

## THESIS ABSTRACT

Master of Arts in Biblical and Theological Studies

Adventist University of Africa

Theological Seminary

Title: AN EXEGETICAL ANALYSIS OF THE IMPERATIVAL USE OF THE PHRASE “Φοβήθητε τὸν θεὸν” IN REVELATION 14:7 AND ITS BACKGROUND USE IN SELECTED OLD TESTAMENT TEXTS

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This thesis is an exegetical analysis of the imperatival use of the phrase Φοβήθητε τὸν θεὸν (fear God) in Rev 14:7 and its background use in selected OT texts. There is a lack of consensus among scholars on the meaning of the imperative Φοβήθητε τὸν θεὸν in Rev 14:7. One group of scholars interprets the imperative denotatively while the other understands it connotatively. This polarization is due to a lack of an exegetically derived meaning that has the OT as its basis.

This research therefore sought to establish the exegetical meaning of the imperative Φοβήθητε τὸν θεὸν in Rev 14:7 based on its use in the OT. First, the research carried out a comparative analysis of related literature, followed by an exegesis of the text in question and five selected OT texts were analysed last. The theological implications of Φοβήθητε τὸν θεὸν as well as a summary of the findings were outlined in the third and fourth chapters respectively.

Five OT texts, morphologically or syntactically, in the imperative  $\text{יִרְאוּ אֶת־יְהוָה}$  (fear God) were selected and these were Lev 19:14, Deut 6:13, Josh 24:14, 2 Kings 17:39 and Eccl 12:13. While some scholars understand the imperative  $\text{Φοβήθητε τὸν θεὸν}$  as referring to being afraid of God, all the five selected texts revealed otherwise. Exegesis of “ $\text{יִרְאוּ אֶת־יְהוָה}$ ” in Lev 19:14 showed that by commanding Israel to fear Him, God meant the people of Israel were supposed to treat the weak and vulnerable among them with love and kindness. In Deut 6:13 and Josh 24:14 the same imperative is used to mean the people of God must shun syncretism, while in 2 Kings 17:39 and Eccl 12:13 the same imperative means the people of God must keep His commandments and shun worship of other gods.

The thesis revealed that the book of Revelation can only be understood if related OT background is considered. Basing on the meaning of “fear God” derived from the selected texts, the research revealed that the imperative  $\text{Φοβήθητε τὸν θεὸν}$  should be understood connotatively. It is a command to humankind to shun syncretism, love people, keep God’s commandments and worship or sacrifice to Him alone.

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“Φοβήθητε τὸν θεὸν” IN REVELATION 14:7 AND ITS BACKGROUND  
USE IN SELECTED OLD TESTAMENT TEXTS

A thesis

presented in partial fulfilment

of the requirements of the degree

Master of Arts in Biblical and Theological Studies

by

Edward Madzorera

May 2025



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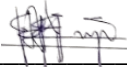
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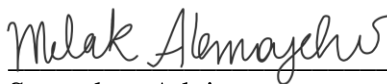
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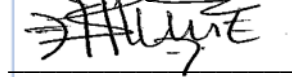
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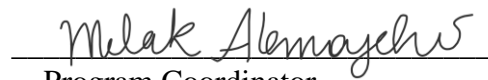
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Dedicated to all who hunger and thirst for the truth

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CHAPTER 1  
INTRODUCTION

**Background of the Problem**

The book of Revelation carries an urgent and essential message to the last-day church that must be heeded if the believers are to be protected by God during the time of crisis that is outlined therein (Rev 2:10; Rev 13:17). One such message is found in the imperative “Φοβήθητε τὸν θεὸν” (fear God), found in the first angel’s message of Rev 14:6-7. Given the magnitude of significance and urgency of the three angels’ messages of Rev 14:6-13, it follows therefore that an accurate exegetical analysis of Rev 14:7 with the phrase “Φοβήθητε τὸν θεὸν,” is of great importance to establish its contextual meaning.

The first angel of Rev 14:7 commands the inhabitants of the earth to “Φοβήθητε τὸν θεὸν καὶ δότε αὐτῷ δόξαν” (fear God and give glory to Him). The challenge facing the reader is on fully understanding what it is to “Φοβήθητε τὸν θεὸν.” It appears scholars have not employed the exegetical approach to analyse the command, nor has there been a comprehensive analysis of the imperatival use and Old Testament (OT) link to the phrase.

The OT scholars like Grant Osborne<sup>1</sup>, Walter Bauer,<sup>2</sup> William Mounce,<sup>3</sup> Perry Downs<sup>4</sup>, Rogers Cleon and Rogers Cleon<sup>5</sup>, and Henry H. Lidel and Robert Scott<sup>6</sup> are divided on the meaning of the imperative, “Φοβήθητε τὸν θεὸν.” The main difference in the commentators’ understanding of ‘Φοβήθητε τὸν θεὸν’ is whether it should be understood from a denotative or connotative point of view or both. Those who understand “Φοβήθητε τὸν θεὸν” denotatively, claim that it means to be afraid of God<sup>7</sup> while those who understand it connotatively argue that it has to do with obeying, showing reverence, or worshipping God.<sup>8</sup>

Botterweck J. G.<sup>9</sup>, Robert McCabe<sup>10</sup>, and Willem Van Gemeren<sup>11</sup> give detailed background usages and meanings of “Φοβήθητε τὸν θεὸν” although they do not

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<sup>1</sup> Grant R. Osborne, “Revelation,” *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (BECNT) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 534.

<sup>2</sup> Walter Bauer, *A Greek - English Lexicon of the New Testament & Other Early Christian Literature* (BAGD), rev. and ed. Fredrick William Danker, 3rd ed. (2021), s.v. “phobethete.”

<sup>3</sup> William D. Mounce, *The Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament* (1993), s.v. “phobethete.”

<sup>4</sup> Perry G. Downs, “Whatever Happened to the Fear of God?” *Christian Education Journal: Research on Educational Ministry* 1, no. 3 (2004): 152-157.

<sup>5</sup> Rogers L. Cleon Jr. & Cleon L. R III. *The New Linguistics & Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998), 639.

<sup>6</sup> Henry G. Lidel and R. Scott, *Greek - English Lexicon with a Revised Supplement* (LS), (1996), s.v. “phobethete.”

<sup>7</sup> The likes of Downs, Cleon and Cleon and Lidel and Scott are more inclined towards a connotative meaning of “Φοβήθητε τὸν θεὸν” (fear God).

<sup>8</sup> Osborne, Danker and Mounce insist that to fear God means literally being afraid of Him.

<sup>9</sup> Fuhs H.F, “*Concept of Fear God*,” *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (TDOT), ed. Johannes G. Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 2:95. s.v. “.אָרֵ” The context of the verb is varied by context such that its meaning ranges from alarm in the face of a threat to the fear of God,” 95.

<sup>10</sup> Radner Ephraim, “Warning to Fear God,” *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry & Writings* (DOTWPW), ed. Tremper Longman III and Peter Enns (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 2008).

<sup>11</sup> “Aspects of Fear,” *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis* (NIDOTTE), ed. Willem Van Gemeren (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997), 2: 528.

specifically focus on the imperatival use of the same and neither do they link meaning in the OT with that in the NT. Yet ascertaining the OT source of the passages in Revelation<sup>12</sup> is a critical step towards understanding what John intended to express. Botterweck suggests that in most cases, the subject of fear in the OT bible is God Himself and this may range from terror and flight to attraction, trust, and love for Him.<sup>13</sup> He goes on to note that in ancient Egypt, fear was understood to mean worship and service with little emphasis on literal fear, while in Deuteronomist literature, the use of the phrase, “אֵת־יְהוָה” is almost the same and refers to worship and obedience.<sup>14</sup>

Similar to Botterweck, Longman also highlights that “yirat” is most often used as a virtue that is encouraged and leads to right behaviour although sometimes it denotes something negative, especially in occurrences where the variant form of *yirat* – *pahad* – is found.<sup>15</sup> Reference is made to Proverbs 3:7 where “proper fear of YHWH leads to humility and an avoidance of pride,”<sup>16</sup> an attitude which is frequently encouraged in the entire book of Proverbs (6:3; 16:19; 29:23). The Eerdmans Analytical Concordance to the RSV<sup>17</sup> lists nineteen variants of words translated ‘to fear’ in the OT with אָרַךְ (to fear) said to be the eighth of the nineteen. In comparison,

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<sup>12</sup> Frank B. Holbrook, *Symposium on Revelation: Introductory and Exegetical Studies, Book 1*, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series (DRCS) 6 (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1992), 83.

<sup>13</sup> Botterweck, s.v. “fear God.”

<sup>14</sup> Fuhs F.H, “Fear of God,” *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (TDOT), ed. Johannes G. Botterweck, Heinz-Josef Fabry & Helmer Ringgren (Michigan: Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1974), 2: 298.

<sup>15</sup> Longman & Enns, s.v. “אָרַךְ.”

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Richard E. Whitaker, *The Eerdmans Analytical Concordance to the Revised Standard Version of the Bible*, s.v. “אָרַךְ.”

Young's Analytical Concordance to the Bible<sup>18</sup> gives thirteen variants where  $\sigma\upsilon\beta\acute{\alpha}\tau\omicron\varsigma$  (to fear or reverence) is the fourth of the nuances, yet still without giving any exegetical justification to the suggested meanings.

The Theological Wordbook of the OT<sup>19</sup> claims that the biblical usages of  $\sigma\upsilon\beta\acute{\alpha}\tau\omicron\varsigma$  are divided into five categories and these are: i) the emotion fear, ii) the intellectual anticipation of evil, iii) reverence or awe, iv) righteous behaviour, and v) worship. In this case, reverence is directed to respected persons (Lev 19:3) or objects (Lev 26:2), while the clearest example of worship is derived from a background observance of "religious syncretists of the Northern Kingdom who feared the Lord in respect to cultic worship (2 Kgs 17:32-34)."<sup>20</sup>

Even though the Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament<sup>21</sup> narrows down the number of nuances to three, it gives a crucial exegetical hint to the uses of  $\sigma\upsilon\beta\acute{\alpha}\tau\omicron\varsigma$  (to fear) in the OT. It points out that the concept of 'fear of God' where God is the object always refers to the worship of JEHOVAH, faithfulness to the covenant, and observance of his commandments. Unfortunately, there is an apparent lack of scholarly work that relates such an observation with the imperative  $\Phi\omicron\beta\eta\acute{\iota}\theta\eta\tau\epsilon\ \tau\omicron\nu\ \theta\epsilon\omicron\nu$  (fear God) in Rev 14:7. Similar to this understanding of the imperative is the

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<sup>18</sup> Robert Young, *Young's Analytical Concordance to the Bible*, s.v. " $\sigma\upsilon\beta\acute{\alpha}\tau\omicron\varsigma$ ."

<sup>19</sup> "Fear of God," *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (TWOT) ed. Laird R. Harris, Gleason L. Archer, and Bruce K. Waltke (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1980), 1: 399.

<sup>20</sup> "Fear of God," *TWOT*, 400.

<sup>21</sup> Fuhs, "Fear of God," *TDOT*, 2:295.

Van Gemeren's<sup>22</sup> explanation of the same concept. Here, fear is shown to refer to terror<sup>23</sup>, reverence<sup>24</sup>, or worship.<sup>25</sup>

Van Gemeren also concurs with Botterweck that the qal meaning of אָרַךְ ranges from literal fear to respect and worship.<sup>26</sup> He also suggests that fear which is associated with worship is characterized by obedience (Ps. 119:63), appropriate moral conduct (Lev 25:17) worship (1 Sam 12:24), and the process of learning (Deut. 4:10).<sup>27</sup> An equally similar line of thought is also suggested by Gerhard, K. & Gerhard, F.<sup>28</sup>, who derive the meaning of “אָרַךְ אֶת־יְהוָה” (fear the LORD) by exploring the OT use of the same imperative. Still, they also do not indicate whether there is any intertextual link with the meaning of the same imperative in the New Testament, in particular Rev 14:7.

However, Moisés Silva takes a different approach to what the other scholars present. He first provides the denotative meaning of the Greek equivalent of “to flee in terror” and then connects the meaning in the New Testament (NT) with that of the OT.<sup>29</sup> By so doing, he switches from the denotative meaning to the connotative one,

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<sup>22</sup> Van Gemeren, *NIDOTTE*, 528–30.

<sup>23</sup> Terror linked with people in rebellion, e.g. Jonah (1:5, 16), or terrified by God's presence after rebellion, e.g. Adam and Eve (Gen 3:8-10).

<sup>24</sup> When the object is usually a figure of authority e.g., one's parents (Lev 19:3), the sanctuary (Lev 19:30), or a leader (Josh 4:14; 1 Kgs 3:28).

<sup>25</sup> Characterised by obedience to God's commandments, (Ps 119:63) appropriate moral conduct (Gen 42:18; Ex 1:17), and a positive response to His love (1 Sam 12:24; Ex 14:31).

<sup>26</sup> Van Gemeren, s.v. “אָרַךְ.”

<sup>27</sup> Van Gemeren, *NIDOTTE*, 527.

<sup>28</sup> *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (TDNT)* ed. Gerhard Friedrich and Gerhard Kittel (1974) s.v. “φοβέω”

<sup>29</sup> Moisés Silva, ed., *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis*, 2nd edition (NIDNTTE) (2014), s.v. “φοβέω.”

where he highlights that the NT connection with the OT is clear in the religious use of the word. It must be noted that the connection with the OT here mentioned also has no reference to the imperatival use of “Φοβήθητε τὸν θεὸν” in Revelation but only to the adverbial use referring to the groups in Revelation 11:13 &18.

Most commentators of the imperative, “Φοβήθητε τὸν θεὸν” lean on the connotative meaning, “to give God reverence, respect, obedience, and honour”<sup>30</sup>. Stefanovic ascribes one general meaning to the list provided by other commentators and claims “fearing God designates a right relationship with God, [while] ‘giving Him glory’ suggests obedience to His commandments.”<sup>31</sup>

Stele acknowledges that the use of  $\sigma\upsilon\lambda\epsilon\upsilon\omicron$  (to fear) and  $\sigma\upsilon\lambda\epsilon\upsilon$  (fear) in the bible, is complex since it can refer both to literal fear of God and having a sense of respect and reverence for God.<sup>32</sup> He further suggests that in the OT, the real fear evoked by the presence of God consequentially leads to a religious awe that draws one to worship and fellowship with God at the same time.<sup>33</sup> This analysis by Stele takes a less common perspective in that he suggests a link between the OT and NT use of the imperative “Φοβήθητε τὸν θεὸν”. Furthermore, Stele’s claim that “the use of the

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<sup>30</sup> Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation* (Berrien Springs, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), 271.

See also, Angel Hayyim, “Where Literary Analysis Leads to the Fear of God,” *Tradition* 51, no. 4, (2019): 181 -192.

See also, Perry G. Downs, “Whatever Happened to the Fear Of God?” *Christian Education Journal: Research on Educational Ministry* 1, no. 3, (2004): 152-157 DOI:10.1177

<sup>31</sup> Ranko Stefanović, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: Commentary on the Book of Revelation*. (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2002) , 443.

<sup>32</sup> Artur A. Stele, ed. *The Word: Searching, Living, Teaching* (Silver Spring, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2002), 2:27.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*, 28.

Greek terminology is determined by its use in the OT”<sup>34</sup> is very important, in the sense that it is a rare attempt to link the meaning of the imperative “Φοβήθητε τὸν θεὸν” in Rev 14, with its background OT use. Beale<sup>35</sup> also shares the same opinion with Stele. He points out that the Apocalypse of Rev has more OT references than any other NT book hence there is a need for a proper understanding of the uses in the OT should we achieve an adequate view of the apocalypse as a whole.<sup>36</sup>

However, there is a lack of deliberate exegetical analysis of the key OT imperative uses of the phrase “יִרְאוּ אֶת־יְהוָה” by both authors. If the OT’s use of the imperative is pivotal to an adequate understanding of the same, then an exegetical analysis of the texts must be equally important.

On the other end, are the likes of Osborne who purport that to fear God entails being afraid of God.<sup>37</sup> He further argues that since the command to fear God is given in the context of judgment, and is devoid of mercy, its recipients are the evildoers who do not deserve God’s mercy.<sup>38</sup> Such a claim however, could be polemical to the declaration given in the introductory part of the book of Revelation which states that the message was given by God, “to show *His servants*<sup>39</sup> things which must shortly take place,”<sup>40</sup> hence leaving little room to suggest that the message is meant for the

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid, 32.

<sup>35</sup> G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2013), 77.

<sup>36</sup> Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 77.

<sup>37</sup> Osborne, *Revelation*, 534.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Emphasis supplied

<sup>40</sup> Verses are quoted from the NKJV unless otherwise noted.

evildoers. Nevertheless, should Osborne's claim be validated, it still does not provide any exegetical and background link of the imperative with the OT.

While some lexicons lean heavily on the connotative meaning of “Φοβήθητε τὸν θεὸν” some commentators like Matthews present a neutral understanding of the same and suggest both the connotative and denotative meaning of “Φοβήθητε τὸν θεὸν” as fitting alternatives in understanding the command in Rev 14:7.<sup>41</sup> By so doing, he leaves the reader without a solid and definite understanding of the imperative.

Robert Wall brings a syntactical dimension to the discussion. He argues that the student of Revelation must study it in literary terms, meaning the scholar cannot afford to ignore how the writer puts the words and visions together.<sup>42</sup> Such a view buttresses the argument that a comprehensive exegetical analysis of the text (Rev 14:7) is indispensable for a clearer understanding of the imperative.

Based on the discussion above, it can be concluded that no comprehensive work has been done to explain the imperatival meaning of “Φοβήθητε τὸν θεὸν” in Rev 14:7. Furthermore, an exegetical study of OT texts with the same imperative (morphologically or syntactically) to establish the background meaning of “Φοβήθητε τὸν θεὸν” remains undone in scholarship. It is for these reasons that the present study is undertaken.

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<sup>41</sup> Kenneth Matthews, *Revelation Reveals Jesus* (Greenville, Tennessee: Second Coming Publishing, 2012). 2:771.

<sup>42</sup> Robert W. Wall, *Revelation: Based on the New International Version*, New International Biblical Commentary New Testament Series 18 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2006), 4.

## **Statement of the Problem**

There is an apparent lack of consensus among scholars on the imperatival meaning of “Φοβήθητε τὸν θεὸν”, in Rev 14:7. Scholars have forwarded different views, some of which distort the character of God. Arguably, this is so because there is no comprehensive exegetical analysis of the text that takes into account the OT background use of the same phrase in its imperatival form.

## **Research Questions**

1. What is the exegetical meaning of the imperative “Φοβήθητε τὸν θεὸν” in Rev 14:7
2. How does an exegetical understanding of the imperative “הִירָאֵתָהּ אֱלֹהִים” in some selected OT texts help in fully understanding the meaning of “Φοβήθητε τὸν θεὸν” in Rev 14:7?

## **Purpose of the Research**

This research purposed to explore and establish the exegetical meaning of the command, “Φοβήθητε τὸν θεὸν” in Rev 14:7. Besides, the research sought to establish the background understanding of the same imperative in the OT. Ultimately, the research ascertained the theological implications that arise from fearing God by the believers.

## **Significance of the Research**

This research is significant for its contribution to the understanding of the imperative to “Φοβήθητε τὸν θεὸν” in Rev 14:7. In addition, the research also sought to establish the meaning of the imperative “Φοβήθητε τὸν θεὸν” from its background in selected OT texts (Lev 19:14; Deut 6:13; Josh 24:14; 2 Kgs 17:39; Eccl 12:13).

Furthermore, an exegetical study of the imperative in Rev 14:7 remains undone, hence this research sought to fill the gap.

### **Delimitations**

This research focused on the meaning of the imperative “Φοβήθητε τὸν θεὸν”, found in Rev 14:7 as well as in selected texts in the OT. The selected texts are only those in the imperative, morphologically or syntactically, and taken from selected sections of the OT. There was a deliberate attempt to select at least one representative text from the Torah and Writings of the Hebrew Bible where the imperatival phrase under study, morphologically or syntactically occurs. Specifically, the texts that were considered are, Lev 19:14; Deut 6:13; Josh 24:14; 2 Kgs 17:39, and Eccl 12:13. A study of more texts than selected was beyond the scope of the present study.

### **Methodology**

To achieve the objectives of this research, an exegetical analysis of the imperative phrase Φοβήθητε τὸν θεὸν (Rev 14:7) together with selected OT texts that are imperatival morphologically or syntactically, was carried out. The syntactical meaning of each text was carefully established. This was followed by a synthesised summary of the analysed texts.

The first chapter is introductory and carries the bulk of the literature review. Chapter two of the research lists and engages in an exegetical analysis of the first part of Rev 14:7—Φοβήθητε τὸν θεὸν. The exegesis selected OT texts that are imperatival—morphologically or syntactically, following the steps outlined below. The steps start with a contextual analysis. Jacques Doukhan<sup>43</sup> and Leonard

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<sup>43</sup> Jacques Doukhan, *Secrets of Revelation: The Apocalypse through Hebrew Eyes* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2002), 10.

Thompson<sup>44</sup> are emphatic in pointing out that the Hebrew background of a text in Revelation is indispensable should one aim at attaining the correct meaning. This is followed by establishing the pericope.<sup>45</sup> Next, is the translation of the texts based on the Hebrew and Greek Bibles to have a reading that is as close to the original as possible.<sup>46</sup>

The genre is also considered because every literary work can only be correctly interpreted if the right interpretive tools in terms of its type are employed.<sup>47</sup> The fifth step of the exegesis is a morpho-syntactical analysis. This is followed by a brief summary that synthesizes the five steps of exegesis for each analysed text. Thereafter, a synthesis of the entire exegesis of Rev 14:7 and its connection to the selected OT texts<sup>48</sup> is done. The exegetical steps<sup>49</sup> for each text consider the following elements in their chronological order:

1. Context
2. Pericope
3. Genre

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<sup>44</sup> Leonard L. Thompson, *Revelation*, Abingdon New Testament Commentaries (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998), 725.

<sup>45</sup> See David Odhiambo, “The Verbal Aspect and Eschatology in John 5:19-30: A Systemic Functional Analysis” (PhD Dissertation, Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, Cavite, Philippines, 2018), 162.

<sup>46</sup> “The original meaning of the language of the text is critical to a correct understanding of Scripture.” Holbrook, *Symposium on Revelation*, 76.

<sup>47</sup> Paul R. House, *1, 2 Kings*, The New American Commentary 8 (Nashville, Tenn: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 54.

<sup>48</sup> Lev 19:14; Deut 6:13; Josh 24:14; 2 Kgs 17:39; Eccl 12:13.

<sup>49</sup> The present study has considered, with variation, steps of textual analysis by other scholars. See Innocent Gwizo “A Study of the Hebrew and Aramaic Clauses Alluding to Temple Defilement in Daniel” (PhD Dissertation, Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, Cavite, Philippines, 2020); Melak A Tsegaw, “Whole Body-Gestures with the Context of Worship in the Book of Psalms” (PhD Dissertation, Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, Cavite, Philippines, 2017); Craig C. Broyles, “Interpreting the Old Testament: Principles and Steps,” in Craig C. Broyles, ed. *Interpreting the Old Testament-A Guide for Exegesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 13-62.

4. Morpho-syntactical analysis

5. Synthesis

The theological implications and the summary of the issues discussed in the research will be given in the third and fourth chapters respectively, after the exegesis. The fourth chapter will also include suggestions for further studies related to the topic of this research.

## CHAPTER 2

### EXEGESIS OF REVELATION 14:7 AND SELECTED OLD TESTAMENT TEXTS

This chapter is dedicated to an exegetical analysis of five texts<sup>1</sup> selected from the OT and Rev 14:7. For each, the background/context, pericope, translation, genre, and morpho-syntactical analysis, are presented. A conclusion synthesizing the main idea of the five aspects is given at the end of each text.

#### **Revelation 14:7**

##### **Context**

John wrote the book of Revelation. Ranko Stefanovic<sup>2</sup> claims that internal evidence<sup>3</sup> alone dispels any contradictory supposition to its authorship. Some commentators debate the time of writing of the book. Preterists argue for a date that is earlier than what other commentators suggest. They claim that Nero and Vespasian must have written the book during the persecution of Christians and that is between AD 64 and AD 79.<sup>4</sup> However, many commentators have noted that there is enough

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<sup>1</sup> Lev 19:14; Deut 6:13; Josh 24:14; 2 Kgs 17:39; Eccl 12:13

<sup>2</sup> Stefanović, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 2.

<sup>3</sup> Rev 1:1,4,9; 21:2; 22:8

<sup>4</sup> “Revelation” *Seventh-Day Adventist Bible Commentary*, (SDABC) ed. Francis D. Nichol (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1980), 7:720.

evidence from the testimony of early writers that proves that the book was written during the period of Emperor Domitian that ended in AD 96.<sup>5</sup>

According to Stefanovic<sup>6</sup> and Robert Wall,<sup>7</sup> the book was primarily written for the seven churches in Asia Minor that were going through persecution as well as general spiritual decline and apostasy. The book is therefore understood by many commentators to be a warning to those who will not believe in God to repent and an encouragement to those who believe in Him, to persevere.<sup>8</sup> Its central theme is proper worship of God highlighted in the depiction of the controversy between God and Satan.<sup>9</sup>

The assertion that the message of the book is a revelation of Jesus Christ that God sent with an angel to John to show his servants, (Rev 1:1) supports the notion that the primary recipients of the message are followers of Christ. Arguments by commentators like Joseph Mangina that the angel's message was not meant for the followers of the Lamb but rather those that have not heeded the call by Christ,<sup>10</sup> do not, therefore, hold water. Wall Robert seems to contradict himself over the same issue. For the general audience of the book, he states that it is for Christians who were located along the coastline of southwest Asia, yet for the first angel of Rev 14:7, he claims that the target audience is those who will worship the beast since they are

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<sup>5</sup> "Revelation," *SDABC*, 7:729.

<sup>6</sup> Stefanović, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 5.

<sup>7</sup> Wall, *Revelation*, 10.

<sup>8</sup> MacDonald and Farstad, *Believer's Bible Commentary*, 2949.

<sup>9</sup> Osborne, *Revelation*, 46

<sup>10</sup> Joseph L. Mangina, *Revelation*, Paperback edition (Grand Rapids, MI.: Brazos Press, 2017), 174.

enemies of God.<sup>11</sup> Beale holds a similar view.<sup>12</sup> He purports that the imperative in Rev 14:7 is a “compulsory edict for antagonistic humanity that will be forced to acknowledge the reality of God’s imminent judgment.” Such an understanding is dismissed by commentators like Stephen Smalley who argues that in the apocalypse, whenever “fearing God” and “giving him glory”, are mentioned together (as in 15:4; 19:3), the saints will be the subject of the action and it is only followers of God who can glorify him.<sup>13</sup> In this case fearing God and giving him glory are used together, hence the imperative cannot be said to be targeting the unbelievers only.

Overall, the book of Revelation was written late in the first century.<sup>14</sup> Its primary recipients were the people of God who were going through persecution and apostasy.<sup>15</sup> The message was intended to comfort and strengthen these believers as well as awaken non-believers to the reality of an imminent judgment and the necessity of turning to God.<sup>16</sup>

## **Pericope**

Prominent commentators have suggested and generally agreed that the book of Revelation can be divided into two sections,<sup>17</sup> which are the historical half and the

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<sup>11</sup> Wall, *Revelation*, 182.

<sup>12</sup> G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2013), 751.

<sup>13</sup> Stephen S. Smalley, *The Revelation to John: A Commentary on the Greek Text of the Apocalypse* (Downers Grove, III: Inter Varsity Press, 2005), 362.

<sup>14</sup> John J. Collins, *Apocalypse: The Morphology of a Genre* (Missoula: Society of Biblical Literature, 1979), 269.

<sup>15</sup> Stefanović, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 5.

<sup>16</sup> Carson, *New Bible Commentary*, 1422.

<sup>17</sup> Maxwell C. Mervyn, *The Message of Revelation: God Cares Vol II* (Oshawa, Ontario Canada: Pacific Press, 1985), 310.

eschatological half. Revelation 14 forms the climax of the historical section of the book,<sup>18</sup> and is divisible into three specific sections. The first section from v.1-5 reveals the triumphant saints standing with Christ on Mount Zion, the second section narrates the messages of the three angels while the third and final section focuses on the two harvests. Rev 14:6-13, forms the larger pericope of v. 7 but the more immediate pericope is vv. 6-7 which starts with “I saw another angel.”<sup>19</sup> This is the message of the first angel out of the three.

### Translation of the Text

|  |             |   |
|--|-------------|---|
| <p>Καὶ εἶδον ἄλλον ἄγγελον πετόμενον ἐν μεσουρανήματι, ἔχοντα εὐαγγέλιον αἰώνιον εὐαγγελίσει ἐπὶ τοὺς καθημένους ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς καὶ ἐπὶ πᾶν ἔθνος καὶ φυλὴν καὶ γλῶσσαν καὶ λαόν,</p>                           | <p>v. 6</p> | <p>And I saw another angel flying in mid-air, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who live on the earth, and to every nation, and tribe, and language, and people.</p>     |
| <p>λέγων ἐν φωνῇ μεγάλῃ· Φοβήθητε τὸν θεὸν καὶ δότε αὐτῷ δόξαν, ὅτι ἦλθεν ἡ ὥρα τῆς κρίσεως αὐτοῦ, καὶ προσκυνήσατε αὐτῷ ποιήσαντι τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν<br/>         ▼ καὶ θάλασσαν καὶ πηγὰς ὑδάτων.</p> | <p>v. 7</p> | <p>Saying in a loud voice, Fear God and give Him glory because the hour of His judgment has come. Worship the one who made heaven and the earth, the sea, and the springs of water.</p> |

### Genre

The book of Revelation is Apocalyptic, that is, it carries messages from God but in symbolic form<sup>20</sup>, or rather secret divine eschatological revelations and heavenly

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<sup>18</sup> Kenneth Strand A, “The Eight Basic Visions in the Book of Revelation,” *Andrews University Seminary Student Journal* 25, no. 1 (1987): 111, accessed 25 May 2025, <https://www.andrews.edu/html>.

<sup>19</sup> “Revelation 14,” (*SDABC*) 7:827.

<sup>20</sup> Kenneth Mathews, *Revelation Reveals Jesus: An Explanation of the Greek Text and Application of the Symbolism Therein* (Greeneville, Tenn.: Second Coming Publishing, LLC, 2012), 30.

perceptions.<sup>21</sup> Its central message is the great controversy theme with an emphasis on the eschatological events and the recreation of the new earth.<sup>22</sup> Mangina<sup>23</sup> and Wall<sup>24</sup> also agree that the book is an apocalypse carrying the theme of the conflict between God and supernatural powers. As much as the majority of commentators agree that the book is an apocalypse, Grant Osborne further adds that it also includes aspects of prophecy and epistle.<sup>25</sup> He also is of the view that proper worship of God, instead of the great controversy, is the main theme of the book since it reveals the conflict between those who worship Satan and God.<sup>26</sup> The book of Revelation can therefore be said to be an apocalypse and, typical with such, contains disclosures from God in symbolic form, about the conflict on who, between God and Satan, should be worshipped.

#### **Morpho-syntactical Analysis: Rev 14:6 -7**

The two verses make the first of the immediate pericopes of Rev 14:6-13, and they focus on the message proclaimed by the first angel of the three in that pericope. The cited texts will be analysed based on the historicist school of thought. This supposes that John spoke of events that occurred in his day and also spanned into the future since he was inspired to foresee the experience of the Christian church

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<sup>21</sup> Collins, John J, *Apocalypse: The Morphology of a Genre*, 10.

<sup>22</sup> "Revelation 14," *SDABC*, 7:722.

<sup>23</sup> Mangina, *Revelation*, 26.

<sup>24</sup> Wall, *Revelation*, 4.

<sup>25</sup> Osborne, *Revelation*, 12.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

throughout history.<sup>27</sup> The other popular schools of thought – futurism – which concludes that Revelation is exclusively composed of events that are still in the future, and preterism which contends that John was given an account of events that were contemporaneous to his time<sup>28</sup>, run contrary to what the book itself testifies. In Rev 1:19 John was instructed to “write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this.” In light of this, the Futurists’ and Preterists’ argument that the scenes are either contemporary to John’s time or still in the future is contrary to the angel’s testimony.

14:6. Clause 1

Καὶ εἶδον ἄλλον ἄγγελον

| Subject                          | Predicate                 | Object                         |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Implied from 1:9 ( <i>John</i> ) | Καὶ εἶδον<br>And I beheld | ἄλλον ἄγγελον<br>Another angel |

14:6. Sentence 1

πετόμενον ἐν μεσουρανήματι, ἔχοντα εὐαγγέλιον αἰώνιον εὐαγγελίσαι ἐπὶ τοὺς καθήμε-  
 ενους ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς καὶ ἐπὶ πᾶν ἔθνος καὶ φυλὴν καὶ γλῶσσαν καὶ λαόν,

| Subject          | Predicate   | Object  |
|------------------|---|---|
| ἄγγελον<br>angel | πετόμενον<br>flying<br>ἔχοντα<br>having<br>εὐαγγελίσαι<br>To preach | ἐν μεσουρανήματι<br>In mid air<br>εὐαγγέλιον αἰώνιον<br>The eternal gospel<br>ἐπὶ τοὺς καθήμενους ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς<br>To those who dwell on the earth<br>ἐπὶ πᾶν ἔθνος καὶ φυλὴν καὶ γλῶσσαν καὶ λαόν,<br>To every nation, tribe, language, and people |

The second clause in v. 6 has a prepositional phrase ἐν μεσουρανήματι as the object. The subject is the angel and, similar to the angel in 8:13 which was also flying

<sup>27</sup> Mervyn C Maxwell, *God Cares: The Message of Revelation*, vol. 2 (Nampa, ID: Pacific press, 1985), 69.

<sup>28</sup> Maxwell, 2:69.

in mid-air, this phrase denotes the global nature of the message carried.<sup>29</sup> The second and third clauses have “the eternal gospel” and “all who dwell on earth” as objects. This also suggests that the message being carried by this angel is not targeting a particular audience but rather all human beings, hence dispelling the notion that the imperative in v. 7 is exclusive. The object εὐαγγέλιον αἰώνιον (eternal gospel) means good news<sup>30</sup> and if it is good for all people then it cannot be said to instil fear and terror in the same intended recipients. The same thought is reflected in Osborne Grant’s assertion that, where εὐαγγέλιον is used in the NT, it suggests God’s gracious offer of salvation. (15:4; 16:9; 19:5,7). Hence, it is apparent that in Revelation, ‘fear God’ and ‘give Him glory’ are signalling repentance and conversion.<sup>31</sup>

#### 14:7. Clause 1

λέγων ἐν φωνῇ μεγάλῃ·

| Subject                            | Predicate       | Object                            |
|------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------------|
| Implied from v. 6 ( <i>angel</i> ) | Λέγων<br>saying | ἐν φωνῇ μεγάλῃ<br>In a loud voice |

The loud voice of the angel suggests importance of the message and an urgent need to awaken all the inhabitants of the earth so they hear the message.

#### 14:7. Clause 2

Φοβήθητε τὸν θεὸν καὶ δότε αὐτῷ δόξαν,

| Subject   | Predicate                                | Object                                     |
|---|--|--|
| Implied from v. 6 ( <i>those who dwell on the earth</i> ) | Φοβήθητε<br>Fear<br>καὶ δότε<br>and give | τὸν θεὸν<br>God<br>αὐτῷ δόξαν<br>Him glory |

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<sup>29</sup> “Revelation,” *SDABC* 7:827.

<sup>30</sup> “The Eternal Gospel,” [Rev 14:6], *SDABC*, 5:567

<sup>31</sup> Osborne, *Revelation*, 535.

In this clause, the subject of the command to fear God is implied from v. 6 of the previous text, and the subject are those who “dwell on earth.” The syntax of the text suggests that the imperative Φοβήθητε in Rev 14:7 is a command. Regarding the imperative mood, Daniel B. Wallace has noted that in the aorist the command is generally an action for the whole and in this case, the entire human race.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, the aorist imperative may be constative when it stresses a solemn and categorical command,<sup>33</sup> such is the syntax of Rev 14:7 phrase Φοβήθητε τὸν θεόν. Again, it may be stressed that the imperative commands all humanity to worship God.

It has already been mentioned that when ‘fear God’ and ‘give him glory’ are used together, it is the saints who are the subject hence dispelling the notion that the message is for the enemies of God only. Since the imperatives, Φοβήθητε, δότε, and προσκυνήσατε are all directed to all who dwell on the earth, this suggests that fearing God, giving Him glory and worshipping Him should be understood as positive actions by those who heed to God’s call.

In this case, fearing God and worshipping Him should have a parallel meaning, a technique referred to by Morton Paul as “broken parallelism” whereby the anticipated synonym in the second hemistich is a different word from its counterpart in the first hemistich, just as fear and worship are different words but carry a similar meaning in the same sentence.<sup>34</sup>

#### 14:7. Clause 3

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<sup>32</sup> Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 485.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*, 763.

<sup>34</sup> Shalom Morton Paul, Robert A. Kraft, and Lawrence H. Schiffman, *Emanuel: Studies in Hebrew Bible Septuagint and Dead Sea Scrolls in Honour of Emanuel Tov*, Supplements to Vetus Testamentum 94 (Leiden Boston: Brill, 2003), 833.

ὅτι ἦλθεν ἡ ὥρα τῆς κρίσεως αὐτοῦ

| Subject           | Predicate         | Object                               |
|-------------------|-------------------|--------------------------------------|
| ἡ ὥρα<br>The hour | ἦλθεν<br>has come | τῆς κρίσεως αὐτοῦ<br>of His judgment |

The first reason for fearing God and giving Him glory is given in this clause, and that is because he will judge the inhabitants of earth. The same notion is reflexive of Eccl 12:13-14 where the wise man also pointed to God's judgment as the main reason for every man to fear Him.

14:7. Sentence 2

καὶ προσκυνήσατε τῷ ποιήσαντι τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν καὶ θάλασσαν καὶ πηγὰς ὑδάτων.

| Subject  | Predicate                       | Object   |
|--|---------------------------------|--|
| Implied from v. 6<br>( <i>those who dwell on the earth</i> ) | καὶ προσκυνήσατε<br>and worship | τῷ ποιήσαντι<br>Him who made<br><br>τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν<br>the heaven and the earth<br>καὶ θάλασσαν καὶ πηγὰς ὑδάτων.<br>and the sea and fountain waters |

Since the command to fear God and worship carries the same meaning, it can also be said that the second reason for fearing God is given in this clause, and that is because he is the creator of everything that exists in heaven, on earth and in the seas. The imperatives 'fear God' and 'worship Him', together with their compliments are therefore being presented in a 'cause and effect' form. The inhabitants of the earth are being admonished to fear God because he is the judge and the hour of judgment has come while at the same time, they should also worship him because he is the one who created everything that exists on earth.

## Summary and Conclusion

The syntactic structuring of Rev 14:6-7, as well as references to other biblical texts, confirm the idea that the imperative Φοβήθητε τὸν θεὸν is directed, not only to those who follow Him, but to all the inhabitants of the earth. The angel that proclaimed the message was flying in the midst of heaven and this attests to the global nature of the message. Since the subject of v. 7 is implied from v. 6, and it is all “who dwell on earth,” this therefore dispels the notion that the imperative to fear God is an exclusive command.

Employment of the ‘broken parallelism’ technique is meant to demonstrate that fearing God and worshipping Him have a synonymous effect in the context of Rev14:7. In this case, to fear God is deemed equal to worshipping Him. Such an understanding resonates well with the main theme of the book that revolves around worship between God and Satan. The reasons for worshipping God as given in the same texts are that He is the Creator of everything and because He will bring everything into judgment. Since, the book of Revelation uses the OT than any other book in the NT,<sup>35</sup> the study now focuses on selected texts in the OT below for a better understanding of the imperatival phrase Φοβήθητε τὸν θεὸν in Rev 14:7.

## Leviticus 19:14

### Context

The book of Leviticus has sufficient internal evidence that point to Mosaic authorship.<sup>36</sup> It narrates events that occurred during the wilderness for thirty days

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<sup>35</sup> Beale, 77.

<sup>36</sup> John E. Hartley and Bruce Manning Metzger, *Leviticus*, ed. David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker, Nachdr., Word Biblical Commentary / [General Ed.: David A. Hubbard; Glenn W. Barker. Old Testament Ed.: John D. W. Watts. New Testament Ed.: Ralph P. Martin], Vol. 4 (Waco, Tex: Word Books, Publ, 2000), xxxvi.

from the day the Tabernacle was erected in Exodus until the Book of Numbers was written<sup>37</sup> and is a reliable guide to an understanding of the religion of biblical Israel.<sup>38</sup> A careful study of Leviticus will help the student to understand, not only the religious beliefs of God's people, but also how God had prescribed for them ways of expressing the same beliefs.<sup>39</sup> Most of the basic principles of worship for the people of God are outlined in the book of Leviticus,<sup>40</sup> suggesting that the book is a reliable informant on what worship entails for the people of God. The book of Leviticus itself is at the centre of the Pentateuch since it is flanked by two books on each side.<sup>41</sup> This makes the subject of worship the core and central issue of the book.

The subject of the text in question is taken from verse 2 of the same chapter. Moses is addressing the people of Israel, hence they are in the second person, suggesting an imperatival command. The first two clauses that begin with "do not" are an echo of the imperative marker of the Decalogue and form a synonymous parallelism in the sense that they both encourage tender respect for the afflicted and forbid wanton cruelty.<sup>42</sup> The third clause is a positive imperative that admonishes the people of Israel to fear God.

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<sup>37</sup> "Leviticus: Background", *SDABC*, 1:693.

<sup>38</sup> Joe M. Sprinkle, *Leviticus and Numbers* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2015), xxxiv.

<sup>39</sup> Baruch A. Levine, *The JPS Torah Commentary: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), xxxiv.

<sup>40</sup> "Leviticus: Background," *SDABC*, 1:694.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:695.

<sup>42</sup> F. Meyrick, *The Pulpit Commentary: Leviticus, Numbers*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1950), 306.

## Pericope

According to Sprinkle,<sup>43</sup> the nineteenth chapter of Leviticus is a full range of concerns given by God focusing on the call to holiness, and how God's people were supposed to treat the poor and helpless. Roy Gane also points out that the chapter is a mixture of apodictic, that is absolute laws, and casuistic, that is conditional laws, all of which reflect the principles of the Ten Commandments.<sup>44</sup> The laws found in this chapter can be put into three categories, of which the first set, identified by the marker "and the Lord spoke to Moses saying," is from verses 1 to 18. The second set, identified by the marker "you shall keep my statutes," (v. 19) starts from vv. 19- 29, while the third set, with the introductory marker, "you shall keep my Sabbaths," (v.30) starts from vv. 30 -36.<sup>45</sup> It therefore follows that the larger pericope of Lev 19:14 should be from verses 3 to 18. The New Jerome Biblical Commentary further narrows the scope of the pericope to verses 11-18 which speak on one's social responsibility and the need to ensure justice and charity are practiced. However, one can argue that verses 13-15 which warn the people against taking advantage of those who cannot defend themselves,<sup>46</sup> must be taken as the immediate pericope of Lev 19:14.

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<sup>43</sup> Sprinkle, *Leviticus and Numbers*, 128.

<sup>44</sup> Roy Gane, *Leviticus, Numbers: From Biblical Text ... to Contemporary Life*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 335.

<sup>45</sup> Hartley and Metzger, *Leviticus*, 128.

<sup>46</sup> v. 13 – the hireling; v. 14 – the deaf and blind; v. 15- the poor

## Translation of the Text

| Hebrew Text  |       | Translation   |
|--|-------|---|
| לֹא־תַעֲשֶׂק אֶת־רֵעֶךָ וְלֹא תַגְזֹל לְאֶתְּלִין<br>פְּעֻלַת שְׂכִיר אֶתְּךָ עַד־בֹּקֶר                                 | v. 13 | You shall not oppress nor rob your neighbour; neither shall you remain with the wages of your hired worker through the night until morning.                   |
| לֹא־תִקְלֹל חֵרֶשׁ וְלִפְנֵי עֹרֵר לֹא תִתֵּן מְכֻשָׁל<br>וַיִּרְאֵת מֵאֱלֹהֶיךָ אֲנִי יְהוָה                            | v. 14 | You shall not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block before the blind, but you shall fear your God; I am the Lord.   |
| לֹא־תַעֲשׂוּ עֲוֹן בְּמִשְׁפַּט לֹא־תִשָּׂא פְּנֵי־דָל וְלֹא<br>תִהְדָּר פְּנֵי גָדוֹל בְּצַדִּיק תִּשְׁפֹּט עַמִּיתְּךָ | v. 15 | You shall not do injustice in the court. You shall not be partial against the poor nor honour the great, but you shall judge your neighbour in righteousness. |

## Genre

Radner Ephraim asserts that the book of Leviticus is generally a “distinctly vocational exhortation,”<sup>47</sup> where God’s people are being admonished to live a life of observance to the details of God’s bidding that should persist through time. As was already pointed out, Roy Gane refers to the nineteenth chapter as an array of apodictic and casuistic laws that reflect the principles of the Decalogue.<sup>48</sup> The bulk of the exhortations in the pericope under focus are apodictic, suggesting that they are unconditional imperatives.

Besides being dominantly didactic in composition, the book of Leviticus also deals with the priesthood and the sanctuary services.<sup>49</sup> Matthew Henry<sup>50</sup> adds to this

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<sup>47</sup> Ephraim Radner, *Leviticus* (Grand Rapids, MI.: Brazos Press, 2008), 35.

<sup>48</sup> Gane, *Leviticus, Numbers*, 335.

<sup>49</sup> "Leviticus: Background," *SDABC*, 1:694.

<sup>50</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*. Vol 1, Gen - Deut (NY: Fleming H. Revell, 1991), 120.

thought by stating that the book is named after its Septuagint name because it contains the laws and ordinances of the Levitical priesthood and its ministrations. The book of Leviticus therefore strikes a balance between instructions on holiness for the people of God and to those who worked at the tabernacle on behalf of God.

### **Morpho-syntactical Analysis: Lev 19:13—15**

Lev 19:13—15 makes a pericope that comprises several clauses that are analysed in this section.

#### 19: 13. Clause 1

|   |                                   |                |
|---|-----------------------------------|----------------|
| לֹא־תַעֲשֶׂק אֶת־רֵעֶךָ וְלֹא תִגְזֹל         |                                   |                |
| Subject                                       | Predicate                         | Object         |
| Implied from v. 2 ( <i>people of Israel</i> ) | תַעֲשֶׂק<br>תִּגְזֹל              | רֵעֶךָ         |
|   | Shall not oppress/<br>plunder/rob | your neighbour |

#### 19: 13. Clause 2

|  |                       |                      |
|--|-----------------------|----------------------|
| לֹא־תִהְיֶה־עִמָּךְ שְׂכֵיר אֶתְּךָ עַד־בֹּקֶר |                       |                      |
| Subject  | Predicate             | Object               |
| implied from v. 2 ( <i>people of Israel</i> )  | לֹא־תִהְיֶה           | פְעֻלַת              |
|  | shall not remain with | wages                |
|  |                       | שְׂכִיר              |
|  |                       | of your hired worker |
|  |                       | אֶתְּךָ עַד־בֹּקֶר   |
|  |                       | until the morning    |

Lev 19:13 has two main clauses: Do not oppress or rob your neighbour and you shall not remain with the wages of your hired worker until morning. The people of Israel are the ones being addressed from Lev 19:2 hence they are the subject. God does not expect them to ill-treat their poor and weak neighbours who are the objects in the clauses. A hired worker was to be paid immediately after accomplishing their task. The same admonition is found in both the OT (Deut 24:14-15) and NT (Jas 5:4;

Col 4:1) where God forbids oppression or non-payment of the hired labourer, warns against failure to pay the hired servant and underpayment of servants respectively. The complementary phrases “of your hired worker” and “until morning” are subordinate to the main clause and give the timeline within which wages ought to be paid as well as specify who ought not to be oppressed. Failure to do so was perceived by God as being cruel to the weak, hence the imperative exhorting the Israelites not to do so.

Leviticus 19:14

Lev 19:14 can be syntactically broken down into three clauses.

19:14. Clause 1

לֹא־תִקְלַל חֵרֵשׁ

| Subject                                       | Predicate                      | Object             |
|---|--------------------------------|--------------------|
| Implied from v. 2 ( <i>people of Israel</i> ) | לֹא־תִקְלַל<br>shall not curse | חֵרֵשׁ<br>the deaf |

19:14. Clause 2

וְלִפְנֵי עִוְרִים לֹא תִקַּח מְשָׁל

| Subject                                       | Predicate                   | Object                               |
|---|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Implied from v. 2 ( <i>people of Israel</i> ) | לֹא תִקַּח<br>shall not put | מְשָׁל<br>a stumbling block          |
|   |                             | לִפְנֵי עִוְרִים<br>before the blind |

19:14. Clause 3

וַיִּרְאוּ מֵאֱלֹהֵי אֲנִי יְהוָה

| Subject                                      | Predicate          | Object                |
|--|--------------------|-----------------------|
| Implied from v.2 ( <i>people of Israel</i> ) | וַיִּרְאוּ<br>fear | מֵאֱלֹהֵי<br>your God |
| אֲנִי<br>I am                                | -                  | יְהוָה<br>the LORD    |

Lev 19:14 has three independent clauses and these are: (i) “Do not curse the deaf,” (ii) “Do not put a stumbling block before the blind,” and (iii) “Fear God; I am the LORD.” The first clause has the Israelites as the subject, also implied in verse 2. The verb is *cursing*, and the object is the *deaf*. The second clause has the subject, (people of Israel) verb, (shall not put), and object (stumbling block) as well as a complementary prepositional clause (before the blind) that serves to specify the group of people that are not supposed to be ill-treated.<sup>51</sup> The third and final clause is different from the first two in the sense that it has God as the object and the verb is “to fear.” The only similarity with the other two clauses is that the subject is still the people of Israel. The link between the first two clauses and the third one suggests that ill-treatment of the weak and physically handicapped is a failure to fear God, hence fearing God is directly linked with taking care and showing love for other people, an underlying principle of the Ten Commandments, according to Matt 22:37-38.

The keyword in Lev 19:14 is *וַיִּירָא* translated as “and you fear” is syntactically in the imperative (q. perf, 2mas, sg). In its qal form, *יָרָא* means to fear someone or something while in its piel form, it means to be afraid to do something or to be terrified of something.<sup>52</sup> As highlighted earlier, the same word taken in context takes a different meaning.<sup>53</sup> The same notion is also indicated by Whitaker<sup>54</sup> and Young.<sup>55</sup> In this context, *יָרָא* suggests worshipping God and taking heed to obey His instructions. The syntactical meaning of “and fear God” in Lev 19:14 is therefore imperatival.

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<sup>51</sup> Sprinkle, *Leviticus and Numbers*, 128.

<sup>52</sup> “*Hebrew Text Analysis: Lev 19:14*,” accessed 20 May 2025, <https://biblehub.com/text/leviticus/19-14.htm>.

<sup>53</sup> Fuhs, “*The Fear Of God*,” *TDOT*, 2:298.

<sup>54</sup> Whitaker, *The Eerdmans Analytical Concordance*, s.v. “*יָרָא*.”

<sup>55</sup> Robert Young, *Young’s Analytical Concordance to the Bible*, s.v. “*יָרָא*.”

Even though outside context, אָרַךְ presents a polarized meaning, the immediate context favours “attraction”, “trust”, and love for God<sup>56</sup> as the most appropriate meanings. Other synonyms include “reverence,” “worship,” and “obedience” to God’s commandments.<sup>57</sup>

The object in the first two clauses is the blind and deaf while the third clause has God as its object. YHWH is the object of fear when associated with worship and the object of terror in the context of divine wrath, and context should help in determining which one is appropriate.<sup>58</sup> The concept of fearing God as an imperative, with God as the object refers to the worship of God and observance of His commandments.<sup>59</sup> Based on the analysis above, a conclusion can be made that in this text “to fear God” is related to showing love for God and all people, regardless of their physical condition, as well as rendering reverential worship to him.

19:15. Clause 1

לֹא-תַעֲשֶׂוּ עֵוֹל בְּמִשְׁפָּט

|   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| Subject<br>Implied from v.2 (people<br>of Israel) | Predicate<br>לֹא-תַעֲשֶׂוּ<br>Shall not do | Object<br>עֵוֹל<br>injustice<br><br>בְּמִשְׁפָּט<br>in court |
|---|--|--|

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<sup>56</sup> Fuhs, “*The Fear Of God*,” TDOT, 2:298.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> “*Aspects of Fear*”, NIDOTTE, 528.

<sup>59</sup> Fuhs, “*The Fear of God*,” TDOT, 2:308.

19:15. Clause 2

לֹא־תִשָּׂא פְּנֵי־דָל

| Subject                             | Predicate                             | Object  |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| Implied from v.2 (People of Israel) | לֹא־תִשָּׂא<br>Shall not be partial   | פְּנֵי־דָל<br>against the poor                                  |
|                                     | וְלֹא תִהְיֶה<br>and shall not honour | פְּנֵי גָדוֹל<br>the great                                      |
|                                     | תִּשְׁפֹּט<br>you shall judge         | עַמִּיתְּךָ<br>your neighbour<br>בְּצִדְקָה<br>in righteousness |

In Lev 19:15, the subject in all the four clauses is still the people of Israel and this is shown by the second person suffix possessive pronoun in עַמִּיתְּךָ. The object is the poor and rich neighbour. The Israelites are being admonished not to show partiality between the rich and the poor but to do justice to both.

### Conclusion

The syntactical analysis has shown that in Lev 19 and verse 14 in particular, God is the object. It has also been established that in this pericope and the entire chapter, the people of Israel are being called to live a holy life reflected in how they treat each other and relate to their God. The command to be kind to those who are defenceless is heightened by the imperative to “fear God.” Thus, to “fear God” in Lev 19:14 carries the meaning of treating fellow citizens, the weak and vulnerable with love and kindness.

## Deuteronomy 6:13

### Context

Wenham<sup>60</sup> asserts that the book of Deuteronomy is a compilation of the words of Moses to the Israelites just before they entered the Promised Land. (Gen 12:7; Ex 12:25; Deut 27:3) Its primary recipients were the people who had experienced the deliverance of God from Egypt with the hope that they would be holy and different from the Canaanites of the land they were going to occupy.<sup>61</sup> It is also noted that the book of Deuteronomy is a theological declaration that calls Israel to respond unreservedly to God's grace, and demonstrate their steadfast loyalty and love for Him.<sup>62</sup> Gerbrandt refers to the book as an exhortation for Israel and a re-statement of the law for the generation that had grown up in the wilderness and was about to enter Canaan.<sup>63</sup> The same concept is echoed by Carson<sup>64</sup> and Justin M. Fuhrmann<sup>65</sup> who opine that Deuteronomy mainly comprises the words of Moses to the Israelites meant to prepare them to be faithful to their covenant with the Lord just before they entered the Promised Land. The book can therefore be said to be God's final call to the people

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<sup>60</sup> Gordon J. Wenham, "Deuteronomy," *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition (NBC)*, 4th ed. Edited by G.J Wenham, J.A Motyer, D.A Carson and R.T France (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 198.

<sup>61</sup> Wenham, *NBC*, 199.

<sup>62</sup> Daniel I. Block, *Deuteronomy: From Biblical Text ... to Contemporary Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 25.

<sup>63</sup> Gerald E. Gerbrandt, "Background to Deuteronomy," *Believer's Bible Commentary (BBC)*, ed. William MacDonald and Arthur L. Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1995), 202.

<sup>64</sup> Wenham, *New Bible Commentary*, 198.

<sup>65</sup> Justin M. Fuhrmann, "Deuteronomy 6-8 and the History of Interpretation: An Exposition on the First Two Commandments" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 53/1 (March 2010): 37, accessed 25 May 2025, [https://etsjets.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/files\\_JETS-PDFs\\_53\\_53-1\\_JETS\\_53\\_1037-063\\_Fuhrmann.pdf](https://etsjets.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/files_JETS-PDFs_53_53-1_JETS_53_1037-063_Fuhrmann.pdf)

of Israel not only to prepare to enter Canaan but also to remind them to respond to God's grace by obeying His commandments (Deut 1:1-8).<sup>66</sup>

### **Pericope**

The *Jerome Biblical Commentary*<sup>67</sup> presents the pericope of Deuteronomy 6:13 as starting from v.1 and ending at v.19. It summarizes the narrative in the nineteen verses as an appeal to faithfulness to the covenant in the land of Canaan where the Israelites were about to enter. However, Daniel Block believes that the pericope of Deuteronomy 6:13 falls within vv. 4 and 19 of the same chapter.<sup>68</sup> The difference could be because vv.1-4 appear to be a prologue, but generally the texts from v.1 to v.19 are a call to Israel exhorting them to shun syncretism, which was a common practice in the land they were about to inherit. It is on that basis that this research assumes the larger pericope starts from verse 1 but the immediate pericope starts from verse 10 and closes with verse 15. In those six verses, the people of Israel were being instructed never to forsake the Lord who brought them out of Egypt and not to follow after the gods worshipped by the people of the land they were to occupy.

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<sup>66</sup> Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*, Vol 1, 187.

<sup>67</sup> Don C. Benjamin, "Deuteronomy," *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, (JBC), ed. R.E. Brown, S.S. Joseph Fitzmyer, S.J. Roland Murphy and O. Carm (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1968), 1:106.

<sup>68</sup> Block, *Deuteronomy*, 36.

## Translation of the Text

| Hebrew Text   | Translation   |
|---|---|
| <p>וְהָיָה כִּי יְבִיאֲכֶם יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיךָ אֶל־<br/>הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע לְאַבְרָהָם לְאִצְחָק<br/>לְיַצְחָק וְלִיעֲקֹב לֵאמֹר לְךָ עָרִים גְּדוֹלוֹת<br/>וְטָבוֹת אֲשֶׁר לֹא־בָנִיתָ:</p> | <p>v. 10 And it shall happen that you shall be brought by the LORD your God to the land which He swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and Jacob; to give you great and good cities which you did not build.</p> |
| <p>וּבָתִּים מְלֵאִים כָּל־טוֹב אֲשֶׁר לֹא־<br/>מְלֵאתָ וּבְרוֹת חֲצוּבוֹת אֲשֶׁר לֹא־חָצַבְתָּ<br/>כַּרְמִים וְזֵיתִים אֲשֶׁר לֹא־נִטְעַמְתָּ וְאָכַלְתָּ<br/>וְשָׂבַעְתָּ:</p>                | <p>v. 11 And houses full of all good things which you did not fill; and hewn out cisterns which you did not dig; vineyards and olives which you did not plant and eat and be satisfied.</p>                             |
| <p>הֲשָׁמַר לְךָ פֶּן־תִּשְׁכַּח אֶת־יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר<br/>הוֹצִיאֲךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם מִבֵּית עֲבָדִים:</p>   | <p>v. 12 Then be careful lest you forget the LORD who took you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of slavery.</p>   |
| <p>אֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיךָ תִירָא וְאִתּוֹ תַעֲבֹד<br/>וּבְשֵׁמוֹ תִשָּׁבַע:</p>   | <p>v. 13 You shall fear the LORD your God and Him only shall you serve and by His name you shall swear.</p>   |
| <p>לֹא תִלְכוּן אַחֲרֵי אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים<br/>מֵאֱלֹהֵי הָעַמִּים אֲשֶׁר סְבִיבוֹתֵיכֶם:</p>  | <p>v. 14 You shall not follow after other gods; the gods of the people who surround you.</p>  |
| <p>כִּי אֵל קַנּוּז אֱלֹהֵיךָ בְּקִרְבְּךָ פֶּן־<br/>יִחַר אַף־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיךָ בְּךָ וְהִשְׁמִידֲךָ<br/>מֵעַל פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה:</p>  | <p>v. 15 Because the LORD your God in your midst is a jealous God, lest the anger of the LORD your God is aroused against you and you are destroyed from the face of the earth.</p>                                     |

## Genre

Block states that the book of Deuteronomy is a narrative<sup>69</sup> and James McConville, who understands the book to be God's narrative to Israel outlining His wish that they enter an everlasting covenantal relationship with Him, also shares the same notion.<sup>70</sup> The SDA Bible Commentary, however, views the book as historical,

<sup>69</sup> Block, 36.

<sup>70</sup> James, G. McConville, "Deuteronomy," *Apollos Old Testament Commentary 5* (Leicester, England: Downers Grove, III: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 18.

legislative, and hortatory.<sup>71</sup> It further asserts that the book consists of three major parts or orations, of which the second of the three orations in which Deuteronomy 6:13 falls is a review of the Decalogue and an admonition for Israel to obey the laws.<sup>72</sup> The book can therefore be said to be a hortatory narrative of the historical and legislative experiences of the people of Israel immediately before they entered Canaan. It is in that sense that it is a type of the book of Revelation, that was also written as an admonition to those who are preparing to enter heaven.

### Morpho-syntactical Analysis: Deuteronomy 6:10-15

This pericope outlines God's love for the people of Israel. It further highlights the warning that God gave about the things that they were to be careful not do or to do after entering the Promised Land. Failure to heed the warning had consequences.

#### 6:10. Clause 1

לִיִּצְחָק וְלִיִּצְעָקָב לְאַבְרָהָם לְאִבְתְּיָךְ נִשְׁבַּע אֱשֶׁר אֱלֹהֵי־הָאָרֶץ אֱלֹהֶיךָ יְהוָה יְבִיאָךְ אֶל־הָאָרֶץ כִּי וְהָיָה

| Subject                             | Predicate  | Object  |
|-------------------------------------|--|---|
| אֱלֹהֵי־יְהוָה<br>The LORD your God | יְבִיאָ<br>brings  | ךָ<br>you (people of Israel, Implied from verse<br>3 and 4)<br>אֶל־הָאָרֶץ<br>into the land |
|                                     | לְאִבְתְּיָךְ נִשְׁבַּע אֱשֶׁר<br>which He swore to your fathers |   |
|                                     | וְלִיִּצְעָקָב לְאִבְרָהָם<br>to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob       |   |

This clause has God as the subject and the people of Israel are the objects. The main subordinate clause is further complemented by a prepositional and an adverbial

<sup>71</sup> "Deuteronomy," SDABC 1:953.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

clause. These dispel any possible ambiguity regarding the place that God was taking Israel to, which is the land of Canaan.

The hiphil part of the main clause reminds the people of Israel that it was God who would cause their successful invasion of Canaan. This main clause is complimented by two prepositional clauses and one relative clause. The first prepositional clause אֶל-הָאָרֶץ is directional and points to the place where God was taking the people of Israel. The relative clause אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע לְאַבְרָהָם is subordinate and serves to differentiate the land sworn to the patriarchs from any other hence, proving to the people of Israel that the God who was with their fathers was still the same God who was leading them now.

6:10. Clause 2

|   |                  |   |  |
|---|------------------|---|--|
| לֹא-בָנִיתָ: אֲשֶׁר וְטַבַּח גְּדֹלֹת עָרִים לְךָ לָתֵת |                  |   |  |
| Subject   | Predicate        | Object  |  |
| The LORD God (implied from the first clause)            | לָתֵת<br>to give | לְךָ<br>to you                                    |  |
|   |                  | וְטַבַּח גְּדֹלֹת עָרִים<br>large and good cities |  |
|   |                  | לֹא-בָנִיתָ אֲשֶׁר<br>which you did not build     |  |

The consistency of the subject (LORD God) and the direct object (people of Israel) in both clauses highlights the two parties that are focal to the narration in the pericope. God wishes to fulfil his promise of pleasant welfare with their fathers. The infinite construct in the second clause לָתֵת (to give) carries with it a sense of perpetuity. God did not intend to establish a relationship with the people of Israel that would end, but rather to make it everlasting. Most important, is the effect of the relative clause לֹא-בָנִיתָ אֲשֶׁר at the end of the text. The emphasis seems to suggest that the people of Israel were being given this beautiful land because of God's grace and

not based on any merit of theirs. The text is therefore focusing on God’s faithfulness in fulfilling the promises he made to the patriarchs as a sign of His unconditional grace and love for them and their posterity.

6:11. Sentence 1

לֹא־נִטְעַתָּ אֲשֶׁר וְזֵיתִים כַּרְמִים לֹא־חֲצַבְתָּ אֲשֶׁר חֲצוּבִים וּבְרֹת לֹא־מָלֵאתָ אֲשֶׁר כָּל־טוֹב מְלֵאִים וּבָתִּים

| Subject   | Predicate | Object  |
|---|-----------|---|
| Implied from vv. 3-4<br><i>(people of Israel)</i> |           | כָּל־טוֹב מְלֵאִים וּבָתִּים<br>and houses full of good things                                      |
|   |           | אֲשֶׁר לֹא־מָלֵאתָ<br>which you did not fill  |
|   |           | וּבְרֹת חֲצוּבִים אֲשֶׁר לֹא־חֲצַבְתָּ<br>and cisterns which you did not dig                        |
|   |           | לֹא־נִטְעַתָּ אֲשֶׁר וְזֵיתִים כַּרְמִים<br>and vineyards and olive trees<br>that you did not plant |

The sentence (6:11), has a main clause (6:11a) and comprises three relative subordinate clauses (6:11b, 11c, and 11d). It is itself subordinate to the previous text as indicated by the ו conjunction that connects this clause to the previous one. The thought of unconditional love for the people of Israel that was brought out in the preceding clauses is therefore continued here. The subordinate relative clauses marked by אֲשֶׁר also further buttress the idea that the people of Israel were going to inherit the good of that land without any effort on their part, hence solely based on God’s grace and love for them.

6:11. Clause 2

וְאָכַלְתָּ וְשָׂבֵעַתָּ

| Subject  | Predicate                       | Object                                |
|--|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Implied from verse 10<br>( <i>People of Israel</i> ) | וְאָכַלְתָּ<br>And when you eat | -<br><br>וְשָׂבֵעַתָּ<br>and are full |

This clause is a protasis to the next verse.

6:12. Clause 1

פֶּן־תִּשְׁכַּח לְךָ הַשֹּׁמֵר

| Subject   | Predicate              | Object     |
|---|------------------------|------------|
| Implied from verse 3-4<br>( <i>People of Israel</i> ) | הַשֹּׁמֵר<br>Take care | -<br><br>- |

An imperative, warning the people of Israel to be careful.

6:12. Clause 2

| Subject   | Predicate                          | Object  |
|---|------------------------------------|---|
| Implied from verse 3-4<br>( <i>People of Israel</i> ) | פֶּן־תִּשְׁכַּח<br>Lest you forget | אֶת־יְהוָה<br>The LORD<br>מִצְרַיִם מֵאֶרֶץ הוּצִיאָה אֲשֶׁר<br>who took you out of the land of<br>Egypt<br>עֲבָדִים מִבֵּית<br>out of the house of slavery |

Complimentary to the warning imperative in the first clause, this clause completes the thought of what the people were supposed to be wary of. The relative clause *מִצְרַיִם מֵאֶרֶץ הוּצִיאָה אֲשֶׁר* and the subordinate clause *עֲבָדִים מִבֵּית* specify which Lord they were supposed to remember and that it is Him who is their redeemer. 6:13.

Clause 1

תִּירָא אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֶת־יְהוָה

| Subject   | Predicate                        | Object   |
|---|----------------------------------|--|
| <p>ךָ</p> <p>You (<i>people of Israel – implied from verse 3-4</i>)</p> | <p>תִּירָא</p> <p>shall fear</p> | <p>אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֶת־יְהוָה</p> <p>the LORD your God</p> |

6:13. Clause 2

תַּעֲבֹד וְאִתּוֹ

| Subject   | Predicate                              | Object                     |
|---|--|----------------------------|
| <p>Implied from verse 3-4<br/>(<i>People of Israel</i>)</p> | <p>תַּעֲבֹד</p> <p>You shall serve</p> | <p>וְאִתּוֹ</p> <p>Him</p> |

6.13. Clause 3

וּבְשֵׁמוֹ תִשָּׁבַע

| Subject   | Predicate                                | Object                               |
|---|--|--------------------------------------|
| <p>Implied from verse 3-4<br/>(<i>People of Israel</i>)</p> | <p>תִּשָּׁבַע</p> <p>You shall swear</p> | <p>וּבְשֵׁמוֹ</p> <p>by his name</p> |

The imperfect tense of the three clauses in the text suggests that the imperative action must be continual. The people of God are supposed to fear, serve, and swear by Him for as long as they live. The qal form of the verb יָרָא suggests both, being afraid of God and showing reverence to Him. However, the object marker אֶת points to YHWH as the object, meaning the imperative תִּירָא אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֶת־יְהוָה (fear the LORD your God) refers to worship as was noted above. Nichol points out that שָׁבַע (to swear) comes from the same root as שִׁבְעָה (seven)<sup>73</sup> implying that when a man swears, he binds himself to the oath seven times, meaning nothing will set him free from the

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<sup>73</sup> "Deuteronomy," 1:975.

oath.<sup>74</sup> Therefore, the people of God were being admonished never to forsake their God or to show allegiance to other gods.

The three clauses of the text are each marked by a verb as the predicate: (i) תִּירָא אֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ תִירָא – “you shall fear the LORD your God,” (ii) וְאֵתוֹ תַעֲבֹד – “and Him only shall you serve,” and (iii) וּבְשֵׁמוֹ תִשָּׁבַע – “and by His name you shall swear.” The sentence is structured so that the object precedes the verb. Such an ordering of a sentence suggests that emphasis or focus is on the object (God) rather than the verbs.<sup>75</sup> The Jerome Biblical Commentary<sup>76</sup> adds voice to the same argument and posits that the stylistic inversion is for emphasis and hence ‘fear’ refers to religious reverence expressed in worship.

The LXX renders תִירָא (you shall fear) as φοβηθήση and according to Kalland, the sense of worship is within the semantic reach of both the Hebrew and Greek.<sup>77</sup> Jesus’ semantic use of the text in his response to the devil in the wilderness of temptation is another telling point. He used προσκυνήσεις (worship) and added μόνω (only) (Matt. 4:10).<sup>78</sup> It shows that Jesus understood Deut 6:13 to be referring to monotheistic worship rather than terror as some commentators<sup>79</sup> have suggested. Therefore, the imperatival phrase “to fear God” in this text relates to worshipping God the deliverer and not showing any reverence to other gods.

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<sup>74</sup> “Deuteronomy,” 1: 975.

<sup>75</sup> Earl S. Kalland, *Deuteronomy*, The Expositor’s Bible Commentary (EBC) 3 ed. Frank Gaebelien (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 68.

<sup>76</sup> Benjamin, *Deuteronomy*, JBC 1:107.

<sup>77</sup> Kalland, *Deuteronomy* EBC, 68.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid, 68.

<sup>79</sup> G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (NIGTC) (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 751.

#### 6.14. Clause 1

|   |                                       |   |
|---|---------------------------------------|---|
| אֲחֵרִים אֱלֹהִים אַחֲרַי תִּלְכוּן לֹא             |                                       |   |
| Subject   | Predicate                             | Object  |
| Implied from vv. 3-4<br>( <i>people of Israel</i> ) | תִּלְכוּן לֹא<br>You shall not follow | אֲחֵרִים אֱלֹהִים אַחֲרַי<br>After other gods |

#### 6.14. Clause 2

|                                 |           |   |
|---------------------------------|-----------|---|
| סְבִיבוֹתֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר הָעַמִּים |           |   |
| Subject                         | Predicate | Object  |
| -                               | -         | סְבִיבוֹתֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר הָעַמִּים<br>The gods of the people<br>around you |

The second clause is a subordinate relative clause complimenting the first clause. God is specifying the other gods that the people of Israel must not follow.

### Summary

The book of Deuteronomy is a narrative meant to instil consciousness among God's people that they were not supposed to be like the Canaanites. Rather, they should respond positively to God's love by being obedient to his commandments. The whole of chapter six is a call to shun syncretism and worship Jehovah alone. The syntax of the analysed texts also suggests that Moses was instructing the people of God to enter into an everlasting, covenantal relationship with Him driven by love as a positive response to His grace. The way Jesus alludes to the same text in responding to the devil's suggestion (Matt 4:10) shows that Jesus understood fearing God as referring to worshipping God, not being terrified by Him. It should be beyond doubt therefore that the imperative "to fear God" in Deuteronomy 6:13 alludes to shunning syncretism and rendering undivided worship to God.

## Joshua 24:14

### Context

Gordon H. Matties,<sup>80</sup> Howard David,<sup>81</sup> and The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commenatry<sup>82</sup> view the book of Joshua as a bridging link between the Pentateuch and the rest of the twelve historical books with God being the primary object of the book. While the book of Deuteronomy, which precedes Joshua, mainly focuses on preparing the people of Israel to enter Canaan, the book of Joshua narrates the process of entering Canaan, the occupation of the land, and all the spiritual concerns,<sup>83</sup> written at a time when the cup of iniquity of the Amorites had become full.<sup>84</sup>

Even though much of the focus of the book is on the occupation of the Promised Land, Matthew Henry claims that it is also a narration of God's love to His people, His justice in punishing the Canaanites for their evil, and His faithfulness to His covenant with the patriarchs.<sup>85</sup> Hays and Duvall assert that the book emphasizes faithfulness to the covenant as a condition for Israel's continued peaceful occupation of the land, while disobedience is shown to be an obstacle to their prosperity.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Gordon H. Matties, *Joshua*, 237.

<sup>81</sup> David M. Howard, *Joshua*, The New American Commentary (NAC) 5 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1998), 27.

<sup>82</sup> "Joshua," *SDABC*, 2:169.

<sup>83</sup> Howard, *Joshua*, 27.

<sup>84</sup> "Joshua," *SDABC*, 2:170.

<sup>85</sup> Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*, vol. 2, Joshua - 1 Kings (NY: Fleming H. Revell, 1935), 239.

<sup>86</sup> Hays and Duvall, "Joshua," *The Baker Illustrated Bible Dictionary (BIBD)*, ed. Tremper Longman, Mark L. Strauss and Peter Enns (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2013), 3:180.

## Pericope

The twenty-fourth chapter of Joshua can be divided into three categories. The first category (vv. 1-13) is a historical narration of the experiences of the patriarchs up to the time of occupation of the Promised Land.<sup>87</sup> The second category (vv. 14-28), is a discourse between Joshua and the people presented in a charge and response format.<sup>88</sup> The third and final category (vv. 29-33) narrates the death and burial of Joshua as well as the reburial of Joseph's bones in Shechem. It follows that the pericope of the text in question should be in the first part of the second category (vv. 14-15), where Joshua is charging the people of Israel never to forsake Jehovah. The rest of the pericope narrates the people's response to Joshua's charge.

## Translation of the Text

| Hebrew Text  | Translation   |
|--|---|
| וְעַתָּה יִרְאוּ אֶת־יְהוָה וְעָבְדוּ אֹתוֹ בְּתָמִים וּבְאֵמֶת<br>וְהִסִּירוּ אֶת־אֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר עָבְדוּ אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם בְּעֵבֶר<br>הַנָּהָר וּבְמִצְרָיִם וְעָבְדוּ אֶת־יְהוָה   | v. 14 Now fear the LORD and serve him with sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the river and in Egypt and serve the LORD.   |
| וְאִם רָע בְּעֵינֵיכֶם לַעֲבֹד אֶת־<br>יְהוָה בְּחַרְוֵי לְבָבְכֶם הַיּוֹם אֶת־מִי תַעֲבֹדוּן אִם אֶת־<br>אֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר־<br>עָבְדוּ אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר בְּעֵבֶר הַנָּהָר וְאִם אֶת־<br>אֱלֹהֵי הָאֲמֹרִי אֲשֶׁר אַתֶּם יֹשְׁבֵים בְּאֶרֶץ אֲמֹנִי וְ<br>בֵּיתִי נִעֲבֹד אֶת־יְהוָה | v. 15 And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve; if the gods which your fathers served beyond the river of the gods of the Amorites whom you dwell in their land; but my house and I, we will serve the LORD. |

## Genre

The book of Joshua is a continuation of the narration of the Pentateuch.<sup>89</sup> It traces the history of the fulfilment of God's promises to His people of giving them

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<sup>87</sup> Henry, 2:257.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> "Joshua," *SDABC*, 2:171.

Canaan as their homeland.<sup>90</sup> Besides, the book is a series of independent narratives but the conclusion (chpts. 23-24) is an exhortation to the people of God, admonishing them to remain faithful to Jehovah.<sup>91</sup> The book of Joshua can therefore be said to be a narrative of the history of Israel's occupation of the land of Canaan that ends with an exhortation from Joshua, the son of Nun, to shun the religious and worship systems of the natives of that land.

### Morpho-syntactical Analysis

Josh 24:14-15

Josh 24:14-15 make the immediate pericope of the larger pericope that ends with v. 18. The two texts will be analysed in this section.

24:14. Clause 1

אֶת־יְהוָה יִרְאוּ וְעָתָה

|  |                 |                        |
|--|-----------------|------------------------|
| Subject  | Predicate       | Object                 |
| Implied from verse 1-2 ( <i>people of Israel</i> ) | יִרְאוּ<br>fear | אֶת־יְהוָה<br>The LORD |

24:14. Clause 2

וּבְאֵמֶת בְּתַמִּים אֹתוֹ וְעָבְדוּ

|   |                        |                         |
|---|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Subject   | Predicate              | Object                  |
| Implied from verse 1-2<br>( <i>people of Israel</i> ) | וְעָבְדוּ<br>And serve | אֹתוֹ<br>Him (the LORD) |

וּבְאֵמֶת בְּתַמִּים  
in sincerity and in faithfulness

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<sup>90</sup> Hays and Duvall, *BIBD*, 3:179.

<sup>91</sup> Donald H. Madvig, "Joshua", *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 3 ed. Frank E. Gaebelain (Grand Rapids: Zondervan), 239.

24:14. Sentence 3

|  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <p>Subject<br/>Implied from verse 1-<br/>2 (<i>people of Israel</i>)</p> | <p>Predicate<br/>וְהִסִּירוּ<br/>Put away</p> | <p>Object<br/>אֱת־אֱלֹהִים<br/>the gods</p>   |
|  |   | <p>וּבְמִצְרַיִם הַנָּהָר בְּעֵבֶר אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם עָבְדוּ אֲשֶׁר<br/>which your fathers served beyond<br/>the river and in Egypt</p> |
|  | <p>וְעָבְדוּ<br/>and serve</p>                | <p>אֶת־יְהוָה<br/>The LORD</p>  |

The text has four main clauses, each one punctuated by an imperative:

| Hebrew Clause  | Translation   |
|--|---|
| וְעַתָּה יִרְאוּ אֶת־יְהוָה  | Now fear the LORD   |
| וְעָבְדוּ אֹתוֹ בְּתָמִים וּבְאֵמֶת  | and serve Him in sincerity and in<br>faithfulness                                   |
| וְהִסִּירוּ אֶת־אֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר עָבְדוּ אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם בְּעֵבֶר<br>הַנָּהָר וּבְמִצְרַיִם : | and put away the gods which your<br>fathers served beyond the river and in<br>Egypt |
| וְעָבְדוּ אֶת־יְהוָה   | and serve the LORD  |

The first and second clauses as well as the third and fourth clause can be presented either in parallelism or in a chiasmic form. The ׀ conjunction in the second and fourth clauses indicates continuation of thought with the first and third clauses consecutively thereby determining the parallels as well. Fearing God and putting away foreign gods, parallels serving Him. This suggests that serving God is the same as fearing and worshipping Him alone. The shift in mood of the chapter from indicative (vv. 2-13) to imperative (vv. 14-28) also adds impetus to the same thought.<sup>92</sup> The resultant effect is an echo of the narration in Deuteronomy where Israel was either chastised for forsaking the Lord, or warned against embracing the gods of the Canaanites.

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<sup>92</sup> L. Daniel Hawk, *Joshua*, Berit Olam (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000), 272.

The fact that fearing God and serving Him are acts that are held together by an exhortation to put away any other forms of so-called gods, points to worship and unwavering devotion to Jehovah. Hence, in this pericope, fearing God is related with serving Him and shunning all false gods.

24:15a. Clause 1

אַת־יְהוָה לְעַבְדֵּךְ בְּעֵינֶיךָ רַע וְאֵם

| Subject   | Predicate                                      | Object   |
|---|--|--|
| Implied from verse 1-2<br>( <i>people of Israel</i> ) | רַע וְאֵם<br>If it is evil (protasis)          | בְּעֵינֶיךָ (prepositional phrase)<br>In your eyes |
|   | לְעַבְדֵּךְ (Infinitive construct)<br>To serve | אַת־יְהוָה<br>The LORD                             |

24:15b. Clause 2

תַּעֲבֹדוּן אֶת־מִי הַיּוֹם לְכֶם בַּחֲרוּ

| Subject   | Predicate          | Object  |
|---|--------------------|---|
| Implied from verse 1-2<br>( <i>people of Israel</i> ) | בַּחֲרוּ<br>choose | הַיּוֹם לְכֶם<br>This day<br>תַּעֲבֹדוּן אֶת־מִי<br>Whom you will serve |

24:15c. Clause 3

בְּעִבְרַתְנָהָר אֲשֶׁר אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר־עָבְדוּ אֶת־אֱלֹהִים

| Subject   | Predicate  | Object   |
|---|--|--|
| אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם<br>Your fathers                           | אֲשֶׁר־עָבְדוּ<br>[which] served                             | אֶת־אֱלֹהִים<br>The gods<br>בְּעִבְרַתְנָהָר אֲשֶׁר<br>beyond the river<br>אֶת־אֱלֹהֵי וְאֵם<br>and the gods<br>הָאֲמֹרִי<br>of the Amorites |
| Implied from verse 1-2<br>( <i>people of Israel</i> ) | בְּאֶרְצָם יֹשְׁבִים אֲתָם אֲשֶׁר<br>In whose land you dwell | -  |

24:15d. Clause 4

אֶת־יְהוָה: נַעֲבֹד וּבֵיתִי וְאֹנְכִי

| Subject                 | Predicate     | Object      |
|-------------------------|---------------|-------------|
| וּבֵיתִי וְאֹנְכִי      | נַעֲבֹד       | אֶת־יְהוָה: |
| But for me and my house | We will serve | The LORD    |

The first clause (24:15a) has a protasis and an infinitive as its predicate with the object being a prepositional phrase – בְּעֵינֵיכֶם (in your eyes) and a direct object – אֶת־יְהוָה (the LORD). The apodosis is found in the second clause (24:15b), hence Joshua is presenting two options for the people of Israel; either they serve Jehovah or the gods of the Amorites. Jehovah is still the object, together with other gods and the subjects are the two juxtaposed groups, which are the people of Israel or Joshua and his household. The predicate of the main clause and the rest have choosing whom to serve between Jehovah and other gods. The thought in this text is therefore complimenting the argument in the previous text and that is, the children of Israel had to demonstrate to whom their allegiance was, between Jehovah and the foreign gods.

### Summary

It has been shown that the book of Joshua mainly focuses on the entrance of Israel into Canaan and the need for them to be wary of embracing the polytheistic religion and evil ways of the people of that land. It is a book that highlights God's covenantal love for his people hence, the imperative to יִרְאוּ אֶת־יְהוָה (fear the LORD) must be understood in that light. Where there is love there is no fear (1 John 4:18), therefore the imperative is speaking of serving God and obedience instead of terror.

The pericope within which the text falls emphasizes the need for Israel to have an everlasting relationship with God. Coupled with this is the semantic and syntactic arrangement of the clauses in Josh 24:14-15. The clauses are an admonition to Israel

not to forsake the LORD, hence the imperative to יִרְאוּ אֶת־יְהוָה (fear the LORD). The parallelistic structure of v. 14 shows an emphasis in the narrative of how Israel was being exhorted to worship nothing else other than Jehovah. Again, “fear God,” based on the syntactical analysis of 24:15, refers to worship of God and shunning foreign gods.

## **2 Kings 17:39**

### **Context**

Commentators agree that 1 and 2 Kings should be studied as one book that closes the history of Israel from the time they left Egypt until they settled in Canaan. Sweeney<sup>93</sup> views the books as tracing the history of the Israelites and how they related with Jehovah, from the time they entered Canaan up to the time of the Babylonian exile. The books sharply criticize the kings of Israel and Judah for influencing people to forsake observance of what God expected of them.<sup>94</sup> Hens-Piazza<sup>95</sup> also suggests that 1 and 2 Kings, together with 1 and 2 Samuel, reveal the story of the Israelite monarchy beginning from the time of Saul up to the exile.

2 Kings 17 narrates the events that occurred during the resettlement of Samaria and how the captives continued to worship their gods without paying attention to the Lord.<sup>96</sup> This was the same period when the Assyrians had destroyed the northern kingdom, although, according to Sweeney,<sup>97</sup> the narrative of 2 Kings 17

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<sup>93</sup> Marvin A. Sweeney, *I & II Kings: A Commentary. I & II Kings* ed. Marvin A. Sweeney (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 1.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid*, 3.

<sup>95</sup> Gina Hens-Piazza, *1-2 Kings, Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006), 1.

<sup>96</sup> Hens-Piazza, 353.

<sup>97</sup> Sweeney, *I & II Kings*, 389.

asserts that God was still Israel's defender. The Baker Illustrated Bible Commentary<sup>98</sup> also adds that in 2 Kings 17, the author focuses on giving a theological explanation for the fall of the northern kingdom. This was mainly because everyone had collaborated in being unfaithful to God and were seeking after idols.

Paul House<sup>99</sup> explains that the period in which the Book of Kings was written was the same when Samaria and the surrounding nations were known for a syncretistic religious system and deities from other nations were being worshipped. Israel had lost the land that she had fought so hard to possess and had embraced the forms of worship and deities of the land. In summary, this was a period of general apostasy.

### **Pericope**

Robert Cohn<sup>100</sup> and Hens-Piazza<sup>101</sup> agree that the pericope of 2 Kgs 17:39 starts from v. 34 and ends with v. 41. Robert Cohn further claims that the same section is an *inclusio*<sup>102</sup> whereby the last three words of v. 41 (to this day) repeat the first three words of v. 34, while Hens-Piazza views v. 34 as a transition point that connects the rebellious character of the foreigners with the acts that were forbidden by the Lord.<sup>103</sup> In this *inclusio*, the narrator criticizes the offspring of the settlers for

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<sup>98</sup> Keith Bodner, *1&2 Kings, BIBD*, 349.

<sup>99</sup> Paul R. House, *1, 2 Kings*, The New American Commentary, (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 8:343.

<sup>100</sup> Robert L. Cohn, *Berit Olam: 2 Kings* ed. David W. Cotter (Collegeville, MI: Liturgical Press, 2000), 122.

<sup>101</sup> Hens-Piazza, *1-2 Kings*, 353.

<sup>102</sup> Cohn, *2 Kings*, 122.

<sup>103</sup> Hens-Piazza, *1-2 Kings*, 354.

perpetuating the idolatrous practices of their ancestors.<sup>104</sup> This analysis will therefore take the verses in the inclusio as the immediate pericope to be analysed.

### Translation of the Text

| Hebrew Text  |       | Translation   |
|--|-------|---|
| <p style="text-align: center;">עד היום הנה הם עשים כמשפטים הראשנים<br/>אינם יראים את־<br/>יהנה ואינם עשים כחוקתם וכמשפטים וכתור<br/>ה וכמצנה אשר צנה יהנה אבני יעקב אשר־<br/>שם שמו ישראל:</p> | v. 34 | <p>Up to this day they do according to the former manner; not fearing the LORD and not doing according to the statutes and ordinances or the law or the commandments which the LORD commanded the sons of Jacob who was named Israel.</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;">ויקרת יהנה אתם ברית ויצום לאמר לא תיך<br/>או אלהים אחרים ולא־<br/>תשתחוו להם ולא מעבדום ולא תזבחו להם</p>   | v. 35 | <p>And the LORD made a covenant with them and commanded them saying do not fear other gods and do not bow to them or serve them or sacrifice to them.</p>   |
| <p style="text-align: center;">כי אם את־<br/>יהנה אשר העלה אתכם מארץ מצרים בכת ג<br/>דול ובזרוע נטויה אתו תיראו ולו תשתחוו ו<br/>לו תזבחו</p>  | v. 36 | <p>But you shall fear the LORD who brought you out of the land pf Egypt with great power and with an outstretched arm. You shall bow to him and to him you shall sacrifice.</p>   |
| <p style="text-align: center;">ואת־החקים ואת־<br/>המשפטים והתורה והמצנה אשר כתב לכם<br/>תשמרון לעשות כל־<br/>הימים ולא תיראו אלהים אחרים</p>   | v. 37 | <p>And the statutes and the ordinances and the commandments which he wrote to you, you shall be careful to all the days [of your life] and you shall not fear other gods.</p>   |
| <p style="text-align: center;">והברית אשר־<br/>ברתי אתכם לא תשכחו ולא תיראו אלהים א<br/>חרים</p>   | v. 38 | <p>And you shall not forget the covenant that I made with you, and you shall not fear other gods.</p>   |
| <p style="text-align: center;">כי אם את־את־<br/>יהנה אלהיכם תיראו והוא יציל אתכם מיד כ<br/>ל־איביכם</p>  | v. 39 | <p>But you shall fear the LORD your God and he will deliver you from the hand of all your enemies.</p>  |
| <p style="text-align: center;">לא שמעו כי אם־<br/>כמשפטים הראשון הם עשים</p>   | v. 40 | <p>But they did not listen, but did according to their former manner.</p>   |
| <p style="text-align: center;">ויהיו הגוים האלה יראים את־יהנה ואת־<br/>פסיליהם היו עבדים גם־</p>   | v. 41 | <p>And it came to pass that these nations feared the LORD and they</p>  |

<sup>104</sup> Cohn, 2 *Kings*, 122.

בְּנֵיהֶם וּבְנֵי בְנֵיהֶם כַּאֲשֶׁר עָשׂוּ אֲבוֹתָם הֵם עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה

served their idols. Their children also and their children's children as what their fathers did up to this day.

## Genre

The Baker Illustrated Bible Commentary<sup>105</sup> asserts that the book of 2 Kings is a continuous narrative of the experiences of Israel while in Canaan. The same notion is also shared by Sweeney<sup>106</sup> who posits that the book is a narrative record of the two kingdoms of Israel, Judah and Israel. Both commentators agree that the books of 1-2 Kings must be read and studied together because the book of Deuteronomy provides the foundation for the narratives found in the two books.<sup>107</sup> However, Hens-Piazza argues that the books are not just historical narratives but rather a record of the salvation story of Israel.<sup>108</sup> With the two thoughts put together, it can be argued that the books of 1-2 Kings are narratives of the salvation story of Israel.

## Morpho-syntactical Analysis: 2 Kings 17:34-41

2 Kgs 17:34-41 make the immediate pericope of verse 37 of the same chapter. The clauses will be analysed to ascertain the contextual and intended meaning of the imperative in v. 37.

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<sup>105</sup> Bodner, *BIBD*, 315.

<sup>106</sup> Sweeney, *I & II Kings*, 1.

<sup>107</sup> Bodner, *BIBD*, 315.

<sup>108</sup> Hens-Piazza, *1-2 Kings*, 2.

17:34. Clause 1

הָרְאִישִׁים כַּמִּשְׁפָּטִים עֲשִׂים הֵם הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה עַד

| Subject   | Predicate                      | Object  |
|---|--------------------------------|---|
| Implied from v. 30-31 ( <i>men of Babylon, Cuth, Hamath, Avites and Serphavites</i> ) | עֲשִׂים הֵם הַיּוֹם<br>They do | הַיּוֹם עַד (prepositional phrase)<br>this day<br>הָרְאִישִׁים כַּמִּשְׁפָּטִים<br>according to the former manner |

The subject in this pericope, save for vv. 34 – 35, are the heathen people of Babylon, Cuth, Hamath, Avites and Serphavites. They had not shown signs of true reform but rather continued in their syncretic lifestyle.

17:34. Clause 2

אֶת־יְהוָה יִרְאִים אֵינָם

| Subject   | Predicate                           | Object                 |
|---|-------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Implied from v. 30-31 ( <i>men of Babylon, Cuth, Hamath, Avites and Serphavites</i> ) | יִרְאִים אֵינָם<br>They do not fear | אֶת־יְהוָה<br>The LORD |

17:34. Clause 3

כְּחֻקֵּיהֶם עֲשִׂים וְאֵינָם

| Subject   | Predicate                              | Object   |
|---|--|--|
| Implied from v. 30-31 ( <i>men of Babylon, Cuth, Hamath, Avites and Serphavites</i> ) | עֲשִׂים וְאֵינָם<br>And they do not do | כְּחֻקֵּיהֶם<br>according to the statutes<br><br>וּכְמִשְׁפָּטָם<br>or according to the rules<br>וְכַתּוּבָה<br>or according to the law<br>וְכַמִּצְוָה<br>or according to the commandment |

The predicate in the second and third clauses is presented negatively to highlight what these nations failed to do. Failure to fear God parallels not following his statutes, rules, laws, and commandments. The opposite is supposed to be true – fearing God is paralleled with doing according to his statutes, rules, laws and commandments.

17:34. Clause 4

יִשְׂרָאֵל שָׁמוֹ אֲשֶׁר־שָׁם יַעֲקֹב אֶת־בְּנֵי יְהוָה צִוָּה אֲשֶׁר

|                               |                                  |   |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|
| Subject<br>יְהוָה<br>The LORD | Predicate<br>צִוָּה<br>commanded | Object<br>יַעֲקֹב אֶת־בְּנֵי<br>The children of Jacob |
| יְהוָה<br>The LORD            |                                  | יִשְׂרָאֵל שָׁמוֹ אֲשֶׁר־שָׁם<br>Named Israel         |

17:35. Clause 1

לֵאמֹר בְּרִית וְיִצְוֹם אִתָּם יְהוָה וַיִּכְרַת

|                               |                                    |  |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|--|
| Subject<br>יְהוָה<br>The LORD | Predicate<br>וַיִּכְרַת<br>made    | Object<br>בְּרִית אִתָּם<br>A covenant with them |
|                               | לֵאמֹר וַיִּצְוֹם<br>And commanded | -<br>Them  |

The LORD, being the subject, is the one who initiated the covenant between him and the children of Israel (the object) and commanded them to do specified things in fulfilment of their role in that covenant.

17:35. Clause 2 לא תיראו לאֵלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים וְלֹא־תִשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ אֲחֵרִים אֱלֹהִים תִּירְאוּ לָהֶם: תִּזְבְּחוּ וְלֹא תַעֲבֹדוּם וְלֹא לָהֶם וְלֹא־תִשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ אֲחֵרִים אֱלֹהִים תִּירְאוּ לָהֶם

| Subject   | Predicate                                 | Object                          |
|---|---|---------------------------------|
| Implied from v. 34 ( <i>the children of Jacob</i> ) | תִּירְאוּ לָא<br>Shall not fear           | אֲחֵרִים אֱלֹהִים<br>other gods |
|   | וְלֹא־תִשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ<br>or bow yourselves | לָהֶם<br>to them                |
|   | תַּעֲבֹדוּם וְלֹא<br>or serve             | הֵמָּה<br>them                  |
|   | תִּזְבְּחוּ: וְלֹא<br>or sacrifice        | לָהֶם<br>to them                |

In this clause, the children of Israel are the subject, suggesting they are the ones to do the action specified in the predicate. Other false gods are the objects. The predicate has four action words that are imperatives forbidding the children of Israel from fearing, bowing down to, serving and sacrificing to false gods. The same predicates are joined together by a vav and negative particle forming וְלֹא(or) which is an indicator of the alternative meaning. This suggests that the command not to fear other gods is prohibition not to worship, bow down or serve them.

17:36. Clause 1

תִּירְאוּ אֹתוֹ נְטוּיָהּ וּבְזֵרוּעַ גְּדוּל בְּכַחַּם מִצְרַיִם מֵאֶרֶץ אֲתֻמָּהּ הַעֲלָהּ אֲשֶׁר אָם־אֶת־יְהוָה כִּי

| Subject  | Predicate  | Object  |
|--|--|---|
| <p>Implied from v. 34<br/>(<i>children of Jacob</i>)</p> | <p>תִּירְאוּ<br/>You shall fear</p>  | <p>יְהוָה<br/>the LORD<br/>מִצְרַיִם מֵאֶרֶץ אֲתֻמָּהּ הַעֲלָהּ אֲשֶׁר<br/>who brought you out of the<br/>land of Egypt (relative,<br/>independent clause)<br/><br/>נְטוּיָהּ וּבְזֵרוּעַ גְּדוּל בְּכַחַּם<br/>with great power and with an<br/>outstretched arm</p> |
| <p>Implied from v. 34<br/>(<i>children of Jacob</i>)</p> | <p>תִּשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ<br/>you shall bow</p> <p>וּתִזְבְּחוּ<br/>and you shall<br/>sacrifice</p> | <p>יְהוָה (the LORD)<br/>to him</p> <p>יְהוָה<br/>to him</p>  |

There is a shift in the object in this text compared to the previous one. The object is no longer the false gods, but the LORD Himself. Contrary to being told not to fear false gods, here the phrase “fear the Lord” is imperatival. For the avoidance of doubt, the relative clause: מִצְרַיִם מֵאֶרֶץ אֲתֻמָּהּ הַעֲלָהּ אֲשֶׁר (who brought you out of the land of Egypt), specifies and differentiates the LORD from all the other gods, while the adverbial phrase: נְטוּיָהּ וּבְזֵרוּעַ גְּדוּל בְּכַחַּם (with great power and with an outstretched arm) coming after it, serves to remind the children of Jacob of the power of the only God worthy to be feared and worshipped. The text therefore gives the reason why only God must be feared, and that is because it is He who delivered the children of Israel from Egyptian bondage. The other phrases in the clause are תִּשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ (you shall bow) and תִּזְבְּחוּ (you shall sacrifice), and has been indicated above, they are parallel

to the main phrase **וירא** (you shall fear), implying that fearing God and bowing and sacrificing to Him have a synonymous effect.

17:37a. Clause 1

**כִּלְהִימִים לַעֲשׂוֹת תִּשְׁמְרוּן לְכֶם כָּתַב אֲשֶׁר וְהַמִּצְוָה וְהַתּוֹרָה וְאֵת־הַמִּשְׁפָּטִים וְאֵת־הַחֻקִּים**

| Subject  | Predicate   | Object  |
|--|---|---|
| Implied from v. 34<br><i>(children of Jacob)</i> | <b>כִּלְהִימִים לַעֲשׂוֹת תִּשְׁמְרוּן</b><br>You shall always do | -<br><br><b>וְאֵת־וְאֵת־הַחֻקִּים</b><br><b>וְהַמִּצְוָה וְהַתּוֹרָה הַמִּשְׁפָּטִים</b><br>the statutes, rules, law, and the<br>commandment<br><br><b>אֲשֶׁר</b> (relative clause)<br>which he wrote for you |

In this clause, syntactically, the imperatival phrase **כִּלְהִימִים לַעֲשׂוֹת תִּשְׁמְרוּן** (you shall always do) has a hortatory effect. The children of Jacob are being encouraged to do the commandments and laws of the LORD. The **ו** conjunction that begins this clause suggests a continuation from the previous clause. Hence, in this text fearing God, besides referring to serving, bowing to God and sacrificing to Him only, also points to keeping His commandments

17:37b. Clause 2

**אֲחֵרִים אֱלֹהִים תִּירָאוּ וְלֹא**

| Subject  | Predicate                                    | Object                                 |
|--|--|--|
| Implied from v. 34<br><i>(children of Jacob)</i> | <b>תִּירָאוּ וְלֹא</b><br>You shall not fear | <b>אֲחֵרִים אֱלֹהִים</b><br>other gods |

In this clause, the children of Jacob are the subject as well. The command not to fear other gods is repeated. The repetition in this case is for emphasis.

17:38a. Clause 1

תִּשְׁכַּחוּ לֹא אֶתְכֶם אֲשֶׁר־כָּרַתִּי וְהַבְרִית

| Subject  | Predicate                                | Object  |
|--|--|---|
| Implied from v. 34<br>( <i>children of Jacob</i> ) | תִּשְׁכַּחוּ לֹא<br>You shall not forget | וְהַבְרִית<br>the covenant                            |
|  |  | אֶתְכֶם אֲשֶׁר־כָּרַתִּי<br>that I have made with you |

This clause is a reminder to the children of Israel. It is an imperative exhorting them not to forget the covenant that God had entered into with them. The covenant involved keeping of God's commandments (v.37a)

17:38b. Clause 2

אֲחֵרִים אֱלֹהִים תִּירָאוּ וְלֹא

| Subject  | Predicate                      | Object                          |
|--|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Implied from v. 34<br>( <i>children of Jacob</i> ) | תִּירָאוּ וְלֹא<br>Do not fear | אֲחֵרִים אֱלֹהִים<br>other gods |

The two clauses of v. 38, syntactically, are imperatives. These imperatives are not to forget the covenant and not to fear other gods. While 17:38a is a command to keep God's commandments, 17:38b is a prohibition to worship other gods. Similar to what was highlighted in the previous text, here the command not to fear other gods also is synonymous with keeping His commandments.

17:39a. Clause 1

תִּירְאוּ אֱלֹהֵיכֶם אִם־תִּזְהֶנָּה כִּי

| Subject  | Predicate                   | Object  |
|--|-----------------------------|---|
| Implied from v. 34<br>( <i>children of Jacob</i> ) | תִּירְאוּ<br>You shall fear | אֱלֹהֵיכֶם אִם־תִּזְהֶנָּה<br>the LORD your God |
| 17:39b. Clause 2                                   |                             |   |

כָּל־אֹיְבֵיכֶם מִיַּד אֶתְכֶם יִצִּיל וְהוּא

| Subject                                | Predicate                      | Object   |
|--|--------------------------------|--|
| אֱלֹהֵיכֶם תִּזְהֶנָּה<br>The LORD God | יִצִּיל וְהוּא<br>will deliver | אֶתְכֶם<br>you (children of Jacob)<br>כָּל־אֹיְבֵיכֶם מִיַּד (prepositional phrase)<br>out of the hand of all your enemies |

In the first clause (17:39a), the subject is the children of Jacob and the object is the LORD God, of which it has already been noted that whenever God is the object, the imperative “fear God” refers to worshipping him.<sup>109</sup> The children of Jacob are the ones being commanded to fear God. The order is inverted in the second clause (17:39b), where the LORD God becomes the subject and the children of Jacob are the object. This inversion shows a cause and effect relationship in that it shows what God will do if His people play their honest role. Fearing God, in this case will result in God delivering His people from the hand of their enemies, thus suggesting that fearing God is something that draws a desirable response from God.

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<sup>109</sup> VanGemeren, *NIDOTTE*, 529.

The text has two clauses, with the second clause complimented by an adjectival participle<sup>110</sup> functioning substantively.

- i) כִּי אַם-אֶת-יְהוָה אֲלֵהֶיכֶם תִּירָאוּ - but you shall fear the LORD you God
- ii) וְהוּא יִצִּיל אֶתְכֶם מִיַּד כָּל-אֲבִיבֵיכֶם - and he will deliver you out of the hand of all your enemies.

The particle conjunction כִּי that introduces the text serves to link it with the preceding thought. In 2 Kgs 17:38, the Israelites are admonished not to forsake the covenant and not to fear other gods. The context of the book, chapter, and pericope point to Israel being warned against worshipping the gods of the Canaanites since this was the cause of their falling into captivity. Fear of other gods is therefore juxtaposed with fear of the LORD. In this case, worship of other gods is juxtaposed with worship of the true God.

The two clauses also relate as apodosis and protasis to each other. If Israel would fear God, then He will deliver them from the hand of their enemies. The context in this case does not suggest being terrified of God but rather obedience and proper, undivided worship. It therefore follows that fearing God, in this text refers to worshipping of God who in turn acts on behalf of His subjects by delivering them from the hand of their enemies. This same thought rings through scripture. The midwives found favour from God who not only prospered their houses, but also protected them Pharaoh because they feared Him (Ex 1:20-21). Job, who feared God (Job 1:1), in the end enjoyed greater prosperity than what he had at the beginning. In Malachi 3:1, God reckoned the acts of those who feared Him and immortalized them in the records of heaven. In the New Testament, men like Cornelius were rewarded

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<sup>110</sup> Gary Alan Long, *Grammatical Concepts 101 for Biblical Hebrew*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 89.

for fearing God (Acts 10:22), while the remorseful thief on the cross received instant justification because he had demonstrated fear for God (Luke 23:40-43).

17:40a. Clause 1

שָׁמְעוּ וְלֹא

| Subject  | Predicate                                 | Object |
|--|---|--------|
| Implied from v. 34<br>( <i>children of Jacob</i> ) | שָׁמְעוּ וְלֹא<br>But they did not listen | -      |

17:40b. Clause 2

עָשׂוּ כַּמִּשְׁפָּטִים כִּי

| Subject  | Predicate          | Object  |
|--|--------------------|---|
| Implied from v. 34<br>( <i>children of Jacob</i> ) | עָשׂוּ<br>they did | כַּמִּשְׁפָּטִים<br>according to their former<br>manner |

The vav and negative particle וְלֹא (but) suggests that the children of Jacob did not do according to what they were commanded in the imperatives. In fact, they continued in their former manner of fearing other gods and bowing and serving them.

17:41a. Clause 1

אֶת־יְהוָה יִרְאוּ הָאֱלֹהִים הַגּוֹיִם וַיִּהְיוּ

| Subject                               | Predicate         | Object                 |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------|------------------------|
| הָאֱלֹהִים הַגּוֹיִם<br>These nations | יִרְאוּ<br>Feared | אֶת־יְהוָה<br>the LORD |

17:41b. Clause 2

עֲבָדוּם כִּי וְאֶת־פְּסִילֵיהֶם

| Subject  | Predicate                    | Object                              |
|--|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Implied from v. 34<br>( <i>children of Jacob</i> ) | עֲבָדוּם<br>They also served | פְּסִילֵיהֶם<br>their carved images |

17:41c. Clause 3

הָיָה הַיּוֹם עַד עֲשִׂים הֵם אֲבֹתָם עָשׂוּ כְּאֲשֶׁר בְּנֵיהֶם וּבְנֵי גַם־בְּנֵיהֶם|

| Subject   | Predicate  | Object  |
|---|--|---|
| <p>בְּנֵיהֶם וּבְנֵי גַם־בְּנֵיהֶם <br/>                     Their children and their children's children</p> | <p>עֲשִׂים הֵם<br/>                     did likewise</p> | <p>הָיָה הַיּוֹם עַד<br/>                     unto this day</p> |

The first and second clauses in this last text in the pericope are paradoxical.

While the other nations mentioned in verse 31, feared the LORD, they also served their idols. Since it has been established that fearing God and serving Him are synonymous in this pericope, it is sad therefore to note that these nations lacked consistency by serving graven images yet at the same time claiming to fear God. The fact that God expressed His dissatisfaction over these nations for their syncretic behaviour therefore suggests that the command to fear God is a universal command that is not only limited to the people of Israel.

In this closing text of the pericope, יָרָא is used for the seventh time. Twice it is used in the participle form in the preceding texts, where the narrator simply informs the reader the reader that, the children of Jacob feared other gods or they did not fear the LORD. Five times, it is used as an imperative in the imperfect tense where the children of Jacob are being admonished not to fear other gods, but to fear the LORD. Fearing God therefore becomes pivotal in this pericope owing to the frequency of use therein.

### Summary

It has been highlighted that the books of 1-2 Kings trace the history of Israel and Judah's relationship with Jehovah. They are being criticized for forsaking the observance of God's commands and embracing the gods of the foreign nations.

Nevertheless, God demonstrated to them that he was still their defender. The imperatival phrase “to fear God” in this context therefore was an exhortation for Israel to worship and serve God alone, obey Him, and forsake the foreign gods. It is an explicit command to keep His commandments (17:34, 37) and not to worship other gods (17:35).

The exclusive worship of God is also depicted as eliciting divine rescue in times of trouble (17:39b). From the same text, it is also revealed that God must be worshipped for what He does for His people (17:38). The book of Revelation echoes the same thought where it portrays God as the protector and redeemer of those who will worship Him in the last days (Rev 14:4).

### **Ecclesiastes 12:13**

#### **Context**

Commentators have concluded that the book of Ecclesiastes, named קהלת (Preacher), is arguably the most unusual and controversial book of the bible.<sup>111</sup> Crenshaw<sup>112</sup> refers to it as a strange book because commentators have not reached a consensus regarding the most probable background of the book. The traditional thought that the writer was Solomon has recently been challenged by some commentators who feel that the book lacks consistency and does not have as much reference to royal language as to support a Solomon authorship.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> George Athas, Tremper Longman, and Scot McKnight, *Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, The Story of God Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2020), 19.

<sup>112</sup> James Lee Crenshaw, *Ecclesiastes: A Commentary*, Old Testament Library (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster press, 1987), 23.

<sup>113</sup> Leander E. Keck, *Introduction to Wisdom Literature; the Book of Proverbs; the Book of Ecclesiastes; the Song of Songs; the Book of Wisdom; the Book of Sirach*, The New Interpreter's Bible, ed. Leander E. Keck and Richard J. Clifford (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2001), 5;275.

Resultantly, the historical and cultural background that can be found in this book is based on indefinite assumptions; hence, the suggestion by Edward Curtis<sup>114</sup> that literature from antiquity seems to have influenced the Preacher's philosophical approach to life. The Preacher appears to be pouring his heart out<sup>115</sup> in his assessment on life, and, according to Curtis this was based on his wisdom whereby he wrote about truth and righteousness, the impact of wise advice, and also that God will bring all the works into judgment.<sup>116</sup> Regardless of all this, it has been generally agreed that since the book is about ideas to do with human survival in this world, then it should have been written during the times of other wisdom literature books.<sup>117</sup>

### **Pericope**

The epilogue of the book forms the pericope of Eccl 12:13. It is outstandingly unique, in terms of style and content, from the rest of the book and that has resulted in commentators like Edward Curtis<sup>118</sup> and James Crenshaw<sup>119</sup> suggesting that a different writer could have written it as an addendum to bring balance to some of the questionable advice from the Preacher in the rest of the book. This epilogue begins from Eccl 12:9-14. Here, the book's overall meaning is explicitly spelled out. That is, men ought to fear God and keep His commandments. Nevertheless, vv.13 - 14 forms the immediate pericope since there is an audience shift from the son to the entire

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<sup>114</sup> Edward M. Curtis, *Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs*, Teach and Text Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2013), 106.

<sup>115</sup> Crenshaw, *Ecclesiastes*, 28.

<sup>116</sup> Curtis, *Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs*, 106.

<sup>117</sup> Keck, *Introduction to Wisdom Literature; the Book of Proverbs; the Book of Ecclesiastes; the Song of Songs; the Book of Wisdom; the Book of Sirach*, 283.

<sup>118</sup> Curtis, *Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs*, 106.

<sup>119</sup> Crenshaw, *Ecclesiastes*, 189.

humanity in v.13. This research will therefore take those last two verses as the pericope of Eccl 12:13.

### Translation of the Text

| Hebrew Text  |       | Translation  |
|--|-------|--|
| אֶת־נִשְׁמַע הַכֹּל דְּבַר סוֹף<br>כִּי־שְׁמֹר וְאֶת־מִצְוֹתָיו יִרְא הָאֱלֹהִים<br>כָּל־הָאָדָם זֶה | v. 13 | The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep His commandments because this [is the duty] of all man. |
| אֶת־כָּל־כִּי<br>כָּל־עַל בְּמִשְׁפָּט יָבֵא הָאֱלֹהִים מְעֻשָׂה<br>וְאִם־רָע אִם־טוֹב נִעְלָם       | v. 14 | For God will bring all works into judgment, including every secret thing whether it is good or evil.                 |

### Genre

Commentators have generally classified Ecclesiastes as wisdom literature. Even though some commentaries claim the genre of the book is debatable<sup>120,121</sup>, they still acknowledge that it reflects the philosophy of the Greek Hellenization period and also that the writer follows the nature of wisdom literature.<sup>122</sup> The Believer’s Bible Commentary<sup>123</sup> refers to it as a “compendium of human wisdom”, while the Interpreter’s Bible claims that the book relates to wisdom since it is sapiential.<sup>124</sup>

### Morpho-syntactical Analysis: Eccl 12:13-14

This pericope forms the epilogue of the book of Ecclesiastes and varies greatly in nature from the rest of the book. Both texts will be analysed below.

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<sup>120</sup> Craig Bartholomew, *BIBD*, 581.

<sup>121</sup> Keck, *Introduction to Wisdom Literature; the Book of Proverbs; the Book of Ecclesiastes; the Song of Songs; the Book of Wisdom; the Book of Sirach*, 270.

<sup>122</sup> Keck, 274.

<sup>123</sup> MacDonald and Farstad, *BBC*, 875.

<sup>124</sup> George A. Buttrick, *The Interpreter’s Bible*, vol. 5 (New York, NY: Abington Press, 1956), 3.

Ecc 12:13. Clause 1

נִשְׁמַע הַכֹּל דְּבַר סוֹף

| Subject   | Predicate                      | Object           |
|---|--------------------------------|------------------|
| Implied from vv. 9-10<br>( <i>words of wisdom and truth</i> ) | נִשְׁמַע<br>All has been heard | דְּבַר<br>Matter |

Ecc. 12:13. Clause 2

יִרְא אֶת־הָאֱלֹהִים

| Subject                                  | Predicate     | Object                |
|--|---------------|-----------------------|
| Implied in the same verse<br>(every man) | יִרְא<br>fear | אֶת־הָאֱלֹהִים<br>God |

Ecc. 12:13. Clause 3

כָּל־הָאָדָם כִּי־נָה שְׁמוֹר וְאֶת־מִצְוֹתָיו

| Subject                   | Predicate       | Object  |
|---------------------------|-----------------|---|
| כָּל־הָאָדָם<br>every man | שְׁמוֹר<br>keep | וְאֶת־מִצְוֹתָיו<br>His commandments<br>כָּל־הָאָדָם כִּי־נָה<br>Because this is the duty of<br>all man |

The first phrase of the three-clause text indicates that the preacher is ending his philosophical arguments about life by way of summary.<sup>125</sup> This naturally suggests a call to attention by all who are reading the book owing to the importance of what is about to be said. James Crenshaw points out that the imperative is either a Niphal imperfect or imperative<sup>126</sup>, and this suggests that the reader must always be willing to listen to the words of advice. While it has been highlighted that George Athas<sup>127</sup> and

<sup>125</sup> Crenshaw, *Ecclesiastes*, 192.

<sup>126</sup> Crenshaw, 192.

<sup>127</sup> George Athas, Tremper Longman, and McKnight, *Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, 234.

the Believer's Bible Commentary<sup>128</sup> claim that the fear here mentioned refers to terror, it should however be noted that the singular person of the subject in the second (אָרַא – fear) and third (אָמַר – keep) predicate clauses nullify such a position since the imperatives are directed to individuals and not a group.

Whereas the Believer's Bible Commentary<sup>129</sup> emphatically asserts that the fear of God being referred to here is not related to faith but rather it is that slavish terror of man before his Creator and whereas George Athas suggests that, the epilogue has two pieces of advice. The first one being that the fear of God in this imperative points to the frightening nature of God, just as Israel learned at Horeb.<sup>130</sup> The second advice, according to Athas is that this fear of God must lead to one ultimately observing God's commandments,<sup>131</sup> logic follows that both Athas and the Believer's Bible Commentary are more inclined towards defining fear of God as feeling terrified in His presence.

It should however be noted that Jacques Doukhan opines that the conjunction וְ (and) just before the imperative אָמַר (keep) must not be seen as serving an additive function but rather it is explicative hence the clause should read as “fear God, in other words, observe his commandments.”<sup>132</sup> That way the imperatives cannot be said to be addressed to a particular group of people nor can the command to fear God be said to be a terrifying thought since keeping His commandments is a positive admonition to those who love Him. This sounds like an echo of Moses' admonition to Israel in Deut

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<sup>128</sup> MacDonald and Farstad, *Believer's Bible Commentary*, 915.

<sup>129</sup> MacDonald and Farstad, 915.

<sup>130</sup> Athas, Longman, and McKnight, *Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, 234.

<sup>131</sup> Athas, Longman, and McKnight, 234.

<sup>132</sup> Doukhan, *Secrets of Revelation*, 124.

6:2 and 10:12 where they are commanded to fear God, keep His commandments, walk in His ways, and love Him. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that the imperative to fear God in this text is wise advice from the preacher that seeks to admonish every being to keep the commandments of God, not to instil terror in them.

Eccl 12:14. Clause 1

וְאִם־רָע אִם־טוֹב כָּל־נַעֲלָם בְּמִשְׁפָּט עַל יְבֵא הָאֱלֹהִים אֶת־כָּל־מַעֲשֵׂה פִי

|            |             |                                      |
|------------|-------------|--------------------------------------|
| Subject    | Predicate   | Object                               |
| הָאֱלֹהִים | יְבֵא       | אֶת־כָּל־מַעֲשֵׂה                    |
| For God    | shall bring | all work                             |
|            |             | בְּמִשְׁפָּט                         |
|            |             | into judgment (prepositional phrase) |
|            |             | כָּל־נַעֲלָם עַל                     |
|            |             | with every secret thing              |
|            |             | וְאִם־רָע אִם־טוֹב                   |
|            |             | whether good or bad                  |

The particle פִּי that introduces this clause also reveals its complementary purpose. As a winding statement to the book, the clause reminds all man that failure to fear God and keep His commandments has consequences since God will judge every deed accordingly. The certainty of judgment is therefore given as the main reason why people must fear or worship God. In Rev 14:7 the first angel of the three echoes the same thought by admonishing the inhabitants of the earth to “fear God and give Him for the hour of judgment has come.”

## Summary

Evaluation of the genre of the book of Ecclesiastes has suggested that most commentators agree it is Wisdom literature. Among other things, the Preacher is sharing his heartfelt thoughts on issues to do with truth, righteousness, and the ultimate goal of life. Eccl 12:13 forms the core of the epilogue to the book and the

Preacher declares that what is most important of all he has said is that man should fear God, and obey His commandments.

The imperative is going out to all humanity and the fact that fearing God has been joined together by a particle with the imperative to keep his commandments, is evidence that *יִרְאָה לַיהוָה* (fear God) in this context means keeping His commandments. The niph'al imperfect and the singular person of the imperatives suggest the same also. Motivation to keep God's commandments is given in the context of an impending judgement.

### **A Synthesis of Revelation 14:7 and its Connection to Selected OT Texts**

In this section, the research aims at synthesizing what has already been said in connection to the imperative in Rev 14:7 *Φοβήθητε τὸν θεὸν*. Findings of the exegesis of the five selected OT texts will also be synthesized and used to shed the broader meaning of the imperative “fear God” in Rev 14:7.

The Book of Revelation being an apocalypse employs numerous citations and allusions from almost all the books of the OT.<sup>133</sup> Although Beale<sup>134</sup> is of the opinion that the book does not use direct quotations from the OT, he agrees that the book of Revelation has more OT references than any other NT book. Other commentators like Doukhan<sup>135</sup> and Grant<sup>136</sup> also agree that the book uses more Hebrew citations than it does the Greek translations. Rev 14:7 is no exception regarding the phrase “fear God.”

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<sup>133</sup> "Revelation" *SDABC* 7: 724.

<sup>134</sup> Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 77.

<sup>135</sup> Doukhan, *Secrets of Revelation*, 10.

<sup>136</sup> Osborne, *Revelation*, 2.

Besides employing and making references to OT allusions and imageries, commentators go further to claim that a proper understanding of the book of Revelation can only be on the basis of an appreciation of the OT.<sup>137</sup> Doukhan claims that not only is the language of the book of Revelation traced from the OT Bible, but it is also thought using the Hebrew language and cannot be comprehended by one who does not understand the Hebrew language.<sup>138</sup> It should therefore be concluded that for a proper understanding of the messages, imageries, and symbolism employed in the book of Revelation, including Rev 14:7 phrase “fear God,” one needs a solid background understanding of the OT. It is on this basis that this research analysed the background meaning of “fear God” in the OT, to understand the same imperative in the book of Revelation. Again, the present has shown that selected OT texts shed meaning to Rev 14:17 phrase “fear God.”

### **Summary**

Imperative meaning of Φοβήθητε τὸν θεὸν in Rev 14:7 can be categorized into three groups. However, the present study, as noted above, has shown that an OT background understanding of the imperative אַרְאֵה אֶת־יְהוָה, is paramount to arrive at the closest possible meaning of the same in the apocalypse of John. The analysis of the imperative phrase in Lev 19:14 showed that to אַרְאֵה אֶת־יְהוָה in that particular context has to do with showing love for humanity by shunning oppression of the vulnerable and ill-treatment of the physically disadvantaged. Since God is the object in that imperative, it is also linked to the demand to render worship to Him alone. It appears

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<sup>137</sup> “Revelation” *SDABC*, 7:725.

<sup>138</sup> Doukhan, *Secrets of Revelation*, 10.

therefore that the imperative to  $\text{לֵאמֹר אֱהַיְהוֹבֶהוּ אֱלֹהֵיךָ}$  is synonymous with loving fellow man and worshipping God alone.

In Deuteronomy 6:13 the same imperatival phrase is in the infinitive, suggesting perpetuity of action. God is also the object, pointing to the fact that He alone must be the object of worship. Since it was pointed out that the book of Deut is an admonition to Israel to shun syncretism in the land they were about to occupy, the subject of worshipping God becomes the highlight of the imperatival phrase. Given that the book of Rev employs images from the OT, it follows that the imperative to “fear God” in Rev 14:7 must have reference to shunning syncretism and rendering undivided worship to God alone. Deliverance from Egyptian bondage is given as the reason for Israel to worship God, in the very same way, deliverance from the death threats of the beast is given to those who will fear God in Revelation.

Similar to this is the meaning derived from the imperative in Josh 24:14. In this text, Joshua was admonishing the people of Israel to show undivided allegiance to Jehovah and not the gods that were worshipped in the land they had occupied. Hence, when the angel in Rev 14:7 commands all who dwell on earth to  $\text{Φοβήθητε τὸν θεὸν}$ , the imperative must be understood as asking the people to render service to God alone.

In the book of 2 Kings, the imperatival phrase in 17:39 points to serving God, bowing down to Him in reverence, sacrificing to Him and keeping His commandments, shunning syncretism and devoting worship to God alone. Comparison of the behaviour of the children of Jacob with that of the surrounding nations also suggests that the imperative to fear God was not exclusive to Israel but to the other nations as well. God promises to deliver anyone who will fear Him from his or her enemies. The blessing that comes with fearing God is therefore not exclusive to

His people only, but also to other nations as long as they acknowledge that it is Him alone who must be served, worshipped, sacrificed to and obeyed. The idea of serving, worshipping and keeping God’s commandments resonates with the major themes in Revelation where service to God is implied in the first verse of the book that shows that message is for the ‘servants’ of God. The theme of worship is not only central to the book, but it is also the highlight of the Great Controversy motif that reaches its climax in Rev 14:7, hence the conclusion that the pericope of 2 Kgs 17:39 informs the imperative in Rev 14:7.

In Eccl 12:13, the shift from “my son” (v.12) to “all men” (v.13) is evidence that the command to fear God is universal and not limited to certain individuals or a particular ethnic group. The niphala imperfect of the imperative suggests that fearing God and keeping His commandments is timeless and must be perpetual. The explicative nature of the command to “fear God and keep His commandments, helps to give meaning to *יִרְאוּ אֶת יְהוָה וְשָׁמְרוּ אֶת צִוִּיּוֹתָיו* and, in this case, it is the same as keeping His commandments. A similar thought is reflected in Ex 2 where the midwives are said to have feared God and disobeyed Pharaoh’s command. It therefore follows that besides the call to worship God, the imperative *Φοβήθητε τὸν θεὸν* must also be demanding that all humanity should obey Him and keep His commandments. The above discussion, showing Rev 14:7 connection to selected OT texts (Lev 19:14; Deut 6:13; Josh 24:14; 2kgs 17:39; Eccl 12:13) can be summed up in Table 1 as shown below.

*Table 1. Connection between Rev 14:7 and Selected OT Texts*

| Text        | Phrase                       | Syntactical Meaning   |
|-------------|------------------------------|---|
| Rev 14:7    | “φοβήθητε τὸν θεὸν”          | Worship God.  |
| Lev 19:14   | וַיְרֹאֵת מֵאַלְהֵיךָ        | Worship God and treat the weak and vulnerable with love and kindness. |
| Deut 6:13   | אַת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ תִירָא | Shun syncretism and render undivided worship to God.                  |
| Josh 24:14  | וְעַתָּה יְרֹאוּ אֶת־יְהוָה  | Worship God alone.  |
| 2 Kgs 17:39 | וְהָנֹה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם תִּירָאוּ | Shun worship of other gods and keep God’s commandments.               |
| Eccl 12:13  | הִשְׁמְרֵם יְרֹא             | Keep God’s commandments.  |

Thus, Rev 14:7 phrase “fear God,” carries the nuance meanings from the OT.

### Conclusion

It can therefore be concluded that the phrase “φοβήθητε τὸν θεὸν” in Rev 14:7 is an imperative of command that calls all mankind to worship God. Based on its connection to the OT, it also carries the additional nuances of meanings.

In the already analysed selected OT texts וַיְרֹאוּ אֶת־יְהוָה does not suggest a literal fearing of God. In Lev 19:14, וַיְרֹאוּ אֶת־יְהוָה refers to loving people. Shunning worship of other gods according to 2 Kgs 17:39, rendering exclusive worship to Jehovah alone, (Josh 24:14) sacrificing to no other gods, (Deut 6:13) as well as keeping God’s commandments (Eccl 12:13). This admonition goes to all nations of the earth as is suggested by the inclusive nature of the context of 2 Kgs 17:34-41 and Eccl 12:13-14.

The meaning of the imperative “fear God” in the OT therefore, nuances added meanings and forms a background to the meaning of the imperatival phrase “φοβήθητε τὸν θεὸν” in Rev 14:7. In Revelation, the people of God are no longer literal Israel, but those who worship God, and it is such who are the primary targets of

the imperative. Hence, the same admonition in the OT to shun syncretism, love people, keep God's commandments, and sacrifice to Him alone is coming to all the inhabitants of the earth in Rev 14:7 remains applicable in the apocalypse. Thus, should "φοβήθητε τὸν θεὸν" (Rev 14:7) be understood.

## CHAPTER 3

### THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

#### **A Call to be Merciful and Kind to Humanity**

The exegesis of the text in question has shown that people from all nations are commanded to “fear God and give Him glory.” This, among other nuances of the text, is a call for all people to be merciful and kind to humanity (Lev 19:14; Deut 24:14; Deut 14:29). God demonstrated through Isaiah that He prefers kindness for the poor and vulnerable to fasting (Is 58:6-7).

The command to show kindness and love to fellow beings is an echo of Christ’s declaration that the greatest commandment is that we ought to love God with all our hearts and our fellow neighbours as we love ourselves (Matt 22:37-39). The same thought is echoed in the parable of the Good Samaritan where Christ emphasised the religious duty of every believer to be kind even to strangers who are in need. (Lk 10) Similarly, the apostle Paul also gives weight to the same thought by declaring, “He that loveth another hath fulfilled the law,” and “for all the law is fulfilled in one word, even this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” (Rom 13:8; Gal 5:14).

#### **A Call to Render Exclusive Worship to God**

To fear God is also a call to render exclusive worship to Jehovah. Beginning from the patriarchal era through to the last days, the call to shun syncretism is repeated several times in Scripture. God Himself at the tower of Babel (Gen 11:7) thwarted attempts at worshipping self and idolizing humanity. God’s promise to make

Abram and his posterity a great nation was based on their perpetual faithfulness to his covenant (Gen 12:1-3), while the descendants of Jacob were reminded at Mt Sinai, not to have other gods besides Jehovah (Ex 20:2-3). Idolatry at Sinai (Ex 32) was supposed to lead to eternal damnation, had it not been for Moses' intercession on behalf all the children of Israel.

It could be because of the apostasy at Sinai that God had to remind the Israelites that, "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one." (Deut 6:4) After settling in Canaan, Joshua implored the Israelites not to worship other gods as their fathers did but to serve the Lord alone. (Josh 24:15) The larger period of the judges was punctuated by a roller-coaster type of relationship between God and His people. At their lowest they would erect altars to sacrifice to, and worship foreign gods. God forsook them and they always ended up in subjection to the foreign nation only for God to intervene by raising a judge who would deliver them from the same oppressor. While in Babylonian captivity, some of the captives from Judah, went through trying times as they were threatened with death should they refuse to worship the idol that the Babylonian king had erected, (Dan 3:8-15) or to acknowledge the Medo-Persian king as god for a specified period of time. (Dan 6:7-9) In both occasions, the captives remained faithful to God and He delivered them in a remarkable manner as a way of demonstrating how those who shun syncretism regardless of circumstances are valuable in His sight.

The same call is made in the NT. Jesus Christ taught that man must not serve two masters at a time. (Matt 6:24), while the apostle Paul dismissed syncretism and idolatry among the people of Athens by explaining to them that the "unknown God" is the only true God who must be worshipped (Acts 17:23-24). Peter and John, even under duress, declared that they would rather obey God than man. (Acts 4:19) In

Revelation, the call to worship Him who created and not any other god is repeated twice (Rev 14:7b; Rev 10:6). Both angels are unmistakably alluding to the commandment in Ex 20:8-11 where God singles Himself as the only creator of the earth, heavens, and the seas, hence worthy our worship.

### **A Call to Faithfulness to God in the Context of the Great Controversy**

The imperative in Rev 14:7 is also a call to demonstrate faithfulness to God in the context of the Great Controversy theme of the bible. Revelation 14, being the climax of the historic section of the book<sup>139</sup>, is the focal point of the message of the great controversy between Christ and Satan. Christ foretold a time in the future when the faithfulness of all men will be severely tested, as the battle between good and evil will reach its climax. He gave assurance that those who will remain faithful will be saved (Matt 24:9, 13) and be given the crown of life (Rev 2:10). Such faithfulness as nuanced in Eccl 12:13, demands that man ought to obey God rather than man (Acts 5:29). Understanding the imperative to fear God as an admonition that compels humanity to worship him and keep his commandments before the close of probation, dispels the futurist assertion that the imperative targets the evildoers who will remain on the earth after the saints have been taken to heaven and will be forced to acknowledge God as the sovereign ruler. It can therefore be concluded that fearing God has a positive reward while destruction is reserved for those who do not.

Taking a cue from Osborne Grant's assertion that the first angel's message announces God's last opportunity for humanity to repent,<sup>140</sup> it can be concluded that the imperative is also God's final message of his grace and love to all humanity. The

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<sup>139</sup> Strand, "The Eight Basic Visions in the Book of Revelation," 108.

<sup>140</sup> Osborne, *Revelation*, 533.

imperative to fear God therefore speaks about God's love and cannot be understood as a message intended to instil fear in its recipients.

## CHAPTER 4

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### **Summary**

In Rev 14:7, the imperative Φοβήθητε τὸν θεὸν in its immediate context and OT background is a universal call to show mercy and kindness to mankind, especially the weak and less privileged. This admonition was given to Israel before entering Canaan (Lev 19:14; Deut 24:14) and repeated after settling there (Is 58:6-7). The call to fear God also suggests rendering exclusive worship to God (Gen 11:7; Ex 20:2-3; Josh 24:15; Acts 17:23-24). God demonstrated His abhorrence of syncretism by threatening to annihilate all His people at Sinai for worshipping a golden calf (Ex 32) and the same threat is directed to those who will worship the beast or its image in the last days (Rev 14:9-10). The same imperative is also a call to demonstrate faithfulness to God in the context of the great controversy. All those who will take heed of the call are promised deliverance from the beast just as Israel was delivered from Egyptian bondage.

#### **Conclusion**

The imperative of command, Φοβήθητε τὸν θεὸν in Rev 14:7 may have multiple meanings if taken out of context. However, a proper exegesis of the text with a consideration of its OT background yields a unified meaning and that is a call to humanity to shun syncretism (Deut 6:13) and render undivided loyalty to Jehovah by worshipping Him (Josh 24:14), keeping his commandments (Eccl 12:13; 2 Kgs 17:39), and showing love and kindness to the vulnerable (Lev 19:14). Failure to take heed to

such a call has undesirable consequences. An experience described by the third angel as drinking the wine of the wrath of God poured into his cup of indignation without mixture (Rev 14:9-11).

### **Recommendations**

This research only looked at the first part of Rev 14:7. It would be necessary to carry a comparative exegesis of the full text together with all the texts in Revelation and the OT that mention fear in the imperative. It appears Paul Morton is the only scholar who made the “broken parallelism” assertion in justifying the synonymous meaning between fear and “give glory” in Rev 14:7. Further study into this assertion is also recommended as it presents a unique argument for the meaning of the imperative Φοβήθητε τὸν θεὸν in Rev 14:7.

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