

Ritual Decalogue (Exodus 34)

v. 14 for you must not worship any other god, because the LORD, whose name is Impassioned, is an impassioned God. ...

v. 17 You shall not make molten gods for yourselves.

v. 18 the Feast of Unleavened Bread

v. 19 first issue of the womb is Mine  
None shall appear before Me empty-handed.

v. 21 Six days you shall work, but on the seventh day you shall cease from labor; you shall cease from labor even at plowing time and harvest time.

Jouön-Muraoka 88Ha

**Qattal** > קָטַל. In Hebrew many nouns such as some *nomina opificum*,\* which in other Semitic languages are *qattāl*, have the form קָטַל, e.g. טָבַח *butcher*. Examples: adjectives: קָנָא *jealous* (5 times; קָנָא twice); חָלַד *sick*; חָפַז *sinful*; substantives: גָּנָב *thief*; שֹׁפֵט *judge*; רֶכֶב *charioteer*; פָּרָשׁ *horseman* (for *parraš*); חָרָשׁ *workman* (for *ħarraš*).

\*“Names of workers,” from Latin *ōpifex*, *īcis*, *comm.* opus-facio, one who does a work.

Nahum Sarna, Exodus (JPS Torah Commentary)

**Impassioned** See Comment to 20:5. The emphasis on this punitive aspect of the divine personality is prompted by the apostasy of the golden calf.

**20:5. an impassioned God** The Hebrew stem *k-n-*, in its primitive meaning, seems to have denoted “to become intensely red.” Because extreme and intense emotions affect facial coloration, the term came, by extension, to express ardor, zeal, rage, and jealousy. It is used in a variety of contexts, even with God as the referent. The limitations of language necessitate the application to God of phraseology that typically belongs in the human sphere. The present epithet *‘el kannā*’ is most frequently translated “a jealous God,” a rendering that understands the marriage bond to be the implied metaphor for the covenant between God and His people. God demands exclusive loyalty from Israel, and, according to this interpretation, His reaction to their infidelity is expressed in terms of human jealousy. It should be noted, however, that the form *kanna*’ is used in the Bible solely of God, never of a human being, a distinction that testifies to a consciousness that the emotion referred to differs qualitatively from the human variety. Whether one renders *kanna*’ as “jealous” or “impassioned,” the term emphasizes that God cannot be indifferent to His creatures and that He is deeply involved in human affairs. It underscores the vigorous, intensive, and punitive nature of the divine response to apostasy and to modes of worship unacceptable to Himself.

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Commentators’ Bible: <https://www.nebraskapress.unl.edu/jps/9780827609426/>

Biblical Hebrew: <https://www.thegreatcourses.com/courses/biblical-hebrew-learning-a-sacred-language.html>

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“Ten Commandments” (Exodus 20)

v. 2 I the LORD am your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, the house of bondage: <sup>3</sup> You shall have no other gods besides Me.

v. 4 You shall not make for yourself a sculptured image, or any likeness of what is in the heavens above, or on the earth below, or in the waters under the earth. <sup>5</sup> You shall not bow down to them or serve them. For I the LORD your God am an impassioned God ...

v. 7 You shall not swear falsely

v. 9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, <sup>10</sup> but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God: you shall not do any work.

Jeffrey Tigay, "Exodus," *Jewish Study Bible*

**14:** Exod. 23.24 is restated in the more comprehensive terms of 20.3, 5, including the prohibition of worshipping *any* other god and the warning against provoking God's indignation (20.5 n.). This passage goes beyond 20.5 in stating that the LORD's very *name is Impassioned*, meaning that jealous indignation (20.5 n.) is another of the qualities embodied in His name or essence (33.19). This is possibly a play on the name YHVH, equating its root "h-vh" with "h-wy" used in Arabic with the meaning "passion."

**20:5** *An impassioned God:* In the biblical view, this is an aspect of His passionate involvement with human beings and no more a character flaw than is human jealousy over marital infidelity. But postbiblical commentators found the implications of divine jealousy troubling, and Maimonides interpreted the term as merely an anthropomorphism based on the necessity of borrowing terms from human experience to describe God based on His actions: "[In reality, His punitive actions] are in accordance with the guilt of those who are to be punished, and not the result of any emotion; for He is above all defect!" (*Guide of the Perplexed*, 1.54).

William H. C. Propp, *Exodus* (Anchor Bible)

**20:5.** *jealous deity.* Y`hweh's jealousy (*qn'*) also resonates anagrammatically with his disinclination to "clear (*nqy*)" abusers of his name (v 7).

Robert Alter, *The Hebrew Bible: A Translation with Commentary*

**14** For you shall not bow to another god, for the LORD, His name is Jealous, a jealous God He is.

**14. His name is Jealous.** See the first comment on Exodus 20:5. The fact that the very next verses three times invoke the metaphor of whoring to represent idolatry strongly argues for a quasisexual sense of "jealous" (rather than "impassioned"): the God Who has chosen Israel implicitly represents Himself as Israel's husband and lover (a metaphor that both Hosea and Jeremiah will make explicit), and when the Israelites betray Him by worshipping other gods, they go "whoring," are unfaithful as an errant spouse is sexually unfaithful.

**20:5. a jealous god.** The Hebrew *qana'* can mean either "jealous" (including the sexual sense) or "zealous," "ardent." The appearance of the term in connection with God's banning all cultic rivals suggests that the leading edge of the word here may in fact be jealousy. The revolutionary idea of a single God uniting all the realms of creation may be a noble and philosophically bold idea, but it is imagined in ancient Israel in powerfully anthropomorphic terms: God does not tolerate rivals to the hearts of His people. The word "god" here is not capitalized because the Hebrew employs the generic term *'el*: this, the LORD is saying, is the kind of god I am, and you had better take that to heart.

Israel Knohl, "YHWH: The Original Arabic Meaning of the Name," [thetorah.com](http://thetorah.com)

When Moses asks God his name, God first answers by saying "I am what I am" and even follows this up with "tell them Ehyeh (I-Am) sent you." The word ehyeh ("I am") sounds very much like YHWH, and is meant as a play on words, explaining that YHWH's name means "he will be" or "being." Nevertheless, this interpretation does not reflect the original meaning of YHWH.

In 1956, Shelomo Dov Goitein (1900-1985), a scholar of both Jewish and Arabic studies, suggested that the name derives from the Arabic root *h.w.y* (هوئى), and the word *hawaya* (هوئاى), which means "love, affection, passion, desire." He connected this suggestion with the passage in Exodus 34, in a set of laws known by scholars as the Ritual Decalogue ... Moreover, according to Goitein, this exclusivity demanded by YHWH goes back to his appearance as a god among nomadic, Arabian tribes.

<https://www.thetorah.com/article/yhwh-the-original-arabic-meaning-of-the-name>

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