

## Exodus 20:3

לֹא יִהְיֶה-לְךָ אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים עַל-פְּנֵי:

You shall have no other gods before me. (RSV)

**לֹא (lo)**

This word means "no" or "not" and often precedes a verb to negate the action of that verb.

**יִהְיֶה (yih-yeh)**

The base word is **הָיָה** (hayah) meaning "to exist." The prefix **י** (y) identifies the subject of the verb as third person, masculine and singular (he) and the tense of the verb as imperfect. This word would be translated as "he exists."

**לְךָ (le-kha)**

The **ל** (l) is a prefix meaning "to" or "for." The **ךָ** (k) is a suffix meaning "you."

**אֱלֹהִים (e-lo-hiym)**

The base word **אֱלֹה** (e-lo-ah) is commonly translated as "God" or "god," but more literally means "one of power and authority." The suffix **ים** (iym) is the masculine plural. This noun is the subject of the verb **הָיָה** (hayah), the "he" of "he exists."

**אֲחֵרִים (a-hha-riym)**

The base word is **אֲחֵר** (a-hher) meaning "other" or "another." This is an adjective describing **אֱלֹהִים**. The gender and number of any adjective will match the noun it describes, therefore the same plural suffix is added to this adjective.

**עַל (al)**

This is a very common word meaning "over" or "above."

**פְּנֵי (pa-nai)**

The base word is **פָּנָה** (panah) meaning "face". But also includes two suffixes, **ים** (iym) the masculine plural suffix and **י** (y) the first person possessive pronoun meaning "of me." In order to explain the formation of this word let me write this word as **פָּנָה-יִם-י** (panah-iym-iy). When a suffix such as **ים** (iym) is added to a noun ending with the letter **ה** (h), the **ה** is dropped so now we have **פָּנָה-יִם-י** (pan-iym-iy). When a plural noun is suffixed with a possessive pronoun such as the **י** (y), the **ם** (m) is dropped so now we have **פָּנָה-יִם-י** (pan-iy-iy). The two **י**s are then combined into one and pronounced "ai" (like the "i" in bike) - **פָּנָה-יִם-י** (pan-ai). This Hebrew word meaning "face" is always idiomatically written in the plural form but should not be understood as more than one face.