

Creating Forbidden Images

Adapted from a shiur

by Rav Moshe Zev Granek on *Parshas Beshalach*

לא תעשון אתי אלהי כסף ואלהי זהב לא תעשו לכם (שמות כ:כ)

The Gemara (*Rosh Hashana* 24, *Avoda Zara* 43) explains that this *pasuk* is the source for a prohibition not to create images of humans, celestial bodies (e.g. sun, moon), angels, and the *Beis Hamikdash* or its *kelim* (utensils).

The Gemara distinguishes between 3-D images (*bolet*) and 2-D images (*shakua* – sunken or flat), but Rishonim dispute the parameters.

- **Tosafos** (in *Rosh Hashana*) – 2-D images of celestial bodies are forbidden (because that's how they look in the sky), but all other images above are forbidden only when 3-D.
- **Ramban** (in *Avoda Zara*) – Even 2-D images are forbidden to create; only retaining 2-D images when made by a non-Jew is permitted.
- **Rambam** – Human 2-D images are permitted, but all other 2-D/3-D images are forbidden.
- **Shulchan Aruch** (Y.D. 141:1) – Rules like Rambam, though some Acharonim are *machmir* for Ramban.
There are two other leniencies mentioned by the *Shulchan Aruch*:
 - *L'hislamed*
 - For educational purposes all images are permitted, though *poskim* dispute the parameters of *l'hislamed*.
 - Picture of human face/body alone – This is permitted (without the entire body), though some are *machmir* here too (see *Pischei Teshuva*).
Commentaries also discuss creating an image of the *Beis HaMikdash* to size or *kelim*.
- **Rambam** – Quotes the *issur* in *Hilchos Beis HaBechira*, not *Avoda Zara*.
There are two *nafka minas* to the difference.
 - *L'hislamed*
 - If it's in *Beis Habechira*, there is no *heter* for *l'hislamed*; if it's in *Avoda Zara*, it is permitted.
 - Which measurements – If it's based on *Beis HaBechira*, whichever *Beis HaMikdash* exists at that time (today is unclear), while if it's about *Avoda Zara*, perhaps any of them.
- May one make a replica of the *Beis HaMikdash*?
 - *Salmas Chaim* (O.C. 272) – No, because *assur* even not to scale

unless it's *l'hislamed*, and this doesn't qualify.

- *Igros*

Moshe (Y.D. 3:33) - Yes, it's not to size.

- *Minchas*

Yitzchok (10:73) - Intent for replica is possibly *assur*.