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The ban on images in a media culture context. A Jewish perspective

There are two aspects to the title: the Biblical prohibition on images and the so-called 'Medienkultur'. Jewish tradition has tended to separate out the prohibition on making 'graven images' from its particular context as the 'Second Commandment' whose primary concern is their use for idolatrous purposes.

Thus Jewish artistic representations were permitted, but their form was influenced by the attitudes of the surrounding Christian or Muslim culture. However the concern with the different forms of contemporary 'idolatry', separated from the particular issue of 'graven images', has remained a challenging issue down to the present day.

In terms of the 'Medienkultur' many of its features, and the challenges it raises, can be found in the Hebrew Bible, as the prophets in particular struggled with the ideas promoted by the authorities of their time.

In terms of today's media, it is probably the Ninth Commandment, the prohibition on 'bearing false witness' that most reflects the problems that should be addressed.