pagan priests to be passed through fire. The Rambam defines the precise halachic boundaries of this sin, explaining that it only applies to one's own descendants and requires both giving over and passing through the flames. Finally, the chapter addresses the prohibitions against erecting a monument (matzevah) for gathering and bowing down on a kneeling stone (even to Hashem) outside of the Beis HaMikdash.

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

הליא

המעשים האסורים משום אוב וידעני

Halacha 1 • The Prohibited Practices of Ov and Yid'oni and Their Punishments

העושה אוב או ידעני ברצונו בזדון חיב כרת ואם היו שם

there there were and if karet is liable for intentionally willingly yid'oni or ov One who performs

עדים והתראה נסקל. היה שוגג מביא חטאת קבועה. כיצד הוא

is How fixed a sin offering he brings unintentionally he is stoned and warning witnesses

מעשה האוב. זה שהוא עומד ומקטיר קטרת ידועה ואוחז שרביט של

of a wand and holds known incense and burns stands that he this the ov the practice of

הדס בידו ומניפו והוא מדבר בלאט בדברים ידועים אצלם עד שישמע

that hears until to them known with words softly speaks and he and waves it in his hand myrtle

השואל כאלו אחד מדבר עמו ומשיבו על מה שהוא שואל בדברים

with words asks that he what on and answering him with him is speaking someone as if the inquirer

מתחת הארץ בקול נמוך עד מאד וכאלו אינו נפר לאזן אלא

but to the ear discernible it is not and as if very until low in a voice the earth from under

במחשבה מרגיש בו. וכן הלוקח גלגלת המת ומקטיר לה ומנחש

and divines to it and burns incense the dead a skull of one who takes And likewise it he senses in thought

בה עד שישמע כאלו קול יוצא מתחת שחיו שפל עד מאד ומשיבו.

and answers him very until low his armpit from under comes out a voice as if there is heard until with it

כל אלו מעשה אוב הן והעושה אחד מהן נסקל:

is stoned of them one and one who performs they are ov practices of these all

This halacha defines the specific sorcery practices of ov and yid'oni and details the judicial punishments for performing them.

ה'ל"ב

מעשה הידעני ואזהרתו

Halacha 2 · The Practice of the Yid'oni and Its Prohibition

כיצד מעשה הידעני. מניח עץ ששמו ידוע בפיו ומקטיר
and offers incense in his mouth Yadua whose name is a bird a bone of He places the yid'oni is the deed of How
ועושה מעשים אחרים עד שיפל כנכפה וידבר בפיו דברים
words with his mouth and speaks like an epileptic that he falls until other deeds and does
שעתידים להיות. וכל אלו מיני עבודת כוכבים הן ואזהרה שלהן
of them and the warning are stars worship of types of these and all to be that are destined
מנין שנאמר ויקרא יט לא "אל תפנו אל האבת" וגו':
etc. the ovos to turn Do not 31 19 Vayikra as it is said from where

The Rambam defines the specific occult practice of the yid'oni and cites the Torah's prohibition against it.

ה'ל"ג

אסור עבודת המלך ודרך עבודתו

Halacha 3 · The Prohibition of the Worship of Molech and the Manner of Its Service

הנותן מזרעו למלך ברצונו ובזדון חייב כרת. בשוגג מביא
he brings inadvertently karet is liable and with intent willingly to Molech of his progeny One who gives
חטאת קבועה. ואם עשה בעדים והתראה נסקל שנאמר ויקרא כ ב
2 20 Vayikra as it is said he is stoned and warning with witnesses he did so and if fixed a sin offering
"אשר יתן מזרעו למלך מות יומת" וגו'. ואזהרה שלו מנין
from where for it and the warning etc. shall be put to death death to Molech of his progeny gives whoever
שנאמר ויקרא יח כא "ומזרעה לא תתן להעביר למלך" ולהלן
and further on to Molech to pass shall you give not and of your progeny 21 18 Vayikra as it is said
הוא אומר דברים יח י "לא ימצא בך מעביר בנו ובתו
and his daughter his son one who passes among you shall there be found not 10 18 Devarim says it
באש". כיצד היו עושים. מדליק אש גדולה ולוקח מקצת זרעו
his progeny some of and takes great a fire he kindles do did they how through the fire
ומוסרו לכהניהם עובדי האש. ואותן הכהנים נותנין הבן לאביו
to his father the son give priests and those the fire the worshippers of to their priests and delivers him
אחר שנמסר בידן להעבירו באש ברשותו ואביו הבן
the son and the father of with his permission through the fire to pass him into their hand that he was delivered after
הוא שמעביר בנו על האש ברשות הכהנים ומעבירו ברגליו
on his feet and he passes him the priests with permission of the fire over his son is the one who passes he
מצד זה לצד אחר בתוך השלהבת. לא שהוא שורפו למלך כדרך
like the manner to Molech burns him that he not the flame in the midst of other to side this from side

שְׂשׂוֹרְפִין בְּנֵיהֶם וּבְנוֹתֵיהֶם לְעֹבֹדֶת כּוֹכָבִים אַחֶרֶת אֶלָּא בְּהַעֲבָרָה בְּלֹד
alone by passing rather other stars for the worship of and their daughters their sons that they burn
הִיתָה עֹבֹדָה זֹאת שְׂשׂמָה מֶלֶךְ. לְפִיכָךְ הָעוֹשֶׂה עֹבֹדָה זֹאת לְעֹבֹדֶת
for the worship of this worship one who performs therefore Molech whose name is this worship was
כוֹכָבִים אַחֶרֶת חוּץ מִמֶּלֶךְ פָּטוּר:
is exempt from Molech aside other stars

This halacha defines the specific ritual of Molech, which involves passing one's child through fire, and clarifies that this liability applies uniquely to Molech worship.

ה'ד

הַעֲבֵרַת זֶרַע לְמֶלֶךְ וְתִנְאִיו

Halacha 4: The Prohibition of Passing One's Progeny to Molech and Its Conditions

אִינוֹ חַיֵּב כָּרַת אוֹ סְקִילָה עַד שְׂיָמְסֹר בְּנוֹ לְמֶלֶךְ וַיַּעֲבִירוֹ בְּרַגְלָיו
with his feet and passes him to Molech his son that he gives over until stoning or karet liable He is not
בְּאֵשׁ דֶּרֶךְ הָעֲבָרָה. מָסֹר וְלֹא הָעֲבִיר הָעֲבִיר וְלֹא מָסֹר. אוֹ
or give over and did not if he passed pass and did not If he gave over passing by way of through the fire
שְׂמָסֹר וְהָעֲבִיר שְׂלֹא בְּדֶרֶךְ הָעֲבָרָה פָּטוּר. וְאִינוֹ חַיֵּב עַד שְׂיָמְסֹר
that he gives over until liable And he is not he is exempt passing by way of not and passed that he gave over
מִקְצַת זֶרַעוֹ וְנִנְיָח מִקְצַת שְׂנֵאֲמֹר וִיקְרָא כ ג "כִּי מִזֶּרְעוֹ נָתַן לְמֶלֶךְ"
to Molech he gave from his progeny for 3 20 Leviticus as it is said some and leaves his progeny some of
מִקְצָתוֹ וְלֹא כָּלּוֹ:
all of it and not some of it

This halacha defines the specific actions of giving over and passing through fire required to incur liability for the worship of Molech.

ה'ה

הַעֲבֵרַת זֶרַע לְמֶלֶךְ וְהַחֲיָבִים בָּהּ

Halacha 5: Passing Offspring to Molech and Who is Liable

אֶחָד זֶרַע כָּשֶׁר וְאֶחָד זֶרַע פָּסוּל אֶחָד בְּנִיו וּבְנוֹתָיו בְּנֵיהֶם
their children and his daughters his sons whether illegitimate offspring or whether legitimate offspring Whether
וּבְנֵי בְּנֵיהֶם עַל כָּל יוֹצְאֵי יָרְכוֹ הוּא חַיֵּב מִפְּנֵי שֶׁהֵן זֶרַעוֹ.
his offspring that they are because is liable he his loin descendants of all for their children and the children of
אֲבָל אִם הָעֲבִיר אָחִיו אוֹ אֲחִיוֹתָיו אוֹ אֲבוֹתָיו אוֹ שֶׁהָעֲבִיר עֲצָמוֹ פָּטוּר.
he is exempt himself if he passed or his fathers or his sisters or his brothers he passed if but
הָעֲבִיר אֶחָד מִזֶּרְעוֹ וְהוּא יָשָׁן אוֹ שֶׁהָיָה סוּמָא פָּטוּר:
he is exempt blind who was or was sleeping and he of his offspring one If he passed

This halacha defines which descendants are included in the prohibition of Molech and who is exempt from liability.

ה'ו

אִסוּר הַקָּמַת מַצָּכָה וְהַשְׁתַּחֲוָיָה עַל אֶבֶן מְשִׁפֵּית

מצבה שאסרה תורה היא בנין שהכל מתקבצין אצלה ואפלו לעבד

to worship and even near it gathers that everyone a structure it is the Torah that forbade A monument

את ה' שכן היה דרך עובדי פוכבים. שנאמר דברים טז כב "ולא

and not 22 16 Devarim as it is said stars worshipers of the way of was because so Hashem —

תקים לה מצבה". וכל המקים מצבה לוקה. וכן אבן

a stone of and likewise receives lashes a monument who erects and anyone a monument for yourself shall you erect

משפית האמורה בתורה אף על פי שהוא משתחוה עליה לשם

to the Name upon it prostrates himself he though even in the Torah that is mentioned kneeling

לוקה שנאמר ויקרא כו א "ואבן משפית לא תתנו בארצכם

in your land shall you place not kneeling and a stone of 1 26 Vayikra as it is said receives lashes

להשתחוות עליה" מפני שהיה דרך עובדי פוכבים להניח אבן לפני

before it a stone to place stars worshipers of the way of it was because upon it to prostrate yourselves

להשתחוות עליה. לפיכך אין עושין כן לה'. ואינו לוקה עד

until receive lashes and he does not to Hashem so do we do not therefore upon it to prostrate themselves

שיפשט ידיו ורגליו על האבן ונמצא כלו מטל עליה שזו היא

is for this upon it is cast all of him and it turns out the stone upon and his feet his hands he spreads out

השתחויה האמורה בתורה:

in the Torah that is mentioned prostration

This halacha defines the forbidden monument and kneeling stone, explaining that even when dedicated to Hashem, they are prohibited because they mimic pagan practices.

חלי ז

אסור השתחויה על אבן משפית חוץ למקדש

Halacha 7· Prostration on Stone Outside the Beis HaMikdash and the Custom of Spreading Mats

במה דברים אמורים בשאר הארצות אבל במקדש מתר

it is permitted in the Beis HaMikdash but the lands in the rest of are said words In what

להשתחוות על האבנים שנאמר ויקרא כו א "בארצכם", בארצכם אי אתם

you not in your land "in your land" 1 26 Vayikra as it is said the stones on to prostrate

משתחוים על האבנים אבל אתם משתחוים על האבנים המפצלות

the hewn the stones on prostrate you but the stones on prostrate

במקדש. ומפני זה נהגו כל ישראל להציע מחצלאות בבתיה

in houses of mats to spread Yisrael all of customarily did this and because of in the Beis HaMikdash

כנסיות הרצופות באבנים או מיני קש ותבן להבדיל בין פניהם ובין

and between their faces between to separate and hay straw types of or with stones that are paved assembly

האבנים. ואם לא מצא דבר מבדיל בינו ובין האבן הולך למקום

to a place he goes the stone and between between him separating a thing he found not and if the stones

אחר ומשתחוה או שוחה על צדו ומטה פְּדִי שְׁלֹא יִדְבִיק פָּנָיו בָּאֶבֶן:

to the stone his face he will press that not in order and inclines his side on bends or and prostrates other

This halacha explains that while prostrating on stone is permitted in the Beis HaMikdash, it is forbidden elsewhere, requiring a separation like mats in stone-paved synagogues.

ה'יח

אסור השתחוה על אבן משפית ועל עבודה זרה

Halacha 8 · Prostration on Paved Stones and to Idols

כָּל הַמִּשְׁתַּחֲוֶה לַה' עַל הָאֲבָנִים הַמִּפְצָלוֹת בְּלֹא פְּשׁוּט יָדָיו וְרַגְלָיו

and feet hands spreading of without paved the stones upon to Hashem who prostrates Any

אִינוֹ לֹקֵחַ אֶלָּא מִכֵּין אוֹתוֹ מִפֶּת מִרְדּוֹת. אָבָל לְעִבּוּדַת כּוֹכָבִים אֶחָד

whether stars to worship of but rebelliousness blows of him they strike but lashed is not

הַשְׁתַּחֲוִיָּה בְּפְשׁוּט יָדָיו וְרַגְלָיו אוֹ בְּלֹא פְּשׁוּט יָדָיו וְרַגְלָיו מִשְׁעָה

from the moment and feet hands spreading of without or and feet hands with spreading of prostration

שִׁיכְבַּשׁ פָּנָיו בַּקֶּרֶקַע נִסְקָל:

he is stoned into the ground his face that he presses

This halacha distinguishes between the Rabbinic prohibition of prostrating to Hashem on paved stones without spreading limbs, and the capital offense of prostrating to an idol in any manner.

ה'לט

אסור נטיעת אילן במקדש

Halacha 9 · The Prohibition of Planting a Tree in the Temple Courtyard

הַנוֹטֵעַ אֵילָן אֶצֶל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ אוֹ בְּכָל הָעֲזָרָה בֵּין אֵילָן סָרֵק

barrenness a tree of whether the Temple courtyard in any part of or the altar near a tree One who plants

בֵּין אֵילָן מֵאֵכֶל אֵף עַל פִּי שֶׁעָשָׂא לְנוֹי לְמִקְדָּשׁ וְיָפִי לוֹ הָרִי

behold for it and attractiveness for the Temple for beauty he made it though · even food a tree of whether

זֶה לֹקֵחַ שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר דְּבָרִים טז כֹּא "לֹא תִטַּע לָךְ אֲשֶׁרָה כָּל עֵץ

tree any an asherah for yourself plant Do not 21 16 Deuteronomy as it is said receives lashes this one

אֶצֶל מִזְבֵּחַ ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ". מִפְּנֵי שֶׁהִיא זֶה דֶּרֶךְ עוֹבְדֵי כּוֹכָבִים נוֹטְעִין

to plant stars worshipers of the way of this it was because your God Hashem the altar of near

אֵילָנוֹת בְּצַד מִזְבֵּחַ שְׁלֹה פְּדִי שִׁיתְקַבְּצוּ שָׁם הָעָם:

the people there that they would gather in order of theirs altars beside trees

This halacha prohibits planting any tree in the Beis HaMikdash, even for aesthetic purposes, because it mimics pagan practices.

ה'י

אסור עשיית אכסדראות של עץ במקדש

Halacha 10 · The Prohibition of Constructing Wooden Porches in the Temple

אִסוּר לַעֲשׂוֹת אַכְסֵדְרָאוֹת שֶׁל עֵץ בַּמִּקְדָּשׁ כְּדֶרֶךְ שֶׁעוֹשִׂין בַּחֲצֵרוֹת,

in courtyards that they make like the way in the Temple wood of porches to make It is forbidden

אֵף עַל פִּי שֶׁהוּא בְּבִנְיָן וְאִינוֹ עֵץ נָטוּעַ הִרְחָקָה יִתְּרָה הִיא שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר

as it is said it is extra a distancing planted a tree and it is not in a building that it is though · even

דברים טז כא "כָּל עֵץ". אֵלָא כָּל הָאֲכַסְדָּרוֹת וְהַסִּבְכוֹת הַיּוֹצְאוֹת מִן

from that protrude and the lattices the porches all rather tree" "any 21 16 Devarim

הַכִּתְלִים שֶׁהָיוּ בַּמִּקְדָּשׁ שֶׁל אֲבָן הָיוּ לֹא שֶׁל עֵץ:

wood of not they were stone of in the Temple that were the walls

The Rambam explains that the prohibition against planting an Asherah tree next to the Altar extends to a Rabbinic ban on any wooden structures in the Temple.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter outlines the severe prohibitions of ov, yid'oni, and Molech, detailing their specific rituals and the liabilities of kares, stoning, or a sin offering depending on whether the act was intentional or inadvertent. The Rambam clarifies that the worship of Molech requires passing some, but not all, of one's descendants through fire with the priests' permission, and does not apply to other relatives or to oneself. Lastly, the Rambam explains the prohibitions against erecting a matzevah and prostrating oneself on a kneeling stone outside the Beis HaMikdash, noting that while bowing on hewn stone was permitted in the Temple, we must use mats or lie on our sides to create a separation when davening on stone floors in our synagogues today.

לְמַעֲשֶׂה

WHAT TO TAKE HOME

My dear talmid, look at what the Rambam is teaching us here. The Torah forbids us from erecting a monument (matzeivah) or bowing on a stone floor, even if our entire intention is to serve Hashem! Why? Because this was the way of the pagans. The Torah is telling us something profound: when it comes to serving Hashem, the end does not justify the means. We cannot use the methods of the street, the styles of the secular world, or the gimmicks of the outside culture, even if we think it will bring us closer to Shamayim or help us gather people for a holy cause.

True avodah requires us to be pure not only in our hearts, but in our vessels. If we try to inspire ourselves using the loud, superficial, and self-centered ways of the world around us, we profane the very connection we are trying to build. Hashem wants us to serve Him in the way He commanded, with the quiet, modest, and holy pathways of the mesorah.

Today, take a look at how you perform your mitzvos and run your Jewish home. Make sure you are not bringing the 'monuments' of the outside world into your sacred space. Choose one small area of your daily life, whether it is how you dress, how you speak, or how you celebrate a simcha, and ensure it is done with pure, authentic Jewish warmth, completely untouched by the trends of the street.