

THESIS ABSTRACT

Master of Arts in Biblical and Theological Studies

Adventist University of Africa

Theological Seminary

**TITLE: AN EXEGETICAL STUDY OF EXODUS 20:4-5 AND ITS
IMPLICATION ON PICTORIAL ORNAMENTATION
IN THE TABERNACLE**

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The use of iconoclastic in modern Christian worship is the main focus which causes the researcher to investigate Exodus 20:4-6. God forbids idol worship among His people in both Old and New Testament believers (Exod 34:14; Deut 8:19; 11:16; 1 Cor 10:21; 2 Cor 5:15, 16). Image worship has been a smoldering concept which distorts the relationship between God and His people. In the Decalogue, the second commandment forbids any form of image worship (Exod 20:4-6). The Hebrew phrase *pesel wəkāl tāmūnāh* indicates something portioned (i.e. fashioned) out, as a shape, phantom, or embodiment, molten images, icon, and every architect's work which man can use to represent God. However, God asked Moses to build pictorial ornaments in the temple to aid the system of worship in the sanctuary.

This research has revealed that God has provided adequate questions in His Holy Scriptures concerning the use of pictorial ornaments as objects of worship. Icons in modern worship are used as a representation of a deity, which goes contrary to the

law of the second commandment in the Decalogue. It is to stick to God who does not share His glory with anyone or anything. The oneness of God is supreme (Deut 6:4) among all things.

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A thesis

presented in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Master of Arts in Biblical and Theological Studies

by

Robert Adjei

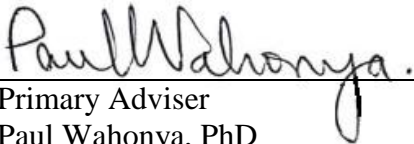
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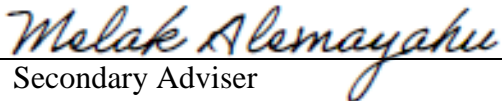
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To God be the Glory. Dedicated to my dear wife: Monica Adjei and my four daughters: Abena Anima Adjei, Ama Anima Adjei, Abena Ntriwaa Adjei, and Ama Kyerewaa Adjei

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

One of the most serious sins that ever existed in religion is idolatry;¹ even kings in the Ancient Near East forbid their subjects to turn their eyes on anyone else.² Both deities and humans are jealous of their subjects, but God's jealousy is different from the pettiness and nastiness of human beings.³ Idolatry can have definition in various ways such as having an inordinate love for something or a person⁴ or a form of worship which debases the national religion.⁵ The Hebrew word for an idol is *tselem* which can be translated "image" or "idol," including an image of God in humans or the shapes of idols.⁶ The Greek word for idolatry is *eidōlōlatria* which connotes the honor given to created objects, or images used to represent God, such as wood, stone, and precious metals.⁷

¹ Taylor G. Bunch, *The Exodus in Type and Antitype* (Payson, AZ: Leaves of Autumn Books, 1937), 97; Timothy George, *Theology of the Reformers*, 2nd Edition. (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2013), 125.

² Herbert Wolf, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Pentateuch* (Chicago, IL: Moody, 1991), 153.

³ Wilbur Fields, *Exploring Exodus* (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1986), 425.

⁴ John L. Mackay, *Exodus: A Mentor Commentary* (Ross-shire, UK: Christians Focus, 2001), 170.

⁵ John Alexander Motyer, "Idolatry," ed. Ian Howard Marshall, *New Bible Dictionary* (Leicester, UK: Inter-Varsity Press, 2000), 495.

⁶ John C. H. Laughlin, "Idolatry," ed. Katharine Doob Sakenfeld, *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2008), 8.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 11.

Idolatry is a form of spiritual adultery because it is a way of breaking the covenant between the individual and his deity.⁸ Idolatry can be in the form of worshipping icons.⁹ The term for this form of worship is called iconolatry, which is defined as “the worship or adoration of icons as idols.”¹⁰ However, Iconoclastic has been defined as social belief which is against the worship of images whether political or religious by Protestants.¹¹

According to Bremmer, the “term [Iconoclastic] first appears in 1797 as used by the polyglot and political radical William Taylor (1765-1835).”¹² Lauren and Schmitt argue that iconoclasm is similar to vandalism.¹³ They say that “the action of attacking or assertively rejecting cherished beliefs and institutions or established values and practices; the rejection or destruction of religious images as heretical; the doctrine of iconoclasts,” and “the doctrine, practice, or attitude of an iconoclast.”¹⁴ For example, several Christians in Moscow, around the 18th century, were involved in iconoclastic.¹⁵

⁸ Erika Moore, “Idolatry,” ed. Tremper Longman III, *The Baker Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2013), 824.

⁹ John F. Baldwin, “Idols and Icons: Reflections on the Current State of Liturgical Reform,” *Worship* 84 (2010): 397.

¹⁰ Gerry Breslin, ed., *Collins English Dictionary* (New York, NY: Collins, 2015), s.v. Iconolatry.

¹¹ Jan N. Bremmer, “Iconoclast, Iconoclastic, and Iconoclasm: Notes Towards a Genealogy,” *Church history and religious culture* 88, no. 1 (2008): 11.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Lauren Reynolds Hall and Megan Cross Schmitt, “Literature Review,” *Change Over Time* 5, no. 1 (2015): 152.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Daniel H. Kaiser, “Icons and Private Deviations Among Eighteenth-Century Moscow Townsfolk,” *Journal of Social History* 45 (2011): 126.

In Jewish tradition, idol worship refers to wooden image and stones which were worshiped by the neighboring nations of Israel.¹⁶ Mackay asserts that “it seems likely that the idols in view here are not those of pagan gods (the first commandment has prescribed them from Israel’s worship), but a representation of Yahweh himself.”¹⁷ It suggests that the neighboring nations of Israel were using images to represent God, which can be termed as iconoclasm.

Hamilton disagrees that even in the Old Testament system of worship there was some amount of aniconic.¹⁸ He wants to prove that there were some paintings in Jewish worship because when Moses was building the tabernacle, God asked him to build two images on the Ark of Covenant to represent the two Cherubims (Exod 25:18).

These Cherubims were not real angels but golden images of holy angels that have spread their wings on the top of the Ark of Covenant.¹⁹ He also asked Moses to make a serpent of brass on a pole for the people of Israel to look upon as a source of life when they were bitten by snakes (Num 21:9). King Solomon also replicated the same thing in the temple (1 Kgs 6:27). Some Christians believe that icons give us the notion of God.²⁰ Meanwhile, Israelites were prevented from involving themselves in iconolatry because of their neighboring countries' practices.²¹

¹⁶ Mackay, *Exodus: A Mentor Commentary*, 342.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 344.

¹⁸ Victor P. Hamilton, *Handbook on the Pentateuch: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 192.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 219.

²⁰ Baldwin, “Idols and Icons: Reflections on the Current State of Liturgical Reform,” 389.

²¹ Hamilton, *Handbook on the Pentateuch: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy*, 345.

One of the renowned chapters within the Pentateuch is Exodus 20 which contains the Decalogue which emphasizes “the true God who alone is to be worshiped.”²² Exodus 20 is the basis of all laws which are found in the entire Scriptures.²³ Forming image in place of God has been forbidden in some portions of the Old Testament;²⁴ because Israel has been set apart for the Lord.²⁵ Edersheim argues that “they who are so distinguished by God’s grace should cultivate holiness so that in turn they sanctify God.”²⁶ Therefore, the holiness of Israelites can be only accomplished by denying themselves from the idols. The Decalogue forbids humanity for making any form of an image to represent God²⁷ or anything in heaven, on the earth, or under the earth (Exod 20:4).

Israel pledged to obey God: not to go contrary to his commands or worship any other god.²⁸ Israelites system of worship should be different from their neighboring countries and also prohibit prostration before idols.²⁹ Meyers supports that, “they are not a catalog of what members of the community must do but rather of

²² Robin Routledge, *Old Testament Theology: A Thematic Approach* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 2008), 243.

²³ *Ibid.*, 242.

²⁴ See Exod 23:24; Lev 26:1; Deut 4:16; 5:8; 16:22; 2 Kgs 23:14; 2 Chr 34:4; Isa 42:8; 44:10; Jer 8:19; 10:14; 51:52; Ezek 8:3; Mic 5:13; Nah 1:14.

²⁵ Routledge, *Old Testament Theology: A Thematic Approach*, 185.

²⁶ Alfred Edersheim, *The Exodus and the Wanderings in the Wilderness* (London, UK: The Religious Tract Society, 1919), 110.

²⁷ Hamilton, *Handbook on the Pentateuch: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy*, 192.

²⁸ Bernhard W. Anderson, *Understanding the Old Testament* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1957), 57.

²⁹ William Johnstone, *Chronicles and Exodus: An Analogy and Its Application* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 329.

what they must avoid doing.”³⁰ God knew His people’s afflictions, behavior, and history; that they are from the idolatrous nation, Egypt, and it will be possible for them to make an image to represent Him (Exod 3:7). The prohibition of the icon has spread throughout the Old Testament.³¹ God forbids His covenant people from making any image and even cursed a craftsman who carves a molten image for His people to worship (Deut 27:15).

Statement of the Problem

God commanded Moses to make two Cherubims of gold, of beaten work in the sanctuary, and Moses in response to God’s instruction built some pictorial ornaments in the tabernacle (Exod 25:18 -22). However, the second commandment forbids idolatry, aniconic, and icons. If images are forbidden in the second commandment, why did God allow some images to be part of the temple worship? Does this permit icon worship in contemporary Christian worship?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the prohibition against making images in Exod 20:4-6 and its relation to the pictorial ornaments in the temple (Exod 25:18) as well as icons in Christian worship.

The Significance of the Study

The outcome of this study will help Bible students to understand how sinful it is to make and use something to replace God in terms of worship. As part of the study, contemporary Christians would get the idea of whether icons should be upheld

³⁰ Johnstone, *Chronicles and Exodus: An Analogy and Its Application*, 54.

³¹ Arends H. W. Curtis, “No Graven Image? : Israelite Aniconism in Its Ancient Near East Context,” *The Journal of Theological Studies* 42 (1998): 182.

in their worship or forbidden. The study will also bring out how every Christian should understand the doctrine of monotheism. Several scholars have written extensively concerning the use of Christ or apostolic portrait but the majority have not considered how some contemporary Christians use the paintings of Christ or apostles as a form of deity when they face [spiritual] challenges or nightmares.

This study will also help African Christians to understand that the worship of Yahweh is different from the ancestral worship in which images are used as a direct mediator between God and man. In the process of true worship, God is only worshiped in spirit and truth (John 4:24).

Methodology and Procedure

This study is using a synchronic approach “this approach looks only at the final form of the text, the text as it stands in the Bible as we have it.”³² The study will also use a grammatical-historical method, which will bring out grammatical and syntactical aspects of the text; there will be deliberations on historical background, a literary genre, and the theological meaning. It means that the study will consider lexical-syntactical and theological aspects. Also, the study focuses on what scholars and other authors have written concerning the topic under study. The evidence for this research was gotten from the use of scholarly resources, for example, Bible Commentaries, Bible Dictionaries, articles, journals, books, periodicals, and Internet sources.

Chapter One deals with the introduction, statement of the problem, purpose and, significance of the study, its methodology and procedure, the definition of terms, and the delimitation of the study. Chapter Two discusses the related literature

³² Michael J. Gorman, *Elements of Biblical Exegesis: A Basic Guide for Students and Ministers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 13.

concerning aniconism and, how it continues throughout the history of the Old Testament and its implication in the intertestamental period and the New Testament era. It also considers the views of Apostolic Fathers concerning aniconism and other schools of thought. This chapter will continue with the Protestants' view of aniconism, and contemporary perspectives of aniconism and its practices.

Chapter Three deals with the background of Exod 20:4-5 and 25:18 and the literary examination of the book of Exodus. Chapter Four discusses the exegetical consideration of Exod 20:4-5; and 25:18. It will also consider the contextual analysis of the passages, its immediate context, the larger context, its textual considerations, literary analysis, form analysis, genre, syntax, linguistic consideration, translation of the passage, and its theological implications.

Chapter Five summarizes the salient points of the idea of aniconism in the second commandment and practice of pictorial ornaments in the temple. It draws conclusions based on the exegetical study on the two passages and makes some recommendations.

Delimitations of Study

This work is a comparative study between icon, aniconic, and pictorial ornaments in the temple in Exod 25:18. Icons in this study concentrated on the Book of Exodus, with references to other parts of the Old Testament. This study does not fully analyze the whole of the book of Exodus and other Old Testament books but is limited to the two focused texts (Exod 20:4-5; 25:18).

Definition of Terms

Aniconic: refers to “painting or about representations without human or animal form.”³³

Aniconism: It refers to the “opposition on religious grounds to the depiction in the visual arts of images of living creatures. Such opposition is particularly relevant to the Jewish, Islamic, and Byzantine artistic traditions.”³⁴

Cherubim: It is related to “hybrid celestial winged beings with human, animal, or birdlike characteristics that are depicted in Jewish, Christian, and Islamic literature and act as throne bearers or throne guardians of the deity.”³⁵

Decalogue: This is “another name for the Ten Commandment”³⁶

Icon: it refers to “a painted representation of a holy person, as Jesus, the Virgin Mary, or a saint. Icons are held in reverence by Christians in the Eastern churches.”³⁷

Pictorial Ornaments: it is a term used in “religious contexts in the shape of golden bells that hung between the multi-colored yarn pomegranates on the fringe of the high priest's robe (Exod 38: 33-34).”³⁸

³³ Breslin, *Collins English Dictionary*, s.v. Aniconic.

³⁴ Encyclopaedia Britannica, *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Revised Edition. (Chicago, IL: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1981), s.v. Aniconism.

³⁵ Encyclopaedia Britannica, *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, s.v. cherubim.

³⁶ Breslin, *Collins English Dictionary*, s.v. Decalogue.

³⁷ Macmillan Mcgraw Hill, *Macmillan School Dictionary* (London, UK: Collier Macmillan, 1993), s.v. Icon.

³⁸ David Noel Freedman, *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, Revised Edition. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), s.v. Ornament.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Several Christians use images such as the cross of Christ as the sign of His glory but in reality, it does not portray the love for Christ's death. However, it pretends to steal the glory of Christ.¹ When Christians kneel, rising, kissing the image on the feet, and give reverence to a cross then it is image worship.² It is our duty as Christians to do away from all images in order to bring honor and glory to Christ.³ Ward strongly believes that the idea of given honor to the cross of Christ which is in the form of worshipping Christ Himself conflicts with the Second Commandment.⁴

Concerning the issue of icon worship, this chapter covers some main ideas, namely: The Issue of Exodus 20: 4-5, the injunction of the second Commandment, the practice of icons in the New Testament time, and the practice of icons today.

This issue of image worship prompted John R. Throop to quote from the writings of John Calvin that "Man's mind is like a store of idolatry and superstition; so much so that if a man believes his mind it is certain that he will forsake God and forge some idol in his brain."⁵ Calvin's statement reveals that man has an edge to make

¹ Henry Dana, *History of the Cross: The Pagan Origin, and Idolatrous Adoption and Worship, of the Image* (London, UK: James Nisbet, 1871), v.

² *Ibid.*, 2.

³ *Ibid.*, v.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁵ John R. Throop, "Exodus 32:1-14: Mercy amidst Idolatry," *The Clergy Journal* 84, 57 (2008): 57.

idols out of pride and ungratefulness. The real illustration of this happened when the Israelites rejected Yahweh at the plain of Mount Sinai and molded a calf image as their god (Exod 32). It suggests that man always prefers to have something to replace God, which resulted in idolatry. Several scholars have written about this subject to inform believers that, God is only one who desires worship.⁶

The Issue of Exodus 20: 4-5

In the book of Exodus, God gave Moses Ten Commandments that reveals the character of God and how God wants to deal with His people.⁷ The Ten Commandments reveal what God demands from man. Within the Ten Commandments, we find the prohibition with on “making graven images” (Exod 20:4). The worship of image-idols was rampant in the ancient Near East⁸ but this practice of image-idols is in direct opposition to the true worship of God. This precludes that God wants His people to be aware of the presence of images, which can entice them to commit such an abomination.

The Idea of Icons

The idea of icons has attracted several explanations among scholars in various ways. Gaifman defines icons as “the absence of figural images of gods in Greek

⁶ See for example R. A. Torrey, *What The Bible Teaches: A Thorough And Comprehensive Study Of What The Bible Has To Say Concerning The Great Doctrines Of Which It Treats* (New York, NY: Fleming H. Revell, 1898), 1898; Roger Ellsworth, *Opening up Psalms* (Leominster, MA: Day One, 2006), 59; John R. Bisagno, *Principle Preaching: How to Create and Deliver Purpose Driven Sermons for Life Applications* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2002), 154; Darrell L. Bock, *Luke 1:1-9:50: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994), 186; Clarence H. Benson, *Biblical Faith: Doctrines Every Christian Should Know* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2003), 56.

⁷ Arthur W. Pink, *The Ten Commandments* (Pensacola, FL: Chapel Library, 1999), 4.

⁸ William F. Albright, “The Ancient Near East and the Religion of Israel,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 2 (1940): 85; Theodore Sideris, “The Theological Position of the Iconophiles during the Iconoclastic Controversy,” *St Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 17 (1973): 223.

practiced religion and the adoption of aniconic monuments, namely objects such as pillars and poles, to designate the presence of the divine.”⁹ He argues that several people use the painting of a deity or arts of a god to do several devotions. Such practices create an argument between those who accept icon worship and reject the second commandment with those who admit the prohibition of image-idol worship.¹⁰ The famous opposition of icon worships came from early church fathers and Byzantine emperor Leo III.¹¹ However, Holmes suggests that the use of icons in worship is not opposed to God but they are “privilege images” authorized by God. These images are sacred and it represents the holy faces of Christ and Christian saints.¹² He continues to emphasize that

An image is called sacred if it enters into contact with the body, or with the face or with other parts of our Lord or one of his saints, where, just through that contact, the figure of the body or of the part that was touched is printed there, as in the case of the Holy Face of Christ, left there by St Veronica, kept in Rome; or the sacred *sudarium* in which the most beatified the body of Our Savior was wrapped following his death, which still today preserves imprinted the image of Christ ... preserved with great veneration by the Duke of Savoy; or whatever other figure was painted or configured in this way.¹³

His argument suggests that some icons are not sinful but rather a holy object, which deserves reverence. Hundley supports that “the image provided people with consistent access to the deity and the ability to offer it gifts and service.”¹⁴ This idea is

⁹ Milette Gaifman, *Aniconism in Greek Antiquity* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2012), chap. 1.

¹⁰ Encyclopaedia Britannica, *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, s.v. iconoclastic controversy.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 283.

¹² Megan Holmes, “Miraculous Images in Renaissance Florence,” *Art History* 34, no. 3 (2011): 433.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Michael B. Hundley, “What Is the Golden Calf?,” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 79, no. 4 (2017): 572.

not different from African traditional beliefs, which assert that the divinities are special beings, which serve as an intermediary between man and God.¹⁵ The use of icons in worship creates a question that can God share His glory with images and painting. Certainly not (Isa 42:8).

The Injunction of the Second Commandment

Did God enact commandments for the Israelites in the wilderness for nothing? Why did He prohibit the making of images? Was He afraid that His people would abandon Him and join the heathen nations for images-idols worship? According to the rabbinic perspective, the Israelites were passionate about idolatry because of their long stay in Egypt.¹⁶ In addition, they have not seen God before as it has been recorded in John 1:18 “no man has seen God at any time,” and because we do not see God, we have a misconception about his existence.¹⁷

God is a transcendent being, man cannot use an image to represents Him.¹⁸ God is a spirit, not a human who can have an image or picture, He does not have a physical image. He only reveals Himself to humans through His angels, dreams, and visions.¹⁹ Adler argues that if God allows humans to make an image to represent Him,

¹⁵ Emeka Charles Ekeke and Chike A. Ekeopara, “God, Divinities and Spirits in African Traditional Religious Ontology,” *American Journal of Social and Management Sciences* 1, no. 2 (2010): 215.

¹⁶ Steven D. Fraade, Aharon Shemesh, and Ruth A. Clements, “Rabbinic Perspectives: Rabbinic Literature and the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in *Proceedings of the Eighth International Symposium of the Orion Center for the Study of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Associated Literature* (Boston, MA: Brill, 2006), 104.

¹⁷ Milian L. Andreasen, *The Faith of Jesus and the Commandments of God* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1939), 175.

¹⁸ Erwin Fahlbusch and G. W. Bromiley, eds., “Image,” trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *The Encyclopedia of Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2003), 863.

¹⁹ Guy P. Duffield and Nathaniel M. Van Cleave, *Foundations of Pentecostal Theology* (Los Angeles, CA: L.I.F.E. Bible College, 1983), 123.

man will become entranced with the image and enticed to worship it instead of worshipping the creator.²⁰ This human perception revealed itself in the New Testament where the people of Lystra wanted to worship Paul and Barnabas as gods who have revealed themselves in human form (Acts 14: 11-13).

Based on this, Walvoord and Zuck suggest that God delivered Israel from Egypt into the wilderness to show His love and law to them as a loving God who has made them a special people for Himself.²¹ God exposed His law to His people, asked Moses to write them down in the book of Exodus, and repeated it in the book of Deuteronomy.²² The argument continues that, even God prohibited the Israelites not to intermarry the Canaanites, which would prevent them from worshiping idols, and after that; He enacted laws against image worship.²³ Therefore, the law against intermarriage with other nations enacted because of image worship among the neighboring countries.²⁴ In this view, we can understand that God does not want His people to have any relationship with those nations who practice image-idol worship.

²⁰ Amy Adler, "The First Amendment and the Second Commandment," *New York Law School Law Review* 57, no. 41 (2012): 44.

²¹ John F Walvoord, "Ezekiel," *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983), 1264.

²² Alexander Roberts, J. Donaldson, and A. C. Coxe, eds., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325- The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*, vol. 1 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1997), 571.

²³ Robert G. Bratcher and Howard A. Hatton, *A Handbook on Deuteronomy* (New York, NY: United Bible Societies, 2000), 152.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 154.

Old Testament View

In the Old Testament, the oneness of God was the mark of true worship (Deut 6:4-5).²⁵ Warner expresses that, “the second commandment recognizes this innate tendency to express worship, by restricting the objects of such worship: all idols are excluded.”²⁶ His argument confirms that humans are born with the propensity to worship God. Therefore, the second commandment averts Israel from worshipping different gods besides Yahweh.²⁷

The Old Testament writers have several words to describe images or idols;²⁸ it explains that anything carving from silver, gold, or wood for worship prohibited.²⁹

The worship of the Israelites based on monotheism.³⁰ Brueggemann affirms that

In making this remarkable claim, it is useful to refer in particular to two paramount affirmations that are at the core of Israel’s testimony. First,

²⁵ David Kane Bernard, “Monotheistic Discourse and Deification of Jesus in Early Christianity as Exemplified in 2 Corinthians 3:16- 4:6” (Doctoral Dissertation, University of South Africa, 2014), 4.

²⁶ Rob Warner, *The Ten Commandments and the Decline of the West* (Eastbourne, UK: Kingsway, 1997), 39.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ The following terms are use to described idols in the Old Testament prophetic writings: Teraphim meaning “Images;” “A Family Idol” (Judg 17:5; 18:14, 17,18,20; Hos 3:4; 1 Sam 19:13); Matzzebah, meaning: Something Stationed (Gen 28:18; 31:45; 35:14, 20; Josh 4:9; 1 Sam 7:12); Chamman or Hammanim, meaning: “Sun-images” or “Sun-pillars” (2 Chr 34:4, 7; 14:3,5; Isa 17:8); aven—Idol, meaning: “Nothingness;” “Vanity” (Isa 66:3; 41:29; Deut 32:21; 1 Kgs 16:13; Ps 31:6; Jer 8:19); Elil, meaning: “A Thing of Naught” (Ps 97:7; Isa 19:3); 'Emah, meaning: “terror,” (Jer 50:38); Miphletzeth, meaning: “A Fright;” “Horror” (1 Kgs 15:13; 2 Chr 15:16); Bosheth, meaning: “Shame;” “Shameful Thing” (Jer 11:13; Hos 9:10); Gillulim, (a word of contempt), meaning: “Dung;” “Refuse” (Ezek 16:36; 20:8; Deut 29:17); Shikkuts, meaning: “Filth;” “Impurity” (Ezek 37:23; Nah 3:6); Semel, meaning: “Likeness;” “A Carved Image” (Deut 4:16); Tselem, meaning: “A Shadow” (Dan 3:1; 1 Sam 6:5); Temunah, meaning: “Similitude” (Deut 4:12-19); Tsir, meaning: “A Form;” “Shape” (Isa 45:16); Maskith, meaning: “Device” (Lev 26:1; Num 33:52); Pesel, meaning: “A Graven” or “Carved Image” (Isa 44:10-20; Deut 7:25; 27:15; Isa 40:19; 44:10); Massekah, meaning: “a molten image” (Deut 9:12; Judg 17:3,4); see, Admin, “Idols of the Bible,” *ChristianAnswers.Net*, last modified 2019, <https://christiananswers.net/dictionary/idol.html>.

²⁹ John H. Sailhammer, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Genesis-Leviticus*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, Revised Edition. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 480.

³⁰ David C. Sim and James S. McLaren, eds., *Attitudes to Gentiles in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity* (New York, NY: T&T Clark, 2013), 17.

Deuteronomy 6: 4-5, the famous Shema, stands at the core of Old Testament faith: ‘Hear, O Israel: The LORD is our GOD, the LORD alone.’³¹

His argument portrays that God demanded sole allegiance from his people.³²

This suggests that it is not appropriate for Israel to claim that she worshiped Yahweh and having a relationship with other gods because according to Isaiah, idolatry is an expression of human arrogance (Isa 48:5).³³ Strengthening the argument, Parton supports that monotheism should be the original religion for humanity but it was only Jews who upheld it while other nations were polytheistic.³⁴

There are several words used by the Old Testament prophets to label the filthiness of idol worship, namely: detest, provoke, rebellion, stubbornness, disobedience, and brutishness (Ezek 37:23; Jer 25:6; 1 Sam 15:23). The prophets described idolatry as willful disobedient that actually demote the value of that worshiper.³⁵ Kaiser suggests that “‘You shall not bow down to them or worship them’ (Exod 20:5) is a figure of speech called hendiadys, where two expressions are used to convey a single idea, viz., ‘to offer religious worship.’ This expression is only used with respect to giving worship to foreign deities forbidden to Israel.”³⁶ He is expatiating that the author of the law used two statements, which mean the same thing to show how sinful it is to make images to represent God.

³¹ Walter Brueggemann, *Old Testament Theology: An Introduction* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2008), 121.

³² Brueggemann, *Old Testament Theology: An Introduction*, 121.

³³ John Barton, *The Old Testament: Canon, Literature and Theology: Collected Essays of John Barton* (Hampshire, UK: Ashgate, 2007), 254.

³⁴ Lewis B. Paton, “Theology of the Old Testament,” *The Biblical World* 25, no. 4 (1905): 283–291.

³⁵ Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit, and Tremper Longman III, eds., “Idolatry,” *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1998), 417.

³⁶ Walter C. Kaiser Jr, “Exodus,” ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary with The New International Version of The Holy Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1990), 423.

But in contrast, Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown point out that in Old Testament tradition, making a statue was not forbidden but using them as a form of worship.³⁷ Camille supports that the prohibition of images is to show us true worship but not to forbid us from making creative arts.³⁸ He argues that making icons or images for business or other purposes was not forbidden but using them to replace God is a heinous sin.

Historical Perspectives on the Prohibition Concerning the Use of Images in Israel

The Jews had been sent into captivity for seventy years because of idolatry (Jer 25:1-11), and after the captivity, they made very strict rules against idolatry.³⁹ It was a sacred mission for the Jews to stop all forms of idolatry whether past or present.⁴⁰ Philo described the second commandment in a very broadway. He admitted that some creatures wanted to assign the honors of God to other creatures.⁴¹ He continues to describe the second commandment in a very sophisticated manner. He suggests that

let us, therefore, reject all such impious dishonesty, and not worship those who are our brothers by nature, even though they may have received a purer and more immortal essence than ourselves (for all created things are brothers to one another, since they are created; since the father of them all is one, the creator of the universe); but let us rather, with our mind and reason, and with all our strength, gird ourselves up vigorously and energetically to the service of that Being who is uncreated and everlasting, and maker of the universe,

³⁷ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1871), 62.

³⁸ Alice Camille, "Idol Curiosity," *U.S. Catholic* 72, no. 9 (2007): 39.

³⁹ Crawford Howell Toy, *Judaism and Christianity: A Sketch of the Progress of Thought From Old Testament to New Testament* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, 1892), 53.

⁴⁰ Solomon Schechter, *Studies in Judaism* (New York, NY: MacMillan, 1896), xxi.

⁴¹ Alexandria Philo, *The Works of Philo*, trans. C. D. Yonge, vol. 2 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993), 523.

never shrinking or turning aside from it, nor yielding to a desire of pleasing the multitude, by which even those who might be saved are often destroyed.⁴²

His statement recommends that It is not sensible for a man to worship his brother or creatures which he supposed to subdue them (Gen 1: 26). Anything man sees around him is created things not his maker and does not deserve worship.

According to Danby, the Jews made the second commandment more rigid after the Babylonian captivity.⁴³ They did not want anyone to have any business with the Gentiles or even pay their money to them if a Jew owns a Gentile. They did not want to have any relationship with the Gentiles when they are celebrating their heathen festivals.⁴⁴ He elaborated this view by saying, “For three days before their festivals and for three days after them it is forbidden [to have any business with them].”⁴⁵

He advocates that the Jews segregated themselves from other nations purposely to avoid religious contaminations. However, the Dandy (*hakhamim*) have a different view, they believe that “Before their festivals, it is forbidden, but after their festivals, it is not forbidden.”⁴⁶ The Danby idea seems right because during their festivals the Jew would make sure that he would not defile himself with contact with an uncircumcised. However, after their festivity, they do business with other foreigners.

⁴² Philo, *The Works of Philo*, 2:2.

⁴³ Herbert Danby, *The Mishnah: Translated from the Hebrew With Introduction and Brief Explanatory Notes* (New York, NY: Hendrickson, 1933), 436.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 437.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

Concerning Jews fight against idolatry, Fairweather explains that at the time of Antiochus Epiphanes IV,⁴⁷ the Jews were instructed to denounce their faith and worship idols and make sacrifices to them; but the majority of them felt reluctant to denounce their faith even at the point of death, and some also run to the wilderness for safety. The punishment and treatment of Epiphanes did not discourage them to worship idols and made sacrifices to them.⁴⁸ Besides, at a point in time, the king sent some officials to the Jewish town called Modin where dwelt a man called Mattathias and his sons.⁴⁹ He encouraged his people not to conform to the king's request to sacrifice unclean animals to idols. Upon this, "he told them that it was better for them to die for the laws of their country than to live so ingloriously as they then did."⁵⁰

According to Lazarus, not only that the Jews were reluctant to obey their oppressors but they also composed poems against idolatry.⁵¹ Strack argues that even at the point of death a Jew after the captivity would not commit idolatry. They were ready to commit any sin if it even involves human life but not idolatry.⁵² During Greco-Roman persecution of the Jews, a man called Miriam Bat Tanhum and his

⁴⁷ History suggests that Antiochus Epiphanes IV was one of the Hellenistic King who came to existence between 175 BC until his death in 164 BC (Wikipedia, "Antiochus IV Epiphanes," *Wikipedia*, last modified 2019, accessed August 15, 2019, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Antiochus_IV_Epiphanes&oldid=954689354); He was one of the notorious Jewish enemy who wanted the Jews to abandon their religious activities and replace it with Hellenistic culture. He even forced the Jews to eat pork that was abominable meat for them. Łukasz Niesiołowski-Spanò, "Antiochus IV Epiphanes and the Jews- A Reassessment," in *History, Archaeology and The Bible Forty Years After Historicity: Changing Perspectives 6*, ed. Hjelms Thompson T.L. (London, UK: Routledge, 2016), 2.

⁴⁸ William Fairweather, *The Background of the Gospels: Or Judaism in the Period Between the Old and New Testaments* (Edinburgh, Scotland: Morrison & Gibb, 1920), 102.

⁴⁹ Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, trans. William Whiston (Scotts Valley, CA: CreateSpace Independent, 2013), 507.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Emma Lazarus, *Songs Of A Semite: The Dance To Death And Other Poems* (New York, NY: Office of the American Hebrew, 2004), 56.

⁵² Hermann L. Strack and Gunter Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*, trans. Markus Bockmuehl (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1996), 26.

seven sons were arrested and they were put in jail in different places, then Caesar called the first one to trick him so that he would bow down before an idol, he said “Heaven forbid! My brothers did not prostrate themselves so I shall not prostrate myself before it, either.”⁵³

To violate the second commandment in the intertestamental period was the greatest sin ever committed by a Jew;⁵⁴ anyone who commits idolatry is treated as a person who commits murder or rape.⁵⁵ Besides, the penalty that would be imposed on such offense will be imposed on idolater.⁵⁶ The Rabbis believed that if someone involves himself/ herself in idolatry, God’s anger would arouse against that person (Deut 29:18-20).⁵⁷ Again, as the Jews were transmitting their knowledge of God to their offspring through oral tradition and Mishna, they used what is called *Tosefta Peah*. In this *Tosefta Peah*, they also put this phrase “forbidden of idol worship” in their writings.⁵⁸

In Jewish Antiquity, they have teaching that Cain was banished from the presence of God because “he turned idolater, and set up the worship of the sun as the

⁵³ Friedrich Avemarie and Jan Willem van Henten, *Martyrdom and Noble Death: Selected Texts from Graeco-Roman, Jewish and Christian Antiquity* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2002), 147.

⁵⁴ Strack and Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*, 26.

⁵⁵ Shaye J. D. Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 67.

⁵⁶ Michaels L. Rodkinson, *Babylonian Talmud* (New York, NY: New Amsterdam Book, 1896), 59.

⁵⁷ Yaakov Elman, “Who Are the Kings of East and West in Ber 7A?: Roman Religion, Syrian Gods and Zoroastrianism in the Babylonian Talmud,” in *Studies in Josephus and the Varieties of Ancient Judaism*, ed. Shaye J. D. Cohen and Joshua J. Schwartz (Boston, MA: Martinus Nijhoff, 2007), 44.

⁵⁸ Marc Hirshman, *The Stabilization of Rabbinic Culture, 100 C.E. -350 C.E.: Texts on Education and Their Late Antique Context* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2009), 19.

best resemblance of the Shechinah.”⁵⁹ The Jews' understanding of Cain's sin was not only by killing his brother but he also involved himself in image worship.⁶⁰

The New Testament Perception of the Second Commandment

The New Testament Jews were not different from the Old Testament believers. They also jolted against the use of idols (Acts 15:20; 17:16; 1 Cor 5:11; 10:14). According to Navok, in the apostolic time, some Jewish sects accused Christians that they are Idolaters because they give reverence to Jesus.⁶¹ However, the writings of Paul refuted that idea because Jesus is part of the Godhead, not an image that represents God. In the New Testament, icons have been associated with idolatry.⁶²

The concept of idolatry has been used to equate some aspect of social vices such as immorality, envy, love of money, and food sacrificed to idols.⁶³ In Romans 1: 25-29, Paul gave an idea that those who have given themselves to image-worship end up in fornication and other social vices.⁶⁴

In Acts 15, there was a controversy between Jews and the Gentile Christians concerning circumcision and the matter brought before the apostles. After settling the matter, a letter was sent to all believers to abstain from “pollution of idols, and

⁵⁹ David Jennings, *Jewish Antiquities* (London, UK: Bradbuhy and Evans, 1837), 2.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁶¹ David Novak, *Jewish-Christian Dialogue: A Jewish Justification* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1989), s.v. Idolater.

⁶² Encyclopaedia Britannica, *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, s.v. iconic.

⁶³ Sean F. Winter, “You Shall Not Give What Is Holy to The Dogs,” in *Attitudes to Gentiles in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity*, ed. David C. Sim and James S. McLaren (New York, NY: T&T Clark, 2013), 148.

⁶⁴ Robert Ewusie Moses, “Powerful Practices: Paul's Principalities and Powers Revisited” (Doctoral Thesis, Duke Divinity School, 2012), 76.

fornication and things strangled, and blood” (Acts 15:20).⁶⁵ The Apostles associated idol worship or practices with some of the unclean things and forbidden items.⁶⁶

John asserts that Christians should abstain from idols, “Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen” (1 John 5:21). Paul also accused Christians in Ephesus of worshiping images (Acts 19:35). In the book of Romans, Paul contends that the Gentiles change the glory of God for images (Rom 1:23). The Apostle John prophesied about the worship of the image of the beast (Rev 13:14,15; 14:9,11; 16:2; 19:20).

The Apostolic Fathers View Concerning Icons

The apostolic fathers succeeded in the work of the Apostles and they were preaching against the use of idols. According to Winter, icons among the Gentiles were very high and they could not be trusted by the church fathers.⁶⁷ Polycarp also admonished the church elders of Philippi to abstain from avarice, which he terms it as a form of image-worship or idolatry.⁶⁸

It is stated in Didache, (which was used as church manual at their time) “My child, regard not omens, for this leads to idolatry; neither be an enchanter, nor an astrologer, nor a magician, neither wish to see these things, for from them all is idolatry engendered.”⁶⁹ It also reemphasized the doctrine of early apostles concerning

⁶⁵ Peter Rüs, “Mysterious Recommendations to Gentile Christians,” *Creation and Evolution*, last modified 2009, accessed August 15, 2019, <http://www.aneste.ch/mysterious-recommendations-to-gentile-christians.html>.

⁶⁶ Robert L. Plummer, “Eating Idol Meat in Corinth: Enduring Principles from Paul’s Instructions,” *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 6, no. 3 (2002): 67.

⁶⁷ Winter, “You Shall Not Give What Is Holy to The Dogs,” 25.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 297.

⁶⁹ Winter, “You Shall Not Give What Is Holy to The Dogs,” 313.

the food dedicated to the idols.⁷⁰ In this eschatological message, it confirms that “*mayim Khayim*” (running water) will flow from the temple and cleans all idols in the last day.⁷¹

The Practice of Icons in the Ancient Near East

Let us investigate the practices of icons among a few of the nations surrounding Israel. May discloses that the concept of icons in the Ancient Near East is different from today’s concept because icon-worship that prohibited by some Christians never existed, and there was no ban on images in Mesopotamia.⁷² The concept of image or figure prohibition started with the Law of Moses (Exod 20:4-5). The worship of icons affected all the nations in the Ancient Near East including Israel, which was set apart by God, the worship of icon penetrated Israel at the time of Solomon,⁷³ and when the kingdom divided after the death of Solomon.⁷⁴ The Jews joined the Canaanites for idolatry⁷⁵ because their neighboring countries were deeply involved in idol-worship (Isa 2:6). The nations surrounding Israel were Egyptians, Assyria, Babylon, Philistines, Phoenicians, the Edomites, Moabites, Syrians, Hittites just to mention a few.⁷⁶

⁷⁰ Winter, “You Shall Not Give What Is Holy to The Dogs,” 319.

⁷¹ Ibid., 247.

⁷² Natalie Naomi May, *Iconoclasm and Text Destruction in the Ancient Near East and Beyond* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 10.

⁷³ Mark Dever and Graeme Goldsworthy, *The Message of the Old Testament: Promises Made* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2006), 298.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 28.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 204.

⁷⁶ John Woolley, *A Catechetical and Practical Exposition of the Decalogue* (London, UK: Paternoster Row, 1877), 44.

Icons in Egypt. Israel spent four hundred and thirty years as slaves in Egypt under the supervision of Pharaoh (Exod 12:41). Egypt held several gods but the god whom they trusted was their king.⁷⁷ For example, Figure 1,⁷⁸ and Figure 2 show the beauty of the pharaoh.



Figure 1. An Egyptian Pharaoh



Figure 2. The Beauty of Pharaoh

⁷⁷ James Baikie, *Peeps at Many Lands: Ancient Egypt* (London, UK: Adam and Charles Black, 1912), 17–18.

⁷⁸ For example, Figure I, II, III are Ibid.

Figure 3, depicts “Pharaoh **Menkaure** of the **Fourth Dynasty**, accompanied by the goddesses **Bat** and **Hathor**.”⁷⁹



Figure 3. Pharaoh Menkaure and the Goddesses Bat and Hathor

According to Baikie, “Divine honors are paid, and sacrifices offered to him; and when he dies and goes to join his brother-gods in heaven, a great temple rises to his memory, and hosts of priests are employed in his worship.”⁸⁰ This statement clearly shows that Pharaoh is a god to Egyptians. He continues to reemphasize the importance of Pharaoh to the Egyptians, “There is just one distinction made between him and the other gods, Amen at Thebes, Ptah at Memphis, and all the rest of the crowd of divinities, are called ‘the great gods.’”

For instance, Figure 4 shows Amen at Thebes⁸¹ whose name was used to end a discourse.⁸²

⁷⁹ Wikipedia, “Menkaure,” *Wikipedia*, last modified 2019, accessed October 31, 2019, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Menkaure&oldid=936724721>.

⁸⁰ Baikie, *Peeps at Many Lands: Ancient Egypt*, 18.

⁸¹ John Palo, “Amen,” *Scribd*, last modified 1999, accessed October 31, 2019, <https://www.scribd.com/document/167027458/Amen>.

⁸² For example, figure IV and V Admin, “Images of Amen at Thebes and Ptah at Memphis,” *Pinterest*, last modified 2019, accessed August 16, 2019, <https://www.pinterest.com/petamni/ptah/>.



Figure 4. Amen at Thebes

Figure 5 shows Ptah of Memphis whom Egyptians claim that he called the creation into existence.⁸³



Figure 5. Ptah of Memphis

⁸³ Victor H. Matthews and Don C. Benjamin, *Old Testament Parallels: Laws and Stories from the Ancient Near East* (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 2006), 3; Flinders Petrie, *Memphis I* (New York, NY: Hall Press, 2013), 19.

Pharaoh takes a different title. He is called ‘the good god.’⁸⁴ This precludes the reasons Egyptians built great temples and pyramids.⁸⁵ Inside these temples were pictures of gods and the king making sacrifices to them repeatedly.⁸⁶ Baikie suggests, “The pillars show pictures of the King making offerings to the gods, or being welcomed by them, but the pictures on the walls are very strange and weird.”⁸⁷ These quotations from Baikie preclude that Egyptians were very involved in icons worship.

Icons in Assyria. Assyria, one of the Israelites neighbors took the images and the principal gods and goddesses from Elamites.⁸⁸ One of the Assyrian Kings, Tiglath-Pileser III erected divine images and golden statue for himself.⁸⁹ Figure 6 illustrates the golden images of Tiglath-Pileser III.⁹⁰

⁸⁴ Baikie, *Peeps at Many Lands: Ancient Egypt*, 18.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 73.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 76.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 80.

⁸⁸ Woolley, *A Catechetical and Practical Exposition of the Decalogue*, 58.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ Matthews and Benjamin, *Old Testament Parallels: Laws and Stories from the Ancient Near East*, 182; Wikipedia, See, Figure VI, VII, and VIII can be found at “Tiglath-Pileser III,” *Wikipedia*, last modified 2019, accessed August 16, 2019, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Tiglath-Pileser_III&oldid=955142319.



Figure 6. Golden Images of Tiglath-Pileser III

Sennacherib, after conquering several nations built a temple and ornamented it with images to illustrate the myth of Ashur.⁹¹ Boardman asserts that “Cult was a characteristic of Assyrian religion” and their cities were full of temples.⁹² During the reign of Rabshakeh, Assyrians believed that if there is no idol in your city, then there is no god among you.⁹³ Because Assyrians were so much involved in idolatry, they went one step further and regarded the king as at least partially divine, and uneducated Assyrians probably believed that the offerings placed on a table before a royal image in a temple were offerings to the image itself rather than offerings to present by the king portrayed to the god.⁹⁴

⁹¹ Woolley, *A Catechetical and Practical Exposition of the Decalogue*, 116.

⁹² John Boardman, ed., *The Cambridge Ancient History: The Assyrian and Babylonian Empires and Other States of the Near East, from the Eighth to the Sixth Centuries BC*, 2nd Edition. (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 224.

⁹³ Woolley, *A Catechetical and Practical Exposition of the Decalogue*, 128.

⁹⁴ Boardman, *The Cambridge Ancient History: The Assyrian and Babylonian Empires and Other States of the Near East, from the Eighth to the Sixth Centuries BC*, 196.

Icons in Babylon. Babylon cannot be exempted from this issue concerning idol worship. Woolley points out that the elected nation of God (the Jews) became captives to Babylonians⁹⁵ through the hands of Nebuchadnezzar II, and all their temple vessels were carried away to Babylon.⁹⁶ The Babylonians believed in *Bel* and *Nabu* as divine gods and every oath was associated with them.⁹⁷ For example, Figure 7⁹⁸ shows the image of Bel.



Figure 7. Image of Bel

Figure 8 shows the pictures of Image of Nabu.⁹⁹



Figure 8. Images of Nabu

⁹⁵ Woolley, *A Catechetical and Practical Exposition of the Decalogue*, 192.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁹⁷ Guy Deutscher, *Syntactic Change in Akkadian: The Evolution of Sentential Complementation* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2000), 111.

⁹⁸ Admin, "Mesopotamian Gods & Kings," *Mesopotamian Artifacts & Texts*, 2019, accessed August 16, 2019, <http://www.mesopotamiangods.com/>.

⁹⁹ Admin, "Mesopotamian Gods & Kings," *Mesopotamian Artifacts & Texts*.

Babylonians were using amulets and charms that were obtained from their gods.¹⁰⁰ They believe that spirits and gods were inhabiting in human beings, plants, and other objects, and “it is on this principle of giving a sentient or perhaps divine nature to inanimate objects.”¹⁰¹ It is not therefore surprising that Nebuchadnezzar was ready to sacrifice to Daniel when he interpreted the dream; he thought that the gods inhibited Daniel. Therefore Daniel was a god in human form.¹⁰² Nebuchadnezzar also built a huge image to represent his kingdom, which he thought would never end.¹⁰³ Babylonians would do nothing unless their gods consulted, and all the prayers and sacrifices were offered to them.¹⁰⁴ According to Leick, “Some of the temples of the ancient gods continued to operate and they provided a base for scholarly activity which, as Beaulieu shows, hallways had a theological grounding.”¹⁰⁵ We can be agreed with Leick that the success of Babylon depends on their gods. Hruska added, “All human beings and the whole of humanity bowed to the will of gods and tilled their lands.”¹⁰⁶

Hruska’s idea is not true for every humanity because some people refused to bow down to the image on the same land (Daniel chapter 3). Baker acknowledges that

¹⁰⁰ Reginald Campbell Thompson, *The Devils and Evil Spirits of Babylonia: Babylonian and Assyrian Incantations Against Demons, Schools, Vampires, Hobgoblins, Ghosts, and Kindred Evil Spirits* (London, UK: Luzac, 1903), 68.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 55.

¹⁰² Mervyn C. Maxwell, *God Cares: The Message of Daniel for You and Your Family* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1981), 31.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 47.

¹⁰⁴ Gwendolyn Leick, “Introduction,” in *The Babylonian World*, ed. Gwendolyn Leick (New York, NY: Taylor & Francis, 2010), 7.

¹⁰⁵ Leick, “Introduction,” in *The Babylonian World*, ed. Gwendolyn Leick, 9.

¹⁰⁶ Blahoslav Hruska, “Agricultural Techniques,” in *The Babylonian World*, ed. Gwendolyn Leick (New York, NY: Taylor & Francis, 2010), 55.

both cities and villages were decorated with temples and shrines of the gods.¹⁰⁷ They believed that their kings were chosen by the gods and their military conquerors.¹⁰⁸

Bahrani confirms that because the Babylonians were involved in the icon, their major symbols were carved in the form of their gods;¹⁰⁹ they portray direct opposition to the second commandment. Briefly, it can presume that the Ancient Near East countries were very involved in image-idol worship, and icons which have been transferred to their decedents in modern days' religion.

Modern Views on Icons

Some of modern-day Christians also frown at icons worship. According to Bremmer, it was normally the attitude of early Christians to fight against cult images.¹¹⁰ Allis supports that anything, which has been made by a human, does not deserve to be worshiped; any form of worship to it is idolatry.¹¹¹ Warner asserts that any worship directed to carvings, statues, ornaments are forbidding by God and is a form of idol worship.¹¹² He continues to say, "The iconographic problem with them is that they represent the unrepresentable."¹¹³ God is a living God and He is beyond any

¹⁰⁷ Heather D. Baker, "Urban Form in the First Millennium BC," in *The Babylonian World*, ed. Gwendolyn Leick (New York, NY: Taylor & Francis, 2010), 69.

¹⁰⁸ Zainab Bahrani, "The Babylonian Visual Image," in *The Babylonian World*, ed. Gwendolyn Leick (New York, NY: Taylor & Francis, 2010), 58.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 162–163.

¹¹⁰ Bremmer, "Iconoclast, Iconoclastic, and Iconoclasm: Notes Towards a Genealogy," 1–17.

¹¹¹ Oswald T. Allis, *God Spoke by Moses: An Exposition of the Pentateuch* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1951), 75.

¹¹² Warner, *The Ten Commandments and the Decline of the West*, 39.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 41.

artistry.¹¹⁴ Hyatt supports that those who make images try to control their gods for their purpose, but God cannot be controlled.¹¹⁵

However, Dirksen also argues that the Orthodox churches believe that “traditions are highly valued as the work of God,” and these traditions woven with the Holy Spirit that experience brought about painting and icons.¹¹⁶ It took the church seven ecumenical councils to decide on the use of icons, first Council of *Nicea* (325 AD), Council of Ephesus (431 AD), Council of Chalcedon (451 AD), Council of Constantinople (553 AD), and the second council of Nicaea (787 AD).¹¹⁷ In those councils, the church agreed that,

We, therefore, following the royal pathway and the divinely inspired authority of our Holy Fathers and the traditions of the Catholic Church (for, as we all know, the Holy Spirit indwells her), define with all certitude and accuracy that just as the figure of the precious and life-giving cross, so also the venerable and holy images, as well in painting and mosaic as of other fit materials, should be outlined in the holy churches of God, and on the sacred vessels and the vestments and hangings and in pictures both in houses and by the wayside, to wit, the figure of our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ, of our spotless Lady, the Mother of God, of the honorable Angels, of all saints and all pious people.¹¹⁸

Noll argues from the point that there were some pillars, pictures, and images at the time of Moses therefore, it is not wrong to use them today. However, he forgets that those pictures and images were not worshiped or reverend at the time of Moses. It

¹¹⁴ Warner, *The Ten Commandments and the Decline of the West*, 41.

¹¹⁵ A. A. Anderson, *The New Century Bible Commentary: Exodus*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1971), 211.

¹¹⁶ B. H. Dirksen, *Icons for Evangelicals: The Theology and Use of Icons in Orthodox Churches and Potential Applications for the Use of Symbol in Contemporary Evangelical Churches* (London, UK: The Catholic Child Welfare Society, 2002), 4.

¹¹⁷ Mark A. Noll, *Turning Points: Decisive Moments in the History of Christianity*, 3rd Edition. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2012), 129.

¹¹⁸ John H. Leith, *Creeds of the Churches: A Reader in Christian Doctrine, from the Bible to the Present* (Atlanta, GA: Westminster John Knox Press, 1982), 55–56.

is the church, which agrees that the use of icons is an essential aspect of the worship of God.¹¹⁹

Various Views on the Iconoclastic

Byzantine has been noted as the first place against icons; the controversy started under the leadership of Leo III in 726 A.D who decreed against the veneration of icons and they should be removed from the churches.¹²⁰ Leo III made a decree against anyone who worships icons to be persecuted and destroyed icons in various temples.¹²¹ In six century, Julian of Atramation protested against icons in the church.¹²² Kastner says that even though people were venerated icons as “complement to and an extension of the sacraments, a locus for the admirable commercium between God and mankind.”¹²³ But it was still resisted and frown against as a form of false worship.

On the different ground, Pallis argues that an iconophile is a group of people who oppose iconoclasm.¹²⁴ The iconophile believes that they worship one God; they believe in the Trinity, they insist, “the object of her worship is not anything created

¹¹⁹ Noll, *Turning Points: Decisive Moments in the History of Christianity*, 134.

¹²⁰ Patricia Wilson-Kastner, “A Note on the Iconoclastic Controversy: Greek and Latin Disagreements about Matter and Deification,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* XVIII, no. 2 (1980): 138.

¹²¹ Sideris, “The Theological Position of the Iconophiles during the Iconoclastic Controversy,” 210.

¹²² Norman H. Baynes, “The Icons before Iconoclasm,” *Harvard Theological Review* 44, no. 2 (1951): 95.

¹²³ Wilson-Kastner, “A Note on the Iconoclastic Controversy: Greek and Latin Disagreements about Matter and Deification,” 143.

¹²⁴ Dimitrios Pallis, “A Critical Presentation of the Iconology of St. John of Damascus in the Context of the Byzantine Iconoclastic Controversies,” *The Heythrop Journal* 56, no. 2 (2015): 177.

but the Creator—the one God in the Trinity.”¹²⁵ Iconophile believes that they are not idol worshiper but idolatries are those who refuse to worship God but false gods.¹²⁶ They argue that according to St. John “an idol is an image of men, or beasts, or of birds, or reptiles, or of another creature, and which image is considered God,¹²⁷ but images they revere are images of divine beings. The iconophile considers that if the image resembles God it is not an idol but if it is an image of a creature then they consider it as an idol. It was Theodora, who put the end to iconoclasm after the death of Theophilos.¹²⁸

According to the belief of iconophile, Icons play an important role in people’s life such as devotion, ritual, and visual culture.¹²⁹ Icons are used for prayers because “Praying with icons is an ancient prayer practice that involves keeping our eyes wide open, taking into our heart what the image visually communicates.”¹³⁰ Ckuj continues to say that icons pave the way to heaven because a glimpse of invisible comes to Christology.¹³¹ It can be assumed that iconophiles contradict themselves because they believe in the oneness of God and the other hand venerating the image, which represents God.

¹²⁵ Sideris, “The Theological Position of the Iconophiles during the Iconoclastic Controversy,” 211.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Nectaria McLees, “Byzantine Bride-Shows and the Restoration of Icons: A Tale of Four Iconophile Empresses,” *Road to Emmaus* 4 (2012): 65.

¹²⁹ Bissera V. Pentcheva, *Icons and Power: The Mother of God in Byzantium* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2008), 442.

¹³⁰ Simon Ckuj, “Praying with Icons” (St Andrew’s Ukrainian Catholic parish, 2017), 2.

¹³¹ Ibid.

Ancient Jewish Icons

In the Jewish religion, icons are not entertained. According to Wolf, “Moses had said that an idolater was like a root that produced ‘bitterness’ and ‘poison.’”¹³² This statement reveals how the mixed people within Israel cause them to disobey God’s command. However, Allis suggests that God forbids making craving images but that does not mean that it prohibits any form of artistic representation in the process of worshiping God.¹³³ Bland claims “Unlike the Eastern Church, premodern rabbinic Judaism neither venerated nor worshipped miraculous icons of its holy figures, saints, and martyrs.”¹³⁴ He continues to say that the rabbinic Judaism never involved themselves in icon controversy.¹³⁵ Mann asserts that making images was a band in Jewish religion and that made them antipathy to art.¹³⁶ However, modern Jews embraced art history,¹³⁷ which has become part of human activities in everyday life.

Reasons for Icons in the Church

The Eastern Roman world admits icons before the protest of iconoclasm.¹³⁸ The Eastern Church allowed images in the church for a purpose. Bynes states that “Therefore we, too, allow material ornament in our churches, not as though we

¹³² Wolf, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Pentateuch*, 22.

¹³³ Allis, *God Spake by Moses: An Exposition of the Pentateuch*, 75.

¹³⁴ Kalman P. Bland, “Icons vs. Sculptures in Christian Practice and Jewish Law,” *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 11, no. 3 (2004): 213.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 113.

¹³⁶ Barbara Mann, “Toward an Understanding of Jewish Imagism,” *Religion & Literature* 30, no. 3 (1998): 26.

¹³⁷ Mann, “Toward an Understanding of Jewish Imagism,” 248.

¹³⁸ Bynes, “The Icons before Iconoclasm,” 93.

thought that God was a god of gold and silver and silken vestments and vessels adorned with precious stones conceding so that each order of the faithful may be led by the hand in a way which is proper to itself and so brought to the Godhead.”¹³⁹

Some Christians argue that Solomon used images of some of these in the table. They argue, “Solomon filled the building with lions and bulls and the palm trees and men in bronze and with carved and molten images.”¹⁴⁰ These Christians argue that Solomon did it without any approval of God but God did not condemn him for it.¹⁴¹ Pagans were accusing the Christians of worshiping idols but they rejected or answered by saying that the church venerates icons for the following reasons:¹⁴²

1. The icon of Christ through incarnation represents God on earth.¹⁴³
2. Angels are painted as ministers of God who reveal themselves to a human in spiritual form.¹⁴⁴
3. Demons tremble before the cross of Christ icon.¹⁴⁵
4. Icons were used for miracles:
 - a. they were used for healing the sick,
 - b. they were used to protect the faithful one,
 - c. they were used to identify a thief.¹⁴⁶

¹³⁹ Baynes, “The Icons before Iconoclasm,” 95.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 98.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid., 95–96.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 96.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Nicolas Oikonomides, “The Holy Icon as an Asset,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 45 (1991): 39.

Oikonomides acknowledges that modern Byzantine icons are more beautiful and have great value.¹⁴⁷ After the controversy over iconoclasm, “authors agree that the prototype of the image is venerated, not the image itself.”¹⁴⁸ Meanwhile, some saint’s icons were placed in various homes, and candles were lighted before them,¹⁴⁹ this shows a clear contradiction among iconophiles.

Protestants’ Viewpoint on Icons

Reformers were people who normally accused Catholics of misinterpreting the scriptures. Bakus acknowledge that the associates of Zwingli see icon worship as the core symbol of the papacy.¹⁵⁰ According to Zwingli, the issue of image worship and its argument started from old.¹⁵¹ He dates it from eight and ninth centuries at the time of early Christians.¹⁵² He argues that since God and Christ are divine it is impossible to have images to represent them, and the devotion offered is directed to the images, not God.¹⁵³ According to Zwingli, what caused reformation was emancipation from idolatry to the worship of one true God?¹⁵⁴ Calvin asserts that “For when God is misshapen in any painting, or any puppet, or in any other piece of wood or stone that

¹⁴⁷ Oikonomides, “The Holy Icon as an Asset,” 37.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 35.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Irena Backus, *Reformation Reading to Apocalypse*, ed. David C. Steinmetz (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2000), 92.

¹⁵¹ David Freedberg, *Art and Iconoclasm, 1525-1580: The Case of the Northern Netherlands* (Amsterdam, Netherlands: Deeeuw Van de Beeldenstorm, 1986), 70.

¹⁵² Freedberg, *Art and Iconoclasm, 1525-1580: The Case of the Northern Netherlands*, 70.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ George, *Theology of the Reformers*, 125.

men use to represent His image and say it is a resemblance of Him; this is a thoroughly gross and outrageous affair.”¹⁵⁵

One of the heinous sin ones can indeed do to another is to paint a picture of that person whom he/she doesn't know. He continues to say that it is the papists who use painting and images in prayer and lighting candles for them,¹⁵⁶ which also displeases God and something dishonorable to His majesty.¹⁵⁷ Marais supports Calvin's theology; he says that “The veneration of anything, either of a saint, image, or a symbol, led the common person to worship the shape in front of them, and to trust in this for the reception of any benevolent mercy.”¹⁵⁸ Image worship makes the devotee think that God is in the object in which he or she sees before him/her but it is an abomination to God.

Luther asserts that “The papists took the invocation of saints from the heathen, who divided God into numberless images and idols, and ordained to each its particular office and work.”¹⁵⁹ Luther continues to say that he wishes all images were abolished because they abuse humanity and the monks and nuns are abandoned from their

¹⁵⁵ John Calvin, *The Covenant Enforced: Sermons on Deuteronomy 27 and 28*, ed. James B. Jordan (Tyler, TX: Institute for Christian Economics, 1990), 35.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 36.

¹⁵⁷ Morne Marais, “Calvin's Doctrine of Idolatry: Calvin Against the Roman Catholic Church and Its Worship Structure in the 16th Century” (MA Thesis, The Bible Institute of South Africa, 2014), 5.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁵⁹ Martin Luther, *Table Talk* (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 2004), 60.

monasteries.¹⁶⁰ Arminius agrees that the scripture forbids men from put our hope and trust in images, and offer prayer or sacrifices to them, which they do not deserve it.¹⁶¹

He continues that it was forbidden to make images in place of God because of it a way of changing the glory of incorruptible God to corruptible things.¹⁶² Some of the reformers fought against image worship vigorously, for example, “Carlstadt who brought together all the passages of Scripture against images and inveighed with increasing energy against the idolatry of Rome. “They fall — they crawl before these idols,” exclaimed he; ‘they burn tapers before them, and make them offerings. ... Let us arise and tear them from the altars!’¹⁶³ These reformers were in an open fight against icon worship. They try to convince the world that images in the temple debase the true worship of God. They were anxious to remove them from the altars.

Contemporary Perspectives on Icons

The controversy about icons and aniconic started in Byzantine; the center of the controversy was “the theological issue which was the identity of the image and its prototype;”¹⁶⁴ and later it became a territorial conflict in the Ancient Near East.¹⁶⁵ The idea behind the prohibition of icons and aniconic is that their devotees believe that “images were perceived of as living objects, virtual parts of god, or persons; damage

¹⁶⁰ Elizabeth Vandiver, Ralph Keen, and Thomas D. Frazel, *Luther's Lives: Two Contemporary Accounts of Martin Luther* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2012), 102.

¹⁶¹ James Arminius, *Works of James Arminius*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 2002), 343.

¹⁶² James Arminius, *Works of James Arminius*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 2002), 91.

¹⁶³ Jean Henri Merle D'Aubigne, *History of the Great Reformation of the Sixteenth Century* (New York, NY: Robert Carter and Brothers, 1853), 108.

¹⁶⁴ May, *Iconoclasm and Text Destruction in the Ancient Near East and Beyond*, 8.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 12.

to the images thus was perceived of as inflicting damage on the depicted, divine or human, alive or dead.”¹⁶⁶ This idea is the direct opposite of the second commandments. Some modern people normally use traditional imagery without knowing their original meaning.¹⁶⁷ Sztabiński argues that,

If the works featured any religious imagery, it took the form of quoting the most stereotypical iconographic themes or using figures of Christ or the Virgin Mary bought in souvenir shops as ready-made components. On this basis, it was argued that postmodern works are not concerned with faith or spirituality, but rather with The Church as an institution and religion as a social phenomenon.¹⁶⁸

Contemporary Christians have been divided into two; those fellow “de facto aniconism, which tolerates iconic worship,” and those who admit “programmatically aniconism, which repudiates images.”¹⁶⁹

The other side of the coin is that there is no Catholic Church or temple without images of Christ, Mary, and saints. It is the rich heritage of the Catholic Church. According to Rausch, these images invite them to contemplate the mysteries they represent.¹⁷⁰ These images are part of Catholic Sacraments, and it can be abused, according to Rausch,

They can become objects of superstition, like making the sign of the cross before shooting a free throw. They are not like talismans or amulets, magical charms that protect their possessors. Sacraments invite our participation in the Christian mysteries; when they engage our faith, they can help us to see beyond the surface of things and raise our minds and hearts to God.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁶ May, *Iconoclasm and Text Destruction in the Ancient Near East and Beyond*, 19.

¹⁶⁷ Grzegorz Sztabiński, “The Margins of Transcendence in Contemporary Art,” *Art Inquiry* 16, no. 25 (2014): 74.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 63.

¹⁶⁹ Yitzhaq Feder, “The Aniconic Tradition, Deuteronomy 4, and the Politics of Israelite Identity,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 132, no. 2 (2013): 253.

¹⁷⁰ Thomas P. Rausch and Catherine E. Clifford, *Catholicism in the Third Millennium* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1966), 83.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

If these images can invite believers in participation in mysteries, and help a person to see beyond the surface then it has some amount of magical powers like talismans or amulets, and it is a form of aniconic. Dulles commentated that,

The community of disciples is only one perspective on the church. Other images and models, such as servant, sacrament, mystical body, an institution, are needed to remind us that the church is an organic and juridical organized community established by the Lord and animated by his Spirit. Through reflection on these models, we can continually enrich our understanding of discipleship itself.¹⁷²

Dulles admitted that the images are being used as a spirit, which reminds them of church organization. It is a belief that images mediate between the individual and the world at large,¹⁷³ and protect them.¹⁷⁴ Clay confirms that “images of saints were carried to excite Parisians ‘to imitate them, and to avail of their protection’”¹⁷⁵ In a nutshell, Clay asserts that “The simple people of today are left still running to the Temples of the mother of God to decorate the images, embellish the altars, celebrate the festivals.”¹⁷⁶

The controversy of aniconic is between the Protestants and the Catholics but it will surprise you to see some Protestants using objects for worship.¹⁷⁷ Why modern

¹⁷² Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church*, 2nd Edition. (New York, NY: Image Books, 1987), 226.

¹⁷³ Richard Simon Clay, “Signs of Power: Iconoclasm in Paris, 1789-1795” (Ph.D. Thesis, University of London, 1999), 37.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 24.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 50.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 86.

¹⁷⁷ Pamela M. Jones, “The Reception of Christian Devotional Art: The Renaissance to the Present,” *Art Journal* 57, no. 1 (1998): 3.

Christians use arts and portraits of Christ, the cross of Christ, or saints? They use it to have a direct reference to transcendence and others use it to display their disbelief.¹⁷⁸

Contemporary Practice of Icons among Pentecostals and Charismatics

Fear of misfortune and prosperity has become the theme of modern Pentecostals and Charismatic preachers. The devotees of these preachers have become slaves to them. An object of worship has become a medium in which people use to receive their miracles. Meyer, admits that the Pentecostals have brought a new way of worshipping African gods into Christianity,

While the churches were kept sober and empty and the missionaries were at pains to condemn local practices of idol-worship, they introduced new religious images to converts' living rooms. For instance, they brought to Africa the famous lithograph of *The broad and the narrow path*, which belonged to the popular culture of the Awakening and was cherished among African converts¹⁷⁹

He continues to say, "Juxtaposing images and biblical references, the lithograph solicits a particular spectator, who is made to look at the image and at the same time look up the biblical reference to understand the former."¹⁸⁰

Small objects or images are used for worship in various places,¹⁸¹ they are called devotional images.¹⁸² These devotional images are normally found in middle-

¹⁷⁸ Sztabiński, "The Margins of Transcendence in Contemporary Art," 74.

¹⁷⁹ Birgit Meyer, "Impossible Representations. Pentecostalism, Vision and Video Technology in Ghana" (M.A. Thesis, Johannes Gutenberg University of Mainz, 2003), 12.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 13.

¹⁸¹ Frederick E. Greenspahn, "Syncretism and Idolatry in the Bible," *Vetus Testamentum* 54, no. 4 (2004): 481.

¹⁸² Jones, "The Reception of Christian Devotional Art: The Renaissance to the Present," 2.

class Christians.¹⁸³ Several Christians in Pentecostal and charismatic churches have become devotees to objects because of fear.

Summary

Concisely, image worship is a tradition of old. Several nations were indulged in idol worship including Israel. The idea of worship in connection with the use of arts, pictures, and paintings of divinity or God is a form of idol worship or iconoclastic. People in the Ancient Near East were the culprit of this form of worship. Due to this, God enacted laws to prevent His people from idolatry that is found in the second Commandment.

The New Testament believers also preached against idolatry, the apostolic fathers inherited it from the apostles. In modern days, the practice of icon worship still ruling in some Christian worship. Iconophiles believe that if the image represents God then it is not prohibited but it rather links the person with the true God. However, it has become obvious that image-idol worship is a heinous sin, which confronts both Jews and Christians. Notwithstanding, one can deduce that the subject on image worship is not certain among Christians.

¹⁸³ Jones, "The Reception of Christian Devotional Art: The Renaissance to the Present," 4.

CHAPTER 3

CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND OF EXODUS 20: 4-5

The book of Exodus has a strong historical basis.¹ It has become the second historical book of origin for children of Israel; it also gives the religious and political background of the Israelites.² Exodus also stretches the “journey that began with Abraham and will continue through the books of Leviticus and Numbers.”³

Several scholars have been written about the book of Exodus;⁴ some support and others doubt the authenticity of the book, its authorship, date of composition, the title of the book, and its immediate audience. This unstable stand among the scholars has called for further studies of the book.

The Authenticity of the Book

There has been a series of controversies about the authenticity of the book, but the book has supported the events recorded in it.⁵ Traditions support that there was a group of people who left Egypt under the leadership of Moses.⁶ Throughout the

¹ John J. Binson, *Reading the Exodus and Conquest* (London, UK: Sage, 1978), 15.

² Everett Fox, *Genesis and Exodus: A New English Rendition* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1990), 223.

³ Jo Bailey Wells, “Exodus,” in *A Theological Introduction to the Pentateuch: Interpreting the Torah as Christian Scripture*, ed. Richard S. Briggs and Joel N. Lohr (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 53.

⁴ Erich S. Gruen, “The Use and Abuse of the Exodus Story,” *Jewish History* 12, no. 1 (1998): 94; Ira Friedman, “The Exodus,” *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 45 (2017): 211; Shubert Spero, “How Chapter Six Put the Exodus Back on Track,” *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 46, no. 4 (2018): 266.

⁵ Fox, *Genesis and Exodus: A New English Rendition*, 233.

⁶ Binson, *Reading the Exodus and Conquest*, 15–16.

Pentateuch, the escape of the Israelites from Egypt has become the paramount symbol in the life of the people.⁷ The book of Exodus was writing to give us insight and understanding about how God delivered the people Israel from the pain and slavery.⁸

According to Gruen, Exodus is “inspiration to subsequent generations of Jews and their admirers, its power is manifest.”⁹ When England was infected with plagues, Bible writers related it to what happened in Moses’ time in Egypt to authenticate the book.¹⁰ Having authenticated the reality of Exodus, let us check the one who wrote the second book of the Pentateuch.

Authorship of Exodus

There is a hot argument among scholars concerning the authorship of Pentateuch which includes the book of Exodus.¹¹ Hoffmeier reviewed one of the early critiques called Thomas Paine in 1790 who argues that the book was a product of “some very stupid and ignorant pretenders to authorship several hundred years after the death of Moses.”¹² Others also argue that the writing system was not well developed for Moses to write such books. But it was refuted by Spence-Jones who says that “Alphabetic writing was probably an art well known in the greater part of Western Asia from a date preceding not only Moses but Abraham.”¹³

⁷ Wells, “Exodus,” 53.

⁸ Wolf, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Pentateuch*, 151.

⁹ Gruen, “The Use and Abuse of the Exodus Story,” 93.

¹⁰ Lucinda Cole, *Swarming Things: Dearth and the Plagues of Egypt in Wither and Cowley* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2016), chap. 4.

¹¹ Carol Meyers, *Exodus* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 16.

¹² James Hoffmeier, *Ancient Israel in Sinai: The Evidence for the Authenticity of the Wilderness Tradition* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2005), 11.

¹³ Henry Donald M. Spence-Jones, “Exodus,” ed. H. D. M. Spence and Joseph S. Exell, *The Pulpit Commentary* (New York, NY: Eerdmans, 1950), 112.

The critics of Mosaic authorship of Pentateuch argue that there are several pieces of evidence which indicate that Mosaic authorship is false: a. Moses described his humbleness, b. He mentioned kings of Israel who ruled over Edom meanwhile Israelites kings came after 1000 B.C, c. He wrote about his death.¹⁴ Moberly admits that even though several scholars have proposed numerous authorship of the book, but the assumption today claims one author of the books.¹⁵ Traditionally, the book has been ascribed to Moses.¹⁶ Wolf says that Moses was holding the pen and the rod of God.¹⁷

According to Fields, it is believed that Moses wrote the book except a few portions which were written by Joshua. According to him, there is internal evidence that testifies about Mosaic authorship, namely, Exod 17:8-16; 20:22-23:32; Exod 34:10-26.¹⁸ He continues to say that there is other external evidence from other books;¹⁹ Jesus acknowledged the authorship of Moses in the gospels.²⁰ Fields reemphasized other Jewish writings that recognized the Mosaic authorship, for

¹⁴ Wolf, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Pentateuch*, 68–69.

¹⁵ R. W. L. Moberly, *At the Mountain of God: Story and Theology in Exodus 32-34* (Sheffield, UK: A&C Black, 1983), 19.

¹⁶ Wolf, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Pentateuch*, 60.

¹⁷ Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible: Genesis to Revelation*, vol. 5 (New York, NY: Fleming H. Revell, 1935), 615.

¹⁸ Nahum M. Sarna, *Exploring Exodus: The Origins of Biblical Israel* (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1976), 11.

¹⁹ Fields, *Exploring Exodus*, 11–12. See for example: Joshua 8:31; 8:32; 23:6; Judges 3:4; I Kings 2:3; II Chron. 25:4; Ezra 6:18; Malachi 4:4.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 12. See for example: Mark 7:10; 12:26; Luke 24:44; John 1:17; 5:46, 47; Matt. 8:4; 19:7; 22:24; Mark 1:44; Luke 2:22; 16:29; 20:28; John 7:19; Acts 3:22; 26:22; I Cor. 9:9.

example: “the Jewish Talmudic tract Baba Bathra, 14b-15a, the Jewish Talmudic tract *Aboth* (Fathers), chap. I, Josephus, *Against Apion*, 1, 8.”²¹

Bork acknowledges Moses as a prolific writer in the Bible. According to him, “he wrote about 22 percent of the entire Bible or about 35 percent of the Old Testament.”²² He continues to say that even the Mosaic authorship has met several critics but the Jewish traditions ascribed the authorship of Pentateuch to Moses.²³ Gill asserts that we should not put doubt on Mosaic authorship of the books of Pentateuch.²⁴ After establishing Mosaic authorship, there is a need to search for the date of its composition.

Date of Composition

The book of Exodus has passed through a series of controversies in its all aspects, for example, the dating of the book has become another hot debate among scholars. Some based their argument on Exodus 1:11 which brings the date to the 12th-13th Century (1440 BC).²⁵ Fields explain that the date of Israelites departure from Egypt to the time of Solomon was 480 years; he dated Solomon’s reign around 970-931 BC. Therefore, if you add 480 years to Solomon’s reign then the date of Exodus would be 1446 BC.²⁶

²¹ Fields, *Exploring Exodus*, 13.

²² Paul F. Bork, *The World of Moses* (Nashville, TN: Southern, 1978), 51.

²³ *Ibid.*, 54–55.

²⁴ John Gill, “Exodus,” *Exposition of the Old and New Testaments* (Paris, AR: Baptist Standard Bearer, 1999), 2.

²⁵ Binson, *Reading the Exodus and Conquest*, 35, 65.

²⁶ Fields, *Exploring Exodus*, 18.

Bunch also gave his date of Exodus based on archaeological evidence he had. He proposed 1491 B.C.²⁷ Matthews and Benjamin argue that “the stela is used to date the exodus of the Hebrews from Egypt to the reign of Ramesses II (1290-1224) and the appearance of Israel in Syria-Palestine to 1250 BCE.”²⁸ Even though there are different dates from different scholars but it ranges between 1290-1495 B.C., which suggests that the exodus of the Hebrews took place within two centuries. The period in which the book was written can give us a clue about its title.

Title of the Book

It became a tradition of Hebrew-speaking Jews that they use the first sentence of a book as its title; so the title of Exodus was taken from the Hellenistic Jews.²⁹ Gill asserts that the title of the book comes from the Hebrew word *Veelleh Shemoth* or sometimes *Sepher Shemoth*, the book can be alternatively called the second book of Moses.³⁰ It was the Septuagint which called it Exodus.³¹ The title of the book comes from the Ancient Greek word (ἐξοδος), *éxodos*, meaning “going out”; and the Hebrew word: שמות ,*Shəmōt*, “Names”, “the second word of the beginning of the text: ‘These are the names of the sons of Israel’ Hebrew: ואלה שמות בני ישראל , second book of the Torah and the Hebrew Bible Hebrew Bible (the Old Testament).”³² The phenomenon surrounding the Israelites movement from Egypt to Canaan even proposes the name

²⁷ Bunch, *The Exodus in Type and Antitype*, chap. 16.

²⁸ Matthews and Benjamin, *Old Testament Parallels: Laws and Stories from the Ancient Near East*, 97.

²⁹ Spence-Jones, “Exodus,” 332.

³⁰ Gordon J. Wenham, *Exploring the Old Testament: A Guide to the Pentateuch* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 2003), 57.

³¹ Gill, “Exodus,” 2.

³² Wikipedia, “Book of Exodus,” *Wikipedia*, last modified 2017, accessed May 28, 2017, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Book_of_Exodus&oldid=955635158.

for the book which recorded the history of their journey. Constable explains that “The Hebrew title of this book (*we'elleh shemot*) originated from the ancient practice of naming a Bible book after its first word or words. ‘Now these are the names of’ is the translation of the first two Hebrew words.”³³ The English name of the book comes from the Greek Septuagint “going out” or “departure” from Egypt because the departure of the Israelites from Egypt is the most remarkable fact mentioned in the whole book.”³⁴ The title of the book gives some amount of information concerning its source.

The Genre of the Book

Each book in the scriptures can contain one or more literary devices.³⁵

Houston recorded that James W. Watts argues that Pentateuch has a unique genre called Torah; it does not contain narrative genre, history, biography, law, instruction, genealogy, and songs.³⁶ It seems that Watts’ statement has some ambiguity because the Pentateuch contains the narratives of Moses’ birth to his death. Smith says that Exodus has a “wide variety of genre or types of literature.”³⁷

He argues contrary Watts because, Exodus contains genealogy, narratives of Moses, the plague story, a poem; complain narrative by the Hebrews, Moses’s intercession, commandment, and instruction for worship.³⁸ But Houston says that the

³³ Thomas L. Constable, “Notes on Exodus,” *PLANOBIBLE Chapel*, 2017, accessed June 1, 2017, <https://planobiblechapel.org/soniclight/>.

³⁴ Adam Clarke, *Clarke’s Commentary*, vol. 1 (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1966), 290.

³⁵ Gorman, *Elements of Biblical Exegesis: A Basic Guide for Students and Ministers*, 85.

³⁶ Walter Houston, *The Pentateuch* (London, UK: SCM Press, 2013), 15.

³⁷ Mark S. Smith, “Exodus,” ed. Daniel Durken, *The New Collegeville Bible Commentary: New Testament* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2010), 10.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

Pentateuch has narrative claims.³⁹ Dozeman asserts that even though it is difficult to compare generic comprising of a text, but the book of Exodus has

historiography” (Exod 1–18), “law codes,” “treaty texts” (Exod 19–24), “prescriptive rituals” (Exod 25–40), “legends” (stories that explain the origins of religious institutions), “religious propaganda” (Exod 32–34), and “biography” (parts of the book are about the life of Moses).⁴⁰

The book of Exodus has been traditionally accepted as Tora or law.⁴¹ The book of Exodus has been divided into two main events:⁴² the first part gives us an idea of Israel encampment around Sinai and given the commandments while the second part talks about their false worship and later crisis, which called for all later laws.⁴³ He continued that it was the heathens who think that their deity cannot be seen therefore they need a representation of it.⁴⁴

Literary, the book of Exodus behaves like Genesis with “a mix of literary genres, including narrative, poetry, legal, and cultic materials.”⁴⁵ However, Ska argues that the literal structure of Exodus is quite different from Genesis; it does not contain any linguistic marks as the “*toledot* formula.”⁴⁶ Smith argues that “since no formal literary markers are present in the book, no uniformity of opinion has been

³⁹ Houston, *The Pentateuch*, 10.

⁴⁰ Thomas B. Dozeman, *Methods for Exodus* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 65.

⁴¹ John J. Collins, *A Short Introduction to the Hebrew Bible: Third Edition* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2018), 40.

⁴² Douglas K. Stuart, *New American Bible Commentary: Exodus*, vol. 2 (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 2006), 19.

⁴³ Jean Calvin, *Commentaries on the Four Last Books of Moses: Arranged in the Form of a Harmony*, trans. Charles William, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1990), 116.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Wolf, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Pentateuch*, 152.

⁴⁶ Jean Louis Ska, *Introduction to Reading the Pentateuch* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 28.

expressed regarding the major divisions of the book.”⁴⁷ But the book has an introduction (Exod 1:1-17) which links it with the preceding book.⁴⁸ The book has been structured chronologically, beginning with the birth of Moses to the construction of the Tabernacle.⁴⁹ The book projects three main characters: “Yahweh as the supreme deity in heaven and earth, Moses as the servant of Yahweh, and Israel as the kingdom of Yahweh and his ‘special possession among all peoples.’”⁵⁰

According to Houston, the Decalogue is one of the complex issues in Sinai periscope,⁵¹ but it has a strategic position which summarizes the previous “eighteen chapters.”⁵² The Ten Commandments is normally agreed by scholars as “*apodictic* statements, which are given in the form of ““you shall/you shall not.””⁵³ The Ten Commandments are also in covenant stipulations.⁵⁴ The arrangement of the law is generally accepted as ten words or laws.⁵⁵

The Source of the Book

The source of Exodus can normally relate to the sources of the Pentateuch. According to Huesman “the entire Pentateuchal problem and the documentary

⁴⁷ James E. Smith, *The Pentateuch* (New York, NY: College Press, 2006), 236.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 235.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Thomas Wingate Mann, *The Book of the Torah: The Narrative Integrity of the Pentateuch* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1988), 79.

⁵¹ Houston, *The Pentateuch*, 108.

⁵² Smith, *The Pentateuch*, 235.

⁵³ Wolf, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Pentateuch*, 153.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 154.

⁵⁵ R. Norman Whybray, *Introduction to the Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1995), 116.

hypothesis (Pentateuch 1:6-16) Yahwist, Elohist, and Priestly sources are prominent in this book, with touches as well of the Deuteronomist.”⁵⁶ Several scholars argue against the authorship of Moses. Dummelow says that “It has been usual, e.g. to argue that the legislation of the Pentateuch is too advanced to have originated at such an early period as the exodus.”⁵⁷ Friedman wrote that the unacceptability of Mosaic authorship of Pentateuch started with Henning Bernhard Witter a German scholar in 1711, then came Jean Astruc a French professor and later Johann Gottfried Eichhorn also a German scholar, who argue that the sources of the Pentateuch were derived from EJPD sources.⁵⁸ He said that

Biblical stories that referred to the deity as God ‘E.’ because the Hebrew word for God is El or Elohim. He called the group of stories that referred to the deity as Yahweh ‘J’ (which in German is pronounced like English Y). ... This third set of stories seemed to be particularly interested in *Priest*. It contained stories about priests, laws about priests, matters of rituals, sacrifice, incense-burning, and purity, and concern with dates, numbers, and measurements...Deuteronomy appeared to be independent, the fourth source. It was called D.⁵⁹

Simmons also argues from a different angle, that it was Graf Wellhausen who propounded the Documentary Hypothesis. Several people mainly referred to it as the Graf Wellhausen hypothesis.⁶⁰ Even though Simmons agrees that Moses made use of extra-biblical sources for Pentateuch, but he supported that Moses used the oral

⁵⁶ John E. Huesman, “The Book of Exodus,” ed. Raymond E. Brown, *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1968), 5.

⁵⁷ John R. Dummelow, ed., *A Commentary on the Holy Bible* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1949), 47.

⁵⁸ Richard Elliott Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?* (New York, NY: Summit Books, 1987), 52.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 52–53.

⁶⁰ Scott Simmons, “Did Moses Write the Pentateuch?,” *Biblical Perspectives Magazine* 12, no. 33 (2010): 4.

source to write the Books.⁶¹ Fox asserts that the source of Exodus is from oral literature.⁶² He continues that “the book emerges as a mix of historical recollection, mythical processing, and didactic retelling, what Buber and others have called a ‘saga.’”⁶³ Meyer also admits that “The first five books of the Bible all become attributed to Moses, as in the references to the ‘Torah.’”⁶⁴

The Audience of the Book

The account which covers the activity of Exodus is a historical fact.⁶⁵ Even though there are a lot of arguments concerning the authorship of the book, but the bottom line is the author was an Israelite as well as the audience.⁶⁶

Fields used this quotation: “And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that Je-ho-vah hath spoken will we do, and be obedient, Exod 24:7”; to support that the main audience were Israelites whom Moses read the message to.⁶⁷ Fields statement suggests that when Moses read the document to the people of Israel, they promised to obey it. Delitzsch asserts that the events in the entire book covered two decades, which gives the accounts of Israel’s departure from Egypt and their story of salvation.⁶⁸ Jamieson supports that Moses

⁶¹ Simmons, “Did Moses Write the Pentateuch?,” 4.

⁶² Fox, *Genesis and Exodus: A New English Rendition*, 223.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 225.

⁶⁴ Meyer, “Impossible Representations. Pentecostalism, Vision and Video Technology in Ghana,” 16.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁶⁶ Spence-Jones, “Exodus,” 8.

⁶⁷ Fields, *Exploring Exodus*, 524.

⁶⁸ C. F. Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Keil & Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament Pentateuch*, trans. James Martin (Edinburgh, Scotland: T. & T. Clark, 1936), 352.

gave the message to the elders to present it to the children of Israel.⁶⁹ Henry confirms that the ordinances in the book were observed by the people of Israel.⁷⁰ These Hebrews were direct recipients of Moses' messages. Moses has been confirmed by traditions and internal evidence as to the author of the book. Moses did not write his words by vacuum or chance, something caused him to write. It was his historical background that perpetuated his writings.

Historical Setting of Exodus

The book of Exodus started with the Israelites' oppression in Egypt and their movement from Egypt through the Red Sea to the foot of Mount Sinai.⁷¹ But there is no archeological evidence to support the history of Israel in Egypt,⁷² because "Egyptians never recorded events unfavorable to them."⁷³ In Wood's article, he reviewed the Johnstone statement which says that "the book [Exodus] relates to Egyptian history but only in a vague way. Not a single Egyptian is identified by name, not even the pharaohs."⁷⁴ But Kenneth Kitchen refuted that argument and said that the title pharaoh was used for all the kings in Egypt till the mid-18th dynasty where it was then used for the king himself.⁷⁵ So, is there no evidence that shows that the exodus

⁶⁹ Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*, 226.

⁷⁰ Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible: Genesis to Revelation*, 5:616.

⁷¹ E. L. Curtis, "Title and Content of Exodus," ed. John R. Dummelow, *A Commentary on the Holy Bible* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1961), 46.

⁷² Francis D. Nichol, ed., "Historical Setting," *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1980), 492.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 493.

⁷⁴ Bryant G. Wood, "Recent Research on the Date and Setting of the Exodus" (Association for Biblical Research, 2009), 2–3.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 3–4.

took place? Yes, God performed several miracles in the wilderness before the children of Israel.⁷⁶ God spoke from the mountain to the hearing of people. He did not speak from heaven which was far away from earth.⁷⁷ He revealed Himself as a personal God to the people not an abstract.⁷⁸

The Hebrews passed through suffering and atrocities under the leadership of the Egyptians (Gen 15:13). In Egypt, the Israelites were serving-man and their gods instead of God who created them, and they became an idolatrous nation.⁷⁹ Children were killed which numbers cannot be given.⁸⁰ The adults were used to build magnificent structures with their blood and sweat.⁸¹ There were high levels of bullying among the Jews and their masters and Hebrews themselves.⁸²

The religious lives of the Hebrews were not started in the wilderness but with their patriarchs; circumcision, sacrifice, and the Sabbath.⁸³ But besides their inherited religion they learned many things from Egypt.⁸⁴ Some of Egyptians beliefs were similar to the Hebrews, for example, the immortality of the soul but the understanding differed from each other⁸⁵ but others were quite opposite. The Egyptians did not

⁷⁶ Clarke, *Clarke's Commentary*, 1:291.

⁷⁷ Marc Zvi Brettler, "Fire, Cloud, and Deep Darkness (Deuteronomy 5:22): Deuteronomy's Recasting of Revelation," in *The Significance of Sinai: Traditions about Sinai and Divine Revelation in Judaism and Christianity*, ed. George Brooke (Boston, MA: Brill, 2008), 18–19.

⁷⁸ Fields, *Exploring Exodus*, 49.

⁷⁹ Bunch, *The Exodus in Type and Antitype*, 10.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 21.

⁸³ Edersheim, *The Exodus and the Wanderings in the Wilderness*, 29.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 31.

believe that “God is the God of the present as well as of the future, and that even here on earth He reigned, dispensing good and evil.”⁸⁶

The Israelites also learned the worship of nature from the Egyptians.⁸⁷ This may be the cause of their practice of idol worship in the wilderness against God. These practices mentioned above and the background of the book have suggested various themes.

Themes of Exodus

There are several themes in the Pentateuch.⁸⁸ According to Sailhamer, the Pentateuch presents the theme of salvation.⁸⁹ Wolf supports that “Exodus is a book of salvation and deliverance, relating how the Israelites gain their freedom from Egypt under the mighty hand of God.”⁹⁰ The Israelites believed that the great salvation and redemption comes from the Exodus they took from Egypt.⁹¹ It is the central concern that God is the savior of the children of Israel.⁹² The liberation from Egypt has become the fertile Biblical theme.⁹³ Gertz asserts that Exodus gives us a theme of divine intervention and deliverance.⁹⁴ The book of Exodus gives us the oppression

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Peter Vogt, *Interpreting the Pentateuch: An Exegetical Handbook* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2009), 62.

⁸⁹ Sailhammer, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Genesis-Leviticus*, 564–572.

⁹⁰ Wolf, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Pentateuch*, 149.

⁹¹ Ibid., 150.

⁹² John D. W. Watts, “Elements of Old Testament Worship,” *Journal of Bible and Religion* 26, no. 3 (1958): 219.

⁹³ Scott M. Langston, *Exodus: Through The Centuries* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2006), 68.

⁹⁴ Jan Christian Gertz, *The Book of Exodus; Composition, Reception, and Interpretation* (Boston, MA: Brill, 2014), 94.

theme of the Egyptians over the Jews.⁹⁵ *Andrews Study Bible* also proclaims that the key theme of Exodus is “self-revelation of God.” His interest is to reveal Himself to His people more and more through the Ten Commandments.⁹⁶ But Vogt concentrated on three of them: the sovereignty and supremacy of Yahweh, the seriousness of sin, and the grace of Yahweh.⁹⁷

Kim also has it differently; he argues that “the themes brought for analysis are freedom, slavery, and oppression.”⁹⁸ Fields declare that the theme of redemption summarizes the book of Exodus.⁹⁹ The book also reveals God’s presence with His people and how He related to them.¹⁰⁰ Eichrodt reveals to us that the entire Old Testament Bible reveals three main themes to us: “God and the people (Israel) of God and the world, God and man.”¹⁰¹ These various themes have revealed the purpose of this book (Exodus).

Purpose of the Book

The main reason for the book of Exodus is to call the people to worship God (Exod 5:1).¹⁰² Yahweh was involved in the deliverance of His people purposely for

⁹⁵ Ilona N. Rashkow, *A Feminist Companion to the Bible Genesis* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 40.

⁹⁶ Taken from Andrews University, *Andrew’s Study Bible: New King James Version* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2010).

⁹⁷ Vogt, *Interpreting the Pentateuch: An Exegetical Handbook*, 63–85.

⁹⁸ Eun Chul Kim, “The Purpose of the Book of Exodus: A Narrative Criticism,” *Asia Journal of Theology* 18, no. 1 (2004): 4.

⁹⁹ Fields, *Exploring Exodus*, 2.

¹⁰⁰ Abel Ndjerareou, “Theme of Exodus,” ed. Tokunboh Adeyemo, *Africa Bible Commentary* (Nairobi, Kenya: WordAlive, 2006), 85.

¹⁰¹ John T. Willis, *Yahweh and Moses in Conflict: The Role of Exodus 4:24-26 in the Book of Exodus* (Bern, Switzerland: International Academic, 2010), 145.

¹⁰² Kim, “The Purpose of the Book of Exodus: A Narrative Criticism,” 4.

worship.¹⁰³ God promises to deliver his people from bondage; this promise started to manifest itself in the book of Exodus.¹⁰⁴ The central purpose of the book is God's deliverance and his gracious covenant with His people.¹⁰⁵ The whole Bible depicts God's glory; this message is found through the five books of Moses.¹⁰⁶ He continues to say that "the great story of God working sovereignly continues."¹⁰⁷ The book gives us the basic foundation of how God glorifies Himself by delivering His people from slavery and making them a holy nation under His lordship.¹⁰⁸ Therefore, it is appropriate for God to impact such a law in the Decalogue in the Scriptures.

The Place of the Passages (Exod 20:4-6) in the Scriptures

The passage in question (Exod 20:4-6) finds itself within the Ten Commandments which have been called the "permanent moral law,"¹⁰⁹ but there are other moral laws in the book such as Exodus 23:1-3.¹¹⁰ The Decalogue was uttered by God himself without involving any intermediary and it was written by God himself (Exod 31:18). That tells us how unique and important it is to God and His people.¹¹¹

¹⁰³ Kim, "The Purpose of the Book of Exodus: A Narrative Criticism," 5.

¹⁰⁴ Walter C. Kaiser Jr, "Title and Theme of Exodus," ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, *Expositor's Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 335.

¹⁰⁵ Francis D. Nichol, ed., "Theme," *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1980), 493.

¹⁰⁶ Dever and Goldsworthy, *The Message of the Old Testament: Promises Made*, 87.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 88.

¹⁰⁸ Angel Manuel Rodriguez, "Sanctuary Theology in The Book of Exodus," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 24, no. 2 (1986): 127.

¹⁰⁹ Fields, *Exploring Exodus*, 417.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Allis, *God Spoke by Moses: An Exposition of the Pentateuch*, 73.

The first and second commandments are similar and related. Both call for the worship of God. Warner observed that “the second commandment recognizes this innate tendency to express worship, by restricting the objects of such worship: all idols are excluded.”¹¹² Because worship is a very important aspect of human life, there are quite a few texts which support that idol worship is abominable before God.

Passages Pertinent to Exodus 20: 4-5 in the Old Testament

Several passages read as Exod 20:4-6. These texts prohibit the making of graven images and worship them. In Deuteronomy 4:16, the same phrase “graven image” is used, but it was used differently from Exod 20:4-6). “Lest ye corrupt *yourselves*, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female.” In the former texts, God forbids man for making a graven image in the likeness of other creatures, but in a later text, he specified that “male and female” which suggests that the prohibition of worshipping a portrait of human beings or humanity itself.

The phrase “graven image” has been used in Deuteronomy 4:25 to indicate that worshipping graven images corrupt the life of the believer. It is a way of provoking God (Isa 40:19, 20; Jer 8:19; 51:17). God does not share His glory with anything or any human being (Isa 42:8). The word “graven image” has been used to indicate that it is a shame or a curse for human beings to worship an image as a God. God curses anyone who worships images (Deut 27:15; Isa 44:9, 10; Jer 50:38).

There are several texts which suggest that the Hebrews were sometimes driven away from the worship of God and gave their allegiance to the graven images. It came to a time of Judges where the priest was ordained to serve in the cult of these “graven

¹¹² Warner, *The Ten Commandments and the Decline of the West*, 39.

images” (Judges 17:3; 17:4; 18: 17, 20, 30, 31). Some of the kings in Judah and Israel play the harlot with their graven images (2 Kg 21:7; 2 Chron 33:19). The practice of worshiping “graven images” was rampant in the life of the Jews (Ps 97:7; Isa 10:10; 42:17; 44:15, 17; 45:20; 48:5; Jer 10:14). Their practice of worshiping “graven images” provokes God (Ps 78:58).

The practice of dual allegiances crept into the lives of God’s people. The people were combining the worship of Yahweh and “graven images” (2 Kg 17:41). By so doing God decided to destroy those who practiced this abomination before Him (Deut 7:5, 25; 12:3; 2 Chr 34:7; Isa 21:9; 30:22; Jer 51:47; 51:52; Mic 1:7; 5:13; Nah 1:14).

Even though, the people provoked God with their abominable worship of “graven images” but God was still calling them for repentance.

As they called them, so they went from them: they sacrificed unto Baalim and burned incense to graven images. I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms; but they knew not that I healed them. I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love: and I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat unto them (Hos 11:2-4).

God shows His love for the people to come back to Him, even though they have been worshiping “graven images.” The love of God extends to everyone when we are still involving ourselves in sin (Rom 5:8).

Observable Undertones in the Passage

The giving of the first and second commandments which seems to be presenting the same idea or law did not happen in the vacuum. The Hebrew showed their lack of faith in God in the wilderness. When Moses left to receive the Commandments of God, they compelled Aaron to provide a “graving-image” for them as God which was properly known as the “golden calf” (Exod 32:1-35). That was why God decided not to show Himself to the people because the people could

have form images in the representation of Yahweh.¹¹³ The recipients of the law have been enslaved in Egypt for centuries,¹¹⁴ and have been influenced by their formal masters. The practice of image worship has been rampant in the land of Canaan which they were going to inherit.

Ancient Near East Background Concerning the Text (Exodus 20:4-6)

The God of the Bible is quite different from the gods in the Ancient Near East; the gods in the Ancient Near East were created and have their origins.¹¹⁵ Whiles the God of Israel has no origin or created. The teachings of *Theogony* was absent in Israel.¹¹⁶ Bible teaches that Yahweh is the only one God who created the universe.¹¹⁷ He does not have anyone who can be compared to Him or share His jurisdiction.¹¹⁸

In the Ancient Near East, the belief was that the gods were borne by other deities. Walton asserts that “heaven (An) and Earth (Ki) joined in cosmic matrimony and the great gods were born.”¹¹⁹ He continues to say that the people can identify a god through their various functions.¹²⁰ ““on earth ... the gods live only in images, in the king as an image of God, in cult images in the temples, and sacred animals, plants

¹¹³ Marvin E. Tate, “The Legal Traditions of the Book of Exodus,” *Review & Expositor* 74, no. 4 (1977): 488.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 484.

¹¹⁵ John H. Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament: Introducing the Conceptual World of the Hebrew Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 87.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 91.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 89.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

and objects.”¹²¹ It suggests that a god can come into existence by various means or devices.¹²² In the Ancient Near East, the gods have something which represents them on the earth. For example, Apsu and Tiamat were represented by water and salt.¹²³ The images were placed in various temples to show the presence of a particular deity.¹²⁴ It seems that the ancient gods were created, the struggle for power within them and has something which represents them.¹²⁵

The image of a god was placed in temples not for worship but as their abode.¹²⁶ Walton asserts that “the earthly temple was a symbol, an echo, a shadow of the heavenly residence.”¹²⁷ The presence of the gods can be identified in the form of an image in various temples. The gods approved their presence to be made in the form of an idol called “actualizing the presence of the god in the temple.”¹²⁸ The images receive items on behalf of the deity it represents.¹²⁹ Walton continues to say that “the image also functioned to mediate revelation from the deity. In Egypt of the early first millennium, for instance, court cases that were being tried were set before the god Amun.”¹³⁰ Walton concluded that the images were not deities but the deities were

¹²¹ Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament: Introducing the Conceptual World of the Hebrew Bible*, 89.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 91.

¹²³ John H. Walton, *Ancient Israelite Literature in Its Cultural Context: A Survey of Parallels between Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Texts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1989), 21.

¹²⁴ Rodriguez, “Sanctuary Theology in The Book of Exodus,” 130.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 21.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 113.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament: Introducing the Conceptual World of the Hebrew Bible*, 114.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 115.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

embodied in the images.¹³¹ This information presented suggests the worship of images in the Ancient Near East is not different from the use of icons in the modern system of worship. Because some modern Christians use the portrait of Christ in their temples, others have placed the crucifixion cross in temples which is similar to the Ancient Near East system of worship. But there are some passages in the scriptures which seem to support that putting images in the temple or images forming part of worship is not wrong.

Contrasting Passages to Exodus 20:4, 5

Even though Exodus 20:4, 5 prohibits the making of images in any form whether it is in heaven, earth, or under the earth; But when God instructed Moses to build the sanctuary, he was asked to make two images of angles on the top of the Ark of the Covenant, “And thou shalt make two Cherubims of gold, of beaten work shalt thou make them, in the two ends of the mercy seat” (Exod 25:18). Here Moses used finely decorated cultic objects of gold and silver. He made images in resemblance to heavenly beings such as an angel in the temple of God. This practice of making images in the temple of God was repeated by King Solomon in the great temple he built for the Lord.

And within the oracle, he made two cherubims *of the olive tree, each* ten cubits high. And five cubits *was* the one wing of the cherub, and five cubits the other wing of the cherub: from the uttermost part of the one wing unto the uttermost part of the other *were* ten cubits. And the other cherub *was* ten cubits: both the cherubims *were* of one measure and one size. The height of the one cherub *was* ten cubits, and so *was it* of the other cherub. And he set the cherubims within the inner house: and they stretched forth the wings of the cherubims so that the wing of the one touched the *one* wall, and the wing of the other cherub touched the other wall; and their wings touched one another amid the house (1 Kgs 6:23-27).

Solomon also made some icons on the walls and doors of the temple.

¹³¹ Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament: Introducing the Conceptual World of the Hebrew Bible*, 116.

And he carved all the walls of the house round about with carved figures of Cherubims and palm trees and open flowers, within and without. {open flowers...The two doors also *were of the olive tree*, and he carved upon them carvings of Cherubims and palm trees and open flowers, and overlaid *them* with gold, and spread gold upon the Cherubims, and the palm trees (1 Kgs 6:29, 32).

Again, Ezekiel reviewed the use of Cherubims and palm trees in the new temple. “And *it was* made with Cherubims and palm trees so that a palm tree *was* between a cherub and a cherub, and *every* cherub had two faces” (Eze 41:18).

When you consider the above texts, it seems that they contradict the second commandment but Archer argues that even though the images were visible to the worshipers but they were not meant for worship: they were not “contrary to the mandate of the second commandment.”¹³² Henry asserts that the use of images in the temple was different from how the heathen set up their images for worship.¹³³ Maraty supports that the Cherubims is a relationship between us and the Seraphim.¹³⁴ The cherubim give the impression of Divine presence.¹³⁵

Fields argue that Israelites were not forbidden to make images but images which they made for themselves as God: therefore other images were permissible for decorations and other use.¹³⁶ Moberly suggests that the law concerning prohibition seems ambiguous; it does not explain the types of images that were permissible or

¹³² Gleason L. Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1982), 112.

¹³³ Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible: Genesis to Deuteronomy*, vol. 1 (New York, NY: Fleming H. Revell, 1935), 370.

¹³⁴ Tadros Y. Malaty, *Commentary on Exodus*, trans. George Botros (Baltimore, MD: Webmaster, 2013), chap. 3.

¹³⁵ Meyers, *Exodus*, 228.

¹³⁶ Fields, *Exploring Exodus*, 424; R. E. Clements, *God and Temple: The Presence of God in Israel's Worship* (Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell, 1965), 31.

not.¹³⁷ Arakaki refuted the idea that the priests were viewing the images on the inner and outer curtains of the Holy place.¹³⁸ But they were not using them as worship images.¹³⁹ Young compares the Cherubims on the Ark of Covenant with “the *androsphinxes* and *crio-sphinxes* of the Egyptians, the Assyrian winged bulls and lions, the Greek *chimaerae*, and the Griffins of the northern nations.”¹⁴⁰ He continues to say that the root of “*Chrubs*” comes from the Egyptian background.¹⁴¹ Jamieson also argues that the real meanings of the two Cherubims were not certain: and they were not angels but human figures.¹⁴²

Even though some scholars have suggested that the idea of making images in the temple is not clear, but none of them argue that the images were made to be worshiped. It is clear that God allowed His people to practice arts and sculptures within the temple and their social activities but images were not allowed to be worshiped.¹⁴³

¹³⁷ Moberly, *At the Mountain of God: Story and Theology in Exodus 32-34*, 169.

¹³⁸ Robert Arakaki, “The Biblical Basis for Icons,” *Orthodox Reformed Bridge*, last modified 2011, accessed September 18, 2017, <https://blogs.ancientfaith.com/orthodoxbridge/is-there-a-biblical-basis-for-icons/>.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ D. Young, “God’s Dwelling-Place Among His People,” *Bible Hub*, last modified 2018, accessed April 14, 2018, https://biblehub.com/sermons/auth/young/god's_dwelling-place_among_his_people.htm.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*, 97.

¹⁴³ Bruce K. Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 417.

The Structural Pattern of the Ten Commandments

The structure pattern of the Ten Commandments of Exodus 20:1-17 may differ among scholars. It seems that the Ten Commandments follow the order of Ancient treaties which consisted of at least five elements: “(1) preamble, (2) prologue, (3) stipulations or demands, (4) blessings and curses, and (5) witness.”¹⁴⁴ However, the Ten Commandment has its pattern:

1. Preamble: “And God spoke all these words, saying” (Exod 20:1).
2. Prologue: “I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage” (Exod 20:2)
3. Stipulations: four laws which are treaties between God and man (Exod 20:3-11) and six laws which are treaties between and his fellow man (Exod 20:12-17).

Hester has it differently; he argues that the Ten Commandments has two main parts: the prologue and prohibitions.¹⁴⁵ Wenham proposes that the Ten Commandment can be divided into two main parts: “the first four deal with duties towards God: the others deal with responsibilities to one’s neighbor.”¹⁴⁶

Historical Background

The book itself presents the historical background of the events in it.¹⁴⁷ The Hyksos who were shepherd Kings (2000-1600) were very friendly to the Hebrews till the Egyptians themselves gain the power and enslaved the Hebrews.¹⁴⁸ It was the

¹⁴⁴ Ranko Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: Commentary on the Book of Revelation* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2009), 85.

¹⁴⁵ Joseph P. Hester, *The Ten Commandments: A Handbook of Religious, Legal and Social Issues* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 1998), 18.

¹⁴⁶ Wenham, *Exploring the Old Testament: A Guide to the Pentateuch*, 69.

¹⁴⁷ Gary Staats, *Bible Books-Old Testament: The Pentateuch* (Findlay, OH: Gary Staats, 2008), 3.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 21.

pharaohs who started the Hebrews' oppression.¹⁴⁹ They separated the Hebrews as “people” and assigned officials for their work, “the word slavery is often used to refer to the status of Israelites in Egypt.”¹⁵⁰

The book of Exodus reveals the genesis of Israel’s history as people of God.¹⁵¹ It presents the history of her traditions, festivals, and backgrounds.¹⁵² The book reveals the reasons for Israel believe in Yahweh: their deliverance, revere Yahweh, and Moses as a servant of God.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁹ Meyer, “Impossible Representations. Pentecostalism, Vision and Video Technology in Ghana,” 34.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 35.

¹⁵¹ Terence E. Fretheim, *The Pentateuch* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996), 160.

¹⁵² Ibid., 161.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 162.

CHAPTER 4

EXEGESIS OF EXODUS 20:4-6; 25:18

This chapter deals with the exegetical deliberation of Exod 20:4-5. It will think through the contextual analysis of the passages, the immediate context, the larger context, its textual considerations, genre, structure, structural patterns, translation of the passage, and its theological implications.

Exodus 20:4-6 falls within the Decalogue. It is the second commandment, which is a co-law of the first commandment, which prohibits dual allegiance and religious syncretism. The making of the graven image is also a form of having another god besides Yahweh. Therefore, the first two laws of the Decalogue are twin sisters, which teach the idea of monotheism (Deut 6:4).

The passage in question poses some difficulties, which are: (1) it is not clear whether artistry is forbidden, especially for those who are making arts and images for cultural purposes and decorations; (2) it was not specific whether the images prohibited were those of foreign gods or Yahweh;¹ (3) The passage does not indicate particular heaven (Paul said we have the three heavens; 2 Cor 12:2) which we are not supposed to make images of.

The hypothesis will not try to conclude what Exod 20: 4, 5 may have meant in the manuscript, but the paper will use a synchronic approach, performing a close interpretation of Exod 20:4-6 and other materials. It can be suggested that any

¹ David R. Worley Jr., "God's Gracious Love Expressed: Exodus 20:1-17," *Restoration Quarterly* 14 (1971): 196.

interpretation concerning Exod 20:4-6 should try to answer the difficulties mentioned above. This will help any reader of the book of Exodus to ascertain how we should consider all forms of images and arts.

Translation of Passage

לֹא תַעֲשֶׂה לָךְ פֶּסֶל וְכָל־תְּמוּנָה אֲשֶׁר בְּשָׁמַיִם מִמַּעַל וְאֲשֶׁר בְּאָרֶץ מִתַּחַת וְאֲשֶׁר בַּמַּיִם
מֵתַחַת לְאָרֶץ:

lō' ta'āšeh l'kā pe-sel w'kāl t^omūnāh 'āšer baš-šā-ma-yim mim-ma-'al
wa'āšer bā-'ā-reṣ

mit-ṭa-ḥaṭ wa'ā-šer bam-ma-yim mit-ṭa-ḥaṭ lā-'ā-reṣ.

לֹא־תִשְׁתַּחֲוּהוּ לְהֵם וְלֹא תַעֲבֹדֵם כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֵל קָדָשׁ עֹן אָבֹת עַל־בָּנִים עַל־
שְׁלֹשִׁים וְעַל־רְבָעִים לְשִׁנָּה י:

lō' ṭiš-ṭah-weh lā-hem w^o-lō' ṭā-'ā-b^o-dēm kī 'ā-no-kī Yah-weh 'ê-lō-he-kā
'el qan-nā' pō-qêd 'ā-wōn 'ā-bōṭ 'al-bā-nīm 'al- šil-lê-šîm Wə-'al rib-bê-'îm
Lə-šō-nə-āy.

וְעֲשֶׂה חֶסֶד לְאֲלֵפִים לְאֲהָבִי וּלְשִׁמְרֵי מִצְוֹתַי: ס

wə-'ō-šeh ḥe-sed la-'ā-lā-pîm, lə-'ō-hā-bay ū-lə-šō-marê miṣ-wō-ṭāy

For yourself make not any graven image or any likeness that is in heaven above or that is in the earth beneath or that is in the water under the earth.

Do not bow down yourself to them nor serve them for I Lord your God am a jealous God visiting to punish sons of the third and four generations of fathers who

hate me and showing covenant loyalty to thousands who love me and keep my commands.

An Outline of the Second Commandment

1. Prohibition of image-making (v. 4a): “For yourself make not any graven image”
2. Expatiating the Law (v. 4b): “or any likeness that is in heaven above or that is in the earth beneath or that is in the water under the earth.”
3. Worship aspect of the law (v. 5a): “Do not bow down yourself to them nor serve them”
4. The emotion of God (v. 5b): “I Lord your God am a jealous God”
5. God’s terrible judgment (v. 5c): “Visiting to punish sons of the third and four generations of fathers who hate me”
6. God’s reward and grace to His faithful once (v. 6): “And showing covenant loyalty to thousands who love me and keep my commands.”

The Structure of the Passage

The passage has some unique structures. The passage can be divided into three main parts: a. the law aspect of the passage; b. the action of the law; c. and God’s justice reviewed, i.e. the wrongdoers are punished while saints are rewarded. The passage begins with “make no any image” then rises to “that is in heaven above, the earth beneath, and water under the earth.” It reaches the climax of the passage “bow down or serves them.” Then it declines from “visiting the iniquity of the fathers” to the end “showing mercy.” The passage reveals some contrast at the end:

פִּקֵּד עֲוֹן אָבוֹת

pô-ked ‘a-won ’ā-bôt

“visiting the iniquity of the fathers” (punishment)

וַעֲשֵׂה חֶסֶד לְאֲלֵפִים לְאָהָבִי וְלִשְׂמֹרֵי מִצְוֹתַי

wə-‘ô-seh ḥe-sed la-’ā-lā-pîm, la-’ô-hā-bay ū-la-šô-mərê miš-wō-ṭāy

“showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me” (reward)

This contrast suggests that the same God who can show love to humanity can also punish any person if he refuses to obey His commandment. Yahweh is God who loves the sinner but hates sin (Ezek 18).

There is synonymous parallelism in the passage.

אֱשֶׁר בְּשָׁמַיִם מִמַּעַל

'ā-śer baś-śāmā-îm mim-ma'-al

וְאֱשֶׁר בְּאֶרֶץ מִתַּחַת

w'ā-śer bā-'ārmit-taḥ

וְאֱשֶׁר בַּיָּם מִתַּחַת לְאֶרֶץ

w'ā-śer bam-ma-îm mit-ta-ḥaṭ lā'-ār-seṣ

“that is in heaven above”

“that is in the earth beneath”

“that is in the water under the earth.”

God wants His people to know the entire possible place which can be a snare to them. There are some huge creatures such as sun, moon, stars, lions, elephants, whale, just to mention a few in these places which attracted a man to make images of them. God repeated “that is in” to show a specific place He is talking about.

There is another synonymous parallelism found in the passage:

לֹא־תִשָּׂהֲוֶה לָהֶם

Lô tiš-taḥ-weh lā-hem

“Bow down yourself to them”

וְלֹא תַעֲבֹדֵם

Wə-lô t̄ā-‘āb̄ə-dêm

“Nor serve them”

These two phrases are the climax of the whole passage. God expects us to serve Him alone. The entire law forbids humanity from making anything in place of God. The passage is an imperative which counsels every human being to desist from making images in place of Yahweh. The passage can be divided into a text phrase and meaning and function columns. Table 1 shows the text phrase and meaning of every phrase and its function.

Table 1. Meaning and Function of Every Phrase

Text Phrase	Meaning and Function
You shall not make	Identify subject and verb; instructing giving to the recipient forbidden him from making an image
For yourself	The prepositional phrase; it is a reflexive phrase which refers to the instruction back to the subject.
Any graven image	Indirect object; limiting worship to Yahweh alone as stated in Deut 6:4.
Any likeness of anything	Noun phrase; Yahweh does not reveal His form to humanity which we can use to represent Him.
in heaven above in the earth beneath in the water under the earth	Adverbial phrases; expatiating the kind of things that are forbidden to make. Nothing deserves worship except Yahweh.
You shall not bow down	Identifies subject and verb; forbidden false worship
To them	Prepositional object; the antecedent of the image.
Nor server them	The verbal phrase; repeating the command against false worship
For I the Lord thy God	Identifies the subject; a special name for God which shows that He is only God who saves.
Am a jealous God	The verbal phrase; reveals the opposite side of God. He fights against any form extramarital affairs
Visiting the iniquity of the fathers	The verbal phrase; God passes judgment on disobedient people.
Upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them	The prepositional phrase; expressing that children who follow their father's sins will receive the same punishment of their fathers.
That hate me	The adjectival phrase; identifies God's enemy
But showing mercy	The verbal phrase; showing contrast to those who hate God.
To thousands of them	The adverbial phrase; indicating those who receive the grace of God.
That love me and keep	Two verbs; expressing the saints of God.
My commandment	The prepositional phrase; showing the owner of the commandment.

A Closed Reading of Exodus 20:4, 5

This important stipulation “you shalt not make unto thee any graven image” is found within the Decalogue. It falls within the first part of the commandments which deals with God and human relationships. The first section of the commandment presents the idea of monotheism. Baker asserts that the term Ten Commandment comes from Hebrew origin meaning “ten words” and it has appeared only three times

throughout the whole Bible (Exod 34:28; Deut 4:13; 10:4).² The “ten words” constitutes the basic principle of human life. The Decalogue has appeared two times in the Pentateuch: Exodus 20:1-21 and Deuteronomy 5:1-22.³

In the wider context, the passage is preceded by God meeting His people at foot of Mount Sinai (Exod 19: 1-25). God made a covenant with His people. God selected Israel as a peculiar people to Himself, “And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation; these are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel” (Exod 19:6). After the meeting, God spoke the “ten words” into their hearing. After the witness of thunders, lightning flashes, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking, God instructed Moses to warn the Israelites not to make any image replacing Him (Exod 20:23), and also gave a law concerning the Altar. Exodus 21 narrates the law concerning servants, violence, and animals.

The context of Exodus 20:4, 5, then, talks about God’s jealousy against the worship of images and idols. The context speaks against the making of images and also serving them as a god. God pronounced a special punishment against anyone who violates the law and its consequences which will also affect the descendant of such a person whose children will complete their father’s iniquities.

² David L. Baker, *The Decalogue: Living as the People of God* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 2017), 1.

³ *Ibid.*, 3.

Context and Grammatical Study of the Text

Scholars like Dozeman have agreed that the Decalogue has appeared two times in the Pentateuch (Exod 20:1-21; Deut 5:6-22).⁴ There is a debate going on among scholars that which of the two is more original and earliest than the other.⁵

Some commentators have made some efforts to assign Exod 20:4, 5 and the close verses to several sources, with slight agreement among scholars as to which verses should be assigned to which source. Clark suggests that some scholars believe that the Decalogue was delivered on the day of Pentecost.⁶ The law was delivered on Mount Sinai which has gained several names: *asereth haddebarim* “ten words,” *eth berithi* “my covenant,” *hattorah* “the law,” *Dekalogos* “Decalogue” a Greek word which means ten words.⁷

In the second command, the first word to appear is “*lo*” which was the primary Hebrew term for factual negation in contrast to *al* which typically described potential negation.”⁸ It is usually used in an emphatic negative command, such as “you shall not kill” (Exod 20:13).⁹ Hebrew has two forms of prohibition: אל plus the imperfect is a solid perpetual embargo, “Do not ever do that.” And לֹא plus the jussive/imperfect is an instant ban. “Stop doing that. Don’t do that.” The commandments always use אל

⁴ Thomas B. Dozeman, *Exodus* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2014), 46.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Genesis through Deuteronomy*, vol. 1 (Henrico, VA: Wesleyan Heritage, 1998), 544.

⁷ Adam Clarke, “Exodus,” *Adam Clarke’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Genesis through Deuteronomy* (Henrico, VA: Wesleyan Heritage, 1998), 545.

⁸ R. Laird Harris, “Second Commandment,” ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago, IL: Moody, 2003), 501.

⁹ Ibid., 502.

and the imperfect, “You shall not.”¹⁰ The use of imperfect gives an idea that God commands humanity from the perpetual prohibition of making images for worship.

The verb “do” אָסַח (‘*āsāh*) has a connotation of reflexive “you to do or make for you”¹¹ indicating the emphasis of the speaker concerning what he is talking about. This verb is in *Qal* imperfect contingent indicating that it is underway or in process. It shows that God was making an objective statement, which means the law has no beginning or end.¹² It also shows a command which expresses a strong injunction or prohibition on the recipient.¹³

The noun “image” פֶּסֶל (*pese*) could perform one of many functions in v. 4. פֶּסֶל (*Pesel*) can be translated as “idol or image.”¹⁴ פָּסַל is the verb form of פֶּסֶל (*pesel*) indicating hewing something into shape.¹⁵ The noun is in the singular form, the reason for that is unclear because the following sentences indicate that we should not make any image to anything which is in heaven, earth, or under the sea. Clark argues that the image can be referred to as wood, stone, or metal which we have used an ax, chisel, or graven tool to manufacture.¹⁶ To a large extent, it means cultic images.¹⁷

¹⁰ John F. Brug, “Brief Study of the Decalogue: The Ten Words, Exodus 20:1-17,” *Jewish Publication Society* 3 (1993): 46.

¹¹ H. F. W. Gesenius, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament with an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic: Based on the Lexicon of William Gesenius*, ed. Francis Brown, trans. Edward Robinson (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1952), s.v. *asah*.

¹² Bill T. Arnold and John H. Choi, *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 57.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 59.

¹⁴ Gesenius, Driver, and Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament with an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic: Based on the Lexicon of William Gesenius*, s.v. *pesel*.

¹⁵ Harris, “Second Commandment,” P¹sal.

¹⁶ Clarke, “Exodus,” 546; see Fields, *Exploring Exodus*, 424.

¹⁷ Tate, “The Legal Traditions of the Book of Exodus,” 488.

Another suggestion is that *pesel* can be referring to any image.¹⁸ In the Ancient Near East, the image or idol considered as an abode of the gods.¹⁹

The phrase “and every likeness, form or representation”²⁰ וְכָל־תְּמוּנָה (wecol-*tmûnâ tmûnâ*) comes from the word *mîn* meaning “kind.”²¹ *Mîn* also means “from” or originally “from part of something.”²² It indicates the outward shape of an object; showing the prohibition of the artistic object of worship.²³ Clark suggests that “every likeness” refers to the prohibition of all kinds of living creatures such as the beast, fowls, creeping things, and fishes that were used as gods in Egypt.²⁴ Murphy asserts that “every likeness” gives an idea against any form which is present to the eye including “all sorts of pictures as well as images” to be worshiped.²⁵

The long-phrase which suggest that we should not make any image in the likeness of anything which is in “the heavens above, or which *is* in the earth beneath, or which *is* in the waters under the heavens above, or which *is* in the earth beneath, or which *is* in the waters under the earth” (Exod 20:4) gives an idea that God was

¹⁸ James Orr, “Exodus,” ed. H. D. M. Spence and Joseph S. Exell, *The Pulpit Commentary* (New York, NY: Funk & Wagnalls, 1913), 215.

¹⁹ Worley Jr., “God’s Gracious Love Expressed: Exodus 20:1-17,” 215.

²⁰ Gesenius, Driver, and Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament with an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic: Based on the Lexicon of William Gesenius*, 215.

²¹ Harris, “Second Commandment,” *mîn*.

²² Ernest Klein, *A Comprehensive Etymological Dictionary of the Hebrew Language for Readers of English* (Jerusalem, Israel: The Beatrice & Arthur Minden Foundation & The University of Haifa, 1987), 371.

²³ Tate, “The Legal Traditions of the Book of Exodus,” 371.

²⁴ Clarke, “Exodus,” 546–547.

²⁵ James G. Murphy, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Exodus, with an New Translation* (New York, NY: I.K. Funk, 1881), 139.

3referring them to the Egyptian worship “images of celestial, terrestrial, and aquatic objects of worship.”²⁶

In v. 5 the author introduces the main idea of the law “not bow down” תִּשְׁתַּחֲוּהוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ (lo’ *tišṭaḥəwh*) this phrase comes from שָׁחָה (*shaha*) meaning to bow down. lo’ *tišṭaḥəwh* is “*hithpael* imperfect of שָׁחָה with metathesis or the *hishtaphel* (*eshtaphel*) imperfect of שָׁחָה”²⁷ which suggest to bow down deeply, do obeisance on the ground.

²⁸Harris argues that the word *shaha* is “commonly occurring from *hištaḥwê* “to prostrate oneself” or “to worship,” which was analyzed as a *Hithpael* of *shaha* is now regarded based on Ugaritic evidence as an *Eshtaphal* stem.”²⁹ *Shaha* can also be used to indicate bowing down to a superior or monarch in homage. This word has been used in (Eze 8:16) when the men of Judah were worshiping the sun towards the East.

The verb which also needs to be considered is “serve” (ta’*abdem*) תַּעֲבֹדֵם which derived from עָבַד (*abad*) meaning to be lead to work or serve.³⁰ The verb is in *hophal* imperfect command which suggests that the action expresses a strong injunction or prohibition. The state of the person is inside; it means that the person services or the work are underway or in process. The expression can also indicate a strong prohibition against bowing down before images. Because the word is in the second person singular may denote do not allow yourself to become a subject to any idol or image.

²⁶ Murphy, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Exodus, with an New Translation*, 139.

²⁷ Brug, “Brief Study of the Decalogue: The Ten Words, Exodus 20:1-17,” 5.

²⁸ Gesenius, Driver, and Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament with an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic: Based on the Lexicon of William Gesenius*, s.v. sh’*mâ*.

²⁹ Harris, “Second Commandment,” sh’*mâ*.

³⁰ Gesenius, Driver, and Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament with an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic: Based on the Lexicon of William Gesenius*, s.v. bad.

The phrase *אֵל קַנָּא יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֵל קַנָּא* (*kî 'anokî y^hwah 'eloeyka 'él qanna*); “for I, Jehovah thy God, *am* a jealous God,” indicates the presence of Yahweh’s jealousy in the passage. This expression shows God’s feeling like a holy being exhibiting His emotions; God has feelings like hatred, jealousy, anger, and revenge as humans have because we were created in His image.³¹ God’s jealousy is like the man who feels jealous of his wedded wife.³²

The use of *qanna* in the passage reviews “God’s intense zeal for righteousness and holiness and to his claim to exclusive loyalty.”³³ He will not share His glory with anything; He will not allow humans to give His honor, respect, and reverence to mere images and pictures.³⁴ Calvin observes that “He permits no rivalry which may detract from His glory, nor does He suffer the service which is due to Him alone to be transferred elsewhere.”³⁵

The verb “visiting” *פָּקַד* (*poked*) is *Qal* participle masculine absolute. It implies that God continuing or progressing “attending, visiting, or punishing”³⁶ those who refuse to conform to His commands. It is a *fientive* verb that designates God’s action implicit on the offender. God overtakes the offender with serious punishment.³⁷

³¹ Murphy, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Exodus, with an New Translation*, 139.

³² Clarke, *Adam Clarke’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Genesis through Deuteronomy*, 1:547.

³³ Brug, “Brief Study of the Decalogue: The Ten Words, Exodus 20:1-17,” 4.

³⁴ Orr, “Exodus,” 5.

³⁵ Calvin, *Commentaries on the Four Last Books of Moses: Arranged in the Form of a Harmony*, 2:139.

³⁶ Gesenius, Driver, and Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament with an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic: Based on the Lexicon of William Gesenius*, s.v. *poḳēd*.

³⁷ Murphy, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Exodus, with an New Translation*, 139.

The phrase עֲוֹן אָבֹתָ עַל־בְּנֵי עַל־שְׁלֹשִׁים וְעַל־רִבְעִים לְשָׁנָא :

“the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth {generation} of them that hate me, (Exod 20:5).” It indicates God visiting the iniquity of the offender does not stop on him but extend to his offspring who continuing the sins of their fathers. “*on*’ used in this verse gives an idea that God is pointing to a specific sin which “signify vanity, breath, vainness, nothingness, falseness, falsehood, idol, idolatry, wickedness, sorrow, distress, and expression of deception, pointing more to the consequences of sin.”³⁸ Sin has several prominent synonyms in Hebrew,³⁹ each one of them has its weight and how it should be dealt with.⁴⁰

Murphy refers to the iniquity as worship many gods contrary to monotheism.⁴¹ He continues that records have proved from immemorial that children normally follow the sins of their fathers.⁴² Clark asserts that “the children walk in the steps of their fathers.”⁴³ This particular sin of idolatry continues from generation to generation. And it was one of the sins which sent the Israelites into captivity where their children suffer the sins committed by their ancestors.⁴⁴ Gray suggests that the

³⁸ Spiros Zodhiates, ed., *Hebrew-Greek Key Study Bible: New International Version* (Chattanooga, TN: Advancing the Ministries of the Gospel, 1996), 1502.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 1503.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 1502. See, for example the most prominent synonyms are *hātā*, to miss the mark; *šāgāh*, to err; *peša*’, rebellion, transgression; *’āwāh*, to be bent, crooked; *’āmāl*, to work, travail (signifying the burdensome aspect of sin); *’āwāl*, to distort, do evil; *’ābar*, to cross over, transgress; *ra*’, evil, wickedness, ruin, bad, harm; *rāšā*’, wicked, wrong, bad, condemned, guilty; *mā’al*, to act treacherously, covertly; *bāgad*, to deal deceitfully; and *’āšām*, trespass, fault, guilt.

⁴¹ Murphy, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Exodus, with an New Translation*, 139.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Clarke, *Adam Clarke’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Genesis through Deuteronomy*, 1:547.

⁴⁴ Clarke, *Adam Clarke’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Genesis through Deuteronomy*, 1:547.

punishment which will be inflicted upon the children of the offender may be temporal effects of the sin, not an eternal consequence.⁴⁵

Delitzsch argues that God will not punish children who did not continue the sins of their fathers but He only punishes those who commit own faults.⁴⁶ Fields support that before God brings judgment to certain people then He had been enduring their sins for long, so the day He brings the punishment then it will be the sins of their fathers and their iniquities.⁴⁷ The verb ׳סַנְעֵל indicates the use of ל which gives the direction of movement wherein the goal is reached, “for who hates me.” The verb of the phrase comes from סַנְעֵל *sānē*’ meaning “hate.”⁴⁸ The word is in verb *Qal* participle masculine plural construct indicating the progression action where people continue hating God. The verb indicates the emotional attitude of God where He does not want to have contact with the offender.⁴⁹

In v. 6 God pronounces His intention for those who obey his voice; “and doing kindness to thousands, of those loving Me and keeping My commands” (Exod 20:6). Even though works do not bring salvation, but God still shows His mercies to those who keep His commandment.⁵⁰ This statement is a favorable language which does not base on merit or righteous reward.⁵¹ “It is a contrast to those “who hate me.”

⁴⁵ Gray, 118.

⁴⁶ Keil and Delitzsch, *Keil & Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament Pentateuch*, 575–576.

⁴⁷ Fields, *Exploring Exodus*, 426.

⁴⁸ Gesenius, Driver, and Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament with an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic: Based on the Lexicon of William Gesenius*, s.v. *sānē*.

⁴⁹ Harris, “Second Commandment,” *sānē*.

⁵⁰ Gesenius, Driver, and Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament with an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic: Based on the Lexicon of William Gesenius*, 548.

⁵¹ Murphy, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Exodus, with a New Translation*, 140.

Exegesis of Exodus 25:18-22

The primary theme of Exodus 25 seems to center around the building of the sanctuary and its accessories, with an emphasis on using pure gold. In several forms, the term “gold: (זָהָב) appears 18 times in Exod 25. For instance, the first gift God demanded is “gold” (זָהָב), the Ark of Covenant was overlaid with “pure gold” (זָהָב טָהוֹר), four rings of the Ark was “gold” (זָהָב), the atonement cover was “pure gold” (זָהָב טָהוֹר), two cherubim were “hammered cherub gold” (כְּרֻבִים זָהָב מְקֻשָּׁה), the tables were overlaid with “gold” (זָהָב), the lampstand was “pure gold” (זָהָב טָהוֹר).

The use of gold is expressed in this chapter with a dual emphasis: 1. Gold used as a gift or offering for the Lord, 2. Gold used as hammered or molding work. The first concern is about God receiving an offering from His people to make a sanctuary. He requested various items such as gold, silver, bronze, blue, purple, and scarlet thread, fine linen, and goats' hair; just to mention a few. These offerings were used to build the sanctuary and its accessories (Exod 35:5,22; 38:24; 38:24). The second concern is about using gold to mold furniture in the sanctuary. It seems that several works in the sanctuary were made of gold.⁵²

Moses mentioned two men: Bezalel and Oholiab who were endowed with the Holy Spirit to make all kinds of artistic works craftsmanship in the sanctuary (Exod 35:32-35), this indicates that God prefers some artistic works in His sanctuary to the place admirable. As time went on, some Jews use these artistic works of gold as a form of gods. And prophet Isaiah proclaims against the people that God will visit them and they will throw their gods which were made up of gold and silver away (Isa 2:20)

⁵² Exod 26:6,29,32,37; 28:5.6.8.11-36; 30:3.5; 31:4; 36:13, 34,36,38; 37:2-28; 39:2-30

Literary Context

The literary context of the book has been discussed in chapter three of this study. However, the context of Exodus 25:18-22 is different from Exodus 20:4-6. The first eight verses of Exodus 25 constitute how the people should bring their offerings for the building of the sanctuary. Verses 10-22 give how the Ark of Covenant should be made, which we have our text in question v. 18. Verses 23-30 shows the manufacture of temple table and the final section (vv. 31-40) gives closing instruction about the building of the lampstand. Hendrix points out that there are six elements in this chapter: “Ark, Table, Lampstand, *Miskan*, Altar of Burnt Offering, and Courtyard.”⁵³

These elements constitute the furniture of the sanctuary. The central portion of Exodus 25 is verse 17-18 which contains the pivot of the text which indicates God’s mercy for His people. i.e. the mercy seat on the top of the Ark. The text for this study is taken from the portion of this central section of the chapter which is focused on the building of two cherubim on both sides of the mercy seat on the Ark (Exod 25:18). There is synonymous parallelism in verse 19.

“make one cherub on one end”

“and the second cherub on the other”

This parallelism indicates the emphasis God was putting on how these images should be constructed. According to Hendrix, Exodus 25-40 has three narratives: command narratives, interlocutory narratives, and execution narratives which Exodus 25 forms parts of the “command narratives” in the book.⁵⁴

⁵³ Ralph E. Hendrix, “A Literary Structural Overview of Exod 25-40,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 30, no. 2 (1992): 132.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 14.

Scripture Passage

וַעֲשִׂיתָ שְׁנַיִם כְּרֻבִים זָהָב מְקוֹשֶׁה תַעֲשֶׂה אֹתָם מִשְׁנֵי קְצוֹת הַכַּפֹּרֶת

*Wə-ā-śî-tā Šə-na-yim kə-ru-ḥîm zā-hāb; miq- Šāh ta- 'ā-śeh 'ô-tām miš-nê qə-
šôwt hak-kap-pô-ret*

And you shall make two cherubim of gold hammered work; you shall make them at the two ends of the mercy seat.

וַעֲשֶׂה כְּרוֹב אֶחָד מִקְצֵה מִזָּה וְכְרוֹב אֶחָד מִקְצֵה מִזָּה מִן־הַכַּפֹּרֶת תַעֲשֶׂוּ אֶת־הַכְּרֻבִים

עַל־שְׁנֵי קְצוֹתָיו:

*Wa- 'ā-śêh kə-rûḥ 'e-ḥād miq-qā-šāh miz-zeh, û-kə-rûḥ 'e-ḥād miq-qā-šāh miz-
zeh; min hak-kap-pô-ret ta- 'ā-śû 'et hak-kə-ru-ḥîm 'al- Šə-nê qə-šô-w-tāw.*

Make one cherub on one end and the second cherub on the other; make the cherubim of one piece with the cover, at the two ends.

וְהָיוּ הַכְּרֻבִים פְּרָשִׁי כְנָפֵיהֶם לְמַעַלָּה סְכָכִים בְּכַנְפֵיהֶם עַל־הַכַּפֹּרֶת וּפְנֵיהֶם אִישׁ אֶל־אָחָיו

אֶל־הַכַּפֹּרֶת יִהְיוּ פְּנֵי הַכְּרֻבִים:

*Wə-hā-yū hak-kə-ru-ḥîm pō-rə-śê kə-nā-pa-yim lə-ma ' -lāh, sô-kə-kîm bə-kan-
pê-hem 'al- hak-kap-pô-ret, û-pə-nê-hem 'îš 'el- 'ā-ḥîw; 'el- hak-kap-pô-ret, yih-yū
pə-nê hak-kə-ru-ḥîm.*

The cherubim are to have their wings spread upward, overshadowing the cover with them. The cherubim are to face each other, looking toward the cover.

וְנָתַתָּ אֶת־הַכַּפֹּרֶת עַל־הָאָרֶן מִלְּמַעַלָּה וְאֶל־הָאָרֶן תַּתֵּן אֶת־הַעֲדוּת אֲשֶׁר אֶתָּן אֵלַיִךְ: ²¹

*Wə-nā-ta-tā 'et hak-kap-pô-ret 'al- hā- 'ā-rôn mil-mā- 'ə-lāh; wə- 'el- hā-ā-rôn,
tit-tên 'et- hā- 'ê-duṭ 'ă-Šer 'et-tên 'ê-le-kā,*

Place the cover on top of the ark and put in the ark the tablets of the covenant law that I will give you.

22 וְנוֹעַדְתִּי לָךְ שֵׁם וְדַבַּרְתִּי אִתְּךָ מֵעַל הַכַּפֹּרֶת מִבֵּין שְׁנֵי הַכְּרֻבִּים אֲשֶׁר עַל-אֲרֹן הָעֵדֻת אֵת כָּל-אֲשֶׁר

אֲצַוְהָ אוֹתָהּ אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: פ

*Wə-nô-w- 'ad-tî la-kā Šām wə-dib-bar-tî it-tə-kā mē- 'al hak-kap-pô-ret, mib-
bên Šə-nê hak-kə-ru-bîm 'ă-Šer 'al- 'ă-rôn hā- 'ê-dut; 'êṭ kāl- 'ă-Šer 'ă-šawh 'ô-wṭ-kā
'el- bə-nê yiś-rā- 'él.*

There, above the cover between the two cherubim that are over the Ark of the Covenant law, I will meet with you and give you all my commands for the Israelites.

Text-Critical Notes

The GWN⁵⁵ reads cherubim as “angels” which can confuse a reader by think that the book is talking about real angels. Breutu LXX with Apocrypha used “graven in gold” which looks like the forbidden graven image in the Exodus 20:4-6, while NJB preferred “two great winged creatures” for the cherubim which also do not help readers to identify the kind of creatures the text is talking about. NAB, NAS, NAU, NET, NIB, NKJ, NLT, NRS, RSV, and TNK use “hammered work” while YLT, WEB, and ERY used “beaten work.” Interestingly, Jerusalem Targum English writes nothing about this text.

Outline of Exodus 25: 18-22

- I. How to make the two cherubim? (v. 18-19)
- II. Cherubim behaves like real angels (v. 20)
- III. The grace of God shown (v. 21-22)

How to Make the Two Cherubim? The phrase וַעֲשִׂיתָ שְׁנַיִם כְּרֻבִּים זָהָב (Exod 25:18) “ You shall make two cherubs (of) gold” is in an appositional phrase which

⁵⁵ GWN means God’s Word to the Nations Version.

indicates agreement indefiniteness and reference.⁵⁶ The verb הָצַח (*‘āsāh*) express making, preparing, forming into anything. According to Basil, this indicates the handy work of a man.⁵⁷ The verb “make” הָצַח (*‘āsāh*) is Conjunctive *waw* plus *Qal* - Conjunctive perfect - second person masculine singular means to press or squeeze something. It can also indicate an ethical obligation from God (Exod 23:22; Lev 19:37; Deut 6:18, etc.).⁵⁸ It can be deduced that God asked Moses to tell the artisans to invent something for the sanctuary.

The noun phrase “two cherubim” $\text{שְׁתַּיִם כְּרֻבִים}$ (*shetayim keruwb*)⁵⁹ it is a noun masculine plural which is the direct object of the sentence. It used to represent the real angels who attend to *shechinah*, or divine Majesty.⁶⁰ The Assyrian has “*kirubu = šêdu* meaning the name of winged bull”⁶¹ which has a similar meaning to the Hebrew. According to Henry, *shetayim keruwb* were not “effigies of an angel, but some emblem of the angelical nature.”⁶² He argues that it was like a logo. Several scholars give different forms for the *shetayim keruwb* that they look like an ox, young men, winged animals, or birds,⁶³ but Calvin claims that they were angels like the one who

⁵⁶ Bruce K. Waltke and Michael Patrick O’Connor, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2004), 228.

⁵⁷ John of Damascus, *An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith* (London, UK: Beloved, 2009), chap. XVI.

⁵⁸ R. Laird Harris, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, vol. 1 (Chicago, IL: Moody, 1980), 132.

⁵⁹ Gesenius, Driver, and Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament with an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic: Based on the Lexicon of William Gesenius*, s.v. shenayim keruwb.

⁶⁰ Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible: Genesis to Deuteronomy*, 1:619.

⁶¹ Gesenius, Driver, and Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament with an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic: Based on the Lexicon of William Gesenius*, s.v. kirubu = šêdu.

⁶² Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible: Genesis to Deuteronomy*, 1:619.

⁶³ Gill, “Exodus,” 323.

guarded the tree of life in the Garden of Eden.⁶⁴ However, Catholic Commentary indicates that the exact form was not known.⁶⁵

This noun phrase “Hammered work” מִקְשָׁה (*miqshah*) is feminine singular which can also mean finely decorated cultic objects of gold or silver.⁶⁶ It was normally related with only metal works.⁶⁷ מִקְשָׁה which comes from the same root has a similar meaning “an artistic hair arrangement; turner’s work, Is 3:24.”⁶⁸ this word מִקְשָׁה give us an idea that the hammered work in the sanctuary was artistic. Gill argues that it hammer’s work which was made smooth.⁶⁹ It can be deduced that it was a blacksmith’s work.

The noun “mercy seat” כַּפֹּרֶת (*kapporeth*)⁷⁰ is feminine singular meaning “the golden plate of propitiation on which the High Priest sprinkled the seat 7 times on the Day of Atonement symbolically reconciling Jehovah and His chosen people 1a1) the slab of gold on top of the Ark of the Covenant which measured 2.5 by 1.5 cubits.”⁷¹ כַּפֹּרֶת (*kapporeth*) is a noun feminine which can be referred to a thing or female but Henry argues that it is a type of Christ,⁷² which does not go well with the word. The

⁶⁴ Calvin, *Commentaries on the Four Last Books of Moses: Arranged in the Form of a Harmony*, 2:116.

⁶⁵ George Haydock, *Catholic Commentary on Exodus* (New York, NY: Edward Dunigan and Brother, 1849), 145.

⁶⁶ Gesenius, Driver, and Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament with an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic: Based on the Lexicon of William Gesenius*, s.v. *miqshah*.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ Gill, “Exodus,” 233.

⁷⁰ Gesenius, Driver, and Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament with an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic: Based on the Lexicon of William Gesenius*, s.v. *kapporeth*.

⁷¹ Harris, “Second Commandment,” 187.

⁷² Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible: Genesis to Deuteronomy*, 1:128.

noun כַּפְרֵת (*kapporeth*) is derived from the verb *capar* which means “to smear with pitch, but in the Hiphil conjugation, it signifies either to expiate, or to purge, or to receive into favor.”⁷³ However, Kaiser has it different that “the word ‘seat’ has no part in the original.”⁷⁴

Cherubim behave like real angels. Cherubim in the passage behaves like real angles. Calvin asserts that David and other prophet use this in their prayers to mean that God dwells between the cherubim (Ps 80:1, Isa 37:16).⁷⁵ These cherubim were metal to show the attitude of adoration, and how “angels desire to look into.”⁷⁶ However, Gill comments that they were not real angels but “hieroglyphics or emblems.”⁷⁷ *The expository* suggests that the exact shape of the cherubim was kept as a secret among the Jews.⁷⁸ The winged human figures were also normally found in countries like Egypt, Assyria, Greeks just to mention a few in their worship system.⁷⁹ The cherubim were a representation of angels who minister to His Majesty, actually their presences there were to indicate angels attendance upon the Redeemer and our creator.⁸⁰

⁷³ Calvin, *Commentaries on the Four Last Books of Moses: Arranged in the Form of a Harmony*, 2:125.

⁷⁴ Sailhammer, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Genesis-Leviticus*, 458.

⁷⁵ Calvin, *Commentaries on the Four Last Books of Moses: Arranged in the Form of a Harmony*, 2:126.

⁷⁶ Sailhammer, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Genesis-Leviticus*, 458.

⁷⁷ Gill, “Exodus,” 245.

⁷⁸ Sailhammer, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Genesis-Leviticus*, 459.

⁷⁹ Spence-Jones, “Exodus,” 122.

⁸⁰ Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible: Genesis to Deuteronomy*, 1:221.

The grace of God shown. The Ark of the Covenant and its accessories were created to show the Grace of God.⁸¹ God places the mercy seat on the Ark of the Covenant to be the propitiation for those who commit the law.⁸² The justices of God reveals here where mercy and truth met together, because “justice without mercy is a moral severity.”⁸³ The mercy seat was commonly called the oracle because it was the place where God gives instructions and answers to the prayers of His people.⁸⁴

Theology and Message of Exodus 20:4-6

Humanity can show their love to God through worship. The Ten Commandments have been divided into two main parts: the love for God and love for our neighbors (Matt 22: 37-39). The highest response a person can give to God for His goodness is to worship Him.⁸⁵ Worship is obligatory for man and indicates man communion with God. Pink asserts that “The Ten Commandments expressed the obligations of man in his original state while enjoying free and open communion with God.”⁸⁶ The power in the Ten Commandment is still working as it was given to Moses at Mount Sanai. Its obligations are still bonding. The summary of the first four of the Ten Commandment calls us to worship God. There is no wonder that God gave the first two commandments prohibiting the worship of other gods besides Yahweh.

⁸¹ Ibid., 1:128.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Spence-Jones, “Exodus,” 123.

⁸⁴ Haydock, *Catholic Commentary on Exodus*, 146.

⁸⁵ Afolarin Olutunde Ojewole, “Biblical Musicians and Worship Responses,” in *Music and Worship in Africa: Adventists’ Dialogue from Biblical, Historical, and Cultural Perspectives*, ed. Sampson M Nwaomah (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University, 2014), 11.

⁸⁶ Arthur W. Pink, *Gleanings in Exodus* (Chicago, IL: Moody, 1981), 309.

What can we say now, is artistry forbidden? No, through this study it has been revealed that artistry per se is not forbidden by the second commandment. Because God Himself commanded Moses to build up a serpent for the people of Israel to look up for their deliverance from snake bit (Num 21:8). He also asked Moses to build two *cherubims* of gold in the sanctuary. They were made up of beaten work which is a form of artistry work (Exod 25:18 -22). Solomon also repeated the same work in the Temple which he built for the Lord (1 Kings 6:23-35). However, the second commandment calls us to worship only Yahweh in spirit and truth but not in kinds and images. Clark asserts that

This commandment also prohibits every species of external idolatry, as the first does all idolatry that may be called internal or mental. All false worship may be considered of this kind, together with all image worship, and all other superstitious rites and ceremonies.⁸⁷

Worshiping Yahweh through other gods or images is prohibited by God. If anyone worships God through images or idols is inconceivable for this text.⁸⁸ It is only the heathen such as Syria-Canaan who were using images to represent their gods.⁸⁹

Exodus 20:4-6 expresses God's prohibition on setting things. Out of the Ten Commandments, nine of them have negative signs of prohibition except the fifth one.⁹⁰ Meyers asserts that "The negative formulation is also striking."⁹¹ It is only the

⁸⁷ Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Genesis through Deuteronomy*, 1:547.

⁸⁸ Walter Houston, "Exodus," ed. John Barton and John Muddiman, *The Oxford Bible Commentary* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2001), 81.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 108.

⁹⁰ Woodrow Kroll, *Exodus: God's Plan, God's People* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2008), 72.

⁹¹ Meyers, *Exodus*, 165.

Sabbath and parent and child relation commandment which do not contain “you shall not...,” the rest contain prohibitions. The prohibitions give us the freedom to live a normal life so long as we are devoid of committing those commandments.⁹² Worley exposes that some scholars believe that even the Sabbath and parent reverence also contain some amount of prohibitive forms.⁹³ The negative formulations give Israelites an opportunity for what to do and what not to do.⁹⁴ There are several texts which have negative formulations.⁹⁵

God has shown His hatred against idolatry (Lev 26:30). Idolatry is forbidden for all ages (Lev 19:4; 26:1). The Jews called it abominable idols (2 Chr 15:8). The question is the image of foreign gods or Yahweh forbidden? Yes, all images are forbidding including an image which is used to represent God because Moses told the people of Israel that God did not show you any form but “You heard the sound of words... to you only a voice” (Deut 4:12). He declared that the Lord will never be willing to forgive anyone who worships images (Deut 29:20). Joshua admonished the people to put away all strange gods (Josh 24:23; 24:20). At Josiah’s reformation, he destroyed all the images and strange gods in his territory to signify that idol worship is an abomination to God’s people (2 Chr 34:7). When God is exalted among all gods then the worship of idols will be abolished within His people (Isa 2: 1-19). God always admonishes His people to turn away from polytheism or strange gods (Ezek 14:6). Anyone who decided to forsake God and follow his/her desire has been left out

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Worley Jr., “God’s Gracious Love Expressed: Exodus 20:1-17,” 190.

⁹⁴ Sebastian Günther, “The Ten Commandments and the Qur’an,” *Journal of Qur’anic Studies* 9, no. 1 (2001): 31.

⁹⁵ See for example (Exod 20:3; 30:32; Lev 8:33; 10:7; 11:4,8,11; 18:3, 26; 19:23, 28; 20:23, 25; 22:20; Deut 1:17; 3:22; 4:2; 6:14; 14:7, 19; 17:16; 18:10; Josh 6:10)

by God to make his/her own decision; “Ephraim *is* joined to idols: let him alone” (Hos 4:17). At the time of the apostles, idolatry was frowned upon by the believers (Acts 15:20). It was equated to fornication and polluted things (Acts 15). Paul also admonished believers to flee from idolatry (1 Cor 10:14). He also expressed his hatred for idol worship in Athens, “Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city gave to idolatry” (Acts 17:16). Apostle John asserts that believers should keep themselves from idols (1 John 5:21).

According to Exodus 20:4, God said that “You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above.” What location of heaven God was pointing to because Paul talked about third heaven (2 Cor 12:2)? Was He pointing to firmament? Or was He pointing to heavenly bodies? Moses explained it in Deuteronomy 4:16-17 that “lest you act corruptly and make for yourselves a carved image in the form of any figure: the likeness of male or female, the likeness of any animal that *is* on the earth or the likeness of any winged bird that flies in the air.” This text helps to understand that man ought not to worship anything which flies in the firmament. The law also banished the worship of celestial bodies such as sun and moon (Deut 4:19; 17:3). The all-knowing God prohibited His people from adoring celestial bodies, at a set point in time some Jews were worshipping heavenly bodies at high places (2 Kings 23:5).

The passage (Exod 20:4-6) gives us an idea about worship and monotheism. The first four commandments are laws that instruct worship. Israel has this rule “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD” (Deut 6:4). It is only God who deserves our worship (Exod 34:14; Deut 4:19). All other nations are called to worship God (Ps 22:27; 66:4; Isa 66:23), refusing to worship God is the source of all evils and

transgression.⁹⁶ The Decalogue enforces the worship of true God “Yahweh” rather than other foreign gods or images,⁹⁷ even angels do not deserve to be worship.⁹⁸ Anything which turns itself to become god put itself into bondage even the divine objects such as the Ten Commandment.⁹⁹ It is obvious and sensible to worship only the true God rather than worshipping images and various objects; because “God is the center of our worship.”¹⁰⁰

God said, “am a jealous God” (Exod 20:5), and His jealousy is about the zeal He has for the people of Israel.¹⁰¹ God’s jealousy is not like human jealousy but He is jealous to defend the purity of His people.¹⁰² Henry asserts that “Jealousy is called the rage of a man, Prov 6:34; but in God, it is holy and just displeasure.”¹⁰³ God’s jealousy reveals His deepest affectionate for Israel as His wife. He wants them to be faithful to Him at all times.¹⁰⁴ God’s jealousy is not about feeling as a human has but it is a way of protecting His holiness against idolatry.¹⁰⁵

God has appointed a day in which He will judge every man according to his works (Eccl 12:13,14; Acts 17:31). God hates those who do evil and judge them

⁹⁶ Joel Marcus, “Idolatry In The New Testament,” *Interpretation* 60, no. 2 (2006): 154–160.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 155.

⁹⁸ Ekkehardt Mueller, “Reflections on Worship in Revelation 4 and 5” (Biblical Research Institute General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2012), 4.

⁹⁹ Marcus, “Idolatry In The New Testament,” 160.

¹⁰⁰ Mueller, “Reflections on Worship in Revelation 4 and 5,” 2.

¹⁰¹ Worley Jr., “God’s Gracious Love Expressed: Exodus 20:1-17,” 196.

¹⁰² Malaty, *Commentary on Exodus*, 141.

¹⁰³ Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible: Genesis to Deuteronomy*, 1:162.

¹⁰⁴ Clarke, *Adam Clarke’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Genesis through Deuteronomy*, 1:547.

¹⁰⁵ Brug, “Brief Study of the Decalogue: The Ten Words, Exodus 20:1-17,” 5.

according to their works (Ps 34:27). God will divide humanity into two main groups: those who do well and who do evil (Ps 1:1-6). According to Exod 20:5,6, God will punish those who do the evil of their ancestors and rewards those who do good and follow His commandments.

God has shown that He is a God of emotion. He was angry against His people when they sin.¹⁰⁶ But He also expresses His compassion towards His people when they are troubled.¹⁰⁷ God is a God of love.¹⁰⁸ He hates those who do evil in their ways.¹⁰⁹ All these emotions testify that God created man in His image and He wants us to be faithful to Him alone.

The greatest emotion God has ever had is love. It also reveals His character. He is the sole initiator of love.¹¹⁰ God demonstrated His love for humanity at Mount Cavalry where He sacrificed His only son for our iniquities (John 3:16). God loves all humanity but extended special love for Israel.¹¹¹ He made them the recipient of His law to express His gracious love and care.¹¹² Even for God to give the law which is His character to us both positive and negative is a display of His love.¹¹³ God rebukes those whom He loves.¹¹⁴ God has shown His blessing He has for those who obey Him

¹⁰⁶ See, Exod 22:24; 32:10; Deut 9:22; Ps 7:11; Ezek 5:13; Rom 1:18.

¹⁰⁷ See, Exod 33:19; Deut 32:36; Ps 135:14; 103:13; Judg 2:18; Jer 42:12; Matt 9:36; 20:34.

¹⁰⁸ See, Deut 7:7,8; 10:15; Jer 31:3; Isa 43:4; Hos 11:1; Mark 10:21; John 3:16; 1 John 4:8; 17:23.

¹⁰⁹ See, Deut 16:21; Prov 6:16; Pss 5:5; 11:5.

¹¹⁰ Malaty, *Commentary on Exodus*, 9.

¹¹¹ Worley Jr., "God's Gracious Love Expressed: Exodus 20:1-17," 188.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 204.

¹¹³ Brug, "Brief Study of the Decalogue: The Ten Words, Exodus 20:1-17," 1.

¹¹⁴ Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible: Genesis to Deuteronomy*, 1:66.

and keeps His commandment (Ps 1:1-6; Exod 20:6). The commandment He gave to His people indicates that He loves righteousness and hate iniquity.¹¹⁵

God also expects us to show our love for Him through obedience to His laws.¹¹⁶ God appreciates obedience more than good intentions and offers we give to Him.¹¹⁷ Kierkegaard asserts that “the love of God is the hatred of the world and the love of the world hatred of God.”¹¹⁸ Those who love will desist themselves from all worldly pleasures, disobedience, follow the principles and orders of their Lord. It only the love which we have for God will help us to desist from making and worshiping images which are our handy works. Our loyalty to God will create hatred within us against any kind of false worship.

Summary

Worship is the principal thing in human life. Every person on earth worships something whether he/she likes it or yes. All gods on earth have images which their devotees use to represent them except the only one God Yahweh, who created the heavens and earth who does not have any form or image to represent Him. Any attempt to make an image of Him is a form of treason against the Yahweh government. No image can be used to represent God in any form of worship. Any artistic work which has been made to receive reverence is truly prohibited. Surely, all creative works which humans use as Yahweh’s representative whether, on earth, undersea or above heavens is prohibited.

¹¹⁵ Gill, “Exodus,” 220.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 310.

¹¹⁷ Søren Kierkegaard, *Provocations: Spiritual Writings of Kierkegaard* (Robertbridge, UK: Bruderhof, 2002), 35.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 39.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Summary of Thesis

This study discusses the issue of icons in Exodus 20:4-6. It discusses how God frowns against dual allegiance and religious syncretism. The subject reveals the idea of monotheism within God's people. The worship of carved images has been seen as the highest sin ever committed in human life (Deut 29:18-20). The prohibition of image worship has been spoken against throughout the Old Testament. It is an abomination for God's people to entertain such kind of worship within them and their territory. It has proved that God does not reside in material things, unlike the other gods.

Chapter 1 has to do with the statement of the problem, purpose of study, the significance, methodology and procedure, definition of terms, and delimitation of the study. Chapter 2 deals with scholars' view on iconoclastic or aniconism. Iconoclasm has to do with Protestants fight against image worship in Christian churches. The prohibition of image worship finds its feet in Ten Commandments, which brought the term icons. Some Christian scholars are debating about how images should function in Christian churches: some support that Christians can use images in temples and churches while others are opposed to it.

It has been revealed that the people of Israel were victims of circumstances because of their history with Egypt, this situation made them feel that God is absent from them and they want a physical image to represent Yahweh (Exod 32). God chose

Israel as His covenant people. These people cannot live a good life without knowing what God is expected from them, therefore, He gave them Ten Commandments. God reveals Himself to Israel as father, husband, and king who cares about their welfare.

The Old Testament promotes the oneness of Yahweh. To worship only one God is the core value in Jewish worship. This is commonly called “Shema” (Deut 6:4). The first and second commandments promote monotheism against polytheism.

After the Babylonian captivity, the Jews learned that it was the worship of images that caused them to land in seventy years captivity. Therefore, after the captivity, they decided to frown against any form of image or idol worship within their domain. The Jews made the second commandment more rigid than ever, some even dedicated their lives to propagate against image worship. The zeal for fighting against icons within the Christian churches also has its root from Jewish traditions.

In the ancient Near East, icons were not forbidden to anyone. The practice of the countries around the Jewish influences them at the time of their kings to involve themselves in image worship. The Ancient Near East countries such as Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon uphold their kings as gods and always present their fortunes before gods indicating that they bring success in life.

Some modern scholars argue vehemently that icons should be absent from all churches while others work in favor of the use of icons, pictures, portraits, and carve images in temples to represent the physical presence of God. They contend that icons are not worshiped but they venerate them. They claim that there is a lot of importance attached to the use of icons in churches.

Whiles others suggest that the Jewish religion does not attach any importance to icons and even not to be entertained in their religion. Major Christian doctrines and practices are adopted from the Jewish religion.

Protestants are forerunners against the use of icons in modern Christianity. Zwingli accepts that reformation is the liberation from Catholic idolatry to the proper worship of God. The reformers accused the Catholic Church as the mother of idol worship within Christendom. But the Catholic Church does not see any wrong with the use of Christian images of the saints.

It has been shown through studies that modern Pentecostals and charismatics have also become slaves to the use of icons, portraits, and images as a way of counsel from their prophet for protection and prosperity. These people have termed them devotional images.

In chapter 3, we discussed the contextual background of Exodus 20:4-6. The book of Exodus reveals some special people (Israelites) who were redeemed by God from Egyptian slavery. The book has met a lot of controversy concerning its authorship, some scholars believe that the source of the book comes from EYP¹ sources which do not permit Moses to be the author of the book, but it has been revealed that it was Moses who was used as a pen in the hands of God to put down the history of God's people. It has been suggested among the majority of scholars that the book can be dated around 1290-1495 B.C. The title of the book carries the idea of the Ancient Greek word (ἐξοδος), *éxodos*, meaning "going out." The reading of the book itself reveals its audience as the people of Israel. The setting of the book reveals how the people of God suffered under the suppression of the Egyptians.

There are several themes suggested for the book of Exodus, but the internal evidence shows that redemption or salvation is great to be upheld. The book calls for the worship of the true God, this purpose point to the first and second commandments

¹ E stand for Elohim source, Y means Yahweh source, and P indicates Priestly source.

which summon all creatures to avoid the worship of images and cling to Yahweh alone. Several Old Testament passages support the fight against image worship. God enacts this law which prohibits the worship of images based on how the Israelites have been trained under the supervision of the Egyptians.

Even though God prohibits the use of images in worship, but He allows Moses to build some images in the temple. The study has proven that those images were not used as gods or not reverence or veneration was given to that temple furniture or images.

The first two laws in the Decalogue are twins which demand total allegiance from man. Some Bible Versions interpret the image in Exodus 20:4-6 as an idol. Some scholars believe that using images in the temple does not defile the church but it rather improve the service because Moses used some images and pillars in the sanctuary for beauty. But it has been proved that images worship or veneration has been forbidden by God.

The book of Exodus has a special genre and structure. It contains some amount of biography, narratives, and laws. The Ten Commandment contains “apodictic” statements.

Historically, the Israelites lived in Egypt as slaves and were liberated by God through Moses. Their liberation from slavery yielded the Sinai story through that we got the Decalogue meaning the “Ten Words.”

The reading of the second commandment shows its clear distinction. “*lo*” in the sentence indicates perpetual prohibition. The verb *'āšāh* is reflexive which warns us not to make images for ourselves. The core word of the passage is *Pesel* which proves that any image worship is forbidden by God. *wecol- t®mûnâ* prompt us that

we should not think that God has in the form of any kind which we will make a copy for ourselves whether in heaven or earth.

The word לֹא-תִשְׂתַּחֲוֶה indicates a complete prohibition of worshipping images which are supported by תִּעֲבֹדֵם which refrain us from becoming subject to idols.

God is very serious about how we pay allegiance to Him and other gods, and He is zealous about our faithfulness or unfaithfulness. He is ready to pay every action according to each person's deeds. He is a just God who rewards people with good things if they do good and also gives punishment to those who refuse to obey Him (1 Sam 2:6-8).

Exodus 20:4-6 calls every creature to worship God who made heavens and earth, this same statement is repeated in Revelation 4:6-7. It is one of the greatest ever gospel in which God wants all creatures to hear.

Conclusion of the Thesis

1. To worship God alone is the theme of the whole scriptures. It is every man's responsibility to worship the creator of the universe.
2. No image, statue, portrait, and pictures of the saints deserve reverence, veneration, or worship. It is allotted for the one who can create the heavens, earth, and the sea.
3. Any commandment which forbids image worship has its bases from the second commandment. The worship of Yahweh must be different from other false worship.

Suggestion for Further Studies

1. We should study and know-how we will deal with sculptures in the African context.
2. The church should tackle issues concerning how African's venerate dead bodies in our burial service.
3. The church should also look at how we can blend our Africa traditions and church principles when it concerns worship and prayer.

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