

הלכות דעות • פרק שביעי

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

CHAPTER PREVIEW

In this chapter, the Rambam guides us through the severe prohibitions of lashon horah (evil speech), rechilus (gossip), and the destructive traits of taking revenge and bearing a grudge. We learn how careful a Yid must be with his tongue, as Hashem detests these sins which can destroy lives and tear apart the fabric of our community.

The Rambam also defines the subtle offshoots of these sins, known as the "dust of lashon horah," showing us how even seemingly innocent talk, joking, or praising someone in front of their enemies can lead to terrible harm. We are taught the proper way to purify our hearts and speech to live in harmony with our fellow Jews.

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

ה"א

האסור לספור לשון הרע ורכילות

Halacha 1: The Prohibition Against Gossiping and Talebearing

המרגל בחברו עובר בלא תעשה שנאמר ויקרא יט טז "לא

"Do not 16 19 Vayikra as it is said commandment a negative transgresses against his fellow One who gossips

תלך רכיל בעמך". ואף על פי שאין לוקין על דבר זה עון

a sin this matter for lash that we do not though . and even among your people" as a talebearer go

גדול הוא וגורם להרג נפשות רבות מישראל. לכן נסמך לו ויקרא

Vayikra to it is juxtaposed therefore from Israel many souls to kill and it causes it is great

יט טז "ולא תעמד על דם רעה". צא ולמד מה ארע לדואג

Doeg befell what and learn go out your neighbor" the blood of by stand "and do not 16 19

האדמי:

the Edomite

This halacha establishes the severe biblical prohibition of talebearing and its connection to endangering human lives.

ה"ב

ההבדל בין רכילות ללשון הרע ומוציא שם רע

Halacha 2: The Distinction Between Gossip, Lashon Horah, and Defamation of Character

אי זהו רכיל. זה שטוען דברים והולך מזה לזה ואומר כך אמר

said thus and says to this one from this one and goes matters who carries this a gossip is Who

פלוגי כך וכך שמעתי על פלוני. אף על פי שהוא אמת הרי זה מחריב

destroys this behold truth that it is though . even so and so about I heard and so thus so and so

את העולם. יש עון גדול מזה עד מאד והוא בכלל לאו זה והוא

and it this prohibition is included in and it very much until than this greater a sin there is the world —

לְשׁוֹן הָרַע. וְהוּא הַמְסַפֵּר בְּגִנּוּת חֵבְרוֹ אֶף עַל פִּי שְׂאוֹמֵר אֶמֶת.

truth that he says though · even his fellow the disgrace of is the one who relates and it horah is lashon

אֲבָל הָאוֹמֵר שֶׁקֶר נִקְרָא מוֹצִיא שֵׁם רַע עַל חֵבְרוֹ. אֲבָל בְּעַל

a master of but his fellow about bad a name one who spreads is called falsehood the one who says but

לְשׁוֹן הָרַע זֶה שִׂיּוֹשֵׁב וְאוֹמֵר כֶּךָ וְכֵן עָשָׂה פְּלוֹנִי וְכֵן וְכֵן הָיוּ אֲבוֹתָיו

his ancestors were and so and thus so and so did and so thus and says is one who sits this horah lashon

וְכֵן וְכֵן שָׁמַעְתִּי עָלָיו וְאוֹמֵר דְּבָרִים שֶׁל גִּנָּאִי. עַל זֶה אָמַר הַפֶּתוּב

the verse said this about disgrace of matters and says about him I heard and so and thus

תְּהִלִּים יב ד "יִכָּרֵת ה' כָּל שִׁפְתֵי חֲלָקוֹת לְשׁוֹן מְדַבֶּרֶת גְּדִלוֹת":

proud things that speaks a tongue flattery lips of all Hashem May cut off 4 12 Tehillim

This halacha defines and distinguishes between a gossip, one who speaks lashon horah, and one who spreads a bad name.

ה'יג

חֹמֶר עוֹן לְשׁוֹן הָרַע וְעֲנָשׁוֹ

Halacha 3 · The Extreme Severity and Punishment of Speaking Lashon Hara

אָמְרוּ חֲכָמִים שֶׁלֹּשׁ עֲבֻרוֹת נִפְרָעִין מִן הָאָדָם בְּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה וְאִין

and there is not this in the world the person from retribution is exacted transgressions three the Sages said

לוֹ חֵלֶק לְעוֹלָם הַבָּא. עֲבוֹדַת כּוֹכָבִים וְגִלּוֹי עֲרִיּוֹת וּשְׁפִיכוֹת

and spilling of nakedness and uncovering of stars worship of the coming in the world a portion to him

דָּמִים. וְלְשׁוֹן הָרַע כְּנֶגֶד כָּלָם. וְעוֹד אָמְרוּ חֲכָמִים כָּל הַמְסַפֵּר בְּלְשׁוֹן

with lashon who speaks anyone the Sages said and further all of them is against hara and lashon blood

הָרַע כְּאִלּוּ כּוֹפֵר בְּעֵקֶר. שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר תְּהִלִּים יב ה "אֲשֶׁר אָמְרוּ לְלִשְׁנֵנוּ

with our tongue said who 5 12 Tehillim as it is said the Essence he denies is as if hara

נִגְבִּיר שִׁפְתֵינוּ אֶתְּנוּ מִי אֲדוֹן לָנוּ". וְעוֹד אָמְרוּ חֲכָמִים שֶׁלֹּשָׁה לְשׁוֹן

lashon three the Sages said and further over us is master who are with us our lips we will prevail

הָרַע הוֹרֵגֵת. הָאוֹמֵר. וְהַמְקַבֵּלוֹ. וְזֶה שְׂאוֹמֵר עָלָיו.

about him whom he speaks and this one and the one who the one who speaks it kills hara accepts it

וְהַמְקַבֵּלוֹ יוֹתֵר מִן הָאוֹמֵר:

the one who speaks it than more and the one who accepts it

This halacha details the severe spiritual consequences of lashon hara, comparing it to the three cardinal sins and explaining its destructive impact on all involved.

ה'יד

אֲבָק לְשׁוֹן הָרַע וְדְבוּר פְּעֻמָּה וּבִשְׁחֹק

Halacha 4 · The Dust of Lashon Horah and Speaking Through Deceit or Jest

וַיֵּשׁ דְּבָרִים שֶׁהֵן אֲבָק לְשׁוֹן הָרַע. כִּיצַד. מִי יֹאמֵר לְפְלוֹנִי

to so and so will say Who How so horah lashon the dust of that they are matters And there are

שְׁיִהְיֶה כְּמוֹת שֶׁהוּא עָתָה. או שִׁיאֲמַר שֶׁתִּקְוּ מִפְּלוֹנִי אִינִי רוֹצֶה

want I do not from so and so be silent that he says or now that he is like that he should be

לְהוֹדִיעַ מָה אֵרַע וּמָה הָיָה. וְכִיּוֹצֵא בְּדִבְרֵי אֵלּוּ. וְכָל הַמְּסַפֵּר

who speaks And anyone these the matters and like was and what happened what to make known

בְּטוֹבוֹת חֲבֵרוֹ בְּפָנָיו שׁוֹנְאָיו הָרִי זֶה אֲבָק לְשׁוֹן הָרַע שֶׁזֶה גּוֹרֵם

causes for this horah lashon is the dust of this behold his enemies in the presence of his fellow of the goodness of

לָהֶם שִׁסְפָּרוּ בְּגִנּוּתוֹ. וְעַל זֶה הָעֲנִין אָמַר שְׁלֹמֹה מִשְׁלִי כֹז יָד

14 27 Mishlei Shlomo said matter this And on of his disparagement that they will speak them

"מְבָרֵךְ רֵעֵהוּ בְּקוֹל גָּדוֹל בִּבְקָר הַשָּׁפִים קָלָה תִּחְשָׁב לוֹ".

for him it will be considered a curse rising early in the morning loud with a voice his fellow One who blesses

שְׁמִתוֹךְ טוֹבוֹתוֹ בָּא לִידֵי רָעָתוֹ. וְכֵן הַמְּסַפֵּר בְּלְשׁוֹן הָרַע דֶּרֶךְ

by way of horah with lashon one who speaks And so too his harm to it comes his goodness for from

שְׁחוֹק וְדֶרֶךְ קְלוּת רֹאשׁ כְּלוּמָר שִׁאִינוּ מְדַבֵּר בְּשִׁנְאָה. הוּא שְׁשִׁלְמָה

is whom Shlomo he with hatred speak that he does not meaning levity and by way of jest

אָמַר בְּחֻכְמָתוֹ מִשְׁלִי כֹז יַח "כְּמִתְלַהֵלָה הִיָּרָה זָקִים חֲצִים וּמּוֹת" מִשְׁלִי

Mishlei and death arrows firebrands who shoots As a madman 18 26 Mishlei in his wisdom said

כֹּז יֵט "וְאָמַר הֵלֹא מְשִׁחַק אָנִי". וְכֵן הַמְּסַפֵּר לְשׁוֹן הָרַע דֶּרֶךְ רַמְאֻת

deceit by way of horah lashon one who speaks And so too I joking Am I not and says 19 26

וְהוּא שִׁסְפָּר לְתַמּוֹ כְּאִלּוֹ אִינוּ יוֹדַע שְׁדָבָר זֶה שְׁדָבָר לְשׁוֹן הָרַע

horah lashon that he spoke this that matter know he does not as if in his innocence is one who speaks and he

הוּא אֵלֶּא כְּשֶׁמִּמְחִין בּוֹ אוֹמֵר אִינִי יוֹדַע שְׁדָבָר זֶה לְשׁוֹן הָרַע אוֹ

or horah is lashon this that matter know I do not he says against him when they protest rather it is

שְׂאֵלוֹ מַעֲשָׂיו שֶׁל פְּלוֹנִי:

so and so of are the deeds that these

This halacha defines the subtle categories of speech known as the dust of lashon horah, including praising someone to their enemies or speaking in jest.

הֲלִי ה

הַגְּדֵרֶת לְשׁוֹן הָרַע וְדִין גְּלוּי בְּפָנָיו שֶׁלֹּשָׁה

Halacha 5 · The Definition of Lashon Horah and the Rule of Disclosure Before Three People

אֶחָד הַמְּסַפֵּר בְּלְשׁוֹן הָרַע בְּפָנָיו חֲבֵרוֹ אוֹ שְׁלֹא בְּפָנָיו, וְהַמְּסַפֵּר

and one who tells in his presence not or his fellow in the presence of the evil with tongue who speaks One

דְּבָרִים שְׂגוֹרָמִים אִם נִשְׁמָעוּ אִישׁ מִפִּי אִישׁ לְהַזִּיק חֲבֵרוֹ בְּגוּפוֹ אוֹ

or in his body his fellow to harm man from mouth of man they are heard if that cause matters

בְּמִמּוֹנוֹ, וְאִפְּלוֹ לְהַצִּיר לוֹ אוֹ לְהַפְחִידוֹ, הָרִי זֶה לְשׁוֹן הָרַע. וְאִם נֶאֱמְרוּ

were said and if the evil tongue this behold to frighten him or him to distress and even in his money

דְּבָרִים אֵלּוּ בְּפָנָיו שֶׁלֹּשָׁה כָּבָר נִשְׁמָע הַדָּבָר וְנִדָּע. וְאִם סִפֵּר הַדָּבָר

the matter told and if and known the matter is heard already three in the presence of these matters

אֶחָד מִן הַשְּׁלֹשָׁה פַּעַם אַחֶרֶת אֵין בּוֹ מַשּׁוּם לְשׁוֹן הָרָע. וְהוּא שֶׁלֹּא

that not and that is the evil tongue because of in it there is not another time the three of one

יִתְכַּוֵּן לְהַעֲבִיר הַקּוֹל וּלְגַלּוֹתוֹ יוֹתֵר:

more and to reveal it the rumor to spread he intends

This halacha defines lashon horah as any harmful or distressing speech, whether spoken in the person's presence or absence, and explains the leniency of a matter already made public before three people.

ה'ל'ו

הִרְחָקָה מִפְּעָלֵי לְשׁוֹן הָרָע וְעִנֵּשׁ הַמְדַּבֵּר

Halacha 6 · Distancing Oneself from Speakers of Lashon Horah and the Desert Decree

כָּל אֵלּוּ הֵם בְּעָלֵי לְשׁוֹן הָרָע שְׂאֵסוֹר לְדוֹר בְּשִׁכּוּנָתָם וְכָל שָׂכֵן

the more so and all in their neighborhood to dwell that it is forbidden horah lashon masters of are these All

לֵישֵׁב עִמָּהֶם וְלִשְׁמָע דְּבָרֵיהֶם. וְלֹא נִחָתָם גְּזֵר דִּין עַל אֲבוֹתֵינוּ

our ancestors against judgment the decree of was sealed and not their words and to hear with them to sit

בַּמְדָּבָר אֲלֵא עַל לְשׁוֹן הָרָע לְבַד:

alone horah lashon for except in the desert

The Rambam warns against living near or socializing with habitual speakers of lashon horah, noting that this sin was the primary cause for the decree against the generation of the desert.

ה'ל'ז

אִסוּר נִקְיָמָה וְהִנָּהֲגַת הַמַּעֲבִיר עַל מְדוּתּוֹ

Halacha 7 · The Prohibition of Taking Revenge and the Virtue of Rising Above One's Feelings

הַנוֹקֵם מַחְבְּרוֹ עוֹבֵר בְּלֹא תַעֲשֶׂה שְׁנֵאָמַר לֹא תִקָּם.

take revenge Do not as it is said commandment a negative transgresses from his colleague One who takes revenge

וְאֵף עַל פִּי שְׂאֵינּוּ לוֹקָה עָלָיו דֹּעָה רָעָה הִיא עַד מָאֵד. אֲלֵא רְאוּי

it is proper rather very until it bad a trait for it lashed that he is not though and even

לוֹ לְאָדָם לְהִיּוֹת מַעֲבִיר עַל מְדוּתּוֹ עַל כָּל דְּבָרֵי הָעוֹלָם שֶׁהִכֵּל

for everything the world matters of all over his feelings over one who passes to be for a person for him

אֶצֶל הַמְּבִינִים דְּבָרֵי הַכֵּל וְהַבְּאִי וְאֵינּוּ כְּדָאִי לְנִקָּם

taking revenge worth and they are not and emptiness vanity are matters of those of understanding according to

עֲלֵיהֶם. כִּיצַד הִיא הַנִּקְיָמָה. אָמַר לוֹ חֲבֵרוֹ הַשְׂאִילֵנִי קֶרֶדְמָה, אָמַר

he said your hatchet Lend me his colleague to him said the taking of revenge is How for them

לוֹ אֵינִי מִשְׂאִילָהּ. לְמָחָר צָרִיךְ לְשָׂאֵל מִמֶּנּוּ, אָמַר לוֹ חֲבֵרוֹ

his colleague to him he said from him to borrow he needs On the morrow lend you I will not to him

הַשְׂאִילֵנִי קֶרֶדְמָה, אָמַר לוֹ אֵינִי מִשְׂאִילָהּ כְּדָרְךָ שֶׁלֹּא הַשְׂאִילְתָּנִי

you lent me that not just as lend you I will not to him he said your hatchet Lend me

כְּשֶׁשְׂאִילְתִּי מִמֶּה, הֲרִי זֶה נוֹקָם. אֲלֵא כְּשִׁיבּוֹא לוֹ לְשָׂאֵל יִתֵּן

he should give to borrow to him when he comes rather is taking revenge this behold from you when I asked

בְּלֵב שְׁלֵם וְלֹא יִגְמַל לוֹ כְּאִשֶּׁר גָּמְלוֹ. וְכֵן כָּל כְּפוּצָא בְּאֵלוֹ. וְכֵן
and so to these similar all and so he repaid him just as him repay and not whole with a heart
אָמַר דָּוִד בְּדַעוֹתָיו הַטּוֹבוֹת תִּהְיִים זֶה "אִם גָּמַלְתִּי שׁוֹלְמִי רָע
evil my ally I have repaid If 5 7 Tehillim the good regarding his traits Dovid said
וְאַחֲלָצָה" וְגו':
etc and I rescued

This halacha defines the Torah prohibition of taking revenge, illustrating it with the classic example of refusing to lend a tool because of a prior refusal, and extols the virtue of overlooking personal grievances.

ה'ל' ח

אָסוּר נְטִירַת אֵיכָה בְּלֵב וְהִנָּהֳגָה הָרְאוּיָה

Halacha 8 • The Prohibition Against Bearing a Grudge and the Proper Character Trait

וְכֵן כָּל הַנוֹטֵר לְאַחַד מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל עוֹבֵר בְּלֹא תַעֲשֶׂה שְׁנֹאמַר
as it is said commandment a negative transgresses of Israel against one who bears a grudge anyone And so
וַיִּקְרָא יִט יח "וְלֹא תִטְרְ אֶת בְּנֵי עַמֶּךָ". כִּיצַד הִיא
is How your people" against the children of — bear a grudge "and you shall not 18 19 Vayikra
הַנְּטִירָה. רְאוּבֵן שָׁאֵמַר לְשִׁמְעוֹן הַשֹּׂכֵר לִי בֵּית זֶה אוֹ הַשְּׂאִילָנִי שׁוֹר
ox lend me or this house to me Rent to Shimon who said Reuven the bearing of a grudge
זֶה וְלֹא רָצָה שְׁמִעוֹן. לְיָמִים בָּא שְׁמִעוֹן לְרְאוּבֵן לְשָׂאֵל מִמֶּנּוּ אוֹ לְשֹׂכֵר
to rent or from him to borrow to Reuven Shimon came After days Shimon did want and not this
מִמֶּנּוּ וְאָמַר לוֹ רְאוּבֵן הֵא לָהּ הִרְיֵנִי מִשְׂאִילָהּ וְאִינִי כְמוֹתָהּ לֹא
not like you and I am not lending to you behold I am is for you Here Reuven to him and said from him
אֲשִׁלֶּם לָהּ כְּמַעֲשֶׂיהָ. הָעוֹשָׂה כְּזֶה עוֹבֵר בְּלֹא תִטְרְ.
you shall not bear a the negative transgresses like this The one who does like your deeds to you will I repay
grudge commandment of
אֲלֵא יִמָּחַ הַדָּבָר מִלְּבוֹ וְלֹא יִטְרְנוּ. שְׁכָל זְמַן שֶׁהוּא
that he time for all bear a grudge about it and not from his heart the matter he must wipe rather
נוֹטֵר אֶת הַדָּבָר וְזוֹכְרוֹ שָׁמָּה יָבוֹא לְנִקָּם. לְפִיכָּה הַקְפִּידָה
was strict therefore to take revenge he will come perhaps and remembers it the matter — bears a grudge
regarding
תּוֹרָה עַל הַנְּטִירָה עַד שִׁימָּחַ הָעוֹן מִלְּבוֹ וְלֹא יִזְכְּרוּנוּ כָּלֵל.
at all remember it and not from his heart the offense that he wipes until the bearing of a grudge about the Torah
וְזוֹ הִיא הַדָּעָה הַנְּכוֹנָה שֶׁאִפְשָׁר שִׁתְּקִים בָּהּ יָשׁוּב
the settlement of through it that will be sustained that it is possible the correct one the character trait is and this
הָאָרֶץ וּמִשְׁאָם וּמִתְנַם שֶׁל בְּנֵי אָדָם זֶה עִם זֶה:
this one with this one man sons of of dealings and their business the land

This halacha defines the Torah prohibition of bearing a grudge (netirah) and explains how it differs from revenge, emphasizing the need to completely erase resentment from one's heart.

The Rambam begins by defining rechilus and lashon horah, explaining that even speaking the truth about a colleague in a disparaging way is a severe sin equivalent to the three cardinal sins. He warns us against the "dust of lashon horah"—which includes sly remarks, insincere jokes, or praising someone in front of those who dislike him—and forbids us from living near or sitting with those who speak evil. Finally, the Rambam details the prohibitions of taking revenge and bearing a grudge, explaining that a person must rise above worldly matters, wipe any resentment from his heart, and help his fellow Jew with a full heart even if he was previously mistreated.

לְמַעֲשֶׂה WHAT TO TAKE HOME

My dear talmid, when you look closely at this sugya, you see that the Torah is not just warning us against telling lies or causing physical harm. The Chazal tell us that lashon hara is equivalent to the three worst sins, and that the decree on our ancestors in the desert was sealed only because of it. Why is this? Because the way we speak and the way we react to others is the very foundation of our emunah. When a person speaks lashon hara, or when he holds a grudge and says, 'I won't lend to you because you didn't lend to me,' he is acting as if he is the master of his own world, forgetting that Hashem is in charge of everything.

The Rambam teaches us that a person of understanding looks at all these petty worldly matters, who lent what, who said what, who insulted whom, as utter vanity. When someone refuses to help you, or when you feel the urge to share a juicy piece of gossip, the yetzer hara wants you to believe that this moment is the most important thing in the world. But the true avodah of a Yid is to rise above these small feelings, to wipe the slate clean, and to realize that keeping peace and protecting another Yid's dignity is what truly matters to Hashem.

Today, when someone asks you for a favor, or when you are tempted to remind someone of how they let you down in the past, do not take revenge and do not bear a grudge. Give with a whole heart, erase the memory of their slight from your mind entirely, and speak only words that build up your fellow Jew.