

The Weekly Daf



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Avodah Zarah 58-64

Week of 13-19 Kislev 5756 / 6-12 December 1995

Rav Weinbach's insights, explanations and comments for the 7 pages of Talmud studied in the course of the worldwide Daf Yomi cycle

Non-Jewish Idol Smasher?

If an idol worshipper smashes an idol it is considered a rejection of its status as an object of worship and it is permissible for a Jew to benefit from its remains. This is true even if the smasher was not the owner of the idol. What if the one smashing the idol is a *geir toshav* — a non-Jew who has committed himself to refrain from idol worship (or all seven Noachide commandments according to another opinion) but has not converted to Judaism and is a full-fledged non-Jew?

There are two possible considerations for his rejection to be valid:

- 1) Since in regard to the rest of Torah observance he is like an idol-worshipper his rejection of idol worship should be valid for all of his kind.
- 2) The fact that the idol was smashed should allow us to assume, as the Sage Reish Lakish (41b) posits, that its worshippers have rejected it as being helpless to defend itself and therefore not worth relying on to defend its worshippers.

Both of these considerations are rejected by Rabbi Nachman:

- 1) Logic dictates that only one who worships idols is capable of rejecting its worship for others.
- 2) We rule like Rabbi Yochanan (41b) who contests this argument presented by Reish Lakish and contends that so long as no idol worshipper actually smashed it, its remains are still considered an idol and forbidden to a Jew for any benefit.

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Fences Around the Vineyard

"Go, go," we say to the Nazir, "go far around and do not come anywhere near to a vineyard."

This is the theme used by our Sages in legislating added safeguards — "fences around the Torah" — to insure that the basic law will not be violated. On our daf it is used to explain why the wine which an idol worshipper diluted with a little water is prohibited for drinking as if he had actually touched the wine. In an earlier daf (17a) it is cited as the basis for expanding the ban on forbidden relations to include any form of physical contact.

But why is this particular idea of nazir used as the model for all such safeguards?

It may be suggested that we find in regard to nazir that the Torah itself has put up so many fences. Not only is he prohibited to drink wine but he is also banned from eating fresh grapes, raisins, and even the skins and seeds of grapes. While the main purpose was to prevent the nazir from indulging in intoxicating spirits, the Torah saw that it was necessary to proscribe anything which might lead to such indulgence. Our Sages, therefore, took their lead from this in creating safeguards in other areas as well.

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