

May a Jew Rent a Property From a Church?

**Rabbi Yosef Kushner**

**Question:** If a church owns a property that is not located on the church grounds, which they rent out for income, is it permitted for a Jew to rent this property?

**Answer:** There is a prohibition on providing money that will be used to fund idol worship.

The Gemara speaks about a house of *avodah zara* that owns a bathhouse, stating that if admission is charged to enter the bathhouse, and that money is used to fund the house of *avodah zara*, a Jew may not make use of it. Another Gemara discusses a marketplace where a tithe of all money earned is given to fund a house of *avodah zara*, it says that a Jew may not shop there. As he is not allowed to have his money provide revenue for *avodah zara*. We see from these Gemaras that one should generally not be renting from a house of *avodah zara* and, thereby, providing them with revenue. There is a Mordechai that seems to differentiate between the case of the bathhouse and a case of a property rental. He explains that a bathhouse is a source of potentially unlimited income. If a few people use it, the house of *avodah zara* makes a small amount of income. If a lot of people use it, they make a lot of income. The more people use it, the more revenue they make; therefore, when a Jew uses the bathhouse, he is providing the house of *avodah zara* with a benefit. In the case of a property rental, however, only one tenant can rent the premises. Accordingly, if a Jew wouldn't rent it, they could just go and find a non-Jewish tenant. This means that the Jew is not really providing them with any benefit, [provided he isn't paying an above-market rate].

When people have such a *shailoh*, I would advise them to stay away from having any connection to a house of *avodah zara* and say that it is better not to take this rental; however, in pressing circumstances, it may be possible to follow the Mordechai's leniency.