

May I Rent a Property to a Church?

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Question: I have a building and I'm looking for a tenant. A church contacted me and wants to rent it. Am I allowed to rent to them?

Answer: While it is forbidden to derive any benefit from *avodah zara*, renting them a property would not be considered deriving benefit from the *avodah zara* because it makes no difference to the landlord what a tenant does with his property. The tenant has to pay rent regardless, no matter what he uses the property for; therefore, the owner is not deriving benefit from the fact that they are using the property for idol worship.

However, there is another problem that may apply, and that is the prohibition of "*lifnei iver*", enabling someone else to sin.

While *lifnei iver* usually means causing a fellow Jew to sin, in this case, non-Jews are also commanded not to worship *avodah zara*; therefore, if one enables a non-Jew to serve *avodah zara*, he has transgressed this prohibition.

If the church could easily find another building to rent that would meet all their needs just as well as this property does, there would not be a transgression of *lifnei iver*, as the owner is not providing them with anything they couldn't get elsewhere and, therefore, is not enabling them in any way. If, however, he is providing them with a location or place that provides some benefit or advantage that they couldn't find elsewhere, it would be considered enabling them and would be a transgression of *lifnei iver*. For example, if the rental property is a unit in an apartment building from which the church hopes to attract congregants, this location is very advantageous to them and has benefits they wouldn't get elsewhere; therefore, renting it to them would be a problem of *lifnei iver*.