

הלכות עבודת כוכבים • פרק י"א

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

CHAPTER PREVIEW

In this chapter, the Rambam teaches us the vital importance of keeping ourselves separate and distinct from the non-Jewish nations. Hashem separated us to be His holy nation, and therefore we must not follow their chukim (statutes), whether in our style of dress, our haircuts, or our deeds. We will learn the specific prohibitions against trying to resemble them, including the laws of the blorit, and the rare exception made for those who must serve in the royal courts of gentile kings.

We will also delve into the Torah's strict prohibitions against various forms of superstition and occult practices that stem from dark, idolatrous roots. This includes the prohibitions of soothsaying (using omens to guide our actions), divination (entering trances to predict the future), fortunetelling through astrology, and casting meaningless spells. Through these halachos, the Rambam guides us to keep our emunah pure and untainted.

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

ה"א

אסור הליכה בחקות העובדי כוכבים ולהדמות להם

Halacha 1 • The Prohibition of Following the Statutes of Idolaters and Resembling Them

אין הולכין בחקות העובדי כוכבים ולא מדמין להן לא במלבוש

in dress not them resemble and not stars the worshipers of the statutes of follow We do not

ולא בשער וכיוצא בהן שנאמר ויקרא כ כג "ולא תלכו בחקות

the statutes of follow "And do not 23 20 Vayikra as it is said to them and the like in hair and not

הגוי". ונאמר ויקרא יח ג "ובחקתיהם לא תלכו". ונאמר דברים יב ל

30 12 Devarim and it is said follow" do not "and in their statutes 3 18 Vayikra and it is said the nation"

"השמר לה פן תנקש אחריהם". הכל בענין אחד הוא מזהיר שלא

that not warns it one in matter the whole after them" you be ensnared lest yourself "Guard

ידמה להן. אלא יהיה הישראל מבדל מהן וידוע במלבושו

in his dress and recognizable from them separated the Jew he shall be rather them he resemble

ובשאר מעשיו כמו שהוא מבדל מהן במדעו ובדעותיו. וכן הוא

He and so and in his character in his thoughts from them separated that he is just as his deeds and in the rest of traits

אומר ויקרא כ כו "ואבדל אתכם מן העמים". לא ילבש

shall he wear not the nations" you from — "And I have separated 26 20 Vayikra says

במלבוש המיוחד להן. ולא יגדל ציצית ראשו כמו ציצית ראשם.

their head the tresses of like his head the tresses of shall he grow and not to them that is unique a garment

וְלֹא יִגְלַח מִן הַצַּדִּידִין וַיִּנִּיחַ הַשָּׁעַר בְּאֶמְצַע כְּמוֹ שֶׁהוּא עוֹשֶׂינָה וְזֶה
and this do that they just as in the middle the hair and leave the sides from shall he shave and not

הַנִּקְרָא בְּלוּרִית. וְלֹא יִגְלַח הַשָּׁעַר מִכִּנְגַּד פָּנָיו מֵאָזֶן לְאָזֶן וַיִּנִּיחַ
and leave to ear from ear his face from opposite the hair shall he shave and not blorit is that which is called

הַפֶּרֶע מִלְּאַחֲרָיו כְּדֶרֶךְ שֶׁעוֹשִׂין הֵן. וְלֹא יִבְנֶה מְקוֹמוֹת כְּכִנְזָן
like the building of places shall he build and not they that do like the way from behind him the long hair

הַיִּכְלוֹת שֶׁל עֲכוּ"ם כְּדִי שִׁיכְנֹסוּ בָּהֶן רַבִּים כְּמוֹ שֶׁהוּא עוֹשֶׂינָה.
do that they just as many into them that there may enter in order idolaters of temples

וְכָל הָעוֹשֶׂה אֶחָת מֵאלוֹ וְכִיּוֹצֵא בָּהֶן לֹקָה:
receives lashes to them and the like of these one who does and anyone

This halacha establishes the negative commandment prohibiting Jews from imitating the customs, dress, hairstyles, and architecture of non-Jewish idolaters.

ה'י"ב

תְּסַפֵּר עֲכוּ"ם וּבְלוּרִית

Halacha 2 · Cutting the Hair of an Idolater Near the Blorit

עֲכוּ"ם שֶׁהָיָה מִסְתַּפֵּר מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל כִּיּוֹן שֶׁהִגִּיעַ לְבְלוּרִיתוֹ קְרוֹב שְׁלֹשׁ
three close his blorit he reached once from a Jew getting a haircut who was An idolater

אֶצְבָּעוֹת לְכָל רוּחַ שׁוֹמֵט אֶת יָדוֹ:
his hand — he withdraws direction to every fingerbreadths

A Jewish barber must not cut an idolater's hair within three fingerbreadths of his idolatrous hairstyle.

ה'י"ג

הֵתֵר מִלְּבוּשֵׁי וְתַגְלִיחַת הַגּוֹיִם לְמִקְרָב לַמְּלָכוֹת

Halacha 3 · Permission to Wear Gentile Clothing and Shave for One Close to the Government

יִשְׂרָאֵל שֶׁהָיָה קְרוֹב לַמְּלָכוֹת וְצָרִיךְ לֵישֵׁב לְפָנֵי מְלָכֵיהֶם וְהָיָה לוֹ
to him and it would be their kings before to sit and needs to the government close who was An Israelite

גִּנְאִי לְפִי שְׁלֹא יִדְמָה לָהֶן הָרִי זֶה מִתֵּר לְלַבֵּשׁ בְּמִלְּבוּשֵׁיהֶן וּלְגַלַּח
and to shave their garments to wear is permitted this behold them resemble he does not because a disgrace

כְּנֶגֶד פָּנָיו כְּדֶרֶךְ שֶׁהוּא עוֹשֶׂינָה:
do that they in the manner his face the front of

This halacha permits a Jew who serves in a non-Jewish royal court to dress and shave like them to avoid embarrassment and maintain his standing.

ה'יד

אִסוּר נְחוּשׁ וּמִקְבִּיעַת סִמְנִים

Halacha 4 · The Prohibition of Soothsaying and Relying on Omens

אִין מִנְחָשִׁין כְּעֲכוּ"ם שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר וַיִּקְרָא יְיָ כו' "לֹא תִנְחָשׁוּ". כִּי־צַד
How practice soothsaying" "Do not 26 19 Leviticus as it is said like idolaters practice soothsaying We do not

הוּא הַנִּחָשׁ. כְּגוֹן אֲלוֹ שְׂאוּמְרִים הוֹאִיל וְנִפְלָה פִּתִּי מִפִּי אוֹ נָפַל
fell or from my mouth my bread and fell Since who say those For example the soothsaying is

מִקְלִי מִיָּדִי אֵינִי הוֹלֵךְ לְמָקוֹם פְּלוֹנִי הַיּוֹם שָׁאֵם אֶלֶף אֵין חֲפִצִּי

my desires not I go for if today such-and-such to place going I am not from my hand my staff

נַעֲשִׂים. הוֹאִיל וְעָבַר שׁוֹעַל מִיְּמִינִי אֵינִי יוֹצֵא מִפֶּתַח בֵּיתִי

my house from the entrance of going out I am not on my right a fox and passed Since will be accomplished

הַיּוֹם שָׁאֵם אֵצָא יִפְגְּעֵנִי אָדָם רַמָּאי. וְכֵן אֵלוֹ שְׁשׁוּמְעִים צִפְצוֹף

the chirping of who hear those And likewise deceitful a man will meet me I go out for if today

הָעוֹף וְאוֹמְרִים יִהְיֶה כֶּךָ וְלֹא יִהְיֶה כֶּךָ. טוֹב לַעֲשׂוֹת דָּבָר פְּלוֹנִי וְרַע

and bad such-and-such thing to do good so it will be and not so it will be and say the bird

לַעֲשׂוֹת דָּבָר פְּלוֹנִי. וְכֵן אֵלוֹ שְׁאוֹמְרִים שְׁחַט תְּרִנְגוֹל זֶה שֶׁקְּרָא

that crowed this rooster slaughter who say those And likewise such-and-such thing to do

עֶרְבִית. שְׁחַט תְּרִנְגָּלָת זֶה שֶׁקְּרָאָה כְּמוֹ תְּרִנְגוֹל. וְכֵן הַמְּשִׁים סִמָּנִים

omens one who sets And likewise a rooster like that crowed this hen slaughter in the evening

לַעֲצֹמוֹ אִם יֵאָרֵעַ לִי כֶּךָ וְכֶךָ אֶעֱשֶׂה דָּבָר פְּלוֹנִי וְאִם לֹא יֵאָרֵעַ לִי

to me will happen not and if such-and-such thing I will do and so so to me will happen If for himself

לֹא אֶעֱשֶׂה, כֹּאֲלִיעֶזֶר עֶבֶד אַבְרָהָם. וְכֵן כָּל כִּיּוֹצֵא בְּדִבְרֵים הָאֵלוֹ

these to matters similar all and likewise Avraham the servant of like Eliezer I will do not

הַכֹּל אָסוּר. וְכָל הָעוֹשֶׂה מַעֲשֶׂה מִפְּנֵי דָּבָר מִדִּבְרֵים אֵלוֹ לֹקָה:

receives lashes these from matters a matter because of an action who does and anyone is forbidden everything

This halacha defines the biblical prohibition of soothsaying, listing various superstitious omens and actions that are forbidden.

ה'ל' ה

סִמָּנִים הַמֵּתִירִים לְדָבָר שֶׁכָּבַר הָיָה

Halacha 5 • Permitted Omens Regarding Events That Have Already Occurred

מִי שֶׁאָמַר דִּיָּרָה זֶה שֶׁבִּנֵּיתִי סִמָּן טוֹב הָיְתָה עָלַי. אִשָּׁה זֶה שֶׁנִּשְׁאָתִי

whom I married this woman upon me was good omen that I built this dwelling who said One

וּבִהֶמָּה זֶה שֶׁקִּנֵּיתִי מִבְּרַכַּת הָיְתָה מֵעַתָּה שֶׁקִּנֵּיתִיהָ עֲשֵׂרְתִּי. וְכֵן

and so too I became rich that I purchased it from the time was blessed that I purchased this or an animal

הַשּׁוֹאֵל לְתִינוּק אִי זֶה פְּסוּק אֶתָּה לּוֹמֵד אִם אָמַר לוֹ פְּסוּק מִן הַבְּרָכוֹת

the blessings from a verse to him he said if learning are you verse this which a child one who asks

יִשְׂמַח וַיֹּאמֶר זֶה סִמָּן טוֹב כָּל אֵלוֹ וְכִיּוֹצֵא בָּהֶן מִתֵּר הוֹאִיל וְלֹא

and not since is permitted to them and similar these all good an omen this is and say he may rejoice

כִּיּוֹן מַעֲשָׂיו וְלֹא נִמְנַע מִלַּעֲשׂוֹת אֶלָּא עָשָׂה זֶה סִמָּן לַעֲצֹמוֹ לְדָבָר

for a matter for himself a sign this he made but from doing he refrained and not his actions he directed

שֶׁכָּבַר הָיָה הֲרִי זֶה מִתֵּר:

is permitted this behold was that already

This halacha clarifies that interpreting past events or a child's verse as a good sign is permitted, provided it does not influence one's future actions.

ה'ל' ו

הגדרת הקוסם והדרכים השונות לגלוי עתידות

Halacha 6 · The Definition of a Diviner and the Various Methods of Predicting the Future

אִיזֶהוּ קוֹסֵם זֶה הָעוֹשֶׂה מַעֲשֵׂה מִשְׁאָר הַמַּעֲשִׂיּוֹת כְּדִי שְׂיִשּׁוּם
that he will be in order actions from other an action is one who does This a diviner Who is
entranced

וְתִפְנֶה מִחֲשַׁבְתּוֹ מִכָּל הַדְּבָרִים עַד שִׁיאֲמַר דְּבָרִים שְׁעֲתִידִים לְהִיּוֹת
to be that are destined things that he says until things from all his mind and will be cleared

וַיֹּאמֶר דָּבָר פְּלוֹנִי עֲתִיד לְהִיּוֹת אוֹ אֵינוֹ הוּא אוֹ שִׁיאֲמַר שְׂרָאוּי
that it is proper that he says or happening is not or to be is destined such and such thing and he says

לַעֲשׂוֹת כֵּן וְהִזְהִירוּ מִכָּה. יֵשׁ מִן הַקּוֹסְמִין שֶׁמְשַׁמְשִׁים בְּחֹל אוֹ בְּאֲבָנִים.
stones or sand who use the diviners of There are from this and be careful so to do

וַיֵּשׁ מִי שֶׁגוֹהֵר לְאָרֶץ וְנִנּוּעַ וְצוּעָה. וַיֵּשׁ מִי שֶׁמִּסְתַּכֵּל בְּמִרְאָה
in a mirror who look some and there are and scream and sway to the ground who bend down some and there are

שֶׁל בְּרֹזֶל אוֹ בְּעִשָּׂשִׁית וּמִדְמִין וְאוֹמְרִים. וַיֵּשׁ מִי שֶׁנוֹשֵׂא מִקָּל בְּיָדוֹ
in his hand a staff who carry some and there are and speak and imagine in a glass lantern or iron of

וְנִשְׁעָן עָלָיו וּמַכָּה בּוֹ עַד שֶׁתִּפְנֶה מִחֲשַׁבְתּוֹ וּמִדְבָּר. הוּא שֶׁהַנָּבִיא
is what the prophet This and he speaks his mind that is cleared until with it and strike on it and lean

אוֹמֵר הוֹשַׁע ד יב "עַמִּי בְּעֵצוֹ יִשְׁאָל וּמִקְלוֹ יִגִּיד לוֹ":
it tells and its staff inquires of its wood My people 12 4 Hoshea says

The Rambam defines the biblical prohibition of divination and describes the various trance-inducing methods used by diviners to predict future events.

ה'י ז

אסור קסמים ושאלה בקוסם

Halacha 7 · The Prohibition of Divination and Inquiring of a Diviner

אֲסוּר לְקַסֵּם וּלְשָׂאֵל לְקוֹסֵם אֶלָּא שֶׁהַשּׂוֹאֵל לְקוֹסֵם מִכֵּין אוֹתוֹ מִכַּת
stripes of him they strike of a diviner that the inquirer except of a diviner and to inquire to divine It is forbidden

מִרְדּוּת אֲבָל הַקּוֹסֵם עֲצָמוֹ אִם עָשָׂה מַעֲשֵׂה מִכָּל אֵלוֹ וְכִיוּצָא בָהֶן
to them and similar these of any of an action he performed if himself the diviner but rebelliousness

לוֹקָה שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר דְּבָרִים יח י "לֹא יִמָּצֵא בְּךָ מַעֲבִיר בְּנוֹ" וְגו' etc.
his son" one who passes among you be found "There shall not 10 18 Devarim as it is said receives lashes

דְּבָרִים יח י "קִסָּם קְסָמִים":
divination" "one who practices 10 18 Devarim

This halacha details the prohibition against practicing divination and the differing punishments for the diviner and the one who consults him.

ה'י ח

הגדרת אסור מעונין וקביעת עתים

Halacha 8 · The Definition of a Fortuneteller Who Predicts Auspicious Times

אִיזֶהוּ מְעוּנֵן אֵלוֹ נוֹתְנֵי עֵתִים שֶׁאוֹמְרִים בְּאַצְטִגְנִינּוֹת יוֹם פְּלוֹנִי טוֹב
is good so-and-so day through astrology who say times those who set These are a fortuneteller Who is

יום פְּלוֹנִי רַע יוֹם פְּלוֹנִי רָאוי לַעֲשׂוֹת בוּ מְלָאכָה פְּלוֹנִית שָׁנָה פְּלוֹנִית
such-and-such year such-and-such melacha on it to do is proper so-and-so day is bad so-and-so day
או חֹדֶשׁ פְּלוֹנִי רַע לְדָבָר פְּלוֹנִי:
such-and-such for a matter is bad so-and-so month or

The Rambam defines the prohibition of being a me'onen, which refers to predicting auspicious or inauspicious times using astrology.

ה'ט

אסור עוֹנֵן וְאַצְטַגְנוּנוֹת וְאַחִיזַת עֵינַיִם

Halacha 9· The Prohibition of Telling Fortunes, Astrology, and Optical Illusions

אָסוּר לְעוֹנֵן אִף עַל פִּי שֶׁלֹּא עָשָׂה מַעֲשֵׂה אֱלֹהִים הוֹדִיעַ אוֹתוֹ
those he made known but an action he did that not though · even to tell fortunes It is forbidden
הַכֹּזְבִים שֶׁהַכְּסִילִים מַדְמִין שֶׁהֵן דְּבָרֵי אֱמֶת וְדְבָרֵי חֲכָמִים. וְכָל
and anyone wisdom and words of truth words of that they are imagine that the fools falsehoods
הַעוֹשֶׂה מִפְּנֵי הָאַצְטַגְנוּנוֹת וְכוּן מְלָאכָתוֹ אוֹ הִלִּיכְתּוֹ בְּאוֹתוֹ הָעֵת
time to that his travel or his work and directed astrology because of who acts
שֶׁקִּבְּעוּ הַכְּרִי שָׁמַיִם הָרִי זֶה לֹקָה שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר וַיִּקְרָא יי כו "לֹא
"Do not 26 19 Vayikra as it is said receives lashes this one behold heaven the astrologers of that set
תַּעֲוִנֶנּוּ". וְכֵן הָאוֹחִז אֶת הָעֵינַיִם וּמַדְמָה בְּפָנָיו הָרוֹאִים שֶׁעוֹשֶׂה
that he does the onlookers before and creates an illusion the eyes — one who holds and likewise tell fortunes"
מַעֲשֵׂה תַמָּהוֹן וְהוּא לֹא עָשָׂה הָרִי זֶה בְּכָלִל מְעוֹנֵן
one who tells fortunes is in the category of this one behold do did not and he wonder an act of
וְלֹקָה:
and receives lashes

This halacha defines the prohibition of telling fortunes, acting based on astrological predictions, and performing magic tricks that deceive the eyes.

ה'י

אסור חֲבִירַת חֶכֶם וְלַחֲשִׁים

Halacha 10· The Prohibition of Casting Spells and Chanting Incantations

אִיזְהוּ חוֹבֵר זֶה שֶׁמַּדְבֵּר בְּדְבָרִים שֶׁאֵינָן לְשׁוֹן עַם וְאֵין לָהֶן
to them and there is not people the language of that are not with words who speaks this a spell-caster Who is
עֲנָן וּמַעֲלָה עַל דַּעְתּוֹ בְּסִכְלוֹתוֹ שֶׁאוֹתָן הַדְּבָרִים מוֹעִילִין. עַד שֶׁהֵן
that they to the point are effective words that those in his foolishness his mind upon and brings up meaning
אוֹמְרִים שֶׁהָאוֹמֵר כֹּךְ וְכֹךְ עַל הַנֶּחֱשׁ אוֹ עַל הָעֶקְרָב אֵינוֹ מְזִיק
harm it does not the scorpion upon or the snake upon and such such that one who says say
וְהָאוֹמֵר כֹּךְ וְכֹךְ עַל הָאִישׁ אֵינוֹ נִזְוָק. וּמֵהֶן אוֹחִז בְּיָדוֹ בְּעֵת
at the time in his hand holds and of them harmed he is not the man upon and such such and one who says
שֶׁמַּדְבֵּר מִפֶּתַח אוֹ סֶלַע וְכִיּוּצָא בְּדְבָרִים הָאֵלּוּ הֵכֵל אָסוּר. וְהַחוֹבֵר
and the spell-caster is forbidden everything these to things and similar a stone or a key that he speaks

עֲצָמוֹ שָׁאָחַז בְּיָדוֹ כָּלֹם אוֹ שָׁעָשָׂה מַעֲשֶׂה עִם דְּבוּרוֹ אֶפְלוֹ הָרָאָה

he pointed even his speech with an action who did or anything in his hand who held himself

בְּאַצְבָּעוֹ הָרִי זֶה לֹקֶה שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר דְּבָרִים יח י "לֹא יִמָּצֵא בָּךְ"

among you" be found "There shall not 10 18 Devarim as it is said receives lashes this one behold with his finger

וְגו' דְּבָרִים יח יא "וְחָבֵר חָבֵר". אֲכַל אִם אָמַר דְּבָרִים בְּלִבָּד וְלֹא

and did not alone words he said if but spells" "and a caster of 11 18 Devarim etc.

הֵנִיד לֹא אֶצְבָּע וְלֹא רֹאשׁ וְלֹא הָיָה בְּיָדוֹ כָּלֹם. וְכֵן אָדָם

a person and likewise anything in his hand was and there was not a head and not a finger not move

שֶׁאָמַר עָלָיו הַחֵבֵר אוֹתָן הַקּוֹלוֹת וְהוּא יוֹשֵׁב לְפָנָיו וּמַדְמָה שֵׁשׁ

that there is and imagines before him sits and he sounds those the spell-caster upon him whom was said

לוֹ בָּזָה הִנָּאָה מִכֵּין אוֹתוֹ מִפֶּת מִרְדּוֹת מִפְּנֵי שֶׁנִּשְׁתַּתַּף בְּסִכְלוֹת

in the foolishness of that he participated because rebelliousness stripes of him we strike benefit in this to him

הַחֵבֵר. וְכָל אוֹתָן הַקּוֹלוֹת וְהַשְּׁמוֹת הַמְשָׁנִים הַמְכַעְרִים לֹא יִרְעוּ וְגַם

and also do harm do not ugly strange and the names sounds those and all the spell-caster

הֵיטֵב אֵין אוֹתָם:

in them there is not good

This halacha defines the forbidden practice of casting spells, detailing the physical actions that incur Torah lashes and the status of one who listens to them.

ה'ל' יא

לְלַחֵשׁ עַל הַנְּשִׁיכָה לְיִשָּׁב דַּעַת הַחוּלָה

Halacha 11 · Permissibility of Whispering Incantations Over a Snake Bite to Settle the Victim's Mind

מִי שֶׁנִּשְׁכּוֹ עֶקְרָב אוֹ נָחָשׁ מִתֵּר לְלַחֵשׁ עַל מְקוֹם הַנְּשִׁיכָה וְאֶפְלוֹ

and even the bite the place of upon to whisper it is permitted a snake or a scorpion whom has bitten One

בְּשִׁבְתָּ כִּדֵּי לְיִשָּׁב דַּעַתוֹ וּלְחַזֵּק לִבּוֹ. אַף עַל פִּי שְׂאִין הַדָּבָר מוֹעִיל

helps the matter that not though even his heart and to strengthen his mind to settle in order on Shabbos

כָּלֹם הוּאִיל וּמִסְכָּן הוּא הַתִּירוֹ לוֹ כִּדֵּי שֶׁלֹא תִטְרָף דַּעַתוֹ

will be distracted that not in order to him they permitted is he and endangered since at all

עָלָיו:

his mind

The Sages permitted whispering incantations over a life-threatening bite, even on Shabbos, solely to prevent the victim from panicking, despite the practice having no medical efficacy.

ה'ל' יב

אִסוּר שְׁמוֹשׁ בְּדִבְרֵי תוֹרָה לְרְפוּאָת הַגּוֹף

Halacha 12 · The Prohibition of Using Words of Torah for Physical Healing

הַלּוֹחֵשׁ עַל הַמַּכָּה וְקוֹרֵא פְסוּק מִן הַתּוֹרָה. וְכֵן הַקּוֹרֵא עַל

over one who recites and likewise the Torah from a verse and recites the wound over One who whispers

הַתִּינוּק שֶׁלֹּא יִפְּעֵת וְהַמְנִיחַ סֵפֶר תּוֹרָה אוֹ תַּפְּלִין עַל הַקָּטָן
 the minor upon tefillin or Torah a scroll of and one who places he will be frightened so that not the child
 בְּשִׁבִּיל שְׁיִישָׁן. לֹא דֵי לָהֶם שָׁהִם בְּכָלֵל מְנַחֲשִׁים וְחוֹבְרִים אֲלָא
 but and charmers soothsayers in the category of that they are for them enough not that he will sleep for the sake
 שֶׁהֵן בְּכָלֵל הַכּוֹפְרִים בַּתּוֹרָה שֶׁהֵן עוֹשִׂין דְּבָרֵי תּוֹרָה רְפוּאָת
 a healing of Torah words of make because they the Torah those who deny in the category of that they are
 גּוּף וְאֵינָן אֲלָא רְפוּאָת נַפְשׁוֹת שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר מִשְׁלֵי ג כֹּב "וַיְהִיו חַיִּים
 life and they shall be 22 3 Mishlei as it is said souls a healing of except and they are not the body
 לְנַפְשָׁךְ". אֲבָל הַבְּרִיא שֶׁקָּרָא פְּסוּקִין וּמִזְמוֹר מִתְּהִלִּים כְּדֵי שֶׁתִּגָּן
 that it will protect in order from Tehillim and a psalm verses who read a healthy person but for your soul
 עָלָיו זְכוּת קְרִיאָתוֹ וַיִּנָּצֵל מִצָּרוֹת וּמִנִּזְקִים הֵרִי זֶה מִתָּר:
 is permitted this behold and from damages from troubles and he will be saved their reading the merit of upon him

This halacha forbids using Torah verses or sacred objects as physical remedies, while permitting a healthy person to recite them for spiritual protection.

ה'לי יג

הָאִסוּר לְדַרְשׁ אֶל הַמֵּתִים וְהַדְּרָכִים הָאִסוּרוֹת בְּכָד

Halacha 13 · The Prohibition of Seeking Information from the Dead and the Forbidden Methods

אִיזְהוּ דוֹרֵשׁ אֶל הַמֵּתִים זֶה הַמְרַעֵב אֶת עַצְמוֹ וְהוֹלֵךְ וְלֵן בְּבֵית
 in a house of and sleeps and goes himself — one who starves This is the dead to one who seeks Who is
 הַקְּבָרוֹת כְּדֵי שְׁיָבוֹא מֵת בְּחִלּוֹם וַיּוֹדִיעֵו מֶה שֶׁשָּׁאֵל עָלָיו.
 about he asked what and inform him in a dream a dead person that will come in order graves
 וַיֵּשׁ אַחֲרֵיהֶם שֶׁהֵם לּוֹבְשִׁים מְלָבוּשִׁים יְדוּעִים וְאוֹמְרִים דְּבָרִים וּמִקְטִירִין
 and burn words and say specific garments wear who others And there are
 קְטֹרֶת יְדוּעָה וַיִּשְׁנִים לְבֶדֶן כְּדֵי שְׁיָבוֹא מֵת פְּלוּנִי וַיִּסְפֹּר עִמּוֹ
 with him and speak so-and-so a dead person that will come in order alone and sleep specific incense
 בְּחִלּוֹם. כָּלֵלֹ שֶׁל דָּבָר כָּל הָעוֹשֶׂה כְּדֵי שְׁיָבוֹא הַמֵּת
 the dead person that will come in order who does anyone the matter of The general rule in a dream
 וַיּוֹדִיעֵו לּוֹקֵה שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר דְּבָרִים יח י "לֹא יִמָּצָא בְּךָ מַעֲבִיר"
 one who passes among you be found There shall not 10 18 Devarim as it is said receives lashes and inform him
 וְגו' דְּבָרִים יח יא "וְדַרְשׁ אֶל הַמֵּתִים":
 the dead to and one who seeks 11 18 Devarim etc.

This halacha defines the biblical prohibition of seeking information from the deceased, whether through self-starvation, sleeping in cemeteries, or performing specific incantations and rituals.

ה'לי יד

אִסוּר דְּרִישָׁה בְּאוֹב אוֹ בְּיִדְעוֹנִי וְעִנְשׁוֹ

Halacha 14 · The Prohibition of Inquiring of an Ov or Yid'oni and Its Punishment

אִסוּר לְשָׁאֵל בְּעַל אוֹב אוֹ בְּעַל יְדִעְוִי שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר דְּבָרִים יח י
 10 18 Devarim as it is said a yid'oni a master of or an ov of a master of to inquire It is forbidden

"לֹא יִמָּצָא בְּךָ מַעֲבִיר" וְגו' דְּבָרִים יח יא "וְשָׂאֵל אוֹב
an ov "and one who inquires 11 18 Devarim etc. one who passes" among you be found "There shall not
of

וַיִּדְעֵנִי". נִמְצְאָתָ לָמַד שֶׁפָּעַל אוֹב וַיִּדְעֵנִי עַצְמוֹ בְּסִקְלָה
are by stoning themselves and a yid'oni an ov that a master of learning you find and a yid'oni"

וְהַנִּשְׂאֵל בָּהֶן בְּאַזְהָרָה וּמַכִּין אוֹתוֹ מַכַּת מִרְדּוּת. וְאִם
and if rebelliousness with lashes of him and they strike is in violation of a of them and the one who
prohibition inquires

כִּיּוֹן מַעֲשָׂיו וַעֲשָׂה כִּפּי מֵאֲמָרוֹ לֹקָה:
he receives lashes their word according to and acted his deeds he directed

This halacha details the prohibition against consulting practitioners of ov and yid'oni, distinguishing between the capital punishment of the practitioner and the disciplinary lashes of the inquirer.

ה'ל"ט

עוֹנֵשׁ הַמְכַּשֵּׁף וְהַאֲוִיז אֶת הָעֵינַיִם

Halacha 15 · The Punishment of a Sorcerer and One Who Deludes the Eyes

הַמְכַּשֵּׁף חַיֵּב סִקְלָה וְהוּא שֶׁעָשָׂה מַעֲשֵׂה כְּשָׁפִים. אֲבָל הַאֲוִיז אֶת הָעֵינַיִם
the eyes — one who holds but sorcery an act of who did and he stoning is liable The sorcerer

וְהוּא שֶׁיִּרְאֶה שֶׁעָשָׂה וְהוּא לֹא עָשָׂה לֹקָה מַכַּת מִרְדּוּת. מִפְּנֵי שֶׁלֹּא זֶה
this the prohibition because rebelliousness lashes of is lashed did not and he that he did who appears and he

שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר בַּמְכַּשֵּׁף בְּכָל דְּבָרִים יח י "לֹא יִמָּצָא בְּךָ" הוּא
it among you shall be found not 10 18 Devarim is in the category of regarding a sorcerer which is said

וְלֹא שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר לְאֲזַהֵר מִיַּתַּת בֵּית דִּין הוּא וְאִין לֹקִין עָלָיו
upon it do they lash and not it Judgment House of death of for warning of which is given and a prohibition

שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר שְׁמוֹת כֹּב יז "מְכַשֶּׁפָּה לֹא תַחֲיָה":
you shall let live not a witch 17 22 Shemos as it is said

This halacha distinguishes between a sorcerer who performs a physical act of sorcery and one who merely creates an illusion.

ה'ל"ז

הַבְּלִי הַקּוֹסְמִים וְהַמְּעוֹנְנִים וְהַחַיִּיב לַהֲיוֹת תָּמִים עִם ה'

Halacha 16 · The Vanity of Sorcery and Divination and the Obligation of Perfect Faith in God

וּדְבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה כָּלָן דְּבָרֵי שֶׁקֶר וְכֹזֵב הֵן וְהֵם שֶׁהִטְעוּ בָּהֶן עוֹבְדֵי
worshippers of with them that misled and they they are and lies falsehood are words of all of them these And matters

כּוֹכְבִּים הַקְּדָמוֹנִים לְגוֹיֵי הָאָרְצוֹת כִּדִּי שִׁינְהֻגוּ אַחֲרֵיהֶן. וְאִין
and it is not after them that they should follow in order the lands the nations of the ancient ones stars

רְאוּי לְיִשְׂרָאֵל שֶׁהֵם חֲכָמִים מְחַכְמִים לְהַמְשִׁיךְ בְּהַבְלִים אֵלֶּה וְלֹא לְהַעֲלוֹת
to bring up and not these after vanities to be drawn exceedingly wise wise who are for Israel fitting

עַל לֵב שֵׁשׁ תּוֹעֵלֶת בָּהֶן. שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר בַּמִּדְבָּר כֹּג כֹּג "כִּי לֹא נִחַשׁ
divination there is no For 23 23 Bamidbar as it is said in them benefit that there is heart upon

בַּיַּעֲקֹב וְלֹא קָסָם בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל". וְנֹאמַר דְּבָרִים יח יד "כִּי הַגּוֹיִם הָאֵלֶּה

these nations For 14 18 Devarim and it is said in Israel soothsaying and no in Yaakov

אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה יוֹרֵשׁ אוֹתָם אֶל מַעֲנָנִים וְאֶל קְסָמִים יִשְׁמְעוּ וְאַתָּה לֹא כֵן"

so not but you they listen diviners and to astrologers to — are driving out you whom

וְגו'. כָּל הַמֵּאֲמִין בְּדְבָרֵי הָאֱלֹהִים וְכִיּוֹצֵא בָהֶן וּמַחֲשֵׁב בְּלִבּוֹ שֶׁהֵן אֱמֶת

truth that they are in his heart and thinks to them and similar these in matters who believes Anyone etc.

וְדָבָר חֲכָמָה אֲבָל הַתּוֹרָה אֲסָרְתָּן אֵינֶן אֵלָּא מִן הַסִּכָּלִים וּמַחֲסָרֵי

and those lacking the fools from except is not forbade them the Torah but wisdom and a matter of

הַדַּעַת וּבְכָלֵל הַנָּשִׁים וְהַקְטָנִים שְׂאִין דַּעַתָּן שְׁלֵמָה. אֲבָל בְּעֵלֵי

masters of but is incomplete intellect whose and the children the women and in the category of understanding

הַחֲכָמָה וְתַמִּימֵי הַדַּעַת יָדְעוּ בְּרָאיוֹת בְּרוּרוֹת שְׁכָל אֱלֹהֵי הַדְּבָרִים

matters these that all clear with proofs know understanding and those of perfect wisdom

שְׂאִסְרָהּ תּוֹרָה אֵינֶם דְּבָרֵי חֲכָמָה אֵלָּא תְּהוּ וְהֶבֶל שְׁנִמְשָׁכוּ בָהֶן

after them that were drawn and vanity emptiness except wisdom matters of are not Torah which forbade

חֲסָרֵי הַדַּעַת וְנִטְשׁוּ כָּל דְּרָכֵי הָאֱמֶת בְּגִלְזָן. וּמִפְּנֵי זֶה אָמְרָה

said this and because of because of them the truth paths of all and abandoned understanding those lacking

תּוֹרָה כְּשֶׁהִזְהִירָה עַל כָּל אֱלֹהֵי הַהֶבְלִים דְּבָרִים יח יג "תָּמִים תִּהְיֶה עִם

with you shall be Wholehearted 13 18 Devarim vanities these all against when it warned Torah

ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ:"

your God Hashem

Rambam explains that all forms of magic, astrology, and divination are complete falsehoods, and that a wise person must recognize their emptiness and remain wholehearted in faith.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

The chapter begins by forbidding us from imitating the dress, hairstyles, and building styles of the gentiles, establishing that a Jew must remain distinct in his appearance and conduct, with lashes as the penalty for violations. The Rambam then details the prohibitions against soothsaying (acting based on superstitious omens, though noting that merely looking back at past events as a good sign or asking a child for a pasuk is permitted) and divination (using trances, sand, or staffs to predict the future). Finally, the chapter defines and prohibits fortunetelling through astrology, performing optical illusions and magic tricks, and casting meaningless spells, emphasizing that relying on these foolish practices is strictly forbidden by the Torah.

The Torah is teaching us a profound lesson about where a Yid looks for direction and identity. The Rambam describes how the nations of the world look to external signs, astrology, and omens to guide their steps, or try to find security by blending into the crowd. But a Jew is meant to be completely different. We do not let a dropped stick, a passing animal, or the 'lucky' days of the calendar dictate our choices. Our identity is anchored from within, in our connection to Hashem, and our steps are guided solely by His Torah and mitzvos.

When we look for 'signs' or try to copy the ways of the world to feel secure, we are forgetting who we are. A Yid is 'mevudal', distinct and elevated. We don't need to look at what the street is wearing or what the stars are saying to know how to live. True peace of mind and real success come from living with simple emunah, knowing that everything comes directly from Hashem, not from coincidences or external forces.

Today, catch yourself if you start relying on a superstitious thought or feel the urge to blend in just to fit the surrounding culture. Instead, make one conscious decision based purely on ratzon Hashem, showing that your steps are guided by emunah alone.