THE SECOND COMMANDMENT: “Thou shalt not displace”

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The second commandment contains four precepts. 1. The prohibition of believing in any god or entity, mythological or natural, which has an autonomous intelligence or divine power. 2. The prohibition of making idols. 3. The prohibition of prostrating to idols. 4. The prohibition of worshiping idols or false gods.

The first of these four precepts, in Hebrew □□ □□□□ □□, is defined by the Rambam (Mishne Tora 1: 6) as the prohibition to “conceive” that there are other divine powers, independent of HaShem.

To be clear, this precept or Mitsva is not about believing or not believing in God or worshipping other gods or idols (that will come in the next three precepts of this commandment). This Mitsva, like the first commandment, is limited to the universe of ideas and beliefs. In this case, accepting, conceiving , declaring that there is another god or other powers independent of HaShem.

In the historical context of the Tora, the pagan peoples of antiquity accepted and declared the existence of multiple “divine” powers, endowed with intelligence and autonomy. For example, in the pagan world, astrologers claimed that the planets exert an influence on the events of human life. The Greeks and Romans represented anthropomorphic gods who supposedly ruled the sea, the land, fertility, etc.

One might think that today, modern man has reached a very advanced knowledge, enabling us to understand reality without medieval prejudices. Although, that does not mean that humanity has fully overcome the temptation to replace God. That temptation, as we tried to explain yesterday, is not due to a desire to not “believing” in God. The biggest challenge of a liberal person is to accept what the first commandment declares: the “authority” of God. In ancient times, as in the famous case of King Nimrod, accepting the authority of God implied a significant limitation to the power of the king. There was a keen interest to displace God and replace Him with

the leadership of the monarch of the day. But this displacement is not a phenomenon that occurred only in the past. Individuals who have a problem with the concept of God as the supreme authority will make every effort to keep "displacing HaShem" and replacing Him with other "gods" who demand nothing of our behavior.

I was watching a fantastic documentary by PBS's "Nature", Natural Born Hustlers, episode 1, presenting the amazing tricks that certain animals develop to deceive their predators and staying alive. I think it's worth seeing because it strengthens our Emunah in the infinite wisdom of God, who allows each species to develop a different strategy changing their colors, disguising their scent, or faking their own death (see here the trailer).

A PBS production, loyal to its liberal philosophy, will not be saying what King David said in Tehillim when he spoke of nature, " □ □□□□□ □□□ □□ "," How great are Your works, HaShem! ". PBS is careful to clarify when presenting any of these amazing tricks (some of which PBS ironically calls "miracle") that these incredible skills are the result of "*millions of years of evolution*." As if evolution were an intelligent, self-sufficient entity, independent of God, "guided" by random mechanisms to handle all the ecological systems of our planet.

I think the attribution of this Wisdom and Intelligence to nature is a modern example of the displacement of God and His replacement by a supposed superpower that is not called "God" or "Creator" but is treated as such.