

BRONZE SERPENT

CULTURAL INSIGHT

The bronze serpent was an image Moses created at Jehovah’s command during the Exodus as a protection against the venom of the fiery serpents (see Numbers 21). Later in Israelite history, the ancient Israelites burned incense to the image. Because of this, the Judahite king Hezekiah broke it into pieces (see 2 Kings 18:4). The name of the serpent presents a wordplay in Hebrew, as the word for “snake” is *naḥaš* and the word for “bronze” is *neḥošet*, making the bronze snake *naḥaš neḥošet*. This root seems to be the source of *Nehuštan*, the name that Hezekiah gave to the image of the snake when he destroyed it.

The bronze snake represents an example of the how the Lord works through continuing revelation. Even though Exodus 20:4 specifically commands the ancient Israelites to not make images of any kind, the Lord commanded Moses to make this symbolic image. Likewise, when it became a stumbling block for the children of Israel, the righteous king Hezekiah destroyed it.

Related verses

Numbers 21

2 Kings 18:4

Credits

Author: Avram R. Shannon

General Editor: Taylor Halverson

Associate Editor: Morgan Tanner

Senior Editor: Sarah Whitney Johnson

Assistant Editor: Verlanne Johnson

ScripturePlus Design: Jasmin Gimenez Rapplepe