

## MITZVAH REVIEW

Constant  
Mitzvah

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מצוה  
תמידית

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### לֹא יִהְיֶה — NOT TO BELIEVE IN OTHER GODS

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**L**o *yihiyeh lecha elohim acheirim* is a prohibition against idolatry. *Chinuch* explains that the primary violation of this prohibition is to attribute power to any source other than Hashem.

We determined that the underlying principle of idolatry is to worship and manipulate systems in nature to provide a practical but meaningless life, rather than focusing on the true purpose of the world.

In addition, we fine-tuned our understanding of our purpose in this world, explaining that we were created to attain *shleimus* (perfection) in all areas of character. Success in attaining *shleimus* is the only true end, and all goals — financial success, health, etc. — are means to that end. Realizing that all circumstances in life provide opportunities for self-perfection allows us to engage in the pragmatic, practical aspects of living, while pursuing the true purpose of this world at the same time.

This understanding enables us to interpret *Lo Yihiyeh* as a constant mitzvah that pertains to our times on several levels:

- (1) It prohibits us from abandoning the pursuit of meaning and purpose in favor of a meaningless existence.

- (2) It explains why following the “*el zar*” — the *yetzer hara* — is considered idolatry:
- (a) The *yetzer hara* tries to convince us that if we follow Hashem’s laws too closely, we won’t be successful, thus causing us to believe that some other force holds the keys to success.
  - (b) Even when the *yetzer hara* allows us to follow Hashem’s laws, he tries to make us view material success as an end instead of as a means, which can cause us to abandon our true purpose in the world.
- (3) Belief in one’s own power to carry out tasks rather than attributing that power to God may also be a transgression of *Lo Yihiyeh*.
- (4) One who denies his own freedom of choice (*bechirah*) insinuates that there is no true purpose to the world, for we cannot attain perfection if we do not have the power to choose correctly.

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## Practical Applications of Lo Yihiyeh

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### **(1) Of Ends and Means**

Maintain a constant awareness of our only true goal: to have a part in realizing the purpose of the world by perfecting ourselves. Be sure to view all areas of material success as means to that end.

### **(2) Pursue Meaning, not Banal Existence**

Identify each circumstance in life as an opportunity for spiritual perfection. Undertake each endeavor not for its own sake, but as part of a total effort to grow closer to Hashem.

Seek solutions to problems in daily living that will bring spiritual growth, not just material success.

### **(3) Remembering the Limits, and the Lack Thereof**

Train yourself to realize that Hashem retains all the power, and that human power is limited to the proper use of *bechirah*.

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## **Additive Effect of Lo Yihiyeh**

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**E***munah* requires us to maintain a constant awareness of the facts that Hashem created the world for a purpose, and that we can take part in that purpose.

*Lo Yihiyeh* adds an awareness that the true purpose of the world should be our *only* pursuit; we should not abandon it in favor of meaningless existence.