

What is Idolatry?

In simplistic terms, idolatry is elevating something or someone that we believe will bring happiness, peace, fulfillment, contentment, and all the things only Aluah (God) is supposed to provide us, which in essence is the definition of a false Aluah (God).

Aluah (God)? In Christianity and Judaism, the creator and ruler of the universe and source of all moral authority; (in certain other religions) the supreme being, Jesus, A superhuman being or spirit worshiped as having power over nature or human fortunes; a deity. Islam calls their God, Allah. In Hebrew Aluah means God, Alahym means Gods. To Hebrew Scripture believers Aluah (God) is **אֱלֹהִים** (Yahuah) alone!

And he received the gold from their hand and fashioned it with a graving tool and made a golden calf. And they said, "These are your Alahym (gods), O Yisrael, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!" **Exodus 32:4**

See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Messiah. **Colossians 2:8**

In that day mankind will cast away their idols of silver and their idols of gold, which they made for themselves to worship... **Isaiah 2:20**

Then you will defile your carved idols overlaid with silver and your gold-plated metal images. You will scatter them as unclean things. You will say to them, "Be gone!" **Isaiah 30:22**

For in that day everyone shall cast away his idols of silver and his idols of gold, which your hands have sinfully made for you. **Isaiah 31:7**

For all the Alahym (gods) of the peoples are idols, but **אֱלֹהִים** (Yahuah) made the Shamyim (heavens). **1 Chronicles 16:26**

"What is in your mind shall never happen – the thought, 'Let us be like the nations, like the tribes of the countries, and worship wood and stone.' **Ezekiel 20:32**

Truly, O **אֱלֹהִים** (Yahuah), the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the nations and their lands, And have cast their Alahym (gods) into the fire. For they were no Alahym (gods), but the work of men's hands, wood and stone. Therefore they were destroyed. **Isaiah 37:18-19**

Idolatry is fashioning and forming false Alahym (gods), or idols, out of one's own vain imaginations. Indeed, idols are really always imaginary, existing solely in the human mind and thoughts. Again by inspiration of the Ruach (Spirit), in another place, Paul states categorically that those possessing true Spiritual knowledge and understanding Therefore, as to the eating of food offered to Idols, we know that "an idol has no real existence," and that "there is no Aluah (God) but one." **1 Corinthians 8:4**

All who fashion idols are nothing, and the things they delight in do not profit. Their witnesses neither see nor know, that they may be put to shame. Who fashions a Alahym (god) or casts an idol that is profitable for nothing? Behold, all his companions shall be put to shame, and the craftsmen are only human. Let them all assemble, let them stand forth. They shall be terrified; they shall be put to shame together. The ironsmith takes a cutting tool and works it over the coals. He fashions it with hammers and works it with his strong arm. He becomes hungry, and his strength fails; he drinks no water and is faint. **Isaiah 44:9-12**

"What profit is an idol when its maker has shaped it, a metal image, a teacher of lies? For its maker trusts in his own creation when he makes speechless idols! **Habakkuk 2:18**

The worship of deity in a visible form, whether the images to which homage is paid are symbolical representations of the true Aluah (God) or of the false divinities which have been made the objects of worship in his stead. An idol, in the pagan mind, was a living and feeling being. The idol was not necessarily equivalent to the god; the god had a separate (though not independent) existence from the idol. The god's spirit dwelt within the idol and was identified with it. The god was not confined to a single idol or a single shape; rather his spirit dwelt within many idols of varied shapes.

In the original form of idolatry, no one actually believed that their idols were Alahym (gods); idol-worshippers understood that their idols were only representations of a god, or of God. Idols are "worshipped in respect of its being an image of a thing that is an intermediary between ourselves and what we perceive as being God."

Idolatry in actuality then is merely the product of human thinking, manufactured in the factory of the human mind. It is the act of creating an abstract Alahym (god) within the deep, dark void of human reasoning. At bottom, all idolatry is "mind-idolatry," for it is primarily in the mind that all idolatry exists.

"Let us beware that we in our pride accept the erroneous notion that idolatry consists only in kneeling before visible objects of adoration, and that civilized peoples are therefore free from it."

"The essence of idolatry is the entertainment of thoughts about Aluah (God) that are unworthy of Him. It begins in the mind and may be present where no overt act of worship has taken place. 'When they knew Aluah (God),' wrote Paul, 'they did not honor him as Aluah (God), neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.'"

All false doctrine is, in essence, an assemblage of "wrong ideas and "perverted notions about Aluah (God)" "Wrong ideas about אַיָּהּ (Yahuah) our Aluah (God) are not only the fountain from which the polluted waters of idolatry flow; they are themselves idolatrous," for "polluted waters" is a metaphor evoked in Scripture to represent false teaching.

Idolatry and false teaching are synonymous terms. Idolatry always has associated with it some form of false teaching, and false teaching is always similar to that of idolatry. "The idolater simply imagines things about Aluah (God) and acts as if they were true." In other words, the person engaging in idolatry simply contrives his own doctrine concerning spiritual matters and the composition of "truth," and conducts his life based on those determinations even though they are not in agreement or harmony with the real Truth which emanates from and is defined by אַיָּהּ (Yahuah) as Truth in His Word.

Scripture attacks idolatry on (2) two independent grounds: it violates the Covenant, and it is useless. Since idolatry is specifically forbidden (**Exodus 20:4**), its practice constitutes a violation of the Covenant (**Deuteronomy 31:16, 20; Jeremiah 11:10**). The second argument can be properly understood in light of the belief held by gentiles and many Yisraelites as well that phenomena such as fertility, rain, health, and so on may be controlled by recourse to other gods than אַיָּהּ (Yahuah), or by worship of their images (**Hosea 2:7-14**). Since, according to scripture, אַיָּהּ (Yahuah) is in control of these phenomena, idolatry is useless (**Isaiah 41:23-24; 44:6-21; Jeremiah 10:1-5**). Scripture emphasizes that since idolatry is a violation of the Covenant, it produces negative results; as a punishment אַיָּהּ (Yahuah) will turn nature against the idolaters (**Deuteronomy 11:13-18; 28**).

Idolatry

Image worship or divine honour paid to any created object. Worship of idols. Idolization, fetishization, fetishism, idol worship, adulation, adoration, reverence, veneration, glorification, lionization, hero-worshipping, immoderate attachment or devotion to something, extreme admiration, love, or reverence for something or someone.

The (1st) first and (2nd) second commandments are directed against idolatry of every form. You shall have no other Alahym (gods) before me. **Exodus 20:3** אַיָּהּ (Yahuah) tells us we are to have no other "Alahym or Mighty Ones" before or in place of Him. His desire for us is that we have NO substitutes for Him, or His Word. Now let's notice what is said next, to show examples of substitutes:

You shall not make unto you any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in Shamyim (heavens) above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: **Exodus 20:4**

אַיָּהּ (Yahuah) gives us the commandment, and then desires to test us in this area. He watches to see whether man will receive אַיָּהּ (Yahuah)'s Word, as it says; or whether man will create a substitute for His Word, by substituting man's own words, definitions, and his own understanding, instead of following אַיָּהּ (Yahuah)'s simple instructions.

Beware that you act corruptly by making a carved image for yourselves, in the form of any figure, the likeness of Male (Jesus, Dead Saints, etc...) or Female (Mother Mary),¹⁷ the likeness of any animal that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged bird (Doves) that flies in the air,¹⁸ the likeness of anything that creeps on the ground, the likeness of any Fish that is in the water under the earth. **Deuteronomy 4:16-18**

Looking at these word definitions, we see that an idol is simply a likeness or image that man would use as a substitute for **אֱלֹהִים** (Yahuah), or as a substitute for His Provision, or for His Word. When we choose the simplicity of His Word, and what it actually says, we are choosing Him. But when we choose some other religious idea or notion of what His Word says, we are choosing a substitute for His Word. Choosing a substitute for **אֱלֹהִים** (Yahuah), or a substitute for His Word, His barachah (blessing) or His provision, is the very essence of idolatry!

In like manner, when we covet, we are showing disdain for the daily Provision of **אֱלֹהִים** (Yahuah). In so doing, we create a substitute of our own making, choosing our own provision instead of **אֱלֹהִים** (Yahuah)'s provision for us. We are thus told in (**Colossians 3:5**) that covetousness is idolatry. Now we know why this is true.

In New Testament usage, we see the term 'things sacrificed unto idols' used in (2) two different examples. One use of the term (as seen in several places in **1 Corinthians**) references the physical 'leftovers' from food that had been part of a 'sacrifice' of (pagan in origin) religious rituals. Paul exhorts us to refrain from eating these leftovers, where eating them may cause our Brother to stumble.

The 2nd New Covenant (Testament) use of the term 'things sacrificed unto idols' (as seen in **Revelation 2:14, 20**) refers to the 'idol sacrifice,' a man-made 'substitute' for the "true Food and true Drink" that is from **אֱלֹהִים** (Yahuah). Scripture draws this analogy so as to give **אֱלֹהִים** (Yahuah)'s people instruction in what **אֱלֹהִים** (Yahuah) thinks of the modern-day, man-made substitute for **אֱלֹהִים** (Yahuah)'s true 'Passover (Easter).' When we substitute a man-made ritual in exchange for obeying the Truth of **אֱלֹהִים** (Yahuah)'s Word, we are creating an idol of substitution.

Hebraism strongly prohibits any form of idolatry. Hebraism holds that idolatry is not limited to the worship of an idol itself, but also worship involving any artistic representations of Aluah (God), the Messiah, the Ruach HaKodesh or any image associated with anything he described in **Deuteronomy 4:16-18**. In addition it is forbidden to derive benefit from anything dedicated to idolatry.

Many pagans labeled Hebrews as atheists and anti-social because of their refusal to worship other alahym (gods). "Whosoever denies idols is called a Hebrew"!

The definition of idolatry, according to Webster, is "the worship of idols or excessive devotion to, or reverence for some person or thing." An idol is anything that replaces the one, true Aluah (God), **אֱלֹהִים** (Yahuah). The most prevalent form of idolatry in scripture was the worship of images that were thought to embody various pagan deities, i.e. Baal (The Lord), Ashtoreth (Ishtar, i.e..Easter), Molech and today in the

form of Jesus (Jesus).

As we look at these Hebrew word definitions, we notice that there are at least 14 Hebrew words translated directly into the English word 'idol,' each having its own definition. These 14 words originate from 8 other Hebrew words, making 22 words all together, revealing a great deal more than if we look at the single English word 'idol.'

By looking at these Hebrew word definitions, we can actually see the full description of the nature of idols. We can also see their use, and the results of having them. Let's look at a few of these definitions by groups.

As we look in the Reference below, here is what we see among the many Hebrew word definitions for the English word 'idol':

- Some definitions reflect the nature of their use, such as to "revere as mighty, worship, and healing."
- Some definitions reflect a cause-and-effect relationship, such as "Do not do [Action 1], lest you do [Action 2]," – warning us that doing [Action 1] inevitably leads us to doing [Action 2].
- Some definitions reflect the results of having them, such as "vexing, fear, trembling, pain, sorrow, and distress." These appear to describe the long-term results these objects have on their owners.
- Still other definitions reflect **אֵימָה** (Yahuah)'s estimation of them, such as "worthless, good for nothing, things of nought, wallowing, filthy, detestable, and abominable."

All these Hebrew definitions reveal some of the great depth of meaning of the various Hebrew words translated into the single English word 'idol.'

"The English word "idol", which expresses contempt or disapproval, reflects several different Hebrew words. Some of these are neutral terms describing the manufacture, e.g. Pasil or Pesil, Strong's#: 6459 an idol, (carved) image," Gillul, Strong's#: 1544 an idol/idols. Gillul first occurs at **Leviticus 26:30**. Ezekiel uses it 38 times beginning at 6:4. The word Gillul is a contemptuous term which the prophet employs frequently. Also Strong's#: 8655. Teraphim (a kind of idol) perhaps household idol and Maccekah Strong's#: 4541.(cast) image, molten metal, or image."

Other Hebrew words for statues of deities are intentionally contemptuous and therefore are appropriately translated "idols," e.g., 'elilim, "powerless ones," gilul, "pellets of dung," and shiqqutsim, "shameful things."

Idolatry is (1) one of Hebraism's (3) three "deadly sins," which the individual would rather give up their life, than violate.

The uncreated Maker

The uncreated Maker is treated as something made, conceived by human thought. So, reducing something to physical form is not of the essence of idolatry. Idolatry does not require a physical idol.

From the beginning, **יהוה** (Yahuah)'s covenant with Yisrael was based on exclusive worship of Him alone (**Exodus 20:3; Deuteronomy 5:7**). The Israelites were not even to mention the names of false Alahym (gods) (**Exodus 23:13**), because to do so would acknowledge their existence and give credence to their power and influence over the people.

Yisrael was forbidden to intermarry with other cultures who embraced false Alahym (gods), because **יהוה** (Yahuah) knew this would lead to compromise. The book of Hosea uses the imagery of adultery to describe Yisrael's continual chasing after other Alahym (gods), like an unfaithful wife chases after other men. The history of Yisrael is a sad chronicle of idol worship, punishment, restoration and forgiveness, followed by a return to idolatry. The books of 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, and 1 & 2 Chronicles reveal this destructive pattern. The Tanakh (Old Testament) prophets endlessly prophesied dire consequences for Yisrael if they continued in their idolatry. Mostly, they were ignored until it was too late and **יהוה** (Yahuah)'s wrath against idol worship was poured out on the nation. But **יהוה** (Yahuah) is a merciful Aluah (God), and He never failed to forgive and restore them when they repented and sought His forgiveness.

In reality, idols are impotent blocks of stone or wood, and their power exists only in the minds of the worshipers. The idol of the Alahym (god) Dagon was twice knocked to the floor by **יהוה** (Yahuah) to show the Philistines just who was Aluah (God). **1 Samuel 5:1-5**

The "contest" between **יהוה** (Yahuah) and His prophet Elijah and the 450 prophets of Ba'al (The Lord) on Mount Carmel is a dramatic example of the power of the true Aluah (God) and the impotence of false Alahym (gods) **1 Kings 18:19-40**. The testimony of Scripture is that **יהוה** (Yahuah) alone is worthy of worship. Idol worship robs **יהוה** (Yahuah) of the honor that is rightfully His, and that is something He will not tolerate. **Isaiah 42:8**

Even today there are religions that bow before statues and icons, a practice forbidden by **יהוה** (Yahuah)'s Word. The significance **יהוה** (Yahuah) places upon it is reflected in the fact that the (1st) first of the (10) Ten Commandments refers to idolatry: "You shall have no other Alahym (gods) before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in Shamyim (heavens) above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, **יהוה** (Yahuah) your Aluah (God), am a jealous Aluah (God), punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me" **Exodus**

20:3-5

Idolatry extends beyond the worship of idols and images and false Alahym (gods). Our modern idols are many and varied. Even for those who do not bow physically before a statue or a cross, idolatry is a matter of the heart – pride, self-centeredness, greed, gluttony, a love for possessions and ultimately rebellion against **יְהוָה** (Yahuah). Is it any wonder that **יְהוָה** (Yahuah) hates it?

יְהוָה (Yahuah) destroys idols. Even good things can become idols, and while reveling and boasting seem good at the time, it is a grave disservice to idolize anything or anybody. The result is **יְהוָה** (Yahuah)'s wrath, on you and the idol. **יְהוָה** (Yahuah) will not be eclipsed.

2 Kings 18:3-4 Hezekiah did right in the sight of **יְהוָה** (Yahuah)... He broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made, for until then the Israelites had burned incense to it; but he called it Nehushtan [the **Nehushtan** (or Nohestan) (Hebrew: נחשׁתן or הנחשת) was a bronze serpent on a pole which **יְהוָה** (Yahuah) told Moshe (Moses) to erect to protect the Yisraelites who saw it from dying from the bites of the "fiery serpents" which **יְהוָה** (Yahuah) had sent to punish them for speaking against **יְהוָה** (Yahuah) and Moses].

James 4:5 Surely you don't think the Scripture is wrong when it says: the Ruach (spirit) which He sent to live in us wants us for himself alone?

Idols, A Matter of The Heart

James 4:3-4 You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures. **4** You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward **יְהוָה** (Yahuah)? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of **יְהוָה** (Yahuah).

Colossians 3:5-6 Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

Ephesians 5:5 For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Messiah and **יְהוָה** (Yahuah).

Ezekiel 6:8-9 However, I will leave a remnant, for you will have those who escaped the sword among the nations when you are scattered among the countries. **9** "Then those of you who escape will remember Me among the nations to which they will be carried captive, how I have been hurt by their adulterous hearts which turned away from Me, and by their eyes which played the harlot after their idols; and they will loathe themselves in their own sight for the evils which they have committed, for all their abominations.

2 Kings 17:15 They despised his statutes and his covenant that he made with their fathers and the warnings that he gave them. They went after false idols and became false, and they followed the nations that were around them, concerning whom אַחַז (Yahuah) had commanded them, that they should not do like them.

2 Kings 17:40-41 They would not listen, however, but persisted in their former practices. Even while these people were worshipping אַחַז (Yahuah), they were serving their idols. To this day their children and grandchildren continue to do as their fathers did.

1 Corinthians 10:7 Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written: "The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in pagan revelry (lively and noisy festivities, especially when these involve drinking a large amount of alcohol)."

1 Samuel 15:23 For rebellion is as the sin of divination (The word divination comes from the Latin *divinare*, meaning "to foresee" or "to be inspired by a god." To practice divination is to uncover hidden knowledge by supernatural means. It is associated with the occult and involves fortune-telling or soothsaying), and presumption is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of אַחַז (Yahuah), he has also rejected you from being king.

Ezekiel 8:12 He said to me, "Son of man, have you seen what the elders of the house of Yisrael are doing in the darkness, each at the shrine of his own idol?"

2 Peter 2:18 For they mouth empty, boastful words and, by appealing to the lustful desires of sinful human nature, they entice people who are just escaping from those who live in error.

1 Corinthians 12:1-2 Now about spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed. **2** You know that when you were pagans, you were influenced and led astray to mute idols.

Isaiah 41:29 "See, they are all false! Their deeds amount to nothing; their molten images are but wind and confusion."

Jeremiah 2:5 This is what אַחַז (Yahuah) says: "What fault did your fathers find in me, that they strayed so far from me? They followed worthless idols and became worthless themselves."

Psalms 97:7 All who worship images are put to shame, those who boast in idols...

1 Samuel 12:21 Do not turn away after useless idols. They can do you no good, nor can they rescue you, because they are useless.

Isaiah 57:12-13 "I will expose your righteousness and your works, and they will not benefit you. When you cry out for help, let your collection of idols save you! The wind will carry all of them off, a mere breath will blow them away. But the man who makes me his refuge will inherit the land and possess my Kadosh (holy) mountain."

Isaiah 42:8 "I am **יהוה** (Yahuah); that is my name! I will not give my esteem to another or my Halal (praise) to idols."

Ezekiel 6:4-6 "... I will slay your people in front of your idols. I will lay the dead bodies of the Yisraelites in front of their idols, and I will scatter your bones around your altars... your idols smashed and ruined, your incense altars broken down, and what you have made wiped out."

1 Corinthians 6:9-10 Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of **יהוה** (Yahuah)? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor male prostitutes, nor homosexual offenders, nor thieves, nor the greedy... **Romans 1:23-25**

Ephesians 5:5 For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person, (that is, an idolater), has any inheritance in the kingdom of Messiah and of **יהוה** (Yahuah).

Spiritual Adultery

Isaiah 57:5-8 "You burn with lust among the oaks and under every spreading tree... The idols... are your portion; they, they are your lot... You have made your bed on a high and lofty hill... Behind your doors and your doorposts you have put your pagan symbols. Forsaking me, you uncovered your bed, you climbed into it and opened it wide..."

Ezekiel 23:7, 29-30 She (Yisrael) gave herself as a prostitute... and defiled herself with all the idols of everyone she lusted after... They will deal with you in hatred and take away everything you have worked for. They will leave you naked and bare, and the shame of your prostitution will be exposed. Your lewdness and promiscuity have brought this upon you, because you lusted after the nations and defiled yourself with their idols.

Idolatry "Inside" The Temple Of יהוה (Yahuah)

Ezekiel 8:5-6 ..."Son of man, look toward the north." So I looked, and in the entrance north of the gate of the altar I saw this idol of jealousy. And he said to me, "Son of man, do you see what they are doing, the utterly detestable things the house of Yisrael is doing here, things that will drive me far from my sanctuary? But you will see things that are even more detestable."

Ezekiel 8:7-10 Then he brought me to the entrance to the court. I looked, and I saw a hole in the wall. He said to me, "Son of man, now dig into the wall." So I dug into the wall and saw a doorway there. And he said to me, "Go in and see the wicked and detestable things they are doing here." So I went in and looked, and I saw portrayed all over the walls all kinds of crawling things and detestable animals and all the idols of the house of Yisrael.

Ezekiel 8:12,15 He said to me, "Son of man, have you seen what the elders of the house of Yisrael are doing in the darkness, each at the shrine of his own idol? They say, 'אֱלֹהִים (Yahuah) does not see us...' He said to me, "Do you see this, son of man? You will see things that are even more detestable than this."

Ezekiel 8:16-18 He then brought me into the inner court of the house of אֱלֹהִים (Yahuah), and there at the entrance to the temple, between the portico and the altar, were about (25) twenty-five men. With their backs toward the temple of אֱלֹהִים (Yahuah) and their faces toward the east, they were bowing down to the sun in the east. He said to me, "Have you seen this, son of man? Is it a trivial matter for the house of Yahudah (Judah) to do the detestable things they are doing here?... Look at them putting the branch to their nose! (Often found in pagan worship was the practice of gathering a branch or bundle of twigs and then the worshiper would put them before his face near the mouth and nose as he prostrated himself and prayed to his idol). Therefore I will deal with them in anger; I will not look on them with pity or spare them. Although they shout in my ears, I will not listen to them."

2 Corinthians 6:16 What agreement is there between the temple of אֱלֹהִים (Yahuah) and idols? For we are the temple of the living Aluah (God). As אֱלֹהִים (Yahuah) has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their Aluah (God), and they will be my people."

Jonah 2:8 Those who pay regard to vain idols forsake their hope of steadfast love.

Ezekiel 14:3-6 And the word of אֱלֹהִים (Yahuah) came to me, saying, 3"Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their hearts and have put right before their faces the stumbling block of their iniquity. Should I be consulted by them at all? 4"Therefore speak to them and tell them, "Thus says אֱלֹהִים (Yahuah) Aluah (God), "Any man of the house of Yisrael who sets up his idols in his heart, puts right before his face the stumbling block of his iniquity, and then comes to the prophet, אֱלֹהִים (Yahuah) will be brought to give him an answer in the matter in view of the multitude of his idols, 5 in order to lay hold of the hearts of the house of Yisrael who are estranged from Me through all their idols. "

1 Peter 4:3 For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do--living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry.

Ezekiel 36:25 "I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols."

Ezekiel 37:23 "They will no longer defile themselves with their idols and vile images or with any of their offenses, for I will save them from all their sinful backsliding, and I will cleanse them. They will be my people, and I will be their Aluah (God)."

1 John 5:21 Dear children, keep yourselves from idols.

1 Corinthians 10:14 Therefore, my dear friends, flee from idolatry.

The Scriptures tell us that anyone who chooses to serve **יהוה** (Yahuah), and to receive His barachah (blessings), must not make for themselves any graven image, nor enter in to any form of idolatry. Because human nature always tries to justify itself, man has twisted what the Scriptures actually say, by re-defining graven images and idols to accommodate his own actions. But **יהוה** (Yahuah) has made it very clear to us. He has given us many examples in Scripture, to illustrate what a graven image is, and what an idol is.

What is a Graven Image?

The phrase “graven image” comes from the King James Version and is first found in **Exodus 20:4** in the (2nd) second of the (10) Ten Commandments. The Hebrew word translated “graven image” Strong's #:6459. Pesel means “an Idol or Image.” A graven image is an image carved out of stone, wood, or metal. It could be a statue of a person (Jesus, Mother Mary, a Dead Saint) or animal (Dove or a Fish), or a relief carving in a wall or pole. It is differentiated from a molten image, which is melted metal poured into a cast. Abstract Asherah poles, carved wooden images of Ba'al (The Lord), or even a Cross of the savior god Tammuz (Jesus) covered in gold leaf, and etchings of Alahym (gods) accompanying Egyptian hieroglyphics are all graven images.

Danger in Our Homes

One of the greatest dangers to Believers today is the action of bringing certain objects into the home. Scripture tells us specifically that any house that has within it an object that **יהוה** (Yahuah) considers an 'abomination' will come under a curse:

And you shall not bring an abominable thing into your house and become devoted to destruction like it. You shall utterly detest and abhor it, for it is devoted to destruction.

Deuteronomy 7:26

When we disobey the clear Word of Scripture, and bring an abomination, a cursed object into our home or office, the above Scripture tells us we become a cursed thing like the object. The result is that we come under the same curse the object is under.

The effects of these curses are varied. These effects include many chronic troubles or accidents, chronic sicknesses, chronic disease, chronic nightmares or mental attacks, constant argument, continued disobedience or rebelliousness, fearfulness, anxiety, and many others. One symptom a Believer may notice is that when idols are present in the home or office, prayers may be difficult to speak, or there seems to be a lack of **יהוה** (Yahuah)'s presence and peace in the home, or a lack of understanding and/or acceptance of **יהוה** (Yahuah)'s Word.

The ultimate effect, however, can be seen in the example of Achan, who took an accursed thing and hid it in his tent. As a result, the entire camp of Yisrael was cursed,

with the result that the entire congregation failed to overcome, or prevail, in the battle against Ai. **Yahusha (Joshua) 6:18-7:12**

As the apostle Paul tells us (**1 Corinthians 10:11**), these things happened to Yisrael for our examples, and are written for our admonition in these last days.

Thus the example of Achan tells us that we too [our family; our whole congregation] shall also fail to overcome against Ai ["iniquity"] if we bring the accursed object into our tent, our house, our homes!

We recall that there is a long list of curses that come as a result of disobedience, starting in **Deuteronomy 28:15**. "But We are 'New Covenant' Believers," many will protest. "We have been taught that idols and the curses in Deuteronomy are of no consequence to saved, Born-Again, New Covenant Believers."

Yes, **וְיָשׁוּעַ** (Yahusha), HaMashiach (The Messiah) has indeed redeemed us from the curse pronounced by the Torah [instruction/Law], having been made a curse for us (**Galatians 3:13**). But Messiah also tells us, after He has made us whole, the same words He spoke to the woman taken in adultery, and the same words He said to the man healed on the Sabbath day: "Go, and sin no more" (**John 8:11; John 5:14**).

We have simply not understood what **וְיָשׁוּעַ** (Yahusha) meant, when He said, "Go, and sin [transgress the Torah] no more, lest a worse thing come to you." **1 John 3:4; John 5:14**

Idols as a New Covenant Issue

Greek eidōlon originally meant "Image" or "Fantasy." By the time of the Septuagint the term was used for images of gods. "Idolatry" is literally "image worship.

Because most New Covenant Believers today are not aware of the dangers of graven images and idols, we will begin with some New Testament warnings. These Scripture passages reveal and highlight many of the potential dangers to Born-Again, New Covenant Believers. These New Testament passages reveal that the issue of 'idols' is indeed a New Covenant issue.

There are many, many warnings given to Believers throughout the New Covenant (Testament). These warnings alert us to the many dangers that can actually prevent one from entering in to the Kingdom as part of the Bride, and they are spelled out in detail in Scripture. The fact that these dangers apply to 'New Covenant' Believers can be easily seen, for they are specific warnings in the New Covenant (Testament) writings, and they are given to 'saved' or Born-again Believers.

Many Believers today, however, have thought that these New Covenant (Testament) warnings are for 'unsaved' people. And for this reason, multitudes of New Covenant Believers today continue to ignore these warnings, with the result that they will be

found among the Foolish Virgins: They will not be ready when the Bridegroom comes and they will not enter in with the Bride. **Matthew 25:10**

The Little Flock, however, will be found among the Wise Virgins: They will see these warnings in Scripture. They will search out, and discover these issues in detail, and will take heed to walk accordingly!

Let's look at the following warnings, all given to Born-Again, New Covenant Believers:

In the New Testament the term idolatry is used to designate covetousness. Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. **Colossians 3:5**

For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Messiah and **יְהוָה** (Yahuah). **Ephesians 5:5**.

Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry. **1 Corinthians 10:14**

Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen. **1 John 5:21**

But I have a few things against you, because you have them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Yisrael, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. **Revelation 2:14**

In **Revelation 2:14**, the church of Pergamum is scolded for tolerating the "teaching of Balaam," or the "doctrine of Balaam." Balaam's name is also invoked in **2 Peter 2:15** and **Jude 1:11**, both warnings about the conduct and message of false teachers. All of these are references to the Tanakh (Old Testament) character of Balaam, who tried unsuccessfully to prophesy against the people of Yisrael **Numbers 22**. He eventually advised King Balak of Moab, the enemy of Yisrael, to pursue a campaign of seduction against them **Numbers 31:8**. The doctrine of Balaam is not only a serious problem, but a devious one. When the frontal assault failed, Balaam took a back-door approach.

Balaam, a prophet from Mesopotamia, was willing to use his talents for illicit purposes. Even though he knew Balak was **יְהוָה** (Yahuah)'s enemy, he tried to sell his prophetic gifts to help him. When that didn't work, Balaam counseled Balak on the most effective way to weaken Yisrael. This was through seduction, using Moabite and Midianite women to tempt the Yisraelites into sexual relationships and into pagan rituals. The Israelites who participated brought **יְהוָה** (Yahuah)'s judgment upon themselves **Numbers 25:1-9**.

According to **2 Peter 2:15**, Balaam's "way" is a choice to promote falsehood for financial reasons. According to **Jude 1:11**, Balaam's "error" was his willingness to accommodate pagan beliefs out of greed. **Jude 1:4** also refers to the sin of those "who pervert the mercy of our Aluah (God) into a license for immorality." One trait of false

teachers is that they attempt to turn believers liberty into a “freedom” to be promiscuous **Romans 14:1-5**.

Putting these ideas together gives a clear view of the doctrine of Balaam. It is the attitude that one can be fully cooperative with the world and still serve **אֱלֹהִים** (Yahuah). The doctrine of Balaam teaches compromise, wanting believers to forget they are called to be Kadash (Separate/Set Apart) and Kadosh (holy) **Leviticus 20:26; 1 Peter 1:2**; the doctrine of Balaam makes believers indistinguishable from the unbelieving world **Matthew 5:13**. The doctrine of Balaam is a belief that “a little sin” doesn’t hurt, we are under Grace, no one can be perfect or without sin, especially if there’s some financial or personal benefit involved **1 Timothy 6:5**. A person following the doctrine of Balaam is willing to compromise his beliefs for the sake of economics. He acts to enable sinful behaviors for personal gain or even participate in them **Romans 1:32**.

In practical terms, the teaching or doctrine of Balaam is the view that Believers can – or even should – compromise their convictions for the sake of popularity, money, sexual gratification, or personal gain. It’s the attitude that treats sin as “no big deal.”

Notwithstanding I have a few things against you, because you suffer with that woman Jezebel, which calls herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. **Revelation 2:20**

Notice the above warning of Paul in **1 Corinthians 10:14**, who very specifically warns the New Covenant Believers to flee from idolatry; and the warning of John in **1 John 5:21**, who warns the Believers to 'keep yourselves from idols.' Likewise notice the warning of **אֱלֹהִים** (Yahusha) in the above Revelation passages, where **אֱלֹהִים** (Yahusha) says He will have a "few things against" those who continue in sins related to idols.

We are also told in context of the passages in Revelation chapters 2 and 3, that these 'idolatry' issues can prevent one from overcoming. We are also told in **Revelation 21:7**, that in order to receive our full inheritance, we must overcome all things. So if we want to overcome all things, we must know what to avoid, and what we must overcome. And this means we must understand – and overcome – the idolatry issues, including those of Revelation chapters 2 and 3!

New Covenant Life: Turning from Idols

There are many passages of Scripture that show the importance of beginning the process of removing idols from one's life. Here is one passage:

"...how you turned to **אֱלֹהִים** (Yahuah) from idols to serve the living and true Aluah (God)..." **1 Thessalonians 1:9**

Here we see that turning "to אַיָּאֵל (Yahuah) from idols" is for the purpose of serving אַיָּאֵל (Yahuah). This verse shows a basic Scriptural principle: that Turning comes before Serving. So unless we fully turn from having these idols, we cannot serve אַיָּאֵל (Yahuah).

Thus if we would truly turn from these objects, we must find out what they are from a Scriptural point of view. And, as we shall see in the Hebrew definitions, we need not physically 'bow down' to an object, for it to be considered a forbidden object, or idol.

Here is another passage, and it tells us something many today have not yet realised: You know that you were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as you were led. **1 Corinthians 12:2**

Here we see that it is common for Gentiles to be carried away to idols. Notice Paul states that you 'were' ("had been") Gentiles. Does that mean they were no longer Gentiles?

Paul gives us the answer. He tells us we are no longer to live and walk as Gentiles **Ephesians 4:17**. What Paul is saying, is that if we are going to walk in, and embrace the Way of אַיָּאֵל (Yahuah), we must abandon the many idolatries the Gentiles hold dear!

Notice that Paul states "As you were led." Beloved, many of us as Gentile Believers are still 'being led' by spiritual leaders today who still live and walk as Gentiles. The result is seen in the above passage – that many are still being "carried away unto these dumb idols." Many Pastors and spiritual Leaders today are simply ignorant of what the Scriptures actually say about the dangers of idols.

The above Scripture passages, and many others, reveal some of the potential dangers to Born-Again, New Covenant Believers. With warnings like these, we would do well to find out exactly what Scripture tells us about idols.

New Covenant (Testament) Idol

As for the Greek words translated 'idol,' the Greek word definitions appear to show dependency on the definitions of the Hebrew words in Scripture. It appears that the New Testament writers must have assumed the Readers had understanding of the Hebrew terms and Torah words, because they used the Hebrew word understandings to communicate these New Covenant truths!

One Greek word translated idol has the meaning of 'likeness,' and is based on the Greek word "to know." This reveals to us many related ideas, telling us that idolatry is similar to a man and woman 'knowing' one another, as seen in **Genesis 4:1**. Thus we see the connection between idols and fornication and adultery, where the use of an idol constitutes knowing someone other than אַיָּאֵל (Yahuah) and **וַיָּאֵל (Yahusha)**.

This same word meaning 'likeness' also has a meaning of knowing with the eyes, and with the senses, and not with the heart. This is how many today know **אֱלֹהִים** (Yahuah)'s Word, a result of walking by sight, and not by Amanah (Faith). The end result of this living by the natural senses, and not by the Ruach (Spirit), is that one becomes 'carnal' (depending on the fleshly senses). Paul tells us the reason for this carnality, however, is because the carnal person is not subject to, not yielded to obedience to the 'Torah' (Instructions) **Romans 8:7**. Paul's insight, and his message to us today, signals an exhortation for us to return to simply walking by Amanah (Faith), and of simple obedience to Torah.

The word "**Torah**" in Hebrew is derived from the root **הָרָה**, which in the hif'il conjugation means "to guide/teach" (**Leviticus 10:11**). The meaning of the word is therefore "teaching", "doctrine", or "**Instruction**"; the commonly accepted "law" gives a wrong impression.

Idols of Substitution of **אֱלֹהִים (Yahuah)'s Word**

"...rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as ... idolatry <08655>. Because you have rejected the word of **אֱלֹהִים** (Yahuah), he has also rejected you from being king." **1 Samuel 15:23**

Notice that in this passage, Saul did what he thought best, and not what **אֱלֹהִים** (Yahuah)'s Word said. Saul's stubbornness was his rejection of **אֱלֹהִים** (Yahuah)'s Word, which is as idolatry. Notice that Saul's stubbornness in rejecting **אֱלֹהִים** (Yahuah)'s Word is considered idolatry, even though there was no 'worship' or 'bowing down' involved.

Incidentally, **אֱלֹהִים** (Yahuah)'s Word to Saul, in rejecting him as king, is His Word to us today. Do we want to rule and reign with Messiah? Then we had better not reject **אֱלֹהִים** (Yahuah)'s Word!

Saul, in his stubbornness, rejected **אֱלֹהִים** (Yahuah)'s Word, replacing what it actually said with a substitute of his own understanding, thus creating an idol of the heart. Now notice in the (2) two following passages how we too can do the same, if we follow this same pattern of rejecting what the Word of **אֱלֹהִים** (Yahuah) actually says, in exchange for our own understanding of what it says:

You shall not make unto yourself any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in Shamuiim (heavens) above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: **Exodus 20:4**

Here **אֱלֹהִים** (Yahuah) tells us not to make a particular shape of object. But as we see in the word definitions, the many meanings of the Hebrew word translated 'make,' Strong's number #: 06213, include the ideas of "do, make, fashion, acquire, have, maintain, prepare," and a number of additional meanings.

You shall not bow down yourself to them, nor serve (Strong's #: 05647) them: for I **אֱלֹהִים** (Yahuah) your Aluah (God) am a jealous Aluah (God), visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the (3rd) third and (4th) fourth generation of them that hate me. **Exodus 20:5**

As we look at what verse 4 actually says, many would say, "But I do not bow down to it, as verse 5 warns – so perhaps it is acceptable to 'make, fashion, acquire, or have' the object in my possession, in my home or office."

This is a grave error, to think that verse 5 supplies the 'context' for the meaning of verse 4. Instead, notice that **Exodus 20:4** and **Exodus 20:5** each has its own separate, stand-alone "Do not" commands, each containing the Hebrew word 'lo.' This information sheds new light onto these passages, and reveals to us a further depth of meaning.

Thus in verse 4, we are told not to "make, fashion, acquire, or have" the described object – and in verse 5 we are told not to bow down to them, even if they had been "made, fashioned, acquired, or had" by someone else. Each passage is a separate command, each independent of the other for contextual meaning.

Nevertheless, many today will continue to ignore **אֱלֹהִים** (Yahuah)'s Word regarding the Command, "do not make" this described object, and will substitute their own understanding of what this Command is saying. Again, the familiar argument is, "But I am not bowing down to this object, so it's OK to have it." But this way of thinking is exactly what Saul did, and this is exactly why **אֱלֹהִים** (Yahuah) considers stubbornness as the sin of idolatry – when we exalt our own understanding above what **אֱלֹהִים** (Yahuah)'s Word actually says.

So if we reject **אֱלֹהִים** (Yahuah)'s simple and clear Word to us in verse 4, and instead choose to follow our own understanding, thinking "But I do not bow down to it, so perhaps it is acceptable to have," then we are doing as King Saul did. It is idolatry in **אֱלֹהִים** (Yahuah)'s eyes. We have now created an idol, in substituting our 'own understanding' in place of what **אֱלֹהִים** (Yahuah)'s Word actually says.

What verse 4 actually says is, "Do not make, acquire, or have" the described object. Period!

And verse 5 actually says, "Do not bow down to, or serve the objects. Period!"

Now let's look at another feature of these two passages. Not only do verses 4 and 5 give us explicit commands, but they are a classic example of a Scriptural "cause-and-effect" relationship. "Do not do [action 1], because it will inevitably lead us to do [Action 2], which you are also forbidden to do."

The not-so-obvious, hidden cause-and-effect relationship between verse 4 and verse 5 tells us that to make, acquire, or have a forbidden object, inevitably leads to a hidden attachment to them, a bowing down [hidden in our heart, not seen], and a hidden

serving them [hidden in our heart, not seen].

Joshua 24:14-27 “Now, therefore, fear אַיָּהוָה (Yahuah) and serve Him in sincerity and truth; and put away the Alahym (gods) which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve אַיָּהוָה (Yahuah). **15**“If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve אַיָּהוָה (Yahuah), choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the Alahym (gods) which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the Alahym (gods) of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve אַיָּהוָה (Yahuah).”

Deuteronomy 30:11-19 For this commandment which I command you today is not too difficult for you, nor is it out of reach. **12**“It is not in Shamyim (heavens), that you should say, ‘Who will go up to Shamyim (heavens) for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that we may observe it?’ **13**“Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, ‘Who will cross the sea for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that we may observe it?’ **14**“But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may observe it. **15**“See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, and death and adversity; **16** in that I command you today to love אַיָּהוָה (Yahuah) your Aluah (God), to walk in His ways and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His judgments, that you may live and multiply, and that אַיָּהוָה (Yahuah) your Aluah (God) may barach (bless) you in the land where you are entering to possess it. **17**“But if your heart turns away and you will not obey, but are drawn away and worship other Alahym (gods) and serve them, **18** I declare to you today that you shall surely perish. You will not prolong your days in the land where you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess it. **19**“I call Shamyim (heavens) and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the barachah (blessing) and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants, **20** by loving אַיָּהוָה (Yahuah) your Aluah (God), by obeying His voice, and by holding fast to Him; for this is your life and the length of your days, that you may live in the land which אַיָּהוָה (Yahuah) swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them.”

Their idols are silver and gold, the work of human hands. They have mouths, but do not speak; eyes, but do not see. They have ears, but do not hear; noses, but do not smell. They have hands, but do not feel; feet, but do not walk; and they do not make a sound in their throat. Those who make them become like them; so do all who trust in them. **Psalm 115:4-8**

All idolatry of self has at its core the (3) three lusts found in **1 John 2:16**: “For all that is in the world, (1) the lust of the flesh, and (2) the lust of the eyes, and (3) the pride of life, is not of the Father, אַיָּהוָה (Yahuah), but is of the world.” If we are to escape modern idolatry, we have to admit that it is rampant and reject it in all its forms. It is not of אַיָּהוָה (Yahuah), but of HaSatan, and in it we will never find fulfillment. This is the great lie HaSatan has been telling since he first lied to Adam and Eve. Sadly, we are still falling for it. Even more sadly, many churches are propagating it in the

preaching of the health, wealth, and prosperity gospel built on the idol of self-esteem. But we will never find happiness focusing on ourselves. Our hearts and minds must be centered on **אֱלֹהִים** (Yahuah) and on others. This is why when asked what is the greatest commandment, **וַיֹּאמֶר** (Yahusha) replied, "Love **אֱלֹהִים** (Yahuah) your Aluah (God) with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" **Matthew 22:37**.

When we love **אֱלֹהִים** (Yahuah) and others with everything that is in us, there will be no room in our hearts for idolatry.