

OVERVIEW of the Daf

1) Nullifying the idol of a Jew (cont.)

A third context in which it was taught that an idolater can nullify the idol of a Jew is presented.

2) **MISHNAH:** The Mishnah discusses different ways to nullify an idol.

3) Clarifying the Mishnah

R' Zeira explains why denting an idol nullifies its idol status.

The source that acting disrespectfully towards an idol nullifies it is cited.

A disagreement is presented regarding the point of dispute between Rabbi and Chachamim in the Mishnah.

The Gemara inquires about the exact position of the second opinion.

An unsuccessful attempt to clarify the second position is presented.

One of the two opinions is unsuccessfully challenged.

A related Baraisa is cited.

The necessity for the Baraisa to mention numerous examples is explained.

The Baraisa's reference to the war of Yehoshua is explained.

The Gemara digresses into an analysis of a ruling of R' Yehudah in the name of Rav who taught that if a Jew stood a brick to bow down to it and an idolater came and bowed to it first the brick is prohibited.

(Continued on page 2)

REVIEW and Remember

1. How does one nullify an idol?

2. What are the two ways the Gemara explains the disagreement between Rabbi and Chachamim regarding an idol that was sold?

3. How did idolaters successfully make property in Eretz Yisroel prohibited if the land was not theirs?

4. What is the status of a damaged pedestal that was once used for idolatry?

Today's Daf Digest is dedicated
 By the Wolper family
 in memory of their father and grandfather
 ר' יהושע שכנא בן ר' יהודה לייב ע"ה

Distinctive INSIGHT

Why is there a need to burn the asheira trees of Canaan?

מכדי ירושה היא להם מאבותיהם ואין אדם אוסר דבר שאינו שלו

In Parashas Mishpatim, the Torah addresses the destruction of the idol worship which was to be found in the land as the Jews entered. There, the Torah states (Shemos 23:24): "Certainly destroy and cut down their monuments." Yet, the Torah there does not instruct us to burn these items in fire. Here, however, in Devarim 12:3, the Torah does add this command to have these items burned. "And you shall break apart their altars; and you shall smash their pillars; and their asherim shall you burn in the fire; and their carved images shall you cut down, and you shall destroy their names from that place." What is the reason for this additional requirement at this point?

Our Gemara (Avodah Zarah 53b) presents a question. How are we to understand the command to burn the asheira trees which were used for idol worship by the inhabitants of the land of Canaan? After all, we know that the land was already presented to our forefathers as an inheritance, and those who entered the land with Yehoshua were merely taking possession of that which was technically already theirs. The Canaanites therefore had no legal right of ownership, and their misuse of these trees had no bearing in creating a formal status of prohibition upon the land and its contents. Why, then, do these trees have to be destroyed?

The Gemara answers that once the Jewish people participated in the worship of the Golden Calf, they demonstrated that the active involvement in idolatry was not objectionable to them. Based upon this attitude, the inhabitants of Canaan were technically involved as agents, as they worshiped items which belonged to the Jews. These items now had the status of idol worship owned by a Jew, whose prohibited status never becomes nullified. Consequently, the only thing to be done was to destroy them.

In Taam V'Daas, Rabbi Yechezkel Avramsky points out that we see that before the worship of the Golden Calf, there was no need to declare that these things be incinerated. At that point, the idolatry service of the gentiles did not have the power to prohibit these asheirah trees. This is why in Parashas Mishpatim, which was before the worship of the Golden Calf, the Torah only commands to have these things cut down and smashed. This was all that was necessary in order to stop the illicit worship. However, after the Jews sinned with the Golden Calf, these items became prohibited not only in worship, but it was also prohibited to derive any benefit from them. Accordingly, the Torah in our verse requires that they be burned and destroyed. ■

HALACHAH Highlight

Can a gentile serve as an agent for another gentile?

וכי אתא עובד כוכבים ופלח לה שליחותא ידידיה קעביד

And when the idolater came and served it (an idol) he was acting as an agent of the Jew

The Gemara Kiddushin (41b) teaches that a gentile cannot serve as the agent for a Jew. Poskim debate whether halacha recognizes the capacity for a gentile to serve as the agent of another gentile. There was once a gentile who made a purchase of some liquor from a Jew before Pesach. The buyer did not take delivery of the liquor himself; he sent an agent to take the liquor home with him and that is what the agent did. The question arose whether the transaction was halachically recognized. Did the agent act, halachically, on behalf of the principal and the liquor belonged to the buyer or perhaps halacha does not recognize that a transaction took place since a gentile cannot act as an agent for another gentile and the liquor remained the property of the Jewish seller and thus is now prohibited from benefit. Teshuvos Maseis Binyomin¹ answered that there is no concern regarding the validity of the sale of the liquor. The reason a gentile cannot serve as a Jew's agent is that the principal and the agent must both be members of the covenant (בני ברית) but there is no issue for a gentile to serve as the agent for another gentile since they are both in the same category of those who are not members of the covenant.

Machaneh Ephraim² notes that the Yerushalmi (Demai 6:1) indicates that a gentile cannot serve as the agent of another gentile but from the Bavli it seems that a gentile can serve as the agent for another gentile. Our Gemara relates that when the Jewish People worshiped the golden calf they revealed that

(Overview...continued from page 1)

4) MISHNAH: More halachos related to the nullification of idols are recorded.

5) Beis Nimrod

R' Yirmiyah bar Abba in the name of Rav explains why Beis Nimrod is permitted even though it was abandoned during a time of war.

6) Pedestals

The Mishnah's ruling that pedestals are nullified after the king passes is explained.

Ulla and R' Yehudah have a discussion regarding the status of a damaged pedestal which is similar to a dispute between Rav and Shmuel against R' Yochanan and Reish Lakish.

A Baraisa is cited in support of R' Yochanan and Reish Lakish's position that one may benefit from an idolatrous pedestal that became damaged.

R' Yaakov bar Idi in the name of R' Yochanan describes the structural difference between a pedestal and an altar. ■

they were pleased with idolatry. Consequently, when the residents living in Eretz Yisroel worshiped their idols they became agents of the Jewish People and those idols could never be nullified. The difficulty with this is that a gentile cannot serve as the agent of a Jew so how was it possible for halacha to recognize that they were acting as our agents for idolatry? He answers that at the time we behaved like idolaters we became like them for this matter and as a result it is considered as though gentiles were acting as agents for other gentiles and thus all the idols became prohibited. ■

1. שו"ת משאת בנימין סי' צ"ז

2. מחנה אפרים הל' שלוחין ושותפין סי' ד"ד ■

STORIES Off the Daf

Absolute Resolve

כיצד מבטלה

Rav Shach, zt"l, once explained what is meant by making an absolute resolution to refrain from negative behavior. "When I learned that smoking was dangerous I immediately stopped smoking. If one accepts upon himself to cease acting in destructive ways but nevertheless reverts, it demonstrates that his kabbalah was not complete."

On another occasion, Rav Shach illustrated his point with a statement on

today's daf. "The first chapter of Tehillim contrasts the wicked and the righteous. We find there that the righteous are compared to a planted tree which is solid. But the wicked are compared to chaff blown by the wind since they have no staying power. Even when they wish to avoid evil, they act only on a superficial level, never allowing their actions to reach their deeper selves.

"We find this differentiation in halachah as well. In Avodah Zarah 53 we find that if an idolater makes a permanent damage to his idol, such as cutting off the top of its ear, nose, or finger, this action nullifies it. But if he only disgraced it by spitting on it or the like, this

does not constitute nullification. Rashi explains that the idolater might spit on his idol merely because he feels angry at it, but it is plausible that later he will reconcile with it.

"This shows that in his heart of hearts, he never meant to truly get rid of his idol. He was merely acting out his anger. Later, when he calms down, he will gladly kiss his idol as if nothing happened. This is because his action is merely superficial. The same is true regarding the actions of the wicked. These are merely superficial, done for superficial reasons. They do not penetrate to the inner depths of the person."¹ ■

1. מחשבת מוסר ח"ג מאמר באו חשבון