

הלכות עבודת פוכבים • פרק עשירי

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

CHAPTER PREVIEW

In this chapter, the Rambam teaches us the crucial halachos of how we must distance ourselves from idolaters and avoid showing them favor, so that we do not, chas v'shalom, learn from their ways or give them a permanent foothold in Eretz Yisrael. We will learn the strict prohibitions against making covenants with them, showing them unearned mercy, or praising them, alongside the severe prohibition of selling or renting them land in Eretz Yisrael.

At the same time, the Rambam guides us in the ways of peace, showing where the Chachanim permitted certain interactions—like supporting their poor or greeting them—for the sake of darkei shalom. We will also learn the definition of a ger toshav and how these halachos apply depending on whether Klal Yisrael is in exile or has sovereignty over the land.

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 Making Covenants with Idolaters and the Law of Jewish Traitors

אין כורתינן ברית לשבעה עממין

We do not make a covenant with the seven nations of Canaan

כדי שנעשה עמם שלום

in order that we make with them peace

ונניח אותם לעבד עבודה זרה

and we leave them to worship foreign worship,

שנאמר דברים ז ב "לא תכרת להם ברית"

as it is said in the Torah (Devarim 7:2), "Do not make with them a covenant,"

אלא יחזרו מעבודתם או יהרגו.

rather they must turn back from their worship or be slain.

ואסור לרחם עליהם

And it is forbidden to have mercy upon them,

שנאמר דברים ז ב "ולא תחנם".

as it is said (Devarim 7:2), "and do not show them favor."

לפיקח אם ראה מהם אויב או טובע פנהר לא יעלנו.

Therefore, if one saw one of them perishing or drowning in the river, he shall not bring him up.

רָאָהוּ נָטוּי לָמוּת לֹא יַצִּילָנוּ.

If he saw him tending to die, he shall not save him.

אֲבָל לְאַבְדּוֹ בְּיָדוֹ אוֹ לְדַחֲפוֹ לְבוֹר וְכִיּוֹצֵא בְּזֶה אָסוּר

But to destroy him with his hand, or to push him into the pit, and the like of this, is forbidden,

מִפְּנֵי שֶׁאֵינוֹ עוֹשֶׂה עִמָּנוּ מִלְחָמָה.

because that he does not make with us war.

בְּמָה דְּבָרִים אֲמוּרִים בְּשִׁבְעָה עַמִּמִּין

In what case are these words said? Regarding the seven nations.

אֲבָל הַמוֹסְרִים וְהָאֲפִיקוֹרוֹסִין מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל

But the informants and the apikorsim of Israel,

הָיָה דִין לְאַבְדָּן בְּיָד וּלְהוֹרִידוֹ עַד בְּאֵר שַׁחַת

it was the law to destroy them by hand and to cast them down until the pit of destruction,

מִפְּנֵי שֶׁהָיוּ מַצְרִים לְיִשְׂרָאֵל

because that they were distressing to Israel

וּמְסִירִין אֶת הָעָם מֵאַחֲרֵי ה':

and turning away the people from after Hashem.

הִלְכָּה ב

Halacha 2 · The Prohibition of Healing Idolaters and the Permission to Heal a Ger Toshav

מִכָּאן אַתָּה לָמַד

From here you learn

שֶׁאָסוּר לְרַפְּאוֹת עֲבוֹ"ם

that it is forbidden to heal an idolater

אֲפִלוּ בְשָׂכָר.

even for a wage.

וְאִם הָיָה מִתְּיָרָא מֵהֶן

And if the doctor was afraid of them

או שהיה חושש משום איבה

or that he was concerned because of ill feeling and hostility that might result,

מִרְפָּא בְּשָׂכָר

he may heal them for a wage,

אֲבָל בְּחִנָּם אָסוּר.

but for free it is forbidden.

וְגֵר תוֹשֵׁב

And regarding a resident convert,

הוֹאִיל וְאַתָּה מְצֻוֶּה לְהַחְיֹתוֹ

since you are commanded to sustain him and keep him alive,

מִרְפָּאִים אוֹתוֹ בְּחִנָּם:

we heal him even for free.

הִלְכָּה ג

Halacha 3 · Prohibition of Selling and Renting Houses and Fields to Idolaters in Eretz Yisrael

אֵין מוֹכְרִין לָהֶם בְּתִים וְשָׂדוֹת בְּאֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל.

We do not sell to them, meaning to idolaters, houses and fields in the Land of Yisrael, so as not to give them a permanent holding in the Holy Land.

וּבְסוּרְיָא מוֹכְרִין לָהֶם בְּתִים אֲבָל לֹא שָׂדוֹת.

And in Syria, which has a lesser degree of sanctity, we sell to them houses, but not fields.

וּמִשְׁכִּירִין לָהֶם בְּתִים בְּאֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל

And we may rent to them houses in the Land of Yisrael, since renting does not give them a permanent holding,

וּבְלִבְדָּ שְׁלֹא יַעֲשׂוּ שְׁכֻנָּה

provided that they will not make a neighborhood of idolaters together,

וְאֵין שְׁכֻנָּה פְּחוֹת מִשְׁלֹשָׁה.

and there is no neighborhood defined as less than three non-Jews living adjacent to one another.

וְאֵין מִשְׁכִּירִין לָהֶם שָׂדוֹת.

And we do not rent to them fields in the Land of Yisrael at all.

ובסוריא משכירין להם שדות.

And in Syria, we may rent to them fields.

ומפני מה הקמירו בשדה,

And because of what did they make this law stringent regarding a field, to forbid even renting it in the Land of Yisrael?

מפני שיש בה שתיים,

It is because there are in it two things that cause spiritual and physical detriment to the Land:

מפניעה מן המעשרות

first, it exempts it from the tithes, as the produce grown by a non-Jew is exempt from terumos and ma'asros,

ונותן להם חניה בקרקע.

and second, it gives to them a resting place in the land, allowing them to establish a physical foothold through agriculture.

ומותר למכר להם בתים ושדות בחוצה לארץ

And it is permitted to sell to them houses and fields outside of the Land of Yisrael,

מפני שאינה ארצנו:

because it is not our land, so the prohibition of giving them a foothold does not apply there.

הלכה ד

Halacha 4 · Prohibition of Renting Dwellings to Idolaters and Giving Them a Resting Place in the Land

אף במקום שהתירו להשכיר

Even in a place where they permitted to rent out real estate to idolaters, such as outside of Eretz Yisrael,

לא לבית דירה התירו

not for a house of dwelling did they permit it,

מפני שהוא מכניס לתוכה עבודת כוכבים

because he brings into it his worship of stars and idols,

ונאמר "לא תביא תועבה אל ביתך".

and it is said in the Torah, "Do not bring an abomination into your house."

אבל משכיר להן בתים לעשותן אוצר.

But one may rent to them houses to make them a storehouse for goods, where no idols will be brought.

ואין מוכרין להן פרות ותבואה וכיוצא בהן במחבר לקרקע.

And we do not sell to them fruits and grain and similar to them in that which is attached to the ground before harvesting.

אָבֵל מוֹכֵר הוּא מִשְׁקָץ

But sell he may from when it is cut and detached,

או מוֹכֵר לוֹ עַל מְנַת לְקַץ וְקוֹצֵץ.

or he may sell to him on condition to cut, and the buyer indeed cuts it down immediately.

וּמִפְּנֵי מָה אֵין מוֹכְרִין לָהֶן

And because of what do we not sell to them land or attached produce?

שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר "וְלֹא תַחֲנֶם"

Because it is said, "and do not show them favor" (lo techonem), which the Sages expounded to mean:

לֹא תִתֵּן לָהֶם חֲנִיָּה בְּקִרְקַע

do not give them an encampment (chanayah) in the land;

שָׂאֵם לֹא יִהְיֶה לָהֶם קִרְקַע יְשִׁיבָתָן יְשִׁיבַת עֲרָאֵי הָיָא.

for if there will not be to them land, their dwelling in the Land of Israel is a dwelling of temporary nature, and they will eventually leave.

וְכֵן אָסוּר לְסַפֵּר בְּשִׁבְחָן

And so it is forbidden to speak in their praise,

וְאָפְלוּ לוֹמַר כַּמָּה נָאָה עוֹבֵד כּוֹכָבִים זֶה בְּצוּרָתוֹ.

and even to say, "How beautiful is this worshiper of stars in his form!"

קַל וְחֹמֶר שֶׁיִּסְפֹּר בְּשִׁבְחַ מַעֲשָׂיו

It is an argument of light and heavy (a kal vachomer) that one should not speak in praise of his deeds,

או שֶׁיַּחֲבִיב דְּבַר מִדְּבָרֵיהֶם

or that he should hold dear a matter from their words,

שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר וְלֹא תַחֲנֶם לֹא יִהְיֶה לָהֶם חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ,

as it is said, "and do not show them favor" (lo techonem), meaning: not shall there be to them favor (chen) in your eyes,

מִפְּנֵי שְׁגוּרִים לְהִדְבִּק עִמּוֹ וְלִלְמַד מִמַּעֲשָׂיו הָרָעִים.

because that it causes one to cling with him and to learn from his deeds the bad ones.

וְאָסוּר לִתֵּן לָהֶם מִתְּנַת חֲנָם

And it is forbidden to give to them a gift of free will,

אָבֵל נֹתֵן הוּא לְגֵר תּוֹשָׁב

but give he may to a resident alien (a ger toshav who has accepted the seven Noachide laws),

שֶׁנֵּאמַר "לְגֵר אֲשֶׁר בְּשַׁעְרֶיךָ תִּתְּנֶנָּה וְאָכְלָה אוּ מָכַר לְנֹכְרִי",

as it is said, "to the stranger who is in your gates you shall give it and he shall eat it, or sell to a non-Jew,"

בְּמִכְרָה וְלֹא בְּנִתְּנָה:

teaching that to the non-Jew it must be by sale and not by giving as a free gift.

הַלָּכָה ה

Halacha 5 · Supporting Poor Idolaters and Greeting Them for the Sake of Peace

מִפְּרִנְסִים עֲנִיִּי עוֹבְדֵי כּוֹכָבִים עִם עֲנִיֵּי יִשְׂרָאֵל

We support the poor of idolaters along with the poor of Yisrael

מִפְּנֵי דְרָכֵי שְׁלוֹם.

because of the ways of peace, to foster good relations and avoid animosity.

וְאִין מְמַחִין בְּיַדֵּי עֲנִיִּי עוֹבְדֵי כּוֹכָבִים בְּלֶקֶט שְׂכָחָה וּפְאָה

And we do not prevent the poor of idolaters from gathering the agricultural gifts of leket, shich'chah, and pe'ah

מִפְּנֵי דְרָכֵי שְׁלוֹם.

because of the ways of peace.

וְשׁוֹאֲלִים בְּשָׁלוֹמָם וְאַפְּלוּ בְּיוֹם חַגָּם

And we inquire of their welfare, and even on the day of their festival,

מִפְּנֵי דְרָכֵי שְׁלוֹם.

because of the ways of peace.

וְאִין כּוֹפְּלִין לָהֶן שְׁלוֹם לְעוֹלָם.

But we do not double our greeting of peace to them, ever, by saying 'peace, peace' to show excessive honor.

וְלֹא יִכְנֹס לְבֵיתוֹ שֶׁל עוֹבֵד כּוֹכָבִים בְּיוֹם חַגּוֹ לְתֵת לוֹ שְׁלוֹם.

And one should not enter into the house of an idolater on the day of his festival to greet him with peace.

מִצְאוֹ בְּשׁוּק נֹתֵן לוֹ שְׁלוֹם

If he found him in the marketplace, he may greet him with peace,

בְּשֹׁפָה רַפָּה וּבְכֹכֵד רֹאשׁ:

but he must do so **with a weak lip**, in a low mumble, **and with seriousness of head**, showing that he does not join in their joy.

הִלְכָּה ו

Halacha 6 · The Prohibition of Allowing Idolaters to Dwell in Eretz Yisrael and the Laws of a Ger Toshav

אִין כָּל הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלּוּ אֲמוּרִים

Not all of these matters of permitting business and showing favor to idolaters **are said**

אֶלָּא בְּזֶמֶן שֶׁגָּלוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל לְבֵין הָעוֹבְדֵי כּוֹכָבִים

except in a time when Yisrael are exiled among the worshippers of stars

אוּ שִׁיד עֲכוּ"ם תְּקִיפָה עַל יִשְׂרָאֵל

or when the hand of the idolaters is powerful over Yisrael, and we do not have the sovereignty to enforce the Torah's laws;

אֲבָל בְּזֶמֶן שִׁיד יִשְׂרָאֵל תְּקִיפָה עֲלֵיהֶם

but in a time when the hand of Yisrael is powerful over them, in Eretz Yisrael,

אָסוּר לָנוּ לְהַנִּיחַ עוֹבְדֵי כּוֹכָבִים בֵּינֵינוּ.

it is forbidden for us to allow worshippers of stars to dwell among us.

וְאִפְּלוּ יוֹשֵׁב יְשִׁיבַת עֲרָאִי

And even one who wishes to dwell a temporary dwelling,

אוּ עוֹבֵר מִמָּקוֹם לְמָקוֹם בְּסַחֲוָה

or a merchant passing from place to place with merchandise,

לֹא יַעֲבֹר בְּאַרְצֵנוּ

shall not pass through our land

אֶלָּא עַד שִׁיקְבַּל עָלָיו שְׁבַע מִצְוֹת שֶׁנֶּצְטְווּ בְּנֵי נֹחַ

except until he accepts upon himself the seven mitzvot that were commanded to the children of Noah;

שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר "לֹא יֵשְׁבוּ בְּאַרְצְךָ" אֲפֹלוּ לְפִי שְׁעָה.

as it is said in the Torah, "They shall not dwell in your land," which means they may not stay even for a temporary time.

וְאִם קִבַּל עָלָיו שְׁבַע מִצְוֹת הָרִי זֶה גֵּר תוֹשָׁב.

And if he accepted upon himself the seven mitzvot, behold, this is a ger toshav (a resident alien).

וְאִין מִקְבָּלִין גֵּר תוֹשָׁב אֶלָּא בְּזֶמֶן שֶׁהַיּוֹבֵל נוֹהֵג

But we do not accept a ger toshav except in a time when the Jubilee year is practiced;

אָבֵל שְׁלֹא בְּזִמַּן הַיּוֹבֵל

but not in the time of the Jubilee, when it is not practiced,

אִין מְקַבְּלִין אֶלֶּא גֵר צֶדֶק בִּלְבַד:

we do not accept any convert **except a ger tzedek** (a righteous convert to full Judaism) **alone**.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

The chapter begins by forbidding covenants with idolaters or showing them mercy, which includes saving them from danger, though we do not actively harm them; conversely, we are commanded to eradicate Jewish traitors and apikorsim who lead others astray. The Rambam details the prohibitions against providing free medical care to idolaters, selling or renting them homes or fields in Eretz Yisrael, and selling them unharvested produce, all derived from the prohibition of giving them a resting place in the land or praising them. Finally, the Rambam explains that while we support their poor and greet them for the sake of peace, when Klal Yisrael is in power, we may not allow any idolater to dwell in our land unless they accept the seven mitzvos of Bnei Noach and become a ger toshav, which is only accepted when the Jubilee Year is observed.

לְמַעֲשֶׂה WHAT TO TAKE HOME

The Torah is teaching us a profound lesson about the sanctity of our spiritual environment. The prohibition of "lo techaneim", not giving idolaters a resting place in the land, and not praising their ways, is not just a physical boundary; it is a spiritual shield. The Rambam explains that when we praise their deeds or hold their words dear, it causes us to draw close to them and learn from their ways. What we allow to take root in our surroundings, and what we allow ourselves to admire, ultimately shapes who we are.

In our daily lives, we are constantly exposed to values, lifestyles, and philosophies that run completely contrary to Torah and yiras Shamayim. It is so easy to slip into admiring the secular world's achievements, their culture, or their outlook on life. But the Torah warns us: do not give these foreign ideas a "resting place" in your mind. Do not let them become beautiful in your eyes, because what you admire, you will eventually imitate.

We must guard our homes and our minds as sacred spaces. Just as we are careful not to bring an abomination into our physical homes, we must be equally vigilant about what we bring into our hearts. Our admiration and our praise must be reserved for holiness, for Torah, and for those who dedicate their lives to serving Hashem.

Today, make a conscious effort to guard your speech and your thoughts from praising secular values or lifestyles. Instead, loudly and warmly praise a mitzvah, a good middah, or a Torah concept in front of your family, ensuring that only holiness has a permanent resting place in your home.