

Avodah Zarah – Simanim

פרק ג – כל הצלמים

דף מב-42 Daf

1. A Yisroel nullifying an עכו"ם's idol

Reish Lakish, who says an idol which is broken is nullified, was challenged from a Baraisa which teaches that an עכו"ם can nullify his own idol or another עכו"ם's idol (by damaging it), but a Yisroel cannot nullify an עכו"ם's idol. According to Reish Lakish, the idol should be nullified automatically since it was broken!?

Abaye answers: שפחסה – the case is *where* [the Yisroel] only struck it and *dented it*, but no part was broken off. The Gemara asks that a Mishnah proves that denting is sufficient damage to be מבטל an idol, and answers that this is only where an עכו"ם dented it (demonstrating his rejection of it), but if a Jew dented it, it is not בטל (and since it was not physically reduced, it is not בטל like a broken idol).

Rava answers that fundamentally, an idol is בטל when a Yisroel dents it. However, there is a *gezeirah* דלמא – *perhaps* [the Yisroel] *will lift it* (thereby acquiring it) *and only then attempt to nullify it*, which would be ineffective because ישראל אינה בטלה לעולם – *any idol in a Yisroel's possession can never be nullified*. This answer is used for a number of other challenges to Reish Lakish.

2. Leaves of an אשירה which fall off and fertilize vegetables

Reish Lakish is challenged from a Mishnah discussing planting vegetables under an אשירה (a worshipped tree). Rebbe Yose says one may not even plant vegetables under it during the winter, although the אשירה's shade is harmful, מפני שהנבייה נושרת עליהן – *because its leaves fall upon them* and fertilize them, resulting in a benefit from the forbidden tree. According to Reish Lakish, the leaves should be permitted as an idol which "broke" on its own!?

The Gemara answers that this case is different, דעיקר עבודת כוכבים קיימת – *the main part of the idol* (i.e., the tree) *remains intact* and is not nullified, so the leaves also are also prohibited. The Gemara objects that if one shaves down an idol for the idol's benefit, the shavings are permitted, even though the idol remains prohibited!?

Rav Huna *brei d'* Rav Yehoshua answers: לפי שאין – *because an idol is not nullified through its natural growth*, where the natural process is for its leaves to fall off and for new ones to grow in their place.

3. Utensils with a figure of the sun, moon, or a dragon

The next Mishnah states that if one finds utensils, ועליהם צורת חמה צורת לבנה צורת דרקון – *and upon them is a figure of the sun, the moon, or a dragon*, יוליכם לים המלח – *he should bring them to the Dead Sea* and throw them in. Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel says: שעל המוכבדין אסורין – *those figures which are on dignified utensils are prohibited*, but שעל המבוזין מותרין – *those on undignified utensils are permitted* because they were presumably not worshipped. The Mishnah implies that only these figures are worshipped, and the Gemara asks that a Baraisa teaches that if one slaughters an animal for the sake of mountains, hills, seas, rivers, a desert, for the sun, the moon, stars and constellations, for מיכאל שר הגדול, or for a tiny worm, the slaughtered animal is considered "זבחי מתים" – *sacrifices of the dead*, and prohibited. This proves that idolators commonly worship all kinds of idols, and not just the three mentioned in the Mishnah!?

The Gemara answers that although they worship many kinds of idols, but regarding דחשיבי – *forming an image on a utensil and worshipping it*, only these three designs, דחשיבי – *which are prominent*, do they design onto a utensil and worship, but regarding other designs, לנוי בעלמא – *they make them merely for ornamental purposes*.

Siman – Mobster

The Jewish mobsters on a mission to rid the town of Avoda Zara flattened the nose of an idol, that was standing next to some vegetables fertilized from the nearby asheira tree's fallen leaves and threw all the keilim with sun and moon engravings they had collected into the ים המלח.



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3 things to remember

1. A Yisroel nullifying an עכו"ם's idol
2. Leaves of an אשירה which fall off and fertilize vegetables
3. Utensils with a figure of the sun, moon, or a dragon

