

The blessing; that you listen...and the curse; if you do not listen to the commandments of Hashem your G-d. And you stray from the path that I command you today, to follow gods of others. (11:27,28)

The *Torah* considers one who strays from the path of Hashem to be an idol-worshipper. He who serves idols is tantamount to one who repudiates the entire *Torah*. Idolatry is a rejection of the Almighty. One who does not firmly believe and accept Hashem as the Supreme Ruler and Creator of the world apparently spurns His *mitzvos* and *Torah*.

In *Megillas Esther 2:5*, the *pasuk* refers to Mordechai as "*Ish Yehudi*." The *Talmud* in *Megillah 12b* explains the term "*Yehudi*" as an appellation describing one who is "*kofer b'avodah zarah*," denies idol worship. Mordechai was called a *Yehudi*, not because he descended from the tribe of Yehudah, which he did not, but rather because of his firm denial of *avodah zarah*. Bisyah *bas* Pharaoh saved Moshe *Rabbeinu* and took him into Pharaoh's palace to be raised and protected as a child. In *Divrei Hayamim I, 4:18* she is referred to as "*Yehudiah*," because she repudiated her father's idols and converted to Judaism.

The word "*yehudi*" originates from *hodah/modeh*, which means admit/concede. Leah named her fourth son Yehudah, saying, "*Now I will thank Hashem*." To demonstrate gratitude is to concede that one has benefited from someone else. A *Yehudi* is one who manifests his gratitude to the Almighty and who proudly, throughout his entire demeanor, recognizes Hashem *Yisborach* as the source of everything that exists. He shows his allegiance to Hashem in his commitment to serve Him through the observance of His *mitzvos*.

We may add that idol-worship has many faces and names. One does not have to genuflect to a stone god in order to be considered an idol worshipper. If one demonstrates loyalty to anything, such as a movement based upon theological deliberation, an endeavor or line of thinking that is antithetical to *Torah* -- or just simply relegates Hashem, His *Torah* and *mitzvos* to second place, he is guilty of worshipping an entity other than Hashem. The most common form of idol worship is self-worship. We are the greatest idols! We take care of ourselves - first, then we respond to the needs and demands of others even those of Hashem. One cannot view himself as a true *Yehudi* as long as he is obsessed with vain, glorious self-gratification. A *Yehudi* is one who unconditionally sublimates himself to Hashem. Otherwise, his self-defined brand of *Yahadus* is nothing more than an exercise in arrogance.