Avodah Zara Ontology

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I. Hilchot Kashrut Sourced in Avodah Zarah

1. Mishnah Avodah Zarah 5:2

It happened with Boethus ben Zpnin that he carried dried figs in a ship and a cask of yen nesekh was broken and it fell upon them; and he consulted the Sages who declared them permitted. This is the general rule: whatever derives advantage [from yen nesekh by its] imparting a flavor is prohibited, but whatever does not derive advantage [from yen nesekh by its] imparting a flavor is permitted, as, for example vinegar which fell upon split beans.

משנה עבודה זרה ה':ב'

מַצְשֶׂה בְּבַיְתוֹס בֶּן זוֹנָן שֶׁהֵבִיא גְרוֹגָרוֹת בִּסְפִינָה, וְנִשְׁתַבְּרָה חָבִית שֶׁל יֵין נֶסֶךְ וְנָפַל עַל גַּבֵּיהֶן, וְשָׁאַל לַחֲכָמִים וְהִתִּירוּם. זֶה הַכְּלָל, כֹּל שֶׁבַּהְנָאָתוֹ בְּנוֹתֵן טַעַם, אָסוּר. כֹּל שֶׁאֵין בַּהְנָאָתוֹ בְּנוֹתֵן טַעַם, מֵתָּר, כְּגוֹן חֹמֶץ שָׁנָפַל עַל גַּבִי גָרִיסִין:

2. Mishnah Avodah Zarah 5:9

The following are prohibited and render prohibited by the smallest quantity: [a cask of] yen nesekh; an idolatrous object; skins of animals which have holes over the heart; an ox which has been sentenced to be stoned; a heifer whose neck was broken; birds brought as an offering by a leper; the hair-offering of a nazirite; the first born of a donkey; meat cooked in milk; the scapegoat; and non-consecrated animals slaughtered in the Temple court. Behold these are prohibited and render prohibited by the smallest quantity.

משנה עבודה זרה ה':ט'

אֵלּוּ אֲסוּרִיז, וְאוֹסְרִיז בְּכָל שֶׁהֵן. יֵין נֶסֶהּ, וַאֲבוֹדָה זָרָה, וְעוֹרוֹת לְבוּבִיז, וְשׁוֹר הַנִּסְקֶל, וְאֶגְלָה עֲרוּפָה, וְצִפֹּרֵי מְצֹרֶע, וּשְׁעַר נָזִיר, וּפֶטֶר חַמוֹר, וּבָשָׁר בָּחָלָב, וְשָׁעִיר הַמִּשְׁתַּלַּח, וְחַלִּיז שָׁנִשְׁחַטוּ בָצָזָרָה, הֲרֵי אֵלוּ אֲסוּרִיז וְאוֹסְרִיז בְּכָל שֶׁהֵן:

3. Mishnah Avodah Zarah 5:12

If [a Jew] purchases cooking-utensils from a non-Jew, those which are customarily used with cold liquids, he must immerse; Those which are customarily used with hot liquids, he must be dip in boiling water; Those which are customarily made white-hot in the fire, he must make white-hot in the fire. A spit and grill must be made white-hot, But a knife may be polished and is then ritually clean.

משנה עבודה זרה ה':יב

הַלּוֹקֵחַ כְּלֵי תַשְׁמִישׁ מִן הַגּוֹי, אֶת שֶׁדַּרְכּוֹ לְהַטְבִּיל, יַטְבִּיל. לְהַגְעִיל, יַגְעִיל. לְלַבֵּן בָּאוּר, יְלַבֵּן בָּאוּר. הַשַּׁפּוּד וְהָאַסְכְּלָה, מְלַבְּנָן בָּאוּר. הַסַּכִּין, שָׁבָּה וְהִיא טְהוֹרָה:

II. Why Does Idolatry Exist?

4. Mishnah Avodah Zarah 4:7

They asked the elders in Rome, "If [your God] has no desire for idolatry, why does he not abolish it?" They replied, "If it was something unnecessary to the world that was worshipped, he would abolish it; but people worship the sun, moon, stars and planets; should he destroy his universe on account of fools!" They said [to the elders], "If so, he should destroy what is unnecessary for the world and leave what is necessary for the world!" They replied, "[If he did that], we should merely be strengthening the hands of the worshippers of these, because they would say, "know that these are deities, for behold they have not been abolished!"

משנה עבודה זרה די:זי

שָׁצְלוּ אֶת הַזְּקֵנִים בְּרוֹמִי, אִם אֵין רְצוֹנוֹ בַּעֲבוֹדָה זְרָה, לֶמָה אֵינוֹ מְבַטְּלָה. אָמְרוּ לָהֶן, אִלּוּ לְדָבָר שָׁאֵין צֹרֶךְּ
לְמָה אֵינוֹ מְבַטְּלָה. אָמְרוּ לָהֶן, אִלּוּ לְדָבָר שָׁאֵין צֹרֶךְ
לְעוֹלָם בּוֹ הָיוּ עוֹבְדִין, הָיָה מְבַטְלוֹ. יְאַבֵּד עוֹלְמוֹ מִפְּנֵי לַחַמָּה וְלַלְּכָנָה וְלַכַּוֹכָבִים וְלַמַּזְלוֹת. יְאַבֵּד עוֹלְמוֹ מִפְּנֵי הַשׁוֹטִים. אָמְרוּ לָהֶן, אִם כֵּן, יְאַבֵּד דָּבָר שָׁאֵין צֹרֶךְ הָשׁוֹטִים. אָמְרוּ לָהֶן, אַף לְעוֹלָם בּוֹ אָמְרוּ לָהָן, אַף לְעוֹלָם בּוֹ וְיַנִיתַ דְּבָר שְׁצֹּרְדְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹ. אָמְרוּ לָהָן, אַף שָׁל אֵלּוּ, שֶׁאוֹמְרִים, מֵּדְעוּ שָׁהַן אֱלוֹהוֹת, שֶׁהְרֵי הֵן לֹא בַטְלוּ:

5. משנת ארץ ישראל על משנה עבודה זרה ד':ז':א'-ב'

עפ"י כתב יד קופמן **שאלו את הזקינים ברומי** - כך בעדי הנוסח הטובים. בעדי נוסח מאוחרים שאלו זקנים ברומי, כאילו מי ששואל הם זקני רומי (היהודיים). סדרת מסורות מספרת על ביקוריהם של זקני דור יבנה ברומא. כגון "ומעשה ברבן גמליאל וזקנים שהיו מסובין ברומי ונפלה מנורה בלילי יום טוב" (תוספתא ביצה פ"ב הי"ב ומקבילות). לדעתו של ספראי היו שתי מסעות לרומא, בדור יבנה, ובכל אחד מהם השתתפו זקנים שונים. המסע נועד לשם הקמת קשרים עם שלטונות האימפריה הנוכריים לאחר המשבר של מרד החורבן. ולשם

6. Avodah Zarah 54b:14-55a:6

A. GEMARA: The Sages taught: Certain philosophers [filosofin] asked the Jewish Sages who were in Rome: If it is not your God's will that people should engage in idol worship, for what reason does He not eliminate it? The Sages said to them: Were people worshipping only objects for which the world has no need, He would eliminate it. But they worship the sun and the moon and the stars and the constellations. Should He destroy the world because of the fools? Rather, the world follows its course, and the fools who sinned will be held to judgment in the future for their transgressions.

The baraita presents another matter that illustrates the same concept: Consider the case of one who stole a se'a of wheat and went and planted it in the ground. By right it should not grow. But the world goes along and follows its course and the fools who sinned will be held to judgment in the future for their transgressions.

The *baraita* presents another matter that illustrates the same concept: Consider the case of one who engaged in intercourse with the wife of another. By right she should not become pregnant. But the world goes along and follows its course and the fools who sinned will be held to judgment in the future for their transgressions.

B. ... A certain philosopher asked Rabban Gamliel: It is written in your Torah with regard to the prohibition against idol worship: "For the Lord your God is a devouring fire, a jealous God" (Deuteronomy 4:24). For what reason is He jealous and does He exact vengeance from the idol's worshippers, but He is not jealous of the idol itself and does not destroy it? Rabban Gamliel said to the philosopher: I will relate a parable to you. To what is this matter comparable? It may be compared to a king of flesh and blood who had one son, and that son was raising a dog. And the son gave the dog a name, naming him after his father. When the son would take an oath, he would say: I swear by the life of the dog, my father. When the king heard about this, with whom was the king angry? Is he angry with the son or is he angry with the dog? You must say that he is angry with the son. So too, God is angry with the worshippers who attribute divinity to objects of idol worship and not with the objects of idol worship themselves. The philosopher said to Rabban Gamliel: **Do you call** the idol a dog? But the idol truly exists, i.e., has power. Rabban Gamliel said to the philosopher: And what did you see that caused you to believe that the idols have power? The philosopher said to Rabban Gamliel: A fire once broke out in our city, and the entire city was burned down, but that temple of idol worship was not burned down.

Rabban Gamliel said to the philosopher I will relate a parable to you. To what is this matter comparable? It may be compared to a king of flesh and blood whose province sinned against him. When he wages

עבודה זרה נ"ד ב:ר"ד-נ"ה א:ו'

גְּמָי תָנוּ רַבְּנֵן: שָׁאָלוּ פִּלוֹסוֹפִין אֶת הַזְּקְנִים בְּרוֹמִי: אִם אֱלֹהֵיכֶם אֵין רְצוֹנוֹ בַּעֲבוֹדָה זָרָה, מִפְּנֵי מָה אֵינוֹ מְבַשְּלָה? אֱלֹהֵיכֶם אֵין רְצוֹנוֹ בַּעֲבוֹדָה זָרָה, מִפְּנֵי מָה אֵינוֹ מְבַשְּלָה? אָמְרוּ לָהָב: אִילוּ לְדָבֶר שָׁאֵין הָעוֹלָם צוֹרֶה לוֹ הִיוּ עוֹבְדִין, הֲבִי הוּא מְבַשְּלָה. הֲבִי הֵן עוֹבְדִין לַחַמָּה וְלַלְּכָנָה וְלַכְּנָה וְלַכּוֹלָת, יְאַבֵּד עוֹלֶם מִפְּנֵי הַשׁוֹטִים? אֶלֶּא עוֹלֶם כְּמְנָהְגוֹ נוֹהֵג, וְשׁוֹטִים שֶׁקּלְקְלוּ עֲתִידִין לִיתֵּן אֶת הַדִּין.

דָּבָר אַחֵר: הָרֵי שֶׁגָזַל סְאָה שֶׁל חִטִּים [וְהָלַךּ] וּזְרָעָה בַּקַרְקַע — דִּין הוּא שֶׁלֹא תִּצְמַח, אֶלֶּא עוֹלֶם כְּמִנְהָגוֹ נוֹהָג וְהוֹלֵךָ, וְשׁוֹטִים שֶׁקּלְקָלוּ צַּתִידִין לִיתֵּן אֶת הַדִּין.

דָּבָר אַחֵר: הָרֵי שֶׁבָּא עַל אֵשֶׁת חֲבֵירוֹ — דִּין הוּא שֶׁלֹא תִּתְעַבֵּר, אֶלָּא עוֹלָם כְּמִנְהָגוֹ נוֹהֵג וְהוֹלֵךְ, וְשׁוֹטִים שָׁקּלְקָלוֹ עֲתִידִין לִיתֵּן אֶת הַדִּין....

שָׁאַל פָּלוֹסׂפּוּס אֶחָד אֶת רַבָּן גַּמְלִיאֵל: כָּתוּב בְּתוֹרַתְּכֶם ״כִּי ה׳ אֱלֹהֶידָּ אֵשׁ אֹכְלָה הוּא אֵל קַנָּא״, מִפְּנֵי מָה מִתְקַנֵּא בְּעוֹבְדָיהָ וְאֵין מִתְקַנֵּא בָּה?

אָמַר לו: אָמְשׁוֹל לְּךְּ מָשְׁל, לְמָה הַדְּבָר דּוֹמֶה? לְמֶלֶּךְ בָּשָׂר וָדָם שְׁהָיָה לוֹ בֵּן אֶחָד, וְאוֹתוֹ הַבֵּן הָיָה מְגַדֵּל לוֹ אֶת הַכֶּלֶב וְהָצֶלָה לוֹ שֵׁם עַל שֵׁם אָבִיו, וּכְשָׁהוּא נִשְׁבָּע אוֹמֵר: ״בְּחַיֵּי כֶּלֶב אַבָּא״, כְּשֶׁשָׁמַע הַמֶּלֶךְ, עַל מִי הוּא כּוֹעֵס, עַל הַבֵּן הוּא כּוֹעֵס אוֹ עַל הַכֶּלֶב הוּא כּוֹעֵס? הֱוֵי אוֹמֵר: עַל הַבֵּן הוּא כּוֹעֵס.

אָמֵר לוֹ: כֶּלֶב אַתָּה קוֹרֵא אוֹתָה? וַהָּלֹא יֵשׁ בָּה מַמְשׁ! אָמֵר לוֹ: וּמָה רָאִיתָ? אָמֵר לוֹ: פַּעַם אַחַת נָפְלָה דְּלֵיקָה בְּעִירֵנוּ, וְנִשְׂרְפָה כָּל הָעִיר כּוּלָּה, וְאוֹתוֹ בֵּית עֲבוֹדָה זָרָה לֹא נִשְׂרַף!

אָמַר לוֹ: אָמְשׁוֹל לְךְּ מָשָׁל, לְמָה הַדָּבָר דוֹמֶה? לְמֶלֶךְ בָּשֶׂר וָדָם שֶׁסְרְחָה עָלָיו מְדִינָה, כְּשֶׁהוּא עוֹשֶׁה מִלְחָמָה, עִם הַחַיִּים הוּא עוֹשֶׁה אוֹ עִם הַמֵּתִים הוּא עוֹשֶׁה? הֱוֵי

אוֹמֵר: עָם הַחַיִּים הוּא עוֹשֵׂה.

war, does he wage war against the living or does he wage war against the dead? You must say that he wages war against the living. God punishes the living worshippers and not the idol, which is not alive. The philosopher said to Rabban Gamliel: You call the idol a dog; you call the idol dead. If it is so, let God remove it from the world. Rabban Gamliel said to the philosopher: Were people worshipping only objects for which the world has no need, He would eliminate it. But they worship the sun and the moon, the stars and the constellations, and the streams and the valleys. Should He destroy His world because of fools? And so the verse states: "Shall I utterly consume all things from off the face of the earth? says the Lord. Shall I consume man and beast? Shall I consume the fowls of the heavens and the fish of the sea, and the stumbling blocks of the wicked, and shall I cut off man from off the face of the earth? says the Lord" (Zephaniah 1:2-3). Should God **remove** objects of idol worship **from the world due to** the fact **that** the wicked stumble because of them? If so, He would have to destroy all of humanity as well, as **do not** idol worshippers also **worship people?** This is expressed in the continuation of the verse: "And shall I cut off man from off the face of the earth? says the Lord."

אָמַר לוֹ: כֶּלֶב אַתָּה קוֹרָא אוֹתָה, מֵת אַתָּה קוֹרֵא אוֹתָה, אֵם כֵּן יְאַבְּדָנָּה מִן הָעוֹלֶם!
אָם כֵּן יְאַבְּדָנָּה מִן הָעוֹלֶם!
אָמַר לוֹ: אִילּוּ לְדָבָר שָׁאֵין הָעוֹלֶם צְּרִיךְ לוֹ הָיוּ עוֹבְדִין,
הַרִי הוּא מְבַשְּלָה, הָרֵי הֵן עוֹבְדִין לַחַמֶּה וְלַלְּבָנָה,
לַכּוֹכָבִים וְלַמַּזְּלוֹת, לְאָפִיקִים וְלַגַּאָיוֹת, יְאַבֵּד עוֹלָמוֹ
מִפְּנֵי שׁוֹטִים? וְכֵן הוּא אוֹמֵר: "אָסֹף אָסֵף כֹּל מֵעַל פְּנֵי
הָאָדָמָה וְאָסַר בִּהָ אָחָם וּרָגִי מִפְּנֵי
הַיָּם וְהַמַּכְשֵׁלוֹת אֶת הָרְשָׁעִים [וְגוֹי]", וְכִי מִפְּנֵי
שֶׁהָרְשָׁלִים בָּהָן יְאַבְּדֵם מִן הָעוֹלָם? וַהְלֹא לְאָדָם
הָן עוֹבְדִין, "וְהַכְּרַתִּי אֶת הָאָדָם מֵעַל בְּנֵי הָאָדָמָה [וְגוֹ׳]".
הַן עוֹבְדִין, "וְהַכְּרַתִּי אֶת הָאָדָם מֵעַל בְּנֵי הָאָדָמָה [וְגוֹ׳]".

C. Agrippas the general asked Rabban Gamliel: It is written in your Torah with regard to idol worship: "For the Lord your God is a devouring fire, a jealous God" (Deuteronomy 4:24). Doesn't jealousy arise only in the following cases: A wise man might be jealous of another wise man, and a mighty man might be jealous of another mighty man, and a rich man might be jealous of another rich man? If so, why is God jealous of objects of idol worship, which are not gods?

שָׁאַל אַגְרִפַּס שַׂר צָבָא אֶת רַבְּן נַּמְלִיאֵל: כְּתִיב בְּתוֹרַתְכֶם: ״כִּי ה׳ אֱלֹהֶידְּ אֵשׁ אֹכְלָה הוּא אֵל קַנָּא״, כְּלוּם מִתְקַנֵּא אֶלָּא חָכָם בְּחָכָם, וְגִבּוֹר בְּגִבּוֹר, וְעָשִׁיר בָּעַשִׁיר?

Rabban Gamliel said to Agrippas: I will relate a parable to you. To what is this matter comparable? It can be compared to a person who married a second wife in addition to his first wife. If the second wife is more distinguished than the first wife, the first wife is not jealous of her, and she does not feel anger toward her husband. But if the second wife is less distinguished than the first wife, she is jealous of her.

אָמַר לוֹ: אֶמְשׁוֹל לְךָּ מְשָׁל, לְמָה הַדָּבָר דּוֹמֶה? לְאָדָם שָׁנָּשָׂא אִשָּׁה עַל אִשְׁתוֹ, חֲשׁוּבָה מִמֶּנָה — אֵין מִתְקַנְּאָה בַּה, פָחוּתַה מִמֵּנָה — מִתְקַנְּאָה בָּה.

D. Zunin said to Rabbi Akiva: Both my heart and your heart know that there is no substance to idol worship. Nevertheless, don't we see people who go with broken limbs to worship idols and come back when they are whole? What is the reason for this?

אֲמֵר לֵיה זוּנִין לְרַבִּי עֲקִיכָּא: לְבִּי וְלְבָּךְ יָדַע דַּעֲבוֹדָה זָרְה לֵית בַּה מְשָׁשָׁא, וְהָא קָחָזֵינַן גַּרְבֵי דְּאָזְלִי כִּי מְתַבְּרִי וְאָתוּ כִּי מְצַמְדִי! מֵאי טַעְמָא?

Rabbi Akiva said to Zunin: I will relate a parable to you. To what is this matter comparable? It can be compared to a trusted person who was in a certain city, and all the residents of his city would deposit items and money with him, even not in the presence of witnesses. And there was one man who did not trust him, who came and specifically deposited money with him in the presence of witnesses. On one occasion, that person forgot and deposited money with him not in the presence of witnesses. The trusted man's wife said to him: Come, let us deny that he deposited the money with us, as there are no witnesses. The

אָמַר לו: אָמְשׁוֹל לְדְּ מָשֶׁל, לְמָה הַדְּבָר דּוֹמֶה? לְאָדָם נְאֱמֶן שֶׁהָיָה בָּעִיר, וְכָל בְּנֵי עִירוֹ הָיוּ מַפְּקִידִין אָצְלוֹ שֶׁלֹא בְּעֵדִים, וּבָא אָדָם אֶחָד וְהִפְּקִיד לוֹ בְּעֵדִים. פַּעַם אֶחָד שָׁכֵח וְהִפְּקִיד אֶצְלוֹ שֶׁלֹא בְּעֵדִים, אָמְרָה לוֹ אִשְׁתוֹ: בּוֹא וְנְכְפְּרָנוּ, אָמֵר לָה: וְכִי מִפְּנֵי שֶׁשוֹטָה זָה עָשָׂה שֶׁלֹא כַּהוֹגָן אָנוּ נְאַבֵּד אֶת אֱמוּנָתִינוּ? אַף כָּדְ יִסוֹרִיו, בְּשָׁעָה שֶׁמְשֹׁגְרִין אוֹתָן עַל הָאָדָם, מֵשְׁבִּיעִין אוֹתָן: שֶׁלֹא תַּלְכוּ אֶלָּא בְּיוֹם פְּלוֹנִי, וְלֹא תַּצְאוּ אֶלֶא בְּיוֹם פְּלוֹנִי וּכְשָׁנָה פָּלוֹנִית, וְעֵל יִדִי פִּלוֹנִי וְעַל יִדִי סֵם פְּלוֹנִי. בִּיוָן שֶׁהְגִּיעַ

זְמַנָּן לָצֵאת, הָלַךּ זָה לְבֵית עֲבוֹדָה זָרָה, אָמְרוּ יִפּוּרִין: דִּין הוּא שָׁלֹא נַצֵא, וְחוֹזְרִין וְאוֹמְרִים: וְכִי מִפְּנֵי שָׁשׁוֹטָה זָה עוֹשֶׁה שָׁלֹא כַּהוֹגָן אָנוּ נָאַבֵּד שְׁבוּעָתֵנוּ?

man said to her: Should we lose our credibility and act deceitfully just because this fool acted improperly and did not require the presence of witnesses? So too, with regard to different forms of suffering, at the time when they are sent to afflict the person, an oath is administered to them as follows: Take an oath that you shall not go and afflict the person except on such and such a day. And you shall not leave him except on such and such a day, at such and such an hour, by means of so-and-so, a specific doctor, and by means of such and such a medicine. When the time came for the suffering to leave him, this sick man went to a temple of idol worship. The forms of suffering said: By right we should not leave him. But then they say: Should we lose the fulfillment of our oath just because this fool is acting improperly?

סנהדרין ס"ג ב:י"ט-ס"ד א:טי

אָמֵר רַב יְהוּדָה אָמֵר רַב: יוֹדְעִין הָיוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל בַּעֲבוֹדָה זָרָה שָׁאֵין בָּה מַמָּשׁ, וְלֹא עָבְדוּ עֲבוֹדָה זָרָה אֶלָּא לְהַתִּיר לָהֶם עֲרָיוֹת בְּפַרְהֶסְיָא.

מֵתִיב רַב מְשַׁרְשְׁיָא: ״כִּזְכֹּר בְּנֵיהֶם מִזְבְּחוֹתָם וְגוֹי״, וְאָמֵר רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר: כְּאָדָם שְׁיֵשׁ לוֹ גַּעְגוּעִין עַל בְּנוֹ? בַּתַר דַּאַבִיקוּ בֵּיהּ.

תָּא שְׁמַע: ״וְנָתַתִּי פִּגְרֵיכֶם עַל פִּגְרִי גִּלּוּלֵיכֶם״. אָמַר: אֵלְיָהוּ הַצַּדִּיק הָיָה מְחַזֵּר עַל תְּפוּחֵי רָעָב שָׁבִּירוּ שָׁלַיִּהוּ הַצַּדִּיק הָיָה מְחַזֵּר עַל תְּפוּחֵי רָעָב שָׁבִּירוּ שְׁלָּיִם. פַּעַם אַחַת מְצָא תִּינוֹק שֶׁהָיָה אָפִּוּחַ וּמוּטָל בָּאַשְׁפָּחָה פְּלוֹנִית אֲנִי. אָמֵר לוֹ: כְּלוּם נִשְׁתַּיֵיר מְשְׁפָּחָה פְּלוֹנִית אֲנִי. אָמֵר לוֹ: כְּלוּם נִשְׁתַּיֵיר מְשְׁפָּחָה? אָמֵר לוֹ: לָאו, חוּץ מְמָנִּי. אָמֵר לוֹ: מַאוֹתָה מִשְׁפָּחָה? אָמֵר לוֹ: לָאו, חוּץ מִמֶּנִי. אָמַר לוֹ: הַן. אָמַר לוֹ: הַן. אָמַר לוֹ: מַל יוֹם ״שְׁמֵע יִשְׂרָאֵל ה׳ אֵלֹהֵינוּ ה׳ אָחָד״. אָמַר לוֹ: הַס, שֶׁלֹּא לְהַוְכִּיר בְּשֵׁם הִי, שֶׁלֹא לִימְדוֹ אָבִיו וְאִמּוֹ. מִיָּד הוֹצִיא יִרְאָתוֹ מַהִיקוֹ, וִּמְלֹּ בְּבִיר וְאִמוֹ מְיָבְל הוּא עָלִיהָ, לְקַיֵּים מַה שְׁנְבְּלְעָה כְּרֵיסוֹ שְׁלַבְּלָת יְרָאָתוֹ לְאָרָץ, וְנָפַל הוּא עָלְיהָ, לְקַיֵים מַה שָׁבְּרָה יִּוְבְּלָנִה בְּיִם מַה בְּתָר דְּאָבִיקוּ בָּיה.

7. Sanhedrin 63b:19-64a:9

§ Rav Yehuda says that Rav says: The Jewish people knew that idol worship is of no substance; they did not actually believe in it. And they worshipped idols only in order to permit themselves to engage in forbidden sexual relations in public, since most rituals of idol worship would include public displays of forbidden sexual intercourse. Rav Mesharshiyya raises an objection to this statement from the following verse: "Like the memory of their sons are their altars, and their Asherim are by the leafy trees, upon the high hills" (Jeremiah 17:2). And Rabbi Elazar says that this means that the Jewish people would recall their idol worship like a person who misses his child. This interpretation indicates that they were truly attached to idol worship. The Gemara answers: This was the case after the Jewish people became attached to idol worship, at which point they began to actually believe in it. At first, they were drawn to idol worship only due to their lust. The Gemara suggests: **Come** and **hear** a proof that the Jewish people engaged in idol worship for its own sake and not for the sake of engaging in forbidden sexual relations: In interpretation of the verse: "And I shall cast your carcasses upon the carcasses of your idols" (Leviticus 26:30), the Sages say that Elijah the Righteous, the prophet, would search for those who were swollen with hunger in Jerusalem. He once found a child who was **swollen** with hunger **and lying in the garbage.** Elijah **said to** the child: From which family are you? The child said to him: I am from such and such family. Elijah said to him: Isn't there anyone left from that family? The child said to him: No one is left besides me. Elijah said to him: If I teach you something through which you will live, will you learn it? The child said to him: Yes. Elijah said to him: Say every day "Listen Israel, the Lord is our God; the Lord is One" (Deuteronomy 6:4). The child said to him: Hush, so as not to mention the name of the Lord (see Amos 6:10). The child did not want to even hear the mention of the name of the Lord, which his father and his mother did not teach him. Immediately, the child removed his god from his bosom and began hugging it and kissing it, until his stomach burst from hunger, and his god fell to the earth and he fell upon it, in fulfillment of that which is stated: "And I shall cast your carcasses upon the carcasses of your idols" (Leviticus 26:30). This

incident demonstrates that the Jewish people engaged in idol worship for its own sake. The Gemara answers: This also occurred **after** the Jewish people **became attached to** idol worship.

The Gemara suggests: **Come** and **hear** another proof, from the verse: **"And** they cried in a loud voice to the Lord their God" (Nehemiah 9:4). What did they say in that prayer? Rav Yehuda says, and some say it is Rav Yonatan who says: Woe, woe [baya, baya], this evil inclination for idol worship is what destroyed the Temple, and burned the Sanctuary, and murdered the righteous ones, and caused the Jewish people to be exiled from their land. And it still dances among us, i.e., it still affects us. Didn't You give it to us solely for the purpose of our receiving reward for overcoming it? We do not want it, nor do we not want its reward. Evidently, the Jewish people were drawn to idol worship itself, and they did not worship idols only in order to engage in forbidden sexual relations. The Gemara answers: This also occurred after the Jewish people became attached to idol worship. The Gemara continues to relate the story of the prayer in the days of Nehemiah: The people fasted for three days and prayed for mercy. In response to their prayer a note fell for them from the heavens in which was written: Truth, indicating that God accepted their request. The Gemara makes a parenthetical observation. Rabbi Ḥanina says: Conclude from it that the seal of the Holy One, Blessed be He, is truth. The form of a fiery lion cub came forth from the chamber of the Holy of Holies. Zechariah, the prophet, said to the Jewish people: This is the evil inclination for idol worship. When they caught hold of it one of its hairs fell out, and it let out a shriek of pain that was heard for four hundred parasangs [parsei]. They said: What should we do to kill it? Perhaps Heaven will have mercy **upon it** if we attempt to kill it, as it will certainly scream even more. **The** prophet said to them: Throw it into a container made of lead and cover it with lead, as lead absorbs sound. As it is written: "And he said: This is the evil one. And he cast it down into the midst of the measure, and he cast a stone of lead upon its opening" (Zechariah 5:8). They followed this advice and were freed of the evil inclination for idol worship. When they saw that the evil inclination for idol worship was delivered into their hands as they requested, the Sages said: Since it is an auspicious time, let us pray for mercy concerning the evil inclination for sin concerning sexual matters. They prayed for mercy, and it was also delivered into their hands. The Sages imprisoned it for three days. At that time, people searched for a one-day-old fresh egg for the sick but could not find one. Since the inclination to reproduce was quashed, the chickens stopped laying eggs. They said: What should we do? If we pray for half, i.e., that only half its power be annulled, nothing will be achieved, because **Heaven does not grant half** gifts, only whole gifts. What did they do? They gouged out its eyes, and this was effective in limiting it to the extent that a person is no longer aroused to commit incest with his close relatives.

תָּא שְׁמַע: ״וַיִּזְעֵקוּ בְּקוֹל גָּדוֹל אֶל ה׳ אֱלהֵיהָם״. מַאי אֲמוּר? אָמַר רַב יְהוּדָה, וְאִיתִּימָא רַב יוֹנָתָן: בִּיָּיא, בִּיָּיא! הַיִינוּ דְּאַחְרָבִיה לְבֵיתָא, וְקַלְנֵא לְהֵיכְלָא, וְקַטְלִינְהוּ לְצַדִּיקֵי, וְאַגְּלִינְהוּ לְיִשְׁרָאֵל מֵאַרְעַיִיהוּ, וַצְדַיִין הוּא מְרַקֵּד בִּינַן. כְּלוּם יְהַבְתֵּיה לַן אֶלָּא לְקבוֹלֵי בֵּיה אַגְרָא? לָא אִיהוּ בָּעֵינַן וְלָא אַגְרֵיה בַּעֵינַן!

בַתַר דַּאֲבִיקוּ בֵּיה.

יְתַבוּ תְּלֶתָא יוֹמֵי בְּתַעֲנִיתָא, בָּעוּ רַחֲמֵי. נְפַל לְהוּ פִּיתִקא מֵרקִיעַא דָּהָוָה כִּתִיב בַּה: "אֵמֵת".

אָמַר רַבִּי חֲנִינָא: שְׁמַע מִינַּהּ, חוֹתָמוֹ שֶׁלֹ הַקֶּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא 'אֱמֶת'. נְפַק כְּגוּרְיָא דְנוּרָא מִבֵּית קָדְשֵׁי הַקֵּדְשִׁים.

אֲמַר לְהוּ נָבִיא לְיִשְּׂרָאֵל: הַיִינוּ יִצְרָא דַּצְבוֹדָה זָרָה. בַּהַדֵי דְּקָתָפָסִי לֵיה, אִישְׁתְּמִיט בִּינִיתָא מִינֵּיה, וַאֲזַל קַלֵיה בָּאַרְבַּע מָאָה פַּרָסֵי.

אָמָרוּ: הֵיכִי נֶיעְבֵּד? דִּילְמָא מִשְׁמַיָּא מְרַחֲמִי עֲלֵיה. אֲמֵר לְהוּ נָבִיא: שַׁדְיוּה בְּדוּדָא דַאֲבָרָא, וְכַסְיוּה בַּאֲבָרָא, דְשָׁיֵיף לָלֵיה. דְּכְתִיב: ״וַיֹּאמֶר זֹאת הָרְשְׁעָה וַיַּשְׁלֵךְ אוֹתָה אֶל תּוֹךְ הָאֵיפָה וַיַּשְׁלֵךְ אֶת הָאֶבֶן הַעוֹפֵרַת אֵל פִּיהַ״.

אָמְרִי: הוֹאִיל ְוְעֵת רָצוֹן הוּא, נִיכְעֵי רַחֲמֵי אַיִּצְרָא דַעֲבֵירָה. בְּעוֹ רַחֲמֵי, אִימְּסַר בִּידַיְיהוּ.

חַבְשׁוּה תְּלֶתָא יוֹמֵי. בְּעוֹ בֵּיצְתָא בַּת יוֹמָא לְחוֹלֶה, וְלָא אַשְׁכַּחוּ. אֲמַרוּ: הֵיכִי נַעֲבֵיד? נִיבְעֵי פַּלְגָא? פַּלְגָא מֵרְקִיעַא לָא יָהַבִי.

> פַּחְלִינְהוּ לְעֵינֵיה. אַהַנִי בֵּיה דְּלָא מִיגָּרֵי אִינִישׁ בַּקַרִיבִתֵּיה.