

### 1) The Shailoh (in brief):

The hair of human hair sheitels are imported primarily from China and India, with a much smaller share coming from Europe and the U.S. The export leader is China; However a lot of the hair also originates from India, which is the source of the Avodah Zorah problems. The hair is procured from woman Hindu worshippers who offer their hair to the temple gechkeh. Inside a special "barbering" room, devotees sit on the floor and bend their heads forward to let a temple barber shave their scalp with a straight razor blade. They do this as a "gesture of gratitude" to the gechkeh, or, in the words of one temple official, to "surrender their ego" (whatever that is supposed to mean). The hair is then auctioned off (unbeknownst to the shavees) for a hefty profit to Western bidders. It is a booming business; 600 temple barbers shave 25000 foolish idol worshipping heads a day!

- The Shailoh is whether these hair offerings are considered **תקרובות עבודה זרה**. The Halacha is that food or item that became **תקרובות עבודה זרה** is **אסור בהנאה** - forbidden to own or to derive benefit from. There is no way to "Kasher" it - it remains "Treif" forever and must be burned and buried. Moreover, any profits derived from the sale or commerce are also **אסור בהנאה** and must likewise be destroyed. Hence, the magnitude of the Avodah Zorah shailoh is enormous: Many sheitel businesses would face the prospect of having to destroy all of their inventory and even their homes and property derived from the sheitel business profits - a serious shailoh indeed!

However, many people are unaware that there are many detailed Halachic conditions that determine what constitutes a true Avodah Zorah, and what is Halachically regarded as genuine **תקרובות עבודה זרה**. This is not the forum for a proper scholarly treatment of this topic but suffice it to say that the mere fact that naive people shave their hair and donate it to a gechkeh does not render the hair **תקרובות עבודה זרה**. The **נגידא עבודה זרה דף נ** and the Shulchan Oruch **קלר דף סו** discuss various conditions, among them, the requirement for a kind of **עבודת פנים** i.e. an act resembling an Avodah in the Mizbeach. In the case of the hair, it could take the form of **הקטרה**, burning on an altar (not relevant here because the hair used in sheitels is saved), or a kind of **זריקת חמשת חבת** i.e. throwing the hair at the idol or altar in a manner that causes it to scatter. **זריקת חמשת חבת** is a kind of **זריקת חמשת חבת** i.e. "Shechitah" of the hair for the Gechkeh in the form of the cutting of the hair. This last possibility might be a problem if in fact the hair cutting is part of the Avodah ritual. The facts on this point are unclear. However, this factor might indeed be part of the point of Halachic contention fueling this "tumult". At this point, no one seems to know. Following is some current conclusive information: