

# תורה מציון Torah MiTzion

RELIGIOUS ZIONIST KOLLELS כוללים ציוניים בתפוצות

## Shabbat Shalom from Torah MiTzion

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### Debasing the Holidays is equivalent to Idol worship Rav Moshe Pinchuk, former Rosh Kollel, Melbourne

On two occasions the Torah juxtaposes the prohibition of Idol Worship to the command of observing the holidays. One such occasion occurs in the reading of Shabbat Chol HaMoed: "Do not make molten idol gods for yourself. The festival of Matzos you are to keep, for seven days you will eat Matzos as I have commanded you" (Shemot 34: 17-18). Based on these juxtapositions, the Talmud (Pesachim 118a, Makkot 23a) concludes: "Rav Sheshet in the name of Rav Elazar Ben Azariah says 'Debasing the Holidays is equivalent to Idol worship because the scripture says 'Do not make molten idol gods for yourself' and immediately afterwards it says 'The festival of Matzos you are to keep'". The purpose of this short essay is to try to understand the rational behind the equation Rav Sheshet has presented.

I would begin by reformulating the statement in the Talmud, it is not a mathematical equation we are being presented with but rather a law of cause and effect in the realm of human psychology. Restated in the affirmative it reads: "Observing the Holidays helps one overcome the temptation of Idolatry".

Previously the Chumash has discussed Idol Worship: "Do not bow down to their gods or serve them, and you must not make anything like their works, but you will destroy them and break down their sacred pillars. And you shall serve your God, and he will bless your bread and your water; and I shall turn malady away from your midst" (Shemot 23: 24-25). Nahmanadies here has an insightful observation regarding the nature of Paganism: "Most Idol worshippers recognize that God is the supreme God, however they think that worshipping other deities and forces will bring them success. Worshipping the Sun may be beneficent, for they have observed the positive effect of the Sun on the growth of grain in

the fields, and the moon's effect on Water wells, etc'. Therefore this verse forcefully makes the point that success hinges only on worship dedicated completely to Hashem. Uprooting Idolatry will not harm but bring about further blessings, for Hashem will bless your bread and your water".

Nahmanadies explains that Paganism of early days was not an expression of deep feelings of religious devotion but rather was an expression of practical concern for the success of their crops. They were fully aware of the forces of nature and their proper harmonization required for success. Paganism was simply an attempt to harness these forces to their needs. Paganism should be viewed not as the early roots of religion but as the first attempts at science and understanding the laws of nature. Anthropologists today have coined this as "Corn Gods" - one worships a God in order to grow corn.

One can now fully appreciate the powerful temptation of old to Paganism, the equivalent today would have been to ask a farmer not to fertilize or water or disinfect his field but rather spend his time in prayer and only thus be ensured of a successful crop.

In this sense, observing the three holidays: Pesach Shavuot and Sukkot which coincide with the phases of the agricultural year serve to impress upon the Jew to what extent Hashem is involved and responsible for the success of the crops. Thus observing these holidays can serve as an antidote to the tremendous temptation of idol worshipping.

#### **Bishul Akum, Part 4** **Rav Nehemya Taylor, Torani Advisor to Torah MiTzion**

The Gemara (*Avodah Zarah* 38a) offers two opinions as to which foods are included in the prohibition of *bishul akum* (eating food cooked by non-Jews). We will analyze each opinion and then examine the *halakhah* itself.

The first opinion states, "Any food which is eaten raw is not included in the prohibition of *bishul akum*."

The second opinion states, "Anything which is not fit to be used as an accompaniment for bread on the table of a king is not included in the prohibition of *bishul akum*."

In his explanation of the first opinion, the Rashba writes that the prohibition of *bishul akum* applies only when the non-Jew has made something inedible become edible. However, where it would have been possible to eat the food without the non-Jew's preparation, it is permitted to eat the cooked food.

The first opinion requires further explanation:

- 1) Who determines which foods are eaten raw?
- 2) What happens when you mix cooked and raw foods?
- 3) What is the determinant -- the type of food, or the actual food?

Regarding the first question, the decisors disagree. The *Birkei Yosef* cites the opinion of the *Banei Chayei* that this determination is based on the individual. What the majority of people do is irrelevant. However, most decisors disagree and say that it depends on the custom of the majority of the people in his area (see the *Arukh HaShulchan*).

A related question was put to Rabbi S. Wosner *shlita* (*Shevet HaLevi* 9:163) regarding sushi (raw fish) prepared by non-Jews. "A businessman who travels regularly to Japan, where

people eat raw fish, wishes to know whether or not he is permitted to eat cooked fish while he is there. Is it permitted, since people there eat it raw? Or is it considered *bishul akum*, since people where he comes from do not eat fish raw?" Rabbi Vosner responds that it is prohibited since this person does not eat sushi where he lives. Additionally, it is possible that the majority of Japanese don't eat sushi.

Of course, these things constantly change, and one needs to check in each place what people eat and how they eat it in order to decide if something is eaten raw or not.

Regarding the second point, the *Shulkhan Arukh (Yoreh De'ah 113)* states, "If one mixed something which is eaten raw (permitted) with something that is not eaten raw (prohibited), and a non-Jew cooked them, then if the prohibited food is the primary ingredient, the mixture is prohibited, and if not, it is permitted." It would seem that according to the *Shulkhan Arukh* it depends on what is primary (*ikar*) and what is secondary (*tafel*). This definition parallels what we have learned in the laws of blessings. According to the *Mishnah Berurah (Orach Chayim 212)*, if one type of food is the primary ingredient in a dish and a secondary ingredient adds taste, the blessing recited is that of the primary ingredient. Therefore, the *Magen Avraham (203:4)* rules that anything which is eaten with bread, such as jellies and the like, is not prohibited as *bishul akum*, because the bread is primary. However, a dish which contains flour from one of the five grains is prohibited, even if the flour is the minority of the dish, because flour is not eaten raw and is always considered the primary ingredient.

The decisors have suggested that the reason it is permitted to drink tea and coffee prepared by a non-Jew (which should be prohibited since coffee beans and tea leaves are not eaten raw) is because the primary and main ingredient is water, and the blessing is "*shehakol*." (See further what the *Yechaveh Da'at 4:42* has written about this. We will discuss this in upcoming articles.)

Regarding the third point, the *Shakh (Yoreh De'ah 113:19)* has an original idea. "Even though pears and apples are usually eaten roasted or cooked, if they were roasted or cooked by a non-Jew it is permissible to eat them, since they are also eaten raw, and the primary way to eat them is raw." This means that if the food is edible raw, even though it is usually eaten cooked, it is permitted even when cooked by a non-Jew. Since, bottom line, it is edible raw, the cooking is irrelevant.

Most legumes and other vegetables are moist and edible when they are ripe and freshly picked. However, after a while they dry out and are no longer edible raw. If a non-Jew cooked them after they dried out, eating them is prohibited. This is because the criterion is the state of the food when cooked. If at that time it can be eaten raw, there is no prohibition, but if at that time it is inedible, it is prohibited.

We have raised a few of the issues surrounding the first opinion. Obviously each food has to be dealt with separately. In a case of doubt, it's advisable to ask a rabbi.

In the next article we will discuss the definition of "fit for a king."

## **The Pain of Separation**

### **Bluma Zalcman**

Why is it that Succos has an extra day "added" to it? Neither Pesach nor Shavuot are granted an extra day? And how does one day make a difference?

**The Chizkuni** answers us with a mashal:

*The King's children came to visit him. When they were ready to leave he asked them "When will you be back?"*

*"In fifty days" they answered*

*So he sent them on their way. They returned in fifty day and he was overjoyed. The time came for him to leave again and again he asked them when they would return.*

*"This time will be longer, we will return in four months time."*

*"Fine, go in peace." The King replied*

*When they returned in four months time, again the King was overjoyed. He loved seeing his children and had a hard time when they left.*

*When they were about to leave he asked them again when they would return*

*"This time will be much, much longer. This time we will return in six or seven months." They answered their father*

*"That is really a long time," Answered the king "please stay one more day!"*

After Pesach we "return" to Hashem only seven weeks later, on Shavuos. After Shavuos, Hashem has to wait four more months until we return to his house. While four months is not a small amount of time, it is not unbearable. However, the six-or-seven month wait between pesach and succos without a visit from Bnei Yisrael causes Hashem to say: *"It is too hard for me to bear the separation."*

Hashem asks us to stay one more day to enjoy our company.

**Why then, you may ask, does Hashem ask us for one more day? How can one single day make a difference?**

**Torat Emet** offers the following explanation:

While during the rest of the days of succos we perform practical mitzvot which are related to the chag itself, Shmini Atzeret we don't have any, and therefore are able to achieve a special closeness to Hashem which becomes everlasting.

**Shem Mishmuel** brings a different reason:

Seven is the number of *teva*, nature, and the limitations brought along with it, while the number eight is symbolic of that which isn't bound by nature's limitations. By remaining alone with Hashem for an eighth, supernatural, day, we can retain closeness to Him and hold onto it forever.

May we always strive to become closer to our Father, and rejoice in his Torah.

## Family Learning: Parshat V'zot Habracha

- 1) Why is Shimon not given a bracha?
- 2) What is the reason that Yissachar and Zevulun are given a joint bracha? (33:18-19)
- 3) Why is the place of Moshe's grave unknown?
- 4) How old was Moshe when he died? (34:7)

## Looking Back: Yonaton Netanyahu

Yonaton, or Yoni, Netanyahu was a commander in Sayeret Matkal, the General Staff Reconnaissance Unit in the IDF. He was killed while rescuing Jewish hostages held in Entebbe in 1976.

Yoni was born in 1946 to Ben Zion and Tzila Netanyahu in New York, where his family was doing Shlichut. When he was two, his family returned to Israel and after kindergarten in Yerushalayim, he learned in the Hebrew Gymnasium. He was very popular and that showed when he was voted president for the student council in 11<sup>th</sup> grade and the head of his unit in the youth group he was a member of.

In 1963, he traveled back to the States with his family and moved to Philadelphia. He graduated a year later, in 1964. After he graduated he returned to Israel and was called up to the army. Yoni was put in a paratrooper unit.

In January 1967 he finished his service and was discharged with the rank of a first lieutenant. However, with the outbreak of the Six Day War, Yoni found himself back in the army. During the last 4 hours of the war, while trying to help an injured friend, Yoni was hit in the elbow by a bullet. He crawled back to his base and passed out. Doctors operated three times until they were able to fix his arm, and even then it never completely recovered. He was discharged from the army as 'handicapped'.

Yoni decided to go back to America and learn in Harvard University, where he learned Physics, Math, and Philosophy. But he was restless to return home. In a letter sent to a friend in Israel he wrote "Harvard continues on being amazing, even though I am a bit anxious to come home. I need to come home. I only hope that my arm gets well enough so I can serve in the reserves. It's important and it's the duty of a good Jew, or at least a good Israeli."

After a year at Harvard, Yoni decided it was time to return to Israel. He enrolled at the Hebrew University, but dropped out after one semester. At the beginning of 1969, Yoni volunteered for permanent service in the IDF. He volunteered for a Select Unit, and his skills soon became clear.

In 1970 he took command of a company in the Charuv Commando Unit. He was very good at stopping infiltrators enter the Jordan Valley.

In 1973 Yoni returned to the United States and to Harvard, but this time he took courses in Political Sciences and International Relations, particularly those that have what to do with Israel. A short time after Yoni came to the States, The Yom Kippur War broke out and he returned to Israel.

Yoni and his unit were positioned in the Golan Heights. They participated in several operations and missions, including putting a stop to Syrian advances in the Golan area. After the Syrians were stopped, Yoni joined a different unit, one for offensive warfare against the Egyptians and Syrians.

In 1975, Yoni went back to his original elite unit. It was with this unit that Yoni and his troops would go on a daring rescue mission in Uganda.

The rescue mission was a success. Only Yoni wasn't able to see the outcome, because he had been shot while in a crossfire with Ugandan troops and terrorists. To honor his memory, the mission was then referred to as "Mivtzah Yonaton".

Since his passing there have been a lot of tributes made to Yoni, for example, a street in Brooklyn is named after him "Lt. Colonel Jonathon Netanyahu Lane", there are schools all over Israel named for him, a scholarship program in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, a fund in Cornell University in the U.S. and many more.

His letters to his family and friends have been published in a book called "Letters from Jonathon". Yonaton Netanyahu is truly an Israeli hero.

**Torah MiTzion** establishes Religious Zionist Kollels (centers of Jewish learning and outreach) in Diaspora Jewish communities to strengthen the study of Torah, Jewish identity, the unity of the Jewish people, and the connection between Torah study and Israel.

The Kollels, led by a Rosh Kollel, are comprised of Israeli shlichim (emissaries) - married men and their wives, and single young men, graduates of Yeshivot Hesder in Israel - who serve in the communities for a period of one-three years.

Torah MiTzion is also proud to be a partner of the "**Jewish Learning Initiative**" program on college campuses: [www.jli.co.il](http://www.jli.co.il).

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#### **Answers:**

##### **Family Learning-**

- 1) Shimon is not given a bracha because Shimon sinned at ba'al Peor.
- 2) They depend on one another. Yissachar learns and teaches Zevulun, and in turn Zevulun makes money and supports Yissachar.
- 3) Moshe didn't want people coming to visit his grave and treating it like a holy site.
- 4) 120 (thus, ad me'ah v'esrim)