

Hebrew Lesson: The Second Commandment

Revised 5-4-03 By Rabbi Edward Levi Nydle (Levi bar Ido)
B'nai Avraham

"You have to serve somebody!" Bob Dylan

"You do not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of that which is in the heavens above, or which is in the earth beneath, or which is in the waters under the earth, you do not bow down to them nor SERVE them. I YHWH your Elohim am a jealous El, visiting the crookedness of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing kindness to thousands, to those who love Me AND guard My commands" **Sh'mot (Exodus) 20:4-6**

In this commentary I want to look thoroughly at the word "**serve**"; as it used in the Scriptural context concerning the service or worship to idols and false elohim. According to Scripture, what defines **service to idols**, and what according to the Scripture is **idolatry**? Let us dig into the Scriptures for the answers.

The word "**serve**" in the verse quoted above means:

- **Strong's** # 5647 "*avad*" meaning to work (in any sense), to serve, enslave, bond-service, compel, keep, labor, (cause or make) to serve; (become) servant, worshipper, tiller.
- **Vines Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words** page 224 under "to serve" says the word means, "To serve, cultivate, enslave, and work." It is first used in *Gen. 2: 5* as "to till the ground" and then it is used in *Gen. 14: 4* and *Gen. 15: 13* as "to **be enslaved to**". It can also be used concerning Yahweh, as in *Deut. 6: 13, 11:13; Ps. 72: 11; and Ps. 100: 2*.

Our Rebbe Yahshua used the same Hebrew word in **Mattithyahu 4:10** when He was tempted by the satan (adversary, opponent) in the wilderness. He used this expression again in **Mattithyahu 6:24**. In the first example He was quoting the Torah (**Deut. 6: 13**) to the adversary when Hasatan was trying to ensnare Him to **serve** and worship him **instead** of Yahweh (as the adversary also tempts us).

In the latter verse Yahshua is referring to Believers trying to **serve** two masters at the same time! Yahshua says:

- "No one is able to SERVE two *adonim* (masters). For either he will have *sinah* (hatred) for the one and *ahavah* (love) for the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve YHWH and *Mammon* (money, riches)." **Mattithyahu 6:24**
- The word SERVE in Greek is "*douleia*" meaning to be slave, to be in bondage to, to serve. It comes from "*doulos*" meaning a slave or to be in subjection to someone (#1398 **Strong's**).

We can understand according to Strong's that the usage of the word "**serve**" means to be a slave to, labor for, to worship, and to be a bond-slave (or one who has **chosen to remain in subjection to someone.**)

Now, let us examine the usage of the word "SERVE" in some other Scriptures.

- **Deut.12: 30** "Be careful not to be ensnared into following them by asking about their elohim, saying: how did these nations **serve** their elohim? I also will do the same."
- **Deut.28: 14** "For if you diligently observe and do all of Yahweh's law, then you will not **turn aside** from any of the laws which I command you this day, to the right hand nor to the left: by going after any el to **serve** it."
- **Yehoshua (Joshua) 24:15** "But if it seems evil to you **serve** Yahweh, then **CHOOSE** for yourselves **this day** whom you will **serve**- whether the elohim your fathers served **ON THE OTHER SIDE** of the river; Euphrates, or the elohim of the Amorites, in whose land **YOU NOW LIVE; BUT AS FOR ME AND MY HOUSE: WE WILL SERVE YAHWEH!"**

In light of these Scriptures, it is very clear Yahweh does NOT want us to **serve** other elohim or idols and He cannot be expressed by any images it violates the second commandment of the TEN WORDS given at Mt. Sinai from Yahweh's own mouth and finger. These warnings are all repeated in the Brit Chadasha (Renewed Covenant).

I want you to notice also that to **serve** someone does involve a choice of our own volition or will. We all have a free will that was given to us by Yahweh and we have the right and freedom to exercise that free will in our service to Him or to other elohim. He desires us to willingly serve him from all our heart in love and fear, and obey Him because of that expression of free will. This is uncomplicated if we really LOVE Him. Yahshua said, "If you LOVE me, you will keep my commandments." The option is ours to make freely, as Renewed Covenant Yisra'el, just as it was with the Yisra'elites in the *TaNak*.

What is Idolatry?

"But I do not worship or **serve** idols! That was something they did in the Bible days. That isn't for today! I am a lot smarter than that!" I hear you protest. Let us examine together some definitions of idolatry and see if the fit today's society and religious rites.

- ***The Encyclopedia Judaica, Vol.8, pages 1231-1232; The Biblical Injunction against Idolatry.*** The Biblical injunction against idolatry comprises three more or less separate matters: the worship of idols, the worship of Elohim with pagan rites, and the making of idols. The Biblical injunction against idol worship includes: 1) idol worship conforming to pagan rituals (Ex.20: 5; Deut.12: 30; cf.Sanh.61b); 2) bowing down (Ex.34: 14) offering sacrifice to another elohim (i.e. to idols Ex.22: 19), which according to rabbis, includes the performance of any of the rituals that form a part of the cult prescribed for the service of YHWH.

This quote reflects the actual Scriptural standpoint of idolatry. The Bible conceives idolatry not merely as the worshipping of images but as the worshipping of anything, real, or imaginary, other than YHWH Himself. This is implicit in the second commandment (**Ex. 20: 3**).

The injunction against worshipping YHWH with the pagan rites (**Deut.12: 31; c.f. Nahmanides ad loc.**) reflects the Biblical view that Yahweh should be worshipped according to His will as revealed in the Torah.

- ***The Horizon Book of Daily Life in Ancient Rome, by Lionel Casson, 1975, page 90,*** "Like the Jewish faith from which it sprang, it was proudly exclusive: the worshipper of

Christ would not include other deities in his prayers or bend his knees to the image of a Roman emperor."

The early talmidim of Yahshua clashed with the pagan governmental authorities and during the period we are surveying they suffered frequent and cruel persecution from them.

- **Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, page 569 : idol-a-try/** 1) the worship of a physical object as a g-d 2)immoderate attachment or devotion to something

Read very carefully all these definitions and let the *Ruach HaKodesh* reveal **truth** to your heart .Let me once again ask you some questions, as I do with every issue to our congregation, to challenge your belief system that you have been subjected to under the typical churchman's teachings, doctrines, and theology from their particular denominational stand.

1. Do you try to worship Yahweh using words that are names of false pagan idols or the elohim of other cultures of Biblical times (such as LORD, God, Christ, and Jesus)?
2. Do you celebrate the false Roman/pagan holidays instituted the popes and Constantine, that have their roots, rites, and practices in pagan idol worship (such as Xmass, Easter/Ishtar, Valentine's Day, and Halloween/All Saints Day)?
3. Do you worship on a day that reflects Sun worship (SUNday); not the Scriptural Seventh Day Sabbath instituted by Yahweh in the book of Bereshith (Genesis)?
4. Are you trying to use any of the above rites or names to worship Yahweh, instead of worshipping Him according to His will as revealed in the Scriptures?
5. Can you honestly say that after looking at the definitions of idolatry given from the above sources, you are free from idol worship?

I did not write this study to condemn or even judge others in their walk with Yahweh. I simply want you to start thinking for yourself and research the Scriptures FOR YOURSELF .The worst enemy the satan has is an informed and knowledgeable Believer who knows the Scriptures in its original languages, who does not WANT to be deceived by any men or angels (messenger) of light. Remember that these are choices you are making on your own. But, as the song by Dylan says:

"You have to serve somebody. It may be the devil, or it may be [Yahweh]. But you are going to have to serve somebody! "