

Tearing Down the Graven Images

A SCRIPTURAL TAKE ON IMAGERY

By Sha'ul bayn Yahukhenun ha Yahudah

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The Way of the Most High

“Exalting belief in our Father, the Most High YHUAH (YaHUAH), through His Turah, the 5 scrolls of M'shih (Moses).”

Email – followYah@gmail.com
Website – www.thewayofthemosthigh.ca

TEARING DOWN THE GRAVEN IMAGES

At first, there were few images which were written or "graven" except for Aibreet (Hebrew script) picture letters or similar wedge-shaped markings and things of that nature. Archaeologists have discovered the ancient writings of Aibreet (Hebrew script) picture-letters in various places of the globe. Each letter represented a picture. The letter "al" or "a" is a picture of an ox: . Self-explanatory, no? The word for "ox" is spelled "al, lamed" -  - and pictures a bull being led by a shepherd's staff or yoke. There was a development of writing symbols into the drawing of pictures or making of imagery. As this development took place, slowly leading to our modern image-oriented society, people believe that it doesn't matter what kind of "picture, image" or "engraving" we have. In other words, most people reason that it is in our nature, seen in the beginning of Scripture and in the development of imagery and writing itself. This leaves people with a very grey area, a murky water of deception.

Some estimates of our daily exposure to ads alone range from 4,000 to 6,000 ads a day. You may consider the billboards, bumper stickers, clothing images, television ads, movie ads, store ads and toys. It is not hard to imagine that these estimates are fairly accurate. One may walk into the home of their friends or extended family and easily find all manner of pictures. We may find wooden or metal trinkets on their TV entertainment units and shelves. There is a very important decision Scriptural believers must make. It is the decision to tear down the graven images from our lives.

Are all images wicked or evil? No. But we should have some standards. To give you a bit of background, Alish'bai and I used to believe very literally in Sh'moot (Ex.) 20:4, taking it out of the context of "worship" in the verses before and after it. Doing so, one would conclude that no image or likeness of anything should be made, excepting those which YaH commanded elsewhere in Scripture. This text reads as: "4You will not make for yourself any sculptured idol or any fashioning of anything which is in the loftiness from above, or which is upon the land from below, or which is in the waters from under the land" (Sh'moot (Ex.) 20:4). The baby toys of dolls, rubber duckies and clothing with bears or flowers and all the rest of it could easily be classified in this category. But is this commandment simply regarding the making of an image or likeness of something? We thought of this in the sense of television, movies and picture images also. And **because of all the corruption in the modern-day image oriented society around us, we went to the extreme of banning all images**, reasoning that Scriptural people of simple ancient lifestyle would have done the same. But the text quoted from Sh'moot (Ex.) 20:4 is in the context of worship. **The Most High desires that we do not worship or become consumed with imagery.** Sad that our world today is consumed with imagery and sound. They cannot have a moment without looking at something or listening to something. There is no stopping for silence of prayer and Scripture. No time for family or nature.

There is a great amount of evidence which shows that Y'shr'Al (Israel) used imagery of animals, people and decorative artwork on their tribal seals and pottery. **We must conclude that imagery can be used in an artistic and educational sense. But we should, as a Scriptural people, understand when imagery falls into the category of "against Scripture."**

The fact that people made "images" for their worship of YaH (such as the golden calf) interfered with what the Most High deemed as proper worship. **Making an image or painting of the Most High based on the visions we see in the writings of the prophets is one of the worst abominations.** In our modern age today, people have made images of the Most High seated on His throne as according to the visions of the prophets. There was punishment for the golden calf incident. So on the one hand **it would be wrong to say that all imagery should be foregone.** But on the other hand, **to say that the Most High doesn't care about imagery and its connection to worship is contradictory to Sh'moot (Ex.) 20:3-6.**

An image-laden society has created a multitude of the evils we see today. If imagery was not a major focus, there would be no pornography, proliferation of movie after movie, or self-idolization through trophies or statues. Some people treat their family portraits and photos as idols. They might pay thousands of dollars on photos and portraits over the years, framing them in gold. People today live by what they can see. Since they can see all the imagery around them, they live by it. Most people today would hardly consider this section of our book worthy of their notice. They are comfortable with their television and movie habits. They are glad with their family albums and tomes.

If we want to have life, we must find it in the Path of the Most High. That "way" of life is a path of belief and action living righteously. It is not lead by the physical eyes alone. In fact, we are warned time after time not to go after our eyes. The command to bind fringes/tassels to our garments with a thread of blue reminds us not to be lead around by the desires of our flesh, the lust of our eyes and after our own heart (B'medbayr (Num.) 15:39). Today there are scores of sheeple who claim to "believe," who do not care that their lives are filled with a majority of worthless imagery.

Imagery in general is not bad. If it is educational, decorative, not related to false origins and symbols, and not idolatrous or self-idolizing, then it will likely be beneficial to you in your walk with **יהוה** (YaHUAH). Sooner or later people should address the amount of time they spend on images which do not fall in these categories.

The Tent or House of the Most High was decorated. Likewise, it is a wonderful thing to decorate one's house and lavish our bodily tents with proper clothing and things like jewelry. With regards to images, this does not mean we ought to fill our home with photo album upon photo album of family pictures to immortalize ourselves and create perfect self-images? Do we really need imagery all over our clothing, walls and everything in our homes? It is our view that the majority of imagery in our lives can and probably should be done away with. Our family has eliminated all imagery except for that which is decorative for the home, clothing, educational and a few family photographs.

Ask yourself, with each image in your life, what worth have you attached to it?

We understand this will be something that most people will fight against with every fibre of their strength. This we know, because we went through it ourselves. It is a liberating feeling to rid the home of the majority of imagery. It brings a simplicity and calm which only those who follow this process could understand. Only those who tear down the graven images from their homes will be able to truly see what our family has seen in our walk with the Most High. Those who personally go through their homes to

throw out the multitudes of useless children toys which are not educational, movies, photo albums, mixed-fibre and image-laden clothing and all the rest of it.

When we leave the confines of our home, we must guard our eyes. It is our prayer that others, like us, will be drawn to spend more time with family, prayer and worship as a result of this process. They will not waste hours of time making and updating photos on social media networks and clubs. Hours of homemade movies and scrapbooking. Again, we are not saying these things are against Scripture. We are simply asking that people consider the amount of time that has been dedicated to these things and how it detracts from actual time with family and YaH.

The home becomes much more natural, family-oriented and dedicated to Scripture when we can take the majority of our imagery out of it. Certainly, television and movies can be educational, but 95% of it is garbage. And the internet can be a wonderful tool for righteousness, but quite often it is a tool for wickedness.

UNAVOIDABLE IMAGES

Sometimes we may be entirely powerless to avoid what our eyes see. On several occasions we have had emails from folks regarding this issue, who complained about the reality of what we call "unavoidable images." There are things which are certainly beyond our control. If we want to drive, we must have a driver's license or risk the oppression of the "peace officers." We would rather not have to drive to work, or have to work in the pyramid system of rich vs. poor and the slavery to bills. But our position here is to open the eyes of Scriptural believers to the fact that we live in an image-oriented world and what we can do about it. Once that fact is driven home, this message should encourage Scriptural believers to cleanse their homes and lives from as much of the false imagery as possible. It is our prayer that the Most High will help us to become self-sustaining households and communities that no longer need to drive or deal with those daily nuisances which are now "beyond our control." But only **יהוה** (YaHUAH) knows. Only He can provide such opportunities.

Isn't the worship of self a false worship? When the Roman emperors made statues of themselves, is it not false worship? They didn't have cameras back then. Certainly these Roman emperors did not bow down and worship their own statues. But I bet they were proud of them. They wanted to memorialize themselves. And isn't that what most people are doing when they have the "perfect" picture of themselves, their family, their car or their home? Is there a balance? We believe there is. If the people of Scripture had depictions of people, karabim, animals and nature as artwork on their homes, pottery and clothing, then we reason that we may also. But let us not seek to "immortalize" ourselves through portraits, statutes and trinkets. Our standard is to have a few pictures of family or some artwork and decorations. Definitely imagery of real life, not garden gnomes or other nonsense. It should not be for the purpose of showing off to others or idolizing ourselves. It is our belief that we take away from the worship of the Most High when we do such things.

Most of all, we must place the vision of the Most High before us. That image is pictured in the Scriptures and in our lives, which reflect His image. But people compare themselves with the media models and "world image" that society wants us to have. They focus on the self-image of their physique, cars and homes. But what is the

image of the Most High we are to reflect? What will you do? People today are focused on having the perfect body. Guys want to be like the cover of "Men's Health." Is that necessary? No. Sure we want to be healthy and desire to be attractive to our partners or prospective partners. When it becomes all-important, there is a problem. It is great to have a home. But when the home becomes an all-important object, there is a problem. All of these things can be taken to extremes. We believe that when images are used sparingly, they do not overtake our time and distract us so much. This helps us to focus on family, worship, study and real life around us.