Journal of Hebrew Scriptures

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Volume 24, 2024

URI: https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1115230ar
DOI: https://doi.org/10.5508/jhs29653

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Publisher(s)

University of Alberta

ISSN

1203-1542 (digital)

Explore this journal

Cite this article

Angelini, A. (2024). Rethinking Images in the Septuagint and Greek Traditions: Eídōlon, Eikōn, and Homoíōma. *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures*, *24*, 1–25. https://doi.org/10.5508/jhs29653

Article abstract

This article analyses the semantics of εἴδωλον, εἰκών, and ὁμοίωμα in the LXX in light of Greek literary and documentary evidence. By addressing the issue of the relationship between the vocabulary of images and the vocabulary of idols, (1) it deconstructs some oppositions inherited from early Christian interpretations of biblical passages (especially regarding Genesis 1). Moreover (2) it shows the interest of including evidence from the LXX in a broader discussion on the role of visual representation in antiquity.

Journal of
HEBREW SCRIPTURES

VOLUME 24 | ARTICLE 3

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Articles in JHS are being indexed in the ATLA Religion Database, RAMBI, and BiBIL. Their abstracts appear in Religious and Theological Abstracts. The journal is archived by Library and Archives Canada and is accessible for consultation and research at the Electronic Collection site maintained by Library and Archives Canada.
ISSN 1203-1542 http://www.jhsonline.org and http://purl.org/jhs

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RETHINKING IMAGES IN THE SEPTUAGINT AND GREEK TRADITIONS: *EÍDŌLON*, *EIKŌN*, AND *HOMOÍŌMA**

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1. INTRODUCTION

One of the central issues in the study of ancient religions is the capacity of material objects, images, and statues to embody a divine—and therefore immaterial—presence in precise circumstances. In this regard, the vocabulary of the image provides an insightful entry into the problem raised by the notion of "cult image." This problem has been addressed both from the perspective of Greek and Israelite religions. In the case of the former, much attention has been paid to the complexity of Greek vocabulary used for divine images and so-called cultic statues.[1] Several studies have demonstrated that there was no designated or fixed Greek term that might correspond to the modern notion of "cultic statue." Moreover, they have highlighted the absence of any firm basis in ancient vocabulary for differentiating cult statues, cultic objects and votive images—a distinction which does not seem to reflect how ancient Greeks conceptualized the visualization of the divine, or understood visual representations

* The idea behind this paper originated from a conversation I had with "Jim" James Aitken in his Cambridge office, in Spring 2018. I dedicate this essay to his memory with much gratitude for his encouragement in pursuing this line of inquiry. Special thanks are due to the readers, for their useful remarks, and to Julia Rhyder for her careful revision of my English text.

[1] See, e.g., Alice A. Donohue, *Xoana and the Origins of Greek Sculpture*, American Classical Studies 15 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988); idem, "The Greek Images of the Gods: Considerations on Terminology and Methodology," *Hephaistos* 15 (1997): 31–45; Tanja S. Scheer, *Die Gottheit und ihr Bild: Untersuchungen zur Funktion griechischer Kultbilder in Religion und Politik*, Zetemata 105 (Munich: Beck, 2000); Simona Bettinetti, *La statua di culto nella pratica rituale greca*, Le Rane Studi 30 (Bari: Levante, 2001); Joannis Mylonopoulos, "Introduction: Divine images versus cult images. An Endless Story about Theories, Methods, and Terminologies," in *Divine Images and Human Imaginations in Ancient Greece and Rome*, ed. idem, Religions in the Graeco-Roman World 170 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 1–19; Catherine M. Keesling, "Greek Statue Terms Revisited: What does ἀνδριάς mean?", in *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 57.4 (2017): 837–61.

more generally.[2] Despite a widespread tendency to associate each item of the Greek image lexicon with a specific typology (for instance ἄγαλμα with a divine statue, ἀνδριάς with a human one, ξόανον with a roughly carved piece of wood, and so on), in-depth analyses have demonstrated that the main lexemes that comprise the lexical field of "image" in ancient Greek (i.e., ἄγαλμα, ἀνδριάς, βρέτας, εἴδωλον, εἰκών, ξόανον) do not correspond rigidly to separated types or modes of representations. Instead, they show significant fluidity and semantic overlaps. On this basis, certain studies have even pleaded for the notion of "cult image" to be abandoned as entirely problematic, suggesting that we should rather speak only and simply of "images."[3]

In the case of the Israelite religion, the material aspects of the divine presence and divine representations more broadly have been the object of growing interest. Biblical scholars have frequently sought to compare biblical texts with ancient Near Eastern materials, and to draw on the research results from the field of Mesopotamian religion.[4] As for ancient Hebrew, the vocabulary of the image builds mainly on two semantic fields.[5] A first group includes words connected with the action of carving, graving and cutting stone or wood, and moulding metal. This can be seen in terms such as פסל, "sculpted object," צלם, "statue," מסכה, "cast image," and others that bring to the fore the material dimension of the image and the technical labour to produce the artefact. A second group includes terms expressing form, shape, and visible appearance: תמונה, "external shape," תבנית, "figure," דמות, "resemblance," and so on. This semantic field comprises words that focus on visibility and likeness. As

[2] See on this the relevant remarks made by Jean-Pierre Vernant, "Naissance d'images," in *Religions, histoires, raisons*, Petite collection Maspero 233 (Paris: Maspero, 1979), 105–37; idem, "Figuration et image," *Mètis* 5 (1990): 225–38.

[3] Donohue, "Greek Images of Gods."

[4] See the fundamental work of Silvia Schroer, *In Israel gab es Bilder: Nachrichten von darstellender Kunst im Alten Testament*, OBO 74 (Fribourg: Presses Universitaires; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1987) and, among others, Karel van der Toorn, ed., *The Image and the Book: Iconic Cults, Aniconism, and the Rise of Book Religion in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, CBET 21 (Leuven: Peeters, 1997); Michael B. Dick, ed., *Born in Heaven, Made on Earth: The Making of the Cult Image in the Ancient Near East* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1999); Nathaniel B. Levtow, *Images of Others: Iconic Politics in Ancient Israel*, ed. William H. C. Propp, BJSUCSD 11 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2008); Benjamin D. Sommer, *The Bodies of God and the World of Ancient Israel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Karen Sonik, "Divine (Re-) Presentation: Authoritative Images and a Pictorial Stream of Tradition in Mesopotamia," in *The Materiality of Divine Agency in Cross-Cultural Perspective*, eds. Beate Pongratz-Leisten and Karen Sonik, Studies in Ancient Near Eastern Records 8 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2015), 142–93.

[5] On this vocabulary see also James Barr, "The Image of God in the Book of Genesis: A Study of Terminology," *Bulletin of the John Ryland Library* 51.1 (1968): 11–26; recently Alessandra Pecchioli, *Il campo lessicale dei sostantivi di immagine in ebraico antico*, unpublished diss., University of Florence, 2015.

Silvia Schroer has convincingly shown, the Hebrew vocabulary of images is characterized by significant fluidity and overlapping meanings and referents.[6] Although not complete synonyms, the terms belonging to the two groups can be variously combined and often occur together or as parallel terms—a phenomenon which occurs not only in Hebrew but also in other north-west Semitic languages. One can think, for example, of the combination of צלם and דמות, both used as equivalents for the Assyrian *ṣalmu*, "statue," in the bilingual inscription of Tell Fekheriye.[7] This therefore seems to confirm that what is valid for ancient Greek also holds true for the Hebrew vocabulary of images: first, a rigid classification and separation in meanings is impossible; second, a single term may refer both to the material object (e.g., a statue), and to the reality behind it (e.g., the god which is "represented" by that object).

Despite this rich discussion in previous research, so far neither historians of Greek religion nor biblical scholars have included the evidence from the Septuagint (henceforward abbreviated as LXX) in their discussion of the vocabulary of the image. This dossier mostly goes unnoticed by specialists of the Greek language as well.[8] However, the interest of bringing the LXX into this debate is at least threefold.

To begin with, the translation transposes image-related problems that are typical of Israelite religion and ancient Judaism into Greek lexical categories. Hence, a detailed analysis of the equivalences and of the translational choices can significantly enhance our understanding of the linguistic and cultural exchange between Greek and Hebrew on matters related to images and divine images. The polemics against images in a Greek text like Wisdom 13–15, for example, excellently demonstrates the extent

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[6] Schroer, *In Israel gab es Bilder*, 304–41.

[7] Lines 1, 12, 15, 16. Editio princeps: Ali Abou-Assaf, Pierre Bordreuil, and Alan Millard, *La statue de Tell Fekherye et son inscription bilingue assyro-araméenne*, Études Assyriologiques 7 (Paris: Éditions Recherche sur les civilisations, 1982); for a recent and detailed commentary see Jan Dušek and Jana Mynářová, "Tell Fekheriye Inscription: A Process of Authority on the Edge of the Assyrian Empire," in *The Process of Authority. The Dynamics in Transmission and Reception of Canonical Texts*, eds. Jan Dušek and Jan Roskovec, DCLS 27 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2016), 9–40.

[8] One exception is Thomas Jurczyk, "The Meaning of agalma, eidôlon, and eikôn in Ancient Greek Texts: A Quantitative Approach Using Computer-Driven Methods and Tools," *Entangled Religions* 14.5 (2023), https://doi.org/10.46586/er.14.2023.10442 (accessed 05.02. 2024), which surveys Jewish and Christian evidence and leads to interesting overall results. However, the distinction between "Greco-Roman polytheistic texts" on the one side, and Jewish-Christian texts on the other side, which underpins the author's grouping, does not prove to be a useful interpretive framework to analyse LXX evidence. See further on this below. Moreover, the author suggests caution in approaching data from the "Greco-Roman polytheistic religious corpus," as the database he uses (Diorisis Ancient Greek Corpus) classifies only few texts as "religious" (see esp. paragraph 60).

to which Jewish authors could appropriate Greek cultural representations to build their own discourse that operated according to paradigms that oppose those typical of Greek religion.[9]

Moreover, from a historical perspective, Hellenistic Judaism is a formative context for the emergence of conflicting attitudes toward images. The construction of ancient Jewish religion as essentially aniconic sits in tension with the flourishing of pictorial evidence in ancient synagogues: in this regard, Dura Europos and the most recent findings from the Huqqoq synagogue constitute the two most famous examples. Although such evidence dates to Late Hellenistic times and the Roman period, it is the result of *longue durée* processes which originated in an Early Hellenistic context; and the LXX is, in several regards, the oldest, the largest and the most important document within that context.

Finally, the Greek translation is often considered the point of origin for central religious notions that will fundamentally shape the history of attitudes towards divine images in later traditions (especially, albeit not exclusively, Christian traditions). To give just one example, one can think of the very idea of "idol" as opposed to "icon." A closer inquiry into this corpus will therefore allow us to test the validity of such historical-religious assumptions.

While a complete mapping of the image-related lexicon and of the conceptual relationships underpinning this vocabulary lies beyond the scopes of the present contribution, in this preliminary study I will offer some remarks on the overall features of the lexicon for images in the LXX and reflect on the criteria used by LXX translators and LXX author to select this lexicon. Afterward, I will concentrate on three relevant examples represented by εἴδωλον, εἰκών, and ὁμοίωμα, to draw some conclusions and discuss the larger implications of this study, as well as potential avenues for further development. More specifically, I will address the issue of the relationship between the vocabulary of images and the vocabulary of idols. I will also evaluate whether and to which extent the LXX can be considered as a witness to semantic shifts from Classical to Post-Classical Greek, in two main aspects: (1) possible "switches" between positive and negative connotations associated with specific items of vocabulary related both to divine images and to images tout court, and (2) possible developments from a concrete image related lexicon toward an abstract notion of "representation."

[9] See especially Wis 14:15–20, and on this Maurizio Bettini, *Il ritratto dell'amante*, 2nd ed. (Torino: Einaudi, 2008), 51–54. On wisdom discourse against images and its Greek philosophical referents see Sonja Ammann, *Götter für die Toren: Die Verbindung von Götterpolemik und Weisheit im Alten Testament*, BZAW 466 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2015), esp. 248–53 on Wis 12–15.

2. THE LEXICON OF THE IMAGE IN THE LXX: GENERAL TENDENCIES

An initial survey of the names for "image" or "statue" in the LXX shows that a variety of tendencies is at work in this corpus. These tendencies can be summarized as A) lexical selectivity, B) productivity on both the lexical and semantic level, and C) semantic contiguity.

A) Lexical Selectivity. Not all the names for "image" available in the Greek language are attested in the LXX. Rather, only specific terms are selected: εἴδωλον and εἰκών are predominant, ἄγαλμα is attested twice in Isaiah and once in 2 Maccabees,[10] while words such as βρέτας, ἀνδριάς, ἵδρυμα, ἀφίδρυμα, ξόανον are completely absent, although they appear in other Jewish-Hellenistic writings.[11] Interestingly, no significant difference in this usage can be detected between translated and non-translated books. However, the selection does not seem for the most part to be theologically motivated, in that it does not reflect a concern to avoid words which were ritually charged from the perspective of Greek religion. Otherwise, it would not be possible to explain the presence of words like εἴδωλον or ἄγαλμα. Criteria for selection seem rather to be based on current usages: for example, βρέτας and ξόανον are absent from papyri and rare in inscriptions. They are also absent in Homer, a school text probably known to the translators. A term like ἀφίδρυμα, popular in Hellenistic Greek, is mainly restricted to when a cult was exported beyond its original country[12]; and it occurs with this meaning, for example, in Flavius Josephus.[13] Perhaps it was considered too specific, and therefore inappropriate. Translational exigences seem to have also played a significant role: I will argue that εἰκών was a much better correspondent to the semantic richness of Hebrew צלם than its synonym ἀνδριάς.

B) Lexical and Semantic Productivity. LXX translators and LXX authors import words to the vocabulary of the image that were previously unattested or rarely used in the meaning adopted by the translators. It is worth noting that such innovations are not realized through the introduction of neologisms; rather, they are produced through new, or unusual, syntactic usages of classical Greek vocabulary. Some of these items remain poorly attested outside LXX traditions. This is the case for the substantive use of γλυπτόν, literally "carved or engraved object," in the form (τὸ) γλυπτόν and (τὰ) γλυπτὰ, which is the main equivalent for the Hebrew פסל.[14] The same holds for the substantive use of the adjective χειροποίητος, literally "handmade." Other forms, by

[10] Isa 19:3; 21:9; 2 Macc 2:2.

[11] Note, however, the presence of ξόανον in Ezek 6:4, attributed to Aquila (Cod. Barberinus 86).

[12] Bettinetti, *La statua di culto*, 54–63.

[13] Josephus, *A.J.* 18.344. Philo uses ἀφίδρυμα mostly in its literal and generic meaning of "things which are erected" (e.g., *Ebr.* 109.2; *Mos.* 1.298; *Dec.* 7; 51).

[14] Both forms might be or not preceded by an article and followed by a genitival construction.

contrast, which were mostly restricted to specific registers of the language in classical Greek, will become popular in Christian discussions regarding images, and their ability (or inability) to represent reality. This is the case for ὁμοίωμα and ὁμοίωσις, usually rendered as "likeness" and "resemblance" respectively.

C) Semantic Contiguity. By this term, I refer to the possibility for interchange in correspondences between Greek image-related terms and their respective Hebrew equivalents, which might suggest a semantic proximity between the notions referred to. Some equivalences between Greek and Hebrew items are established in the Pentateuch and subsequently occur quite regularly in other books: εἰκών usually translates צלם; ὁμοίωμα translates דמות,[15] whereas γλυπτόν translates פסל.[16] However, other correspondences may occasionally occur, sometimes within the Pentateuch itself. The following table offers some examples:

Greek	Main Hebrew equivalent	Other equivalents
εἰκών	צֶלֶם (Heb.) צְלֵם (Aram.) (24x/34x)	פסל Isa 40:19–20 סמל Deut 4:16; 2 Chr 33:7 דמות Gen 5:1
ὁμοίωμα	דמות (16x/25x)	תמונה Exod 20:5; Deut 4:12, 15, 16, 23, 25; 5:8 תבנית Deut 4:16, 17(2x), 18(2x), Josh 22:28; Ps 105:20; 143:12; Ezek 8:3; 10:8 צלם 1 Sam 6:5

Εἰκών may occasionally translate פסל (Isa 40:19-20); דמות (Gen 5:1), and סמל (Deut 4:16; 2 Chr 33:7). Ὁμοίωμα, which is the main equivalent for דמות, in several instances translates תמונה (7x) or תבנית (10x); once, in 1 Sam 6:5 ὁμοίωμα translates צלם, a passage to which I will return later. Morevoer, both תמונה and תבנית are translated with a variety of renderings (μορφή, ὁμοίωμα, and παράδειγμα), which makes it difficult to speak of one main Greek equivalent for these Hebrew items:

תמונה	ὁμοίωμα (Exod 20:5; Deut 4:12, 15, 16, 23, 25; 5:8) μορφή (Job 4:16)
תבנית	ὁμοίωμα (Deut 4:16, 17[2x], 18[2x], Josh 22:28; Ps 105:20; 143:12; Ezek 8:3; 10:8) μορφή (Isa 44:13)

[15] 4 Kgdms 16:10; 2 Paral 4:3; Isa 40:18; Ezek 1:5(2x), 16, 22, 26(3x), 28; 8:2; 10:1, 10, 21; 23:15.

[16] Lev 16:1; Deut 4:16,23,25, 27:15; Judg 17:3, 4; 18:14, 18, 20, 30, 31; 4 Kdgms 21:7; 2 Paral 33:7; Ps 96:7 (= 97:7 MT) ; Isa 42:17; 44:17; 48:5; Jer 10:14; 51:17; Nah 1:14; Hab 2:8.

	παράδειγμα (Exod 25:9; 1 Paral 28:11–12, 18, 19)

As for εἴδωλον, the situation is even more complex. This Greek word translates around fifteen Hebrew items, seven of which are concentrated in the Pentateuch[17]:

τὰ εἴδωλα	תרפים Gen 31:19, 34, 35
εἴδωλον	פסל Exod 20:4; Deut 5:8 (B)
εἴδωλα	אלילים Lev 19:4
τὰ εἴδωλα	גללים Lev 26:30; Deut 29:16
τὰ εἴδωλα	אלוה (אלהים) Num 25:2; 33:2
τὰ εἴδωλα	צלם Num 33:52
τὰ εἴδωλα	הבל (הבלים) Deut 32:21

Most equivalences are also attested outside the Pentateuch. However, in the rest of the Bible, εἴδωλον may occasionally render other Hebrew words, like שקוץ ("abominable thing," e.g., 4 Kgdm 11:5, 7), עצב ("divine effigy," in Hos 14:9 and Mic 1:7), or other illegitimate cultic objects.[18] Some of the nouns translated by εἴδωλον belong to the vocabulary of the image (such as פסל and צלם) or denote more specific cultic objects (mainly illicit ones), while others refer to foreign gods.

Overall, this survey reveals that a certain degree of semantic proximity was perceived by the translators between the Hebrew terms referring to images and their Greek equivalents: the same item could be rendered by different Greek nouns, and, vice versa, each Greek item translates several Hebrew nouns. This leads to a certain degree of interchangeability, which suggests that there was no sharp separation between the concepts to which such terms refer.

Moreover, it seems clear that, in the LXX, the same word can refer either to material objects, or to the deities who are embodied by those objects, or to entities that are disembodied or inconsistent, such as the הבלים, literally "vapours" (and hence "vain things"), or the אלילים, "gods of nothing." This seems to

[17] For a semantic analysis of εἴδωλον in the Pentateuch, one can refer to Robert Hayward, "Observations on Idols in Septuagint Pentateuch," in *Idolatry: False Worship in the Bible, Early Judaism and Christianity*, ed. Stephen Barton (London: T & T Clark, 2007), 40–57; Daniel Barbu, *Naissance de l'idolâtrie: Image, identité, religion*, Collection Religions 7 (Liège: Presses de l'Université de Liège, 2016), 40–88; see also Sonja G. Anderson, *Idol Talk: The Discourse of False Worship in the Early Christian World* (PhD diss., Yale University, 2016), 3–9.

[18] This is especially true for the books of Chronicles, where εἴδωλον translates different items related to the illicit cults practiced by Israelite and Judahite kings: among these, the Baʿalim, the incense altar, the goats-demons, and others. For a complete list of all the Hebrew equivalents for εἴδωλον see Edwin Hatch and Henry A. Redpath, *A Concordance to the Septuagint and the Other Greek Versions of the Old Testament including the Apocryphical Books* (Graz: Akademische Druck- u. Verlagsanstalt, 1954), 376.

be especially the case for εἴδωλον, although other lexemes might share this property. In Judges 18:24, for example, τὸ γλυπτόν translates אלוה, "deity," and in Isa 19:3, ἄγαλμα translates the Hebrew אטים, a hapax of difficult meaning but which is probably related to the Akkadian *eṭemmu*, "spirit of the dead." This feature is partly explained by the fact that, in the Hebrew Bible, as well as in the LXX, most of the image-related vocabulary is found in the context of so-called idol polemics. The aim of such polemics is namely to critique foreign gods and foreign cults by reducing them to mere images, that is, powerless entities.[19]

3. RATIONALE BEHIND THE CASE STUDIES

Since the major context for the vocabulary of the image is the discourse against so-called idols, εἴδωλον is a natural candidate for the initial focus of this inquiry. The LXX appears to be instrumental in the semantic shift from the concept of "image" to that of "idol" in later Jewish and Christian Greek traditions. The case of εἴδωλον may be complemented by, and contrasted with, εἰκών and ὁμοίωμα, in that the interpretation of these three terms has relevant implications from a historical-religious perspective. First, an opposition or, at the very least, an internal tension is often postulated between εἰκών and εἴδωλον as reliable versus false images, or positive versus negative meaning.[20] Such a tension is derived, on the one hand, from the Platonic understanding of these categories. In his critique of visual arts and of images more generally, Plato distinguishes between appearance and being, and attributes every kind of image (εἴδωλον) to the first category, that is "appearance." Every product of mimetic arts, and every kind of εἴδωλον belongs to the sphere of appearance (φαίνομαι), i.e., to an imitation of reality. This means that the εἴδωλον is nothing but a copy of real things and, as such, it cannot seize the true essence of the object, which instead belongs only to intellectual knowledge and not to any visible form.[21] Although Plato does not literally oppose εἴδωλον to εἰκών, he creates a hierarchy between these two notions in which εἰκών has a superior status, because it retains close similarity to its model, which is not necessarily the case for εἴδωλον.[22]

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[19] On the polemics against images as a discourse see Levtow, *Images of Others*, 16–18, and Ammann, *Götter für die Toren*, 12–13.

[20] F. Büschel, "εἴδωλον, εἰδωλόθυτον, εἰδωλεῖον, κατείδωλος, εἰδωλολάτρης, εἰδωλολατρία," TDNT 2:376–80; Suzanne Saïd, "Deux noms de l'image en grec ancien: idole et icône," *Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* 131.2 (1987): 309–30.

[21] The *locus classicus* for the Platonic polemics is Plato, *Soph.* 235b–240b. The critique is radicalized in Plato, *Resp.* 595a–598d, where artists are said to produce a "second degree" imitation, as reality is itself an imitation of the ideal world.

[22] Plato, *Soph.* 240b. This passage needs to be read in combination with 236c, where Plato contrasts εἰκαστική, "art of likeness," a representation which is faithful to its model, with φανταστική, which is pure "apparition." For a comment see, e.g., Noburu Notomi, *The Unity of Plato's Sophist: Between the Sophist and the Philosopher*, Cambridge Classical

On the other hand, the polarity between εἴδωλον and εἰκών is associated with the occurrence of εἰκών in Gen 1:26 (καὶ εἶπεν ὁ θεός ποιήσωμεν ἄνθρωπον κατ᾽ εἰκόνα ἡμετέραν καὶ καθ᾽ὁμοίωσιν: "and the god said: we will create a man according to our image and likeness"). In the context of ancient and modern exegetical debates regarding the possibility for a man to be (or not) an *imago dei*, a further opposition has been construed between εἰκών and the two related words ὁμοίωσις and ὁμοίωμα. Such an opposition ultimately still derives from the patristic reading of Gen 1:26. Church fathers debated over the degree of semantic overlap and semantic differentiation between the forms εἰκών and ὁμοίωσις, which are paired in this verse. While εἰκών, ὁμοίωσις, and ὁμοίωμα can be used as synonyms in ancient literature, a stream of interpretation among the Fathers insisted on the difference between them. According to this interpretation, εἰκών/*imago* expresses inherence to reality, while ὁμοίωσις or ὁμοίωμα/*similitudo* focuses on a type of likeness not necessarily connected with derivation. Augustine goes as far as to say that only *imago* belongs to the sphere of the representation, while *similitudo* does not[23]:

> *Imago et aequalitas et similitudo distinguenda sunt […]Ubi imago, continuo similitudo, non continuo aequalitas: ut in speculo est imago hominis; quia de illo expressa est, est etiam necessario similitudo, non tamen aequalitas […] Ubi similitudo, non continuo imago non continuo aequalitas; omne quippe ovum omni ovo, in quantum ovum est, simile est; sed ovum perdicis, quamvis in quantum ovum est, simile sit ovo gallinae, nec imago tamen eius est, quia non de illo expressum est, nec aequale, quia et brevius est et alterius generis animantium.*
>
> Image and equality and likeness must be distinguished […] where there is an image, there is necessarily a likeness, but not necessarily an equality. For example, there is in a mirror an image of a man. Because the image has been copied from him, there is also necessarily a likeness; but, nonetheless, there is no equality […] where there is a likeness, there is not necessarily an image and not necessarily an equality. For every egg is like every other egg insofar as it is an egg; but a partridge egg, although like a chicken egg insofar as it is an egg, is, nonetheless, neither its image, because it is not a copy of that one, nor its equal, because it is smaller and of another species of living thing.

As a consequence, the conceptual field of the image includes likeness, while the reverse would not hold. A similar formulation is still adopted by modern exegesis and theological lexicons: "As

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Studies (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 122–50; David Ambuel, *Image and Paradigm in Plato's Sophist* (Las Vegas: Parmenides Publishing, 2007), 67–90.

[23] Augustine, *De diversis quaestionibus octoginta tribus*, transl. David L. Mosher, FaCH 70 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1982), 189–90 = Question 74. See also ibid., Question 51.4. For a comment on this passage see R. A. Markus, " 'Imago' and 'similitudo' in Augustine," *REAug* 10 (1964): 125–43.

distinguished from εἰκών, which implies the archetype, the 'likeness' or 'form' in ὁμοίωμα may be accidental, as one egg is like another,"[24] or, alternatively: "εἰκών represents the object, whereas ὁμοίωμα emphasizes similarity, but with no need for an inner connection between the original and the copy."[25] The definition of these notions also has consequences for their understanding in the New Testament, especially in the Pauline letters. A closer analysis of these lexemes will reveal whether such a construction is sustainable in light of the LXX evidence. Within the limits of this inquiry, I will leave aside the theologically charged form ὁμοίωσις and consider only ὁμοίωμα, as this term also occurs much more frequently in the LXX.

4. *EÍDŌLON*

It has long been thought that the biblical prohibition against images and the idol polemics are two interrelated issues.[26] However, it is difficult to establish how and when this shift occurred within the biblical corpus: in other words, when images became idols. According to several scholars, this connection is ultimately rooted in the Greek reception of the Decalogue, which forbids the Israelites to make divine images and serve them as if they were deities themselves. It is precisely within this context that the Greek εἴδωλον occurs for the first time as a translation of פסל, both in Exod 20:4–5 and in Deut 5:8–9. However, in Deut 5:8 Alexandrinus and the Chester Beatty papyrus (963) preserve the more literal γλυπτόν, "carved object"—a reading preferred by John Wevers.[27] It is indeed probable that the Old Greek here had γλυπτόν instead of εἴδωλον: we will therefore limit our analysis to Exod 20:4. A hypothesis, first proposed by F. Büschel in the sixties, followed by F. Barnes Tatum,[28] and still accepted today, is that the introduction of εἴδωλον led the translator to reinterpret the commandment not as anti-iconic but as anti-idolic. Understood in this way, the prohibition would not concern any divine image, or any image *tout-court*, but specifically images of foreign gods, already devalued and reduced to mere "idols."[29]

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[24] Richard C. Trench, *Synonyms of the New Testament*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Macmillan; London: Parker, 1855), 56–61 (57).

[25] J. Schneider, "ὁμοίωμα," *TDNT* 5:191.

[26] This section builds on an hypothesis previously discussed in Anna Angelini, "Naming the Gods of Others in the Septuagint: Lexical Analysis and Historical-Religious Implications," *Kernos* 32 (2019): 241–65 (256–60) and idem, *L'imaginaire du démoniaque dans la Septante: une analyse comparée de la notion de 'démon' dans la Septante et dans la Bible hébraïque*, JSJ.S 197 (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 216–24.

[27] John W. Wevers, *Septuaginta: Vetus Testamentum Graecum*, vol. 3, 2, Deuteronomium (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1977), ad loc.

[28] Büschel,"εἴδωλον," 2:376–380; W. Barnes Tatum, "The LXX Version of the Second Commandment (Ex.20,3–6=Deut.5,7–10): A Polemic against Idols, not Images," *JSJ* 17.2 (1986): 177–95.

[29] The hypothesis is partially rejected by Hayward, "Idols," 41–42, although he still considers εἴδωλον in Exod 20:4 as meaning "idol."

This hypothesis is based on two observations: first, the fact that the translation of פסל with εἴδωλον is unique to these two passages from the Decalogue; second, that the word does not usually designate divine statues or images in the Greek language outside Jewish and Christian writings. However, this hypothesis does not prove entirely true on closer inspection. Terry Griffith already collected a series of literary texts in which εἴδωλον clearly indicates a divine statue or cultic object.[30] He gathered evidence from Herodotus, Aesop, but especially from Hellenistic and Roman writers, such as Diodorus, Dionysius Halicarnassus, Plutarch, Dioscorides and Polybius. Moreover, in some of these passages, εἴδωλον is paralleled with ἄγαλμα[31] or with εἰκών,[32] and Griffith correctly infers that the semantic domain of εἴδωλον has to at least partly overlap with them.[33] Furthermore, we find confirmation in Greek epigraphy that εἴδωλον can easily refer to a statue. In an inscription from Delos from the late 3rd or early 2nd century BCE, known as the Aretalogy of Sarapis, the Egyptian priest Apollonios thanks the god Sarapis for his victory over his enemies, specifically some Delian people who brought a lawsuit against him and tried to stop the installation of a temple for the god. The victory is attributed to the power of Sarapis, and is celebrated with a poem which imitates Homeric poetry. The conclusion of the poem describes how Sarapis performed a miracle at the trial to paralyse Apollonios' accusers and render them unable to speak.[34] The text says that they "stood like statues struck by the god or like stones" (θεοπληγέσσιν ἐοικότας εἰδώλοισιν ἔμμεναι ἢ λάεσσιν). Here εἰδώλοισιν is paralleled with λάεσσιν, and probably refers to human beings who have been petrified or transformed into statues by the gods, as are frequently found in Greek mythology.

A glance at the evidence from papyri and inscriptions seems to reinforce Griffith's analysis and offer further information on the Egyptian context, which is particularly relevant to the understanding of the LXX. A papyrus from Tebtunis in the South Fayum, dating to 87 BCE, contains a petition by a certain Armisios and his colleagues who work as ibis and hawk embalmers in the temple of Hermes.[35] Armisios complains about someone who struck him and stole the precious garments of the gods while he was washing them. The expression used here is τῶν ἐν τῶι ἱερεῶι ἰδώλων ἰβίων καὶ ἱεράκων ("of the images of ibis and hawks

[30] Terry Griffith, "Eidolôn as 'Idol' in Non-Jewish and Non-Christian Greek," *JTS* 53.1 (2002): 95–101. Further examples have been provided by Alexis Chantziantoniou, "Idolising Eidola: The Lexicon of Cult Images in Postclassical Greek," paper presented at the conference *Language and Cultural Identity in Postclassical Greek*, University of Cambridge, 13th–15th September 2023.

[31] Polybius, *Hist.* 30.25.13–15.

[32] Herodotus, *Hist.* 1.51.

[33] Griffith, "Eidolôn," 97.

[34] IG 11. 4 1299, lines 88–90. See Griffith, "Eidolôn," 100 n. 29.

[35] PStrasb. 2 91, ed. Friedrich Preisigke, *Griechische Papyrus der Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek zu Strassburg* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1920), 2:31–33.

which are in the temple"), which is paralleled with τὰ βύσσινα ὀθόνια τῶν θεῶν ("the linen garments of the gods") some lines further on. Εἴδωλα here indicates the divine statues of the ibis and hawks that are actually meant to represent the gods themselves:

τῆι ε τῶν
Ἐπαγομένων τοῦ [λ]ᾳ (ἔτους) τοῦ
ἑνὸς ἡμῶν Ἁρμιύσιος πλύ-
νοντος τὰ βύσσιν̣α περι̣βό-
λαια τῶν ἐν τῶι ἱερεῶι ἰδώλων[36]
ἰβίων καὶ ἱεράκων ἐπιπαραγενό-
μενοι ὁ τοῦ Φανήσιος υἱὸς καὶ
Σιουῆρις Σιουήριος καὶ ὁ τού-
του υἱὸς καὶ δόντες αὐτῶι
πληγὰς πλείους ἀφείλοντο
τὰ βύσσινα ὀθόνια τῶν θεῶν

Moreover, an ostracon from the cemetery of sacred fish in Latopolis, dating to the 1st–2nd century AD, brings an oracular petition addressed to Athena from Ammonios and his colleagues, ram-embalmers, who have been unfairly accused.[37] The petition is addressed to the εἰδώλοις Ἀθηνᾶς θεοῖς μεγίστοις, "the sacred images of Athena (and) to the great gods"; and a similar expression is repeated a few lines later (ὑφ' ὑμῶν τῶν κυρίων εἰδώλων καὶ τῶν σὺν ὑμῖν ἁπάντων θεῶν, "from you, ruling images and from all the gods which are with you"):

εἰδώλοις Ἀθηνᾶς θεοῖς
μεγίστοις παρὰ Ἀμμω-
νίου Πετεήσιος καὶ τῶν σὺν
αὐτῶι κριοτάφων κατὰ Πετορζ(μήθιος)
καὶ Φαουήριος Φμόιτος καὶ Πετήσιος
παντοπώλ(ου)·ἀξιοῦμεν ἡμᾶς
κρίνεσθαι μετ' αὐτῶν καὶ βο-
ηθεῖσθαι ὑφ' ὑμῶν τῶν
κυρίων εἰδώλων καὶ τῶν σὺν ὑμῖν ἁπάν-
των θεῶν·ἐγκαλούμε(θα) ὑπὸ τούτων
τῶν καταράτων καθ' ἡμέραν
ὑμῶν

[36] Restored by the editors as: ἱερῶι εἰδώλων.

[37] P.Worp 7 (= O. Garstand 1), Bernard Boyaval, "Note sur des pièces d'archives lilloises," *Chroniques d'Égypte* 55 (1980): 309–13. See also Claudio Gallazzi, "Supplica ad Atena su un ostrakon da Esna," *ZPE* 61 (1985): 101–9; Jean Gascou, "Justice d'Athéna en Égypte Romaine," in *Sixty-five Papyrological Texts: Presented to Klaas A. Worp on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday*, eds. F. A. J. Hoogendijk and P. B. Muhs, PLB 33 (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 29–40.

In the absence of more information concerning the context of this passage, it remains difficult to establish exactly what these εἴδωλα of Athena resembled. But the term must refer to some concrete object which represents the goddess in order for the petition to be effective. We know that in Latopolis the Egyptian goddess Neith was assimilated to Athena quite early on; the fish *latos* (*lates niloticus*) was considered sacred to her and a cult was devoted to the animal. It is therefore possible that the petition was addressed to the fish itself, which was considered a substitute for the goddess. Further support for this interpretation comes from another papyrus from Tebtunis, dating to the first half of the 1st century AD.[38] The text reports an oath by a corporation of fishermen who swear not to catch the oxyrynchus and the lepidotos, two types of fish sacred to Osiris. What is interesting for our purposes is the formulation, which introduces the expression εἴδω̣λα θεῶν ὀξυρύνχων κ(αὶ) λεπιδωτῶν to underline the proximity between these fish and the gods themselves:

> We [….] all thirteen being elders of the fishermen of the villages of Narmouthis and Berenicis Thesmophori, swear, all fourteen, to the agents of Sarapion son of Ptolemaeus, nomarch and superintendent of the revenues and the distribution of imposts of the Arsinoite nome, by Tiberius Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus Imperator that *we never have been or will be privy to fishing or dragging a net or casting a net to catch the images of the divine oxyrhynchi and lepidoti, in conformity with the public engagement signed by us and the other fishermen* (μὴν μηδὲ ἓν συνεστορηκέναι μηδὲ συνιστορήσιν ἁ[λ]ιέουσι μηδὲ σαγηνηευ̣ισι μηδὲ ἀμφιβολέουσι κυνηγουντες ἴδωλα θεῶν ὀξυρύνχων κ(αὶ) λεπιδωτῶν).[39]

Based on this evidence, we can reasonably argue that, in Exod 20:4, εἴδωλον may not yet mean "idol" in some abstract or polemical way. Instead, it renders the idea of a material object (image or statue) whose function is to work as "substitute" for the deity. James Aitken had rightly noted the proximity between the use of εἴδωλον in Exod 20:4 and in papyri, and observed that "the sense of εἴδωλον as 'image' would seem to be the simplest reading of the passage."[40] In this sense, this choice points towards a specific reception of the second commandment, which was open to different interpretations still during Hellenistic and Roman times.[41] Moreover, in the LXX formulation of Exod

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[38] PSI 8 901 (= Sel. Pap. 2 329).

[39] Transl. A.S. Hunt and C.C. Edgar, *Select Papyri, Volume II: Public Documents*, LCL 282 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1934), 329.

[40] James K. Aitken, "Outlook," in *The Reception of Septuagint Words in Jewish-Hellenistic and Christian Literature*, eds. Eberhard Bons, Ralph Brucker, and Jan Joosten, WUNT II 367 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 183–94 (193).

[41] In this regard, one can compare, for example, the different interpretation of the second commandment provided by Josephus (*A.J.* 3.91: ὁ δὲ δεύτερος κελεύει μηδενὸς εἰκόνα ζῴου ποιήσαντας

20:4, the equivalence between פסל and εἴδωλον respects both the Hebrew text (source language) and the Greek language of the time (target language).

However, the example of Exod 20:4 does not mean yet that all the uses of εἴδωλον in the LXX have a univocal meaning, or that they are to be restricted to a single logic. Εἴδωλον is a dense, polysemic, and polyvalent term in Greek, and some other semantic features or specific connotations of this term might explain its usage in other Septuagintal contexts. In this regard, the equivalence mentioned above between הבלים and εἴδωλα in Deut 32:21 proves particularly interesting when contrasted with Exod 20:4, and deserves further comment. The context of Deut 32 is at least partly different from the decalogue, because the polemics here are not directed against images but against the foreign cult that the Israelites are whoring after (the language of prostitution is explicitly used in the previous verses, Deut 32:16–17). As has already been noted by scholars, this is not a literal render (the more literal and most frequent equivalent for הבל in the LXX being μάταιος). A different quality associated with the εἴδωλον could indeed have guided the translator's choice here. Since Homeric times, the word can be applied to anything that is capable of making present something which is elsewhere, or which is not real: an image of someone appearing in dreams (ὄναρ)[42]; phantoms or ghosts coming back from the netherworld (ψυχή),[43] or created ad hoc by a god (φάσμα)[44]; but also the shadow of the body (σκιά),[45] the image reflected in a mirror,[46] and so on. These uses stress the fact that the visual representation produced by the εἴδωλον is deceptive and does not correspond to actual reality; and this is probably the reason why Plato chose εἴδωλον as a general term to qualify (negatively) images in his writings. In some sources, this absence in reality is equated with an absent body: Lucian defines the shadow of Heracles as an εἴδωλον ἀσώματος.[47] If we think of the original meaning of הבל, i.e., "vapour," from which the idea of "vanity," "uselessness" develops, the translation of הבלים with εἴδωλα in Deut 32:21 seems to reflect the translator's awareness that the word εἴδωλον can sometimes denote something insubstantial. Moreover, הבל and images coming from dreams are already associated in some biblical texts: Zechariah (10:2) condemns dreams as a means of divination, saying that they offer nothing but a worthless (הבל) comfort; and a difficult passage from Qohelet (5:6) equates חלמות ("dreams") with הבלים ("vanities").[48] This background could

προσκυνεῖν) and Philo (*Dec.* 51: περὶ ξοάνων καὶ ἀγαλμάτων καὶ συνόλως ἀφιδρυμάτων χειροκμήτων).

[42] Synesius of Cyrene, *De insomniis* 15.

[43] Homer, *Od.* 9.471–6; 24.4; Herodotus, *Hist.* 5.92.

[44] Homer, *Il.* 5.449–53; *Od.* 4.796.

[45] Aeschylus, *Ag.* 839.

[46] Plutarch, *Pyth. orac.* 404c 10.

[47] Lucian, *Diol. mort.* 11.5.

[48] Qoh 5:6.

have enhanced the equivalence between εἴδωλον and הבל found in Deuteronomy.[49]

We can already draw some provisional conclusions from the comparison between Exod 20:4 and Deut 32:21. First, the uses of εἴδωλον in the LXX Pentateuch seem to retain the semantic polyvalence that the word has in classical and post-classical Greek. Second, its meaning should not always be systematically reduced to the notion of "idol." Rather, each instance should be analysed in its own context. Third, in the formulation of Exod 20:4, εἴδωλον means "image." It was chosen because of its functional capacity to represent a divine reality, in the same way that the fish mummies or the embalmed hawks represent the goddess Neith-Athena and Horus-Hermes in the Egyptian Hellenistic temples, as papyrological evidence confirms. These results are in line with what Pierre Vernant has shown to be[50] the salient feature of the Greek εἴδωλον: i.e., the capacity to make present (*présentifier*) someone or something which is absent, i.e., by performing a representative function. From this perspective, the term belongs to the semantic field of image and visual representation and can refer to both an insubstantial image, i.e., to an image that we would qualify as a pure "appearance," and to a concrete object. It is probably this feature which explains its success in idol polemics.

5. *EIKŌN*

In the Greek vocabulary of image, εἰκών is certainly a central item, such that its presence in the LXX is not surprising. The word is attested around forty times, fifteen of which are concentrated in the book of Daniel, where εἰκών refers to the golden statue of huge dimensions built by Nebuchadnezzar. Eight occurrences are found in the book of Wisdom, to which we will return below. The word does not occur in the formulation of the Decalogue, but in other passages referring to the *Bildverbot*, for instance Deut 4:16, as an equivalent to the Hebrew סמל, "statue," and appears occasionally in the prophetic polemics against idols.[51] It has sometimes been suggested that the semantic domain of εἰκών has an abstract or "metaphysical" potential, i.e., the capacity to refer to non-corporeal or non-material images, and that this potential would explain its presence in the Greek text of Gen 1:26. This suggestion is based, once again, on the occurrence of εἰκών in Platonic and Jewish-Hellenistic philosophical writings (such as Aristobulus and Philo), where εἰκών means "image" as a mental representation, and refers to spiritual

[49] On this see already Hayward, "Idols," 44–46.

[50] Jean-Pierre Vernant, "Aspects de la personne dans la religion grecque," in *Mythe et pensée chez les Grecs: Études de psychologie historique* (Paris: Maspero, 1965), 79–94; idem, "Naissance d'images"; idem, "Figuration et image."

[51] See especially Hos 13:2, where the translator probably read תמונה, and Isa 40:19–20, where εἰκών is an equivalent of פסל.

qualities.[52] However, such a frame might not be helpful for understanding the uses of εἰκών in the LXX.

To begin with, the semantic domain in which εἰκών occurs most frequently in the LXX is a concrete one. It refers to a sculpted or carved object,[53] to a divine or human statue,[54] but also to a pictorial image and to a portrait, like its main equivalent צלם.[55] This material meaning of εἰκών as statue and image corresponds to the main use of the word in classical Greek, and it is also documented in 2nd-century BCE papyri. The Papyrus of Geneva attests to a εἰκόνων εἰσφορὰν, a tax collected to fund the installation of Lagid royal statues[56]; and εἰκών designates the statues of the pharaohs also in Lagid bilingual decrees.[57] Outside Egypt, it occurs in inscriptions as a designation for honorific statues and, more rarely, for divine images.[58]

Beside the meaning of "statue" or "portrait," εἰκών frequently has a metaphoric use and is applied to various entities that are not material representations (especially human beings, but also natural and other elements). Yet, in these cases, the physical nature of εἰκών should not be dismissed too quickly. A salient example is the royal titulature for Ptolemy Philopator, where the king is called εἰκὼν \ζῶσα/ τοῦ Δι̣[ός, "a living image of Zeus."[59] As has been rightly pointed out by Stephen Lleweylin, this metaphor presupposes the use of images, statues or coins to portray the deity. It can therefore be fully understood against the background of the Lagid εἰκόνες placed at the entrance of the Temples.[60]

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[52] See Susan Brayford, *Genesis*, Septuagint Commentary Series (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 222; Sam Ferguson, "The Metaphysical Image: An Analysis of the Septuagint's Impact on the *Imago Dei*," *Inservimus*: *The Ph.D. Student Journal of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary* 2.1 (2016): 74–98 (89–98).

[53] Isa 40:19–20.

[54] Besides Daniel, see also Ezek 7:20; 16:17; Wis 13:13, 16; 14:15, 17.

[55] For example, it indicates the images of Chaldeans painted on the wall in Ezek 23:14.

[56] P. Gen. 3 136, 14. See on this Paul Schubert, "L'εἰκόνων εἰσφορά et l'autorité restaurée du roi," in *Akten des 21. Internationalen Papyrologenkongresses*, eds. Bärbel Kramer, Wolfgang Luppe, and Herwig Maehler, APF 3 (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1997), 2: 917–92; Christophe Thiers, "Deux statues des dieux Philométors à Karnak (Karnak Caracol R177 + Cheikh Labib 94CL1421 et Caire JE 41218)," *BIFAO* 102 (2002): 389–404.

[57] See Thiers, "Deux Statues," 395–7, for a discussion of the equivalences between Greek, Egyptian and Demotic.

[58] E.g., the εἰκών of Artemis in Wolfgang Blümel, *Die Inschriften von Knidos*, IGSK 41 (Bonn: Habelt, 1992), 1:59; see Kirsten Koonce, "Agalma and Eikôn," *The American Journal of Philology* 109.1 (1988): 108–10.

[59] P. Münch 3 45, 11.

[60] Stephen R. Lleweylin, "The King as a Living Image," in *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity: A Review of the Greek Inscriptions and Papyri Published in 1986-87*, eds. Greg Horsley and Stephen R. Llewelyn, NDIEC 9 (North Ryde: Macquarie University, 2002), 36–38. What a

The metaphorical uses of εἰκών imply a relationship of analogy between the image and its referent. The nature of this analogy, having the visual dimension as its core focus, is well illustrated by the use of the word in 3rd–2nd century BCE papyri. Here εἰκών occurs frequently with the meaning of "description." It is found in testaments, contracts, and slave trades when identifying someone or something via physical features or particular signs. It serves as a sort of report form, which is similar to modern forms of physical I.D.s.[61] One early example comes from a letter of the Zenon archives. Here Toubias informs the advisor of Ptolemy II, Apollonios, that he has sent him a eunuch and four boy slaves, and adds their "descriptions" (εἰκόνας)[62]:

> ἀπέσταλκά σοι ἄγοντα Αἰνέ[αν εὐνοῦχον ἔ]να καὶ
> παιδά[ρια . . . .]τικά τε
> 5καὶ τῶν εὐγενῶν τέσσαρα, ὧν [ἐστὶν] ἀ̣περίτμητα δύο .
> ὑπογεγράφαμεν
> δέ σοι καὶ *τὰς εἰκόνας* ⟦αὐ⟧τῶν π̣[αιδαρ]ί̣ων ἵνα εἰδῆις.
>
> ἔρρωσο. (ἔτους) κθ, Ξανδικοῦ ι.

Αἶμος ὡς (ἔτους) ι	Ἀτίκος ὡς (ἔτους) η	Ἀυδομος ὡς (ἔτους) ι	Ὀκαιμος ὡς (ἔτους) ζ
μελαγχρὴς κλαστόθριξ μελανόφθαλμος σιαγόνες μείζους καὶ φακοὶ ἐπὶ σιαγόνι δεξιᾶι ἀπερίτμητος	Μελίχρους κλαστόθριξ ὑπόσιμος ἡσυχῆι μελ̣ανόφθαλμος οὐλὴ ὑπ' ὀφθαλμὸν δεξιὸν ἀπερίτμητος	μελανόφθαλμος κλαστόθριξ ἔσσιμος πρόστομος οὐλὴ παρ' ὀφρὺν δεξιὰν περιτετμημένος	Τρογγυλοπρόσωπος ἔσσιμος γλαυκὸς πυρράκης τετανὸς οὐλὴ ἐμ μετώπωι. ὑπὲρ ὀφρὺν δεξιὰν... περιτετμημένος

"living image" is can be further highlighted by one passage from Plutarch's *Life of Themistocles* (27.4), which describes the ritual to be performed in front of the Persian king. Here the chiliarch Artabanus explains to the Greek Themistocles that one of their most typical beautiful customs is the *proskynesis* in front of the king, "as in front of the image of the god savior of everything" (ὡς εἰκόνα θεοῦ τοῦ τὰ πάντα σῴζοντος).

[61] See Geneva Misener, "Iconistic Portraits," *Classical Philology* 19.2 (1924): 97–123.

[62] P. Cairo Zen. 1 59076 (transl. Roger S. Bagnall and Peter Derow, *The Hellenistic Period: Historical Sources in Translation*, Blackwell Sourcebooks in Ancient History [Oxford: Blackwell, 2004], 65). See also P. Ryl. Gr. 4 558; P. Enteux 22; P. Köln Gr. 9 365; P.Tebt. 1 32.

> I have sent to you Aineias bringing a [eunuch] and four boys, alert and of good breeding, two of whom are uncircumcised. I append *descriptions* of the boys for your information. Farewell. Year 29, Xandikos 10.
>
> Haimos. About 10. Dark skin. Curly hair. Black eyes. Rather big jaws with moles on the right jaw. Uncircumcised.
>
> Atikos. About 8. Light skin. Curly hair. Nose somewhat flat. Black eyes, scar below the right eye. Uncircumcised.
>
> Audomos. About 10. Black eyes. Curly hair. Nose flat. Protruding lips. Scar near the right eyebrow. Circumcised.
>
> Okaimos. About 7. Round face. Nose flat. Gray eyes. Fiery complexion. Long straight hair. Scar on forehead above the right eyebrow. Circumcised.

Moreover, it has to be observed that the semantic domain of εἰκών can overlap with εἴδωλον in referring to vanishing and inconsistent images. In Ps 38:7 (= 39:7 MT), it is said that "the man passes through as an image" (μέντοιγε ἐν εἰκόνι διαπορεύεται ἄνθρωπος πλὴν μάτην ταράσσονται); again, in Ps 72:20 (= 73:20 MT) the "image" of the enemies is compared to a dream that goes away when one awakes (ὡσεὶ ἐνύπνιον ἐξεγειρομένου κύριε ἐν τῇ πόλει σου τὴν εἰκόνα αὐτῶν ἐξουδενώσεις. "Like a dream when one awakes, O Lord, in your city you will set their image at naught."). These two passages are based on a difficult Hebrew text; but it would be tempting to translate εἰκών here as "phantom." This meaning is attested, albeit rarely, in Classic and Hellenistic literature. In these cases, εἰκών denotes a deceptive image which bears a close resemblance to someone, but without really being him or her: e.g., the image of Athena which appears to Heracles when he has lost his mind,[63] or the double of Heracles in Ades, while the "true" one has remained in the Olympus.[64]

The idea of the visual similarity between the image and its referent is also central in another passage from Euripides, where Hecuba compares the hands of the young Astyanax to those of his father Hector (ὦ χεῖρες, ὡς εἰκοὺς μὲν ἡδείας πατρὸς). The context of familial likeness between the father (i.e., the model), and the son (i.e., the copy), closely resembles Gen 5:1, where Adam generates his son κατὰ τὴν εἰκόνα αὐτοῦ. This parallel offers a pertinent key to interpreting the expression κατὰ τὴν εἰκόνα in other instances in Genesis.[65] Seen in this way, the Greek expression would then perfectly correspond to the meaning of בצלם, "according to the model of," which has been highlighted, among others, by James Barr.[66]

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[63] Euripides, *Herc. fur.* 1002: ἀλλ' ἦλθεν εἰκών, ὡς ὁρᾶν ἐφαίνετο Παλλάς ("But there came a phantom, Pallas as it revealed itself to view.").

[64] Lucian, *Diol. mort.* 11.1.

[65] Gen 1:26–27; 5:3; 9:6.

[66] Barr, "Image of God," 16–17. However, this does not mean that such a model would have a distinct ontological status on its own, as

Finally, some additional remarks are due concerning the metaphorical potential of εἰκών. The LXX indeed attests to a usage of εἰκών which implies an abstract idea of "mental representation". These occurrences are concentrated in the book of Wisdom, where, e.g, "the night" covering the Egyptians "is an image of the darkness which will receive the idolatrous" (νὺξ εἰκὼν τοῦ μέλλοντος αὐτοὺς διαδέχεσθαι σκότους).[67] In this regard, another good example is Wis 7:26, where wisdom is said to be an image of divine goodness (εἰκὼν τῆς ἀγαθότητος αὐτοῦ). A reference to the physical aspects of vision is still present, as in the same verse εἰκών is parallel with both ἀπαύγασμα ("reflection, glare") and ἔσοπτρον ("mirror"). In this regard, it is interesting to observe that even Plato refers to a pictorial dimension to explain how a mental representation is generated. Socrates speaks of "a painter […] who paints in the soul images of the things that have been said,"[68] and of images who are "shaped with words in the soul."[69]

We can at this point advance some conclusions concerning εἰκών. First, the semantic richness of εἰκών in the LXX corresponds to its usages in classical and post-classical Greek literature, and makes the word a perfect equivalent for the Hebrew צלם. Moreover, the "positive" meaning that tends to be associated with εἰκών, on account of its occurrences in Genesis, seems to be unjustified, since the word is also used to indicate images of foreign gods that are the object of harsh polemics in the prophetic literature, as passages like Hosea 13:2; Isa 40: 19–20; Ezek 7:20; 16:17; 23:14 attest. Hence, the opposition between εἰκών and εἴδωλον as transmitting a notion of reliable *versus* false images does not hold true, as εἰκών can sometimes denote deceptive images and overlap with εἴδωλον. Rather, the semantic specificity of εἰκών resides in its focus on visual and figurative aspects, which are not necessarily implied by εἴδωλον.

Furthermore, metaphorical uses of εἰκών in the LXX are attested. However, they are concentrated in those books which actively engage with Greek philosophical referents, such as Wisdom, while no metaphorical value seems to be required to understand the meaning of εἰκών in the book of Genesis,[70] or in other books.

Finally, the fact that εἰκών in the LXX is used for divine images and statues helps deconstruct another artificial opposition, inherited from classical epigraphy and henceforth often reiterated: the differentiation between ἀγάλματα as referring exclusively to divine images, and εἰκών as specifically referring to human images, statues or portraits.[71] Egyptian papyri and a few

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Barr's formulation might instead suggest.

[67] Wis 17:20.

[68] Plato, *Phil.* 39b: τῶν λεγομένων εἰκόνας ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ γράφει.

[69] Plato, *Resp.* 588b: εἰκόνα πλάσαντες τῆς ψυχῆς λόγῳ.

[70] In this regard the meaning of the expression κατ' εἰκόνα αὐτοῦ in Sir 17:3, which attests to the ancient exegesis of Gen 1:26, might be different from the meaning of the same expression in Gen 1:26 itself.

[71] Louis Robert, "Recherches épigraphiques," *REA* 62 (1960): 276–361 (316–7); more recently e.g., Dimitris Damaskos, *Untersuchungen zu*

inscriptions already call the validity of such a distinction into question.[72] The evidence from the LXX would also support a reassessment of the issue. We should evaluate the specific features of the Egyptian context and the impact of typically Hellenistic phenomena, such as the ruler divinization, on naming divine images.

6. *Homoíōma*

Contrary to εἰκών and εἴδωλον, ὁμοίωμα is quite rare in classical Greek, which prefers the form ὁμοιότης. Ὁμοίωμα remains mostly confined to the philosophical language of Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus, and few others. This neuter abstract noun expresses similarity between two entities, and therefore can be rendered by "resemblance." In Platonic philosophy, ὁμοίωμα can function as an equivalent for εἰκών, or together with cognate verbs (εἰκάζω).[73] It can also occasionally mean "image": in these cases, it denotes a mental representation, as for example to certain music which, according to Aristoteles, expresses various states of emotion owing to the similarity (ὁμοιώματα) between the melody and the soul's feelings.[74] The abstract value of this item is confirmed by its rare occurrences in papyri and inscriptions, where it has an adverbial function (e.g., ἐξ ὁμοιώματος, "by analogy"[75]).

The word often has the meaning "copy of."[76] This is suggested by the syntagmatic pattern employed when ὁμοίωμα is used with this meaning, since the noun is then followed by a genitive. This pattern is the most frequent in the LXX, where ὁμοίωμα is almost always the head noun of a genitive structure, where the genitive refers to the object of which ὁμοίωμα is the copy (see Table 1).

Hence, ὁμοίωμα corresponds well to the Hebrew דמות on account of its morphological features (the Hebrew form being construed with the sufformative of the abstract), as well as its semantic domains: both ὁμοίωμα and דמות bring to the fore the functional aspect of the image, and its relationship with what is represented. In this regard, however, ὁμοίωμα also overlaps partially with the semantic domains covered by תמונה, "external

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hellenistischen Kultbildern (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1999), 305–7.

[72] Hans-Joachim Drexhage, "Zur Behandlung und Restaurierung von Bildwerken in der Antike," in *Mousikos Anēr: Festschrift für Max Wegner zum 90. Geburtstag*, eds. Oliver Brehmand and Sascha Klie, AVFG 32 (Bonn: Habelt, 1992), 348–54.

[73] Plato, *Phaedr.* 250b; *Parm.* 132d–133e. See also Aristotle, *Pol.* 1340a.

[74] Aristotle, *Pol.* 1340a: ἔστι δὲ ὁμοιώματα μάλιστα παρὰ τὰς ἀληθινὰς φύσεις ἐν τοῖς ῥυθμοῖς καὶ τοῖς μέλεσιν ὀργῆς καὶ πραότητος [....] συμβέβηκε δὲ τῶν αἰσθητῶν ἐν μὲν τοῖς ἄλλοις μηδὲν ὑπάρχειν ὁμοίωμα τοῖς ἤθεσιν.

[75] OGIS 669.52; compare P. Fayum 106.20. However, in a 2nd century CE ostracon containing a descriptive label it refers to concrete objects: ἀρχαῖα βυβλία καὶ ὁμοιώματα ("ancient books and similar things," or "ancient books and copies"): O.Mich 3.1101.

[76] Plato, *Parm.* 132d; *Phaedr.* 250b; *Soph.* 266d.

shape," "visible form," and by תבנית, which in Deuteronomy means "imitation" or "reproduction." Indeed, ὁμοίωμα is repeatedly used as an equivalent for both terms in the context of *Bildverbot*, in Exod 20:4 and Deut 5:8, where it is paralleled with εἴδωλον and γλυπτόν, and in the longer Deuteronomic passage prohibiting the cult of images (4:12–25). On the one hand, this context underlies the strong proximity between the image and its model, i.e., the reality which is represented by the image. On the other hand, the fact that ὁμοίωμα is used as an equivalent for תמונה and תבנית partly extends the semantic potential of ὁμοίωμα with features that are not explicitly attested in Greek literature. In Deuteronomy ὁμοίωμα eventually also expresses the physical form of the image and its visible appearance. It could therefore be translated as "likeness" (especially in verses 12, 15, and 16a, where it is not followed by a genitive). This meaning is found occasionally in the New Testament[77] and elsewhere. An example, which is probably late, is the Aesopian tale transmitted in the collection attributed to the persian philosopher Syntipas, where the deer looks into the water and sees its image reflected in it (ἰδοῦσα δὲ ἐν τῷ ὕδατι τὸ τοῦ ἰδίου σώματος ὁμοίωμα).[78]

As in the cases of εἰκών and εἴδωλον, the copy expressed by ὁμοίωμα might be either deceptive and misleading or faithful and efficacious, depending on the context. An example of the first use is Sir 34:2–3, where the author polemizes against the interpretation of dreams as a means of divination. He opposes visions and apparitions that occur in dreams with reality, in the same way in which the "copy" (ὁμοίωμα προσώπου) of a person is distinguished from and different to that person "in flesh."[79] The opposite case is 1 Sam 6:5, the only case where ὁμοίωμα occurs as an equivalent of צלם. The land of the Philistines is afflicted by plagues and mice because of the improper presence of the ark in their territory. Their priests and diviners then suggest to them that they might produce golden mice, literally "copies of your mice which devastate the land": (ὁμοίωμα τῶν μυῶν ὑμῶν τῶν διαφθειρόντων τὴν γῆν) to be put on a chariot together with the ark and brought away. This will stop the plague and the presence of mice in Ashdod. The images of mice and rats are meant to act as substitutes for the actual mice, in that they have the capacity to literally carry away the pestilence.

In light of this evidence, the idea that ὁμοίωμα indicates only a formal similarity to what is represented and not a "substantial" one does not hold true. Nor does ὁμοίωμα seem to be used as the opposite of εἰκών. Instead, the main meaning of ὁμοίωμα as "copy," in the LXX and in the rest of the Greek literature, implies a strong proximity between the entity that is

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[77] Rev 9:7.

[78] Syntipas, *Fabulae Synt.* 15 (*Corpus fabularum Aesopicarum*, eds. August Hausrath and Herbert Hunger, BSGRT [Leipzig: Teubner, 1959], 1,2:155–83).

[79] Especially Sir 34:3: τοῦτο κατὰ τούτου ὅρασις ἐνυπνίων κατέναντι προσώπου ὁμοίωμα προσώπου.

qualified as ὁμοίωμα and its model, or between two entities sharing similar features, so that one can work as the "representation" of the other.

7. CONCLUSIONS

The present study has a series of implications for biblical exegesis. First, the analysis of εἴδωλον, εἰκών, and ὁμοίωμα in the LXX against the background of other Greek evidence questions a rigid opposition between εἴδωλον and εἰκών on the one hand, and εἰκών and ὁμοίωμα on the other, as reflecting an opposition between images able to express the substance of the underpinning reality *versus* images that do not have this capacity. The ancient way of conceiving images and their relationship with reality does not build on an internal tension between these notions, or on an "inner meaning" that would be exclusively inherent to each item of vocabulary. Rather, the Greek vocabulary of the image shows a considerable level of contiguity and proximity, demonstrated by the fact that 1) the semantic domains covered by different items of vocabulary partly overlap; 2) several items frequently concur together to define more precisely the nature of the image in question. In this regard, a further task that needs to be completed is an exhaustive mapping of collocations, to determine how these terms interact each other and how such interactions modify meaning.

Second, as the value judgment on the images expressed in biblical texts does not depend on the vocabulary itself (either εἴδωλον, εἰκών, or ὁμοίωμα) but on the context, it would be useful to differentiate more clearly the concept of "idol" from that of "image," which too often tend to be assimilated in biblical scholarship. It is undeniable that the LXX is the context in which a certain notion of "idol" was fashioned and passed on to the New Testament and early Christian literature.[80] Yet this religious construction operates more on the level of the internal development of the LXX tradition, as it is attested in later books such as Isaiah, Daniel, Chronicles, and especially in non-translated books, such as Wisdom or 2 Maccabees. Therefore, the discussion of idols and the relationship between idols and images needs to be revised and reframed in several regards, both in relation to the Hebrew Bible and to the Septuagint. On the one hand, a common discourse against idols seems to already develop in the Hebrew Bible itself, although without a single term emerging. On the other hand, Septuagint translators, and more specifically the translators of the Pentateuch seem to have been aware of the broad semantic spectrum which could be covered by εἴδωλον in Greek.

This remark highlights a further implication of this study which pertains to the broader field of the Greek language and culture. The uses of εἴδωλον, εἰκών, and ὁμοίωμα in the LXX attest to the semantic richness of these notions, and also to a higher degree of continuity with the usages of this lexicon in

[80] On the history of this notion, see Barbu, *Naissance de l'idolâtrie*, especially 40–58.

other Greek corpora, than what is usually acknowledged. Moreover, their use in the LXX emphasizes and reinforces the fundamental differences between these items: while εἴδωλον expresses the capacity of the image "to presentify" (*présentifier*) the divine reality, εἰκών insists on its visual aspects, and ὁμοίωμα underlines the relation of similarity between a copy and its model. These test cases confirm once again the interest of the LXX for advancing our understanding of the Greek language.

A final implication concerns the history of religion. The absence of clear-cut differentiations in LXX vocabulary between "images" and "cult images," or, in other words, the lack of a specific vocabulary for cult images and statues, seems to confirm that the latter is more a product of a modern way of thinking than a notion that was relevant in ancient times. However, this finding also has further consequences for the general understanding of the status of the image in antiquity. In a 1990 essay, Jean-Pierre Vernant underlined how the very idea of "figurative representation" is a complex mental category. As such, it not only presupposes the definition of notions like "appearance," "likeness," "image," but also implies an understanding of their mutual relationships, as well as of the difference between image, on the one hand, and reality, on the other.[81] The articulation between these notions in antiquity was probably different, and the evidence from the LXX seems to confirm that ancient boundaries were far more fluid than what we usually assume. There are, however, developments toward a clearer articulation of the relationships between image and reality. An example is the presence of non-corporeal referents for the image, attested in the LXX, although this does not automatically mean that a metaphysical notion of the image—i.e., a notion of image as "representation"— is at work. The introduction of an abstract and functional term like ὁμοίωμα within the lexicon of the image is another step in this direction. Tracing such developments is certainly a promising avenue for future research.

[81] See on this Vernant, "Figuration et image," 226: Autrement dit une statue cultuelle, quelle que soit sa forme, même pleinement humaine, n'apparaît pas nécessairement comme une image, perçue et pensée comme telle. La catégorie de la représentation figurée n'est pas une donnée immédiate de l'esprit humain, un fait de nature, constant et universel. C'est un cadre mental qui, dans sa construction, suppose que se soient déjà dégagées et nettement dessinées, dans leurs rapports mutuels et leur commune opposition à l'égard du réel, de l'être, les notions d'apparence, d'imitation, de similitude, d'image, de faux-semblant.

TABLE 1: *HOMOIŌMA*

	Verb/ headnoun	Genitive construction	Hebrew equivalent
Exod 20:4	ποιέω	+ παντὸς ὅσα ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ ἄνω καὶ ὅσα ἐν τῇ γῇ κάτω καὶ ὅσα ἐν τοῖς ὕδασιν ὑποκάτω τῆς γῆς	תמונה
Deut 4:12	εἶδον	Ø	תמונה
Deut 4:15	εἶδον	Ø	תמונה
Deut 4: 16 (2x)	ποιέω	Ø	תמונה
		+ ἀρσενικοῦ ἢ θηλυκοῦ	תבנית
Deut 4: 17	ποιέω	+ παντὸς κτήνους	תבנית
(2x)		+ παντὸς ὀρνέου πτερωτοῦ	תבנית
Deut 4:18	ποιέω	+ παντὸς ἑρπετοῦ	תבנית
(2x)		+ παντὸς ἰχθύος	תבנית
Deut 4:23	ποιέω	+ πάντων ὧν συνέταξεν κύριος ὁ θεός σου	תמונה
Det 4:25	ποιέω	+ παντὸς	תמונה כל
Deut 5:8	ποιέω	+ παντὸς ὅσα ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ ἄνω καὶ ὅσα ἐν τῇ γῇ κάτω καὶ ὅσα ἐν τοῖς ὕδασιν ὑποκάτω τῆς γῆς	כל תמונה
Josh 22:28	εἶδον	+ τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου	תבנית
Jdg 8:18*	/	+ υἱοῦ βασιλέως	תאר
1Kgd 6:5	ποιέω	+ τῶν μυῶν ὑμῶν τῶν διαφθειρόντων τὴν γῆν	צלם

*Text A has μορφή.

4Kgd 16:10	ἀποστέλλω	+ τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου	דמות
2Paral 4:3	ποιέω	+ μόσχου	דמות
Ps 105:20	/	(ἐν ὁμοιώματι) + μόσχου	בתבנית
Ps 143:12	/	+ ναοῦ	תבנית
Song 1:11	ποιέω	+ χρυσίου	תור
Isa 40:18	ὁμοιόω	Ø	דמות
Isa 40:19	κατασκευ-άζω	Ø	?
Ezek 1:5 (2x)	εἶδον	+ τεσσάρων ζῴων + ἀνθρώπου	דמות
Ezek 1:16	/	Ø	דמות
Ezek 1:22	/	Ø	דמות
Ezek 1:26 (3x)	/	+ θρόνου + τοῦ θρόνου Ø	דמות דמות דמות
Ezek 1:28	ὅρασις	+ δόξης	דמות
Ezek 8:2	εἶδον	+ ἀνδρός	מראה
Ezek 8:3	ἐκτείνω	+ χειρὸς	תבנית
Ezek 10:1	εἶδον	+ θρόνου	דמות
Ezek 10:8	εἶδον	+ χειρῶν	תבנית
Ezek 10:10	/	Ø	דמות
Ezek 10:21	/	+ χειρῶν	דמות
Ezek 23:15	/	+ υἱῶν Χαλδαίων	דמות
Dan 3:92	/	+ ἀγγέλου θεοῦ	דמה
Sir 34:3	/	+ προσώπου	/
Sir 38:28	κατέναντι	+ σκεύους	/
1Macc 3:48	ἐξεραύνω	+ τῶν εἰδώλων	/