



KOF-K

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בס"ד

Contemporary Avodah Zarah Issues

Going Near a Church

If a church has a path that can lead you to your destination, one may go through that path.¹ However, it is an act of piety for one not to go on that path if there is a different way to get to your destination that is equal to the first path.² When church services are being held, one may not enter the parking lot because people standing by will think you are going into the church. When services are not being held, and you have no other way of getting to your destination, you may go through the church's parking lot.³ One should distance himself four *amos* from an *avodah zarah*.⁴ There is no problem walking on the sidewalk of the church. Still as an act of piety one should distance himself four *amos*.⁵ *Horav Yisroel Belsky Shlita* says one should keep four *amos* away from the entrance of a church. A yard sale in the churchyard, one is allowed to go there if there is no *maris ayin*, and the money is not going for their *avodah zarah*.⁶

Going Into a Church (*Yeshiva*, building, repairs)

The *Mishnah* in *Avoda Zara*⁷ prohibits one from entering a city in which *avodah zarah* is present. Unfortunately it is impossible for those living in *golus* to adhere to this prohibition. We are considered *anusim* in this regard.⁸ Entering an actual house of *avodah zarah* is clearly prohibited.⁹ A church is considered a house of *avodah zarah*, therefore, a Jew is forbidden to enter it.¹⁰ Many people think that they may go to Vatican City to tour; however, this is forbidden.¹¹ One who is running for his life may

¹ Rama Y.D. 149:2.

² Refer to Sefer Chasidim 435.

³ Igros Moshe 3:129.

⁴ Shulchan Aruch Y.D. 150.

⁵ Darchei Teshuva 150:2, Chai Ha'Levi 4:63.

⁶ Yaskel Avdi 8:20:46, Teshuvos V'hanhugos 1:463.

⁷ 11b. Refer to Rivevos Ephraim 1:64.

⁸ Rambam Perush Ha'mishnayos Mesechtas Avoda Zara 1:3.

⁹ Ritva Avodah Zarah 11b, Shulchan Aruch 150:1, Shach Y.D. 149:1.

¹⁰ Birchei Yosef 149:2, Darchei Teshuva 150:2, Igros Moshe 3:129, Minchas Elazar 1:53-3, Yechaveh Da'as 4:45, Binyan Tziyon 1:63, Shearim Metzuyanim B'Halacha 167:9, Rivevos Ephraim 3:496-497. Refer to Yalkut Yosef O.C. 151:page 270 in depth in regard to davening in the Me'aros Hamachpeilah since the Arabs use it as their house of worship refer to Yalkut Yosef O.C. 151:page 270 in depth.

¹¹ Refer to Yechaveh Da'as 4:45.



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go into a church to save himself.¹² The *poskim* say entering a church because of *darchei shalom* is prohibited.¹³

Horav Moshe Feinstein zt"l says¹⁴ even if one cannot find a building for a *yeshiva* it is clearly prohibited to rent out their church for your *yeshiva*.

The *poskim* say it is prohibited to build their churches. For an architect to draw out the plans for the building it is permitted because it has nothing to do with the actual *avodah zarah*. Nonetheless, if there is no *eivah* involved one should stay away from such activity.¹⁵ (To do the aforementioned for a reform or conservative temple is clearly permitted, and there is no need to be stringent with this.) One is not allowed to put windows in their *beis avodah zarah*.¹⁶ Even if a goy made the frame of the window and the *Yid* just installs the window it is still not allowed.¹⁷ A roofer is not allowed to make the roof of a church because you are benefiting the *avodah zarah* itself.¹⁸ A *Yid* is not allowed to contract himself out in order to help bring stones or other objects that would help in the building of a church even if they can hire *goyish* workers. When this situation arises one should consult his *Rov*.

Playing Ball in a Church

To play ball in a ballroom, which has connection to the tefillah of the goyim even if there are pictures of no *avodah zarah* is not allowed. One should train his children to stay away from such places.¹⁹ *R' Moshe Feinstein Zt"l* prohibited going to the Y.M.C.A. to do exercise. *R' Elyashiv shlita* says in *Eretz Yisroel* since mostly *Yidin* go to the Y.M.C.A it is permitted.²⁰

Voting

One may vote in a church which specifically set up a room for this purpose i.e; in their basement or a different room. The reason is because it is a room used for other things

¹² Shulchan Aruch 157:3, see Teshuvos Ha'rosh 19:17.

¹³ Yabea Omer Y.D. 2:11.

¹⁴ Igros Moshe Y.D. 3:77:4.

¹⁵ Igros Moshe Y.D. 1:68.

¹⁶ Yabea Omer Y.D. 2:11 in the meluyim, V'yan Dovid Y.D. 3:52, see Taz 139:2.

¹⁷ Teshuras Shai 128.

¹⁸ Mesechtas Avodah Zarah 51b, Shulchan Aruch Y.D. 139: 9-11.

¹⁹ Igros Moshe O.C. 4:40:26, Rivevos Ephraim 3:302:3.

²⁰ Divrei Chachumim page 191:47.



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i.e: voting not only for their prayers and everyone knows that you are there to vote and not for anything else. This is only permitted if one has no other place to vote.²¹ One is not allowed to look at pictures of a church's ceiling even though it is not an *avodah zarah*, but it is there to beautify the church.²²

Looking At a Clock on a Church

The *poskim* say one is allowed to look at the clock on the outside of a church because it is not considered benefiting from the *avodah zarah*. The clock was put on the highest building in the town as a service for the community.²³

Listening To Music from a Church

It is prohibited to hear the music that is being played in the church. This is true even if it is music that is not live.²⁴

Turning a Church into a *Shul*

A church which was destroyed and the walls are not the way it was previously, and a lot of money must be invested in order to make it into a shul, then this is permitted. Without these conditions it should not be done.²⁵ It is permitted to buy furniture from a church if it is being sold at a very inexpensive price.²⁶

Going Into a Mosque

Most *poskim* say one is allowed to build a mosque because the Arabs do not bow down to *avodah zarah*, therefore their mosques are not houses of *avodah zarah*.²⁷ The *poskim* say one is permitted to enter a mosque only when there is a pressing need.²⁸

Cross

The *Rama*²⁹ says the cross that the goyim wear around their necks are just a remembrance of their *avodah zarah*, and is not an *avodah zarah*.³⁰

²¹ Teshuvos V'hanhugos 2:410, Chai Ha'Levi 4:63.

²² Avnei Yushfei 1:53:4.

²³ Minchas Elazar 2:73, Divrei Malkiel 5:90, Teshuvos V'hanhugos 2:412.

²⁴ Igros Moshe Y.D. 2:56, Avnei Yushfei 1:153:5.

²⁵ Igros Moshe 1:49, Shevet Ha'Levi 9:36 Kinyan Torah 3:18.

²⁶ Pri Megadim Y.D. 154:8.

²⁷ Chut Mishulash 2:28, Avnei Yushfei 1:153, Ben Yisroel L'nuchri page 374:10.

²⁸ Horav Yisroel Belsky Shlita, see Avnei Yushfei 12:153, Shearim Metzuyanim B'Halacha 167:91, Tzitz Eliezer 4:91:4.

²⁹ Y.D. 141:1.

³⁰ Refer to Ritva Avodah Zarah 42b, Terumas Ha'deshen 196, Shach 6.



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Clothing with a Cross

Clothing which has a cross on them hidden in the style or the like may be worn. However, if one has other garments then those should be worn and not the ones with the cross.³¹

Stamps That Have a Cross

It is permitted to sell and have stamps that have a cross on them: there is no concern that these crosses were bowed down to at any point.³²

An Award/Medallion with a Cross

One may keep an award or medallion that has a cross on it since the cross is only a remembrance. Some say to break off a little piece of the cross.³³

Windows That Have a Cross

Some exterior wooden window frames have designs that configurate into a cross this is permitted.³⁴ The *Stiepler* zt"l did not like this practice.³⁵

Business with a Cross

Initially, the *poskim* say one should not benefit from conducting any sort of business that has to do with the cross. *B'dieved*, one may sell them.³⁶

Other *Halachos* Pertaining To The Cross

If a goy walks into *shul* with a cross around his neck there is no need to prevent him from coming into the *shul*.³⁷ The *poskim* say there is no problem in making a plus (+) sign it has nothing to do with a cross.³⁸

Selling X- Mas Trees and Holiday Lights

The x-mas trees that are sold used to come from a place where *avodah zarah* was worshipped. Now it is nothing but a remembrance. The holiday lights as well as the

³¹ Shraga Hameir 5:76, Teshuvos V'hanhugos 2:411, Avnei Yushfei 1:152.

³² Igros Moshe Y.D. 1:69, see Divrei Dovid 1:17, Shearim Metzuyanim B'Halacha 167:1.

³³ Refer to Shach 6, Pischei Teshuva 141, Darchei Teshuva 7, Yechaveh Da'as 3:65, Maharshag 3:191, Zera Emes 2:45, Lev Chaim 3:100.

³⁴ Darchei Teshuva 141:3,4, Shearim Metzuyanim B'Halacha 167:2, Halef Lecha Shlomo O.C. 70

³⁵ Orchos Rabbeinu 1:page 112:5.

³⁶ See Divrei Chachumim page 192:47, Kinyan Torah 1:54:5, Darchei Teshuva, Maharam Shick 152, Zera Emes 2:45, Yehuda Yalei Y.D. 1:177, Ben Yisroel L'nuchri page 387-388.

³⁷ Har Tzvi O.C. 1:85.

³⁸ Asei Lechu Rav 5:21.

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trees should not be sold by *yidin*. If not selling these items will cause animosity then one may sell them. Nevertheless, it should be avoided if at all possible.³⁹

Mentioning the Holiday of December 25th

It is best to try to stay away from mentioning the holiday of December 25th by its name. One should refer to the holiday in a different way. There are certain topics which *Yidin* should avoid discussing this is one of them.⁴⁰

³⁹ Horav Yisroel Belsky Shlita.

⁴⁰ Horav Yisroel Belsky Shlita, see Shulchan Aruch Y.D. 147, G'ra 3, Darchei Teshuva 7, Chinuch mitzvah 86.