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Avodah Zarah Daf 12

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May the studying of the Daf Notes be a zechus for their neshamot and may their souls find peace in Gan Eden and be bound up in the Bond of life

Mishna

A city in which there is idol worship, outside of it, it is permitted to conduct business. If there was idol worship outside of it, it is permitted within.

May one go to a place where an idolatrous festival is taking place? Should the road lead only to that place, it is forbidden; if one could go by this road to another place, it is permitted. (11b)

Meat Markets Outside Azza

The *Gemora* asks: What does the *Mishna* mean when it states, “outside of the city”?

Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish said in the name of Rabbi Chanina: It is referring to the meat market (*which was located in close proximity to the*) outside of Azza.

Some say that Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish asked Rabbi Chanina: What is the law regarding the meat markets outside of Azza?

Rabbi Chanina replied: Did you never go to Tzur and see a Jew and idolater cooking two separate pots on a stove? The sages did not worry about this.

The *Gemora* asks: What does he mean when he says, “the sages did not worry about this?”

Abaye explains: He meant that the sages did not worry that when the Jew turns around, the idolater will put some *neveilah* meat into his pot. Similarly, the sages did not worry that the people in the meat market outside of Azza will have idolatrous money (*which would be forbidden to derive benefit from*) just because they are close to Azza.

Rava says: He meant that the sages did not worry that the Jew will allow the idolater to cook for him, making the dish into *bishul akum* (*food cooked by idolaters, which is forbidden to eat*). Similarly, the sages did not worry that the people in the meat market outside of Azza will have idolatrous money due to the holiday just because they are close to Azza.

Rabbah bar Ulla says: He meant that the sages did not worry that some (*non-kosher*) food will spray from the pot of the idolater into the pot of the Jew. Similarly, we do not suspect that the people in the meat market outside of Azza will have idolatrous money. [*Rashi understands that Rabbah bar Ulla argues that on the festival itself one must suspect that even the people in the meat market have idolatrous money. However, we do not suspect this during the days beforehand and afterwards.*] (11b – 12a)

Appearance of Idol Worship



The *Mishna* asked: Is it permitted to go to this (idolatrious) city (on the day of their festival)?

The *braisa* states: One cannot enter a city where there is a festival of idolatrous worship, and cannot go from it to another city. These are the words of Rabbi Meir. The *Chachamim* say: As long as a road only leads to this city, it is forbidden to travel on this road. If the road is not exclusively for this city, it is permitted.

If a person was stuck by a thorn before an idol, he should not bow to pick out the thorn before the idol, as it appears that he is bowing to an idol. If it does not appear like this, it is permitted (see explanation below).

If his coins fell down and were scattered in front of an idol, he should not bow to pick them up, as it appears as if he is bowing to an idol. If it does not appear this way, it is permitted.

If there is a stream that is next to an idol, one should not bow to drink from the stream, as it appears as if he is bowing down to the idol. If it does not appear like this, it is permitted.

One should not place his mouth on the mouth of sculptures that have water ejecting from them in the city, as it appears that he is kissing an idol. Similarly, a person should not put his mouth on a water fountain connected to the ground, because it is dangerous (for he might swallow a leech).

The *Gemora* asks: What does the *braisa* mean when it says, "If it does not appear this way?" If it means that nobody is currently looking at him, didn't Rav Yehudah say in the name of Rav that anytime the sages forbade something because it has the appearance of one who is

doing something that is forbidden, it is even forbidden to do in a most private room?

Rather, the *Gemora* answers: It must mean that the action he is doing does not appear as if he is bowing down to an idol.

The *braisa* needed to say this law regarding all three cases. If it only said this regarding the thorn, one might think that this is permitted regarding a thorn because one can walk away from the idol and remove the thorn elsewhere. However, being that one cannot walk away from his scattered money, perhaps it will be forbidden. If it only was stated regarding money, perhaps we would only say this regarding a loss of money, and not regarding the pain of a thorn. If it stated both of these cases but did not state the case of the stream, one would think that these are permitted if it does not appear that he is bowing down because there is no danger involved. However, regarding a stream where if he does not drink he will die, perhaps it is permitted. This is why the *braisa* states it is permitted if it does not appear that he is bowing down. [This is the way the *Rashba* and *Tur* understand the *Gemora*, as opposed to the *Ran*. The argument between them is regarding whether the appearance of idolatry is something for which a person must sacrifice his life.]

The *Gemora* asks: Why does the *braisa* say a case regarding sculptures? [It already stated a case regarding a stream that involved danger, and said it was forbidden.]

The *Gemora* answers: This is because it wanted to state the case regarding the water fountain connected to the ground, due to danger. [Rashi explains that both the case of sculptures and fountains involve putting one's mouth on it, not bending down. The *braisa* therefore stated the case of statues in order to state a similar case of the water

fountain.] What is the danger referred to here? It is a leech. (12a – 12b)

Danger

The *braisa* states: A person should not drink from rivers or streams, not with his mouth nor with one of his hands (*as opposed to scooping up the water and examining it while it is in both of his hands*). If he did drink, his blood is on his own head, due to the danger. What danger does this refer to? It refers to a leech.

This supports the position of Rabbi Chanina. Rabbi Chanina says: If someone swallows a water leech, it is permitted to boil water for him on *Shabbos*. There was an indeed an incident where a person swallowed a water leech, and Rabbi Nechemiah permitted water to be boiled for him on *Shabbos*. While they are boiling the water, Rav Huna the son of Rav Yehoshua says, he should drink vinegar.

Rav Idi bar Avin says: If someone swallowed a hornet, he will not live. However, he should drink a *revi'is* of vinegar from Shamgaz (*very strong vinegar*) that will possibly let him live long enough to write a will.

The *braisa* says: A person should not drink water at night. If he does, his blood is on his own head due to the danger. What is the danger? The danger of Shavriri (*a demon who causes blindness*).

If he did drink, what should he do? If there is someone else with him, he should wake him up and say, “drink water.” If not, he should bang the cover of the stone jar on the jar, and say to himself, “Planya bar planisa, your mother told you that you should be careful from shavriri, bri, riri, iri, ri, in clear cups.” (12b)

Mishna

A city that has an idol and contains stores that are adorned (*for the idolatrous festival*) and stores that are not adorned was a case that presented itself in Beis Sha’an. The *Chachamim* said: One cannot deal with the stores that are adorned, while one can deal with the stores that are not adorned. (12b)

Decorated Stores

Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish says: This is only regarding stores that are adorned with roses and myrtle branches, as a person who enters has benefit from the smell. However, if it is adorned with fruits, it is permitted. This is as the verse says, *You should not have anything from the cheirem stick to your hand*. This indicates that while it is forbidden to benefit from it, it is permitted to give them benefit. (*The Rashba explains that the benefit is not going directly to the idol, but rather from the storekeeper to the priest to the idol. He is therefore not responsible for the end result.*) (12b)

INSIGHTS TO THE DAF

The *chazan* may pray only with closed eyes!

Our *sugya* explains that a Jew with a thorn in his foot must not bend to remove it before an idol as it looks like he is bowing. Likewise, if coins fell next to an idol, he shouldn’t bend to gather them, lest he be suspected of worshipping an idol.

Praying while facing a mirror: Radbaz (cited in *Baer Heitev*, 90:23) deducted a stricter *halachah*, that a person must not pray facing a mirror as when he bows, he looks as though he is bowing to his reflection, even though it is not an idol and even though the person has no intention



to worship it. Indeed, *Mishnah Berurah* (90, S.K. 71) rules that not only is it forbidden to pray facing a mirror with open eyes, as it disturbs one's concentration, but even with closed eyes, as it appears as though one is bowing to the reflection.

To whom does the reflection bow? It is interesting to note Maharsham's individual opinion (*Da'as Torah*, 90:23) that it is "possible" that in a pressing situation one may pray facing a mirror with closed eyes as an onlooker also sees the reflection bowing to the person praying. That is, it isn't considered like bowing, when the „worshipped image“ simultaneously bows back... As for the *halachah*, however, we follow Radbaz.

Praying while facing a window at night: *Ishei Yisrael* (Ch. 9:25, S.K. 66) writes that in the light of *Mishnah Berurah*'s ruling, one should also not pray at night while facing a window which shows one's reflection. However, *Responsa Or Letziyon* (II, *Hilchos Tefilah*, 11, according to *Shulchan Aruch*, 90:23) has doubts, as the prohibition only regards facing a mirror whereas a window is not designed to reflect anything.

The *chazan* was reflected in the golden letters of the 'amud: We also find this opinion in *Responsa Shevet HaLevi* (IX, 21) about a synagogue whose *gabaim* decorated it superbly, with huge golden letters of Hashem's name facing the *chazan*. One of the congregation noticed that the *chazan* was reflected in the letters and he asked HaGaon Rav S. Vosner for his opinion. Rav Vosner replied that according to all opinions, the *chazan* must not pray with open eyes as his reflection disturbs his concentration. He may, however, pray with closed eyes, as the letters were not designed as a mirror.

Prayer next to a lamp: As for someone praying with a lamp behind him which casts his shadow on the wall in front of him, the Maharsham (*ibid*) writes that an onlooker would not suspect that he is bowing to his shadow as a shadow is not a clear image.