

worshipping their gods, and you will sin against the LORD your God (NIV).

What were some of these detestable things? The most obvious of these was the worship of images. Such idolatry constituted a denial of the rightful place of Yahweh as the only true and unique God. But as noted above there were other areas where Canaanite practice was vile and reprehensible. Among these were the practices of human sacrifice, temple prostitution, the mutilation of the human body and sorcery or divination. Among some of the groups there was even official sanction for the practice of bestiality which was punishable by death among the Hebrews (Exod 22:19, 20). The NIV translation of Deut 23:17, 18 makes the Hebrew reaction to temple prostitution very clear.

"No Israelite man or woman is to become a temple prostitute. You must not bring the earnings of a female prostitute or of a male prostitute into the temple of the LORD your God to pay a vow because the LORD your God detests them both" (NIV).

In Deut 18:10-12 human sacrifice, divination and sorcery are prohibited among the Hebrews. Verse 10 says,

"Let no one be found among you who sacrifices his son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, casts spells or who is a medium or spiritist, or who consults the dead. Anyone who does these things is detestable to the LORD. Because of these abominations the LORD will drive out those nations before you. You must be perfect like the LORD your God."

In Deut 14:1 God through Moses warns the Israelites against mutilation of their bodies which was practiced by the Canaanites in certain rituals for the dead. In the Ugaritic Textbook tablet 67, VI, lines 19-22, it gives a typical Canaanite grief ritual:

He pours the ashes of grief on his head,
The dust of wallowing on his pate,
For clothing he is clothed with sackcloth.
He roams the mountain in mourning, Yea
through the forest in grief.
He cuts cheeks and chin, lacerates his
forearms.
He plows the chest like a garden; like a
vale he lacerates the back.
He lifts his voice and shouts: Baal is dead."

It is such a practice that forms the background of Deut 14:3. "You are the children of the LORD your God. Do not cut yourselves or shave the front of your heads for the dead for you are a people holy to the LORD your God" (Cf. 1 Kgs 18:28). For Israel to practice this typical Canaanite ritual would have been a testimony of denial of the exclusive worship of Yahweh. In Exod 54:15 the Israelites are admonished, "You shall destroy their altars, their cult pillars and cut down their poles that are dedicated to