

Deuteronomy 16:22

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Neither shalt thou set thee up any image; which the LORD thy God hateth.

Analysis

Neither shalt thou set thee up any image; which the LORD thy God hateth—The matstsevah (מַצֵּבָה, 'standing stone, pillar') served as Canaanite memorial or cultic object. Even though Jacob erected memorial stones (Genesis 28:18, 35:14), God now forbids them in worship contexts—what served as testimony to God's appearance becomes idolatrous when venerated itself.

The verb **hateth** (אָנַף, sane) is rare in reference to God's emotions, emphasizing intensity. God **hates** idolatry not from insecurity but from covenant love—it destroys the relationship He died to create. Jesus warned: **No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other** (Matthew 6:24). Images divide affection; true worship demands wholehearted devotion. The second commandment's jealousy (Exodus 20:4-5) springs from passionate love, not petty anger.

Historical Context

Standing stones marked Canaanite cultic sites, often associated with Baal worship. Even legitimate memorial stones (like Jacob's at Bethel) risked becoming objects of veneration rather than pointers to God. God's prohibition prevented Israel from adopting Canaanite worship forms.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. What 'images' (mental pictures of God, cultural representations, sentimental objects) might you be venerating rather than the living God?
2. How does God's 'hatred' of idolatry reflect His passionate love (covenant jealousy) rather than arbitrary pickiness?
3. What memorial objects or practices (originally honoring God) risk becoming ends in themselves rather than means to worship?

Interlinear Text

וְלֹא	תִּקַּן יָמֶיךָ	לִבְּ	מִצֶּבֶת הָ	אֲשֶׁר	שֵׁן אֵ
H3808	Neither shalt thou set thee up	H0	any image	H834	hateth
	H6965		H4676		H8130
וְהָ	אֱלֹהֶיךָ:				
which the LORD	thy God				
H3068	H430				

Additional Cross-References

Leviticus 26:1 (References God): Ye shall make you no idols nor graven image, neither rear you up a standing image, neither shall ye set up any image of stone in your land, to bow down unto it: for I am the LORD your God.

Exodus 20:4 (Parallel theme): Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth:

Revelation 2:15 (Parallel theme): So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.

Revelation 2:6 (Parallel theme): But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

Jeremiah 44:4 (Parallel theme): Howbeit I sent unto you all my servants the prophets, rising early and sending them, saying, Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate.

Zechariah 8:17 (References Lord): And let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbour; and love no false oath: for all these are things that I hate, saith the LORD.

Deuteronomy 12:31 (References God): Thou shalt not do so unto the LORD thy God: for every abomination to the LORD, which he hateth, have they done unto their gods; for even their sons and their daughters they have burnt in the fire to their gods.