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Watch Yourself Carefully

4: 15-24

Watch yourself carefully DIG: Ancient peoples often used animal figurines to represent their gods, or characteristics of their gods. In what ways is this an attempt to control or limit these gods? Why would this be of such concern to Ha'Shem? What is the importance of god acting, yet remaining without form, at Horeb (Mount Sinai)? In what ways are the Israelites the image of the unseen God in verse 20? In what way is Moses' inability to cross the Jordan a redemptive suffering for Isra'el (verses 21-24)? How could Moshe's death strengthen their covenant relationship with ADONAI?

REFLECT: In what ways do we attempt to limit or control the LORD? How is this like the function of idols in the ancient world? Whatever is the most important thing in your life can become an idol. Modern-day idols can be sports, family, career, and even the worship of self. Even things that God has given us, and are good, like our family, spouse, children, or career, can become an idol if we are not careful. We need to watch ourselves carefully. Is ADONAI number one in your life, or has He slipped down to number two . . . or three . . . or?

ADONAI made mankind in His image, but idolaters make gods in their own images and thereby cheapen themselves, and insult God.

Watch yourselves carefully since [your parents] saw no form on the day that ADONAI spoke to [them] in Horeb (which is the name used for Mount Sinai in Deuteronomy) out of the midst of the fire (4:15). Since **God** did not represent **Himself** in physical **form**, **Isra'el** was not to represent **Him** in physical **form**. To disobey **Ha'Shem's** commandment in this matter was to be in danger of divine judgment. So, this passage is a detailed commentary on the second commandment (**to see link click [Bm](#) - Do Not Make Idols**).¹²²

Moses reminded this **second generation** from **the Exodus** not replace **YHVH**

with any human creation. **Their** parents had worshiped **idols** during **the wilderness** wanderings (**Exodus 32:1-35; Numbers 25:1-3; Amos 5:25-27; Acts 7:39-43**). Some possible objects that pagans might use in **idolatrous** worship are now given. Examples of most, if not all, of these could be found in the religion of the Canaanites, **the Egyptians** and the Hittites whose **gods** found their way into **Israel**.¹²³ **So, this new generation needed to watch themselves carefully, so that they did not act corruptly and make for themselves an idol in the likeness of any figure - the form of a male or female, the form of any animal that is on the earth, the form of any winged bird that flies in the sky, the form of anything that creeps on the ground, the form of any fish that is in the water under the earth (4:16-18).**

The warning and prohibition then move from the animal world to the cosmic sphere. **The heavenly bodies** were among the most powerful of the deities of the ancient Near East. Hence, the temptation to be enticed by **them**. Therefore, **Moses** reminded **them**, **“Watch yourselves carefully, so that you do not lift up your eyes toward the heavens and see the sun and the moon and the stars - all the heavenly host - and are drawn away and bow down and worship them”** (see the commentary on **Genesis Lw - The Witness of the Stars**). **ADONAI** had **allotted them to all the peoples under all the heavens** for **their** benefit, not that **they** were proper objects of worship (**4:19**). The list of “shapes” that **idols** might take is followed by mention of **all the heavenly hosts**. However, this order precisely reverses the order in the **Genesis** account, where **the heavenly hosts** were created first, then afterwards, **the animals, fish and birds**. The point, being made deliberately through this literary device, is that **idolatry** not only corrupts and diminishes **God’s** redemptive achievement for **His** people, but perverts and turns upside-down the whole created order.¹²⁴

Then **Isra’el’s** special status is described. While the other pagan nations worshiped the sun, moon and stars, **ADONAI had taken Isra’el, and He brought you out of the iron furnace, out of Egypt to be a people for His own inheritance, as you are this day (4:20)**. **YHVH** chose **Abraham** and **his** descendents to bring **His** blessings to the whole world (see the commentary on **Genesis Dt - I Will Bless Those Who Bless You and Whoever Curses You I Will Curse**), and in order to accomplish that important task, **Isra’el** had to be **a separated people**. As **Isra’el’s Redeemer, YHVH** had every right to demand absolute allegiance from **her**, and **Isra’el** had every obligation to give absolute allegiance to **Him**.

Each year when **they** celebrated Pesach, **the Israelites** would be reminded that

they had been slaves in **Egypt** and **the LORD** had delivered **them** by **His** great power. **They** were **His people**. It was when **Isra'el** began to imitate surrounding pagan nations and worship **their** detestable gods that **she** ceased to be a nation wholly devoted to **YHVH**. Because **she** forgot **her** distinctive privileges, **she** lost **her** distinctive blessings. Today, we can learn a lesson from this. We are called to be **a separated people** who are **not conformed to this world (Romans 12:1-2; Second Corinthians 6:14-7:1)**. Unless we are **a separated people**, wholly devoted to **God**, we can never follow **Messiah's** example.¹²⁵

Then the passage takes an unexpected turn to **God's** denial of **Moshe's** entry into **the Land (1:37-38, 3:23-28)**. The link is the theme of inheritance. **The Israelites**, who had a special status, belonged in a **Land** of **their** own, which was their inheritance. And it was into this inheritance that **Moses** could not go.¹²⁶ **Furthermore, ADONAI was angry with me because of your words, and He swore that I would not cross over the Jordan or enter the good land that ADONAI your God is giving you for an inheritance (4:21). For I must die in this land of Mo'av; I am not crossing over the Jordan. But you will cross over and take possession of that good land (4:22)**. Not only would the previous generation disobey and die outside **the Land; Moses, himself**, would also die outside, as a witness to the consequences of disobedience.

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, We love **You!** **You** are a wonderful **Father!** May we remember that our obtaining an inheritance is not **Your** responsibility- but ours. **You** are so ready to bless **Your** children but as a wise and loving **Father You** must discipline us when we do not follow **You**, "**My son, do not take lightly the discipline of ADONAI or lose heart when you are corrected by Him, because ADONAI disciplines the one He loves and punishes every son He accepts.**" (Hebrews 12:5-6). Even in trials may we keep our eyes fixed on the joy of pleasing **You** in all we do and think, just as **Yeshua** did. **Focusing on Yeshua, the initiator and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before Him, He endured the cross, disregarding its shame; and He has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of God. (Hebrews 12:2)**. In **Your Holy Son's** name and power of resurrection. Amen*



Therefore, **watch yourselves carefully so that you do not forget the covenant of ADONAI your God, which He cut with you** (see the commentary on [Genesis Eg](#) - **I am the LORD, Who Brought You Out of Ur of the Chaldeans to Give You This Land**), and make for yourselves a graven image in the form of anything that ADONAI your God has forbidden you. **For ADONAI your God, is a consuming fire (Hebrews 12:29). He** would purify what is precious (just as **fire** purifies precious metals) and destroy what is worthless (4:23).

For ADONAI is a jealous God (4:24). The reason that **idols** are not to be worshiped is that **ADONAI is a jealous or zealous God. Idolatry** practiced by **the Israelites** was looked upon as spiritual adultery, and constituted **“forgetting” the covenant.** The Hebrew term *qanna'* combines the two concepts of **jealousy** and **zeal** (not envy or suspicion). So, **zeal**, or **zealousness**, meaning a *passionate devotion to*, would be a better term to use than **jealous**, which has negative, even petty connotations. Because **God** and **Isra'el** are viewed as married, **Isra'el** is viewed as the wife of **ADONAI (Deuteronomy 5:1-3, 6:10-15, 7:6-11; Isaiah 54:1-8, 62:4-5; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezeki'el 16:8; Hosea 2:14-23)**, and **idolatry** would cause **God's zeal** to burn like a husband's **zealousness** would burn against an unfaithful wife (**Hosea 2:2-5**). For that very reason, **the Israelites** should not have worshiped **other gods. God** has a right to be **zealous** over what is rightfully **His**. As a result, this was not a petty **jealousy**, but a righteous **zealousness**.