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Forbidden Merchandise

The *Gemara* explains the items the *Mishnah* forbids to sell to idolaters.

What is *iztroblin*? — Pine-wood. - But this is contradicted [by the following teaching]: To these have been added Alexandrian nuts, *iztroblin*, mochasin and bnos-shuash. Now were you to suggest that *iztroblin* is pine-wood, has pine-wood anything to do with Shemittah? Has it not been taught in a Baraisa This is the general rule: Everything which has a [perennial] root is subject to the laws of Shemittah but anything that has no such root is not subject to the law of Shemittah. Rav Safra then said: It means fruit of the cedar. So also when Ravin came [from Eretz Yisroel] he said in the name of Rabbi Elazar [It means] fruit of the cedar.

Bnos-Shuach. Rabbah bar Bar Chanah said in the name of Rabbi Yochanan: White figs.

Stems. Rabbah bar Bar Chanah said in the name of Rabbi Yochanan: 'with their stems' is what the *Mishnah* intended to teach.

Frankincense. Rabbi Yitzchak said in the name of Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish: that is clear-frankincense. (14a1 – 14a2)

Indirect Abetting of Idolatry

The *Baraisa* says that all of these items may be sold in a bundle. – And how much is a bundle? Rabbi Yehudah ben Besairah defines it as weighing three or more maneh.

But let us be concerned that the one buying such quantities

will resell it to another who will burn it as a sacrifice?

Abaye explains that although this buyer's customers may offer the produce to their idolatry, we are only prohibited from directly abetting an idolater's transgression, not from abetting one who is in turn abetting a transgression. (14a2)

Roosters – Black and White?

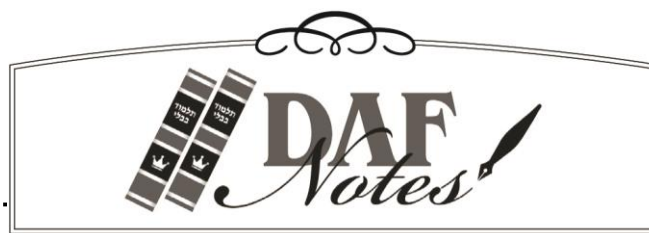
The *Mishnah* forbids selling a white rooster to an idolater.

Rabbi Yonah said in the name of Rabbi Zeira who said in the name of Rav Zevid, and some report that Rabbi Yonah said in the name of Rabbi Zeira: If an idolater asks: Who has a rooster? it is permitted to sell him [even] a white rooster, but if he asks: Who has a white rooster? it is forbidden to sell him a white rooster.

The *Gemara* challenges this from the dispute of Rabbi Yehudah and the Sages in the *Mishnah*. Rabbi Yehudah allows one to sell a white rooster among others, while the Sages prohibit this as well. The *Gemara* says that if the idolater specifically requested a white rooster, Rabbi Yehudah would not permit selling it to him, even among others. The *Mishnah* must therefore be referring to a case where the idolater did not specify what kind of rooster, and prohibits selling him a white one even in that case.

Rav Nachman bar Yitzchak answers that the case of the dispute is when the idolater asked for an assortment of roosters, and not just a white one.

The *Gemara* supports this from a *Baraisa*, in which Rabbi



Yehudah says that it is only prohibited to sell a white rooster if the customer asked for “this white rooster”, but not if he requested, “this and this”.

Rabbi Yehudah continues that even if he requested a specific (white) one, but bought it for a party for his son, or for someone ill in his household, it is permitted to sell it, as he is not planning to sacrifice it.

The *Gemara* challenges this from the *Mishnah*, which says that if an idolater makes a party for his son, it is forbidden to deal with only him on that day, indicating that he offers sacrifices as part of such a party.

Rav Yitzchak bar Rav Mesharsheya answers that the *Baraisa* is referring to a general social party, as opposed to the *Mishnah's* case of a wedding party, which is commemorated by sacrifices.

The *Gemara* again challenges Rabbi Zeira from the *Mishnah* which concludes that all other items may be sold generically to an idolater, but not if he is specific in his request.

The *Gemara* says that if “generically” means when he doesn’t specify his purpose (e.g., “white wheat”), while “specific” means when he specifies an idolatrous use (“for my idolatry”), both cases are obvious – there is nothing suspect about white wheat per se, and one is obviously prohibited from selling an item that the buyer expressly indicated will be used to enable idolatry. Rather, “generic” and “specific” must refer to the type of item - “wheat” vs. “white wheat”, and, by analogy, the *Mishnah* prohibits selling a white rooster even generically, i.e., when the buyer just asked for a rooster.

The *Gemara* rejects this proof, and maintains that “specific” means that he specified that he is purchasing it for idolatry. It is not obvious that this is forbidden, since we may have thought that he is not planning to use it for idolatry, but he is saying this only to get a discount. Since he is so attached

to idolatry, he assumes others are also, and therefore will sell the item at a discount for religious use. The *Mishnah* is teaching us that we take his statement at face value, and forbid the sale. (14a2 – 14b1)

How Devious?

Rav Ashi asks whether one can sell an intact white rooster to a buyer who requested a white rooster with a broken limb. Do we assume that he since he requested an imperfect one, which would not be fit for a sacrifice, he is not planning to sacrifice it, or are we concerned that this was a way of covering up his real intentions? If we assume that this is forbidden, [what if one enquires,] ‘Who has a white rooster? Who has a white cock?’ and when a black one is given to him he accepts it or when a red one is given to him he accepts it, may a white one be sold to him? Do we assume that his subsequent purchase of others indicates that he does not plan on sacrificing the rooster, or is this also just a way of covering up his real intentions? The *Gemara* leaves these inquiries unresolved. (14b1 – 14b2)

More Forbidden Merchandise

Rabbi Meir prohibited selling a good palm tree, *chatzav*, or *niklav* to an idolater.

Rav Chisda told Avimi that we have a tradition that Avraham Avinu learned four hundred chapters on the subject of idolatry, while we have only five, but we don’t even understand these.

The *Gemara* explains that Rav Chisda did not understand Rabbi Meir’s statement, since it implies that a bad palm tree is permitted, whereas the *Mishnah* says that one may not sell idolaters anything attached to the ground.

Avimi answered that Rabbi Meir is referring to the *fruits* of the good palm tree, which are prohibited, although they are detached, while the fruits of a bad palm tree are permitted.

The *Gemara* identifies *chatzav* as *kashba* – a type of date, or



an herb used as hedges.

Rav Dimi came from *Eretz Yisroel* and quoted Rav Chama bar Yosef saying that *niklav* is *kurayti*.

Abaye told Rav Dimi that we read *niklav* in the *Mishnah*, and do not understand it, and now we learned *kurayti* from you, but we still don't understand it, so how have you helped us?

Rav Dimi answered that when you go to *Eretz Yisroel*, they will understand *kurayti*, so they can identify it for you. They do not understand *niklav*, so you would not have been able to identify the item by that name. (14b2 – 14b3)

Selling Animals

The *Mishnah* says that selling small animals to idolaters depends on the local practice - in a place where they have a custom to permit the sale, it is permitted, but in a place where they have the custom to forbid it, one may not. Everywhere, however, one may not sell large animals, including calves and young donkeys, whether intact or broken. Rabbi Yehudah permits one to sell broken ones, while ben Besairah permits one to sell horses. (14b3)

The *Gemara* challenges the *Mishnah*, which leaves the issue of selling small animals subject to local custom, indicating that in principle it is permissible. The *Mishnah* later forbids one from leaving any animal in an idolater's inn, since we suspect he may sodomize the animal, which is forbidden for non-Jews.

Rav answers that this *Mishnah* is referring only to a place which has the custom to forbid selling small animals to non-Jews, but in places that permit the sale, it is permitted to sell and leave a small animal in the inn.

Rabbi Elazar answers that when one sells an animal to an idolater, we may assume that he will not sodomize it, as that will ruin the animal, which is now his property. However, leaving one's animal in the inn is forbidden, since the

idolater may sodomize it, as it is not his, and he does not care if it gets ruined.

The *Gemara* notes that Rav revoked his original answer and accepted Rabbi Elazar's, as Rav Tachlifa quoted Rabbi Shila bar Avimi, who quoted Rav saying that an idolater will not sodomize his own animal, since it will ruin the animal. (14b3 – 15a1)

INSIGHTS TO THE DAF

Turnisa

Rashi translates the *turnisa* as a type of cedar tree, since the *Gemara* (Rosh Hashanah 23a) lists *turnisa* as one of the species of cedar trees.

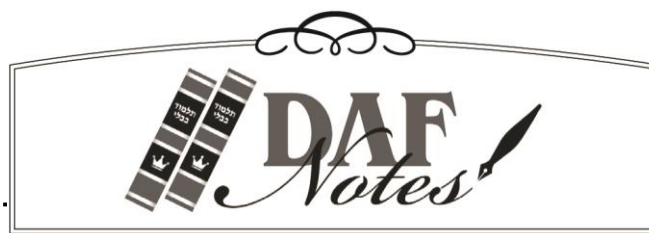
Tosfos (14a *Turnisa*) challenges Rashi's explanation, since the *Gemara* rejects this explanation since *Shemittah* does not apply to items that do not have a base in the ground, but it applies to *itzroblin*.

Rashi explains that the requirement is that it remain in the ground from year to year. If *turnisa* is a cedar tree, which remains in the ground for many years, how is this a challenge? Furthermore, if this is a requirement for *Shemittah*, how does *Shemittah* apply to grain, which is harvested each year? Finally, as the *Gemara* notes later, any tree which is attached to the ground may not be sold to an idolater.

Rabbeinu Tam therefore says that *turnisa* in this *Gemara* refers to a type of soil, and the *Shemittah* requirement is simply taking root in the ground. Since it is soil, it does not take root, and is not included in the prohibition of selling attached items.

Indirect Assistance to Sin

Abaye says that we are not forbidden from abetting someone who is abetting someone else's transgression. Tosfos (15b l'ovaid) and the Rosh (14) say that this is only



true of a non Jew, but we are forbidden from any assistance that will lead a Jew to sin, even if it is done through levels of indirection.

White Roosters

The *Gemara* discusses the parameters of the dispute between Rabbi Yehudah and the Sages about selling multiple roosters to an idolater. The *Gemara* says that their dispute is in a case where the idolater asked for “this and this”.

Rashi explains that the idolater asked for various types of roosters – white, black, red, etc. Since he mentioned other colors, although he asked for white, Rabbi Yehudah permits selling him the whole group of roosters.

Other Rishonim say that the *Gemara* means that the idolater pointed out which actual roosters he wanted to buy, but did not specify their color, and therefore Rabbi Yehudah permits selling all of them. However, if he mentioned white, even along with others, it is forbidden to sell him roosters of multiple colors.

The *Mishnah* says that one may break the foot of the rooster and then sell it to the idolater. The Ramban says this is only the opinion of Rabbi Yehudah, but the Sages forbid this, since we are concerned he may not break the foot, and observers will not notice the foot, and will permit the sale of an intact white rooster.

The Ritva says that this statement is unanimous, and the Sages do not forbid for either of these reasons.

According to the Ramban, Rav Ashi’s question, about an idolater who asked for a rooster with a broken foot, is only according to Rabbi Yehudah, while the Ritva says it is according to all.

Rav Ashi questions how concerned we are that the idolater is trying to hide his intentions. He first asks about one who

requested a white rooster with a broken foot. Rav Ashi then said that if we are concerned in this case, are we also concerned when he asked for a white one, but then bought a red or black one.

The Rashba explains that even if the first case is forbidden, this may be because observers will not notice the broken foot, but they will notice that he bought a red or black one, so we still may permit this sale.

The Ramban says that in the first case we suspect more that he is hiding his intentions, because it is uncommon for someone to specifically request one with a broken foot.

DAILY MASHAL

Topical Chapters

Our *Gemara* says that Avraham’s tractate *Avodah Zarah* contained 400 chapters while ours contains only five. Where did the 395 chapters disappear? According to *Meromei Sadeh*, in Avraham’s era the whole world was engaged in all sorts of idolatry and therefore his *Avodah Zarah* contained 400 chapters. But in the era of Rebbi, the redactor of the *Mishnah*, idolatry was on the wane and even the founder of Christianity was being oppressed by the Romans, such that only five chapters were written.

On the other hand, Rabbi Aharon Kotler zt”l explained that Avraham’s level of faith was so high that he expanded the prohibition of idolatry to include fine details that we do not consider, such as any slight thought that attributes events to chance and not to Divine providence, and even the slightest flattery, which Rabeinu Bechayei compares to idolatry (*Chovas HaLevavos, Sha’ar HaBitachon*) for a person imagines that another might favor or harm him. Therefore, Avraham’s tractate *Avodah Zarah* was so long (*Mishnas Rabbi Aharon*).