



Holiday Gifts – Introduction

The Gemara (Avodah Zarah 2a) and Shulchan Aruch (Y.D. 148) cite several prohibited actions during the non-Jewish holiday season, including performing certain business transactions and giving gifts. Some of these actions are prohibited only on the day of the holiday. Others are also prohibited three days before the holiday.

The reason for this is that we assume that as a result of receiving these gifts or earnings during this time period, the aino-Yehudi will be in high spirits and thus serve his idol on the holiday. This would cause the Jew to violate the prohibition of "Lifnei iver lo sitein michshol – do not place an obstacle before a blind person," which prohibits causing another person to sin. Since idolatry is forbidden for aino-Yehudim as well, this prohibition applies. (Avodah Zarah [beginning]; Shulchan Aruch ibid; Bein Yisrael L'nachri 27:18)

Some Rishonim hold (see Tur and Beis Yosef ibid) that most of these prohibitions only applied in the days of Chazal, when the aino-Yehudim served genuine avodah zarah (idols) and would thank them when in high spirits. However, in contemporary times, when aino-Yehudim don't serve or thank their idols as in previous times – and in many cases there is also the fear of "eivah" – some of these halachos do not apply, as explained in Shulchan Aruch (Y.D. 148; see nosei keilim).