

# The Law and the Image of God<sup>1</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

*The purpose of this article is to show that the image of God (God-likeness) is an important theme in the OT. In the interest of space, the discussion on the image of God will be limited to the study of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. In this article, I argue that the idea of God-likeness (i.e. moral-likeness to God and a relationship between God and humankind like that between parent and child), seen in Gen 1-11, is also seen in Exodus-Deuteronomy. The biblical theological approach is used in the study of Exodus to Deuteronomy. A thematic and theological study of the Law is done in which aspects of the Pentateuch (especially the legal material) are highlighted which demonstrate that those who live in conformity to the law display God-likeness and those who do not, display serpent-likeness (i.e. behaviour of those who are at enmity with God).*

## A INTRODUCTION

Although I am aware of the critical issues regarding the unity, dating, multiple authorship, and sources of the books of the Pentateuch, I will be working from the final canonical form of the text, and not take hypothetical sources into consideration.

There has been much debate among scholars with regards to the significance of the *imago Dei* (Gen 1:26) in the OT. John Walton argues that the theme of the *imago Dei* (Gen 1:26) is an important theological theme in the Old and New Testaments.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, Claus Westermann argues that the *imago Dei* is not a significant theme in the OT: he says that Gen 1:26 has "no significance in the rest of the OT and, apart from Ps 8, does not occur again."<sup>3</sup> Therefore, this article explores the theme of the image of God in the Pentateuch. Critical issues will be noted where they are relevant to the subject under study.

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<sup>1</sup> This article is a sequel to my previous article, Daniel Simango "The Meaning of the *Imago Dei* in Genesis 1-11," *OTE* 25/3 (2012): 638-656 and is based on my M.A. Dissertation; see Daniel Simango, "The Image of God (Gen 1:26-27) in the Pentateuch: A Biblical-Theological Approach" (M.A. diss., North-West University, 2006).

<sup>2</sup> John H. Walton. *Genesis from Biblical Text to Contemporary Life* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan 2001), 130.

<sup>3</sup> Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1-11: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1987), 148.

In this article, I argue that the theme of the image of God or the *imago Dei* is significant in the OT. In the interest of space, the discussion on the image of God will be limited to the study of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. I explore the development of the theme of the image of God or *imago Dei* in Exodus-Deuteronomy. The theme of image of God (or God-likeness)<sup>4</sup> is traced in the narrative and legal sections of Exodus-Deuteronomy. The phrase "image of God" is not used elsewhere in the *Torah*, apart from Genesis. This omission does not mean that the concept is ignored. On the contrary, the issues in connection with the image of God are raised in the narrative and legal sections of the Pentateuch. There is much in the law that describes the proper relationship between God and his people, and often the father-son imagery is used for this relationship which potentially relates to the relational aspect of the image of God.<sup>5</sup> The law also mentions the fact that the Israelites are to be morally like God, and this potentially relates to the substantive aspect of the image of God.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore the law speaks of a need for a substantive change (i.e. regeneration) in the individual Israelite in order for him or her to keep the law.<sup>4</sup> Narrative portions of the law use creation language with respect to Israel which may also suggest the need for a substantive (or moral) change. Finally, the law speaks of the issue of dominion of Israel in a way that suggests that dominion is a consequence (not the essence) of Israel being in the image of God.

## **B CREATION LANGUAGE IN THE LAW**

The following discussion on the use of creation language in the law is indebted at many points to Meredith Kline<sup>8</sup> and John Ronning.<sup>9</sup> The law (both the legal statements as well as narrative portions of the Pentateuch) is associated with creation. This may be observed by the use of creation language in the law. The use of creation language with respect to the Israelites seems to suggest that the Israelites are God's new creation.

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<sup>4</sup> I argued that the image of God (or God-likeness) is both moral and relational in perspective: it involves a moral likeness to God and a relationship between God and humankind like that between parent and child. In this present study, I argue that the idea of God-likeness, as seen in Genesis 1-11, is also seen in Exodus-Deuteronomy. See Simango, "Image of God," 56-85.

<sup>5</sup> The relational aspect of the image of God is the parent-child relationship based on trust, faith, love, dependence, and obedience, see Simango, "Image of God," 54-55.

<sup>6</sup> In this article, the substantive aspect of the image of God will be limited to the moral-likeness to God.

<sup>7</sup> See Eugene Merrill, *Deuteronomy* (NAC; Michigan: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 388-389.

<sup>8</sup> Meredith G. Kline, *Images of the Spirit* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1980), 15-16.

<sup>9</sup> John L. Ronning, "The Curse on the Serpent (Genesis 3:15) in Biblical Theology and Hermeneutics" (Ph.D. diss.; Westminster Theological Seminary, 1997), 94-95.

In the Exodus narrative, God separated Israel from Egypt by means of the plagues. This distinction is described with the *hiph'il* of the root פלה (to separate) accompanied by the preposition בֵּין in the fourth (Exod 8:18-19 [22-23]), fifth (9:4), and tenth plagues (11:7). This recalls the separation of light and darkness (Gen 1:4-5), and of the waters above and below (Gen 1:6-7) because these Genesis passages have the *hiph'il* of בָּדַל and the preposition בֵּין.<sup>10</sup>

Ronning (1997:94) observes that Israel and Egypt are "syntactically distinguished" (Exod 9:6; 10:22-23; 11:6-7a and 12:27). This syntactic distinction involves the use of a chiasm in Exod 9:6 and 10:22-23. A chiasm is also used for the creation separations (Gen 1:4-5; 6-7) and the Cain and Abel narrative (Gen 4:4b-5a).<sup>11</sup> The language of separation is furthermore used when Egypt pursued the Israelites to overtake them. The angel of God and the pillar of cloud came "between the camp of Egypt and the camp of Israel" (בֵּין...וּבֵין Exod 14:20; literal translation).

**The first day of creation** is re-enacted in the ninth plague and at the crossing of the Red Sea.<sup>12</sup> In the ninth plague, Egypt was plagued with darkness for three days while Israel had light in the places where they lived (Exod 10: 21-29). At the crossing of the Red Sea,<sup>13</sup> the Egyptians had darkness in their camp and the Israelites had light in their camp. The translation of the second part of Exod 14:20 is difficult as many have observed,<sup>14</sup> but as some Targums, the Syriac and the NIV-versions interpret, the angel of God in the cloud gave light to the Israelite camp and darkness to the Egyptian camp. The ninth plague and the crossing of the Red Sea allude to the separation of the light and darkness in the creation account, which would symbolically relate the Egyptians to the darkness which existed before God's creation and the Israelites to the light which God created.

**The second and third days** of creation are also re-enacted at the crossing of the Red Sea. Kline sees the dividing of the waters of the Red Sea as analogous to the second day,<sup>15</sup> but this division does not distinguish Israel from Egypt. Ronning,<sup>16</sup> on the other hand, sees the re-enactment of the second day of creation in God's physical separation of Israel from Egypt with the pillar of fire

<sup>10</sup> Ronning, "Curse on the Serpent," 94.

<sup>11</sup> Ronning, "Curse on the Serpent," 94.

<sup>12</sup> Kline, *Images of the Spirit*, 15-16.

<sup>13</sup> Reed Sea or Sea of Reeds is the translation of the Hebrew, but several verses (e.g. Exod 23:31; Num 14:25; 21:4; Deut 1:40; 2:1) imply that the body of water in question is what we today call the Red Sea, so either rendering can be justified.

<sup>14</sup> E.g. Brevard S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus: A Critical, Theological Commentary*. (OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974), 218.

<sup>15</sup> Kline, *Images of the Spirit*, 15-16.

<sup>16</sup> Ronning, "Curse on the Serpent," 96.

and cloud during the night. Like the second day of creation, where heaven or the expanse separates the waters above from the waters below (Gen 1:8), figuratively, the expanse also comes between the Egyptians and the Israelites to keep them separate (Exod 14:19-20). The cloud phenomenon suggests heaven (or sky), is the name given to the expanse which separates the waters above from the waters below on the second day of creation in Gen 1:7-8.<sup>17</sup> The language used to describe the separation between the Israelites and the Egyptians is reminiscent of the creation account. The pillar of cloud comes "between the camp of Egypt and the camp of the Israel" (NASB) just like the expanse was put "between the waters below and the waters above" (בֵּין...וּבֵין; Exod 14:20; cf. Gen 1:7; own translation).

**On the third day of creation,** God causes the dry ground (יַבְשָׁה) to appear in the midst of the waters (or seas; Gen 1:9-10). Similarly, at the crossing of the Red Sea, God causes the dry ground (יַבְשָׁה) to appear in the midst of the Red Sea, so that the Israelites could walk on it (the new thing which God created in the creation account, see Gen 1:9-10), while the pursuing Egyptians drowned in the sea (which already existed in the creation account, see Gen 1:9).

Creation language is also used in Deut 32.<sup>18</sup> The root רָחַף (*pi'el*, to hover) and the noun תְּהוֹ (formlessness) used in Gen 1:2 occur again in the Pentateuch only in Deut 32. In the creation account, the noun תְּהוֹ is used to describe the state of the earth prior to creation. The verb רָחַף (*pi'el*) is used to describe God's presence over the waters, "the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters" (Gen 1:2). In Deut 32:10, the wilderness is referred to as a תְּהוֹ. In Deut 32:11, the verb רָחַף (*pi'el*) is used to describe God's activity in leading the Israelites through the wilderness (Deut 32:10) on the way to Canaan. His care for Israel is likened to that of an eagle hovering protectively over its young and guiding them to maturity. God also describes himself as bearing the Israelites on eagles' wings in Exod 19:4. The use of creation language in Deut 32 would connect the exodus event and creation, symbolically identifying the Israelites as God's new creation.<sup>19</sup>

As we have seen, creation language is used to describe the separation of Israel from Egypt by means of the plagues and the first three days of creation are re-enacted at the crossing of the Red Sea. The Israelites are identified with light, the waters above and the dry ground.

If the first three days of the creation account are re-enacted at the crossing of the Red Sea in connection with Israel's redemption, logically, one might also expect to find the second three days related somehow to the history of Israel. Ronning suggests that

<sup>17</sup> Ronning, "The Curse on the Serpent," 95.

<sup>18</sup> Kline, *Images of the Spirit*, 14-15.

<sup>19</sup> Kline, *Images of the Spirit*, 14.

[a]s the first three days of creation speak to Israel's redemption from Egypt, the second three days may be seen as related to Israel's observance of the law. Thus "forming and filling" in the creation account point to the "redemption and sanctification" of Israel.<sup>20</sup>

**In the fourth day of creation**, the lights are created for signs and seasons, days and years, and thus are important for Israel's calendar, including feasts and the Sabbath day. God instructs the Israelites to celebrate three feasts: Passover Feast (Exod 12: 1-14; Lev 23:4-8; Num 28: 16-25; Deut 16: 1-8), Feast of Weeks (Exod 34:22; Num 28:26-31; Deut 16:9-10), and the Feast of the Tabernacles (Lev 23: 39-44; Deut 16: 13-17). All three feasts (and the Sabbath) are linked to the exodus experience (Israel's redemption), which is a type of creation in the life of Israel.

In the Law of Moses, the lights created on the fourth day of creation (Gen 1:14-19) were not to be worshipped (Deut 4: 19). In Egypt, the god Re was the sun god and Thoth originally was a moon-god. In Mesopotamia, Shammash was the sun god, Sin the moon-god, and Ishtar the "star" Venus. In Canaan, the goddess Shaphash was the sun god, Yarah the moon-god, and Athtar the "star" Venus.<sup>21</sup>

**The fifth and sixth days of the creation** account describe the various animals that God created (Gen 1:20-25). They were important to the law from three perspectives. First, no idols were to be made of these creatures (Deut 4:15b-18). The Israelites were not to make physical representations or images shaped in any form, not even the shapes of the creatures that God created on the fifth and sixth days of creation.

Secondly, the Israelites were to distinguish between clean and unclean animals (Lev 11:47; 20:25; cf. Deut 14). The word that the NIV translates as "distinguish" in Lev 11:47; 20:25 is the Hebrew word *הבדיל*, which is the same word that we find in Gen 1:4, 6, and 14, translated by the NIV as "separated" or "separate." In the creation account, God separated light from darkness (Gen 1:4), the waters above from the waters below (Gen 1:6-8), and created the lights to separate light and darkness, namely day and night. The Israelites were to do a similar thing. They were to separate or distinguish between clean and unclean animals.

Thirdly, some of the animals created on the fifth and sixth days of creation (Gen 1:20-25) were used by the Israelites to worship God according to the law. They served as offerings and sacrifices (as a means of worshipping God, instead of being worshipped). The animals which were used as offerings

<sup>20</sup> John L. Ronning, *Notes on Deuteronomy* (Kalk Bay: The Bible Institute of South Africa, 2001), 18.

<sup>21</sup> Duane L. Christensen, *Deuteronomy 1-11* (WBC; Dallas: Word Books, 1991), 87.

included birds (Lev 5:7, 11), lambs (Num 28), cattle, rams and goats. The animals which were sacrificed included ox and sheep (Deut 18:3).

**On the sixth day of creation**, humankind was created in God's image and given dominion over creation (Gen 1:26-28). The law showed Israel what it meant to be in God's image. Unlike the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land they were to enter, whose religion was based on physical or visual phenomena (idols), the Israelites' experience of worship was to be defined by the law (Deut 4:15). Moral likeness to God was one of the purposes of the law, and the overall summary of the law is found in Lev 19:2, "You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy." If Israel kept the law, she would be the visible image of the invisible God to the nations and she would have dominion over the Promised Land and the nations (Deut 4:1; 28:1; see section H for fuller discussion). The nations would notice Israel's obedience to the law and acknowledge God's presence in her midst (Deut 4:5-8).

The table below is a summary of how the second three days of creation (days 4-6) are related to Israel's observance of the law.

DAYS 4-6 OF THE CREATION ACCOUNT AND THE LAW		
Creation		The Law
<b>Day 4</b>	Lights in the sky created to separate <b>הַבַּיִל</b> light and darkness, rule over the day and night (Gen 1: 14-19).	Lights are for signs and seasons, days and years, thus are important for Israel's calendar, including the feasts and the Sabbath day. In the law, these lights are not to be worshipped (Deut 4:19).
<b>Day 5</b>	Birds created to fly above, sea creatures created to swim in the waters below (Gen 1:20-25).	The animals described in days 5 and 6 are important in the law from three perspectives: firstly, no idols are to be made of these creatures (Deut 4:18). Secondly, Israel must distinguish <b>הַבַּיִל</b> between clean and unclean animals (Lev 11; 20:25; cf. Deut 14). Thirdly, some of the animals created on the fifth and sixth days of creation (Gen 1:20-25) were used by the Israelites to worship God according to the law. They served as offerings and sacrifices (as a means of worshipping God, instead of being worshipped).
<b>Day 6a</b>	Creation of land animals (Gen 1:24-25).	
<b>Day 6b</b>	Creation of human kind in the image of God to fill the earth and to rule over it. Vegetation given to land animals and humans (Gen 1:26-31).	General statements in the law suggest that defining God-likeness (morally) is one of the purposes of the law (e.g. Lev 19:2). Passages in the law regard Israel's dominion over the Promised Land and the nations as consequence for keeping the law (Deut 4:1; 28:1)

The seventh day of creation also relates to Israel's history. Kline suggests this when he argues as follows:

Within the broad parallelism that emerges we find that at the exodus re-enactment of creation history the divine pillar of cloud and fire was present, like the Spirit of God at the beginning, to bring light into the darkness (and indeed to regulate the day-night sequence), to divide the waters and make dry land appear in the midst of the deep, and to lead on to the Sabbath in the holy paradise land.<sup>22</sup>

In the law, Israel's rest in the Promised Land was a result of the people's obedience to the laws and decrees of God (Lev 26:3-6). However, the Israelites who left Egypt (except Caleb and Joshua, see Num 14:30) did not enter the rest of Canaan because of their unbelief (Num 14:11): this appears to be a rejection of the relational aspect of sonship. They did not follow God's instructions in Exod 19:5-6, and they continuously rebelled against him (Num 14:22). They manifested wickedness, disobedience, lack of faith in God (Num 14:27-30, 35) and their moral behaviour is unlike God (this will be later explained in detail in section D). Later on, during the time of Joshua, the Israelites entered the rest of Canaan because they obeyed God's commands (Josh 1:6-9; 14-19).

### **C STATEMENTS PORTRAYING THE ISRAELITES AS CHILDREN OF GOD**

The statements in the law which portray the Israelites as children of God are significant because "image" implies sonship<sup>23</sup> which means that sonship may also imply image (Exod 4:22-23; Deut 1:31; 8:5; 14:1; 32:5, 6, 15, 18-20). In Exod 4:22-23, God calls Israel his firstborn son (Exod 4:22-23). This means that as a nation, Israel is supposed to be the image of God, since sonship implies image; to be in the image of God means to be his children.

An objection to the view that the relationship of Israel as son of God may come from the suggestion that Israel is called "son" in the same way as the ANE suzerain-vassal relationships. In response to this objection, there are indications in the law that sonship is not just a status (as in the suzerain-vassal relationships) but is related to the idea of God as father (not just suzerain), and the idea of Israelites being like God (morally).

In Deut 14:1, the Israelites are called the children of God. As God's children, the Israelites' duty is to obey God's will.<sup>24</sup> Their behaviour and practices as God's children should be distinct from the nations in Canaan. The Israelites were not to follow Canaanite-mourning rites (Deut 14:1; Lev 19:27-28; I

<sup>22</sup> Kline, *Images of the Spirit*, 14-15.

<sup>23</sup> Simango, "Image of God," 31.

<sup>24</sup> Christopher J. H. Wright, *Deuteronomy* (NIBCOT; Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1996), 180.

Kgs 18:28). They were to eat what God says they should eat (Deut 14:3-21; cf. Lev 11; 20:25). They were to separate or distinguish between clean and unclean animals and this was a reminder of their own separation from the nations.<sup>25</sup> As God's children, the Israelites were to serve God as a holy nation, a kingdom of priests (Exod 19:6). This intent is also indicated by the repetition of the phrase "you are a people holy to the LORD your God" in vv. 2 and 21.

Deuteronomy 32 is another key passage, which proves that Israel's sonship is related to moral likeness. In Deut 32, Moses teaches a song to the Israelites. Deuteronomy 32 is a hymn of bitter grief, where God expresses his intense disappointment with Israel.<sup>26</sup> This song is to be a witness against the people of Israel (Deut 31:19-21). In Moses' song, God is described as "the Rock" (v. 4), and this metaphor emphasises the stability and permanence of the God of Israel.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, the Israelites could rely on him. God's actions are perfect (cf. 2 Sam 22:31) and he is just in all his dealings with humankind. He is faithful (cf. Deut 7:9) and he does no wrong (which means he always does what is morally right).

Many commentators<sup>28</sup> have noted a textual difficulty with the passage of Deut 32:5. The translation of v. 5 is difficult and uncertain and there is some doubt about the correctness of the reading, ". . . they are no longer his children" (Deut 32:5b). The RSV renders the following translation of v. 5b, ". . . they are no longer his children because of blemish." The NRSV has, "Yet his degenerate children have dealt perversely with him." The NASB has ". . . they are not his children because of their defect." Although the translation of verse 5b is controversial, it is clear from the context that the Israelites are morally unlike God, "the Rock." The Israelites, unlike the faithful Rock, are corrupt and perverted (Deut 32:5). They have become so corrupt to the extent that they have lost their moral resemblance to God their father (Deut 32:5). Yet, it is God who had made them (v. 6) and formed them into a nation (v. 9). Kalland proposes that the word "Father" in v. 6 suggests that the formation of the nation of Israel is a creative act of God.<sup>29</sup> The Israelites had abandoned God who was their father (Deut 32:6, 18). Later in Deut 32, the Israelites are referred to as God's children (his sons and daughters).

<sup>25</sup> Eugene H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy* (NAC; Michigan: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 123.

<sup>26</sup> Raymond Brown, *The Message of Deuteronomy* (BST; Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1993), 291.

<sup>27</sup> Peter C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 378; Earl S. Kalland, "Deuteronomy," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* (vol. 3; ed. Frank E. Gæbelein; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1992), 200.

<sup>28</sup> Craigie, *Book of Deuteronomy*, 377-378.

<sup>29</sup> Kalland, "Deuteronomy," 201.

If the correct reading of v. 5b is ". . . to their shame they are no longer his children" and vv. 18-20 refers to the Israelites as God's children, "his sons and daughters," how do we reconcile the two? Is there any contradiction? There is no contradiction. In v. 5, the Israelites are not God's children because of their defect. Substantively (or morally), they are unlike God and vv. 18-20 speak of their position or status as God's children. The fact that the Israelites are morally unlike God in their behaviour does not mean that they are no longer his children or in his image. The implication here is that the Israelites, as God's children, should reflect the moral attributes of their good father. Creation language in the passage also has implications for the substantive view (see section B). Therefore, sonship is not just a status (as in the suzerain-vassal relationships) but is related to the idea of God as father (not just suzerain) and the idea of Israelites being like God.

## **D THE IMAGE OF GOD, PHARAOH AND THE WILDERNESS GENERATION**

### **1 Pharaoh in the Image of the Serpent**

Unlike the nation of Israel who is God's firstborn son, in his image (section C), Pharaoh is shown to be morally like the tempter of Gen 3. Pharaoh deals "shrewdly" חכם, *hitpa'el*) with Israel and he enslaves them (Exod 1:10-11). "To 'deal shrewdly' for an evil purpose is one of the moral attributes of the serpent of Genesis 3."<sup>30</sup> Therefore, Pharaoh is morally like the serpent of Gen 3.

Like Cain, the moral offspring of the serpent of Gen 3, Pharaoh is a murderer. When he saw enslavement as only partially effective in limiting the numbers of the Israelites, he gave explicit instructions to the Hebrew midwives to kill male babies and spare female infants (Exod 1:15-16). When this also proved to be ineffective, he resorted to a more aggressive policy: he commanded his own people to kill all male babies (Exod 1:22). By killing the Hebrew babies, Pharaoh shows himself as the moral offspring of the serpent.

Like the serpent of Gen 3, Pharaoh is cursed by God. God had given Abraham the promise, "I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse" (Gen 12:3, NASB). This promise was extended to Abraham's descendents, the Israelites. By oppressing Israel, Pharaoh suppressed (thus counteracting) God's blessing given to Israel and he invited a curse on himself and Egypt. The curse on Egypt and Pharaoh is clearly seen in the plagues that befell Egypt, and the death of the Egyptian army at the Red Sea. Soliciting a blessing is not necessarily an indication of a curse but Pharaoh's request to Moses, "Take your flocks and herds... And also *bless me*" (Exod 12:32), seems to imply that Pharaoh realises that Egypt had been cursed

<sup>30</sup> Ronning, "Curse on the Serpent," 93.

by God: ". . . the desire is for a farewell blessing, instead of the curse which has been clinging to Egypt."<sup>31</sup>

## 2 The Wilderness Generation and Serpent-Likeness

As seen from the previous discussion in section B, creation language symbolically depicts the Israelites as God's new creation in his image. However, the majority of Israelites in the wilderness who crossed the Red Sea manifested unbelief, discontent, disobedience, which was a rejection of the relational aspect of sonship and are subsequently portrayed as morally evil, unlike God. Their moral behaviour can be compared to Cain and Pharaoh, who were modelled after the tempter of Gen 3.<sup>32</sup>

When they encountered trouble and hardship, the Israelites rejected the relational aspect of sonship which is based on faith, trust, love, dependence on God, their father. Harrison echoes the same point, that "the Israelites repudiated their relationship with God when adversity appeared to threaten them."<sup>33</sup> Instead of trusting and being content with God (their father), they suffered from unbelief, doubt and they saw God as not good.

The first example of this is seen when the Israelites arrived at the Red Sea and they saw the Egyptian army approaching, they cried to Moses saying:

Is not this the word which we spoke to you in Egypt, saying, Leave us alone that we may serve the Egyptians? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness (Exod 14:12, NASB).

The Israelites had seen God's miraculous signs performed by Moses and they believed and worshipped God (Exod 4:31). God delivered them from servitude in Egypt and they witnessed his power when he cursed Egypt with the ten plagues. But when the Egyptian army was approaching, they gave in to unbelief and they doubted Moses' call to deliver them from Egypt. However, God miraculously delivered them from the Egyptian army and they crossed the Red Sea. Again, they feared and believed in him (God) and his servant Moses (Exod 14:31).

The second example of rejection of the relational aspect of sonship is seen when the Israelites complained about food (Exod 16:2-3). They longed to go back to Egypt where they had plenty to eat (Exod 16:3). In Egypt, they served the Egyptians as slaves and were not allowed to serve their God, but they wanted to go back and serve the Egyptians, rather than serving God. In

<sup>31</sup> Alan R. Cole, *Exodus: An Introduction and Commentary* (TOTC; Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1973), 111.

<sup>32</sup> Ronning, "Curse on the Serpent," 121-122.

<sup>33</sup> Harrison, Roland K., *Numbers* (WEC; Chicago: Moody Press, 1990), 212.

this incident, the general behaviour of the Israelites is parallel to Gen 3 but the parallels are not exact. Like Adam and Eve in Gen 3, they are not content with their status, which is shown by their complaints about food and their desire to go back and serve the Egyptians (Exod 16:2-3).

The third example of rejection of the relational aspect of sonship is seen when the majority of Israelites in the wilderness (this includes Korah, Dathan and Abiram in Num 16) indirectly accuse God of withholding "good things" and of being a liar. In this event, the Israelites are shown to be like tempter because they accuse God of withholding something good from them. In their view, the land of Egypt was the Promised Land, "a land flowing with milk and honey" (Num 16:13) which God was withholding from them, so they wanted to go back to Egypt.

The Israelites saw God's motives as contrary to what he had promised them and the patriarchs. In their complaints (Num 14:1-4; 16:13), they show themselves to be like the tempter when they accuse God of not being good. This is a rejection of the relational aspect of sonship. The Israelites had a perverted view of God.<sup>34</sup> They saw his motives as evil.<sup>35</sup> They saw God as a liar, a God who fools and hates them.

You grumbled in your tents and said, "The LORD hates us; so he brought us out of Egypt to deliver us into the hands of the Amorites to destroy us" (Deut 1:27).

God had promised them a land flowing with milk and honey, but (in their opinion) he fooled them (Num 16:14), and wanted them to fall by the sword of their enemies (Num 14:3; cf. Exod 14:11-12).

Korah and his followers' rebellion against God in Num 16 was a rejection of the relational aspect of sonship. Like the tempter of Gen 3 (who incited Adam and Eve to rebel against God), Korah together with Dathan and Abiram incited rebellion against God's servant Moses (which was rebellion against God himself, see Num 16:11). In this incident, Korah and his friends rejected the relational aspect of sonship (faith, trust, love, dependence and obedience) and they acted like Eve when they decided for themselves what is good or not good. They also wanted to replace Moses (God's appointed leader) with their own leader who would take them back to Egypt (Num 14:4).

The fourth example of rejection of the relational aspect of sonship is seen when God commanded the Israelites to fight the Amorites. Because of their unbelief, they refused and rebelled against God (Num 14:1-10 cf. Deut 1:26). In this incident, the general behaviour of the Israelites is parallel to Gen

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<sup>34</sup> Craigie, *Book of Deuteronomy*, 102.

<sup>35</sup> Timothy R. Ashley, *The Book of Numbers* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 245.

3, but the parallels are not exact. Like Eve, they suffered from unbelief (Num 14:11; 20:12; Deut 1:32) and decided for themselves what is good or not. They did not follow God's command. They wanted to stone Joshua and Caleb because of their faith in God (Num 14:10) and replace Moses with a leader who would take them back to Egypt (Num 14:4). At this point, the Israelites' behaviour was a rejection of the relational aspect of the image of God, the father-son relationship. Wenham seems to echo this point when he says, "This time they actually propose returning to Egypt, thereby completely rejecting the whole plan of redemption."<sup>36</sup>

The wilderness generation of Israelites is also shown to be morally like Pharaoh and Cain, who are modelled after the tempter. Like Cain and Pharaoh, they are shown to be murderers. They wanted to kill Joshua and Caleb because of their faith in God: their belief that God was going to give them victory over the Amorites (Num 14:10). The Israelites were also hostile against Moses when they arrived at Rephidim and there was no water for them to drink. They wanted to stone Moses (Exod 17:4).

As seen in section B, creation language depicts the Israelites as God's new creation in his image, but this section has shown that the generation of Israelites in the wilderness is portrayed as morally unlike God. They are shown to be like the tempter and they have rejected the relational aspect of sonship, the father-son relationship.

How do we reconcile the fact that creation language portrays the Israelites as God's new creation in his image and the fact that the wilderness generation of Israelites is portrayed as morally and relationally like the tempter? The symbolism and language of creation in the law express a need for regeneration in Israel. The law seems to support this interpretation when it exhorts the Israelites to circumcise their hearts, typically of the need for regeneration (Deut 10:16). Circumcision of the heart is an act of God. God's work is required for the Israelites to keep the law. God will circumcise the hearts of the Israelites (Deut 30:6). This suggests the need for a substantive change (i.e. regeneration) in the individual Israelite in order to keep the law. Circumcision of the hearts is not an outward sign, but an inward reality where one is converted. This is a renewal of Israel so that they love God with all their heart.<sup>37</sup>

When the Israelites obey God and keep his commandments, they will be morally like him, a people in his image. They will serve God as a holy nation, a kingdom of priests (Exod 19:5-6). The hearts of the Israelites in the wilderness were uncircumcised. They were not converted: ". . . they were never saved in

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<sup>36</sup> Gordon J. Wenham, *Numbers: An Introduction and Commentary* (TOTC; Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1981), 120.

<sup>37</sup> John A. Thompson, *Deuteronomy: An Introduction and Commentary* (TOTC; Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1974), 285.

the first place."<sup>38</sup> This is the reason why they continuously rebelled against God and are morally unlike him.

## **E GENERAL STATEMENTS ABOUT THE LAW AND GOD-LIKENESS**

General statements in the law suggest that defining God-likeness (morally) is one of the purposes of the law. The overall summary of the law is found in Lev 19:2: "You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy" (NASB). Commenting on Lev 19:2, Keil and Delitzsch say that this command to be holy is the principle upon which all different commandments are based and the goal which the Israelites are to keep as a nation of God.<sup>39</sup> The idea of God-likeness found in the so-called Holiness code is also found in the Covenant and Deuteronomistic codes. The exact phrase "be holy" is not used in the Covenant and Deuteronomistic codes, but the concept of God-likeness seems to be implied in Israel's ethical laws (see Exod 19:5-6; Deut 7:6; 14:2; 26:19; 28:9). Clements makes the same observation when he says: "Every biblical statement about God carries with it an implied demand upon men to imitate Him in daily living."<sup>40</sup> This section will not study the so-called Holiness Code, the Covenant Code and Deuteronomistic Code in comparison to each other.

In the OT, the noun קדש is used in reference to God, the Israelites and the cult. When קדש is used in reference to God, the noun conveys the idea of separateness, uniqueness, distinction as the wholly other of moral goodness.<sup>41</sup> The command to be holy (Lev 19:2) is given in the context of moral laws. The previous chapter, Lev 18, describes immoral sexual relations which are forbidden in Israel and Lev 19 deals mainly with moral laws. Therefore, the context of Lev 19:2 seems to support the moral definition of קדש. In Lev 19:2, קדש denotes moral perfection. God's character is totally good and entirely without evil.<sup>42</sup> Harrison defines God's holiness as the "antithesis of human imperfection, and revolts against everything that is impure or evil."<sup>43</sup> God calls the Israelites to be like him morally. The Israelites are to develop in themselves the

<sup>38</sup> Wayne Grudem, "Perseverance of the Saints: A Case Study from Hebrews," in *The Grace of God, the Bondage of the will* (ed. Thomas R. Schreiner and Bruce A. Ware; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 160-161.

<sup>39</sup> Keil Carl F. and Franz Delitzsch, *The Pentateuch: three Volumes in One* (vol. 1 of *Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten Volumes* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 418-419.

<sup>40</sup> Ronald E. Clements, "Leviticus," in *The Broadman Bible Commentary* (vol. 2; ed. Clifton J. Allen; Nashville: Broadman Press, 1970), 51.

<sup>41</sup> Everett F. Harrison, "Holiness," *ISBE* 2: 725-726.

<sup>42</sup> Jackie A. Naudé, "קדש," in *NIDOTTE* 3: 883.

<sup>43</sup> Roland K. Harrison, *Leviticus: An Introduction and Commentary* (TOTC; Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1980), 196.

moral characteristics that God possess<sup>44</sup> and these include attributes such as righteousness (Exod 9:27), justice (Deut 32:4), kindness (Exod 20:6; 34:6), love (Exod 34:6), faithfulness (Exod 34:6) goodness, and purity. When the Israelites practise these attributes they reflect God's holiness.

Since the Israelites were to be morally like God, their moral behaviour was supposed to be distinct from the nations. In Lev 18, the Israelites were commanded not to follow the moral practices of the Egyptians and the Canaanites (Lev 18:3).

Since God is holy (Lev 19:2), the Israelites were to be set apart for God. They were not to follow the moral practices of the nations. They were to be holy in their sexual relationships. Leviticus 18:6-23 describes heathen sexual relations that were forbidden in Israel and were regarded as incestuous. No man was to approach any of his close relatives and uncover their nakedness (לְגִלוֹתָ לְעֵרְוָה). They were not to uncover the nakedness of their father and mother (Lev 18:7-8). This reminds us of Ham, the moral offspring of the serpent, who uncovered the nakedness of his father to his brothers.<sup>45</sup> The implication here is that the Egyptians and Canaanites are shown to be morally like Ham (Gen 9:22) because they uncovered the nakedness of their relatives (fathers and mothers). Therefore, they are modelled after the serpent. By implication the Israelites were to model themselves after Shem and Japheth who acted like God (morally) by covering the nakedness of their father (Gen 9:23); they were to cover the nakedness of their close relatives.

The Israelites were supposed to act towards others as God acted towards them when they were in Egypt. God's attributes are that he is merciful and kind (Exod 20: 6; 34:6, 7; Num 14:18-19; Deut 4:31; 5:10; 7:9).<sup>46</sup> In his kindness, he redeemed the Israelites from their slavery in Egypt (Exod 15:13; 18:9). Therefore, the Israelites were to show kindness to those who were in misery or distress. They were not to ill-treat foreigners. They were to love them as themselves, and treat them as their fellow Israelites. They were to be kind to foreigners because they were once in a similar situation in Egypt, and the Lord showed his kindness to them (Exod 22:21; Lev 19:33-34). The positive implication here is that the Israelites were to act like God. They were not to follow the example of the negative immoral acts of Pharaoh, when he was unkind to them (Exod 1:10-14). They were not to take advantage of a widow or an orphan (Exod 22:22). They were to be generous to the poor (Lev 25:35) and they were not to charge interest on loans to them or sell them food at a profit (Exod

<sup>44</sup> John E. Hartley, "Holy and Holiness, Clean and Unclean," *DOT, Pentateuch*: 425.

<sup>45</sup> Meredith G. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue* (Hamilton, Ma.: M.G. Kline, 1993), 161-162.

<sup>46</sup> Eugene H. Merrill, "A Theology of the Pentateuch," in *A Biblical Theology of the Old Testament* (ed. Roy B. Zuck; Chicago: Moody Press, 1991), 66.

22:25; Lev 25:36-37; Deut 15:7-11; 23:19-20). When a creditor took a poor man's cloak as a pledge, he had to return it by sunset, so that he could use it for the night, because God cares for him: he is compassionate, the Israelites were to reflect God's compassion by returning the cloak by sunset (Exod 22:26; Deut 24:10-13). When harvesting, the Israelites were not to reap to the very edges of their fields or gather gleanings of their harvest, so that they could relieve the plight of the poor, such as widows, orphans, and foreigners (Lev 19:9-10; 23:22; Deut 24:19-22). They were to do this because God was generous to them: he delivered them from Egypt and gave them the land of Canaan (Lev 25:38). They were to love their neighbours as themselves (Lev 19:18). They were to show kindness to their enemies and slaves (Exod 23:4-5; Deut 23:16). If a poor Israelite sold himself as a slave to a rich foreigner, his relatives could redeem him from slavery (Lev 25:47-52). The rich foreigner was to treat the poor Israelite as a hired man and not as a slave. The Israelites were to see to it that the foreigner did not treat their fellowmen ruthlessly (Lev 25:53). The implication here is that God had redeemed the Israelites from Egyptian slavery so that they would serve him (Exod 4:23; Lev 25:42, 55). Therefore, they were to reflect God's kindness in their dealings with each other. The Israelites were to see to it that foreigners would not treat their fellowmen as Pharaoh did in Egypt (Lev 25:53 cf. Exod 1:10-14, 22-22).

Righteousness and justice are some of God's moral attributes (Exod 9:27; Deut 32:4).<sup>47</sup> He does not show partiality neither does he accept bribes (Deut 10:17). In his justice, he defends the cause of the fatherless, widows and foreigners (Deut 10:18-19). The Israelites were to do the same (Deut 10:20): they were to be just and righteous in their dealings with one another. They were not to spread false reports, and be malicious witnesses (Exod 23:1-2, 7). They were not to show favouritism or partiality. They were to be fair with one another (Exod 23:3, 6; Lev 19:15). Their judges and officials were to judge people fairly. Morally, they were to be like God. They were not to pervert justice or show partiality (Deut 10:17; 16:18-19). The Israelites were not to deprive the foreigner or the fatherless of justice or take the cloak of a widow as a pledge. They were to remember that the Lord was just to them: he redeemed them from their slavery in Egypt (Deut 24:17-18). Those who withheld justice from the widow or foreigner were cursed (Deut 27:19). The Israelites were to have the same law for the foreigner as for the native Israelite (Lev 24:22). They were not to oppress foreigners because they were once foreigners in Egypt (Exod 23:9). The implication is that they were not to be like Pharaoh who oppressed them in Egypt, on the contrary they were to be just as their God, who delivered them from Egypt. Like God, they were not to accept bribes (Deut 10:17; Exod 23:8; Deut 16:18-19). They were not to use dishonest standards when measuring length, weight or quantity (Lev 19:35; Deut 25:13-14). They were to use (accurate) honest scales and weights (Lev 19:36; Deut 25:15).

<sup>47</sup> Merrill, "A Theology," 67.

God is a jealous God (Exod 20:5; 34:14; Deut 4:24; 5:9; 6:15). This is one of his moral attributes. The Israelites were to be the same: they were to be jealous in their marriage relationships and in their covenant relationship with the Lord. The word "jealous"  $\text{זָאָר}$  is not to be understood in the petulant sense; the word "zealous" might be a better translation in modern English.<sup>48</sup> In some contexts the word  $\text{זָאָר}$  is translated zealous (e.g. Num 25:11, 13; 1 Kgs 19:10, 14). God is zealous that complete devotion be given exclusively to him. The same principle was also seen in the Israelites' marriage relationships. If a man had feelings of jealousy and he suspected his wife of adultery, he was to take her to the priest for inquiry (Num 5:11-31). God's zealousness for righteousness arises from his holiness.<sup>49</sup> The Israelites were to be jealous for the worship of the Lord. Phinehas the son of Eleazar is commended for being zealous for the worship of God. He is described as being zealous with God's zeal because he killed a sinner in the camp (Num 25:7-13). Because of his zeal, God's wrath was turned away from the Israelites. Phinehas, the priest, is shown to be the true Israelite. He does not tolerate sin (or idolatry) and he is zealous for the worship of Yahweh. As Wenham observes, some commentators have suggested that he is seen as a type of Christ (cf. Mark 3:5; 11:15-19).<sup>50</sup>

Giving the best for an offering is God-likeness. God gave the best to the Israelites, he gave them good things: good land (Deut 4:21-22; 8:7, 10; 9:6; 11:17; 26:9) and rains and harvest (Deut 28:12 cf. 30:5, 9). The Israelites were to do the same in their sacrifices and offerings: they were to give the best to God. This is implied by the command to sacrifice animals without any defect or blemish (Exod 12:5; 29:1; Lev 1:3, 10; 3:1, 6; 4:3, 23, 28, 32; 5:15, 18; 6:6; 9:2, 3; 14:10; 22:19, 21; 23:12, 18; Num 6:14; 19:2; 28:3). When they made grain offerings, they were to use fine flour (Lev 2:1; 5:11; 6:20; 14:10; 23:17; Num 7:13, 19, 25).

## **F THE TEN COMMANDMENTS AND GOD-LIKENESS**

### **1 Introduction**

The following discussion on the Ten Commandments is limited to the issues discussed earlier in connection with the image of God. This section looks at the Ten Commandments and sees whether they have a substantive and / or relational relevance to the image of God. "Substantive relevance" looks at whether there is a specific God-likeness in obedience to the command or whether there is a more general idea of moral goodness. "Relational relevance" sees if the commandment focuses on humankind's relationship toward God.

<sup>48</sup> See Kalland, "Deuteronomy," 46; Thompson, *Deuteronomy*, 107; Cole, *Exodus*, 156; Craigie, *Book of Deuteronomy*, 138.

<sup>49</sup> Thompson, *Deuteronomy*, 107.

<sup>50</sup> Wenham, *Numbers*, 15.

## 2 The First Commandment

*Relationally*: "You shall have no other gods before me" (Exod 20:3; Deut 5:7), focuses on the relational aspect of the image of God. This commandment deals with the Israelites' relationship towards God. They were to submit to God's authority, as a son submits to his father: for the Israelites this was "a matter of practical loyalty."<sup>51</sup> The implication here is that when the Israelites worshipped other gods they rejected God as their Father.

*Substantively*: Obedience to this commandment entails a general moral likeness to God. Since the Israelites had experienced the faithfulness of God when he delivered them from Egypt (Exod 20:2; Deut 5:6), in response to God's faithfulness, they too were to be faithful to God.<sup>52</sup> They were not to have other gods. It is inherently right to worship God and inherently wrong not to do so.

## 3 The Second Commandment

*Relationally*: "You shall not make for yourself an image" (Exod 20:4; Deut 5:7) focuses on the relational aspect of the image of God. The Israelites were not to make physical images intended to represent God. This was a common phenomenon in the Ancient Near Eastern religions. Since the Israelites lived in the midst of polytheistic cultures, the Egyptians had influenced them in this direction, and they were going to encounter the same thing in Canaan. Making physical images that intend to represent God is a rejection of the sonship relation and "an attack on divine freedom and sovereignty."<sup>53</sup>

*Substantively*: Obedience to this commandment does not entail a specific God likeness in action but a more general idea of moral goodness. When God made a covenant with the Israelites at Sinai, they "saw no form" but they heard the voice of God (Deut 4:12, 15). The Israelites were not to make a physical representation of God because the only legitimate image of God is humankind, who is created in his likeness.<sup>54</sup> The Israelites were the visible image of (the invisible) God. Through their obedience of the law, the nations were going to acknowledge the presence of God and his righteous decrees and laws (Deut 4:5-8). Therefore, it is inherently wrong for them to make an image or representation of their God whom they had not seen because this belittles God, as ". . . the use of an image of deity makes the deity subject to human manipulation."<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Wright, *Deuteronomy*, 96.

<sup>52</sup> Craigie, *Book of Deuteronomy*, 152.

<sup>53</sup> Wright, *Deuteronomy*, 70.

<sup>54</sup> Wright, *Deuteronomy*, 71.

<sup>55</sup> Wright, *Deuteronomy*, 70.

#### 4 The Third Commandment

*Relationally*: "You shall not take the Lord's name in vain" (Exod 20:7; Deut 5:11), focuses on the relational aspect of the image of God. When the Israelites take the Lord's name in vain (thus lifting up God's name to emptiness) this is a rejection of the sonship relation: the parent-child relationship which is based on faith, trust, dependence and love.

*Substantively*: Obedience to this commandment entails a general idea of moral goodness. This commandment is concerned with attempts to manipulate God's name for personal ends.<sup>56</sup> When one manipulates or distorts God's name, God's character is called into question.<sup>57</sup> As Wright points out, the noun אִישׁ (emptiness or vanity) "is often used in association with evil or trouble-making intention (cf. Ps. 12:2; Prov 30:8; Isa 59:4)."<sup>58</sup> This reminds us of the serpent in Gen 3, who did not revere God's name and person but accused him of being a liar and jealous of his position, which distorted his character. Therefore, revering God's name is morally good, so that the one revering God displays God-likeness in the general sense because God is good. This also implies that, when the Israelites used the Lord's name in vain they showed themselves to be morally like the serpent.

#### 5 The Fourth Commandment

*Relationally*: Sabbath keeping in Exod 20:8-11 focuses on humankind's relationship towards God. The reason given for observing the Sabbath is that for six days God worked to create the heavens and the earth and on the seventh day he rested, blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy (Gen 2:2-3 cf. Exod 20:11). For six days, the Israelites were to work but on the Sabbath they were all to rest and this included servants, foreigners, and animals (Exod 20: 9-10). Therefore, the Sabbath rest in Exod 20 was not a moral necessity but a relational matter (the Israelites are to rest once in seven days because God did the same thing. After six days of work, God rested on the Sabbath thus setting an example for them to follow).

*Substantively*: Sabbath keeping in Deut 5:12-15 entails a general moral likeness to God. Deuteronomy gives an additional reason for observing the Sabbath. The Israelites were slaves in Egypt and the Lord was kind to them: he redeemed them from Egypt. The head of the household was to show kindness to his family and employees by giving them rest on the Sabbath.<sup>59</sup> Deuteronomy presents Sabbath obedience on the part of the head of the household as a substantive (or moral) likeness to God: it is matter of showing kindness. The

<sup>56</sup> Craigie, *Book of Deuteronomy*, 155.

<sup>57</sup> John W. Marshall, "Decalogue," in *DOT, Pentateuch*: 176.

<sup>58</sup> Wright, *Deuteronomy*, 71.

<sup>59</sup> Wright, *Deuteronomy*, 75-76.

fact that Deut 5:15 gives an additional reason for observing the Sabbath suggests that there is a close connection between the creation and the exodus. Creation and the exodus are related themes in the OT.

Therefore the Sabbath law, for which different motivations are given in Exodus and Deuteronomy, has God-likeness for its rationale (one is relational and the other substantive).

## **6 The Fifth Commandment**

*Relationally:* "Honour your father and your mother" (Exod 20:12; Deut 5:16), is connected to the relational aspect of the image of God. The Israelites were to honour those who had given them life, whose (physical) image they bore (cf. Gen 5:3). Parents were authorities established by God. Children were not to strike or curse their parents (Exod 21:15, 17) but they were to revere them (Lev 19:3). Dishonouring parents was an offense against God because parents have been put in authority by God. Therefore, dishonouring parents was a rejection of the relational aspect of the image of God: the parent-child relationship which was based on faith, trust, dependence and love. Those who dishonoured their parents were cursed (Deut 27:16). Rebellious children were put to death (Deut 21:18-21).

*Substantively:* Obedience to this commandment entails a general moral likeness to God, because honouring parents is morally good, so that the one who honours his or her parents displays God-likeness in the general sense because God is good.

The consequence of honouring parents is related to the theme of dominion because the blessing of fruitfulness which is also in Gen 1:26-28 is connected to dominion. If the Israelites honoured their parents (thus obeying God's law), they were going to have long life and prosperity in the Promised Land (thus subduing the earth) (Exod 20:12; Deut 5:16).

## **7 The Sixth Commandment**

*Relationally:* "You shall not murder" (Exod 20:13; Deut 5:17). When one takes away human life, this is an offence against God because humankind is created in God's image: humans are in a relationship with God like that of a parent and child.<sup>60</sup> Murder is a direct attack on the relational aspect of sonship to God. God alone, who has made human kind in his image, has the right to take life. Humans have no right to take away the life of another human being (except as commanded by God) because it belongs to God.

*Substantively:* Obedience to this commandment entails specific God-like action because God is not a murderer. Murder is an issue of moral unlikeness to

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<sup>60</sup> See Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 30.

God. Murder is one of the moral characteristics of the tempter, his offspring, Cain<sup>61</sup> and Pharaoh (see section D). Therefore, the implication here is that the Israelites were not to be morally like the tempter, Cain and Pharaoh, who shed innocent blood. Morally they were to be like God, who preserves the life of the innocent. God commanded the Israelites to spare the life of the innocent. Those who committed murder unintentionally were to flee to a city of refuge for protection (Num 35:6-34; Deut 19:1-13). The penalty for premeditated murder was death (Exod 21:12-14; Lev 24:17, 21; Num 35:30).

## 8 The Seventh Commandment

*Relationally:* "You shall not commit adultery" (Exod 20:14; Deut 5:18). When one commits adultery against his partner, this is also an offence against God. Adultery of one partner in the marriage relationship was not only unfaithfulness to the other partner, but also unfaithfulness to God. This concept is explicit in Joseph's words: "How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God? (Gen 39:9). Adultery is an offence against God because he is the one who instituted marriage (Gen 2:24-25). Adultery is a rejection of the relational aspect of sonship. It is going against God's plan of marriage (Gen 2:24). Probably, this explains why the sentence for adultery was severe (Lev 20:10; Deut 22:22).

*Substantively:* Obedience to this commandment entails a general moral likeness to God. The marriage analogy is used to describe the relationship between God and Israel. God is figuratively seen as Israel's husband and Israel as his bride. Israel's unfaithfulness to the Lord is often referred to as harlotry or adultery (Exod 34:15, 16; Lev 17:7; 20:5, 6; Num 15:39; Deut 31:6; Jer 3:8; 5:7; 23:14; Ezek 16:29-32; 23:37). Faithfulness is one of the moral attributes of God (Exod 34:6). God was faithful to his bride, Israel, when he delivered her from Egypt (Exod 20:2; Deut 5:6), and he fulfilled all his promises to her (Num 23:19). Israel likewise is to be faithful to God and this includes marriage relationships. Adultery is "unfaithfulness in a relationship of commitment."<sup>62</sup>

## 9 The Eighth Commandment

*Relationally:* "You shall not steal" (Exod 20:15; Deut 5:19). Stealing other people's belongings is an offence against God's children, therefore against God. Stealing is thus an attack on the relational aspect of the image of God which is based on love. Furthermore, as seen from the Genesis narrative, after God created humankind in his own image, he blessed them and he commanded

<sup>61</sup> See Bruce K. Waltke, "Cain and His Offering," *WTJ* 48 (1986): 370; John D. Currid, *A Study Commentary on Genesis Vol. 1:1-25:18* (London: Evangelical Press, 2003), 143-144; Sidney Greidanus, "Preaching Christ from the Cain and Abel Narrative," *BSac* 161/644 (2004): 393.

<sup>62</sup> Craigie, *Book of Deuteronomy*, 160.

them to fill the earth and have dominion over creation (Gen 1:26-28). Dominion over creation obviously includes one's personal possessions. Therefore, if an Israelite steals from his fellow he is acting contrary to the blessing that God has bestowed on the one he is stealing from.

*Substantively:* God gives to and blesses his people. Stealing is the opposite of this. Therefore, obedience to this commandment entails a general moral likeness to God.

## 10 The Ninth Commandment

*Relationally:* "You shall not give false testimony against your neighbour" (Exod 20:16; Deut 5:20). The Israelites were not to do to others what they would not want them to do to them. Stealing and malice are the main reasons for false testimony. Therefore, false testimony is a sin against God. Giving a false testimony against your neighbour is an offence against God's child, therefore against God. Therefore, false witnessing is an attack on the relational aspect of the image of God which is based on love of God.

*Substantively:* Obedience to this commandment entails a specific moral likeness to God. Craigie supports this when he says,

A God of faithfulness, who did not deal deceitfully with his people, required of his people the same transparency and honesty in personal relationships.<sup>63</sup>

God speaks the truth and does not lie. To bring a false witness against a neighbour is a sin against God because God is "the God of truth" (Isa 65:16). Kaiser supports this point when he says, "To despise the truth was to despise God whose very being and character are truth."<sup>64</sup> He is absolutely reliable (Num 23:19). The Israelites should do the same. Lying is one of the moral characteristics of the tempter and his offspring such as Cain.<sup>65</sup> The implication here is that the Israelites are to be like God morally and not like the tempter and his offspring, who are liars.

## 11 The Tenth Commandment

*Relationally:* "You shall not covet . . . anything that belongs to your neighbour" (Exod 20:17; Deut 5:21). The main reason why people covet is discontentment (i.e. God does not love you enough); this recalls Gen 3 where Adam and Eve were not content with their status and consequently they sinned.

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<sup>63</sup> Craigie, *Book of Deuteronomy*, 163

<sup>64</sup> Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., "Exodus," in *Zondervan NIV Bible Commentary: Old Testament* (vol 1; ed. Kenneth L. Barker and John R. Kohlenberger III; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 425.

<sup>65</sup> See Waltke, "Cain and His Offering," 370; Currid, *Study Commentary*, 143-144; Greidanus, "Preaching Christ," 393.

Coveting becomes an offence against your neighbour only when it leads to theft *etcetera*. Coveting your neighbour's wife or property is incompatible with loving your neighbour. Therefore, coveting is a rejection of the relational aspect of sonship based on love. It is an offence against God because it is closely linked to discontentment and theft.

*Substantively*: The tenth commandment deals with inward motives. Coveting is a root of all kinds of sins. By itself, coveting is less serious, but can lead to the violation of more serious sins (or of all the commandments). David is a good example of this. He coveted Bethsheba while she was bathing (2 Sam 11:2-3) and this led David to commit adultery (2 Sam 11:4) and to order that her husband, Uriah, be murdered (2 Sam 11:14-16).

## **G LAWS THAT DO NOT APPEAR TO BE MORAL LAWS**

### **1 Introduction**

As seen, the Israelites are portrayed as God's children (see section C). As the one in authority, God gave the Israelites laws that do not have moral God-likeness for their rationale (though these laws may serve a moral purpose), but they are based on the relational aspect of sonship, a relationship of submission. These laws do not appear to be moral laws firstly, because they are not fixed but changeable. Secondly, the nations are not blamed for violating these laws. These laws may prohibit things which are not inherently wrong, but once God prohibits them, it becomes wrong to violate the prohibited practice. The laws which do not appear to be moral laws include the various aspects related to worship (e.g. sacrifices, altars, the tabernacle, and priesthood), Israel's diet, childbirth, infectious skin diseases, mildew, human discharges and appointed feasts. This section will be selective and will discuss laws concerning Israel's diet and sacrifices and see how they relate to the relational aspect of the image of God.

### **2 Dietary Laws**

God gives dietary laws to the Israelites. They are to eat what God says they should eat (Deut 14:1-21; cf. Lev 11; 20:25). No food is inherently unclean by itself (the NT supports this, cf. Matt 15:11; Rom 14:14). Food becomes unclean when God says so.<sup>66</sup> Therefore, it becomes wrong to violate the prohibited practice. These dietary laws are not fixed but they can be changed by God himself; for example, what the Israelites are allowed to eat is not the same as Adam or Noah (Gen 1:29; 9:3-4). The nations (e.g. the Canaanites) are not blamed for violating the dietary laws. Therefore, the dietary laws are not based on inherent morality: food is made clean or unclean because the law says so. The Israelites'

<sup>66</sup> Merrill, "A Theology," 58.

separation between clean and unclean animals was a reminder of their own separation from the nations.<sup>67</sup> They were to be a holy nation (Deut 14:2, 21).

[F]or you are a people holy to the LORD your God. Out of all the peoples on the face of the earth, the LORD has chosen you to be his treasured possession. Do not eat any detestable thing. These are the animals you may eat: the ox, the sheep, the goat, (Deut 14:2-4).

### **3 Laws on Sacrifice**

God also gave the Israelites laws of worship through Moses (Lev 1:1-2). God gave general regulations and outlined the individual sacrificial rituals to be performed by both the worshippers and officiating priests (Lev 1-7). God also prescribed the public sacrifices during the annual national festivals (Num 28-29; Lev. 23; Deut. 16).

The general principles of the sacrificial laws that are based on substantive morality (e.g. giving the best for an offering) and its details pertain to the relational aspect of sonship, however, they are changeable. For example, the way Abraham worshipped was not the same as required from the Israelites. Again, the nations (e.g. the Canaanites) were not blamed for violating the detailed principles of the sacrificial laws. In the law, an offering was limited to animal and vegetable offerings. Sacrifices were mainly animal offerings slaughtered for communal meals.<sup>68</sup> In the Israelite sacrificial system, some of the sacrifices were concerned with restoring the relationship between God and Israel (e.g. the burnt offering, see Lev 1:4; 16:24; the sin offering, see Lev 4:8-10).

## **H DOMINION AS A BLESSING FOR KEEPING THE LAW**

Passages in the law speak of dominion as a blessing for keeping the law and curse as the consequence for not keeping the law.

If the Israelites kept the law, they were going to have dominion in two ways: firstly they would have dominion over the Promised Land. They were going to possess the land and be successful in it (Deut 4:1; 6:3, 17-18, 24; 11:8, 27; 12:28; 30:8-9; Lev 25:18).

God's blessing would extend to every sphere of the Israelite community. Their people, the land and animals were going to be fertile (Deut 28:3-6, 8, 11-14, cf. Lev 25:19; 26:4-5). They would have peace (Lev 26:6-10) and God's presence would be among them (Lev 26:11-13).

Secondly, they were going to have dominion over the nations (Lev 26:7-8; Deut 6:19; 15:5-6, 22-25; 28:1, 7; cf. Exod 34:11).

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<sup>67</sup> Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 123.

<sup>68</sup> Richard E. Averbeck, "Offerings and Sacrifices," in *NIDOTTE* 4: 996-997.

However, if the Israelites disobeyed the law, they were going to be cursed (Deut 11:28). Every sphere of their life would be cursed, and this included the fruit of their womb, their land, and animals (Deut 28:15-19, cf. Lev 26:18-22). Death, sickness, and diseases and drought would plague them (Deut 28:20-24; 60-61). Their enemies would triumph over them (Deut 28:25-26, 49ff, cf. Lev 26:23-37).

Therefore, the function of dominion is a consequence (not the essence) of being in the image of God. By keeping the law (i.e. acting in the image of God), the Israelites were to have dominion over the Promised Land and the surrounding nations.

## I SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In summary, the theme of the image of God is developed and seen in the narrative and legal sections of the law. Creation language depicts the Israelites as God's new creation and this implies that they are in the image of God. However, this is not a reality for most Israelites but symbolic of the need for a substantive (or moral) change (i.e. regeneration). General statements in the law suggest that defining God-likeness (morally) is one of the purposes of the law. The Israelites are portrayed as God's children. This implies they are in the image of God, since sonship implies image. The Ten Commandments are connected to the concept of the image of God because they relate to the relational aspect of the image of God and obedience to these commandments entails a general or specific moral likeness to God. Some laws do not appear to be moral laws but they are based on the relational aspect of sonship, a relationship of submission. Passages in the law speak of dominion for Israel in a way that suggests that dominion is the consequence (not the essence) of Israel being in the image of God.

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