

## The “I” in Idol



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The Torah goes to great lengths speaking about the laws of *Avoda Zara*, which forbid serving idols or anything other than God. We know that a group of Talmudic sages, the *Anshei Knesset Hagedolah*, successfully prayed to God to get rid of the desire to serve idols many years ago. The question then becomes, how are the laws forbidding serving idols relevant to us in today's world?

The Talmud (Shabbat 105b) teaches us that a person who becomes angry and loses control of himself is considered to be serving *Avoda Zara*. This seems quite difficult to understand. How is losing one's temper considered idolatry? Perhaps

we can understand this with the following parable, based on an idea by American rabbi and author Rabbi Yissocher Frand.

After shul on Shabbat morning, a father comes home ravenous and is infuriated to find that the table has not been set and no food has been prepared. He turns to his family angrily and says, “Why can't you have the food ready on time for me when I come home?” Seeing that he is in a bad mood, they stay quiet and hastily prepare lunch.

During the meal his kids are acting a little wild and he says to them angrily, “Behave and calm down”. His kids comply for a few minutes, but then start getting rowdy again. Suddenly, he stops the meal and screams: “I WANT SILENCE! I HAVE HAD ENOUGH OF THIS BEHAVIOUR, THE NEXT PERSON WHO MISBEHAVES IS GROUNDED FOR A WEEK!”

What happened? All the children did was act their age. Why did the father lose control? The problem is that the father considers his will to be the final word, and he could not handle the impudence of those who did not defer to his supremacy. In other words, he thinks he's like God.

The father never considered for a second that **God** wanted him to wait a while for the food to be ready or to test his patience with how he reacted to his kids. Rather, he thought that everything must be done according to his will and not the will of God.

Nowadays, even though the desire to serve other gods may be lost, the desire to serve ourselves, and make ourselves gods, has not been lost. The “I” in idol is what we always have to be aware of. We must be very careful to realise that we are here to serve God and not ourselves.

## Quiz Time!

1. What is the 2nd of the 10th Commandments?
2. What is the maximum number of times you can fold a piece of paper: 4, 6, 7 or 8?
3. What language is Rashi's commentary written in: Hebrew, French or Aramaic?
4. The word 'robot' comes from a Polish, Slovak and Czech word 'robota' meaning.....?
  - a. Metallic
  - b. Electronic
  - c. Forced Labour
  - d. Freedom
5. Can you think of an event in the Torah when gold played a central role?
6. What is the chemical symbol for gold?
7. Which two animals are mentioned in the 10 Commandments?
8. Which animal was the French General Napoleon famously afraid of?