

Worship in the Tanakh

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We are told to worship only Yehovah throughout the Tanakh. We are not to worship other elohim or even items that we raise up as substitutes to Yehovah. Today we will be looking in the Tanakh for Worship is and how we should be doing it and not doing it.

We find that the word translated as Worship in the Tanakh is transliterated as shachah (shah-ghah) which is Shin-Chet-Hey. It is a verb and can be found on page 1005 in the BDB. It is reference number 7812. It can also be translated as bow-down.

Bow Down/ Worship Yehovah

Shemot (Exodus) 24:1

¹ Then He said to Moses, “Come up to Yehovah, with Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy elders of Israel, and **bow low (shachah שחַהּ)** from afar. ²Moses alone shall come near Yehovah; but the others shall not come near, nor shall the people come up with him.”

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 26:10

¹⁰Wherefore I now bring the first fruits of the soil which You, O YEHOVAH, have given me.” You shall leave it before Yehovah your Elohim and **bow low (shachah שחַהּ)** before Yehovah your Elohim.

Divrei HaYamim Bet (2 Chronicles) 20:18

¹⁸Jehoshaphat bowed low with his face to the ground, and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem threw themselves down before Yehovah to **worship (shachah שחַהּ)** Yehovah.

Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 12:13

¹³And in that day, a great ram’s horn shall be sounded; and the strayed who are in the land of Assyria and the expelled who are in the land of Egypt shall come and **worship (shachah שחַהּ)** Yehovah on the holy mount, in Jerusalem.

Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 66:23

²³And new moon after new moon, And sabbath after sabbath, All flesh shall come to **worship (shachah שחה)** Me.

Yermiyahu (Jeremiah) 7:2

²Stand at the gate of the House of Yehovah, and there proclaim this word: Hear the word of Yehovah, all you of Judah who enter these gates to **worship (shachah שחה)** Yehovah!

Yermiyahu (Jeremiah) 26:2

²⁴Thus said Yehovah: Stand in the court of the House of Yehovah, and speak to [the men of] all the towns of Judah, who are coming to **worship (shachah שחה)** in the House of Yehovah, all the words which I command you to speak to them. Do not omit anything.

Tehillim (Psalms) 29:2

²Ascribe to Yehovah the glory of His name; **bow down (shachah שחה)** to Yehovah, majestic in holiness.

Tehillim (Psalms) 96:9

⁹**Bow down (shachah שחה)** to Yehovah majestic in holiness; tremble in His presence, all the earth!

Bow down to the pillar cloud at the tent of meeting

Shemot (Exodus) 33:8-10

⁸Whenever Moses went out to the Tent, all the people would rise and stand, each at the entrance of his tent, and gaze after Moses until he had entered the Tent. ⁹And when Moses entered the Tent, the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the entrance of the Tent, while He spoke with Moses. ¹⁰When all the people saw the pillar of cloud poised at the entrance of the Tent, all the people would rise and **bow low (shachah שחה)**, each at the entrance of his tent.

Bowing to other elohim

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 8:19

¹⁹If you do forget Yehovah your Elohim and follow other elohim to serve them or **bow down (shachah)** to them, I warn you this day that you shall certainly perish;

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 11:16

¹⁶Take care not to be lured away to serve other elohim and **bow (shachah שחה)** to them.

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 30:17

¹⁷But if your heart turns away and you give no heed, and are lured into the **worship (shachah שחה)** and service of other elohim,

Bowing to Idols/Nature

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 4:19

¹⁹And when you look up to the sky and behold the sun and the moon and the stars, the whole heavenly host, you must not be lured into **bowing down (shachah שחה)** to them or serving them. These Yehovah your Elohim allotted to other peoples everywhere under heaven;

Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 2:20

²⁰On that day, men shall fling away, To the flying foxes and the bats, The idols of silver And the idols of gold Which they made for **worshiping (shachah שחה)**.

Yermiyahu (Jeremiah) 25:6

⁶Do not follow other elohim, to serve them and **worship (shachah שחה)** them. Do not vex Me with what your own hands have made, and I will not bring disaster upon you.”

Bowing to Humans in Respect

Bereshit (Genesis) 37:10

¹⁰And when he told it to his father and brothers, his father berated him. “What,” he said to him, “is this dream you have dreamed? Are we to come, I and your mother and your brothers, and **bow low (shachah שחה)** to you to the ground?”

Shemu'el Bet (2 Samuel) 16:4

⁴The king said to Ziba, “Then all that belongs to Mephibosheth is now yours!” And Ziba replied, “I **bow low (shachah שחיה)**. Your Majesty is most gracious to me.”

Shemu’el Aleph (I Samuel) 2:35-36

³⁵And I will raise up for Myself a faithful priest, who will act in accordance with My wishes and My purposes. I will build for him an enduring house, and he shall walk before My anointed evermore. ³⁶And all the survivors of your house shall come and **bow low (shachah שחיה)** to him for the sake of a money fee and a loaf of bread, and shall say, ‘Please, assign me to one of the priestly duties, that I may have a morsel of bread to eat.’

Bereshit (Genesis) 7, 12

⁷Thereupon Abraham bowed low to the people of the land, the Hittites, ⁸and he said to them, “If it is your wish that I remove my dead for burial, you must agree to intercede for me with Ephron son of Zohar.

¹²Then Abraham bowed low before the people of the land,

We see that to bow down is to show respect, honor, in the case of Yehovah to worship him. We also see that to bow down to objects made of hands (idols) is worshipping them. We are told not to do this.

So is there some indication of how they bowed down or worshipped in the Tanakh?

Shemot (exodus) 33:10

¹⁰When all the people saw the pillar of cloud poised at the entrance of the Tent, all the people would **rise (koom)** and **bow low (shachah)**, each at the entrance of his tent.

Koom (Kaf-vav-mem) reference number 6965. BDB page 877 and has the meaning of Arise or Stand.

Which would seem to indicate that one would rise and bow in worship. Arise here does not indicate from a kneeling position but a standing one. Maybe the position was as this. You start from a standing position, bend at the waist with Hands on your knees. Repeating this process. Or they could have already been kneeling with hands raised in air and bowing low or prostrating themselves.

Yehoshua (Joshua) 7:6, 10

⁶Joshua thereupon rent his clothes. He and the elders of Israel lay until evening with their faces to the ground in front of the Ark of Yehovah; and they strewed earth on their heads.

¹⁰But Yehovah answered Joshua: “Arise! Why do you lie prostrate?”

Prostrate is lying flat on the ground and is another position of worship (respect, honor).

We see that bowing is the same as worshipping. When we pray we are bowing before him we are in fact worshipping him. In the future all nations will worship (bow down) to Yehovah.

Zechariah 14:16-17

¹⁶All who survive of all those nations that came up against Jerusalem shall make a pilgrimage year by year to bow low to the King YEHOVAH of Hosts and to observe the Feast of Booths. ¹⁷Any of the earth’s communities that does not make the pilgrimage to Jerusalem to bow low to the King LORD of Hosts shall receive no rain.

Another word, which is sometimes used as Worship, is avad (Ayin-vet-dalet). It is reference number 5647 in the BDB and found on page 712. It is a verb. It is very often used with worship (shachah).

Tehillim (Psalm) 100:2

²**worship** (avad) Yehovah in gladness; come into His presence with shouts of joy.

Shemot (Exodus) 23:25

²⁵You shall **serve (avad)** Yehovah your Elohim, and He will bless your bread and your water. And I will remove sickness from your midst.

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 4:19, 27-28

¹⁹And when you look up to the sky and behold the sun and the moon and the stars, the whole heavenly host, you must not be lured into **bowing down (shachah שָׁחָה)** to them or **servicing (avad)** them. These Yehovah your Elohim allotted to other peoples everywhere under heaven;

²⁷Yehovah will scatter you among the peoples, and only a scant few of you shall be left among the nations to which Yehovah will drive you. ²⁸There you will **serve (avad)** man-made elohim of wood and stone, that cannot see or hear or eat or smell.

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 7:4

⁴For they will turn your children away from Me to **worship (avad)** other elohim, and Yehovah’s anger will blaze forth against you and He will promptly wipe you out.

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 8:19

¹⁹If you do forget Yehovah your Elohim and follow other elohim to **serve (avad)** them or **bow down (shachah שחַה)** to them, I warn you this day that you shall certainly perish;

Shemu'el Aleph (I Samuel) 12:14, 23-24

¹⁴“If you will revere Yehovah, **worship (avad)** Him, and obey Him, and will not flout Yehovah’s command, if both you and the king who reigns over you will follow Yehovah your Elohim, [well and good].

²³“As for me, far be it from me to sin against Yehovah and refrain from praying for you; and I will continue to instruct you in the practice of what is good and right. ²⁴Above all, you must revere Yehovah and **serve (avad)** Him faithfully with all your heart; and consider how grandly He has dealt with you.

Another word used for Bow down is kadad (Kof-dalet-dalet) and found on page 869 of the BDB.

Shemot (exodus) 4:31

³¹and the people were convinced. When they heard that Yehovah had taken note of the Israelites and that He had seen their plight, they **bowed low (kadad)** in **homage (shachah שחַה)**.

Shemot (exodus) 12:27

²⁷you shall say, ‘It is the passover sacrifice to Yehovah, because He passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt when He smote the Egyptians, but saved our houses.’”

The people then **bowed low (kadad)** in **homage (shachah שחַה)**.

Nehemyah (Nehemiah) 8:6

⁶Ezra blessed Yehovah, the great Elohim, and all the people answered, “Amen, Amen,” with hands upraised. Then they **bowed (kadad)** their heads and prostrated themselves before Yehovah with their faces to the ground.

We see that not only is bowing down a sign of respect, honor and homage it is an act of worship. As we serve Yehovah we are also worshipping whether through singing, playing of instruments, and keeping his covenant. We are not to serve or bow down to other elohim or idols.