

Is Purchasing an “Indian Hair” Sheitel a Problem of Providing Funding for Avodah Zara?

Question: Most of us remember the controversy about the hair of Indian-hair sheitels, and if it is considered “*takruvos avodah zara*” or not. According to what we have previously stated, we can ask why this question is even relevant. We said that it is forbidden to buy merchandise from a house of *avodah zara* if this provides revenue to fund their activities. Why wouldn’t buying an Indian-hair sheitel, which provides revenue for a house of *avodah zara*, be forbidden for that reason?

Answer: There is a very popular beer called Trappist Beer, which is produced by monks in a monastery and used to fund the monastery’s activities. It is sold in many Jewish stores. I was bothered about why this wouldn’t be considered providing benefit for *avodah zara* until I saw a *teshuva* from Rav Elyashiv *zt”l*, in which he explains that the problem of providing funding for a house of *avodah zara* would only apply when someone buys something directly from the church.

In the case of the beer, the customer is purchasing it from a middleman, not from the actual monastery. The monastery has already been paid, and when a Jew buys the beer from a store he is not actually giving them anything. Although it could be argued that a customer does benefit the monastery in the fact that if there were no customers the middlemen wouldn’t buy any beer from them, Rav Elyashiv maintains that if one isn’t directly giving money to the house of *avodah zara*, he is not considered to be benefitting them.

The same reasoning would apply to the sheitels. If one purchases them from a retailer, rather than from the church itself, the prohibition of giving revenue to a house of *avodah zara* would not apply and the only relevant question would be whether these sheitels are considered *takruvos avodah zara* or not.