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For Our Good Always
Studies on the Message and Influence of
Deuteronomy
in Honor of Daniel I. Block

Edited by

JASON S. DEROUCHIE, JASON GILE, and KENNETH J. TURNER

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Counting the Ten

An Investigation into the Numbering of the Decalogue

JASON S. DEROUCHIE

The Bible is explicit that God revealed *ten* Words to his people at Mt. Sinai (Exod 34:28; Deut 4:13, 10:4), and it goes to reason that we should know how to count them, especially in light of the unique status these words bear in Scripture.¹ But in the history of interpretation there has been three principal perspectives on how properly to enumerate these ten, and the distinct forms of the Decalogue in Exod 20:1–17 and Deut 5:5–21 only intensify the challenges.²

Author's Note: Perhaps no other individual has had as much influence on my approach to scholarship and academic ministry as Daniel Block. He is a dear mentor, brother, and friend, and I count my five years as his doctoral son some of the most significant in my life with respect to character and skill development. The psalmist's delight in the good instruction of the Lord is reflected in Dan's study, life, and teaching, and I am so grateful for this example. My earliest musings on the present topic took place in his office, and I joyfully offer this completed piece in his honor. May Yahweh bless and keep you and continue to use you as an instrument of his grace for his glory, for your joy, and for the good his people. Parts of the present study grow out of my book, *A Call to Covenant Love: Text Grammar and Literary Structure in Deuteronomy 5–11* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2007) 115–17, 127–32. Earlier drafts of this paper were presented under the title "Numbering the Decalogue: A Textlinguistic Reappraisal" at both the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society in November 2006 and the upper Midwest region meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in April 2007.

1. While often termed the "Ten Commandments," the Hebrew label preserved in Exod 34:28, Deut 4:13, and Deut 10:4 is "Ten Words" (עֲשֵׂרֵת הַדְּבָרִים), which is also the etymology of the term Decalogue (from the Greek δέκα 'ten' + λόγοι 'words'). Nevertheless, Moses declares that the Ten Words were "commanded" (Piel צוה, Deut 4:13), and Jesus explicitly calls them "commandments" (ἐντολάς, Matt 19:17–19). Both of these factors may have some bearing on the question of numbering, and they suggest that the traditional title "Ten Commandments" is not misdirected. For a discussion of the role and significance of the Ten Words in Scripture, see my accompanying essay in this volume titled "Making the Ten Count: Reflections on the Lasting Message of the Decalogue."

2. In the history of interpretation, critical scholars have questioned whether it is indeed proper to treat the "ethical Decalogues" of Exod 20:1–17 and Deut 5:6–21 as the truest, most original "Ten Words." Indeed, many attempt to find a "ritual Decalogue" in Exod 34:11–26 and believe this list to be the most ancient "Ten Words." I believe a close reading of the text as it stands removes the proposed tensions and clearly designates that

Most recent studies of the Ten Words accept without discussion the traditional Reformed numbering. Throughout the centuries, however, interpreters have questioned their proper itemization, debating issues of form, style, semantic content, and cantillation, especially with reference to the boundaries of “Words” one, two, and ten.³

Contemporary studies in discourse grammar (i.e., textlinguistics or discourse analysis) open new avenues for discerning literary structure and flow-of-thought in Hebrew texts. Utilizing a nuanced understanding of participant reference, connection, and other literary devices like inclusio and repetition, this study reevaluates the numbering of the Decalogue and argues that a modified form of the Catholic-Lutheran enumeration most closely aligns with the formal text-grammatical signals and finds strong support from the perspective of style, semantic content, and cantillation.⁴

the phrase עשרת הדברים ‘the Ten Words’ is only properly applied to Exod 20:1–17 and Deut 5:6–21. See Appendix A for my argument.

3. The following contemporary studies have wrestled with the numbering of the Decalogue: L. Hartman, “The Enumeration of the Ten Commandments,” *CBQ* 7 (1945) 105–8; W. L. Moran, “The Conclusion of the Decalogue (Ex 20,17 = Dt 5,21),” *CBQ* 29 (1967) 543–54; Bo Reicke, *Die zehn Worte in Geschichte und Gegenwart. Zahlung und Bedeutung der Gebote in den verschiedenen Konfessionen* (Tubingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1973); M. D. Koster, “The Numbering of the Ten Commandments in Some Peshiṭta Manuscripts,” *VT* 30.4 (1980) 468–73; M. Breuer, “Dividing the Decalogue into Verses and Commandments,” in *The Ten Commandments in History and Interpretation* (essay trans. G. Levi; ed. B.-Z. Segal and G. Levi; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1985) 291–330, esp. 309–14; P. L. Maier, “Enumerating the Decalogue: Do We Number the Ten Commandments Correctly?” *Concordia Journal* 16.1 (Jan 1990) 18–26; N. Jastram, “Should Lutherans Really Change How They Number the Ten Commandments?” *Concordia Journal* 16.4 (Oct 1990) 363–69; H. D. Hummel, “Numbering the Ten ‘Commandments’: A Response to Both Jastram and Maier,” *Concordia Journal* 16.4 (Oct 1990) 373–83; P. L. Maier, “A Response to Nathan Jastram,” *Concordia Journal* 16.4 (Oct 1990) 370–72; L. Smith, “Original Sin as ‘Envy’: The Structure of the Biblical Decalogue,” *Dialog* 30 (1991) 227–30; R. Youngblood, “Counting the Ten Commandments,” *BR* 10 (Dec 1994) 30–35, 50, 52; B. Arnett, “Counting to Ten: Enumerating and Interpreting the Decalogue of Exodus 20,” *Journal for Biblical Ministries* (spring 2009) 58–74; R. R. Hutton, “A Simply Matter of Numbering? ‘Sovereignty’ and ‘Holiness’ in the Decalogue Tradition,” in *Raising Up a Faithful Exegete: Essays in Honor of Richard D. Nelson* (ed. K. L. Noll and B. Schramm; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2010) 211–23; D. I. Block, “How Shall We Number the Ten Commands? The Deuteronomy Version (5:1–21),” in idem, *How I Love Your Torah*, 56–60; and idem, *The Gospel according to Moses: Theological and Ethical Reflections on the Book of Deuteronomy* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2012) 169–73.

4. After the bulk of this research was completed, written, and presented, I found N. Jastram’s 1990 article, which also employs discourse analysis to establish the numbering of the Decalogue and supports the Catholic-Lutheran numbering (“Should Lutherans Really Change How They Number the Ten Commandments?” *Concordia Journal* 16.4 [Oct 1990] 363–69). His paper is helpful and complements the present essay; his is the second

1. History of Interpretation

Table 1 (p. 96) highlights the primary ways Jews and Christians have enumerated the Decalogue through the centuries. The chart displays the six main groupings of textual witnesses, which are generally arranged chronologically from left to right under each main heading. The various numberings are limited to twelve main statements, and some of the differences between Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5 are noted in parentheses.⁵ Because the following discussion includes a number of technical details related to the Jewish Masoretic cantillation tradition, some readers may find it useful simply to overview the table and then move on to section 2, where I engage in my own analysis of the Ten Words.

The Jewish Masoretic tradition has retained two distinct and contradictory cantillation systems for arranging the Decalogue—the so-called “upper” and “lower” tropes.⁶ For ease of reference, Table 2 (p. 98)

study in a four-part series in *Concordia Journal* related to the numbering of the Ten Words (see n. 3).

5. The order of the prohibitions against murder, adultery, and theft vary throughout the witnesses. According to J. W. Wevers, it is simply not clear why the order varies (*Notes on the Greek Text of Exodus* [Septuagint and Cognate Studies 30; Atlanta, GA: Scholars, 1990] 314; idem, *Notes on the Greek Text of Deuteronomy* [Septuagint and Cognate Studies 39; Atlanta, GA: Scholars, 1995] 104). For a full discussion of the witnesses, see D. Flusser, “Do not Commit Adultery, Do Not Murder,” *Textus* 4 (1964) 220–24; idem, “The Ten Commandments and the New Testament,” trans. Gershon Levi, in *The Ten Commandments in History and Interpretation* (ed. Ben-Zion Segal and Gershon Levi; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1985) 219–46.

Murder > Adultery > Theft	LXX Exod and Deut (A); Sam Exod and Deut; Pesh Exod and Deut; MT Exod and Deut; 4Q41(Deut ^a); 4Q129(Phyl B); XQ3(-Phyl 3); 1Q13(Phyl); Josephus, <i>Ant.</i> 3:92; Matt 5:21; 19:18; Mark 10:19
Murder > Theft > Adultery	Hos 4:2
Adultery > Theft > Murder	LXX Exod (S/B)
Adultery > Murder > Theft	LXX Deut (S/B); LXX Exod (LC [?]); Philo, <i>Decal.</i> 10:36 and <i>Spec. Laws</i> , 3:8, Nash Papyrus; Luke 18:20; Rom 13:9; Jas 2:10–11
Theft > Murder > Adultery	Jer 7:8–11

6. Similar upper and lower cantillation tropes are evident in the *BHS* at the episode of Reuben and Bilhah in Gen 35:22–23. As for the occurrence in the Ten Words, Breuer notes: “We are forced to the conclusion that the upper and lower cantillations for the beginning of the Decalogue, from the ‘I am the LORD’ to ‘My commandments’, not only do not complement one another, but actually disagree with one another,” for the upper tropes separate the statements “I am Yahweh your God” and “There shall never be to you other gods,” whereas the lower tropes bring them together (“Dividing the Decalogue

Table 1. *The Numbering of the Decalogue throughout History*

	Jewish				Christian	
	<i>Philo Josephus Min. of Rabbis</i>	<i>Lower Cant. (Verses)</i>	<i>Maj. of Rabbis Tg. Ps.-Jon. Upper Cant.</i>	<i>Parashiyot (Para- graphs) Post-Mas. Cant.</i>	<i>Augustine Catholic Lutheran</i>	<i>Origen Augustine Orthodox Reformed</i>
I am Yahweh your God (Exod 20:2 // Deut 5:6)	1	[1]	1	1	Intro	Intro
Never other gods (Exod 20:3 // Deut 5:7)			2		1	1
Never make a carved image (Exod 20:4–6 // Deut 5:8–10)	2	[2–4]				2
Never bear Yahweh's name in vain (Exod 20:7 // Deut 5:11)	3	[5]	3	2	2	3
Remember (/Observe) the Sabbath (Exod 20:8–11 // Deut 5:12–15)	4	[6–9]	4	3	3	4
Honor your father and mother (Exod 20:12 // Deut 5:16)	5	[10]	5	4	4	5
Never murder (Exod 20:13 // Deut 5:17)	6	[11]	6	5	5	6
(And) Never commit adultery (Exod 20:14 // Deut 5:18)	7		7	6	6	7
(And) Never steal (Exod 20:15 // Deut 5:19)	8		8	7	7	8
(And) Never bear false witness (Exod 20:16 // Deut 5:20)	9		9	8	8	9
(And) Never covet your neighbor's house (/wife) (Exod 20:17a // Deut 5:21a)	10	[12]	10	9	9	10
(And) Never covet (/desire) your neighbor's wife, etc. (/house, field, etc.) (Exod 20:17b // Deut 5:21b)				10 (only Deut)	10	

separates the two systems as evidenced in the *BHS* of Exod 20:1–17. The two systems can be easily distinguished by contrasting the placement of the three most common disjunctive accents: *silluq*, which marks the end of a verse (׃); *athnach*, which signals the main pause and semantic middle of a verse (׃); and *zaqeph qaton*, which subdivides the Silluq or Athnach portion of a verse (׃).

The most normative Jewish interpretation, as expressed by the majority of rabbis, *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*, and the upper Masoretic cantillation signs (tropes) (see column 3 of Table 1 or column 1 of Table 2), holds that the clause “I am Yahweh your God” (Exod 20:2 // Deut 5:6) is the first of the Ten Words and that statements two and three make up Word two: “There shall never be other gods” through “those who love me and keep my commandments” (Exod 20:3–6 // Deut 5:7–10). Both statements on coveting (Exod 20:17 // Deut 5:21) are then read together as the tenth Word.⁷

In contrast, the lower Masoretic cantillation system, which is likely the older tradition, argues for a different numbering (column 2 of Table 1 or Table 2).⁸ The system most directly distinguishes not Command-

into Verses and Commandments,” 305). He also identifies a third alternative system that is post-Masoretic in origin and links all the first-person material from “I am Yahweh your God” through “my commandments” (Exod 20:2–6 // Deut 5:6–10) (293, 299–300, 310, 319–20). However, this third framework fails to separate the “coveting” commands, which is the necessary corollary to secure *ten* Words (319–20). While most Jewish scholars like Nahmanides attempted to fix this problem by arguing that the purpose of joining “I am Yahweh your God” with what follows was not to create one Word instead of two but simply “to ally the two Commandments,” Breuer shows the untenable nature of this view (320–21).

7. For the classic Rabbinic interpretation, see the *Mekhilta de Rabbi Ishmael* (2nd ed.; trans. J. Z. Lauterbach; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2004, orig. 1933) 313–43 (*Bahodesh* 5–9); cf. Rabbi Hammuna in Mak 24a; Rabbi Levit in TJ Ber 1.8, 3c. For a further list, see J. H. Tigay, *Deuteronomy* [JPSTC; Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1996] 355 n. 24). In the upper Masoretic cantillation system, a *silluq* (full stop) follows the first statement, thus distinguishing “I am Yahweh your God” and “There shall never be to you other gods” as two Words. This view is generally taken to be the “traditional” Jewish arrangement of the Decalogue because it alone is explicitly expressed in the Masoretic cantillation (Breuer, “Dividing the Decalogue into Verses and Commandments,” 302, 314, 329). While a different numbering is implied in the lower cantillation system (see below), the enumeration must be inferred, for the system lays out twelve verses of roughly equal length rather than ten discrete Words. For a full description, overview, and evaluation of the upper and lower Masoretic cantillation systems, see *ibid.*, 291–330.

8. Breuer argues that the lower tropes retain “the *original* scheme of the Masorah” (“Dividing the Decalogue into Verses and Commandments,” 327–29, quote from 329) because (1) within the synagogue custom of cantillation the number of verses reported for each biblical book always agrees with the lower system and “these numbers are apparently older than the similar numbers calculated for the weekly pericopes—just as the

Table 2. Exod 20:2–17 with Upper and Lower Cantillations Separated

Upper Tropes (Distinguishing 10 "Words")	Lower Tropes (Distinguishing 12 "Verses")	
אֲנֹכִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִיךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם מִבֵּית עַבְדִּים:	אֲנֹכִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִיךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם מִבֵּית עַבְדִּים:	2
לֹא יִהְיֶה לְךָ אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים עַל-פָּנָי:	לֹא יִהְיֶה לְךָ אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים עַל-פָּנָי:	3
לֹא תַעֲשֶׂה לְךָ פֶסֶל וְכָל-תְּמוּנָה אֲשֶׁר בַּשָּׁמַיִם מִמַּעַל וְאֲשֶׁר בָּאָרֶץ מִתַּחַת וְאֲשֶׁר בַּמַּיִם מִתַּחַת לָאָרֶץ:	לֹא תַעֲשֶׂה לְךָ פֶסֶל וְכָל-תְּמוּנָה אֲשֶׁר בַּשָּׁמַיִם מִמַּעַל וְאֲשֶׁר בָּאָרֶץ מִתַּחַת וְאֲשֶׁר בַּמַּיִם מִתַּחַת לָאָרֶץ:	4
לֹא-תִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה לָהֶם וְלֹא תַעֲבֹדֵם כִּי אֲנֹכִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֵל קַדָּשׁ עֹזֵן אֲבֹת עַל-בָּנִים עַל-שְׁלֹשִׁים וְעַל-רַבְעִים לְשָׁנָאִי:	לֹא-תִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה לָהֶם וְלֹא תַעֲבֹדֵם כִּי אֲנֹכִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֵל קַדָּשׁ עֹזֵן אֲבֹת עַל-בָּנִים עַל-שְׁלֹשִׁים וְעַל-רַבְעִים לְשָׁנָאִי:	5
וְעָשָׂה חֶסֶד לְאֶלְפִים לְאֵהָבִי וּלְשֹׁמְרֵי מִצְוֹתַי: ס	וְעָשָׂה חֶסֶד לְאֶלְפִים לְאֵהָבִי וּלְשֹׁמְרֵי מִצְוֹתַי: ס	6
לֹא תִשָּׂא אֶת-שֵׁם יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְשׁוּא כִּי לֹא יִנְקֶה יְהוָה אֶת אֲשֶׁר-יִשָּׂא אֶת-שְׁמוֹ לְשׁוּא: פ	לֹא תִשָּׂא אֶת-שֵׁם יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְשׁוּא כִּי לֹא יִנְקֶה יְהוָה אֶת אֲשֶׁר-יִשָּׂא אֶת-שְׁמוֹ לְשׁוּא: פ	7
זְכוֹר אֶת-יְוָם הַשַּׁבָּת לְקַדְּשׁוֹ:	זְכוֹר אֶת-יְוָם הַשַּׁבָּת לְקַדְּשׁוֹ:	8
שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים תַּעֲבֹד וְעָשִׂיתָ כָּל-מְלֹאכְתְּךָ:	שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים תַּעֲבֹד וְעָשִׂיתָ כָּל-מְלֹאכְתְּךָ:	9
יְוָם הַשְּׁבִיעִי שַׁבָּתוֹ לִיהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לֹא- תַעֲשֶׂה כָּל-מְלֹאכָה אֲתָהּ וּבִנְךָ וּבִתְּךָ עַבְדְּךָ וְאִמְתְּךָ וּבְהֵמְתְּךָ וְגֵרְךָ אֲשֶׁר בְּשַׁעְרֶיךָ:	יְוָם הַשְּׁבִיעִי שַׁבָּתוֹ לִיהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לֹא- תַעֲשֶׂה כָּל-מְלֹאכָה אֲתָהּ וּבִנְךָ וּבִתְּךָ עַבְדְּךָ וְאִמְתְּךָ וּבְהֵמְתְּךָ וְגֵרְךָ אֲשֶׁר בְּשַׁעְרֶיךָ:	10
כִּי שֵׁשֶׁת-יָמִים עָשָׂה יְהוָה אֶת-הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת- הָאָרֶץ אֶת-הַיָּם וְאֶת-כָּל-אֲשֶׁר-בָּם וַיָּנַח בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי עַל-כֵּן בִּרְךָ יְהוָה אֶת-יְוָם הַשַּׁבָּת וַיְקַדְּשֶׁהוּ: ס	כִּי שֵׁשֶׁת-יָמִים עָשָׂה יְהוָה אֶת-הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת- הָאָרֶץ אֶת-הַיָּם וְאֶת-כָּל-אֲשֶׁר-בָּם וַיָּנַח בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי עַל-כֵּן בִּרְךָ יְהוָה אֶת-יְוָם הַשַּׁבָּת וַיְקַדְּשֶׁהוּ: ס	11
כִּבְדֹּךָ אֶת-אָבִיךָ וְאֶת-אִמְּךָ לְמַעַן יֵאָרְכוּךָ וְיִמִּיךָ עַל הָאָדָמָה אֲשֶׁר-יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ נָתַן לְךָ: ס	כִּבְדֹּךָ אֶת-אָבִיךָ וְאֶת-אִמְּךָ לְמַעַן יֵאָרְכוּךָ וְיִמִּיךָ עַל הָאָדָמָה אֲשֶׁר-יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ נָתַן לְךָ: ס	12
לֹא תִרְצַח: ס	לֹא תִרְצַח: ס	13
לֹא תִנְאַף: ס	לֹא תִנְאַף: ס	14
לֹא תִגְנוֹב: ס	לֹא תִגְנוֹב: ס	15
לֹא-תַעֲנֶה בְרַעַף עַד שֹׁקֶר: ס	לֹא-תַעֲנֶה בְרַעַף עַד שֹׁקֶר: ס	16
לֹא תִחַמְדֵּךְ בֵּית רֵעֶךָ לֹא-תִחַמְדֵּךְ אִשְׁתֵּךְ וְעַבְדְּךָ וְאִמְתְּךָ וְשׁוֹרְךָ וְחֲמֹרְךָ וְכָל אֲשֶׁר לְרֵעֶךָ: פ	לֹא תִחַמְדֵּךְ בֵּית רֵעֶךָ לֹא-תִחַמְדֵּךְ אִשְׁתֵּךְ וְעַבְדְּךָ וְאִמְתְּךָ וְשׁוֹרְךָ וְחֲמֹרְךָ וְכָל אֲשֶׁר לְרֵעֶךָ: פ	17

This comparison is adapted from M. Breuer, "Dividing the Decalogue into Verses and Commandments," 295.

ments or Words but twelve “verses” of roughly equal length (marked in Column 2 of Table 1 by brackets and highlighted in gray in Column 2 of Table 2). However, all the Words are understood to fall along the “verse” breaks. So although one “verse” may include many Words (e.g., the statements “You shall never murder” through “You shall never bear false witness” making up “verse” 11 [Exod 20:13–16 // Deut 5:17–20]) and although one Word may include many verses (e.g., the Sabbath commandment including “verses” 6–9 [Exod 20:8–11 // Deut 5:12–15]), the division into verses never cuts against the division into Words. Stated differently, “Only full Commandments combine to form one verse; and only full verses combine to form one Commandment.”⁹ The most significant point to observe, however, is that the upper and lower cantillation systems place the statement “There shall never be to you other gods” (Exod 20:3 // Deut 5:7) in *different* Words: the upper tropes approach it as the *introduction* to what follows (beginning a unit that continues with “You shall never make a carved image”), whereas the lower tropes treat it as the *conclusion* to what precedes (closing a unit that begins with “I am Yahweh your God”).¹⁰

One tradition that aligns with the verse divisions of the lower cantillation system is found in Philo, Josephus, and a minority of the rabbinic witnesses (column 1 of Table 1).¹¹ Here the first Word begins with “I am Yahweh your God” (Exod 20:2 // Deut 5:6) and ends with the negative “There shall never be to you other gods” (Exod 20:3 // Deut 5:7). The ban on image making (Exod 20:4–6 // Deut 5:8–10) is then viewed as the second Word, and again the coveting prohibitions (Exod 20:17 // Deut 5:21) are viewed together as Word ten.

A different Jewish tradition that also aligns with the verse arrangement of the lower accentuation system is retained in the paragraph

books themselves are older than the division into weekly scriptural lessons” (327); (2) the lower system alone is “faithful to the plain sense of the text, and the usual biblical style,” whereas in the upper cantillation system of the Ten Words “it fashions inordinately long and short verses”; (3) the very name applied to the lower system in the early Masoretic period was *ta’ama qadma* (“the ancient trope”) (see Codex Sassoon 507, also known as the Damascus Pentateuch, MS5); and (4) the lower system alone always adheres to the syntactical rules of the tropes.

9. Breuer, “Dividing the Decalogue into Verses and Commandments,” 304.

10. *Ibid.*, 305. Breuer argues that this “contradicting” set of tropes in the upper and lower cantillation systems suggests that “the two systems come from two different sources,” specifically the upper from the “Easterners” (Babylonia) and the lower from the “Westerners” (Palestine). While the Masorah usually decides in favor of the western tradition, “in this instance it let the two systems stand side by side, and so both of them entered the Tiberian Masorah” (323).

11. See Philo, *Decal.* 12.50–51; Josephus, *Ant.* 3.91 (cf. 3.101). For examples of rabbinic witnesses, see Rabbi Ishmael in *Sifre Numbers*, 112; cf. *Hor.* 12a; *Mak.* 24a.

divisions of the MT (the so-called *parashiyot* [פרשיות]) (column 4 of Table 1).¹² Here the first Word is made up of the extended section in which God speaks in first person—“I am Yahweh your God” through “those who love *me* and keep *my* commandments” (Exod 20:2–6 // Deut 5:6–10).¹³ The second Word then begins with “You shall never take the name of Yahweh in vain” (Exod 20:7 // Deut 5:11), and the final prohibitions “You shall never covet your neighbor’s house (/wife)” and “You shall never covet (/desire) your neighbor’s wife (/house, field), etc.” (Exod 20:17 // Deut 5:21) are distinguished as discrete Words.¹⁴ While some in Jewish circles have concluded that the separation of the coveting commandments as distinct paragraphs was an “error” brought about by the necessity to arrive at *ten* Words after linking all the first-person address into one paragraph,¹⁵ a strong case can be made for the legitimacy of this division.

Indeed, following a Christian tradition that dates at least back to Augustine, most Catholics and Lutherans have enumerated the Words in this way, though commonly marking “I am Yahweh your God” (Exod 20:2 // Deut 5:6) as the preface to the Decalogue and “There shall never be to you other gods” (Exod 20:3 // Deut 5:7) as the actual first Word (column 5 of Table 1).¹⁶ Often in these circles, and especially among

12. While these divisions are not present in the Leningrad Codex, the editors of the BHS added them in accordance with their placement in other Masoretic manuscripts (W. R. Scott, *A Simplified Guide to BHS* [4th ed.; N. Richland Hills, TX: BIBAL, 2007] 1). They are marked in the MT by a large space and the sigla פ, which is referred to as the *śatûmāʿ*, signaling a “closed” paragraph (see E. Yeivin, *Introduction to the Tiberian Masorah* [trans. E. J. Revell; Masoretic Studies 5; Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1980] 40–42). Intriguingly, the *śatûmāʿ* is absent between the coveting commands in the MT of Exod 20:17, but it is present between the parallel commands in Deut 5:21. The “missing” *śatûmāʿ* results in only nine paragraphs in Exod 20:2–17, whereas Deut 5:6–21 includes the expected ten. Notably, the majority of manuscripts consulted by Kennicott included the *śatûmāʿ* even in Exod 20:17 (see C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament* [10 vols.; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002] 1.2:111 [on Exod 20:1]).

13. This appears to be the same tradition witnessed to in the alternative post-Masoretic set of tropes (Breuer, “Dividing the Decalogue into Verses and Commandments,” 310).

14. This was the arrangement of Maimonides, as expressed in the Ben Asher manuscript and the Leningrad Codex.

15. So *Minḥat Shai* on Exod 20:4. Similarly, in his introduction to the Decalogue within his long commentary, Ibn Ezra denounces the separation of the coveting commands (see M. Greenberg, “The Decalogue Tradition Critically Examined,” in *The Ten Commandments in History and Interpretation* [essay trans. M. Shorashim], 96 n. 17).

16. See Augustine, “Questions of Exodus,” in *Quaestionum in Heptateuchum libri*, 7.2.71 (see J. Zycha, ed., *Sancti Aurelii Augustini: Quaestionum in Heptateuchum Libri VII Adnotationum In Iob Liber Unus* [1895] [Kessinger, 2010]); P. Lombard, *The Sentences*, 3.33.1.2 (see idem, *The Sentences Book 3: On the Incarnation of the Word* [trans. G. Silano; Turnhout (Belgium): Brepols, 2008]); P. Melanchthon, “Exposition of the Decalogue,” in *Loci communes*

Catholics, the deuteronomic version is used as the base text, for it more clearly distinguishes the two commandments against coveting by using two different verbs (חמד 'covet'; Hith. ארה 'desire') and by explicitly separating the "wife" from the servants, livestock, and material goods (Deut 5:21). This shape is distinguished from the Exodus version where the charge not to "covet" (חמד) your neighbor's house is followed by the order not to "covet" (חמד) your neighbor's wife, servants, livestock, and all other belongings (Exod 20:17).

In distinction to this approach, Calvin aligned with Philo, Josephus, Origen, and alternative comments by Augustine in distinguishing as two Words the charge against having other gods (Exod 20:3 // Deut 5:7) and the ban against shaping a graven image (Exod 20:4–6 // Deut 5:8–10) (column 6 of Table 1). This group also retains the union of the statements about coveting (Exod 20:17 // Deut 5:21), seeing no exegetical basis for separating the final two prohibitions.¹⁷

2. Learning to Count the Ten

As summarized in Table 3 (p. 102), the history of the Decalogue's interpretation has witnessed no less than three different numbering traditions.¹⁸ The present study attempts to move beyond the interpretive impasse by raising new questions and by positing new significance to past observations.

(see idem, *The Chief Theological Topics: Loci Praecipui Theologici* 1559 [2nd Eng. ed.; trans. J. A. O. Preus; Saint Louis, MO: Concordia, 2011] 91–114). Cf. "Commandments of God," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia: An International Work of Reference on the Constitution, Doctrine, Discipline and History of the Catholic Church* (Appleton, 1907–1912) found at <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen> and the newly published *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (2nd ed.; New York: Doubleday, 2003), which devotes over 100 of its 756 pages to the Decalogue (see pp. 553–672). Breuer rightly notes that the only view not supported in any way by the Masorah is that which treats the statement "I am Yahweh" as standing outside the Decalogue and "There shall never be to you other gods" as the first Word ("Dividing the Decalogue by Verses and Commandments," 312–13).

17. Origen, *Homilies on Exodus*, 8.3 (see Origen, *Homilies on Genesis and Exodus* [Fathers of the Church Series 71; trans. R. E. Heine; Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1982] 185–96); Augustine, *Against Two Letters of the Pelagians*, 3.4.10 (see Augustine of Hippo, "A Treatise Against Two Letters of the Pelagians," trans. R. E. Wallis, in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, First Series, Volume V: Saint Augustin: Anti-Pelagian Writings* [ed. P. Schaff; New York: Christian Literature Company, 1887] 406); cf. idem, *Letters* 55.11.20; *Sermons* 33.3; J. Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 2.8.12 (see *Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion* [2 vols.; ed. J. T. McNeill; trans. F. L. Battles; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960] 1:377–79).

18. It is important to note that the complexities related to the numbering of the Decalogue led to many other enumeration proposals in Jewish circles; for an overview, see Breuer, "Dividing the Decalogue into Verses and Commandments," 314–18.

Table 3. Three Primary Ways the Decalogue Has Been Numbered

	<i>Maj. Jew</i>	<i>Cath- Luth</i>	<i>Orth- Ref</i>
I am Yahweh your God	1		
Never other gods	2	1	1
Never make a carved image			2
Never bear Yahweh's name in vain	3	2	3
Remember (/Observe) the Sabbath	4	3	4
Honor your father and mother	5	4	5
Never murder	6	5	6
(And) Never commit adultery	7	6	7
(And) Never steal	8	7	8
(And) Never bear false witness	9	8	9
(And) Never covet your neighbor's house (/wife)	10	9	10
(And) Never covet (/desire) your neighbor's wife, etc. (/house, field, etc.)		10	

Specifically, the rest of this paper will address a number of grammatical and literary features in the Decalogue that, when properly understood, help us count the Ten. Every language is governed by certain rules that determine how and when various lexemes are used in order to guide communication. While the grammar of biblical Hebrew is different from, say, English, it nevertheless is directed by common linguistic constraints. If communication is going to be comprehensible, Hebrew, like English, must have a way to track participants, to signal the logical relationship between clauses, and to highlight dramatic pause, transition, or units of thought. These types of discourse grammatical features along with elements of style will now be used to itemize the Ten Words.

2.1. Preparatory Remarks

For years scholars have wrestled with the historical development of the Decalogue and the diachronic relationship of the differing versions in Exodus and Deuteronomy. A detailed assessment of this issue is beyond the scope of the present study, but I do offer a number of observations in Appendix B that have guided my assessment that follows.

Section 2 focuses on the Decalogue's structure rather than message, though the discussion does set some trajectories for the latter.¹⁹ To assist

19. For more on the message of the Ten Words, see my second essay in this volume titled "Making the Ten Count: Reflections on the Lasting Message of the Decalogue."

tracking my textual analysis in this paper, Table 4 (pp. 104–5) uses an amended ESV text to underscore the distinctions between the forms of the Ten Words in Exodus and Deuteronomy. Areas where the texts are different but overlapping are signaled with a double underline; a single underline marks those places where one text includes something that the other does not.

2.2. Numbering Words Five through Ten

I begin this discussion at the end of the Decalogue, because here my analysis is simplified with only two different numbering traditions and because this discussion will bring greater clarity to the comments that follow on Words one and two. The Decalogue ends with a clear grouping (Exod 20:13–17 // Deut 5:17–21) that is signaled by the pithy nature of the six prohibitions and by the lack of any direct reference to “Yahweh your God” or of any expressed grounds or motivations (see Table 5, p. 107). At stake here is whether the final two injunctions against coveting/envy are to be read together as a single Word (so the majority Jewish and Orthodox-Reformed views) or separately as distinct Words (so Catholic-Lutheran view).

As an initial observation, Exod 20:17 bears a level of interpretive ambiguity that makes enumeration difficult. On the one hand, the repetition of the verb **חמד** ‘covet’ clearly identifies a topical parallel between the two prohibitions. Furthermore, if **בית** in 20:17a is understood as ‘household’, the independent clause that follows in 20:17b is easily read as an expansion or clarification of this household’s makeup, which would include the neighbor’s wife, servants, livestock, and material goods.²⁰ Linguists have long recognized that Hebrew clauses lacking a fronted conjunction signal discontinuity in a text, often to mark apposition or explication, as would be the case in 20:17b (= option 1). However, asyndeton can also signal a fresh beginning in discourse (= option 2), which suggests the possibility that Exod 20:17b could be a *distinct* Word that actually is *not* intended to unpack the “house” of 20:17a.²¹

20. While the term **בית** ‘house’ can refer to the structural dwelling inhabited by but in distinction from its inhabitants (e.g., Gen 33:17; Judg 11:31, 34), it can also point to the inhabitants themselves—namely, one’s family (i.e., “household”), whether made up of husband, wife, children, and servants (e.g., Gen 7:1, Josh 24:15, 1 Sam 27:3) or simply the biological offspring on the father’s side (e.g., Gen 24:38, Num 17:17, 1 Sam 20:16). See “**בית**,” HALOT 124–25.

21. On the absence of connection (= asyndeton) in Hebrew as a marker of disjunction, whether for apposition/clarification (option 1 above) or for new unit initiation (option 2 above), see F. I. Andersen, *The Hebrew Verbless Clause in the Pentateuch* (JBLMS 14; Nashville: Abingdon, 1970) 28; idem, *The Sentence in Biblical Hebrew* (JLSP 231; New York: Mouton, 1974) 27; S. G. Dempster, “Linguistic Features of Hebrew Narrative: A Discourse Analysis of Narrative from the Classical Period” (Ph.D. diss., University of Toronto,

Table 4. A Comparison of the Decalogue in Exodus and Deuteronomy

J	C/L	O/R	Exod 20:2-17	Deut 5:6-21
1			² I am Yahweh your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.	⁶ I am Yahweh your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.
2	1	1	³ There shall never be to you other gods before me.	⁷ There shall never be to you other gods before me.
	2	2	⁴ You shall never make for yourself a carved image or any likeness of <i>anything</i> that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. ⁵ You shall never bow down to them or serve them, for I Yahweh your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children—unto the third and unto the fourth <i>generation</i> —to those who hate me, ⁶ but showing steadfast love to thousands of <i>generations</i> —to those who love me and keep my commandments. Ⓛ	⁸ You shall never make for yourself a carved image, any likeness of <i>anything</i> that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. ⁹ You shall never bow down to them or serve them, for I Yahweh your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children even unto the third and unto the fourth <i>generation</i> —to those who hate me, ¹⁰ but showing steadfast love to thousands of <i>generations</i> —to those who love me and keep my commandments. Ⓛ
3	2	3	⁷ You shall never bear the name of Yahweh your God in vain, for Yahweh will not hold him guiltless who bears his name in vain. Ⓛ	¹¹ You shall never bear the name of Yahweh your God in vain, for Yahweh will not hold him guiltless who bears his name in vain. Ⓛ
4	3	4	⁸ Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. ⁹ Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁰ but the seventh day is a Sabbath to Yahweh your God. On it you shall not do any work—you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates.	¹² Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as Yahweh your God commanded you. ¹³ Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁴ but the seventh day is a Sabbath to Yahweh your God. On it you shall not do any work—you, or your son, or your daughter, or your ox, or your donkey, or any female servant, or your ox, or your donkey, or any

			<p>11. For in six days Yahweh made the heaven and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore Yahweh blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. ¶</p>		<p>of your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you.</p> <p>15 And you shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and Yahweh your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore Yahweh your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day. ¶</p>
5	4	5	<p>12 Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that Yahweh your God is giving you. ¶</p>		<p>16 Honor your father and your mother, as Yahweh your God commanded you, that your days may be long and that it may go well with you in the land that Yahweh your God is giving you. ¶</p>
6	5	6	<p>13 You shall never murder. ¶</p>		<p>17 You shall never murder. ¶</p>
7	6	7	<p>14 You shall never commit adultery. ¶</p>		<p>18 And you shall never commit adultery. ¶</p>
8	7	8	<p>15 You shall never steal. ¶</p>		<p>19 And you shall never steal. ¶</p>
9	8	9	<p>16 You shall never testify a deceptive witness against your neighbor. ¶</p>		<p>20 And you shall never testify a false witness against your neighbor. ¶</p>
10	9	10	<p>17 You shall never covet your neighbor's house. You shall never covet your neighbor's wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's. ¶</p>		<p>21 And you shall never covet your neighbor's wife. ¶ And you shall never desire your neighbor's house, his field, or his male servant, or his female servant, his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's. ¶</p>

In support of this latter possibility, one must ask why the verb *חמד* ‘covet’ is repeated at all if indeed 20:17b is intended only to clarify the makeup of the “household.” The list of wife, servants, livestock, and material goods could have simply been placed directly after the noun *בית* ‘house’ to express apposition. Comparably, if 20:17b merely explicates the initial coveting prohibition, why is the noun-phrase *רעך* ‘of your neighbor’ repeated after “wife” and not simply replaced with a 3ms pronominal suffix as is found on the rest of the members of the list: “his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey”?²²

With these observations, what is clearly apparent is that the two prohibitions against coveting are cast as independent clauses, each initiated with the same negative durative construction (*לֹא + yiqtol*) that is found in the previous four commandments, all of which are treated as separate Words in the various numbering systems (Exod 20:13–16; cf. Deut 5:17–20). Recognizably, the same structure is evident between the independent clauses of Exod 20:4–5 (cf. Deut 5:8–9), and none of the three enumeration systems treat these as separate Words.²³ Nevertheless, the unbroken staccato-like pattern of prohibitions against murder, adultery, theft, false witness, and coveting a house leads naturally into reading the formally identical element in 20:17b as the final note in the succession.

As attention shifts to Deut 5:21, a number of differences are apparent that support viewing the final two prohibitions of the Decalogue as discrete Words. First, while the verb *חמד* ‘covet’ is retained in the first prohibition of 5:21a, the Hithpael of *ארה* ‘desire, crave’ is used in 5:21b, thus drawing a firmer conceptual distinction (though still overlapping) between the independent clauses.

Second, the isolation of the commandment against coveting a neighbor’s wife in Deut 5:21a makes it impossible to read 5:21b as an ex-

1985) 42–47; DeRouchie, *A Call to Covenant Love*, 120–32, 225; D. A. Garrett and J. S. DeRouchie, *A Modern Grammar for Biblical Hebrew* (Nashville: B&H, 2009) 284–85. From a cross-linguistic perspective, S. H. Levinsohn has observed that in the non-narrative texts of the Greek NT, asyndeton occurs in comparable contexts: (1) “when there is a close connection between the information concerned” (i.e., the information belongs together in the same unit, whether for restatement or association) and (2) “when there is no direct connection between the information concerned” (i.e., the information belongs to different units with the asyndetic clause orienting the reader to a new direction) (*Discourse Features of New Testament Greek: A Coursebook on the Information Structure of New Testament Greek* [2nd ed.; SIL International, 2000] §7.2).

22. Both of these questions are also raised by Jastram, “Should Lutherans Really Change How They Number the Ten Commandments?” 366.

23. However, in the history of Jewish interpretation, this has happened (see Breuer, “Dividing the Decalogue into Verses and Commandments,” 314–18).

Table 5. A Textual Comparison of Exod 20:13–17 and Deut 5:17–21

Exod 20:13–17		Deut 5:17–21	
לא תרצח	13	לא תרצח	17
לא תנאף	14	ולא תנאף	18
לא תגנב	15	ולא תגנב	19
לא־תענה ברעך עד שקר	16	ולא־תענה ברעך עד שוא	20
לא תחמד בית רעך	17	ולא תחמד אשת רעך	21
לא־תחמד אשת רעך ועבדו ואמתו ושורו וחמרו וכל אשר לרעך		ולא תתאוה בית רעך שדהו ועבדו ואמתו ושורו וחמרו וכל אשר לרעך	
13 You shall never murder.		17 You shall never murder.	
14 You shall never commit adultery.		18 <u>And</u> you shall never commit adultery.	
15 You shall never steal.		19 <u>And</u> you shall never steal.	
16 You shall never testify a <u>deceptive</u> witness against your neighbor.		20 <u>And</u> you shall never testify a <u>false</u> witness against your neighbor.	
17 You shall never covet your neighbor's <u>house</u> . You shall never <u>covet</u> your neighbor's <u>wife</u> , or his male servant, or his female servant, <u>or</u> his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's.		21 <u>And</u> you shall never covet your neighbor's <u>wife</u> . <u>And</u> you shall never <u>desire</u> your neighbor's <u>house</u> , <u>his field</u> , or his male servant, or his female servant, his ox or his donkey, or anything that is to your neighbor.	

plication of the preceding clause. While the two prohibitions may still plausibly be read together, the relationship between them must be understood in a way different than the advocates of the Jewish majority and Orthodox-Reformed view have traditionally treated the parallel in Exod 20:17a–b.

Third, the inclusion of שדה 'field' after 'house' in Deut 5:21b suggests that in the Decalogue בית simply means 'physical dwelling place' and not 'household'. Although land can be connected to household inheritance (e.g., Judg 11:2), in Scripture territory still stands distinct from the household itself.²⁴ So while servants, livestock, and material goods could be considered part of one's household, there is no evidence that suggests a field could be. As such, the list (at least in Deuteronomy) should likely not be seen as explicating "house." Furthermore, William L. Moran observed long ago that in ANE literature "house and field"

24. While the *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* 2:151 (8 vols.; ed. D. J. A. Clines; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 1993–2011) suggests that a household can include territory, I see no conclusive evidence for this in any of the examples cited.

serve as a formulaic pair for “immovable property,” and the evidence above suggests they should be read as such in the Decalogue.²⁵

Fourth, Deuteronomy’s inclusion of the conjunction *wa* (ו) before each of the commandments in 5:18–21b supports the conclusion that the final prohibition of the Decalogue should be read as its own Word. While most English versions fail to translate the conjunction,²⁶ *wa* was intended to be heard (and read), and it plays an important structuring role that can only be relayed in another language when the form is represented in translation.²⁷

25. Moran, “The Conclusion of the Decalogue,” 549. In the same context, he further observes, “If other [often movable] properties are specified as parts of or in some way attached to ‘the house and the field,’ the latter expression always occupies initial position.” He summarizes, “The legal documents in question present the following typical scheme: ‘house and field’ + specifications (buildings, various forms of cultivation, personnel, livestock) + generic formula (‘everything [else] belonging to him’)” (550). At one place, there is even a list that bears exact correspondence of element and order to the list in Deut 5:21b (551). Throughout the OT, “house and field” appear together in Gen 39:5; Lev 25:31; Jer 6:12, 32:15; Isa 5:8; Mic 2:2; and Neh 5:3, 11. Both the LXX and Nash Papyrus include “field” in Exod 20:17, but this seems most likely due to deuteronomistic influence. D. I. Block notes that inclusion of “field” in Deut 5:21b “restores the full complement of seven items, like the list of those who are to benefit from the Sabbath rest in Exod 20:10” (“Reading the Decalogue Right to Left: The Ten Principles of Covenant Relationship in the Hebrew Bible,” in idem, *How I Love Your Torah*, 41 n. 76).

26. At Deut 5:18–21, the “and” is present in the ESV but is absent in the ASV, KJV, NASB, NASU, NIV83, NRSV, HCSB, CEB, and NIV, likely due less to text-critical conclusions and more to the tendency of Hebraists to view *wa* as a mere multivalent connector with little clear functional purpose. (For a traditional approach to the use of *wa*, see T. O. Lambdin, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew* [New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1971] §132 [pp. 162–65]; §197 [pp. 279–81]; *IBHS* §39.2; and *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* [2:596–98], which gives no less than 15 meanings and sub-meanings to *wa*. I disagree with this approach. For a historical survey of the interpretation of *wa* with a compelling argument that *wa* always serves as a coordinator, see R. C. Steiner, “Does the Biblical Hebrew Conjunction ו Have Many Meanings, One Meaning, or No Meaning at All?” *JBL* 119 [2000] 249–67.) On another note, the connector *wa* is present before the negative in the MT and 4Q129(Phyl B), and it is represented in the Vulgate in all but the last prohibition (suggesting, ironically, that the Catholic Jerome was reading the commands against envy as a unit). Likely due to an intentional or unintentional attempt to harmonize with Exodus, the *wa* is also not represented in the various Greek versions, Sam Deut, 4Q134(Phyl G), XQ3(Phyl 3), the Peshitta, and Tg. Ps.-J. (cf. M. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1–11* [AB 5; New York: Doubleday, 1991] 279).

27. In his commentary on Genesis, Robert Alter chose to render “every ‘and’ and every element of parataxis” in translation, being convinced that the ubiquitous *wa* was intended to be heard and serves “an important role in creating the rhythm of the story, in phonetically punctuating the forward-driving movement of the prose” (*Genesis: Translation and Commentary* [New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1996] xx). My view goes further than this, for I believe the Hebrews used *wa* specifically to identify blocks of discourse that were to be read as units.

Specifically, *wa* (with its allomorphs) is a coordinator that links elements of equal syntactic value (phrases to phrases, clauses to clauses, texts to texts). The result is a chain of grammatical units that are to be read together.²⁸ While at times the connector's semantic value is bleached, Richard C. Steiner has convincingly argued that *wa* always retains a single meaning of logical connection (= "and"), which by default expresses coordination.²⁹ Unlike asyndeton, *wa* generally does not stand at absolute beginnings in a text because an initial structure by nature is not coordinated with any other structure.³⁰ Therefore, when *wa* occurs, the interpreter must view the unit it introduces as part of a larger text structure, which in this case begins with the asyndetic commandment against murder in Deut 5:17 that starts the chain. Although examples exist where clauses fronted with *wa* serve to explicate preceding thoughts, there must be other elements in the context that override the default meaning of coordination.³¹ And because it is clear that

28. See Dempster, "Linguistic Features of Hebrew Narrative," 40–41; DeRouchie, *A Call to Covenant Love*, 107–20, 225; idem, "Wa and Asyndeton as Guides to Macrostructure in the Reported Speech of Deuteronomy" (paper presented at the annual meetings of the Evangelical Theological Society and the Society of Biblical Literature, Boston, MA, November 2008); cf. Garrett and DeRouchie, *A Modern Grammar for Biblical Hebrew*, 284–85.

29. Steiner, "Biblical Hebrew Conjunction," 249–67; cf. Andersen, *The Hebrew Verbless Clause in the Pentateuch*, 28; idem, *The Sentence in Biblical Hebrew*, 27. For an expanded summary of Steiner's work, see DeRouchie, *A Call to Covenant Love*, 108–10. On a side note, in personal email correspondence, SIL linguist S. H. Levinsohn stated: "I consider *waw* to be default for texts that are chronologically organized (narratives and procedures) and marked (associative) for those that are not. Conversely, I consider asyndeton to be marked for texts that are chronologically organized, whereas juxtaposition (asyndeton?) is default for those that are not."

30. So, for example, *wa* almost never begins quotations, because quotations mark absolute beginnings. Where we do find speech-initial *wa*, it is best understood to be serving as a "contextual coordinator within dialogue" (C. L. Miller, "The Pragmatics of *waw* as a Discourse Marker in Biblical Hebrew Dialogue," *ZAH* 12 [1999] 165–91; cf. Dempster, "Linguistic Features of Hebrew Narrative," 43–44). On the use of *wa* fronting biblical books, where one would expect an absolute beginning, see DeRouchie, *A Call to Covenant Love*, 351–53.

31. Andersen (*The Sentence in Biblical Hebrew*, 27) writes: "An apposition sentence [i.e., one marked by asyndeton] can be an alternative surface realization of a coordination relationship [as in the complete series of Ten Words in the Exodus version], and a coordination sentence can be an alternative relationship of an apposition relationship. Hence, in classifying such sentences, attention must be paid to the deep relationships as well as to the surface features." By "deep relationships" (also called "deep structure"), Andersen refers to the way texts communicate meaning at levels other than surface form. Contextual clues work with grammar to guide communication. (For more on the view that various deep structure clause-type realities can be expressed in the surface structure in different ways, see *ibid.*, 186–91, and the discussion of Generative-Transformational Grammar in D. Crystal, *A Dictionary of Linguistics & Phonetics* [5th ed.; Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003]

none of the six prohibitions that end the Decalogue in Deuteronomy (including 5:21b) can be seen as explicating what precedes, the default interpretation is to read 5:21b as a new, final element in the series of commandments that began in 5:17.³²

What is important to emphasize at this point is that both the formal and stylistic features and the semantic content of the Decalogue call for treating the last two prohibitions as discrete Words (Exod 20:17a–b // Deut 5:21a–b), an enumeration that has ancient support in the Masoretic paragraph divisions. The lack of conjunction at the head of Exod 20:17b created the possibility for the final injunction against coveting to be read either as its own Word (= fresh beginning) or as a description of the previous prohibition against coveting (= explication). The differences in the deuteronomistic version, however, render the explication interpretation impossible (at least in Deuteronomy) and thus establish the likelihood that the two statements against coveting are to be read as *distinct* Words. And as we shall now see, the fact that Deuteronomy treats as a single, extended unit Words six through ten (through fronted *wa*) helps disclose an overall structure to the Decalogue that may assist in identifying Words one and two.

2.3. Distinguishing Words One through Four

In contrast to the concluding unit just assessed, the rest of the Decalogue is characterized by the repetition of the phrase יהוה אלהיך 'Yahweh

199–200, 471–73.) For a developed discussion of the restating or specifying use of *wa*, see D. W. Baker, "Further Examples of the WAW *Explicativum*," VT 30.2 (1980) 129–36. He provides a thorough list of verses in the Hebrew Bible that have been suggested by others to contain this use of *wa*. Those I found that link clauses are Gen 24:16, 38:8; Exod 9:2; Lev 2:13; Deut 23:1; 32:28, 30, 36; 33:23; 2 Sam 14:6; Isa 42:2, 59:9; Ezek 3:15; Job 34:35; Prov 3:12; with infinitive construct constructions: Isa 32:7, Jer 17:10, Neh 8:13.

32. Some of the early Jewish rabbis who wrestled with the significance of this text block believed the conjunctions signaled a chain reaction, so that the breaking of one commandment would lead to the breaking of all the rest (e.g., *Mekhilta de R. Simeon ben Yohai* on Exod 20:14: "If he broke one law he would break the other" (Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1–11*, 313). (For a discussion of the translation difficulties and interpretation of Jas 2:10–11 as it relates to this idea, see Flusser, "Do not Commit Adultery, Do Not Murder," 224–25.) More recently, M. Weinfeld has argued that the inclusion of "and" in Deut 5:18–21 "enhances the uniformity of the second pentad by making it, as it were, one sentence" (*Deuteronomy 1–11*, 313; cf. N. Lohfink, "The Decalogue in Deuteronomy 5," in *Theology of the Pentateuch: Themes of the Priestly Narrative and Deuteronomy* [trans. L. M. Maloney; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994] 257). Similarly, J. G. McConville has observed that the *wa* connectors treat the injunctions against murder, adultery, theft, bearing false witness, and the different forms of coveting as one "coherent block, rather than separate commands" (*Deuteronomy* [AOTC 5; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002] 122). He also adds that the "and" conveys "a sense of coherent consequentiality" thus "building up a total picture of the standards to be observed in the covenant community" (129).

your God' and by the use of ground or motivation clauses throughout. Here there are six asyndetic statements that demand our attention, the first indicative and the rest volitional, and each must either stand as a discrete Word (= fresh beginning) or clarify, expand, or fill out a nearby Word (= apposition/explication):³³

- "I am Yahweh your God . . ." (Exod 20:2 // Deut 5:6);³⁴
- "There shall never be to you other gods . . ." (Exod 20:3 // Deut 5:7);³⁵

33. While further justification for this assertion is supplied in the footnotes that follow, two points are noteworthy here. First, the asyndetic commandment in Exod 20:5 // Deut 5:9 against bowing down and serving should be viewed not as a discrete Word but as explanatory, whether to the prohibition against images in Exod 20:4 // Deut 5:8 or to the injunction regarding the exclusivity of Yahweh in Exod 20:3 // Deut 5:7. The dependence on the preceding context is highlighted by the use of the 3mp pronominal suffixes that demand antecedents: "you shall never bow down to *them* or serve *them*." Second, the asyndetic clause in Exod 20:9 // Deut 5:13 ("Six days you shall labor") begins a text block that runs to Exod 20:11 // Deut 5:15; together the unit explains the nature of the Sabbath "command" in Exod 20:8 // Deut 5:12. Within this explicatory unit is inserted another appositional, parenetic statement (Exod 20:10 // Deut 5:14) that further clarifies the character of the Sabbath directive.

34. Scholars question whether the combination *אני יהוה אלהיך* in Exod 20:3 // Deut 5:7 is best translated with "Yahweh" as part of the predicate ("I am Yahweh your God") or as an appositive to the 1cs pronoun ("I, Yahweh, am your God"; see NJPS, NAB, and A. Peobel, *Das appositionell Bestimmte Pronomen der 1. Pers. Sing. in den westsemitischen Inschriften und im Alten Testament* [Assyriological Studies; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1932] 53–58). In context, the former option seems more likely for three reasons: (1) of the 308 instances in Deuteronomy where *אלהים* 'God' + suffix is directly preceded by *יהוה* 'Yahweh', all but four are clearly appositional (see Deut 5:6, 9; 6:4; 29:5[6]); (2) the phrase appears to be intentionally repeated in the Words against bearing Yahweh's name in vain, remembering/observing the Sabbath, and honoring one's parents, where "your God" must be appositional to the divine name (Exod 20:7, 10, 12 // Deut 5:11, 12, 14–16); (3) the collocation *אני יהוה* 'I am Yahweh' (without "your God") occurs very frequently in the Torah and cannot be translated in any way other than "I am Yahweh" (see Lev 18:4–5; cf. Exod 6:2, 6, 8, 29; 12:12; Lev 18:5; 19:12, 14, 16, 18, 28, 32, 37; 20:8; 21:12; 22:2, 3, 8, 30–33; 26:2, 45; Num 3:13, 41, 45; and the discussion in Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1–11*, 284–86; Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 355 n. 28). V. H. Hamilton observes that *אני* 'I' is used when "your God" is singular (Exod 20:2, 5; Deut 5:6, 9), but *אני* is used when "your God" is plural (Lev 11:44; 18:2, 30; 19:2; 20:7, 24; 25:38, 55; 26:14; 15:41) (*Exodus: An Exegetical Commentary* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011] 322, note on 20:2).

35. The Hebrew of Exod 20:3 // Deut 5:7 is in third person, not second person like the rest of the Decalogue: *לא יהיה לך אלהים אחרים עלי-פני*. This fact moved H. G. Reventlow to argue that the clause should be read not as an imperative but as an indicative, with Yahweh declaring the banishment of all rival deities: "There will [not shall] not be to you any other gods . . ." (*Gebot und Predigt im Dekalogue* [Gütersloh: G. Mohn, 1962] 25–28). In light of both grammatical and form-critical arguments, few scholars have followed this view (see R. Knierim's critique, "Das erste Gebot," *ZAW* 77 [1965] 20–39). Within the OT, there are other examples where a first or third person *yiqtol* with *לא* expresses a negative prohibition (see 1 Sam 14:36 [1st], Ezek 48:14 [3rd], Prov 16:10 [3rd]; so GKC §107o). In light of the rest of the volitional injunctions that follow in the Decalogue, it seems best to

- “You shall never make for yourself a carved image . . .” (Exod 20:4[–6] // Deut 5:8[–10]);
- “You shall never bear Yahweh’s name in vain . . .” (Exod 20:7 // Deut 5:11);
- “Remember/Observe the Sabbath . . .” (Exod 20:8[–11] // Deut 5:12[–15]);³⁶
- “Honor your father and your mother . . .” (Exod 20:12 // Deut 5:16).

Throughout history, all interpreters have agreed that the last three of these statements make up discrete Words. What is at stake, therefore, is whether the prohibition against bearing Yahweh’s name in vain (Exod 20:7 // Deut 5:11) is Word two or three, and if the latter, how one should demarcate Words one and two. More specifically, one must answer two related questions:

Is the declaration “I am Yahweh your God” (Exod 20:2 // Deut 5:6) its own discrete Word, the first of the Ten (so majority Jewish view), or is it a foundational preface (i.e., historical prologue) either to the whole Decalogue or to the particular charge related to Yahweh’s exclusivity (Exod 20:3 // Deut 5:7)?

Is the asyndetic commandment against a sculptured image (Exod 20:4 // Deut 5:8) best read as its own Word (= fresh beginning) or as a clarifying expansion (= apposition, explication) on “There shall never be to you other gods” (Exod 20:3 // Deut 5:7)? We will address each issue in turn.

2.3.1. *The Initial Indicative Clause—*

Neither an Independent Word Nor a Preamble

With reference to the enumeration of the first Word, it is noteworthy that the 1cs pronominal suffix at the end of the prepositional phrase *על־פני* ‘before me’ in Exod 20:3 // Deut 5:7 grammatically binds the prohibition against other gods to Yahweh’s self-presentation (“I am Yahweh your God”) in Exod 20:2 // Deut 5:6. The result is that the command to

read Exod 20:3 // Deut 5:7 in a volitional way, even though here we clearly have a long *yiqtol*. For a similar use of *לֹא יִדְהֶיָה*, see Deut 25:13–14.

36. Both Exodus and Deuteronomy begin the Sabbath commandment using an infinitive absolute for the imperative (Exod 20:8 // Deut 5:12). For comparable uses in the Pentateuch, see Exod 13:3; Lev 2:6, 6:7[14]; Num 15:35, 25:17; Deut 1:16, 15:2. Years ago, J. D. W. Watts argued that the infinitive absolute never stands alone as a substitute for a finite verb but instead is defined by a following verbal construction that carries an imperatival sense; he gives *זָכַר* in Exod 20:8 gerundive force: “Remembering the Sabbath to hallow it, six days you shall labor” (“Infinitive Absolute as Imperative and the Interpretation of Exodus 20,8,” *ZAW* 74 [1962] 141–45). Regardless, the statement about the Sabbath should be read volitionally.

worship Yahweh alone is only understandable when linked with the identification clause that precedes. Furthermore, because the indicative clause and the first injunction grammatically form a unit, two conclusions naturally follow: (1) they are likely *not* distinct Words, and (2) the presentation statement “I am Yahweh your God” is best understood as an introduction to Word one and *not* as a covenantal historical prologue to the whole Decalogue.³⁷ The link between these verses also means that, while some of the ten Words include indicative prefatory or supporting material, each of the Ten is volitional at its core, calling the covenant community through two positive orders and eight prohibitions to a life of radical love for God and neighbor.³⁸

These conclusions, drawn from discourse grammar, call into question the views of those rabbis that treat Exod 20:2–3 // Deut 5:6–7 as distinct Words, and they also contrast with all other interpretations that fully distinguish the statement of divine supremacy and redemption from the initial order not to have other gods.³⁹ The conclusions also explain how Moses could assert that the Ten Words were “commanded” (Piel צוה, Deut 4:13) and clarify why Jesus referred to the Ten Words as “commandments” (ἐντολάς, Matt 19:17–19). In the Decalogue, the identity of Yahweh as Israel’s redeemer provides the syntactic and theological foundation for the charge to keep Yahweh central in Israel’s

37. Contrast, for example, the comment by P. J. Gentry: “The fact that the covenant is broadly structured according to a Hittite treaty demonstrates plainly that verse 2 . . . is, in fact, the historical prologue of the treaty, so that the first command is just verse 3” (P. J. Gentry and S. J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012] 330). While I would agree that many elements of the Hittite treaties are present, the text grammar suggests that the Decalogue is employing the general pattern in its own unique way. Furthermore, Breuer notes that while contemporary scholars tend to view the initial indicative statement in Exod 20:2 // Deut 5:6 as separate from the Decalogue proper, this “system is clearly rejected by the Masorah; it does not conform to either the upper or the lower cantillation, nor does it agree with the paragraph divisions” and “it was also not accepted by the later punctators [*sic*]” (“Dividing the Decalogue into Verses and Commandments,” 313).

38. B. S. Childs sees the prohibitions as “charting the outer limits of the covenant” and the positive statements as providing “positive content for life within the circle of the covenant” (*The Book of Exodus* [OTL; Louisville: Westminster, 1974] 398).

39. As highlighted above, the remnants of a third set of cantillation tropes actually unite into a single group the statements “I am Yahweh your God” and “There shall never be to you other gods” (Breuer, “Dividing the Decalogue into Verses and Commandments,” 300–301). Because the majority of Jewish interpreters separated the two statements as distinct Words, the linking of the two in some post-Masoretic traditions forced many later scholars to wrestle with how the relationship of the statements should affect numbering, for it was “as though two Commandments were delivered as one Commandment” (301 n. 9).

affections and loyalty—a connection that is explicitly retained in numerous other texts throughout the OT (see Exod 19:4–6, Deut 6:12–15, Judg 6:8–10, Hos 13:4, Ps 81:10–11[9–10]).⁴⁰

2.3.2. *Never a Carved Image—*

Assessing the Makeup of the First Word

With respect to the relationship between the prohibition against having other gods (Exod 20:3 // Deut 5:7) and the two asyndetic injunctions that begin with the ban against making a sculptured image (Exod 20:4–6 // Deut 5:8–10)], Philo, Josephus, a minority of the rabbis, and the Orthodox-Reformed interpreters have seen in them the first *two* Words of the Decalogue. In contrast, most rabbis and the Masoretes who crafted the upper tropes viewed the latter prohibitions to be explaining or concretizing (= apposition, explication) what it means to have no other gods before Yahweh. Similarly, the Catholic-Lutheran tradition commonly interprets the entire series of initial prohibitions as a single Word, the first of the Ten. A number of textual features, most of which are related to discourse grammar, support this latter view.

First, it is noteworthy that Yahweh speaks in first person in each of the statements that span from “I am Yahweh your God” (Exod 20:2 // Deut 5:6) to “showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love *me* and keep *my* commandments” (Exod 20:6 // Deut 5:10) (i.e., the first Word in the Catholic-Lutheran view). In the rest of the Decalogue, however, Yahweh is portrayed in third person.⁴¹ The personal per-

40. See Greenberg, “The Decalogue Tradition Critically Examined,” 99 with n. 24; Breuer, “Dividing the Decalogue into Verses and Commandments,” 308. Recognizably, because all the commands are in some way expressions of loyalty to Yahweh above all else, Yahweh’s self-identity can elsewhere provide the ground for calls to widespread, life-encompassing obedience (see Lev 18:2–6, 19:36).

41. B. S. Childs notes that the shift from first to third person is common in other laws of the Pentateuch (e.g., Exod 34:19, 23; 22:26–27; Lev 19:5, 8, 12, 19). However, while recognizing that the final redactor must not have felt tension with the inconsistency in the Decalogue, Childs fails to offer a conclusive historical reason for the phenomenon (*The Book of Exodus*, 394, 399). Along with seeing the change from first to third person in the Decalogue as a tool for uniting material that is to be read together, I propose the shift could be a formal marker signaling when the leaders of Israel ran to Moses and requested that he serve as mediator of Yahweh’s voice (Exod 20:19, Deut 5:27). While it is clear that Yahweh spoke all Ten Words to the people (Deut 5:22), the leaders engaged Moses immediately after Yahweh began to speak (5:23; cf. Exod 20:18–19). Furthermore, Deuteronomy 5 introduces the Ten Words with Moses already serving as covenant mediator, and the difficult infinitive construct לֵאמֹר ‘to say’ at the end of Deut 5:5 may as easily modify Moses’ “declaring” (להגיד) in 5:5 as Yahweh’s “speaking” (Piel דבר) in 5:4. With this, it is at least possible that the record “And [Moses] said to them” (Exod 19:25) that comes just before the Decalogue points to Moses relaying God’s Words to the people (so Hamilton, *Exodus*, 316). Significantly, the לֵאמֹר ‘to say’ speech frame that introduces the Decalogue in both

spective in the text, therefore, calls readers to view as a single unit the prohibitions against other gods and the injunctions against crafting an image and worshipping the wrong object.

Second, an *inclusio* that holds together all the first-person address is suggested by the repeated use of the phrase יהוה אלהיך 'Yahweh your God' in the initial declaration "I am Yahweh your God" (Exod 20:2 // Deut 5:6) and in the ground clause following the charge to guard what one worships and serves ("for I Yahweh your God am a jealous God," Exod 20:5 // Deut 5:9).⁴² As already noted, the phrase "Yahweh your God" sets apart the initial Words of the Decalogue from the grouping of concise prohibitions that end it (Exod 20:13–17b // Deut 5:17–21b). In Exodus 20, the prohibition against bearing Yahweh's name in vain and the commands to keep the Sabbath and to honor one's parents each use the phrase one time. This limited appropriation could lead one to see—as in the Orthodox-Reformed view—the self-presentation statement and the first prohibition as the first Word, and the charges against shaping a graven image and against wrong worship as the second, for each would bear one use of "Yahweh your God." However, the *inclusio* interpretation seems more likely because in the Deuteronomy account, the phrase "Yahweh your God" is used three times in the Sabbath commandment and twice in the charge to honor parents, thus showing that there was no explicit intention to limit the use of the phrase to one occurrence per Word.

Third, the phrase אלהים אחרים 'other gods' (plural) in Exod 20:3 // Deut 5:7 provides the most likely antecedent referent for the 3mp

Exod 20:1 and Deut 5:4–5 by nature marks a non-prototypical speech event—namely, one that summarizes several similar speeches or one long speech, presents the statements of many people as one statement, has one character in the story cite a prior statement by another character in the story, comes through an agent or prop rather than a full character or is from someone who is not actually present and participating in the current conversation, or functions as the official record of the principal points made by speakers and is thus less vivid conversation than it is a documentation of the essential points made by the speakers (C. L. Miller, "Discourse Functions of Quotative Frames in Biblical Hebrew," in *Discourse Analysis of Biblical Literature—What It Is and What It Offers* [ed. W. R. Bodine, Society of Biblical Literature Semeia Studies; Atlanta: Scholars, 1995] 165; idem, *The Representation of Speech in Biblical Hebrew Narrative: A Linguistic Analysis* [Harvard Semitic Museum Monographs 55; Atlanta: Scholars, 1996] 425–29; for summaries of Miller's work, see DeRouchie, *A Call to Covenant Love*, 205–12; Garrett and DeRouchie, *A Modern Grammar for Biblical Hebrew*, 323–27). One would expect לאמר to introduce Deuteronomy's version of the Decalogue, because Moses the mediator is recalling the Decalogue from an earlier time; however, the use of לאמר in Exodus is less expected and may serve as a signal that even that version of the Decalogue came through the agency of Moses.

42. Jastram, "Should Lutherans Really Change How They Number the Ten Commandments?" 364.

pronominal suffixes in Exod 20:5 // Deut 5:9 (“You shall never bow down to *them* or serve *them*”). Earlier it was noted that discourse grammar bound together Yahweh’s self-identification as Israel’s savior with the prohibition against perceiving any sovereign other than him (Exod 20:2–3 // Deut 5:6–7). So too now the same grammar signals that the unit of thought marked by the initial prohibition against other gods should be read in conjunction with the prohibitions against making a carved image and against wrong worship and service.

Those holding to the Orthodox-Reformed numbering locate the antecedent referent to the 3mp suffixes of Exod 20:5 // Deut 5:9 in the previous verse (and not Exod 20:3 // Deut 5:7), but they vary in whether the antecedent is the singular פסל ‘image’, the phrase כל-תמונה ‘any likeness’,⁴³ or the three-part relative clause in combination with its singular head (lit., “any likeness that is in heaven . . . or in the earth . . . or in the waters . . .”).⁴⁴ None of these options are likely, however, for outside the Decalogue the word pair “to bow down and serve” (Exod 20:5 // Deut 5:9) is a stereotyped expression that always has as its object “other gods” or “the host of heaven,” never physical images (, at least explicitly).⁴⁵ Furthermore, the designation of Yahweh as אל קנא ‘a jealous God’

43. While the noun phrase כל-תמונה ‘any likeness’ is fronted with *wa* in Exod 20:4 and therefore joined with פסל ‘carved image’, the word pair should not be viewed as a compound plural entity. This conclusion is drawn in light of the absence of any conjunction in the parallel Exod 20:4, which suggests that the second phrase describes (= apposition, explication) פסל and that the “and” in Deut 5:8 is best read as “even,” much like the combination “man *and* father” can point to one and the same individual with the latter nominal element giving greater clarity to the former in a given a context. Thus, “You shall never make for yourself a carve image—even any likeness. . . .”

44. With respect to the first option, the noun פסל is used 31 times in the OT, always in the singular, and in two of these instances, parallelism or apposition within a clause suggests that the singular פסל can bear a plural referent. Isa 42:17 reads, “They shall be turned back; they shall be utterly put to shame—those who trust in the image (בפסל); those who say to a molten image (למסכה), ‘You (pl) are our gods.’” Similarly, Ps 97:7 asserts, “All the servants of an image (פסל) are put to shame, those who boast in the idols (באילימים).” While not conclusive, these texts do suggest the possibility that פסל is the antecedent of the 3mp suffixes and that the prohibition against images is distinct from the prohibition of other gods. As for כל, when appearing in construct with an undetermined noun in the singular, the term is usually best rendered “every” rather than “all” (HALOT, 474; Ringgren, “כל” *kāl*,” TDOT 7:136). However, the basic meaning of כל as ‘totality’ may make it possible that the plural suffixes could refer back to this form. Finally, while no grammatical parallels are easily apparent, it is obvious that the relative clause following כל-תמונה ‘any likeness’ includes three distinct prepositional phrases, and it is possible that when viewed together they could provide the necessary plural referent for the pronominal suffixes.

45. W. Zimmerli, “Das Zweite Gebot,” in idem, *Gottes Offenbarung: gesammelte Aufsätze zum Alten Testament* (TB 19; Munich: Kaiser, 1963) 235 n. 3, 236–38. See Exod 20:5, 23:24; Deut 4:19, 5:9, 30:17; 1 Kgs 9:9; 2 Kgs 17:35, 21:3; Jer 22:9; 2 Chr 7:22, 33:3.

in Exod 20:5 // Deut 5:9 elsewhere refers directly to the threat of evil influences or rival deities competing for Israel's allegiance with no explicit reference to manufactured idols (see Exod 34:14; Deut 4:24, 6:15, 32:16, 21; cf. Josh 24:19; Ezek 39:25; Joel 2:18; Zech 1:14, 8:2).⁴⁶ Consequently, the proper referent for the 3mp suffixes in Exod 20:5 // Deut 5:9 seems to be the אלהים אחרים 'other gods' of Exod 20:3 // Deut 5:7, the result of which is the grouping of all three of the initial prohibitions.⁴⁷

Fourth, each of the Words in the beginning of the Decalogue appear to be guided by an intentional commandment + ground or motive clause. Along with the ground clause related to Yahweh's jealousy in Exod 20:5 // Deut 5:9, causal reasons (usually signaled by כִּי 'because') are supplied for the commandments related to not bearing Yahweh's name in vain (Exod 20:7 // Deut 5:11) and for remembering/observing the Sabbath (Exod 20:8–11 // Deut 5:12–15),⁴⁸ and a purpose clause (לְמַעַן 'so that') is used to motivate listeners to honor their parents (Exod 20:12 // Deut 5:16). In each of these three Words, only *one* ground or motivation statement is given for each unified commandment, and this suggests the likelihood that all three of the initial prohibitions should be read as a unit bearing a single ground clause—namely, never have other gods, craft an image, or worship and follow other gods "for I Yahweh your God am a jealous God" (Exod 20:5 // Deut 5:9).⁴⁹

46. Block, "How Shall We Number the Ten Commandments?" in idem, *How I Love Your Torah*, 60; and idem, *The Gospel according to Moses*, 172. The only potential text I find that may suggest otherwise is Ezek 8:3, which uses the ambiguous phrase סמל הקנאה המקנה 'the image of jealousy, which provokes jealousy'.

47. On this point, I am in agreement with E. Nielsen, who asserted with reference to Exodus 20: "Vv. 5–6 are syntactically linked with v. 3 in such a way that together with it they form a frame round the prohibition of images in v. 4, making it a subdivision of the commandment not to have other gods. In other words on these grounds it is not so arbitrary to take vv. 3–6 as a single commandment" (*The Ten Commandments in New Perspective* [trans. D. J. Bourke, SBT, Series 2.7; Naperville, FL: SCM, 1968] 11–12).

48. While the Sabbath command is worded differently in Deuteronomy, the ground clause in Deut 5:15 is signaled by the inference marker על־כֵּן 'therefore' that directly follows.

49. Zimmerli, "Das Zweite Gebot," 237–38; Jastram, "Should Lutherans Really Change How They Number the Ten Commandments?" 364. After recognizing the role of the ground clauses in each of the initial words of Exodus 20, Childs, who himself follows the Orthodox-Reformed numbering, notes that "this interpretation means that in its present redaction the second commandment of v. 4 has been incorporated within the framework of the first commandment" (*The Book of the Exodus*, 405). Gentry and Wellum (*Kingdom through Covenant*, 329) suggest that the reason ground clauses are given for the Commandments related to Yahweh's exclusivity, the bearing of his name, and keeping the Sabbath—but not for any of the others—is that these three alone were unparalleled in the law codes of other ANE materials, an assertion they claim is supported by J. J. Stamm

Table 6. *The Alternating Arrangement of the Decalogue*

I	Worship of Yahweh	Exod 20:2–6 // Deut 5:6–10	long
II	Yahweh's name	Exod 20:7 // Deut 5:11	short
III	Sabbath	Exod 20:8–11 // Deut 5:12–15	long
IV	Parents	Exod 20:12 // Deut 5:16	short
V	Moral commandments	Exod 20:13–17 // Deut 5:17–21	long

Fifth, when the initial declaration and three prohibitions are read together as the first of the Ten Words, the whole is seen to express an alternating arrangement with respect to length (= long + short + long + short + long). The following structure is adapted from a comparable one by Norbert Lohfink, and it shows that elements of style buttress a modified Catholic-Lutheran numbering (see Table 6).⁵⁰

Sixth, a number of parallel texts support linking the injunction against other gods with the prohibitions against shaping a graven image and misguided worship. In Lev 19:4, for example, the declaration “I am Yahweh” provides the foundation for a prohibition against idolatry: “Do not turn to other gods or make any gods of cast metal. I am Yahweh your God.” Similarly, the statement, “for I Yahweh your God am a jealous God,” which grounds the prohibition against bowing down to and serving entities other than Yahweh in Exod 20:5 // Deut 5:9, is the identical reason given in Deut 6:14–15 for heeding the commandment, “You shall never pursue after other gods.”⁵¹ Finally, in Ps 81:10–11[9–10], the call to align with and bow down to Yahweh alone is linked with the recollection of Yahweh’s deliverance of Israel from Egypt: “There shall be no strange god among you, and you shall not bow down to a foreign god. I am Yahweh your God, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.”

3. *A Fourth Option for Numbering?*

Before synthesizing my argument for a modified Catholic-Lutheran view, I want to summarize and reject an alternative option to the Decalogue’s numbering that heretofore has gone unexplored. Keeping in mind the role of asyndeton to mark both new beginnings and explica-

and M. E. Andrew, *The Ten Commandments in Recent Research* (SBT, Second Series 2; Naperville, IL: Alec R. Allenson, 1967).

50. Lohfink, “The Decalogue in Deuteronomy 5,” 257.

51. Cf. Breuer, “Dividing the Decalogue into Verses and Commandments,” 308.

tion, it is possible that the first of the Ten Words may actually be “You shall never make a carved image” and that the combination “I am Yahweh your God” + the prohibition against having other gods could stand *the thesis commandment* over the whole Decalogue, providing a summation of all the other Ten Words. Using the less ambiguous version in Deuteronomy 5, Table 7 (p. 120) summarizes the different approaches to the Decalogue’s structure, including this fresh proposal. Clauses fronted with *wa* use an upward pointing arrow (↑) to mark connection, whereas those lacking a conjunction (= asyndeton) are signaled by the sign for a null-set (∅). Indentation signals the asyndetic clause is understood to explicate a preceding clause.

In this newly proposed reading, the charge against shaping a graven image along with all the other nine Words explicates what it means to give Yahweh sole allegiance. As many have recognized, the Supreme Commandment to love Yahweh with all in Deut 6:4–5 (cf. Matt 22:37–38; Mark 12:29–30; Luke 10:27) is easily seen as the positive restatement of the injunction against having other gods. As such, full-orbed love for God in a way that counters all rivals would mean to refrain from worshipping idols and using God’s name in vain, to keep the Sabbath holy and to honor one’s parents, and to resist murdering, committing adultery, stealing, bearing false witness, coveting a neighbor’s wife, and desiring a neighbor’s house and moveable property. A positive benefit of this interpretation is that it may give greater clarity to the distinction elsewhere in Deuteronomy between the singular *המצוה* ‘the Commandment’ and the plural *החוקים והמשפטים* ‘the statutes and the judgments’ (see Deut 5:31, 6:1, 7:11). The reason “the Commandment” appears to describe all of Moses’ teaching is that it captures in its heart the entire message of the Ten Words and, by extension, the book.⁵²

52. I find intriguing the arguments of S. Kaufman, G. Braulik, and J. H. Walton that the structure of the Decalogue provided an organizing principle for the final form of Deuteronomy 12–26 (see S. Kaufman, “The Structure of the Deuteronomic Law,” *Maarav* 1 [1979] 105–58; G. Braulik, “The Sequence of the Laws in Deuteronomy 12–26,” trans. L. M. Maloney, in *A Song of Power and the Power of Song: Essays on the Book of Deuteronomy* [ed. Duane L. Christensen; SBTS 3; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1993] 313–35 [trans. of “Die Abfolge der Gesetze in Deuteronomium 12–26 und der Dekalog,” in *Das Deuteronomium: Entstehung, Gestalt und Botschaft* (ed. N. Lohfink; BETL 68; Leuven: Leuven University Press) 252–72]; J. H. Walton, “Deuteronomy: An Exposition of the Spirit of the Law,” *Grace Theological Journal* 8/2 [1987] 213–25; idem, “The Decalogue Structure of the Deuteronomic Law,” in *Interpreting Deuteronomy: Issues and Approaches* (ed. D. G. Firth and P. S. Johnston; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2012) 93–117; cf. J. D. Currid, *Deuteronomy* [Darlington, UK: Evangelical Press, 2006]). R. D. Nelson, D. I. Block, and others propose that a key difficulty with such reconstructions is the reapplication of the order to honor one’s parents to the topic of public authorities, whether officers, judges, kings, priests,

*Table 7. Different Approaches to the Decalogue's Structure
Based on the Role of wa and Asyndeton*

		1. Majority Jewish View	2. Orthodox-Reformed View
∅	1	I am Yahweh your God	I am Yahweh your God
∅	2	Never other gods	1 Never other gods
∅		Never make a carved image	2 Never make a carved image
∅	3	Never bear God's name in vain	3 Never bear God's name in vain
∅	4	Observe the Sabbath	4 Observe the Sabbath
∅	5	Honor your father and mother	5 Honor your father and mother
∅	6	Never murder	6 Never murder
↑	7	And never commit adultery	7 And never commit adultery
↑	8	And never steal	8 And never steal
↑	9	And never bear false witness	9 And never bear false witness
↑	10	And never covet your neighbor's wife	10 And never covet your neighbor's wife
↑		And never desire your neighbor's house, etc.	And never desire your neighbor's house, etc.
		3. Catholic-Lutheran View	4. Another Possible View
∅		I am Yahweh your God	I am Yahweh your God
∅	1	Never other gods	Never other gods
∅		Never make a carved image	1 Never make a carved image
∅	2	Never bear God's name in vain	2 Never bear God's name in vain
∅	3	Observe the Sabbath	3 Observe the Sabbath
∅	4	Honor your father and mother	4 Honor your father and mother
∅	5	Never murder	5 Never murder
↑	6	And never commit adultery	6 And never commit adultery
↑	7	And never steal	7 And never steal
↑	8	And never bear false witness	8 And never bear false witness
↑	9	And never covet your neighbor's wife	9 And never covet your neighbor's wife
↑	10	And never desire your neighbor's house, etc.	10 And never desire your neighbor's house, etc.

To follow this view or any other view that distinguishes the first two prohibitions requires that the second prohibition (“You shall never make a carved image”) bear no semantic or syntactic dependence on the first (“There shall never be to you other gods”). However, I have already shown the unlikelihood of this thesis and have offered a number of arguments in favor of reading Exod 20:2–6 // Deut 5:6–10 as a complete unit that must be read together. In the end, therefore, this fourth numbering option is suspect.

4. *Synthesis: How to Count the Ten Words*

Throughout the history of interpretation, scholars have proposed at least three different itemizations of the Decalogue. This study has attempted to move beyond the interpretive impasse by approaching the Ten Words using textlinguistic and stylistic analysis and incorporating these findings with observations from semantic content and cantillation. The conclusions have supported a modified Catholic-Lutheran view of numbering, with the only change being that Yahweh’s initial declaration to be Israel’s redeemer must be read as the foundational prelude to the first Word and not as a covenantal prologue to the whole Decalogue.

In the analysis, the distinctions in Deuteronomy 5 were shown to bring greater clarity to the more ambiguous account in Exodus 20, most directly with the numbering of Words five through ten. Deuteronomy shapes the final six negative injunctions into a single unit by use of the *wa* conjunction, which suggests that each prohibition, including the two injunctions against coveting, be read not only alongside of but also in distinction from the others. Deut 5:21 also uses two different verbs in the prohibitions against evil desire, includes “field” before the list of household members, and transposes “house” and “wife,” thus separating the latter from the list and placing the charge against lust (i.e., coveting a neighbor’s wife) on its own line. All these elements were used

or prophet (Deut 16:18–18:22) (R. D. Nelson, *Deuteronomy* [OTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002] 79; D. I. Block, “Preaching Old Testament Law to New Testament Christians,” in *The Gospel according to Moses*, 117 n. 31; idem, *Deuteronomy* [NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012], 301–2; cf. Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 534 n. 19). However, as is highlighted in §2.3 of my accompanying essay “Making the Ten Count,” Paul himself in 1 Tim 5:3 appears to see a broader application of the commandment to honor one’s parents that includes the treatment of the elderly within the household of God (see P. H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus* [NICNT; Accordance electronic ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006] 338). Nevertheless, regardless of one’s view regarding this thesis, most will affirm that the Decalogue significantly captures the core volitional thrust of the OT in general and of Deuteronomy in particular.

in support of treating the final two commandments against coveting as discrete Words.⁵³

As for Words one through four, the shift from first- to third-person orientation, the tracking of pronominal referent, the distinct use of ground and motivation clauses, and features of style were all employed to argue that the initial indicative statement and the three asyndetic commandments that follow were to be read together as the first Word of the Ten. In light of this numbering, the whole Decalogue is legitimately regarded as ten *commandments* (contrary to the majority Jewish view), and the indicative self-identification clause at the head is rightly viewed as a foundational prelude to the first Word, which focuses on the worship of Yahweh alone. The prohibition against ever considering Yahweh as anything but the absolute Sovereign (Exod 20:3 // Deut 5:7) flows from the reality of his redeeming work on Israel's behalf (Exod 20:2 // Deut 5:6). Furthermore, it is clarified by the two explicative asyndetic charges not to replace or misrepresent God by a manufactured image or with misdirected worship (Exod 20:4–6 // Deut 5:8–10). All three of these prohibitions are then grounded in Yahweh's just jealousy.

In the end, features of discourse grammar, style, and semantic content are shown to give greatest support to a modified Catholic-Lutheran numbering of the Decalogue. This view is also buttressed by the Masoretic paragraph divisions (the *parashiyot*) and is likely preserved in the oldest of the Masoretic witnesses, the verse division signaled through the lower cantillation system. God gave us ten Words, and they can now be counted correctly.

53. Many scholars immediately discount the Catholic-Lutheran numbering because it requires that the Exodus and Deuteronomy version of the Decalogue actually have different elements for the ten. Specifically, they assert that the separation of "wife" from the list in Deut 5:17 requires that the commands against coveting/envy be read as one Word, lest the deuteronomic version say something different than the Exodus version. However, even with all the changes made to the commands to keep the Sabbath and to honor one's parents, Moses asserted that his thrust was no different than Yahweh's original charge at the mountain, for in Deuteronomy everything was "just as Yahweh your God commanded you" (Deut 5:12, 16). In the words of Lohfink, this formulaic back-reference ensures that "in spite of the changes and additions that have been made [in the deuteronomic version], at bottom nothing is commanded that is not also in the older version" ("The Decalogue in Deuteronomy 5," 262). Furthermore, because the developments in Deuteronomy appear to be linked intentionally to the book's domestic ideology, there is just grounds for the preacher to adapt the text without altering its essence (see D. I. Block, "'You Shall Not Covet Your Neighbor's Wife': A Study in Deuteronomistic Domestic Ideology," *JETS* 53 [2010] 449–74; repr. in idem, *The Gospel according to Moses*, 137–68).

Now, knowing how to count the Ten Words means nothing if we fail to make them count. As a step toward this end, I have written a parallel essay in this volume titled “Making the Ten Count: Reflections on the Lasting Message of the Decalogue.”

***Appendix A. The Real Decalogue:
Exodus 20 // Deuteronomy 5, not Exodus 34***

It seems necessary to justify the identification of Exod 20:1–17 and Deut 5:6–21 as the “Ten Words” (עשרת הדברים) referred to in Exod 34:28, Deut 4:13, and 10:4. In the history of interpretation, critical scholars have often identified a number of “Decalogues” in Scripture, most notably the “ethical Decalogues” of Exod 20:1–17 and Deut 5:6–21 and the “ritual or cultic Decalogue” of Exod 34:11–26, the latter often being considered most original.⁵⁴ However, a close reading of the text as it stands removes the proposed tensions and clearly designates which lists are to be regarded as the covenantal “Ten Words.”

It is true that Exod 34:11–26 includes a series of apodictic principles and that directly after them in verse 28 the phrase “Ten Words” shows up for the first time in Scripture. However, only if one begins with verse 17 are *ten* directives evident, and as will be shown, Exodus 34 itself calls the reader to look elsewhere for the actual Ten Words of the covenant (34:1, 28). The prescriptions in Exodus 34 are best seen as sample laws from the Covenant Code of Exodus 20–23 (esp. ch. 23), perhaps even a festival calendar, and should not be confused with the actual Decalogue.⁵⁵

With respect to Exod 34:11–26, the misunderstanding has arisen because the prescriptions themselves are directly followed first by Yahweh’s charge to Moses to write down “these words” in accordance with which God made a covenant with his people (a clear reference to 34:11–26) and then by the narrator’s record that the “the words of the covenant, the Ten Words,” were written on the tablets (34:27–28). Do we have here a command–fulfillment sequence, wherein Moses obeys by writing the ten covenantal words on the tablets?

54. This view is espoused most recently by D. H. Aaron, *Etched in Stone: The Emergence of the Decalogue* (New York: T & T Clark, 2006). Other scholars have posited a “curse Decalogue” in Deut 27:15–26, but the curses number twelve, not ten, and they are never associated with the Decalogue. Still others have pointed to the commands in Leviticus 19 as a new Decalogue, but while some of the instructions are clear echoes (e.g., revering one’s parents, keeping the Sabbath, and resisting idolatry in 19:3–4), the total number of commands is well beyond ten.

55. So too W. J. Harrelson, “Ten Commandments,” *IDB* 4:570.

This is unlikely, for with a back-reference to the divine activity promised and fulfilled in Exod 24:12, 31:18, and 32:15–16, Yahweh announced in 34:1 that *he*, not Moses, would write *the same Words* on the new tablets that *he* had written before with his own finger: “Yahweh said to Moses, ‘Cut for yourself two tablets of stone like the first, and I will write on the tablets the words that were on the first tablets, which you broke.’” Yahweh, not Moses, is the antecedent to the 3ms verb *וַיִּכְתֹּב* ‘and he wrote’ in verse 28, which means that “these words” that Moses is charged to write in verse 27 (i.e., 34:11–26) are *not* the actual Ten Words of the covenant.

Later in Deuteronomy, Moses highlights that the Words of Exod 20:1–17 were indeed the very same Decalogue of 34:28. First, in Deut 4:12–13, the prophet states specifically that Yahweh declared his covenant, the Ten Words, out of the fire and wrote them on two tablets of stone (cf. Exod 31:18). In echo of Exod 34:1 and 28, he then stresses in Deut 10:4 that Yahweh “wrote on the tablets, in the same writing as before, the Ten Words that Yahweh had spoken to you on the mountain out of the midst of the first on the day of the assembly.”

These passages leave no question regarding the makeup of the Decalogue. The biblical author connected the phrase “Ten Words” only to the lists in Exod 20:1–17 and Deut 5:6–21.

Appendix B. Observations on the Relationship of Exodus and Deuteronomy’s Versions of the Decalogue

There has been a long history of discussion regarding the historical development of the Decalogue, and a number of scholars disagree about the diachronic relationship of the differing versions in Exodus and Deuteronomy.⁵⁶ A detailed assessment of this issue is beyond the scope of the present study, but a few observations are still in order here. First, the narrative that governs the final form of the whole Pentateuch presents the Exodus Decalogue as preceding Deuteronomy’s version by some forty years, for Exod 20:1–17 is part of the initial record of the Sinai theophany, whereas Moses speaks Deut 5:6–21 as a back-reference

56. For an overview of this issue, see the surveys of scholarly discussion in Childs, *The Book of Exodus*, 388–401; and Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1–11*, 262–67; cf. Harrelson, “Ten Commandments,” *IDB* 4:570, 572; C. J. H. Wright, “Ten Commandments,” *ISBE* 4:786–89; R. F. Collins, “Ten Commandments,” *ABD* 6:383–84; J. W. Marshall, “Decalogue,” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch* (ed. T. D. Alexander and D. W. Baker; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003) 171–72; P. D. Miller, “The Ten Commandments,” *The New Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible* (5 vols.; ed. K. D. Sakenfeld; Nashville: Abingdon, 2009) 5:517–19.

to this event after Israel's defeat of the Amorite kings, some four decades later (Deut 1:3–4, 4:45–46). Second, while Deut 5:6–21 evidences a number of distinctions from the Exodus version, Deuteronomy itself treats its Decalogue as a reiteration of the very "Ten Words" spoken by God out of the midst of the fire at the mountain of God—namely, as an echo of Exod 20:1–17 (cf. Deut 5:4–5, 22 with 4:12–13 and 10:4). Regardless of how one attempts to clarify the diachronic relationship of the texts, the shape of the final form suggests that any proposed tensions were not felt by the Pentateuch's final redactor. Third, unlike the Exodus version, the text of Deuteronomy itself suggests that it is a secondary account that rests on a law that Yahweh previously proclaimed at Sinai. This is most evident in the twice stated subordinate clause **כאשר צוה יהוה אלהיך** 'just as Yahweh your God commanded you', which stands as a plus in Deuteronomy's Words on the Sabbath and honoring one's parents (Deut 5:12, 16). As Lohfink concluded, this formulaic back-reference ensures that "in spite of the changes and additions that have been made [in the deuteronomistic version], at bottom nothing is commanded that is not also in the older version."⁵⁷ As highlighted above, this observation is significant as we considered the theological implications of the Decalogue's numbering and the variations evident between Exodus and Deuteronomy.

57. Lohfink, "The Decalogue in Deuteronomy 5," 262. While I agree with Lohfink on this point, I do not agree with his historical conclusions or with his assertion that the Sabbath is "the principal commandment" of the deuteronomistic Decalogue.