

# Deuteronomy 7:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But thus shall ye deal with them; ye shall destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their groves, and burn their graven images with fire.

## Analysis

The command to destroy altars, images, groves (Asherah poles), and graven images reflects total war against idolatry. This wasn't cultural vandalism but spiritual surgery—removing cancer before it metastasizes. Each element represented different aspects of Canaanite worship: altars (sacrificial systems), images (matstsebah, stone pillars), groves (asherah, wooden cult objects), and graven images (pesel, carved idols). The comprehensive list shows that partial obedience equals disobedience—God requires complete rejection of false worship. The New Testament parallel is putting to death 'the deeds of the body' (Romans 8:13) and making no provision for the flesh (Romans 13:14). Spiritual victory requires radical amputation of sin (Matthew 5:29-30).

## Historical Context

Archaeological excavations throughout Canaan have uncovered numerous altars, standing stones, Asherah poles, and idol figurines, confirming the pervasiveness of these cultic objects. The Canaanite religious system was not abstract philosophy but involved elaborate ritual infrastructure. Asherah worship involved fertility rites and sexual immorality. Baal worship included child sacrifice. These weren't benign cultural differences but practices that degraded human dignity and corrupted society. Israel's failure to fully execute this command (Judges 2:1-3) led to centuries of spiritual struggle.

## Related Passages

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**Ephesians 2:8** — Salvation by grace through faith

**John 3:16** — God's love and salvation

## Study Questions

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1. What 'altars' or 'idols' in your life compete for the devotion that belongs to God alone?
2. How radical are you willing to be in removing temptations and occasions for sin?
3. In what ways does partial obedience to God's commands actually constitute disobedience?

## Interlinear Text

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מִזְבְּחֹתָיו מִלְבָד מִלְבָד

H3588 H518 H3541 But thus shall ye deal H1992 H4196

H6213

תַּתֵּת צוֹן וְמִצְבָּתָה מִלְבָד

with them ye shall destroy their images and break down their groves

H5422 H4676 H7665 H842

בְּאָשָׁן תִּשְׂרַף אֵל וְפִסְילֵיהֶם תַּגְזִיעַ וְ

and cut down their graven images and burn with fire

H1438 H6456 H8313 H784

## Additional Cross-References

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**Exodus 23:24** (Parallel theme): Thou shalt not bow down to their gods, nor serve them, nor do after their works: but thou shalt utterly overthrow them, and quite break down their images.

**Exodus 34:13** (Sacrifice): But ye shall destroy their altars, break their images, and cut down their groves:

**Deuteronomy 7:25** (Parallel theme): The graven images of their gods shall ye burn with fire: thou shalt not desire the silver or gold that is on them, nor take it unto thee, lest thou be snared therein: for it is an abomination to the LORD thy God.

**Deuteronomy 9:21** (Parallel theme): And I took your sin, the calf which ye had made, and burnt it with fire, and stamped it, and ground it very small, even until it was as small as dust: and I cast the dust thereof into the brook that descended out of the mount.

**Deuteronomy 16:22** (Parallel theme): Neither shalt thou set thee up any image; which the LORD thy God hateth.

**Leviticus 26:1** (Parallel theme): 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.

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