

Deuteronomy 27:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Cursed be the man that maketh any graven or molten image, an abomination unto the LORD, the work of the hands of the craftsman, and putteth it in a secret place. And all the people shall answer and say, Amen.

Analysis

Cursed be the man that maketh any graven or molten image—This first curse addresses idolatry, the fundamental covenant violation that breaks the First and Second Commandments. The Hebrew *pesel* (graven image) refers to carved idols, while *massekah* (molten image) indicates cast metal images. Both are *to'evah* (abomination)—a term expressing God's intense revulsion toward idolatry.

The phrase **the work of the hands of the craftsman** (מַעֲשֵׂה יָדַי הַחָרָשׁ) emphasizes the absurdity of worshiping human creations. Isaiah 44:9-20 brilliantly satirizes this irrationality. The specification **in a secret place** reveals that these curses target hidden sins, not just public violations—God sees what humans conceal.

And all the people shall answer and say, Amen—The congregation's amen (אָמֵן, "so be it" or "truly") constitutes covenant self-malediction. By saying amen to each curse, Israel invoked judgment upon themselves if they committed these sins. This wasn't passive listening but active oath-taking, making each person individually accountable.

Historical Context

Israel's constant temptation toward idolatry (the golden calf, Exodus 32; Baal worship, Numbers 25) made this curse foundational. Ancient Near Eastern religion centered on images as dwelling places for deities, but YHWH's imageless worship was radically unique. Archaeological excavations throughout Israel have uncovered numerous household idols and figurines, confirming that secret idolatry plagued Israel throughout its history, exactly as this curse anticipated.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. What 'secret place' idols—things you worship privately but wouldn't acknowledge publicly—might be under this curse in your life?
2. How does the emphasis on idolatry as 'the work of the hands of the craftsman' challenge modern forms of self-made religion and self-help spirituality?

Interlinear Text

וּמִסַּכָּה פֶּסֶל יַעֲשֶׂה אֲשֶׁר הָאִישׁ אָרֹר
Cursed be the man that maketh any graven or molten image
H779 H376 H834 H6213 H6459 H4541

חֶכְשׁ שֶׁחֶרֶט מַעֲשֵׂה הַיְהוָה תוֹעֵב ת
an abomination unto the LORD the work of the hands of the craftsman
H8441 H3068 H4639 H3027 H2796

וְאָמַר וְהָעָם כָּל יַעֲנֶה בֶּסֶת תִּרְ וְשָׁם
and putteth it in a secret shall answer place And all the people and say
H7760 H5643 H6030 H3605 H5971 H559

אָמֵן:
Amen
H543

Additional Cross-References

Exodus 34:17 (Parallel theme): Thou shalt make thee no molten gods.

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:

Deuteronomy 5:8 (Parallel theme): Thou shalt not make 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 waters beneath the earth:

Leviticus 19:4 (References Lord): Turn ye not unto idols, nor make to yourselves molten gods: I am the LORD your God.

Leviticus 26:1 (References Lord): 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 20:23 (Parallel theme): Ye shall not make with me gods of silver, neither shall ye make unto you gods of gold.

1 Corinthians 14:16 (Parallel theme): Else when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest?

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