

הלכות עבודת כוכבים • פרק שביעי

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

CHAPTER PREVIEW

In this chapter, we begin learning the practical halachos of how a Yid must distance himself from any connection to avodah zarah. The Rambam opens by teaching us the positive mitzvah to completely destroy and eradicate false deities, their accessories, and anything made for their service. We will learn the distinction between Eretz Yisrael, where we are commanded to actively hunt down and destroy these abominations, and the diaspora, where the obligation is limited to places we conquer.

We will also learn the severe prohibitions against deriving any benefit whatsoever from avodah zarah, its accessories, and its offerings. The Torah warns us, "Do not bring an abomination to your home," and "Let nothing which is condemned cling to your hand." The chapter goes into detail regarding what is forbidden, including animals sacrificed to idols, where even the bones, horns, and hides are completely prohibited from use.

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

הלכה א

Halacha 1: The Mitzvah to Destroy Idol Worship in Eretz Yisrael and the Diaspora

מצות עשה היא

It is a positive commandment

לאבד עבודת כוכבים ומשמשיה

to destroy idol worship and its accessories,

וכל הנעשה בשבילה

and everything that is made for its sake,

שנאמר "אבד תאבדון את כל המקומות"

as it is said in the Torah, "You shall utterly destroy all the places" where they served their gods,

ונאמר "כי אם כה תעשו להם" וגו'.

and it is said, "Rather, thus shall you do to them", to break down their altars, etc.

ובארץ ישראל מצוה לרדף אחריה

And in the Land of Yisrael, it is a mitzvah to pursue after it actively,

עד שנאבד אותה מכל ארצנו.

until we destroy it from all our land.

אֲבָל בְּחוּץ לְאֶרֶץ אֵין אָנוּ מְצֻיִן לְרֹדֵף אַחֲרֶיהָ

But outside the Land, we are not commanded to pursue after it to seek it out and destroy it,

אֲלָא כָּל מָקוֹם שֶׁנִּכְבַּשׁ אוֹתוֹ

rather, any place that we conquer

נֶאֱבַד כָּל עֲבֹדַת כּוֹכָבִים שָׁבוּ.

we must destroy all idol worship that is in it.

שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר "וַאֲבַדְתֶּם אֶת שְׁמֵם מִן הַמָּקוֹם הַהוּא".

As it is said, "And you shall destroy their name from that place", which teaches us:

בְּאֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל אַתָּה מְצֻיָּה לְרֹדֵף אַחֲרֵיהֶן

In the Land of Yisrael, you are commanded to pursue after them,

וְאִי אַתָּה מְצֻיָּה לְרֹדֵף אַחֲרֵיהֶן בְּחוּץ לְאֶרֶץ:

but you are not commanded to pursue after them outside the Land.

הלכה ב

Halacha 2 - The Prohibition of Deriving Benefit from Idols and Their Accessories

עֲבֹדַת כּוֹכָבִים

An idol

וּמִשְׁמֹשֶׁיהָ

and its accessories that are used to serve it,

וְתִקְרֶבֶת שְׁלָהּ

and an offering of it that was sacrificed to it,

וְכָל הַנַּעֲשֶׂה בְּשִׁבְלָהּ

and everything that is made for its sake

אֲסוּר בִּהְנִיָּאָה

is forbidden in benefit to a Jew,

שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר

as it is said in the Torah in Sefer Devarim,

"וְלֹא תִּבְיָא תוֹעֵבָה אֶל בֵּיתְךָ"

"And do not bring an abomination into your house"

וְכָל הַנִּהְנֶה בְּאֶחָד מִכָּל אֵלֵּי

and anyone who benefits from one of all these forbidden items

לֹקָה שְׁתֵּים.

receives lashes twice because he violated two distinct negative commandments:

אֶחָת מִשּׁוּם וְלֹא תִבְיֵא.

one because of the prohibition of "and do not bring" an abomination into your house,

וְאֶחָת מִשּׁוּם וְלֹא יִדְבַק בְּיָדְךָ מֵאֻמָּה מִן הַתְּרֵם:

and one because of the prohibition of "and let not cling to your hand anything of the condemned thing."

הִלְכָּה ג

Halacha 3 · The Prohibition of Benefiting from Idolatrous Offerings and Pierced Hides

בְּהֵמָה שֶׁהִקְרִיבוּהָ כָּלָהּ לְעִבּוֹדַת כּוֹכָבִים

An animal that they sacrificed entirely to worship of stars

אִסּוּרָה בְּהֵנָא

is forbidden for benefit,

אֶפְלוּ פִרְשָׁה וְעִצְמוֹתֶיהָ וְקַרְנֶיהָ וְטִלְפִיָּהּ וְעוֹרָהּ

even its dung, and its bones, and its horns, and its hooves, and its hide —

הַכֹּל אִסּוּר בְּהֵנָא.

everything is forbidden for benefit.

לְפִיכָּה אִם הָיָה בְּעוֹר סִימָן

Therefore, if there was in the hide a sign

שִׂידֵעַ בּוֹ שֶׁזֶה הָעוֹר תִּקְרָכֶת עִבּוֹדַת כּוֹכָבִים הוּא

that one knows by it that this hide is an offering of worship of stars,

כְּגוֹן שֶׁהָיוּ עוֹשִׂים שְׁקוּרָעִים קָרַע עָגַל כְּנָגַד הַלֵּב

it is, for example, that they were accustomed to tear a tear round opposite the heart

וּמוֹצִיאִין הַלֵּב

and they extract the heart,

הרי כל אותן העורות שהן כה אסורין בהנאה

behold, all of those hides that are so are forbidden for benefit,

וכן כל כיוצא בזה:

and so all similar to this.

הלכה ד

Halacha 4 · The Difference Between the Idol of a Non-Jew and a Jew

מה בין עבודת כוכבים של עובד כוכבים לעבודת כוכבים של ישראל.

What is the difference between an object of worship of stars of a worshiper of stars to an object of worship of stars of an Israelite?

עבודת כוכבים של עובד כוכבים אסורה בהנאה מיד

An object of worship of stars of a worshiper of stars is forbidden for benefit immediately upon its creation,

שנאמר "פסילי אלהיהם תשרפון באש"

as it is said in the Torah, "The sculptures of their gods you shall burn with fire,"

משפסלו נעשה לו אלה.

meaning that from when he sculpted it, it becomes to him a god and is immediately forbidden.

ושל ישראל אינה אסורה בהנאה עד שתעבד

And an object of worship of stars of an Israelite is not forbidden for benefit until it is actually worshiped,

שנאמר "ושם בסתר"

as it is said regarding the curse for making an idol, "and places in secret,"

עד שיעשה לה דברים שפסתר שהן עבודתה.

which means it is not forbidden until he does for it things that are in secret, which are its manner of worship.

ומשמשי עבודת כוכבים בין של עובד כוכבים בין של ישראל

And the accessories of an object of worship of stars, whether of a worshiper of stars or whether of an Israelite,

אינן אסורין עד שישתמשו בהן לעבודת כוכבים:

are not forbidden until they are actually used with them for the service of worship of stars.

הלכה ה

Halacha 5 · Wages for Making an Idol and Dividing an Inheritance with a Non-Jew

העושה עבודת כוכבים לאחרים

One who makes an idol of worship of stars for others,

אף על פי שהוא לוקה

even though he receives lashes for violating the prohibition against making an idol,

שכרו מותר

his wage is permitted for him to use,

ואפילו עשאה לעובד כוכבים שהיא אסורה מיד.

and even if he made it for a worshiper of stars, in which case the idol itself becomes forbidden immediately upon completion.

מפני שאינה נאסרת עד שתגמר

This is because the idol is not forbidden until it is completed,

ומכוש אחרון שגומרה אין בו שיה פרוטה.

and the final stroke that completes it, which is the only part of the work done while the object is actually forbidden, does not have in it the value of a perutah, so the forbidden wage is negligible.

הלוקח גרוטאות מן העובד כוכבים ומצא בהן עבודת כוכבים.

One who purchases scrap metal from a worshiper of stars and found among them an idol of worship of stars:

אם נתן מעות ולא משה יחזירם לעובד כוכבים.

If he gave money but did not pull the scrap metal to acquire it, he should return them to the worshiper of stars and get his money back.

וכן אם משה ולא נתן מעות

And so, if he pulled the scrap metal but did not give money,

אף על פי שמשיכה בעובד כוכבים קונה

even though pulling regarding a worshiper of stars acquires the item,

כמקח טעות הוא.

it is like a purchase of error, and the transaction is void, so he may return it.

נתן מעות ומשה יוליכם לים המלח.

But if he gave money and pulled, the transaction is complete and he cannot return it; therefore, he must cast them to the Sea of Salt to destroy them.

וכן עובד כוכבים וגר שירשו את אביהן עובד כוכבים

And so, a worshiper of stars and a convert who inherited the estate of their father, who was a worshiper of stars,

יכול הגר לומר לעובד כוכבים

the convert is able to say to the worshiper of stars:

טל אתה עבודת כוכבים ואני מעות.

'Take you the worship of stars and I will take the money;

טל אתה יין נסך ואני פרות.

take you the wine of libation and I will take the produce.'

ואם משכאן לרשות הגר אסור:

But if they divide the inheritance after the items already came into the possession of the convert, it is forbidden to exchange them, as he would be trading in forbidden objects.

הלכה ו

Halacha 6 - Benefiting from Images Made by Idolaters

צורות שעשאום עובדי כוכבים לנוי מתירין בהנאה

Images that idolaters made for beauty are permitted for benefit,

וצורות שעשאום לעבודת כוכבים אסורין.

and images that they made for idolatry are forbidden to derive any benefit from.

כיצד.

How so do we determine their status?

כל הצורות הנמצאים בפכרים אסורים בהנאה

All the images that are found in the villages are forbidden for benefit,

מפני שחזקתן של עבודת כוכבים הן עשוין.

because their presumption is that they are made for idolatry, as villagers are generally superstitious and worship them.

והנמצאות במדינה

And those found in the city are judged as follows: if

אם היו עומדין על פתח המדינה

they were standing at the entrance of the city,

והיה ביד הצורה צורת מקל או צפור או כדור או סף או עטרה וטבעת

and there was in the hand of the image the form of a staff, or a bird, or a globe, or a sword, or a crown and a ring,

חזקתו שהוא לעבודת פוכבים ואסור בהנאה.

its presumption is that it is for idolatry and is forbidden for benefit.

ואם לאו

And if not—meaning, if it does not hold any of these symbols of power and worship—

הרי הוא בחזקת לגוי ומותר:

behold it is in the presumption of being made for beauty and is permitted.

הלכה ז

Halacha 7 · The Status of Discarded Idols and Severed Limbs of Worshipped Images

צלמי עבודת פוכבים הנמצאים משלכים בשוקים

Statues of worship of stars that are found cast away in the marketplace

או בתוך הגרוטאות

or inside the scrap metal,

הרי אלו מותרין

behold these are permitted in benefit, as we assume they were discarded and nullified by their owners,

ואין צריך לומר שבקרי צלמיהן.

and there is no need to say that fragments of their statues are permitted.

אבל המוצא יד מצורת פוכב או מזל

But one who finds a hand from the form of a star or a constellation,

או רגלה או איבר מאיבריה משלה

or its foot, or a limb from its limbs, cast away,

הרי זה אסור בהנאה

behold this is forbidden in benefit.

הואיל וידוע בודאי שזה האיבר מן צורת עבודת פוכבים הנעבדת

Since he knew with certainty that this limb is from the form of worship of stars that is worshiped, and such prominent limbs are sometimes worshiped on their own,

הרי היא באסורה

behold it remains in its prohibition

עד שיודע לו שהעובדי כוכבים עובדיה בטלונה:

until it becomes known to him that the worshipers of stars, its worshipers, nullified it.

הלכה ח

Halacha 8 · The Status of Found Vessels Bearing Images of the Sun, Moon, or Dragon

המוציא כלים ועליהן צורת חמה ולבנה ודרקון.

One who finds vessels and upon them is the form of the sun, or the moon, or a dragon—which are forms commonly worshipped as idols—

אם היו כלי כסף וזהב או בגדי שני

if they were vessels of silver and gold, or garments of scarlet, which are highly valuable and often used for idolatrous service,

או שהיו חקוקים על הנזמים ועל הטבעות

or if they were engraved upon the nose-rings and upon the rings which are worn as personal ornaments and sometimes treated with superstitious reverence,

הרי אלו אסורין.

behold, these are forbidden to benefit from, because we must assume they were made for worship.

ועל שאר הכלים מתירין מפני שחזקתן לנוי.

But upon the rest of the vessels, they are permitted, because their presumption is that they were made merely for ornament and not for idolatry.

וכן שאר הצורות הנמצאות על כל הכלים

And so, the rest of the forms that are found upon all the vessels,

חזקתן לנוי ומתירין:

their presumption is that they are for ornament, and therefore they are permitted to be used.

הלכה ט

Halacha 9 · Mixtures of Idolatry and the Prohibition of Benefiting from Their Sale Proceeds

עבודת כוכבים ומשמשיה וכל התקרבת שלה

An idol, and its accessories, and any offering of it

אוסרים בכל שהן.

forbid other items they mix with in any amount, meaning they are never nullified.

פיצה.

How so?

עבודת כוכבים שנתערבה בצורות של נוי

If an idol was mixed with permissible images of beauty,

אפלו אחת בכמה אלפים

even if it is only one forbidden image among several thousands of permitted ones,

יוליף הכל לים המלח.

he must bring the whole mixture to the Sea of Salt to be destroyed.

וכן אם נתערב כוס של עבודת כוכבים בכמה כוסות

And so if a cup of libation for an idol was mixed with several permitted cups,

או חתיכה מן הבשר שנתערבה בכמה חתיכות

or a piece of the meat offered to an idol that was mixed with several kosher pieces,

יוליף הכל לים המלח.

he must bring the whole mixture to the Sea of Salt.

וכן עור לבוב שנתערב בכמה עורות

And so a hide pierced at the heart for idolatrous worship that was mixed with several ordinary hides,

הכל אסור בהנאה.

the whole mixture is forbidden for benefit.

עבר ומכר עבודת כוכבים או אחד ממשמשיה או תקרבת שלה

If he transgressed and sold an idol, or one of its accessories, or an offering of it,

הרי הדמים אסורין בהנאה

behold, the money received from the sale is forbidden for benefit,

ואוסרין בכל שהן בעבודת כוכבים

and they forbid any other money they mix with in any amount, like the idol itself,

שנאמר "והיית חרם כמוהו"

as it is said, "And you shall be banned like it,"

כל מה שאתה מביא מעבודת כוכבים ומכל משמשיה ותקרבתה הרי היא כמוה:

teaching that all that which you bring and produce from an idol, and from all its accessories and its offering, behold it is like it in its severe prohibition.

עבודת כוכבים או אֲשֶׁרָה שֶׁנִּשְׂרְפָה

An object of worship of stars or an asherah tree that was burned,

אֶפְרָה אָסוּר בִּהְנֵאתָהּ.

its ashes are forbidden for benefit.

וְגִחַלֹת שֶׁל עֲבוֹדַת כּוֹכָבִים אָסוּרָה

And a coal of an object of worship of stars is forbidden,

וְהִשְׁלָהֶכֶת מִתֵּתָת מִפְּנֵי שֶׁאֵין בָּהּ מַמָּשׁ.

but the flame is permitted because there is no substance in it.

סִפֵּק עֲבוֹדַת כּוֹכָבִים אָסוּר,

A doubt of worship of stars is forbidden,

סִפֵּק סִפְקָהּ מִתָּר.

but a doubt of its doubt is permitted.

כִּיצַד.

How so?

כּוֹס שֶׁל עֲבוֹדַת כּוֹכָבִים שֶׁנִּפְלַ בְּאוֹצָר מְלֵא כּוֹסוֹת

A cup of worship of stars that fell into a storehouse full of cups,

כָּלן אָסוּרִים,

all of them are forbidden,

מִפְּנֵי שֶׁעֲבוֹדַת כּוֹכָבִים וְכָל מְשֻׁמְשֵׁיהָ אוֹסְרִין בְּכָל שֶׁהֵן.

because worship of stars and all its accessories forbid in any amount that they are, and are not nullified even in a large mixture.

פֶּרֶשׁ כּוֹס אֶחָד מִן הַתַּעֲרֶכֶת

If one cup separated from the mixture

וְנִפְלַ לְכוֹסוֹת שְׁנַיִם

and fell into another group of two cups,

הָרִי אֵלָיו מִתְרִין.

behold these are permitted, because we have a double doubt: perhaps this separated cup is not the forbidden one, and even if it is, perhaps it is not this specific cup we are now using.

טבעת של עבודת כוכבים שנתערבה בכמה טבעות

A ring of worship of stars that became mixed with many permitted rings,

ונפלו שתיים מהן לים הגדול

and two of them fell into the Great Sea,

התרו כלן

all of them that remain are permitted,

שאני אומר אותה הטבעת היתה בכלל השתיים.

for I say that the forbidden ring was among the two that fell into the sea.

נתערבה במאה

If the forbidden ring became mixed with one hundred permitted rings,

ונתחלקו ארבעים למקום אחד וששים למקום אחר

and they were divided, forty to one place and sixty to another place,

ונפלו הארבעים כלן לטבעות אחרות

and the forty fell, all of them, into other permitted rings,

כלן מתרות

all of them are permitted,

שאני אומר אותה הטבעת האסורה ברוב היא.

for I say that the forbidden ring is in the majority, meaning it remained with the larger group of sixty.

נפלו הששים לטבעות אחרות כלן אסורות:

But if the sixty fell into other permitted rings, all of them are forbidden, because we assume the forbidden ring was in the majority group.

הלכה יא

Halacha 11 · The Prohibition of Benefiting from the Shade of an Asherah and Passing Under It

האשרה

Regarding the asherah tree,

בין שהיתה נעבדת

whether it is a tree that was itself worshiped as an idol,

בִּין שְׁהִיְתָה עֲבֹדָת כּוֹכָבִים מִנֹּחַת תַּחְתֶּיהָ

whether it is a tree that an actual idol was placed under it and thus serves it,

אָסוּר לֵישֵׁב בְּצֶל קוֹמָתָהּ.

it is forbidden to sit in the shade of its trunk, because one may not derive any benefit from it.

וּמִתֵּר לֵישֵׁב בְּצֶל הַשָּׂרִיגִים וְהָעָלִים שָׁלָהּ.

And it is permitted to sit in the shade of the branches and the leaves of it, as their shade is not considered a significant benefit.

וְאִם יֵשׁ לוֹ דֶּרֶךְ אַחֶרֶת

And if there is to him another path to reach his destination,

אָסוּר לוֹ לַעֲבֹר תַּחְתֶּיהָ.

it is forbidden for him to pass under it, so that he does not appear to be honoring the idol.

וְאִם אֵין שָׁם דֶּרֶךְ אַחֶרֶת

And if there is not another path there,

עוֹבֵר תַּחְתֶּיהָ כְּשֶׁהוּא רָץ:

he passes under it while he runs, to show that he is not trying to benefit from its shade.

הִלְכָּה יב

Halacha 12: The Status of Chicks and Nests in an Asherah Tree

אֶפְרוּחִים שֶׁקָּנְנוּ בָּהּ

Regarding chicks that nested in an asherah tree,

וְאִין צְרִיכִין לְאִמָּן

and they do not need their mother for survival, they

מִתְרִין.

are permitted for benefit, as they are independent of the forbidden tree.

וְהָאֶפְרוּחִים וְהַבִּיצִים שֶׁצְרִיכִין לְאִמָּן

But the chicks and the eggs that need their mother to survive or hatch

אָסוּרִין

are forbidden

שְׁהָרֵי הָאֲשֵׁרָה כְּמוֹ בְּסִיס לָהֶן.

because the asherah is like a base for them, supporting the mother bird who is vital to their existence.

וְהָיָה עֲצָמָהּ שֶׁבְּרֹאשָׁהּ

And the nest itself that is at its top

מִתָּר

is permitted for use,

מִפְּנֵי שֶׁהָעוֹף מְבִיא עֲצֵיו מִמָּקוֹם אֲחֵר:

because the bird brings its wood to build the nest from a different place other than the asherah itself.

הִלָּכָה יג

Halacha 13 · The Prohibition of Benefit from Asherah Wood Used to Heat an Oven

נֹטֵל מִמֶּנָּה עֲצִים אֲסוּרִים בִּהְנֵאָהּ.

If he took from it, from an asherah tree, wood that is forbidden in benefit,

הִסִּיק בָּהֶן אֶת הַתֵּנוּר

and he heated with them the oven,

יֻצָּן

it must be cooled down completely so that the forbidden heat is dissipated,

וְאַחֵר כִּי יִסִּיק בְּעֲצִים אֲחֵרִים שֶׁל הֵיתָר

and after that he shall heat it again with other wood of permission,

וַיֵּאָפֶה בּוֹ.

and he shall bake in it.

אָפֶה בּוֹ אֶת הַפֶּת וְלֹא צָנְנוּ

If he baked in it the bread while it was still hot from the forbidden wood, and he did not cool it down first,

הַפֶּת אֲסוּרָה בִּהְנֵאָהּ.

the bread is forbidden in benefit because it was baked through the use of a forbidden object.

נִתְעַרְבָה בְּאַחֵרוֹת

If this forbidden loaf became mixed with others and cannot be identified,

יֹולֵיד דְּמִי אוֹתָהּ הַפֶּת לָיִם הִמָּלַח

he shall bring the value of that forbidden bread to the Sea of the Salt to destroy it,

כִּדֵּי שְׁלֹא יִהְיֶה בָּהּ

in order that he not receive benefit from it,

וְשָׂאֵר הַכֶּכָּרוֹת מִתְּרִין:

and the rest of the loaves are then permitted to be eaten.

הֶלְכָּה יֵד

Halacha 14 · A Garment Woven with Asherah Wood and the Principle of Two Contributing Factors

נָטַל מִמֶּנָּה כְּרֹכֶר

If one took from it, from the wood of an asherah tree, a shuttle used for weaving,

וְאַרְגָּב בּוֹ אֶת הַכְּבֵּד

and wove with it — with this forbidden shuttle — the garment,

אָסוּר בְּהִנָּאָה.

the garment is forbidden for benefit.

נִתְעָרַב בְּכֵגָדִים אֲחֵרִים

If this forbidden garment became mixed with other garments and cannot be identified,

יֹולֶיף דָּמִי אוֹתוֹ הַכְּבֵּד לְגֵם הַמֶּלֶח

he must bring the value of that forbidden garment to the Sea of Salt to destroy it,

וְשָׂאֵר כָּל הַכְּבֵּדִים מִתְּרִין.

and the rest of all the garments are permitted for use.

וּמִתֵּר לְטַעַם תְּחִתֶּיהָ יִרְקוֹת

And it is permitted to plant under it, under the shade of the asherah tree, vegetables,

בֵּין בִּימֹות הַחֹמָה שֶׁהֵן צְרִיכִין לְצִל.

whether in the days of the sun, the hot summer months, when they need shade to protect them,

בֵּין בִּימֹות הַגֶּשְׁמִים.

whether in the days of the rains, the winter months, when they do not need shade.

מִפְּנֵי שֶׁצִּל הָאֲשֵׁרָה שֶׁהוּא אָסוּר

This is permitted because the shade of the asherah, which is forbidden,

עם הקרקע שאינה נאסרת

together with the ground, which is not forbidden,

גורמין לירקות אלו לצמוח

jointly cause these vegetables to grow.

וכל שדבר אסור ודבר מתר גורמין לו

And anything that a forbidden thing and a permitted thing jointly cause it to grow or exist,

הרי זה מתר בכל מקום.

behold, this is permitted in every place, under the halachic rule of 'zeh v'zeh gore'm'.

לפיכך שדה שזבלה בזבל עבודת פוכבים

Therefore, a field that one fertilized with fertilizer of idol worship,

מתר לזרע אותה.

it is permitted to sow it, because the crop is produced by both the forbidden fertilizer and the permitted soil.

ופרה שפטמה בכרשיני עבודת פוכבים

And a cow that one fattened with vetches of idol worship

תאכל

may be eaten,

וכן כל כיוצא בזה:

and so all cases similar to this are permitted.

הלכה טו

Halacha 15 · The Prohibition of Offerings to Idols and Anything Found in an Idolatrous Temple

בשר או יין או פרות שהכינום להקריבם לעבודת פוכבים

Meat or wine or fruits that they prepared in order to offer them to the service of stars

לא נאסרו בהנאה

are not forbidden in benefit

אף על פי שהכניסום לבית עבודת פוכבים

even though that they brought them in to the house of the service of stars,

עד שיקריבום לפניו.

until that they offer them before it.

הִקְרִיבוּם לִפְנֵיהֶּ נִעְשׂוּ תְּקַרְבֹּת

Once they offered them before it, they became an offering to idolatry,

וְאַף עַל פִּי שֶׁחֲזְרוּ וְהוֹצִיאוּם

and even though that they returned and took them out of the temple,

הֲרִי אֱלוֹ אֲסוּרִין לְעוֹלָם.

behold these are forbidden forever.

וְכָל הַנִּמְצָא בְּבֵית עֲבוֹדַת כּוֹכָבִים

And everything that is found in the house of the service of stars,

אֶפְלוּ מַיִם וּמָלַח

even water and salt,

אֲסוּר בְּהִנָּאָה מִן הַתּוֹרָה.

is forbidden in benefit from the Torah, as we assume it was offered as part of the service.

וְהַאֲכִיל מִמֶּנּוּ כָּל שֶׁהוּא לוֹקָה:

And the one who eats from it even any amount is lashed.

הִלָּכָה טז

Halacha 16 · Laws of Objects Found on an Idol and the Worship of Peor and Marculis

הַמוֹצֵא כְּסוּת וְכֵלִים וּמַעוֹת בְּרֹאשׁ עֲבוֹדַת כּוֹכָבִים.

One who finds garments, or utensils, or money on the head of an idol of worship of stars,

אִם מָצְאוֹ דֶּרֶךְ בִּזְיוֹן הֲרִי אֱלוֹ מְתָרִין

if he found them placed in a way of derision, behold, these are permitted for benefit,

וְאִם מָצְאוֹ דֶּרֶךְ כְּבוֹד הֲרִי אֱלוֹ אֲסוּרִין.

and if he found them placed in a way of honor, behold, these are forbidden as ornaments of idolatry.

כִּיצַד.

How so?

מָצָא כִּיס תְּלוּי בְּצוּאָרוֹ.

If he found a purse hanging on its neck,

כִּסוּת מְקַפֵּלֶת וּמִנַּחַת עַל רֹאשׁוֹ.

or a garment folded and placed on its head,

כְּלִי כִפּוּי עַל רֹאשׁוֹ

or a utensil overturned on its head,

הֲרִי זֶה מִתֵּר מִפְּנֵי שֶׁהוּא דֶּרֶךְ בְּזִיּוֹן

behold, this is permitted, because that it is placed by way of derision,

וְכֵן כָּל פִּיּוּצָא בְּזֶה.

and so too all similar to this.

מָצָא בְּרֹאשׁוֹ דְּבָר שֶׁפִּיּוּצָא בּוֹ קָרַב לְגִבֵּי הַמִּזְבֵּחַ הֲרִי זֶה אָסוּר.

But if he found on its head a thing that similar to it is offered upon the Altar, such as wine, flour, or frankincense, behold, this is forbidden as an idolatrous offering.

בְּמָה דְּבָרִים אֲמֹרִים בְּזִמָּן שֶׁמִּצָּאָן חוּץ לְמָקוֹם עֲבוֹדָתוֹ

In what words are said? At the time that he found them outside to the place of its worship, meaning outside the temple chamber.

אֲבָל אִם מִצָּאוֹ בְּפָנִים

But if he found it inside the temple chamber,

בֵּין דֶּרֶךְ כְּבוֹד בֵּין דֶּרֶךְ בְּזִיּוֹן

whether it was placed by way of honor, whether by way of derision,

בֵּין דְּבָר הֲרָאוּי לְמִזְבֵּחַ בֵּין דְּבָר שֶׁאֵינּוּ רָאוּי

whether it is a thing that is fit for the Altar, whether it is a thing that is not fit,

כָּל הַנִּמְצָא בְּפָנִים אָסוּר אֶפְלוּ מִיָּם וּמֶלַח.

all that is found inside is forbidden for benefit, even water and salt.

וּפְעוּר וּמַרְקוּלִים כָּל הַנִּמְצָא עִמָּהֶן בֵּין בְּפָנִים בֵּין בַּחוּץ אָסוּר בִּהְנֵאָה.

And regarding the idols of Peor and Marculis, all that is found with them, whether inside their temple whether outside, is forbidden for benefit.

וְכֵן אֲבָנֵי מַרְקוּלִים אֲבָן הַנִּרְאִית שֶׁהִיא עִמּוֹ אָסוּר בִּהְנֵאָה:

And so too regarding the stones of Marculis, any stone that appears that it is belonging with it is forbidden for benefit.

עבודת פוכבים שהיה לה מרחץ או גנה

In the case of an **idol that had** belonging **to it a bathhouse or a garden,**

נהנים בהם שלא בטובה

we may benefit from them without favor, meaning without expressing gratitude or paying the priests of the idol,

ואין נהנים בהם בטובה.

but we do not benefit from them with favor, where one would have to show gratitude or pay them.

היה לה ולאחרים

If the bathhouse or garden **belonged to it and to others** in partnership,

נהנין בהן אפילו בטובת כהניה

we may benefit from them even with favor shown **to its priests,**

ובלבד שלא יתן שכר:

provided that the Jew **not give payment** directly to the idol's treasury.

מרחץ שיש בה עבודת פוכבים

Regarding a **bathhouse that has in it** an image of **worship of stars,**

מתר לרחץ בה

it is permitted to bathe in it,

מפני שהיא נעשית שם לנוי

because the image is **made there for beauty**

ולא לעבדה.

and not to worship it.

שנאמר אלהיהם.

This is **as it is said** in the Torah, "their gods," which teaches us that they are only forbidden

בזמן שנהגים בה מנהג אלהות

at a time that they behave with it in the custom of godliness,

ולא בזמן שמבזין אותן

and not at a time that they degrade them,

כגון זו שהיא עומדת על הכיב

such as this image which stands over the sewer pipe

והכל משתינין בפניה.

and everyone urinates before it.

ואם היתה דרך עבודתה בכך

And if the way of its worship was in this manner,

אסור לכנס בו:

then it is forbidden to enter it.

הלכה יט

Halacha 19: Slaughtering and Cutting Meat with a Knife of Idol Worship

סבין של עבודת כוכבים ששחט בה

Regarding a knife of idol worship that one slaughtered with it a healthy animal,

הרי זה מותר

behold this is permitted to be eaten,

מפני שהוא מקלקל.

because by slaughtering a healthy animal that he is damaging the animal's value, as a live animal is worth more than a slaughtered carcass.

ואם היתה בהמה מסכנת

And if it was an animal in danger of dying, where slaughtering it saves its meat from becoming a non-kosher carcass,

הרי זה אסורה

behold this is forbidden to be eaten,

מפני שהוא מתקן

because by slaughtering it that he is improving its value and saving it from loss,

והרי זה התקון מהנאת משמשי עבודת כוכבים.

and behold this improvement is from benefit of accessories of idol worship, which is strictly forbidden.

And likewise it is forbidden to cut with it meat into neat portions for cooking,

מִפְּנֵי שֶׁהוּא מְתַקֵּן

because by preparing the food that he is improving it.

וְאִם חָתַךְ דֶּרֶךְ הַפֶּסֶד וְהִשְׁחָתָה מֵתָר:

And if he cut the meat by way of loss and destruction, such as hacking it into useless pieces, it is permitted.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

The chapter outlines the dual obligations of destroying avodah zarah and avoiding any benefit from it. We learn that in Eretz Yisrael, there is an active mitzvah to seek out and eradicate idol worship, whereas in the diaspora, the obligation applies to conquered areas. Furthermore, the Rambam establishes that deriving any benefit from an idol, its accessories, or its offerings is strictly forbidden, carrying a double measure of lashes. This prohibition is so absolute that it extends to every part of an animal sacrificed to an idol, including its hide, bones, and hooves, all of which are completely forbidden for use.

לְמַעֲשֶׂה WHAT TO TAKE HOME

The Torah is teaching us a profound lesson about the nature of spiritual poison. When it comes to avodah zarah, the Torah does not just tell us to avoid worshipping it; we are commanded to destroy it, to hunt it down in Eretz Yisrael, and we are strictly forbidden from deriving even the slightest benefit from it. Even the ashes of a burned idol remain forbidden. Why such extreme measures? Because some things are so spiritually toxic that they cannot be managed, compromised with, or safely kept in our lives. If we leave even a small trace of them, they will eventually pull us down.

In our personal avodah, we all have our own 'avodah zarah', those negative habits, toxic environments, or improper influences that pull us away from Hashem and damage our yiras Shamayim. Sometimes we try to compromise. We think, 'I won't let it control me, I'll just keep a little piece of it around,' or 'I can handle being in this environment without it affecting me.' The halachah of eradicating avodah zarah teaches us that this is a dangerous mistake. True spiritual safety requires a complete break. We must eradicate the negative influence entirely from our lives and our homes, leaving no residue behind.

Identify one negative influence, improper media, or toxic habit in your life today that you have been trying to 'manage' rather than eliminate, and make a firm decision to completely remove it from your home and your life.