Deuteronomy 5:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

> Thou shalt have none other gods before me.

Analysis

The first commandment 'Thou shalt have none other gods before me' establishes radical monotheism and exclusive covenant loyalty. The Hebrew 'al-panai' (before my face/in my presence) suggests both priority and exclusivity—no rivals tolerated in God's presence. This commandment grounds all ethics in proper God-worship. The Reformed tradition sees this as requiring wholehearted affection, trust, and obedience directed solely to Yahweh. Any divided loyalty—whether to literal idols or modern equivalents (money, pleasure, reputation)—constitutes covenant violation. True religion is primarily a heart disposition, not merely external conformity.

Historical Context

Israel entered a polytheistic world where nations worshiped multiple deities simultaneously. Egypt had pantheons of gods; Canaan worshiped Baal, Asherah, Molech, and Chemosh; Mesopotamia served Marduk, Ishtar, and others. Israel's exclusive monotheism was radically countercultural. Yet Israel repeatedly violated this command through syncretism—worshiping Yahweh alongside Baal (1 Kings 18:21), Asherah (Judges 6:25-30), and other gods, ultimately resulting in exile.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does the first commandment require not merely external monotheism but wholehearted affection and exclusive trust in God alone?
2. What modern 'gods' compete for the heart's supreme devotion, and how can you identify and remove them?

Interlinear Text

א ל ה יְהִ֣יֶ֥ה	לְבָ ים אֱלֹה	אֲחֵ֖ר ים	עַל פָּנָ֑יַ
H3808 H1961 H0	**gods** H430	**Thou shalt have none other** H312	H5921 **before** H6440

Additional Cross-References

Exodus 20:3 (References God): Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

Matthew 4:10 (References God): Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.