

# **GOD ALONE IS TO BE WORSHIPED**

## **A Brief Treatise Against Idolatry**

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"God spoke all these words, saying: I am God {MarYah} your Lord, who brought you out of Egypt, from the place of slavery. Do not have any other gods before Me. Do not represent such gods by any carved statue or picture of anything in the heaven above, on the earth below, or in the water below the land. Do not bow down to such gods or worship them.

"I am God your Lord, a God who demands exclusive worship. Where My enemies are concerned, I keep in mind the sin of the fathers for their descendants, to the third and fourth generation. But for those who love Me and keep My commandments, I show love for thousands of generations." (Exodus 20:1-6, *Living Torah* translated by Kaplan)

"God said to Moses: This is what you must tell the Israelites: You have seen that I spoke to you from heaven. Do not make a representation of anything that is with Me. Do not make silver or gold gods for yourselves." (Exodus 20:19-20, *ibid*).

"Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they speak not; eyes have they, but they see not; they have ears, but they hear not; noses have they, but they smell not; they have hands, but they handle not; feet have they, but they walk not; neither speak they with their throat. They that make them shall be like unto them; yea, every one that trusteth in them." (Psalm 115:4-8, *Jewish Publication Society Tanakh*)

### **Defining Idolatry**

"I am MarYah your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. You shall not worship them or serve them." (Exodus 20:4)

In his *Guide for the Perplexed*, Maimonides said, "Now you know that whoever performs idolatrous worship does not do it on the assumption that there is no deity except the idol.... Rather is it worshiped in respect of its being an image of a thing that is an intermediary between ourselves and God.... However, in spite of the fact that those infidels believe in the existence of the deity, their idolatrous worship entails their destruction; for the reason that their infidelity bears upon a prerogative reserved to God alone, may He be exalted –

I mean the prerogative of being worshiped and magnified...

"How great, then, must be the offence of him who has a wrong opinion of God Himself, and believes Him to be different from what He truly is, i.e., assumes that He does not exist, that He consists of two elements, that He is corporeal, that He is subject to external influence, or ascribes to Him any defect whatever. Such a person is undoubtedly worse than he who worships idols in the belief that they, as agents, can do good or evil.

"Therefore bear in mind that by the belief in the corporeality or in anything connected with corporeality, you would provoke God to jealousy and wrath, kindle His fire and anger, become His foe, His enemy, and His adversary in a higher degree than by the worship of idols."

*The Poor Man's Concordance and Dictionary to the Sacred Scriptures* says of idolatry: "These things have been generally confined to the idea of the worshipping of creatures or images, but, in fact, may be properly applied to every thing which men set up in their hearts to regard, and which tend to the lessening their reverence for the Lord." (By Robert Hawker).

Idolatry is not limited to the worship of demons, statues or even heroes (hero worship) or political leaders (kings, presidents). If a person directs worship to the

true God through any type of created object (including a person who claims to be a mediator or channel of God's power such as is seen in the teachings of some New Age cults), to represent God Himself, then this is also defined as idolatry.

One can break the divine commandment of "making" an idol without the actual manufacturing of such. As shown in Psalm 115:8 above a person only needs to trust in an idol in order to commit the making of an object for worship.

### **Are some Jews idolaters?**

Unfortunately, many Jews fall within the definition of being idolaters. This is because some put more emphasis on the various "attributes" of God and attempt to bring such "attributes" down to the earth, and ultimately worship these. Such individuals are those who are involved with the dark practices within Kabbalah. The Zohar, a mystical work written by misguided Jews in the Aramaic language, stands as a witness to how some Jews have fallen into the trap of idolatry.

Rabbi Yihhye ibn Shlomoh ElGafeh wrote: "Have they, then, not considered the honour of God whose name is profaned by this new kabbalah, God save us. Is there a greater profanation than this, to serve another god who is created and not the Lord, our God who let His ways

be known to Moses! This is the pain in our hearts. How is it possible that the Jewish People, the nation chosen by God to love Him and to serve Him and to proclaim His Oneness in their prayers with all their heart and all their soul and all their might without any association to anything else from among the creations above or below, has had its faith so twisted about! For they have abandoned the God of their fathers and have exchanged the honour of the Great and Mighty and Wondrous God for other gods in the form of a man with a small face appointed by his father and mother to conduct and nourish all the worlds, God save us from this insidious trap!...

"So are there many such idolatrous minhagim [customs] which they have instituted, and one must take heed of them, of their food and of their drink lest one be rendered impure. Woe unto us that through this treacherous Zohar we have become similar to other nations, such as the religions of India or the cults of the ancient Egyptians, Caldeans, Persians and Medes all of which were involved with such mystical doctrines based on the powers of their imagination 'who never get out of the confusion and are in constant battle with their own opinions!'" (*Instructions from the Holy Wars Against the False Kabbalah of the Zohar*)

"The essential commandment concerning idol worship is not to serve any of the creations, neither angels, celestial spheres and stars nor any one of the four

elements and whatever has been created from them. Even if the one who serves them knows that Ha-Shem is God and yet he serves this creation in the manner of the generation of Enosh (at its inception), he is one who practices idol worship." (Rambam in *Hilchot Avoda Zara*, 1,2)

### **Idolatry and Kabbalah in Christianity**

The demonic teachings of Kabbalah have even influenced some Christians. Believing they could find truths within the Zohar concerning their own faith, including the doctrine of the trinity. The *Jewish Encyclopedia* says, "The enthusiasm felt for the Zohar was shared by many Christian scholars, such as Pico de Mirandola, Reuchlin, Aegidius of Viterbo, etc., all of whom believed that the book contained proofs of the truth of Christianity.

"They were led to this belief by the analogies existing between some of the teachings of the Zohar and certain of the Christian dogmas, as for instance the fall and redemption of man, and the dogma of the Trinity, which is expressed in the Zohar in the following terms: 'The Ancient of Days has three heads. He reveals himself in three archetypes, all three forming but one. He is thus symbolized by the number Three. They are revealed in one another. [These are:] first, secret, hidden 'Wisdom'; above that the Holy Ancient One; and above Him the Unknowable One. None knows what He contains; He is

above all conception. He is therefore called for man 'Non-Existing' [Ayin] (Zohar, iii. 288b)"

"This and also the other doctrines of Christian tendency that are found in the Zohar are now known to be much older than Christianity; but the Christian scholars who were deluded by the similarity of these teachings to certain Christian dogmas deemed it their duty to propagate the Zohar. Shortly after the publication of the work (Mantua and Cremona, 1558) Joseph de Voisin translated extracts from it which deal with the soul. He was followed by many others, among whom was Knorr, Baron von Rosenroth, who rendered into Latin the introduction, the 'Sifra di-Zeni'uta,' the 'Idra Rabbah,' and the 'Idra Zuta' ("Kabbala Denudata," Sulzbach, 1677)."

Some Christians spend a lifetime in attempting to find "hidden messages" in the Hebrew Tanakh, a game they refer to as "Bible Codes". Many of these Christians become obsessed with this dangerous game which, in my opinion, is yet another form of Kabbalah, and leads away from the truth of God.

A Christian reader recently asked me the question, "Are some Christians idolaters?" My response to such a question will no doubt come as a great offense to some misguided, yet sincere, Christian men and women who believe they are truly serving Almighty God. It is never my intention to offend anyone, only to educate

concerning the obvious. In one single word, yes. The reason for such a blunt answer is due to the way mainstream Christianity views the one they refer to as "Jesus." Christians worship the "man", the "incarnation" in which they call the "Logos." (John 1:1, from the Greek New Testament) Nowhere in the Scriptures are God's people commanded to worship a body of flesh. It is recorded in the New Testament Bible that Jesus taught that one should only worship God, quoting from the Torah itself:

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the most important commandment. The second is like it: Love your neighbor as you love yourself. The whole law of Moses and all the prophets depend on these two commandments." (Matthew 22:34-40)

There is no evidence that Christ obliterated or did away with the Torah of Sinai in which he quoted; in fact he said he did not come to destroy it at all and that it must be obeyed or one would be considered "little" in the Kingdom. (See Matthew 5:17). However, Christians teach otherwise.

However, there appears to be some among Christianity and some other religious communities, who clearly distinguish between the "man of flesh" and the "God who sent the man", or even the "God who was in the man", and they worship that God, and thus they can not

legitimately be referred to as idolaters. There are some among the traditional Assyrian Christians who refer to Christ as both "man and God" believing that Christ healed the sick and raised the dead as God in him but was crucified and died as man, that the man should not be worshiped, but rather, the God who sent him, and whom he claimed to be his Father.

A similar teaching is outlined in the Assyrian Church of the East's ancient hymn known as "Teshbokhta" which was composed by Rabban Mar Babai in the sixth century C.E.

"In His Godhead begotten of the Father, without beginning before all time; in His humanity born of Mary, in the fullness of time, in a body united; neither His Godhead is of the nature of the mother, nor His humanity of the nature of the Father; the natures are preserved in their Qnumas (substance), in one person of one Sonship... the Sonship of the Son is in two natures, one person."

### **The Nestorians of old: "No images or pictures"**

In the old days among the independent mountain "Nestorians", a crucifix and even pictures of saints were not permitted in their sanctuaries as it was viewed as idolatry. William W. Seymour says "The Nestorians, while venerating the Cross, will not tolerate the crucifix." (*The Cross in Tradition, History and Art*). In the book

*Nestorians and Their Rituals*, George Percy Badger and John Mason Neale wrote, "The Nestorians have no images or pictures in their churches, and are very much opposed to the use of them, even as ornaments, or as barely representing historical facts illustrative of sacred Scriptures. They will not even allow of a crucifix, and regard the mere exhibition of such an emblem, to say nothing of adoration, as a monstrous iniquity. I have knowledge of the fate of several crucifixes which were introduced among them by Roman missionaries: the cross, if possible, was spared; but the image was treated ignominiously and broken to pieces." (page 132). {See also, *The Mongols and the West, 1221-1410*, by Peter Jackson, Pearson Longman 2005}.

And finally, from the book *Travel Fact and Travel Fiction*, Z.R.W.M. von Martels says, "...the Armenian and Nestorian Christians had no use for the crucifix and employed only the cross without the figure of Christ: in fact, at one point, when Buchier brought to court a silver crucifix which he had manufactured from the *gaghan*, Sergius and the Nestorians removed from it the effigy of Christ." (page 60).

**"He who holds to be true what in reality is false"**

"What has prompted me to speak explicitly about this matter is my observation of the state of many people in regard to their beliefs and convictions.

"There is among them, for instance, the type of person who has attained the truth and is cognizant of it and rejoices in it. Of him does the prophet say, *Your words were found, and I did eat them; and your words were to me a joy and rejoicing of my heart* (Jeremiah 15:16).

"Again there is among them he who has attained the truth but who is nevertheless in doubt about it, being neither wholly convinced nor holding it firmly in his grasp. In reference to him the prophet says, *Though I write for him ever so many things of My Law, they are accounted as a strange thing* (Hosea 8:12).

"There is further among them he who holds to be true what in reality is false, thinking that it is the truth; he thus clings to falsehood and abandons what is right. Of him Scripture says, *Let him not trust in vanity, deceiving himself; for vanity shall be his recompense* (Job 15:31)." (*The Book of Beliefs and Opinions*, by Rabbi Saadia Gaon, translated by S. Rosenblatt; Yale Univeristy Press, 1948).

### **I will cut off thy graven images**

"The word of the LORD that came to Micah... concerning Samaria and Jerusalem. Hear, ye peoples, all of you; Harken, O earth, and all that therein is; and let the Lord GOD be witness against you, the Lord from His holy temple. For, behold, the LORD cometh forth out of His place, and will come down, and tread upon the high places of the earth. And the mountains shall be molten

under Him, and the valleys shall be cleft, as wax before the fire, as waters that are poured down a steep place. For the transgression of Jacob is all this, and for the sins of the house of Israel. What is the transgression of Jacob? is it not Samaria? And what are the high places of Judah? are they not Jerusalem? Therefore I will make Samaria a heap in the field, a place for the planting of vineyards; and I will pour down the stones thereof into the valley, and I will uncover the foundations thereof. And all her graven images shall be beaten to pieces, and all her hires shall be burned with fire, and all her idols will I lay desolate; for of the hire of a harlot hath she gathered them, and unto the hire of a harlot shall they return." (Micah 1:1-7, *Jewish Publication Society Tanakh*)

"For let all the peoples walk each one in the name of its god, but we will walk in the name of the LORD our God for ever and ever...And I will cut off thy graven images and thy pillars out of the midst of thee; and thou shalt no more worship the work of thy hands...It hath been told thee, O man, what is good, and what the LORD doth require of thee: only to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God" (4:5; 5:12; 6:8, *ibid.*)

*He who makes objects for the purpose of worshiping them, shall be like them, and everyone that trusts in them.*

(Psalm 115:8)

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