



Laws of
Kings and Wars

Translated from
the Rambam's Mishne Torah

ECLECTIC TORAH COMPILATIONS

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— TALMUDIC BOOKS —

LAWS OF KINGS AND WARS

**TRANSLATION OF
THE FINAL CHAPTER OF
THE RAMBAM'S MISHNEH TORAH**

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LAWS OF KINGS AND WARS

Introduction

What follows is my translation of the last section of the Rambam's monumental work, the Mishneh Torah, with which this great master of Torah concludes his systematic arrangement of the entire Halachoh. This translation is based on an uncensored and scholarly version produced by Mechon Mamre (www.mechon-mamre.org) and contains several passages dealing with the founders of Christianity and Islam which are absent in the standard editions. There are also numerous and sometimes critical nuances between this version and the standard editions, including the division of paragraphs. It was beyond the scope of this effort to indicate all these differences.

These Laws are of particular interest because of the relevance of these matters to our current historical situation. Herein are the rules for the Nation upon its entry into the Land of Israel, its requirement to re-establish the Davidic monarchy, and to rebuild the Temple. We were commanded to cleanse the Land of idolatry, in its many forms, and to destroy the physical existence of the evil Amalekites and remember their wickedness for eternity. Further, the Rambam give us the rules of conduct for both the Mandatory War (War of Mitzvoh) and the Discretionary War, and the curious concession to our Evil Impulse as expressed in the Laws of the Yefas Toar, the beautiful and enticing woman who is happened upon in the heat of battle.

I also found of great interest the Rambam's summary of the Seven Fundamental Commandments which are demanded of the entire Gentile world and required for the moral functioning of all human society.

The Rambam concludes this, his Magnum Opus, with a description of the King Messiah and the End of Days which we are enjoined to anticipate on a daily basis. Of great importance is the Rambam's concluding remarks at the end of Chapter 12 wherein he clarifies the proper attitude regarding these matters. Unlike those who have overly emphasized this issue because of some bogus hidden agenda, the Rambam pointedly returns our focus to the true essence of it all. The real reason for hoping for these Days, says the Rambam, is so that we may have time for Torah and its Wisdom so that, ultimately, as in the words of the Prophet, "the entire Earth shall be filled with knowledge of the Lord".

Note:

Many of my footnotes were taken from the commentary of the Rambam La'am, Mosad Harav Kook 5718.

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Preface

The Laws of Kings and Wars encompasses twenty-three Commandments, ten Positive Commandments and thirteen Negative Precepts. They are:

1. To appoint a king of Israel.
2. That he not be appointed from among the converts.
3. That he may not have an excess number of wives.
4. That he may not have an excess number of horses.
5. That he may not amass silver and gold.
6. To extirpate the Seven Nations.
7. Not to leave any one of them alive.
8. To destroy the descendents of Amalek.
9. To remember what Amalek did.
10. Not to forget their evil deeds and their ambush on the route.
11. Not to dwell in the Land of Egypt.
12. To offer peace to the residents of a besieged city, and to treat them in accordance with the manner laid down in the Torah, whether they come to terms or not.
13. Not to offer peace to Ammon and Moab only, when they are besieged.
14. Not to destroy fruit-bearing trees during a siege.
15. To prepare a place where those in a military camp can go to relieve themselves.
16. To prepare a shovel to dig for this purpose.
17. To anoint a Kohen to address the soldiers at the time of war.
18. That one who is engaged to be married or one who built a house or one who planted a vineyard must rejoice in these things for a full year, and that they are returned home from the battlefield.
19. That nothing is given them to do; they do not go out even for needs of the city nor needs of the garrison, or similar.
20. Not to flee or retreat during battle.
21. The laws of the Woman of Beauty (Yefas Toar).
22. Not to sell the Woman of Beauty.
23. Not to capture her for slavery after she has had relations with you.

All these are explained in the chapters which follow.

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Chapter 1.

- 1.1 Israel was enjoined with three Commandments upon entering the Land: to appoint a king, as it says, “*you shall set a king over yourselves*” (Deut. 17:15); to destroy the descendents of Amalek, as it says “*erase the memory of Amalek*” (Deut. 25:19); and build the Temple, as it says, “*you shall seek His habitation, and there you will come*” (Deut. 12:5).
- 1.2 The appointment of the king comes before the war with Amalek, as it says, “*G-d has sent me to anoint you king...Now, go and smite Amalek*” (I Samuel 15:1-3). The eradication of Amalek precedes the construction of the Temple, as it says, “*and it was so, when the king was settled in his home, and G-d allowed him respite from his enemies all around. And the king said to Nathan, the Prophet, ‘I am living in a house of cedar...’*” (II Samuel 7:1-2).
- 1.3 Now, since the appointment of a king is a Commandment, why did G-d not want (a king) when the people asked Samuel for one? Because their request was merely due to resentment, and not for the purpose of fulfilling a Commandment. They had rejected Samuel the Prophet, as it says, “*as they have forsaken Me...so do they also with you*” (I Samuel 8:7).
- 1.4 At first, a king was not appointed other than by the Court of Seventy (Sanhedrin) and with consent of a Prophet. So was Joshua appointed by Moses our Teacher and his Court, and Saul and David by Samuel the Ramathite and his Court.
- 1.5 A convert may not be appointed king, even after many generations, until one has a Jewish mother, as it says, “*You cannot place over yourselves a foreign man, one who is not your brother*” (Deut. 17:15). This rule is also applicable for any governing Position, and includes a commander in the Army and any officer in the Army¹, or even the one who is merely responsible for the reservoir which irrigates the fields. It goes without saying that a convert cannot be appointed Judge or President. All these Positions must be filled by (born) Jews, as it says, “*place upon yourselves a king from those who are close to you*” (ibid.). All official, governing Positions must be filled with those from among our brethren.
- 1.6 A woman may not be appointed queen, as it says, “*upon yourselves a king*” (Deut. 17:15) - a “king” and not a “queen”. A woman may not be appointed to any Position² in Israel. Only may a man. A butcher³, barber, bath-attendant or tanner may not be chosen either as a king or as a Kohen Godol (High Priest).

¹ Lit., officers of the fifties or tens.

² Lit., mission.

³ Or, blood-letter.

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Not because they are disqualified, but because these professions are degrading they are always viewed trivially in the eyes of the people. Even if he worked at one of these vocations for but one day, he is disqualified (from becoming king).

- 1.7 The king is anointed with the (original) Anointing Oil⁴, as it says, “*Then Samuel took the vial of oil and poured it upon his head, and he kissed him*” (I Samuel 10:1). The anointing qualifies him and his sons in perpetuity, and ensures that the monarchy will be hereditary, as it says, “*In order that he may have many days in his reign, he and his sons, among Israel*” (Deut. 17:20).
- 1.8 If the king (dies and) leaves a young son, the monarchy is retained for him until he gets older, as Yehoyadah did with Yoash. Those who take precedence in (the laws of) inheritance, take precedence for succession to the throne; and the older son precedes the younger one.
- 1.9 This is not only true for the monarchy but for all governing Positions and all appointments in Israel – a son inherits from his father, and so his son from him, forever. This is as long as the son follows in his father’s footsteps with regard to wisdom and awe. If the son was G-d-fearing but lacked wisdom, he is appointed to succeed his father, and trained. However, if he was not G-d-fearing, even though he was very wise, he is not appointed to a Position in Israel.
- 1.10 From the time David was anointed he merited the crown of kingship, the monarchy became his and that of his male descendents for all time, as it says, “*Your throne, will be established forever*” (II Samuel 7:16). This only refers to those who are of legitimate lineage, as it says, “*If your sons shall observe my covenant*” (Psalms 132:12). Even though he only merited the monarchy for his descendents who have legitimate lineage, the monarchy will never be withdrawn from the descendants of David. The Holy One, Blessed Be He, had promised him as such, as it says, “*If his children forsake my Torah and walk not in My statutes,...and I shall visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with disease. But My mercy I shall not break off from him*” (Psalms 89:31-34).
- 1.11 Should a prophet install a king from any of the other Tribes of Israel, and that king follows in the ways of the Torah and observes the Commandments, and fights the Wars of G-d, he, too, is a king and all the Commandments of the King are applicable to him. This, even though the “essential” monarchy belongs to David and from his children there will be kings. For we see that Achiya the Shilonite appointed Jeraboam and said to him, “*And it will be, if*

⁴ Prepared by Moses.

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you listen to all that I command you...and I shall build for you a sure house as I built for David...” (I Kings 11:38). And Achiya said to him, “*And to his son, I shall give one tribe, so that it shall be a remembrance for David my servant for all days before me in Jerusalem*” (I Kings 11:39).

- 1.12 The monarchy remains with the House of David forever, as it says, “*your throne shall be established forever*” (II Samuel 7:16). In contrast, if a king from (any of the other tribes of) Israel is appointed, the monarchy will cease from his House, as it says with regard to Jeraboam, “*but not for all the days*” (I Kings 11:39).
- 1.13 The kings of Israel are not anointed with the (special) Anointing Oil, but with persimmon oil only. They may never be appointed in Jerusalem – only may the descendants of David. Only descendants of David are anointed (with the special Anointing Oil).
- 1.14 When a king of the House of David is anointed, he is anointed only next to a spring⁵. The son of a king is not anointed unless this is necessary to resolve a dispute (of succession) or a war. Thus, Solomon was anointed because of Adoniyoh, Yoash because of Asalih, and Yehoachoz because of Yehoyokim his brother.

Chapter 2.

- 2.1 The king must receive great honor. He is to be venerated and feared by everyone, as it says, “*Surely, shall you place*” (Deut. 17:15) – that is, his awe is to be upon you. No one may ride his horse, sit on his chair⁶, use his scepter or his crown or any of his serving vessels⁷. When he dies, all of these are destroyed by fire.
- 2.2 His slaves, maidservants and attendants may not be employed by anyone except by another king. For this reason Avishag was permitted to Solomon, but not to Adoniyoh. No one else may ever have marital relations with a wife of a king. Even a king may not marry the widow or divorcee of a different king.
- 2.3 It is forbidden to see a king naked or when he is having his hair cut or when he is in the bathhouse or when he is drying himself off. He does not perform Chalitzoh⁸, as it says, “*and she shall spit before him*”⁹ (Deut. 25:9) since this

⁵ Done to symbolically compare him to an ever-flowing spring.

⁶ Or, throne.

⁷ Or, his appurtenances.

⁸ Divorce the wife of his deceased, childless brother.

⁹ Or, *in his face*.

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would be a disgrace. We do not listen to him even if he allows it because a king cannot forgo his own honor. Since he cannot perform Chalitzoh, he cannot perform Yibum¹⁰. And since it is not possible to perform Yibum with his wife, Chalitzoh is not performed with her either. She will forever remain “bound to her husband”.

- 2.4 Should one of the king’s relatives die, the king must not pass the threshold of his palace¹¹. When he is being comforted¹², the entire nation sits on the ground and he sits on an ottoman¹³. If he was a descendent of David, he may sit in the Courtyard (Azaroh) of the Temple since only kings from the House of David may sit in the Temple Courtyard, as it says, “*And King David came, and he sat before G-d*” (II Samuel 7:18, I Chronicles 17:16).
- 2.5 The king gets his hair cut every day. He grooms himself and adorns himself in resplendent garments, as it says, “*your eyes shall gaze upon the king in his beauty*” (Isaiah 33:17). The king sits on a throne in his palace and he wears a crown on his head. The entire nation comes to him when he wants, and stands before him and bows to the ground.
- 2.6 Even a prophet stands before the king and bows to the ground, as it says, “*...behold, Nathan the Prophet; and he came in before the king and bowed down to the king with his face to the ground*” (I Kings 1:23). However, the Kohen Godol does not appear before the king unless he¹⁴ wants to nor does he stand before him. Rather, the king stands before the Kohen Godol, as it says, “*and he stood before Eliezer the Kohen*” (Numbers 27:21). Nevertheless, the Kohen Godol is commanded to honor the king, he seats him, and stands before him when he comes to him. The king should not stand before him unless he is there to ask of the Urim.
- 2.7 The king must give honor to those who study Torah. When the Sanhedrin and the Sages of Israel enter, he must stand for them and he seats them by his side. So did Asa¹⁵ King of Judah do when he stood up from his throne for a Torah scholar and kissed him and called him “my rabbi, and my teacher”.
- 2.8 This applies when the king is at home alone with only his servants present, and he does this and similar things privately. But in public, before the people, he does not do this. Then he stands for no one and does not speak gently and does

¹⁰ Levirate marriage with his sister-in-law.

¹¹ Or, chambers.

¹² With the mourner’s meal.

¹³ Or, footstool.

¹⁴ The Kohen Godol.

¹⁵ In some editions: Yehoshofat.

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not call any one, but by his name. This is so that reverence¹⁶ for him will fill the hearts of all.

- 2.9 In the same way that Scriptures has given him great honor, and everyone is obliged to give him honor, so has he been commanded to be of a subdued and unpretentious heart, as it says, *“and my heart is empty within me”* (Psalms 109:22). He must not act overly haughty towards Israel, as it says, *“lest his heart become haughty over his brothers”* (Deut. 17:20).
- 2.10 He must be merciful and compassionate to the small and great with regard¹⁷ to their wants and welfare. He must show respect for even the lowest of the low. When he speaks to the entire Congregation together, he is to speak sensitively, as it says, *“listen to me my brothers and my people”* (I Chronicles 28:2) and *“and should you today be a servant to your people...”* (I Kings 12:7).
- 2.11 He must always behave with extreme modesty, for we have never had anyone greater than Moses Our Teacher who said, *“and what are we? your complaint is not against us”* (Exodus 16:7-8). He must suffer their burdens and criticisms and anger, *“as a nursing father carries the sucking child”* (Num. 11:12). Scriptures calls him ‘shepherd’, *“To be a shepherd over Jacob His people”* (Psalms 78:71), and the (proper) behavior of a shepherd is as has been defined in the Tradition, as it says, *“As a shepherd who leads his flock, and with his arm he gathers the lambs, and in his breast he carries...”* (Isaiah 40:11).

Chapter 3.

- 3.1 When the king sits on the throne of his monarchy, he must write a Sefer Torah for himself, this in addition to the Sifrei Torah which were left for him by his forefathers. He checks his Sefer against the one¹⁸ in the Temple Courtyard, in accordance with the Court of Seventy-One.
- 3.2 If his forefathers did not leave him a Sefer or if it was lost, he has to write two Sifrei Torah. The first one will be kept in his Repository; this is the same Commandment which all of Israel must observe. The second one must never leave his side, other than when he goes to the lavatory or the bath or a place where it would be improper to read from it¹⁹. When he goes to war, it is with him. When he returns, it is with him. When he sits in judgment, it is with him.

¹⁶ Lit., awe.

¹⁷ Lit., and deal with.

¹⁸ It was an ancient Sefer Torah.

¹⁹ e.g. a cemetery.

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When he eats²⁰, it is next to him, as it says, “*And it shall be with him, and he shall read from it all the days of his life*” (Deut. 17:19).

- 3.3 *"He must not have too many women"* (Deut. 17:17). By Tradition we have learned that he may have up to eighteen women including wives²¹ and concubines²². Were he to add even one and have intercourse with her, he is given stripes. He may divorce one and marry another one in her place.
- 3.4 *"He must not accumulate many horses"* (Deut. 17:16), but only as many as he needs for his chariots²³. He may not even have one spare horse to trot before him, as is done before other kings. If he adds, he is given stripes.
- 3.5 He must not amass too much silver and gold for his treasury in order to be proud about it or for his enjoyment. He may only have as much as he needs to pay his soldiers, servants and attendants. However, it is a Mitzvoh to increase the coffers of the Temple Treasury. Any extra silver and gold is to be ready for use for the public needs and their wars. The prohibition only forbids him from increasing his own wealth in his own treasury, as it says, “*and he shall not increase for himself*” (Deut. 17:17). He is given stripes if he increase his riches.
- 3.6 The king must not drink himself drunk, as it says, “*not for kings is the drinking of wine*” (Proverbs 31:4). Rather, he must be engaged in Torah and the needs of Israel, day and night, as it says, “*and it shall be with him, and he shall read from it all the days of his life*” (Deut. 17:19). Similarly, he must not be preoccupied with women. Even if he has but one (wife) he should not be found by her all the time as with the fools, and as it says, “*Give not your strength to women*” (Proverbs 31:3). Regarding the steering of his heart away, the Torah has already been exacting and said, “*Do not veer your heart*” (Deut. 17:17). For his heart is the heart of the entire Congregation of Israel. Therefore, Scriptures has attributed to him that which is written in the Torah, more so than any other member of the nation, saying, “*all the days of his life*” (Deut. 17:19).
- 3.7 We have already explained that the kings of the House of David may judge and may be judged and testimony can be brought against them. Not so the kings of Israel regarding whom our Sages have decreed that they do not judge and are not judged, they cannot give testimony and no one can testify about them. This is because their hearts are coarse, and from these matters only fiascoes will result, and there will be a loss to the religion.

²⁰ Lit., reclines.

²¹ Those with a marriage contract.

²² Those without a marriage contract.

²³ For war.

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- 3.8 The king has the right to execute anyone who rebels against a king. One is liable to the death penalty even if the king decreed that he is to go to a particular place and he did not go there or that he not leave his house and left. If he so wishes, he may execute him it says, “*any man who disagrees with your words*” (Joshua 1:18).
- 3.9 Similarly, the king has permission to execute anyone who disgraces²⁴ him or insults him, as was the case with Shimi ben Gera. The king has permission to execute only by the sword. He may imprison and beat someone with a whip for the sake of his honor. However, he may not declare their money ownerless, for it would be robbery were he to do so.
- 3.10 Anyone who fails to obey the king’s orders because he is engaged in the performance of Commandments, even of one simple Commandment, is exempt. This is so since whenever a dictate of the Master (G-d) conflicts with a dictate of the servant (the king), the dictate of the Master takes precedence. Needless to say, the king is not heeded if he decrees something which cancels a Commandment.
- 3.11 The king has the right to execute a killer, even when there is no clear proof (against him) or no warning was given him or even if there was only one witness. He may execute someone who killed accidentally out of hatred. He may do so for purposes of establishing Public Order, as is necessary depending on the prevailing circumstances. He may even execute many people on one day and hang them and leave them hanging for many days in order to instill fear and crush the hands of the wicked of the world.

Chapter 4.

- 4.1 The king has the right to levy a tax for his own needs or for wars, and to set rates for the tax. It is forbidden to avoid paying his tax. The king has the right to decree that anyone who fails to pay his taxes can have his property confiscated or he can be executed, as it says, “*and you shall be slaves unto him*” (I Samuel 8:17). Further, it says, “*and they shall be for you a tribute, and they shall serve you*” (Deut. 20:11). From here we learn that he can levy a tax and set the rates for the tax. His laws in these, and all similar matters, are binding. For the king is entitled to everything about which is written in the Chapter Regarding Kings²⁵.

²⁴ Or, embarrasses.

²⁵ I Samuel 8.

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- 4.2 He can recruit and conscript, from anywhere in Israel, courageous and strong men and make them soldiers for his chariots, horsemen, and members of his guard. He can draft men who will run before him, as it says, *“and will appoint them for his chariots and horsemen, and they will run before his chariots”* (I Samuel 8:11). He can take of the handsomest ones and make them his attendants, as it says, *“and your best youth and your asses...he will take for his work”* (I Samuel 8:16).
- 4.3 He can enlist artisans²⁶, any he so needs, to do his work. But, he must pay them their wages. He can draft all the animals and slaves and maid-servants he needs for his service, but he must pay their wages or pay their worth, as it says, *“and to plough his ploughings, and to harvest his harvests, and to make the implements of war and the tools for his chariots...and the best of your slaves and maid-servants and youth and your asses...he shall take; and they shall do his work”* (I Samuel 8:12-16).
- 4.4 He can take, from anywhere in Israel, wives and concubines; wives being those with a Kesuba (marriage contract) and Kedushin (being sanctified), while concubines are those without a Kesuba and Kedushin. He need only sequester himself with her in private to make her a concubine. She is then permitted to him. However, an ordinary man is forbidden to have a concubine, but may have a Hebrew maidservant, but only after she was so designated²⁷. The king makes those concubines who has brought to his palace into cooks and bakers and perfumers²⁸, as it says, *“and your daughters he shall take for perfumers and cooks and bakers”* (I Samuel 8:13).
- 4.5 He can compel those who are qualified to be his ministers, and may appoint them to be the officers in charge of the thousands and the fifties, as it says, *“and he shall set up for himself, officers of the thousands and officers of the fifties”* (I Samuel 8:12). He may seize any of the fields and olives and vineyards for his servants when they go to war. He may deploy his army in any of these places and take from there if they have from nowhere else to feed themselves. But, he must pay its worth, as it says, *“and your good fields and vineyards and olives...he shall take; and he will give to his servants”* (I Samuel 8:14). He is entitled to a tithe from the seeds and the trees and the animals, as it says, *“And he will take a tithe of your seeds and your vineyards...and he will take a tithe of your flocks”* (I Samuel 8:15-17).
- 4.6 The King Messiah may procure for himself 1/13th of all the lands conquered by Israel. This is a law for him and his sons, forever.

²⁶ Or, craftsmen.

²⁷ To be his wife.

²⁸ I do not know why the Rambam's order is different than that in the verse.

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- 4.7 The king acquires the money of anyone²⁹ he executes. The treasuries of the king of any conquered kingdom are his. The spoils are laid out before him and he takes a half first. The remaining half of the booty is divided equally between all the soldiers (who went out to the battlefield) and all those who guarded the weapons in the camp, as it says, *“and that part which goes down to the battle and the part which remains with the provisions and equipment...together they shall divide”* (I Samuel 30:24).
- 4.8 All lands which he conquers are his. He can give them to his servants or his soldiers, however he so wishes. He retains for himself whatever he wants. However he so decides is the law.
- 4.9 This is as long as all his doings are done for the Sake of Heaven, and his orientation and thoughts are to promote the True Religion, fill the world with righteousness, break the arm of the wicked, and fight G-d’s war. For we do not, a priori, appoint a king except to execute justice and fight wars, as it says, *“and that our king will judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles”* (I Samuel 8:20).

Chapter 5.

- 5.1 A priori, the king does not go to fight other than a War of Mitzvoh (Mandatory War). What is a War of Mitzvoh? This is the war against the Seven Nations³⁰ or the war against Amalek or any war to assuage Israel of a persecutor. After this, he may fight Discretionary Wars which are those wars he conducts against the other nations in order to enlarge the borders of Israel, and increase his renown and reputation³¹.
- 5.2 He does not need to obtain permission from the Court to engage in a War of Mitzvoh but he may, at any time, on his own, compel the people to go out to war. However, he requires the authorization of the Court of Seventy-One to take the people with him go out to fight a Discretionary War.
- 5.3 He may breach³² to build roads, and no one can stop him from so doing. The “king’s-way” has no dimension, but is whatever size he needs. He need not make the way tortuous in order to circumvent someone’s vineyard or field. Rather, he cuts straight through and goes about his war.

²⁹ Those who rebelled against him.

³⁰ Aboriginal to Eretz Yisroel.

³¹ So that the Gentiles will be afraid of us and won’t bother us.

³² Vineyards and fields.

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- 5.4 It is a Positive Commandment to exterminate the Seven Nations, as it says, “*surely, you shall destroy them*” (Deut. 20:17). Anyone who comes across any of these nations and fails to kill them violates a Negative Commandment, as it says, “*you shall not keep alive any soul*” (Deut. 20:16). Nonetheless, they have already all been destroyed and their memory forgotten.
- 5.5 It is a Positive Commandment to obliterate Amalek, as it says, “*erase the memory of Amalek*” (Deut. 28:19). It is a Positive Commandment to perpetually remember their wicked deeds and their ambush in order to arouse our enmity against them, as it says, “*remember what Amalek did to you*” (Deut. 25:17). By Tradition we have learned that “*remember*” means by speech, “*do not forget*” (Deut. 25:19) – in one’s heart; for it is forbidden to forget their enmity and hatred.
- 5.6 Any lands conquered by Israel with a king, and in accordance with the Court, are lands “conquered by the masses” and are equal in status to Eretz Yisroel in every respect, as were the lands conquered by Joshua. This is as long as these lands were conquered after all those lands mentioned in the Torah have already been conquered.
- 5.7 It is permissible to live anywhere in the world, except for Egypt, defined as the area extending west of the Mediterranean Sea, 400 Parsangs by 400 Parsangs, in the direction of Ethiopia and in the direction of the desert.
- 5.8 The Torah warned us in three places not to return to Egypt, “*and do not return in this way again*” (Deut. 17:16), and “*and you shall no longer see it*” (Deut. 28:68), and “*And you shall not ever again see it*” (Exodus 14:13). Alexandria is included in this prohibition.
- 5.9 It is permissible to return to Egypt to conduct business and commerce or to conquer other lands. The prohibition is only against residing permanently there. One does not get lashes for violating this prohibition, since when he entered the country he was permitted to do so. Then, when he planned to dwell there permanently, he was not actually committing an act.
- 5.10 It appears to me that if an Israelite king conquers Egypt with the permission of the Court, it would be permitted to live there. The warning against returning was said for individuals or to live there when (Egypt) is in the hands of the non-Jews since their deeds are more corrupt than all the other nations, as it says, “*as the doings of the Land of Egypt*” (Levit. 18:3).
- 5.11 It is forbidden to leave Eretz Yisroel, ever, except for purposes of learning Torah or marrying or to save (his money) from the non-Jews. Then he must return to the Land. One may leave for commerce. However, one may not

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reside (permanently)³³ outside of the Land unless there is famine so severe that wheat which once cost one Dinar now costs two Dinars.

- 5.12 This rule applies when people have money and the fruit is expensive. However, if fruit is cheap, but people have no money or income, and he doesn't even have a cent in his pocket, one may go to wherever he can to make a living³⁴. Although it may be permissible to leave the country, it would not be "altruistic" to do so. For we see that Machlon and Kilyon, two of the greats³⁵ of their generation, left only because of the considerable troubles there were then and, nevertheless, perished.
- 5.13 The greatest of our Sages would kiss the borders of Eretz Yisroel and its stones and roll in its dust. And so it says, "*As your servants desired her stones, and loved her dust*" (Psalms 102:15).
- 5.14 Our Sages have said that the sins of anyone who dwells in Eretz Yisroel are forgiven, as it says, "*And the inhabitant shall not say, 'I am sick', the people who dwell therein shall be forgiven for their iniquity*" (Isaiah 33:24). Even if one were to walk but four cubits in the Land, he merits The World To Come. The sins of anyone buried in the Land are forgiven. It is as if his grave becomes an altar for atonement, as it says, "*and makes expiation for the land of His people*" (Deut. 32:43). And when discussing the calamities³⁶ it says, "*on defiled ground shall you die*" (Amos 7:17). Nevertheless, being "admitted" (into the Land) during one's life and being "admitted" after death (i.e. buried) are not the same. Even so, the greatest of the Sages would escort their dead to there. Learn from Jacob our father and Joseph the Righteous.
- 5.15 A person should always dwell in Eretz Yisroel, even in a city where most of the residents are not Jewish, rather than live outside of the Land in a city where most of the residents are Jewish. For anyone who leaves the Land is considered as if he worships idols, as it says, "*for they have driven me out this day that I should not cleave to the inheritance of the Lord, saying, 'go serve other gods'*" (I Samuel 26:19). And regarding the calamities it says, "*Neither shall they enter into the land of Israel*" (Ezekiel 13:9).
- 5.16 Just as it is forbidden to leave the Land, so it is forbidden to leave Babylon for any other country, as it says, "*They shall be carried to Babylon, and there shall they be*" (Jeremiah 27:22).

³³ Without intention of returning.

³⁴ Lit., make a profit.

³⁵ That is, great community leaders.

³⁶ The Prophet was severely reproofing Amatziah, priest of Beis El.

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Chapter 6.

- 6.1 War is not conducted against anyone in the world until they are first offered peace (and refuse it), whether this is a Discretionary War or a War of Mitzvoh, as it says, *“when you come close to the city to fight with it, you shall call to it to make peace”* (Deut. 20:10). If they make peace and accept the Seven Commandments incumbent upon the Sons of Noah (Gentiles), none of them are killed, but they must pay us tribute, as it says, *“and they shall be for you a tributary, and they shall serve you”* (Deut. 20:11).
- 6.2 If they propose to accept upon themselves the payment of the tribute but not servitude to us or they accept servitude but not the tribute, we ignore their proposal until they accept both. The servitude referred to here is one of disgrace and is demeaning. They are not to raise their heads up to Israel for any reason. They must be subjugated to us and may never be assigned to a Position over us.
- 6.3 The tribute they must pay shall be for service of the king, with their bodies and their money, such as the building of the walls³⁷ and the strengthening of fortresses and the building of the royal palace and similar, as it says, *“And this is the account of the levy which King Solomon raised to build the Temple of G-d, and his palace, and Milo, and the wall of Jerusalem...and all the store-cities which Solomon had...the Emorites who remained...and Solomon imposed a head-tax, until this very day. And of the Children of Israel, Solomon made none a bondsman; but they were the soldiers and his servants and his officers and his captains and those in charge of his chariots and his horsemen”* (I Kings 9:15-22).
- 6.4 The king may make a deal with them that he can take half of their money or land and leave all their moveable goods or take their moveable goods³⁸ and leave their lands. This is all in accordance with whatever arrangement he makes with them. It is forbidden for us to lie to them in their peace treaty or deceive them after they have made peace and have accepted the Seven Commandments.
- 6.5 If they do not come to peaceful terms or they make peace but do not accept the Seven Commandments, we engage in war against them and slay all their adult males. We take all their money and children as spoils. We do not kill the women or minors, as it says, *“the women and the children”* (see Deut. 20:14 and 2:34) which means the male children.

³⁷ Of Jerusalem.

³⁸ Or, chattel.

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- 6.6 To what do we refer? To a Discretionary War with one of the other nations. However, with one of the Seven Nations or with Amalek who do not make peace, we leave no soul alive, as it says, *“so you shall do with everyone...only of the cities of the nations...do not leave alive any soul”* (Deut. 20:15-16), and regarding Amalek it says, *“erase the memory of Amalek”* (Deut. 25:19).
- 6.7 How do we know that this is referring to those who do not make peace with us? For it says, *“there was no city which came to peace with the Children of Israel except the Chivites, dwellers of Givon. Everything, they took in the war. For from G-d their hearts were strengthened to the call of war with Israel, so that they may be destroyed.”* (Joshua 11:19-20). They were offered peace, and refused.
- 6.8 Joshua dispatched three communiqués before entering the Land. The first one he sent read, *“Whoever wishes to flee, may flee”*. The next read, *“Whoever wishes to make peace, let him make peace”*. The next read, *“Whoever wishes to make war, make war”*.
- 6.9 If so, why did the residents of Givon go and deceive us³⁹? He had sent the (first) letter to them, and they did not accept it. Being unaware of the Laws of Israel, they thought that we won't again be offering them peace⁴⁰. So, why was this matter difficult for the Heads⁴¹, and they saw that it would have been proper to smite them by sword were it not for the oath⁴²? Because they made a treaty with them, and it says, *“make no peace treaty with them”* (Deut. 7:2). Thus, their verdict was that they were to be serfs. Now, since we, in error, made an oath with them, by law, they should have been killed because they deceived us, were it not for the disgrace doing so would have caused to G-d's Name.
- 6.10 We do not extend offers of peace neither to Ammon nor to Moab, as it says, *“do not seek as to their peace or their prosperity all your days”* (Deut. 23:7). Our Sages have said that from what it says, *“and you shall call upon her (the city) to peace”* (Deut. 20:10) we might have thought that we can offer Ammon and Moab peace, were it not to say *“do not seek their peace”*. From the phrase, *“With you he shall dwell...and you shall not wrong him”* (Deut. 23:17) one would think that we can offer peace to Ammon and Moab. However, from the phrase, *“and for their prosperity”* we learn that although we do not offer them peace if they, on their own, make peace, we accept them.

³⁹ Saying, “we are from a distant land” when they could have simply made peace with us (Joshua 9:9).

⁴⁰ After the first time, i.e., they would not have a second chance.

⁴¹ Of the Tribes.

⁴² That they made with the Givonites.

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- 6.11 When we besiege a city which we want to capture, we do not encircle it from all four sides, but only on three. We leave one side open for them to flee. Anyone who wishes to escape with his life may so do, as it says, “*and you shall deploy against Midian, as G-d had commanded Moses*” (Numbers 31:7). By Tradition we have learned that this is what was meant.
- 6.12 Fruit-bearing trees must not be cut down outside of the city⁴³ nor do we block their irrigation water causing the trees to dry up, as it says, “*do not destroy her trees*” (Deut. 20:19). Anyone who cuts down a tree receives lashes. This is not only at times of a siege, but anyone at anytime who chops down a fruit-bearing tree by for destructive purposes receives stripes. The tree may be cut down if it is damaging other trees or it is damaging another’s field, or because the tree is more valuable for its wood than its fruit. The Torah only forbids wanton destruction.
- 6.13 It is permitted to cut down a non-fruit-bearing tree even if the tree itself is not needed. Similarly, an old fruit-bear tree which only produces a small yield and is not worth the effort to maintain can be cut down. And how much olive yield must an olive tree produce for it not to be cut down? A quarter of a Kav of olives. A palm tree which produces a Kav of dates may not be cut down.
- 6.14 And not only regarding trees, but even one who destructively breaks vessels or rips up clothing or tears down a building or seals up a spring or wastes food violates the Negative Commandment of “Do not destroy”. However, he only receives stripes for disobedience, in accordance with the Rabbis.
- 6.15 We may besiege a non-Jewish city (even) on Shabbos⁴⁴ and we may make war with them even on Shabbos, as it says, “*until it falls*” (Deut. 20:20). We do battle on Shabbos whether it is a War of Mitzvoh or a Discretionary War.
- 6.16 We may encamp anywhere. One who is killed in battle is buried wherever he falls, for he acquires that spot, as would a Meis Mitzvoh⁴⁵. Four things were exempt in the military camp:
- 1) D’mai⁴⁶ may be eaten;
 - 2) The requirement to ritually wash one’s hands before eating (a meal) is waived;
 - 3) Wood could be collected from anywhere⁴⁷ even if it was found unattached from a tree and dry. We are not concerned about any of these matters in the camp, and

⁴³ Under siege in order to pain them.

⁴⁴ Other versions read: “but may not begin within three days before Shabbos” so as not to violate Shabbos.

⁴⁵ An abandoned corpse.

⁴⁶ Foods which we do not know if Ma’aser [tithes] or Terumah were taken.

⁴⁷ And it would not be considered theft.

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- 6.17 4) They are exempt from erecting an Eruv Chatzeiros⁴⁸ in the camp. Rather, one may carry from tent to tent and hut to hut. This, as long as the entire camp is encircled with a barrier ten handbreadths high so that it legally becomes a Private Domain, as we have explained in the Laws of Shabbos, since there is no such thing as a camp⁴⁹ of less than ten⁵⁰. Just as the soldiers are exempt from these matters when going out to war, they are exempt from them within the camp when returning⁵¹.
- 6.18 It is forbidden to relieve oneself within the camp or just anywhere in the field. Rather, it is a Positive Commandment to set up a latrine where the people may go and relieve themselves, as it says, “*and you shall have a place outside of the camp*” (Deut. 23:13). Similarly, it is a Positive Commandment that everyone carries a shovel⁵² along with the rest of his weaponry so that when he goes to the latrine he can dig a hole where to relieve himself and cover over⁵³ with soil, as it says, “*you must have a shovel with you, with your weaponry*” (Deut. 23:14). This must always be done whether the Holy Ark is with them or not, as it says, “*and your camp shall be holy*” (Deut. 23:15).

Chapter 7.

- 7.1 A Kohen is appointed to address the people at the time of war, whether it is a War of Mitzvoh or a Discretionary War. He is anointed with the (special) Anointing Oil and called the “Anointed for War”.
- 7.2 The Anointed for War addresses the people twice. First, at the border⁵⁴ just before going out to wage the battle, he says to them, “*Is there man here who has planted a vineyard, and has not redeemed it?*” (Deut. 20:6). When they hear him, those people will return from the front. And then again at the front he (addresses them and) says, “*do not fear and do not run away*” (Deut. 20:3).
- 7.3 At the time they are organizing to deploy in their battle array and are ready to do battle, the Anointed for War stands on a high place with the entire army before him and says to them in the Holy Tongue, “*Shema Yisroel, you are about to do battle today with your enemies. Have no fear in your hearts, do not be frightened, do not scurry about and do not flee from before them. HaShem, your G-d, goes with you to fight with your enemies and save you*”

⁴⁸ Device to commingle two courtyards and, thus, permit carrying between them on Shabbos.

⁴⁹ Some version have “divider”.

⁵⁰ For “camp” this would mean ten people, for “divider” this would mean ten handbreadths high.

⁵¹ From the battle, for they are still in danger.

⁵² Or, spade.

⁵³ His excrement.

⁵⁴ When leaving the country.

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(Deut. 20:3-4). Until here does the Anointed for War speak. A subordinate Kohen now broadcasts this message to the people in a loud voice.

- 7.4 The Anointed for War again speaks and says, *“Is there a man here who has built a new home and has not dedicated it? Let him go and return to his house lest he die in battle and another man dedicate it. Is there a man here who has planted a vineyard and has not used its fruit? Let him go and return to his house lest he die in battle and another man use its fruit. Is there a man here who has betrothed a wife and has not taken her? Let him go and return to his house lest he die in the battle and another man take her”* (Deut. 20:5-7). Until here does the Anointed for War speak. Then a⁵⁵ marshal broadcasts this message to the people in a loud voice.
- 7.5 The marshal himself then speaks and says, *“Is there a man here who is afraid and weak of heart?”* (Deut. 20:8). Another officer then broadcasts this to the people. After all those who are to leave have left from the front, they arrange the battle array and appoint officers to lead the people.
- 7.6 Behind each array, strong and tough gendarmes are appointed and hold an iron axe in their hands. These police have the right to cut the thigh of anyone who wants to flee the battle, for fleeing is the first step to defeat.
- 7.7 People are returned from the battlefield in a Discretionary War. However, in a War of Mitzvoh everyone goes out to the battle, even a groom from his room and a bride⁵⁶ from under her wedding canopy.
- 7.8 The Law is the same whether one builds a house wherein he will live or builds a pen for his cattle or a woodshed or a storehouse⁵⁷, as long as a human could live therein⁵⁸. The Law is also the same whether one builds, buys or inherits a house or receives it as gift. In all these cases, he is returned home from the front. However, the one who built a guard booth or a porch or a portico or a structure which does not have the (minimum) dimensions of 4 x 4 cubits, or the one who steals a house, does not return.
- 7.9 The Law is the same for the one who plants a vineyard or the one who plants five fruit-bearing trees or even five types of food⁵⁹. It is same whether one plants or prunes or grafts. Grafting refers to the type of grafting which would cause one to be obligated by the Laws of Orlah. It is the same whether one buys or inherits or was given these as a gift. However, this Law is not

⁵⁵ Lit., the.

⁵⁶ She will supply food and water for her husband, but will not participate in the fighting.

⁵⁷ Used for wine, oil or wheat.

⁵⁸ Even if no one actually does.

⁵⁹ I think this means whether five of one type of tree or five different types of trees.

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applicable to the one who planted four fruit-bearing trees or five non-fruit-bearing trees or stole a vineyard. He does not return home. Similarly, a vineyard owned by two partners, qualifies neither to return.

- 7.10 The Law is the same whether one is engaged to a virgin or a widow or if he has to perform Yibum (Levirate marriage) - even in a case where there are five brothers and one dies, they all return home. If one made a condition today that his marriage to a woman retroactively to today would be valid only twelve months from now, and that time elapsed while he was at war, he returns home.
- 7.11 One who remarries his divorcee, one who becomes engaged to a woman who is forbidden to him, for instance, a Kohen Godol to a widow, or a divorcee or a Chalutzah to a regular Kohen, or a female bastard or female Nosin⁶⁰ to a Israelite, or the daughter of an Israelite to a male bastard or male Nosin do not return from the battlefield.
- 7.12 All those who are returned from the battle array, return when they hear the words of the Kohen. They will, however, supply the water and food for the soldiers, and repair the roads.
- 7.13 These are those who do not go out to the battlefield at all, and they are not troubled for any reason at all: The one who builds a house and dedicates⁶¹ it; the one who marries his fiancée or performs Yibum; and the one who redeems⁶² his vineyard. These do not go out until the end of the year, as it says, *“he shall be free unto his house for one year, and he shall make his wife happy, she who he has taken”* (Deut. 24:5). By Tradition we have learned that a person is given one undisturbed year⁶³ after buying a house or marrying a woman or beginning to eat from a vineyard.
- 7.14 For an entire year he does not supply the water or the food, nor repair the roads, nor guard at the wall⁶⁴. Nothing is given him to do that year, as it says, *“he shall not go to the army, and nothing shall burden him at all”* (Deut. 24:5). This verse is worded to teach two Negative Commandments: that he does not go out either for needs of the city or for needs of the brigade⁶⁵.
- 7.15 One built a house and rented it out. If the renter pays the rent up front, then it is like he dedicated the house⁶⁶. But, if the renter only pays his rent after

⁶⁰ Givonites, and cursed by King David.

⁶¹ I.e., he moves in.

⁶² In the fourth year after planting. The redemption monies are brought up to Jerusalem.

⁶³ Free from communal responsibilities.

⁶⁴ Nor give the wooden boards to strengthen the city gates.

⁶⁵ Or, garrison.

⁶⁶ As soon as the rent is collected.

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twelve month have elapsed, he is considered like one who has not dedicated his home.

- 7.16 Regarding the one who built a house, brought his household goods in and locked the door: if he has to forgo (his normal activities) in order to guard his belongings, then this is similar to someone who dedicated his home and has begun to dwell therein. But, if there is no need to stay there and guard his household goods⁶⁷ at all, then he is comparable to one who has not dedicated a house at all. Anyone who builds a house and plants a vineyard outside of the Land of Israel does not return from the battlefield, for these reasons.
- 7.17 *"What man is there who is fearful and is faint-hearted"* (Deut. 20:8)? Exactly so. This is one whose heart has no strength to withstand the strains of war⁶⁸. Now, once one becomes entangled with the perplexities of war, he should trust the Hope of Israel, and He will save him in times of trouble. He should know he is doing battle for the unity of the Name. He should place his life in His Hands and neither be afraid nor alarmed. He should not think about his wife or his children. Rather, he should wipe away thoughts of them from his heart, and clear himself of everything for the war.
- 7.18 Anyone who thinks about or contemplates (matters) during the battle and frightens himself violates a Negative Commandment, as it says, *"do not be faint of heart, nor be alarmed, do not flee, and be not frightened before them"* (Deut. 20:3).
- 7.19 And not only that, but all the blood of Israel hangs around his neck. If he did not win and did not fight the battle with all his heart and soul, he is like one who spills everyone's blood, as it says, *"lest he not melt his brothers' hearts as has his"* (Deut. 20:8). It is explicitly stated in the Tradition that, *"Cursed be he who does the work of G-d sluggishly, and cursed be he who keeps back his sword from blood"* (Jeremiah 48:10).
- 7.20 However, anyone who does fight with all his heart without fear, and his intentions are only to Sanctify the Name, is promised that he will not be harmed and nothing bad will happen to him. He will build an upright home in Israel, and he and his children will earn merit forever, and merit The World To Come, as it says, *"certainly, G-d shall make for my master a faithful house, for the wars of G-d does my master fight and no evil will be found with you all your days...And the soul of my master will be bound with the living, with the Lord your G-d..."* (I Samuel 25:28-29).

⁶⁷ Because they were large and heavy and cannot be easily stolen.

⁶⁸ He is afraid he'll be killed in battle due to his sins.

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Chapter 8.

- 8.1 Those courageous soldiers (or front-line troops) who cross the borders into non-Jewish lands, capture them and take prisoners are permitted to eat non-Kosher meats⁶⁹, swine and so on, if they are hungry and could not find anything to eat except for these forbidden foods. They may also drink wine offered in the service of idolatry. By Tradition we have learned that “*houses filled with all good*” (Deut. 6:11) means beheaded boar, and the like.
- 8.2 Similarly, one may have sexual intercourse with a non-Jewish woman if his lust gets the better of him. But, he must not just have intercourse with her and go. Rather, he must take her home, as it says, “*and when you see a Woman of Beauty among the captives*” (Deut. 21:11). He may not have intercourse with her a second time until he marries her.
- 8.3 The Woman of Beauty is permitted only in the hour of capture, as it says, “*and you see her among the captives*” (Deut. 21:11). This is applicable whether or not she is a virgin. Even if she is a married woman this Law applies since there is no concept of forbidden interpersonal relationships among the non-Jews⁷⁰.
- 8.4 From “*And you desire her*” (ibid.) we learn - even if she is not pretty; from “*unto her*” (ibid.) we learn - and not with her friend, for you may not have relations with a second one; from “*and you shall take her as a wife*” (ibid.) we learn - you may not take two and have relations with one and leave the other for your father or brother. From where do we know that we do not coerce her (to have relations) during the war⁷¹, as it says, “*and you shall bring her home*” (Deut. 21:12). He must take her back to the city⁷² and only then he may have relations with her.
- 8.5 A Kohen, too, is permitted to have this one-time intercourse with a Woman of Beauty, for the Torah only permitted this to appease the (Evil) Inclination. But he may not marry her afterwards because she will then be a convert.
- 8.6 What are the details of the Jewish Law of the Woman of Beauty? (Even) after he has had the first intercourse with her, she still remains a non-Jewess. Now, if she accepts upon herself the Wings of the Shechinoh (Holy Presence)⁷³, she

⁶⁹ Lit. Neveilos and Treifos.

⁷⁰ Actually, since they do not have the concept of “sanctification”, the Rambam is referring to relations between Jews and non-Jews. However, as far as relations between non-Jews and non-Jews are concerned, they are considered married and the prohibition against adultery is applicable for them.

⁷¹ Probably, “out in the open”.

⁷² Lit., an open place.

⁷³ I.e., she converts.

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immediately⁷⁴ immerses in a Mikveh for purposes of conversion. If she does not wish to do accept this, she sits in his house for thirty days, as it says, “*and she cries for her father and mother, for a month of days*” (Deut. 21:13). He does not prevent her from weeping for her religion⁷⁵.

- 8.7 She grows her fingernails long and shaves her head so that she will appear despicable in his eyes. She is to remain in the house with him. When he comes in, he sees her, and when he leaves, he sees her. This is done so that he will come to loathe her. He discusses matters with her in order to induce her to convert for thirty days. If she accepts and he still wants her, she converts and immerses, as do all converts. In all, she must wait three months: one month of wailing, and two months thereafter. He then may marry her with a Kesuba (marriage contract) and Kiddushin (sanctification).
- 8.8 If he does not want her, he releases her on her own. If he sells her⁷⁶, he violates the Negative Commandment “*and you may not sell her for money, you shall not deal with her as a slave, because you have humbled her*” (Deut. 21:14). The sale is invalid and he must return the money. If he first had relations with her and then seized her for the purposes of making her a maidservant, once he uses her as such, he violates a Negative Precept, as it says, “*you shall not deal with her as a slave*” (Deut. 21:14), that is, he must not have her serve him.
- 8.9 If (at first) she does not want to convert, (we) talk with her repeatedly for twelve months. If she still doesn't want to (fully) convert, she may accept the Seven Noahide commandments, and he sends her away on her own. She then has the same status as any other Resident Convert. He cannot marry her, for we cannot marry anyone who has not fully converted.
- 8.10 If she became pregnant from their first intercourse, the child is a convert. However, it is not the father's child in every respect⁷⁷, since the mother was a non-Jewess. However, the Court immerses the child with (without?) their consent⁷⁸. Tamar was born from a first intercourse with a Woman of Beauty, while Avshalom was born after the wedding. Thus Tamar was (Halochically) Avshalom's sister on their mother's side (only) and she was permitted to marry Amnon, as it says, “*now speak with the king, for he will not withhold me from you.*” (II Samuel 13:13).

⁷⁴ And she need not grow her fingernails long nor shave her head.

⁷⁵ Which she can no longer practice.

⁷⁶ As a maidservant.

⁷⁷ E.g. inheritance, etc.

⁷⁸ Lit., knowledge.

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- 8.11 A Woman of Beauty who does not want to forsake (her) idolatry after the twelve months is executed. Similarly, we do not make a treaty with a city which came and made peace with us until they completely relinquish their idolatry, destroy its places, and accept the rest of the Commandments commanded of the Sons of Noah. For any non-Jew who is under our jurisdiction and fails to accept the Noahide Commandments is executed.
- 8.12 Moses our Teacher did not bequeath the Torah and the Commandments to anyone but to Israel, as it says, *“the Heritage of the Congregation of Jacob”* (Deut. 33:4), and to anyone from the other nations who wishes to convert, as it says, *“as you, as a convert”* (Numbers 15:15). However, no one who does not want to convert is forced to accept the Torah and the Commandments.
- 8.13 Moses our Teacher was commanded by the Almighty to compel the world to accept the Commandments of the Sons of Noah. Anyone who fails to accept them is executed. Anyone who does accept them upon himself is called a Convert Who May Reside Anywhere⁷⁹. He must accept them in front of three wise and learned Jews. However, anyone who agrees to be circumcised and twelve months have elapsed and he was not as yet circumcised is no different than any other member of the nations of the world⁸⁰.
- 8.14 Anyone who accepts upon himself and carefully observes the Seven Commandments is of the Righteous of the Nations of the World and has a portion in the World to Come. This is as long as he accepts and performs them because (he truly believes that) it was the Holy One, Blessed Be He, Who commanded them in the Torah, and that is was through Moses our Teacher we were informed that the Sons of Noah had already been commanded to observe them. But if he observes them because he convinced himself logically⁸¹, then he is not considered a Resident Convert and is not of the Righteous of the Nations of the World, but merely one of their wise.

Chapter 9.

- 9.1 Adam, the first man, was commanded with six commandments: 1) idolatry, 2) “blessing” (euphemistically) the Name (of G-d), 3) murder, 4) illicit sexual relations, 5) thievery and, 6) establishing a system of justice.
- 9.2 Even though all of these have been received as a Tradition from Moses our Teacher and we can understand the rationale for them, nevertheless, from

⁷⁹ A “Resident Convert” for short. He may live anywhere in the Land of Israel.

⁸⁰ He remains a non-Jew in every respect.

⁸¹ By his own intellect and conscience, but he does not agree that they were commanded by G-d.

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(verses in) the Torah (we learn that) it was these that they were commanded. A seventh commandment forbidding the eating of a limb torn from a live animal was added for Noah, as it says, *“Even flesh, life is in the blood, do not eat of it”* (Genesis 9:4).

- 9.3 These commandments were universally applicable - until Abraham. With Abraham, circumcision was also commanded and he prayed Shacharis (the Morning Prayer). Isaac separated out a tithe and added another prayer in the afternoon and, with Jacob, the prohibition against eating the sciatic nerve was added, as was the Maariv (Evening) Prayer. In Egypt, Amram was commanded with other precepts⁸² and, with Moses our Teacher, the Torah was completed.
- 9.4 A non-Jew who worships idols is culpable⁸³, if he worships the idol in its own peculiar way⁸⁴. Any type of idolatry which would result in the death penalty in a Jewish Court, would be cause for a non-Jew to be put to death. Similarly, any act committed for which a Jewish Court would not assign the death penalty, would not be cause for the execution of a non-Jew. Yet, even though he would not be executed, all (acts) are forbidden (to him). We do not allow them to set up a monument nor plant an (idolatrous) Ashera tree nor make (human) forms, and so on, even for decorative purposes.
- 9.5 A non-Jew who “blesses” the Name, whether he “blesses” with one of the special Names⁸⁵ or with one of the sobriquets⁸⁶, in any language, is liable. This is not so with a Jew⁸⁷.
- 9.6 A non-Jew who kills someone, even a fetus in its mother’s womb, is executed. Even if he kills someone who has an incurable, terminal illness, or tied someone up and placed him in front of a lion or he let him starve until he died is liable since he caused someone to die. Similarly, if he killed a Pursuer⁸⁸ when he could have saved his friend by merely injuring one of the Pursuer’s limbs, is also executed. This is not the case with a Jew.
- 9.7 Six are forbidden to the non-Jew⁸⁹: 1) his mother, 2) his father’s wife, 3) a married woman, 4) his maternal sister, 5) a male, and 6) an animal. From *“and so a man will leave his father”* (Genesis 2:24), we learn of the prohibition with

⁸² I do not know which.

⁸³ Liable to execution by the sword.

⁸⁴ I.e., in the way said idol is worshipped.

⁸⁵ Specifically שם הוי-ה or שם אדני-י

⁸⁶ E.g. א-ל, אלוקים, שד-י, צבאו-ת

⁸⁷ For he is liable only with שם הוי-ה or שם אדני-י

⁸⁸ Someone who is chasing someone else for the purpose of killing him.

⁸⁹ With whom he may not engage in sexual relations.

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his father's wife; "*and his mother*" (ibid.) – this is learned in its literal sense; from "*and cleave to his wife*" (ibid.) we deduce - and not his friend's wife; from "*his wife*⁹⁰" (ibid.) - and not with a male; from "*and they shall be as one flesh*" (ibid.) - we learn about the animal or beast or bird since he and they are not of the same flesh; and it says, "*she is indeed my sister the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother. And so she became my wife.*" (Genesis 20:12).

- 9.8 A non-Jew is culpable if he has relations with the one whom his father had seduced or raped. What this really means is his mother. He is forbidden to his father's wife even after his father's death. He is forbidden to have relations with any male, whether a minor or an adult, nor with any animal whether young or fully-grown. He alone is executed and not the animal, since an animal is only killed if it had relations with a Jew.
- 9.9 A non-Jew is not liable for punishment with regard to his friend's wife until he has intercourse with her in the normal way, and this only after she has already had marital relations with her husband. However, if she was only engaged or she was brought under the marital canopy⁹¹, but the marriage was not as yet consummated, he is not liable for having had relations with her, as it says, "*and she, one who has had relations with a man*" (Genesis 20:3).
- 9.10 To what do we refer? To a non-Jew who had relations with a non-Jewess. But a non-Jew who had relations with a Jewess, whether in the normal fashion or not in the normal fashion is culpable. If she was an engaged girl⁹², he is stoned, as would be a Jew. If he had relations with her after she had come under the canopy, but the marriage was not as yet consummated, he is strangled to death, as would a Jew. If he had relations with a married Jewish woman has consummated her marriage with her husband, then (the Law) is the same as if he had relations with his non-Jewish friend's wife, and he is killed by means of the sword.
- 9.11 A non-Jew who had relations with a maidservant who he united⁹³ with his slave is executed because of the prohibition of having relations with his fellow's wife. He is not culpable unless it was publicly known that she belonged to such and such a slave. From when is she considered permitted⁹⁴? When he separates her from his slave and shakes loose her hair in the market.

⁹⁰ Or, his woman.

⁹¹ It is unclear to what this refers since non-Jews do not have "Chuppa" (the marital canopy) as part of their wedding ceremony. Maybe, for this reason, this phrase is absent in some versions.

⁹² Between the ages of 12 and 12½.

⁹³ I.e. married.

⁹⁴ I.e. divorced from his slave.

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- 9.12 And when is one of their⁹⁵ married women considered like one of our divorcees? From the time he expels her from his house and sends her off on her own, or from when she leaves on her own from his property. For the Gentiles do not have a written bill of divorce⁹⁶ and the matter is not dependent upon him alone. Rather, whenever either he or she wishes to separate⁹⁷, they (may) separate.
- 9.13 A non-Jew is liable to punishment because of thievery whether he stole from a non-Jew or a Jew, whether he stole or robbed money or kidnapped or withheld an employee's wages or the like. Even if he was a worker and ate⁹⁸ at a time when he wasn't working, he, too, is a thief and is culpable, which is not the case with a Jew. A non-Jew is liable for thievery for stealing even the value of less than a Prutah (penny). If a non-Jew stole less than the value of a Prutah, and another came and stole from him, both are executed.
- 9.14 He is liable for punishment for eating any amount of the limb of a living animal or the flesh from a living animal. For measures and sizes were given for Israel only. Non-Jews are permitted to consume blood from a live animal.
- 9.15 The Law is the same regarding a limb or flesh which separated from the animal or beast. However, it appears to me, that a non-Jew is not executed for eating the limb of a live bird. Any limb or flesh which falls off of a slaughtered animal, even though both its signs⁹⁹ were cut is forbidden to the non-Jew because of the prohibition of eating a limb from a live animal as long as the animal is still quivering about¹⁰⁰.
- 9.16 Anything which is forbidden to a Jew because of the prohibition of eating flesh from a live animal is also forbidden for a non-Jew. There are cases when it would be forbidden for a non-Jew, but not for a Jew. For a non-Jew, there is no difference if it is an animal or a beast, whether it was a non-kosher (species of) animal or a kosher (species of) animal. In all these cases, non-Jews are obligated in the prohibition of eating a limb or flesh from a live animal. Limbs and flesh which separated from the quivering animal are forbidden to a non-Jew because of this prohibition, even though a Jew slaughtered it through both its signs.
- 9.17 What must they do to fulfill their requirement regarding the Law of Justice? They have to set up magistrates and judges in each district to judge the people

⁹⁵ Not referring to a slave.

⁹⁶ As do we.

⁹⁷ The spouse need not consent.

⁹⁸ He is entitled to eat from the produce of the field within which he was working when he is working.

⁹⁹ The trachea and the esophagus, both of which must be cut to affect a Kosher slaughtering.

¹⁰⁰ Has post-slaughter spasms.

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with regard to these Six Commandments; and they must issue warnings (about them) to the people. A non-Jew who violates one of the Seven Commandments is executed by means of the sword.

- 9.18 ¹⁰¹How is this so? Anyone who worships idols or blasphemed or murdered or had sexual relations with one of those forbidden to him or stole even less than the value of a Prutah or ate any amount from a limb or the flesh of a live animal or saw someone else violate one of these and failed to judge and execute him, is himself executed by means of the sword.
- 9.19 It was for this reason all residents of the City of Shechem deserved to be executed. For Shechem kidnapped¹⁰², and they saw and knew and failed to judge him. A non-Jew is executed by the testimony of one, and with one judge, without forewarning, and by the testimony of relatives, but not by the testimony of a woman¹⁰³. A woman may not judge for them.

Chapter 10.

- 10.1 A non-Jew who accidentally violates one of his (Seven) Commandments is exempt from punishment, except for an accidental murderer. For if a Blood Avenger kills him, he is not killed. He¹⁰⁴ has no City of Refuge and their courts do not execute him.
- 10.2 To what do we refer? To someone who accidentally and without intention violates one of the commandments as, for example, if he had sexual intercourse with his friend's wife and thought that she was his wife or that she was single. However, if he knew that she was his friend's wife, but did not know that she was forbidden to him and thought this was permitted for him, or if he killed someone and he did not know that it is forbidden to kill, this is considered to be "close" to having committed the act "On Purpose", and he is executed. This is not considered as an accidental sin for them since he should have learned what the Law is, and didn't.
- 10.3 A non-Jew may violate one of the Commandments if he is forced¹⁰⁵ to do so. Even if he was forced to worship idols, he may do so, since non-Jews are not commanded to Sanctify the Name. A non-Jewish child or a deaf person or a

¹⁰¹ This entire passage is absent in most versions.

¹⁰² Dinah.

¹⁰³ Other editions are missing the words, "but not by the testimony".

¹⁰⁴ The accidental murderer.

¹⁰⁵ By some violent and strong person.

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mentally-deficient person may never be punished, since these people are not obligated in the Commandments.

- 10.4 We ignore the request of a non-Jew who had converted and was circumcised and immersed, and now wishes to turn away from G-d and change his status to Resident Convert as he was before. Rather, he is to conduct himself like any other Jew, or he will be executed. A child can annul his conversion when he grows up if he had been immersed by the Court when he was a minor. He may only become a Resident Convert. However, if he didn't annul his conversion at that time¹⁰⁶, he cannot do so later, and he becomes a Righteous Convert.
- 10.5 Therefore, the money from the marriage contract of a minor girl¹⁰⁷ who the Court has immersed or the "rape fine" or the "seduction fine" will all be given to and held by the Court until she grows up and she does not reject her conversion. This is done lest she take the money, grow up, deny her conversion and utilize monies to which, as a non-Jewess, she has no rights, except by Jewish Law¹⁰⁸.
- 10.6 A non-Jew who "blessed" G-d or worshiped idols or had relations with a married woman or killed someone, and then converted, is exempt from punishment. If he killed a Jew or had relations with a married Jewish woman and converted, he is liable for punishment. He is executed¹⁰⁹ for killing the Jew or strangled for having relations with a married Jewish woman, for here his verdict changes.
- 10.7 We have already explained that all death penalties for non-Jews are by the sword, except if he had relations with a married Jewish woman or with an engaged girl. In those cases he is executed by stoning. If he had relations with a woman after she had come under the marital canopy, but had not consummated her marriage, he is strangled to death.
- 10.8 By Tradition we know that non-Jews are also forbidden to have sexual relations with animals, and are not permitted to graft trees, only¹¹⁰. They are not executed for these violations. A non-Jew who hits a Jew, even if he just injures him a bit, is not executed, even though he deserves it.
- 10.9 Circumcision was only commanded of Abraham and his descendents, as it says, "*You and your descendents who will follow you throughout the generations*" (Genesis 17:9). Ishmael's descendents are excluded from this

¹⁰⁶ Immediately upon reaching the age of majority.

¹⁰⁷ If she was married to or raped or seduced by a Jew.

¹⁰⁸ I.e. unless she would be Jewish.

¹⁰⁹ By the sword.

¹¹⁰ That is, they are not forbidden in the other matters of commingling, such as Sha'atnez, etc.

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Commandment, as it says, “*For through Isaac shall your descendents be called yours*” (Genesis 21:12). Esau is excluded since Isaac said to Jacob, “*and he shall give the blessing of Abraham to you and to your descendents*” (Genesis 28:4). Since he, alone, was the descendent of Abraham who stood fast with his religion and his upright ways, it is his progeny who were commanded with circumcision.

10.10 Our Sages have said that the sons of Ketura, those who are the descendents of Abraham who came after Ishmael and Isaac, are obligated with (the Commandment of) circumcision. However, today, since the descendents of Ishmael have commingled with the children of Ketura, all of them are obligated with circumcision on the eighth day. However, they are not executed¹¹¹.

10.11 A non-Jew who busied himself with Torah is liable with his life¹¹². He must involve himself in their Seven Commandments only. Similarly, a non-Jew who “rested” as one would on Shabbos, even on a weekday, is liable with the death penalty. There is no reason to mention (that he is culpable) if he invented his own holiday.

10.12 The principle here is that we do not permit them to make a new religion and create new commandments for themselves based on their own reasoning. They may only become Righteous Converts and accept upon themselves all the Commandments, or they must observe their own (Seven) Laws only, and not add or detract from them. If a non-Jew busied himself with Torah or made Shabbos or made up something new, we give him lashes and punish him and tell him that he is liable with the death penalty for doing this. But he is not executed.

10.13 A non-Jew¹¹³ who wishes to perform another Torah Commandment¹¹⁴ (merely) in order to receive a reward is not prevented from so doing in the Halochically correct way. Thus, if he brings the Olah (burnt) offering, we accept it from him. If he gives charity, we accept it from him. It appears to me, however, that we give these monies to the Jewish poor since he (the Resident Convert) is sustained by Israel, and they have a commandment to keep them (the Jews) alive. However, if a non-Jew¹¹⁵ gives charity, we take it and give it to the non-Jewish poor¹¹⁶.

¹¹¹ If they fail to do so

¹¹² From Heaven, because others will see him perform Mitzvochs and being engaged in Torah and will be deceived. They will think him a practicing Jew and err after him.

¹¹³ One who had accepted the Seven Commandments, i.e. a Resident Convert.

¹¹⁴ Other than learning Torah or observing Shabbos.

¹¹⁵ One who didn't accept the Seven Commandments.

¹¹⁶ We take for the “sake of peace”, but give it back to them since it is a disgrace for Jews to have to receive charity from non-Jews.

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- 10.14 The Jewish Court must set up judges for the Resident Converts to judge them in accordance with these statutes. This is so that the world will not come to be destroyed¹¹⁷. If the Court sees that it can appoint judges from among them, then it should do so. If the Court sees that it must appoint Jewish judges¹¹⁸, then it may do so.
- 10.15 Two non-Jews who appear before you to be judged in accordance with Jewish Law and wish to be judged in accordance with the Torah, are so judged. One wishes to be judged so and the other not, he is not forced to be judged except by their own laws. If a Jew and a non-Jew appear before us and we can learn merit for the Jew in accordance with their laws, we judge them in accordance with their laws and we say to him, 'this is your law'. But if the Jew has merit in accordance with our Law, we judge him by Torah Law and tell him 'this is our Law'. It appears to me that we do not do this with a Resident Convert, but we always judge him by his laws.
- 10.16 And so it appears to me that we treat a Resident Convert as we would a Jew, that is with respect and loving-kindness, since we are commanded to keep him alive¹¹⁹, as it says, "*to the stranger who is within your gates you shall give, that he may eat of it*" (Deut. 14:21). Our Sages have said that we do not double¹²⁰ our saying of Shalom refers to the non-Jews¹²¹, but we do with a Resident Convert. And that that our Sages have commanded us to visit their sick and bury their dead along with Jewish dead, and sustain their poor along¹²² with the poor of Israel is for the "sake of peace", since it says, "*G-d is good to all, and His mercies extend upon all his works*" (Psalms 145:9) and it says, "*her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace*" (Proverbs 3:17).

Chapter 11.

- 11.1 The King Messiah will arise and re-establish the monarchy of David as it was in former times. He will build the Sanctuary and gather in the dispersed of Israel. All the earlier statutes will be restored as they once were. Sacrifices will be offered, the Sabbatical and Jubilee years will be observed, as commanded in the Torah.
- 11.2 Anyone who does not believe in him or one who does not anticipate his coming not only denies the Prophets, but also the Torah and Moses our

¹¹⁷ Or, morally corrupted.

¹¹⁸ Since no non-Jew was qualified to be a judge.

¹¹⁹ Sustain and support him.

¹²⁰ Literally double by saying "Shalom. Shalom".

¹²¹ One who has not accept the Seven Commandments.

¹²² But not alongside.

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Teacher. For the Torah has given testimony about him saying, “*And the Lord your G-d will turn your captivity and have compassion with you. He will return and gather you from all the peoples...If any of you should be dispersed at the ends of Heaven, from there G-d will gather you, from there He will fetch you. And the Lord, your G-d will bring you...*” (Deut. 30:3-4). These matters are explicit in the Torah and include everything said by all the Prophets.

- 11.3 It is even written in the Chapter of Balaam who prophesized about both the Messiahs. The first Messiah was David who saved Israel from her adversities. The final Messiah will be from his sons and will deliver Israel from the hands of the descendants of Esau.
- 11.4 There it says, “*I shall see him, but not now*” (Numbers 24:17) - this refers to David; “*I behold him, and not soon*” (ibid.) - this is the King Messiah; “*A star from Jacob shall step forth*” (ibid.) - this is David; “*and a scepter shall arise out of Israel*” (ibid.) - this the King Messiah; “*and shall smite through the corners of Moab*” - this is David; and so it says, “*And he smote Moab and measured them with a rope*” (II Samuel 8:2); “*and break down all the sons of Seth*” (Numbers 24:17) - this is King Messiah of whom it says, “*and his dominion shall be from sea to sea*” (Zechariah 9:10); “*and Edom shall be a possession*” (Numbers 24:18) - this is David, as it says, “*And Edom shall become slaves to David*” (see II Samuel 8:6 and II Samuel 8:14); “*Seir also, even his enemies, shall be a possession*” (Numbers 24:18) - this is King Messiah, as it says, “*And the saviors shall come upon Mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau...*” (Obadiah 1:21).
- 11.5 Even in the section regarding the cities of refuge it says, “*If the Lord your G-d shall enlarge your borders...and shall add for you another three cities more...*” (Deut. 12:20, Deut. 19:8-9). This actually never took place¹²³, and the Holy One Blessed be He never commands for nothing. However, from the words of the Prophets this matter does not need a proof, since all the Books are full of this matter.
- 11.6 It should not occur to you that the King Messiah must bring wondrous signs or perform marvels or invent new things or revive the dead or anything like what the fools say. It is not so. For Rabbi Akiva, one of the wisest of the Sages of the Mishna, was King Ben Coziba’s¹²⁴ arms-bearer¹²⁵ and said that he was the King Messiah. He and all the Sages of his generation thought that he was the King Messiah, until he was killed because of his sins¹²⁶. Since he was killed,

¹²³ Since there were never nine, but at most six Cities of Refuge. The additional three must therefore be prophetic.

¹²⁴ Bar Cochba.

¹²⁵ I.e. his staunch supporter.

¹²⁶ He killed Rabbi Elazar HaModai.

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they then understood that he was not the one. The Sages never asked of him neither a sign nor a wonder.

- 11.7 So, the essence of the matter is like this: The Laws and the Statutes of the Torah never change. We may not add to them nor detract from them.¹²⁷ Anyone who adds to or subtracts from them or reveals some new dimension to the Torah or understands the Commandments differently than their plain meaning is, for sure, an evil person and an Apikoris.
- 11.8 Now, if a king should arise from the House of David who is versed in Torah and engages in Commandments, as did David his forefather, in accordance with both the Written and the Oral Torahs, and he enjoins all of Israel to follow in its ways and encourages them to repair its breaches, and he fights the Wars of G-d¹²⁸, then he may be presumed to be the Messiah. If he succeeds in his efforts and defeats the enemies around and builds the Sanctuary in its proper place and gathers the dispersed of Israel, he is definitely the Messiah.
- 11.9 But, if he does not succeed in these matters or is killed, we will know that he was not the one Torah has promised. He is (merely to be considered) like all the (other) exemplary and qualified kings of the House of David who have died. G-d set him up only to try the masses, as it says, *“And some of the wise will stumble, to refine among them and to purify and to make white, even to the time of the end, for it is yet for the time appointed”* (Daniel 11:35).
- 11.10 Even Jesus the Nazarene who imagined he would be the Messiah and was killed by the Court¹²⁹ was prophesized about by Daniel as it says, *“and also the children of the violent among your people will lift themselves up to establish the vision, but they shall stumble”* (Daniel 11:14). Was there ever a greater impediment than this one? All the Prophets spoke of the Messiah, Redeemer of Israel and Savior and Gatherer of the Exiles and Strengtheners of the Commandments. But this one caused the ruin of Israel by the sword and the dispersal of its remnant and its humiliation and reversed¹³⁰ the Torah, and caused most of the world to err and worship a god other than HaShem (G-d).
- 11.11 Nonetheless, the Thoughts of the Creator of the World are beyond any man’s understanding. For our ways are not His Ways, and our thoughts are not His Thoughts. And all the doings of Jesus the Nazarene and that of that Ishmaelite¹³¹ who came after him are nothing but to pave the way for the King

¹²⁷ This last sentence is absent in most editions.

¹²⁸ I.e. he defends Israel.

¹²⁹ Or, was handed over to the Romans who killed him as a revolutionary because he proclaimed himself the Messiah, King of Israel.

¹³⁰ Or, changed.

¹³¹ I.e. Mohammed. The Rambam labels him “Meshugah” in his Igeress Teiman.

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Messiah and prepare the entire world to worship G-d together, as it says, “*For then*¹³² *I will turn to the peoples a pure language, that they may all call upon the Name of the Lord, to serve Him with one consent*” (Zephania 3:9).

11.12 How is this so? The world is now already filled with matters of the Messiah and matters of the Torah and matters of the Commandments. Knowledge of these matters have spread to the distant islands and to the many nations of those with uncircumcised hearts. They discuss these matters and the Commandments of the Torah. Some of them¹³³ say that these Commandments were once true, but have since been canceled for our times as they were not meant to be observed for all generations. Some of them say that these are secret matters and are not as simple as they would appear, and now the “Messiah”¹³⁴ has come and revealed these secrets.

11.13 But when the true King Messiah will rise and succeed, and he will be lifted up and raised aloft, they all will immediately return and will know that their fathers left them an erroneous legacy, and their fathers and prophets led them astray.

Chapter 12.

12.1 It should not occur to you that during the days of the Messiah a single thing from the “ways of the world”¹³⁵ will be canceled nor will there be something novel in the Creation. Rather, the world will continue in its customary way. Now, that which is said in Isaiah, “*And the wolf will live with the sheep and the leopard shall lie down with the kid*” (Isaiah 11:6) is a parable and riddle. The substance of the matter is that Israel will dwell in safety with the wicked of the world who are compared to wolves and tigers, as it says, “*a wolf of the deserts spoil them, a leopard watches over their cities*” (Jeremiah 5:6). But, they will all return to the true religion and they will not steal and not destroy. Rather, they will eat of the permissible foods comfortably¹³⁶ like Israel, as it says, “*and the lion will eat straw as does the ox*” (Isaiah 11:7).

12.2 And so similar matters written about the Messiah are parables. In the days of the King Messiah everyone will understand these parables and to what these matters were compared and to what was hinted. Our Sages have said that there is no difference between This World and the Days of the Messiah except (our) subservience to the kingdoms of the world alone.

¹³² When they will realize that their Messiahs were false will they abandon them and turn to G-d's true Messiah.

¹³³ As did Jesus.

¹³⁴ Mohammed.

¹³⁵ I.e. Nature.

¹³⁶ I.e. in peace.

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- 12.3 From the plain meaning of the words of the prophets we understand that at the beginning of the days of the Messiah there will be the War of Gog and Magog. Before the War of Gog and Magog, a prophet will arise to correct Israel and prepare their hearts¹³⁷, as it says, “*Behold, I will send you Elijah*” (Malachi 3:23). He will not come to make the pure impure, nor purify the impure, nor disqualify people who are presumed to have legitimate lineage¹³⁸, nor qualify those who are disqualified. He will only come to bring peace to the world¹³⁹, as it says, “*And he shall turn the hearts of the fathers on the children*” (Malachi 3:24).
- 12.4 Some of the Sages say that Elijah will come¹⁴⁰ before the coming of the Messiah. But regarding all these matters and similar, no one knows how it will be until it will be. For these matters were unclear to the Prophets. Even the Sages themselves did not have a Tradition regarding these matters and only could attempt to understand the verses. Thus, there were disagreements in these matters. Nevertheless, neither the order that these events will occur nor their details are fundamental to the religion.
- 12.5 Thus, a person must never busy himself with the Aggadot and not dwell on the Midrashim regarding these matters or similar issues. He must not make them dogma¹⁴¹. For these do not result in either love (for G-d) nor fear (of sin). Similarly, one should not calculate the Ends¹⁴². Our Sages have said that the spirit of those who calculate the Ends will expire¹⁴³. Rather, one is to (simply) wait and believe in the principle¹⁴⁴ of this matter, as we have explained.
- 12.6 During the days of King Messiah, when he will be secure in his monarchy, and all of Israel will gather about him, everyone’s genealogy will be clarified by him by means of the Holy Spirit which will rest upon him, as it says, “*And he shall sit as a purifier and refiner...*” (Malachi 3:3). The Sons of Levi will be the first to be purified¹⁴⁵, and he will say, “this one has the pedigree of a Kohen, and this one has the pedigree of a Levite”. He will reject those who have no (true) lineage¹⁴⁶ and make them Israelites, as it says, “*And the Tirashoso said to them...until a Kohen will arise with the Urim and Tumim*” (Ezra 2:63). You have now learned that those with a pedigree will be

¹³⁷ I.e. Direct them to G-d.

¹³⁸ Or, family pedigree.

¹³⁹ Between Israel and the other nations.

¹⁴⁰ Either to announce his coming or “authorize rabbis” (for the Sanhedrin?).

¹⁴¹ Or, the essence, a tenet.

¹⁴² Of a) the Exile, and b) when the Messiah will come.

¹⁴³ I.e. They will die.

¹⁴⁴ And not contemplate the details.

¹⁴⁵ Their lineage will be determined first.

¹⁴⁶ As Levites and Kohanim.

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confirmed, and lineage will be made known, by means of the Holy Spirit. He will not ascertain the ancestry of Israel except regarding which tribe they are from, and inform us that this one is from such and such a tribe and that one is from such and such a tribe. But, he will not tell us whether someone presumed of legitimate pedigree is a bastard or a slave. For the Law is that the family which had someone assimilate within it, assimilates him¹⁴⁷.

- 12.7 The Sages and the Prophets did not long for the days of the Messiah because they wanted to rule the world or because they wanted to have dominion over the non-Jews or because they wanted the nations to exalt them or because they wanted to eat, drink and be merry. Rather, they desired this so that they would have time for Torah and its Wisdom. And there would be no one who would oppress them or force them to be idle (from Torah). This, in order that they may merit the World to Come, as we have explained regarding the Laws of Repentance.
- 12.8 At that time there will be no famines and no wars, no envy and no competition. For the Good will be very pervasive¹⁴⁸. All the delicacies will be as readily available as is dust. The world will only be engaged in knowing G-d¹⁴⁹. Then, there will be very wise people¹⁵⁰ who will understand the deep, sealed matters. They will then achieve knowledge of the Creator to as high a degree as humanly possible, as it says, *“For the Earth shall be filled of knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea”* (Isaiah 11:9).

Blessed be Hashem who helped me.

¹⁴⁷ Lit., “the family which became assimilated, assimilates.” The commentary in the Rambam La’am says “remains in its presumption of legitimate lineage”.

¹⁴⁸ Or, inspiring, affecting, influencing.

¹⁴⁹ Compare with Rabbi S. R. Hirsch in his Nineteen Letters.

¹⁵⁰ Some editions have, “Israel will be very wise”.

LAWS OF KINGS AND WARS

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