



## Being the cause for prohibited praise

The first *Mishnah* of *Avodah Zara* discusses the prohibition of engaging in commerce with idol worshipers near their holidays. In the last cycle, 10(37), we addressed the debate in the *Gemara* regarding the source of the prohibition and the difference between each side of the debate.

One understanding is that the idol worshiper would be happy with the deal and thank his god during the holiday. Being the cause of this reaction violates the prohibition, "... the name of the gods of others you shall not mention, nor shall your mouth cause it to be heard." (*Shemot* 23:13). The second understanding is that by providing the idol worshiper with, e.g. an animal to sacrifice as part of the worship, it would constitute the prohibition of *lifnei iver* – enabling another to sin. The practical difference between these two explanations, is if the idol worshiper already had an animal to sacrifice. In that case *lifnei iver* would not be violated. Nevertheless, one would still be providing the idol worshiper with reason to praise his god. In this article we shall address a different question.

The *Tosfot Yom Tov* cites *Rashi* who explains that the prohibition violated in our *Mishnah* is "nor shall your mouth cause it to be heard" – the first understanding listed above. *R' Tzvi Hirsh Kalisher* asks why giving the idol worshiper reason to praise is not considered *lifnei iver*.

*R' Kalisher* answers that speech alone is not considered an action. Consequently, if the idol worshiper would then praise his god, it would not be considered worship or a violation of a prohibition that applied to him. That being the case there is no issue of *lifnei iver*. The *Bach* (YD 148) explains similar that praising is similar to kissing an idol, against which gentile idol worshiper is not commanded. Whilst a Jew would be prohibited, it would not be considered a capital offence like the prohibited forms of

worship. Nevertheless, by causing him to praise the idol, the prohibition of "nor shall your mouth cause it to be heard" still applies.

The *Taz* however argues that accepting an idol as a god is certainly a capital offence – *lifnei iver* should still then apply. The *Nukdat HaKeseif* defends the *Bach* by explaining that there is a difference between accepting it as a god and our case, which is simply praising it. The *Chazon Ish* (YD 62:17) explains that acceptance is a definitive moment prior to worship. Praising, after that, is not an act of acceptance, but rather is a statement of the existing relationship.

The *Taz* instead answers that *lifnei iver* is violated when enabling another to violate a prohibition. The classic example is giving a *nazir* a glass of wine (that he is prohibited to drink) when he was unable to attain any himself. However, if the other party was able, and the *Yisrael* simply expedited its execution, *lifnei iver* would not be violated. Applying the logic to our case, nothing was stopping the idol worshiper from praising his god on his festival and reason to do so would inevitably be found.

The *Chazon Ish* (YD 62:15) argues with the explanation of the *Taz*. The fact that he will find a different cause for praise elsewhere is not a reason to discount this case as *lifnei iver*. At that point there was no cause for praise, and the transaction resulted in the *Yisrael* being the cause for praise. Consequently, *lifnei iver* should still apply.

*R' Kalisher* suggest another answer. *Lifnei iver* only applies when the object handed to the other party is used to violate the prohibition. In this case however, no object involved in the transaction is being used for idol worship. It is only that the transaction evokes a response that he will praise his god.

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**Revision Questions**

עדינות ח': ה'ט'

- What did *R' Yehoshua* and *R' Yehuda ben Beteira* present regarding the previous case and how did *Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel* respond? (ח': ג')
- What three laws did *R' Yosi ben Yo'ezer ish Tzreida* present? (ח': ד')
- What was the ruling given after they found bones in the *dir eitzim*? (ח': ה')
- Explain the debate regarding how they constructed the *heichal* in the *Beit Ha'Mikdash*. (ח': ו')
- What are the various opinions regarding the task of *Eliyahu Ha'Navi*? (ח': ז')

עבודה זרה א': א'-ט'

- When is one prohibited from trading with *goi'im*? (א': א')
- What else is prohibited at that time? (א': א')
- What is *R' Yehuda's* opinion? (א': א')
- On what point does *R' Yishmael* argue? (א': ב')
- Which "festival" is debated between *R' Meir* and the *Chachamim*? (א': ג')
- When is one allowed to enter a city of idol worship during their festival? (א': ד')
- List some items that may not be sold to an *akum* at any time during the year? (א': ה')
- Regarding the previous question, what is the general rule regarding all other items? (א': ה')
- What are the three opinions regarding which (farm) animals can be sold to an *akum*? (א': ו')
- What other animals may not be sold? (א': ז')
- Which joint-construction venture may one not partake in with an *akum*? (א': ז')
- What specific types of jewellery are mentioned by the *Mishnah* as those forbidden to make for *avodah zara*? (א': ח')
- Explain the debate regarding renting and selling fields and houses to *goyim* in: (א': ח')
  - *Chutz La'aretz*.
  - *Eretz Yisrael*.
- Why is one unable to rent out a *merchatz* to a *goi*? (א': ט')

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28 July כ"ה תמוז	29 July כ"ו תמוז	30 July כ"ז תמוז	31 July כ"ח תמוז	1 August כ"ט תמוז	2 August א' אב	3 August ב' אב
Avodah Zara 2:1-2	Avodah Zara 2:3-4	Avodah Zara 2:5-6	Avodah Zara 2:7-3:1	Avodah Zara 3:2-3	Avodah Zara 3:4-5	Avodah Zara 3:6-7

