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### ***Those who Worship Mountains***

A teacher of *braisos* recited as follows in front of Rav Sheishes: If idolaters worship mountains and hills, they are permissible, but the worshippers should be killed with the sword (*for Noahides are commanded not to worship idols, and their method of execution is through a sword*); if they worshipped plants and herbage, they are prohibited, but the worshippers should be killed with the sword.

Rav Sheishes said to him: Who is the *Tanna* that holds like that?

He replied: It is Rabbi Yosi the son of Rabbi Yehudah, who maintains the following: A tree which had been planted (*without any idolatrous intention*) and was subsequently worshipped is prohibited (*and the same would apply with these plants*).

The *Gemora* asks: [*What compelled him to understand the braisa in such a manner?*] Perhaps the *braisa* is referring to a tree (*plant*) which had been planted for idolatry at the outset and it is following the opinion of the Rabbis (*who hold that in such a case, the tree would be prohibited*)?

The *Gemora* answers: This cannot enter your mind, because *braisa's* case of “plants” is analogous to the case of a mountain; and just as with a mountain, it was not planted for idolatry at the outset, so with this also it was not planted for idolatry at the outset. (46a)

### ***Dislodged Stones***

It was stated: If stones became detached from a mountain (*and then they were worshipped*), the sons of Rabbi Chiya and Rabbi Yochanan disagree: One says that they are prohibited and the other says that they are permitted.

The reason of the one who says that they are permitted is because the stones are like the mountain; and just as the mountain is something with which no man’s handiwork is involved and is permitted, so these likewise have had no man’s handiwork involved with them and are permitted.

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The *Gemora* deflects this refutation, for the case of a mountain proves the contrary (*for although it is not a living being, it does not become prohibited when worshipped*).

The argument repeats itself - and the nature of the two cases (*animal and mountain*) are dissimilar; but the common characteristic to them both is that no man’s handiwork is involved and is permitted, so too anything that has had no man’s handiwork involved with them (*including stones that became detached from a mountain*) should be permitted.

The *Gemora* rejects this comparison, for both of them have not changed from their original form (*unlike the case of a dislodged stone*)!?

Well then, the *Gemora* changes the analogy, let us derive that the stone is permitted by comparing it to the cases of an animal which has become blemished (*and did changes from its original form, but is nevertheless permitted*) and a mountain. Alternatively, it may be derived from the cases of an unblemished animal and a withered tree.

And, the *Gemora* notes, as for the one who prohibits the stones, it is because the Torah states: *You shall utterly detest it, and you shall utterly abhor it* — although it is possible to reach the conclusion through analogy that they are permitted, (*the Torah is teaching us...*) do not draw that conclusion. (46a)

### ***Upright Egg***

The *Gemora* notes: It can be proven from the following that it is the sons of Rabbi Chiya (*Yehudah and Chizkiyah*) who permit their use: Chizkiyah asked: What is the *halachah* if a man stood up an egg to worship it (*does it become forbidden*)? This question must be understood in the sense that the man had the intention of worshipping it and, in fact, did worship it; and the point of Chizkiyah inquiry is whether the setting up of the egg is to be considered an action (*and regarded as man's handiwork being involved with it*) or not (*and it would be permitted, just as the case of the mountain*). The *Gemora* infers from here that his opinion must be that if the man had not stood it up, it is not prohibited (*even though it is not connected to the ground – like a mountain*). Conclude, therefore, from here that it was the sons of Rabbi Chiya who permitted the use of the stones!

The *Gemora* rejects the proof, for we can always maintain that it was the sons of Rabbi Chiya who prohibited their use, and that is why the egg is prohibited if the man worshipped it, even though he had not set it up; and the case of the

inquiry is where he set up an egg to worship but did not worship it.

The *Gemora* questions the logic: According to whose opinion are we asking? If it is according to the one who says that an idolatrous object of a Jew is prohibited immediately (*as soon as it was prepared for use – even though it wasn't actually worshipped yet*), then it is prohibited; and if it is according to the one who says that such an object is not prohibited until it has actually been worshipped, behold the man has not worshipped it (*and it should therefore be permitted*)!?

The *Gemora* concludes that the inquiry is necessary in the following case: If he set up an egg to worship but did not do so, and an idolater came and worshipped it (*and although the idolater cannot prohibit something that is not his own, perhaps in this case it can become forbidden*), is it similar to that which Rav Yehudah said in the name of Shmuel: If a Jew set up a brick to worship it but did not do so, and an idolater came and worshipped it, it is prohibited. [*Since the Jew revealed his intent to worship it as an idol, it emerges that the idolater served it as an agent of the Jew, and it is as if the Jew worshipped it himself.*]

And Chizkiyah inquired as follows: Does Shmuel specify a brick because its erection is recognizable (*for its length is considerably greater than its width*), but the law would not be the same with an egg; or perhaps there is no difference? The *Gemora* leaves this question unresolved. (46a)

### ***Worshipped Stones for the Altar***

Rami bar Chama inquired: If one bows down to a mountain, are its stones permitted to be used to build an altar? Does the law prohibiting the use to the Most High of objects which have been worshipped apply to things attached to the ground or does it not? And even if you conclude that this law does apply to things attached to the ground, are objects necessary for the preparation of an offering treated the same as the offering or not?

Rava said: It can be derived through a *kal vachomer*: If the payment of a harlot is permitted for secular purposes when it is an object which is not attached to the ground, but is prohibited for the service of the Most High when it is an object attached to the ground (*for the Scriptural verse prohibiting these items do not differentiate between items that are attached to the ground and those that are not*), so a worshipped object, whose use for secular purposes is prohibited when it is not attached to the ground, how much more so should it be prohibited for the service of the Most High when it is an object attached to the ground!

Rav Huna the son of Rav Yehoshua said to Rava: The reverse conclusion may be derived as follows: If a worshipped object may not be used for secular purposes when it is not attached to the ground, but is permitted for the service of the Most High when attached to the ground (*for the Scriptural verse permitting these items do not differentiate between items that are attached to the ground and those that are not*), so the payment of a harlot, which is usable for secular purposes when it is not attached to the ground, how much more so should it be permissible for the service of the Most High when it is attached to the ground!?

Rava replied to Rav Huna: I reason a *kal vachomer* that leads to a stringency, and you reason one that leads to a leniency; and the rule is that when there is a choice, we always compare in manner that will lead to a stringency, not a leniency. (46a – 46b)

### ***Worshipped Grain for an Offering***

Rami bar Chamah inquired: If one worshipped standing-grain (*while it was attached to the ground*), may it be subsequently used for meal-offerings (*according to the opinion who maintains that objects worshipped when attached to the ground are prohibited for the service of the Most High*)? Does a change in form (*from wheat to flour*) make permissible that which had been used for idolatrous worship, or does it not have that effect?

Mar Zutra the son of Rav Nachman said: Let us learn from the following: A *Mishna* states: In cases where animals are prohibited from being used as offerings upon the altar (*such as those which were designated to be worshipped, or those that were already worshipped, or any animal that had been sodomized*), their offspring are permissible for that purpose. And regarding this a *braisa* was taught that Rabbi Eliezer forbids the offspring as offerings. [*They are discussing a case where the animal was pregnant when it was worshipped. The point of issue between them is whether the offspring is regarded as being a “change in form” or not. Evidently, the inquiry propounded by Rami is an argument amongst Tannaim.*]

The *Gemora* rejects the proof, for Rav Nachman said in the name of Rabbah bar Avahu: The difference of opinion is regarding the case where the animal had been sodomized and had then become pregnant, but when it became pregnant and then sodomized, all agree that the offspring are forbidden to be used as offerings! Similarly here (*regarding the grain*), it is analogous to the case where the animal was pregnant and then it had been sodomized.

Others say that Mar Zutra himself resolved the inquiry from that which Rav Nachman had stated: The difference of opinion is regarding the case where the animal had been sodomized and had then become pregnant, but when it became pregnant and then sodomized, all agree that the offspring are forbidden to be used as offerings! Similarly here (*regarding the grain*), it is analogous to the case where the animal was pregnant and then it had been sodomized.

The *Gemora* rejects the analogy, for there it was originally an animal (*when it was inside its mother*) and now it is an animal; only the door (*the mother’s womb*) had been closed in its face (*and afterwards it opened – it is not regarded as a “change in form”*); but in our case, it was originally wheat and now it is flour! (46b – 47a)