ABRAHAM ABINU and HALLOWEEN

Halloween has unmistakable pagan origins, deeply rooted in ancient idol-worshiping practices. And although today its celebration might not be oriented toward idol-worshiping, Halloween still has many elements, *too many*, related to idolatry.
As we all know, idolatry or *'aboda zara* is the most serious offense in Judaism. In the Tora we are commanded to keep away from all forms of idol-worshipping. Idolatry consists of numberless rituals, superstitions, magic and mythical beliefs. "Death" was always considered the scariest mystery, which triggered extreme anxiety and agitation. Dead people, their invisible spirits, were often an object of fear, reverence, and especially cult. Halloween is no exception. "All-hallow-even" celebrates the "day of all (dead) saints".

The ancient Celts celebrated Halloween at the end of the summer when they believed the evil spirits and souls of the dead visited the world of the living. The idol-worshipers considered the dead more or less as Hollywood considers today the "zombies": bad and dangerous. Dead people came back to this world angry, revengeful and with the desire to recruit newcomers. Pumpkins, which resembled the unpleasant faces of the dead, were carved to welcome and appease them. Large fires would be lit to assist the dead finding their way into the world of the living. Food, particularly sweets, would be left outside the doors to feed the ghosts. All this favors to the dead were done because people believed that those who assisted the dead spirits, would be left undisturbed ("If I appease them, then they will not take me with them").

Cats were especially important in Halloween because people believe cats could smell and warn of the presence of the invisible spirits. A black cat, however, was avoided (or killed) because witches or evil spirits reincarnated into black cats.
The devil himself would come the night of Halloween from the

inferno. The Druids, the Celtic priests, wore masks to make dead people think they were one of them. These priests would knock randomly on the doors to request human sacrifices for the devil or the revengeful ghosts. If you don't want to become a human sacrifice, at least, appease them with candies. As you can see from this brief description, Halloween might look fun or even innocent, but it is deeply rooted in primitive idolatry and the pagan cult of death. In one way or another, most (or all) elements that were part of the ancient pagan Halloween celebration are still present in today's Halloween. Therefore, we Jews should avoid participating in any way, active or passive, in Halloween.

As a side note, and thinking as an educator, Halloween might provide an excellent opportunity to educate our kids. How so? Idolatry was the norm in ancient days. We Jews fought against it since the day our father Abraham broke his father's idols. But many times I find it so difficult to describe to my children the environment of idol worshiping, the real dimension of '*aboda zara*, its appeal to superstitious minds, the numberless fantasies and delusions around it, and how courageous was our father Abraham Abinu when he became the first iconoclast. It is difficult to appreciate Abraham did because primitive '*aboda zara* is almost gone… Halloween is an opportunity to help our children to visually identify the superstitions of '*aboda zara*, and the importance of staying away from it.Observing Halloween "from the balcony" will surely make us proud and privileged to be the children of Abraham Abinu.