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Imitatio Dei and the Formation of the Subject in Ancient Judaism

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This article considers the relationship between *imitatio dei* and selfhood in ancient Jewish traditions. This relationship is considered across a wide range of texts that are engaged in theological reflection and a complex practice of reading, with philosophical implications. Topics such as human essence, divine creation, and perfectionist aspirations are explored as part of the charactrization of selfhood in the Hebrew Bible and beyond.

והמשכלים יזהרו כזהר הרקיע ומצדיקי הרבים ככוכבים לעולם ועד

> And the knowledgeable will be radiant like the bright expanse of sky, and those who lead the many to righteousness will be like the stars forever and ever.
> (Dan 12:3)

This article explores the way in which the biblical tradition reflects on the formation of the subject in ancient Judaism. This is evident not only in the Hebrew writings but also in the Greek translations of the Hebrew. We can see in the Greek a complex and intricate framework through which philosophical and theological reflection entered into ancient Jewish discourse. This is expressed in the translation and interpretation in the LXX of creation, divine imitation, and selfhood. My focus here covers texts from the Hebrew Bible as well as various Jewish Hellenistic–period writings to which I will turn most explicitly in the last part of the article.

I dedicate this essay to the memory of Stanley Cavell, who, as philosopher, teacher, and friend, exemplified what it is to be created in the image of God.

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Biblical translations in this article are drawn from both NRSV and NJPS, with some modifications.

I begin by problematizing current work on the "subject" and the "self" in ancient Judaism.[1] What are the terms for self, subject, and soul and how are these topics about the self, perfection, training, ascesis, suffering, and transformation of the individual represented in the context of ancient Hebrew texts? How might we characterize a training of the self and the soul that is self-imposed and emerging in place of temple structures around rituals associated with repentance or self-correction? Are we guilty of anachronistic imposition or imposing our narrative onto the narrative of ancient Jewish texts? Or is there a genuine and organic movement within the body of materials from ancient Jewish prayer, self-reflection, discourses about knowledge toward a Platonic ideal or perhaps a movement that is not teleological but includes perfective moments nevertheless?

By asking these questions in conversation with a variety of texts, I seek to explore ancient Jewish understandings of the "self" as these understandings emerge and change. Thus, while I begin with the classic philosophical view of "self" in the works of John Locke, throughout this essay I examine views of the self always with an eye to antiquity. I begin with Locke because he is one of the first philosophers not only to talk about the self but to give us a developed conception of the self and of personal identity.

While a full investigation of the genesis of the concept of the self is not possible here, it would be reasonable to take it as a given that something like the contemporary conception of the self comes into view in Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689).

> Self is that conscious thinking thing,—whatever substance made up of, (whether spiritual or material, simple or compounded, it matters not)—which is sensible

[1] Recent scholarship on the Hebrew Bible and ancient Judaism with implications for conceptions of the "self" includes, for example, the work of James Kugel, Angela Kim Harkins, and David Lambert. In *The Great Shift: Encountering God in Biblical Times* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017), Kugel reflects on the ways ideas about selfhood transform in his chapter entitled "The Emergence of the Biblical Soul" (187–210). Harkins's work on the rhetorical "I" of the Hodayot and the reader experiencing the text religiously and emotionally has implications for the self but rarely addresses questions of ancient selfhood explicitly (*Reading with an "I" to the Heavens: Looking at the Qumran Hodayot through the Lens of Visionary Traditions*, Ekstasis [Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012]). David Lambert's research deals with the self more directly, distinguishing modern conceptions of the interior self from biblical explorations of "self" in other terms. He explores these ideas through reflecting on philological practices ("Refreshing Philology: James Barr, Supersessionism, and the State of Biblical Words," *BibInt* 24 [2016]: 332–56); readings of communal mourning in Job ("The Book of Job in Ritual Perspectives," *JBL* 134 [2015]: 557–75); examining the imposition of "desire" ("'Desire' Enacted in the Wilderness: Problems in the History of the Self and Bible Translation," in *Self, Self-Fashioning, and Individuality in Late Antiquity: New Perspectives*, ed. Maren R. Niehoff and Joshua Levinson, Culture, Religion, and Politics in the Greco-Roman World 4 [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019], 26–49) and the concept of "repentance" as applied to biblical texts (*How Repentance Became Biblical: Judaism, Christianity, and the Interpretation of Scripture* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2016]).

> or conscious of pleasure and pain, capable of happiness or misery, and so is concerned for itself, as far as that consciousness extends.[2]

Here in this brief passage from Locke, we have the idea of a *thing*—in other words, a bearer of properties that is not, or at least not obviously, itself a property borne by another thing that is conscious—capable of representing things, forming beliefs and desires, feeling pleasure and pain, happiness and misery that is *reflexive*—in other words, self-conscious and reflexive in the particular manner of something that is "concerned for itself," taking an *interest* in its own actions and happiness.

There is nothing objectionable about using this notion of the self as a methodological notion *of ours*, a way of indicating what *we* are interested in—so long as we do not assume that the notion can be unproblematically ascribed to the ancient Jewish texts with which we are concerned. However, we will need to be cautious if we are to avoid this sort of imposition.

Locke is carefully neutral about whether the substance of the self is material or immaterial, and we should be neutral about the underlying ontology in general—about whether it is a thing at all. Locke's self is conscious—a term that Locke more or less introduces into the language.[3] While we may assume that selves are capable of awareness in some loose and general sense, we should not commit ourselves to the view that ancient Jewish selves have the sort of interiority that Locke assumes, that they have minds in the early modern, post-Cartesian sense: as it were, inner movie theaters in which representations of outer things and events are projected onto an inner screen that mediates between the self and the external world. What matters for present purposes is that Locke's self is reflexively responsible for itself and interested in itself.

What Locke does not mention, however, is the self's relationship to others, which later, post-Kantian philosophers will thematize.[4] One way to characterize the self's reflexivity is to say that it is capable of first-personal, self-referential thought, typically although not always expressed by the first-person pronoun, "I." However, we should not rule out the possibility that the ancient Jewish self is

[2] John Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975), book 2, ch. 27, sec. 17. While Descartes's meditative method focuses attention on the self, it is widely recognized that Locke's discussion of consciousness and personal identity first thematizes the self in a distinctively modern way. See, e.g., Galen Strawson, *Locke on Personal Identity: Consciousness and Concernment*, Princeton Monographs in Philosophy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011); Etienne Balibar, *Identity and Difference: John Locke and the Invention of Consciousness*, trans. Warren Montag (London: Verso, 2013); Shelley Weinberg, *Consciousness in Locke* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

[3] See Weinberg, *Consciousness in Locke*.

[4] See, e.g., J. G. Fichte's socialization of subjectivity, drawing on kabbalistic concepts, as discussed in Paul Franks, "Fichte's Kabbalistic Realism: Summons as *Ẓimẓum*," in *Fichte's Foundations of Natural Right: A Critical Guide*, ed. Gabriel Gottlieb, Cambridge Critical Guides (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 92–116.

sometimes a way of signaling an interpretative community—that the first-person pronoun אני, אנוכי or, of course, the first-person pronoun embedded in a verb, such as אזכירך ("I will mention you" [11Q5 XXII, 1 = Apostrophe to Zion]) or אמרתי אני בלבי ("I said to myself" [Eccl 2:1, 15; 3:17, 18], where לב should be understood as mind/heart), picks out the people or community within which the individual identifies.[5]

I. Creation and Imitation

The ancient Jewish self is created. We may say that it is constitutively related, in ways that we will tease out across this essay, to a higher, divine being.

Genesis 1:26–27

26ויאמר אלהים נעשה אדם בצלמנו כדמותנו וירדו בדגת הים ובעוף השמים
ובבהמה ובכל הארץ ובכל הרמש הרמש על הארץ: 27ויברא אלהים את האדם
בצלמו בצלם אלהים ברא אתו זכר ונקבה ברא אתם:

26Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth."
27So God created humankind in his image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.

Genesis 2:7

וייצר יהוה אלהים את האדם עפר מן האדמה ויפח באפיו נשמת חיים ויהי האדם
לנפש חיה

Then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.

Both passages in different ways depict the created human in relation to, even with elements of, the divine creator—suggesting a potential for the self to become like the divine. What then is involved in actualizing that potential as an emerging self? This essay examines texts in which there are first-personal linguistic indications of

[5] Here I make use of the conception articulated in the passage cited from Locke's *Essay*, while abstracting from other features of his discussion of personal identity. As I am using the conception, reflexive self-concern need not be realized in individuals alone but may also be embedded in larger, social units. See also Jon D. Levenson, "The Resurrection of the Dead and the Construction of Personal Identity in Ancient Israel," in *Congress Volume: Basel 2001,* ed. André Lemaire, VTSup 92 (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 305–22. Levenson argues that ancient Israelites understood identity to survive death because identity was embedded not in individuals but in the family and in the nation understood as extended family.

reflexivity correlated with the divine. How, in light of the aforementioned problem of anachronism, should we characterize the self in ancient Judaism? To what extent should we regard terms such as נפש ("breath"), אדם ("human"), איש ("man"), לב ("heart"), or νοῦς ("mind") and ψυχή ("soul") and others as equivalents of "self"?

I then consider what one might call both the theological and the conceptual challenge. On the one hand, humanity is described as godlike or created in the image of God (e.g., Gen 1:27) and human beings are called upon to be holy (קדשים תהיו) and to be godlike in their behavior. On the other hand, crossing between the earth and the heavens—becoming divine in precisely the sense that God is divine—is impossible.[6] How then is the call to be "godlike" or to be holy, like God, or to be like the exemplar who is godlike—even a divine human—remotely compelling or coherent?

My response to this challenge is to turn to ancient Jewish texts from the Persian and Hellenistic period that construct a bridge between the possible and the impossible through wisdom, a liminal space. The self is on a path toward coming to understand creation, the law of nature, and divine knowledge. A further step I want to take is to include the practice of pseudonymity (of not only being godlike, but being *like* the one who is godlike) in the construction of new texts, and imitation in the form of צלם – דמות – תבנית ("image – figure – pattern") as ways of capturing the challenge to emerge as a subject who defines oneself through the originary form and moment (creation or birth) which is unrepeatable but inevitably aspires to repeat.[7] Like the work of divine imitation, godliness and godlikeness in exemplars are emulated through expansion, refinement, and extension.[8] In the final section, I will characterize the journey of the ancient Jewish self in pursuit of the goal in which it is reflexively interested.[9] To be godlike is to emerge as a subject

[6] See, e.g., the contrast between the call to be holy in Lev 20:26 and the incomparability formula in Exod 15:11; see below.

[7] I am drawing from an essay coauthored with Irene Peirano entitled "Pseudonymity as an Interpretive Construct," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: Fifty Years of the Pseudepigrapha Section at the SBL,* ed. Matthias Henze and Liv Ingeborg Lied, EJL 50 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2019), 331–55.

[8] For discussion on pseudepigraphy, see Loren T. Stuckenbruck, "Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha," in *Early Judaism: A Comprehensive Overview*, ed. John J. Collins and Daniel C. Harlow (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 179–203; Irene Peirano, "Authenticity as an Aesthetic Concept: Ancient and Modern Reflections," in *Aesthetic Value in Classical Antiquity*, ed. Ralph M. Rosen and Ineke Sluiter, Mnemosyne Supplements 350 (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 215–42; and Peirano's monograph *The Rhetoric of the Roman Fake: Latin Pseudepigrapha in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012). See my discussion in *Seconding Sinai: The Development of Mosaic Discourse in Second Temple Judaism*, JSJSup 77 (Leiden: Brill, 2004), and more recent discussions in my article and book "The Vitality of Scripture within and beyond the 'Canon,'" *JSJ* 43 (2012): 497–518; and *Losing the Temple and Recovering the Future: An Analysis of 4 Ezra* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

[9] By *reflexively* I mean to turn back on itself, as I mentioned above in Locke's account.

and to approximate the very thing that is out of reach. If one cannot ascribe attributes directly to God on the basis of our knowledge of what it is to be God, then we have to ascribe them to God indirectly on the basis of some kind of human perfection—this is a classic view of Maimonides.[10]

The discourse of בצלם אלהים is precisely an imitation of the human that is reflected back onto the formation of the creator in human hands. Perfection is thus no longer a divine aspiration with a particular ideal form that is achievable. Rather, it is an interior aspiration that comes to be about the formation of the self or the subject insofar as the subject is formed as it relates its own perfection. Imitation of the divine is an internal aspiration that is always incomplete but nevertheless the essence of every self.

How then is the self or the subject said to have been formed in relation to God? To begin with the obvious is the impossibility of being godlike—even among the gods.

Exodus 15:11

מי כמכה באלם יהוה מי כמכה נאדר בקדש נורא תהלת עשה פלא:

> Who is like you, O Lord, among the gods?
> Who is like you, majestic in holiness,
> awesome in splendor, doing wonders?

One cannot be God, but nevertheless there is the charge to be godlike (Lev 20:26: הייתם לי קדשים כי קדוש אני יהוה, "You shall be holy to me; for I the Lord am holy"). This is a typical formulation, which surfaces and resurfaces across later texts that engage with this Priestly discourse.[11] For the purposes of this article I am not thinking about the emergence (or lack thereof) of a monotheistic dogma.[12] Rather, I want simply to think about how we come to characterize the "I" which is in relation to the deity. I am thinking perhaps first and foremost of נפש or נפשי—as the closest formulation for selfhood.[13] נפשי expresses the reflexivity of the self.[14] Furthermore, what we have here is an equation of humanity as divinely imaged; and what follows is that blood is the life-source of that divine copy or image, and so to eat blood is a divine transgression because of the very essence of humanity. [15]

[10] Maimonides, *Guide* 1:54; 3:54; *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot De'ot*, 1:5–11.

[11] See esp. Ezekiel and the much later 11Q19, the Temple Scroll, among other texts. For a discussion of commands for holiness, see W. Z. Harvey, "Holiness: A Command to Imitatio Dei," *Tradition* 16 (1977): 7–28.

[12] See Jon D. Levenson's discussion of this passage in *Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988).

[13] Aubrey R. Johnson, *The Vitality of the Individual in the Thought of Ancient Israel*, 2nd ed. (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1964), 1–22. H. Seebass "נֶפֶשׁ *nephesh*," *TDOT* 9:497–519, esp. 510–11.

[14] See, e.g., Ps 23:3: נפשי ישובב ינחני במעגלי צדק למען שמו, "He restores my soul. He leads me in right paths for his name's sake."

[15] It is notable that נפש and דם are two ways of expressing what it is to consider imitation

II. כי נפש הבשר בדם הוא: For the Life of the Flesh Is in the Blood

In Gen 9 the prohibition is with respect to shedding human blood:

> [4]אך בשר בנפשו דמו לא תאכלו: [5]ואך את דמכם לנפשתיכם אדרש מיד כל חיה אדרשנו ומיד האדם מיד איש אחיו אדרש את נפש האדם: [6]שפך דם האדם באדם דמו ישפך כי בצלם אלהים עשה את האדם:
>
> [4]Only, you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood. [5]For your own lifeblood I will surely require a reckoning: from every animal I will require it and from human beings, each one for the blood of another, I will require a reckoning for human life. [6]Whoever sheds the blood of a human, by a human shall that person's blood be shed; for in his own image God made humankind.

As the Priestly rewriting indicates, to be created in the image of God is not to be God.[16] Arguably this is already the point with respect to knowledge, and with respect to blood shedding. What is wrong with shedding human blood in P—that is, Gen 9—is that the one who claims mastery over human blood, hence over human life and death, usurps the place of God, a place that cannot properly be occupied by one who is *only* created in the image of God but is not God. The sacrificial role of blood in Lev 17 is connected to the role of blood in the Noachian covenant.[17]

Leviticus 17:10-14:

> [10]ואיש איש מבית ישראל ומן הגר הגר בתוכם אשר יאכל כל דם ונתתי פני בנפש האכלת את הדם והכרתי אתה מקרב עמה: [11]כי נפש הבשר בדם הוא ואני נתתיו לכם על המזבח לכפר על נפשתיכם כי הדם הוא בנפש יכפר: [12]על כן אמרתי לבני ישראל כל נפש מכם לא תאכל דם והגר הגר בתוככם לא יאכל דם: ס [13]ואיש איש מבני ישראל ומן הגר הגר בתוכם אשר יצוד ציד חיה או

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of the divine and exemplifying what it is that God is imaged in the human. See Gen 9:6 and Lev 17:14 (quoted below). On blood as divine life source in relation to this proscription, see T. Abusch, "Blood in Israel and Mesopotamia," in *Emanuel: Studies in the Hebrew Bible, Septuagint, and Dead Sea Scrolls in Honor of Emanuel Tov*, ed. Shalom M. Paul et al., VTSup94 (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 676; William K. Gilders, *Blood Ritual in the Hebrew Bible: Meaning and Power* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2004), 17–24; P. J. Harland, *The Value of Human Life: A Study of the Story of the Flood (Genesis 6–9)*, VTSup 64 (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 154–58; B. Kedar-Kopfstein "דם *dām*," *TDOT* 3:234–50, here 240, 246; M. Vervenne, "The Blood Is the Life and the Life Is the Blood: Blood as Symbol of Life and Death in Biblical Tradition (Gen. 9,4)," in *Ritual and Sacrifice in the Ancient Near East: Proceedings of the International Conference Organized by the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven from the 17th to the 20th of April 1991*, ed. J. Quaegebeur, OLA 55 (Leuven: Peeters, 1993), 451–70.

[16] For the correlation of Gen 1, 6, and 9, see Konrad Schmid, *A Historical Theology of the Hebrew Bible*, trans. Peter Altmann (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2019), 311–14.

[17] See ibid., 388–89.

עוף אשר יאכל ושפך את דמו וכסהו בעפר: 14כי נפש כל בשר דמו בנפשו הוא
ואמר לבני ישראל דם כל בשׂר לא תאכלו כי נפש כל בשר דמו הוא כל אכליו
יכרת:

> 10If anyone of the house of Israel or of the aliens who reside among them eats any blood, I will set my face against that person who eats blood, and will cut that person off from the people. 11For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it to you for making atonement for your lives on the altar; for, as life, it is the blood that makes atonement. 12Therefore I have said to the people of Israel: No person among you shall eat blood, nor shall any alien who resides among you eat blood. 13And anyone of the people of Israel, or of the aliens who reside among them, who hunts down an animal or bird that may be eaten shall pour out its blood and cover it with earth. 14For the life of every creature—its blood is its life; therefore I have said to the people of Israel: You shall not eat the blood of any creature, for the life of every creature is its blood; whoever eats it shall be cut off.

Thus, while in Gen 9 the human responsibility is expressed by the prohibition of shedding human blood, in Lev 17 the human responsibility is expressed by the prohibition of consuming nonhuman blood—seen already more briefly in Gen 9:4. In both cases, this human responsibility is required if the human is to play its proper role of serving as a creature created in the image of God. To be sure, Gen 9 is oriented toward humanity writ large and Lev 17 addresses Israel in covenant. Nonetheless, both speak to the human ability to be in relation to the divine—in which state, perhaps, to be like the divine—and demonstrate that the essence of blood as life sets fundamental bounds on behavior in order for the human to remain in such a state. The human must exercise dominion over other creatures[18] but must not misunderstand this dominion as absolute. To be created in the image of God is to be called to *imitate* God, but not to *be* God. Both the blood prohibitions[19] are meant to signify the limitations placed on the image of God: "For the life of the flesh is in the blood" (Lev 17:11). Here we see the reason for the essential role of blood in covenantal relationships, first in the Noachian covenant, which prohibits the shedding of human blood, and then in the Israelite covenant, which prohibits the shedding of animal blood outside an explicitly covenantal context. Blood is life. Blood is the life-force with which God endows God's living creatures.[20] We can connect this to Gen 1 as well as to Gen 9. Human blood is the exemplification of בצלם אלהים

[18] Pierre Bordreuil, "'A l'ombre d'Elohim': Le thème de l'ombre protectrice dans l'Ancient Orient et ses rapports avec 'L'Imago Dei,'" *RHPR* 46 (1966): 368–91, here 391; W. Randall Garr, *In His Own Image and Likeness: Humanity, Divinity, and Monotheism*, CHANE 15 (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 175–76; Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis*, trans. John H. Marks, 3rd rev. ed., OTL (London: SCM, 1972), 59; Claus Westermann, *Genesis: A Practical Commentary*, trans. David E. Green (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), 10–11.

[19] That is, the prohibition on shedding human blood in Gen 9 and the prohibition on consuming animal blood in Lev 17.

[20] Kedar-Kopfstein, "דם *dām*," 239–41.

("in the image of God"). Animals may not be created in the image of God, but they are only one rank lower, as it were, in the hierarchy of God's creatures. Blood is the exemplification of their special status. Life is active participation in the divine project of creation. Animals participate in this divine project to a lesser degree, humans to a greater degree. Human life and loss of life are defined through divine imaging. For the purposes of this essay I am looking at blood by analogy to life-force.[21]

III. Defining the Self

In later texts composed in the Hellenistic period, we find an even more developed account of the subject who is formed through his or her relationship with God. The self comes to be defined through prayer, through submission to the work of the self, through adherence to the law, as well as practices associated with מוסר ("correction") or even ascesis, and finally through aspiration to approximate divine-like activity by praying with divine beings, that is, angels, and imitation with reference to the divine (construction, creation, Sabbath, etc.).[22]

The self is thus defined through the impossibility of overcoming the human–divine divide and the work that is involved on the part of the subject nevertheless to realize the godlike nature of the self. We see this in much later ancient Jewish examples from the Hellenistic period with respect to confession and repentance and the emergence of the self in Dan 9:3–5.

> 3ואתנה את פני אל אדני האלהים לבקש תפלה ותחנונים בצום ושק ואפר:
> 4ואתפללה ליהוה אלהי ואתודה ואמרה אנא אדני האל הגדול והנורא שמר
> הברית והחסד לאהביו ולשמרי מצותיו: 5חטאנו ועוינו והרשענו ומרדנו וסור
> ממצותך וממשפטיך:

> 3Then I turned to the Lord God, to seek an answer by prayer and supplication with fasting and sackcloth and ashes. 4I prayed to the Lord my God and made confession, saying, "Ah, Lord, great and awesome God, keeping covenant and steadfast love with those who love you and keep your commandments, 5we have

[21] For a very different way of thinking about categories of selfhood that operate as fluids in the body and embodied spirit, see Ingrid Lilly, "Rûah Embodied: Job's Internal Disease from the Perspective of Mesopotamian Medicine," in *Borders: Terminologies, Ideologies, Performances*, ed. Annette Weissenrieder, WUNT 366 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 323–37.

[22] On Sabbath observance as *imitatio dei*, see Harvey, "Holiness," 12–13; David S. Shapiro "The Doctrine of the Image of God and Imitatio Dei," *Judaism* 12 (1963): 57–77, here 58. See further Hindy Najman, "Angels at Sinai: Exegesis, Theology and Interpretive Authority," *DSD* 7 (2000): 313–33; Noam Mizrachi, "God, Gods, and Godhead in the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice," in *The Religious Worldviews Reflected in the Dead Sea Scrolls: Proceedings of the Fourteenth International Symposium of the Orion Center for the Study of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Associated Literature, 28–30 May, 2013*, ed. Ruth A. Clements, Menahem Kister, and Michael Segal, STDJ 127 (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 161–92.

> sinned and done wrong, acted wickedly and rebelled, turning aside from your commandments and ordinances."

Represented here is the self on behalf of the community. Can this prayer and confession effect external change for the community, or does confession transform the individual from within? In order to consider this question, let us look at another later example where the individual is the representative of the community, in this case for the Yaḥad.

So, for example, in the Community Rule (1QS XI, 2–9)[23]

2 כיא אני לאל משפטי ובידו תום דרכי עם ישור לבבי
3 ובצדקותו ימח פשעי כיא ממקור דעתו פתח אורי ובנפלאותיו הביטה עיני ואורת לבבי ברז
4 נהיה והויא עולם משען ימיני בסלע עוז דרך פעמי מפני כול לוא יזדעזע כיא אמת אל היאה
5 סלע פעמי וגבורתו משענת ימיני וממקור צדקתו משפטי אור בלבבי מרזי פלאו בהויא עולם
6 הביטה עיני תושיה אשר נסתרה מאנוש דעה ומזמת ערמה מבני אדם מקור צדקה ומקוה
7 גבורה עם מעון כבוד מסוד בשר לאשר בחר אל נתנם לאוחזת עולם וינחילם בגורל
8 קדושים ועם בני שמים חבר סודם לעצת יחד וסוד מבנית קודש למטעת עולם עם כול
9 קץ נהיה

> 2 … As for me, my justification lies with God. In His hand are the perfection of my walk and the virtue of my heart.
> 3 By His righteousness is my transgression blotted out. For from the fount of His knowledge has my light shot forth; upon his wonders has my eye gazed—the light of my heart upon the mystery
> 4 of what shall be. He who is eternal is the staff of my right hand, upon the Mighty Rock do my steps tread; before nothing shall they retreat. For the truth of God—
> 5 that is the rock of my tread, and His mighty power, my right hand's support. From His righteous fount comes my justification, the light of my heart from His wondrous mysteries. Upon the eternal
> 6 has my eye gazed—even that wisdom hidden from men, the knowledge, wise prudence from humanity concealed. The source of righteousness, gathering
> 7 of power, and abode of glory are from fleshly counsel hidden. To them He has chosen all these has He given—an eternal possession. He has made them heirs in the legacy

[23] Text and translation are from Donald W. Parry and Emanuel Tov, eds., *The Dead Sea Scrolls Reader*, part 1, *Texts Concerned with Religious Law* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 40–41 (translation by Michael O. Wise).

8 of the Holy Ones; with the Angels has He united their assembly, a Yaḥad party.
They are an assembly built up for holiness, an eternal Planting for all
9 ages to come.

In the above passage the holy ones are themselves likened to the angels and are with the angels as ones that are chosen and carry forward a legacy. Thus, it follows that the self is a manifestation of divine image, but not divine. However, the impasse between heaven and earth is still not overcome.[24]

In the Hellenistic period there continues to be much reflection about the self with respect to the divine; however, there is nevertheless an impassable achievement with respect to divine perfection. The aspiration to be godlike is part of the work of perfection and it is what makes it possible for them to be living godlike lives. One of the texts that help us understand both the struggle to overcome human obstacles to being godlike and the aspiration to be in the image of God, צלם אלהים, is 4QInstruction / *Musar le-Mevin* (4Q417 1 I, 16–18 *par* 4Q418 43, 44, 45 I, 13–14).[25]

16 כ]י[א
17 כתבנית קדושים יצרו ועד לוא נתן הגוֹ לרוח בשר כי לא ידע בין
18 [טו]ב לרע כמשפט [ר]וחו

[24] For another Scrolls passage about confession, see the Hodayot, 1QH[a] IX, 27–31.

27 ולוא נסתרו ולא נעדרו מלפניכה ומה יספר אנוש חטאתו ומה יוכיח על עוונותיו
28 ומה ישיב עול כול משפט הצדק לכה אתה אל הדעות כול מעשי הצדקה
29 וסוד האמת ולבני האדם עבודת העוון ומעשי הרמיה. אתה בראתה
30 רוח בלשון ותדע דבריה ותכן פרי שפתים בטרם היותם ותשם דברים על קו
31 ומבע רוח שפתים במדה ותוצא קוים לרזיהם ומֹבֹעֵי רוֹחות לחשבונם להודיע

27 Nothing is hidden, nor does anything exist apart from Your presence. How shall a man explain his sin, and how shall he defend his iniquities,
28 and how can he return injustice for righteous judgment? You are God of knowledge, all righteous works and true counsel belong to You;
29 sinful service and the deceitful works belong to the sons of men. (vacat) You created
30 breath for the tongue, and You know its words. You determined the fruit of the lips before they came about. You appoint words by a measuring line
31 and the utterance of the breath of the lips by calculation. You bring forth the measuring lines in respect to their mysteries, and the utterances of breath in respect to their reckoning in order to make known.

The text follows the edition of Eileen M. Schuller and Carol A. Newsom, *The Hodayot (Thanksgiving Psalms): A Study Edition of 1QH[a]*, EJL 36 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012). The translation is from Donald W. Parry and Emanuel Tov, eds., *The Dead Sea Scrolls Reader*, part 5, *Poetic and Liturgical Texts* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 17 (translation by Martin Abegg).

[25] The text is from Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, *To Increase Learning for the Understanding Ones: Reading and Reconstructing the Fragmentary Early Jewish Sapiential Text 4QInstruction*, STDJ 44

16 Because
17 He had fashioned him according to the structure of the holy ones. But he had not yet given contemplation to the fleshly spirit. Because he did not know how to distinguish between
18 good and evil according to the judgment of his spirit.

In Instruction (in the passage above) the self is articulated through an understanding that there are two paths—that of the flesh and that of aspiration to divine image.[26] To be sure this is not a rejection of the corporeal realm since much of 4QInstruction provides guidance for how to live in this world by caring for the poor and respecting one's parents. But what we do see is that there is a path that can come to enable the human to achieve a status and stature of godlike perfection.

There are a number of passages from Philo of Alexandria where similar aspirations, not to be God and not to be Moses as the perfect exemplar but to be like God, are articulated.[27] This path is inscribed already within the human potential to realize and achieve perfection as a subject that is formed as a copy of the divine (see, e.g., Philo, *Mos.* 1.158–159).

This has implications for how we think about perfection and aspiration. How is it possible to do the kind of work that can ultimately achieve being soul alone or mind alone, as in Philo (e.g., *Her.* 56–57; *Contempl.* 10–11)? The story that these ancient Jewish communities seem to tell goes as follows: There is an earthly context for perfection, which revolves around the community, or city, that lives in accordance with the law. This law is the law of Moses but also goes well beyond the confines of that text as it also embodies and is exemplified through wisdom.[28] In

(Leiden: Brill, 2001), 52. The translation is from Arjen Bakker, "The Figure of the Sage in *Musar le-Mevin* and *Serek ha-Yahad*" (PhD diss., KU Leuven, 2015), 197.

[26] Cf. Samuel L. Adams, *Wisdom in Transition: Act and Consequence in Second Temple Instructions,* JSJSup 125 (Leiden: Brill, 2008).

[27] Shapiro, "Doctrine of the Image of God," 70.

[28] My references to wisdom are broad in scope and implication. Wisdom implies processes of learning and seeking understanding (or becoming an understanding subject)—processes that are not in opposition to, for example, liturgy, prophecy, and law, to name just a few categories. I am drawing on scholarship that both defines and critiques wisdom literature; see, e.g., Stuart Weeks, "Is 'Wisdom Literature' a Useful Category?," in *Tracing Sapiential Traditions in Ancient Judaism*, ed. Hindy Najman, Jean-Sébastien Rey, and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, JSJSup 174 (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 3–23; Will Kynes, *An Obituary for "Wisdom Literature": The Birth, Death, and Intertextual Reintegration of a Biblical Corpus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019). I am also referencing the continuing growth of wisdom in the Hellenistic period in the Dead Sea Scrolls and beyond; see, e.g., Arjen Bakker, "Wisdom in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Early Jewish Interpretation," in *The Oxford Handbook of Wisdom and the Bible*, ed. Will Kynes (New York: Oxford University, 2021), 141–54; John J. Collins, "Wisdom Reconsidered in Light of the Scrolls," *DSD* 4 (1997): 265–81; Menahem Kister, "Wisdom Literature and Its Relation to Other Genres: From Ben Sira to *Mysteries*," in *Sapiential Perspectives: Wisdom Literature in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls: Proceedings of the Sixth International Symposium of the Orion Center for the Study of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Associated Literature, 20–22 May, 2001*, ed. John Collins, Gregory E. Sterling, and Ruth A.

this sense, while there is an impasse between heaven and earth that is not overcome, it strikes me that to be like God is to exemplify צלם אלהים, which then falls short of being a divine human being. This is expressed in Philo's terms as becoming mind alone (as in the case of Moses at the end of his life) or soul alone (in the *Contemplative Life*). Thus θεῖος ἀνήρ, or איש אלוהים, is not what is celebrated but rather the exemplification of the human as the subject finds from within that copy which is at one's essence. If that is achieved, then the exemplary state of being might be characterized as νόμοι ἔμψυχοι ("ensouled law"), or the exemplary status of the law, since the paradoxically perfect copy of that which is unwritten, namely, the law of nature, is repeatable (e.g., Philo, *Mos.* 2.12–14; *Her.* 230–231).[29] In Philo of Alexandria, it is the law of Moses that emerges as equivalent to the law of nature but also exemplifies the paradigm for understanding the cosmos through the law of nature.[30]

The construction of the divine image is a reflection of the ideal human from the subject's standpoint. The structure itself is reversed so that we are speaking of divine image and aspiration. However, the notion of "aspiration" is itself ultimately internalized in the work of wisdom, the law, and the individual who achieves time and again the status of an ensouled law,[31] or the משכיל ("sage") or the מבין ("one who has understanding").

It is no surprise here that the prophet and more generally the charismatic comes to be downplayed, but not because there is no longer inspiration.[32] Instead, my suggestion is that the winding down or the so-called ending of prophecy is

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Clements, STDJ 51 (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 13–47; Matthew J. Goff, *Discerning Wisdom: The Sapiential Literature of the Dead Sea Scrolls,* VTSup 116 (Leiden: Brill, 2007); Armin Lange, "Wisdom Literature and Thought in the Dead Sea Scrolls," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. John J. Collins and Timothy H. Lim (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 455–78.

[29] For further discussion of this point, see my two essays "A Written Copy of the Law of Nature: An Unthinkable Paradox?," *SPhiloA* 15 (2003): 51–56; and "The Law of Nature and the Authority of Mosaic Law," *SPhiloA* 11 (1999): 55–73.

[30] It is relevant to mention also Wis 7:24–30, where Wisdom comes to be a perfected reflection or expression of the image of God.

[31] For further examples of "ensouled law" seen in the lives of the patriarchs, of Moses, and with the potential to be lived by sages, see *Abr.* 3–5; *Mos.* 2.4, 48; *Prob.* 72–91. For some of my previous work on this concept, see *Seconding Sinai*, 77–85; *Past Renewals: Interpretative Authority, Renewed Revelation, and the Quest for Perfection in Jewish Antiquity*, JSJSup 53 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 92, 94–95, 97, 222, 224.

[32] On the "end" or changing of prophecy, see John Barton, *Oracles of God: Perceptions of Ancient Prophecy in Israel after the Exile* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1986); George J. Brooke, "Prophecy and Prophets in the Dead Sea Scrolls," in *Prophets, Prophecy, and Prophetic Texts in Second Temple Judaism*, ed. Michael H. Floyd and Robert D. Haak, LHBOTS 427 (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 151–65; Lester L. Grabbe, "Poets, Scribes or Preachers? The Reality of Prophecy in the Second Temple Period," in *Knowing the End from the Beginning: The Prophetic, the Apocalyptic and Their Relationships*, ed. Lester L. Grabbe and Robert D. Haak, JSPSup 46 (London: T&T Clark, 2003), 195–215; Najman, *Losing the Temple*.

precisely an internalization of the prophetic, which in no way compromises the spirit or vitality of Judaism.

The emergence of the self as the image of God happens precisely at a time when practice, ritual, and even sacrifice are internalized and translated onto the body and the practices of the individual. These texts from the Hellenistic period construct a bridge between the possible and the impossible through wisdom and the comprehension of creation, the law of nature and divine knowledge.[33] There are many different ways in which this is achieved in our ancient Jewish texts. Imitation can be performed through creating and building.[34] But there are also imitative ways of reproducing the creation of humanity or of incomparable heroes such as Moses or Isaiah. This is done through pseudonymous attribution, which can (though it does not have to) have the effect of growing a corpus or attaching a much later work to an earlier author in the form of a pseudonym. This is done as a way of repeating an unrepeatable moment, namely, creation of the human being itself.

To emerge as a subject and to approximate the very thing that is out of reach, that is, divine imaging, is perfectly captured. The aspiration is not to be divinized but rather to be angel-like, godlike, and perhaps also to internalize the law of nature or the law of Moses as that perfectionist aspiration. This is an internal self-evaluation as one turns on oneself to achieve a next self in the larger framework of what we would call, in ancient Jewish terms, to aspire to be godlike, which is also to aspire to humanity. This achievement is not about an ideal that can be reached but, rather, about a godlike humanity increasingly described as a subject who is ultimately defined through the image of God, or in the form of holiness, or as ensouled law.

Thus, the texts that thematize becoming godlike do not necessarily reflect the possibility of becoming a divine human. Rather, this aspiration is an important development of the desire to recover the image of the divine in both an earthly and heavenly context.

IV. Conclusion

This study charted the emergence of the self within the history of developing concepts of the subject. This development reflects explicit attention in dialogue with Greek thinking on the subject.[35]

I have argued that we should speak of the subject with reference to the subject's relationship to the creator in ancient Judaism. This is because the self is constructed

[33] E.g., Jubilees Prologue and 1:1–4, 4 Ezra 3:1, 14:3, and 14:42–48.

[34] Here I have in mind the two terms רוח אלהים ("spirit of God") and חכמת לב ("wisdom of heart"), which are said to have inspired Bezalel in Exod 31:3–6, 35:31–35.

[35] Cf. Gretchen Reydams-Schils, "'Becoming like God' in Platonism and Stoicism," in *From Stoicism to Platonism: The Development of Philosophy, 100 BCE–100 CE*, ed. Troels Engberg-Pedersen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 142–58.

as a copy and never as a form or as an original. This does not mean, however, that the self or the subject is foreign to Jewish texts; rather, there is ongoing formation and thinking about higher and lower reading and being in this period. Moreover, there is a reciprocal dynamic across linguistic boundaries with reference to the emergence of the "I" as individual—as thinker, as sage, and as the one who aspires to be like God.

Those who achieve new levels of wisdom and being godlike, but not being God, have achieved this through internalizing the instruction and living in accordance with the details of the law and ultimately being able to internalize the law of nature.[36] The distinction between being like God and becoming God can perhaps distinguish ancient Jewish thinking from early Christian thinking about the creation of Adam.[37]

The process of becoming like God is also a process of becoming fully human and thus constructing the self. The discourse about *imitatio dei* can be connected to the subject's concern for itself, which is partially definitive of the self, according to the Lockean conception deployed here. The concern for the self is expressed in the ideal of constructing the subject that fulfills the purpose of being created in the image of God. This is a self that can achieve knowledge of the cosmos as it uncovers its own human potential.

[36] In the way that Philo will speak of the one (e.g., Moses or Abraham) who is self taught. See my essay "Text and Figure in Ancient Jewish Paideia," in *The Authoritative Scriptures in Ancient Judaism*, ed. Mladen Popović, JSJSup 141 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 253–66.

[37] Menahem Kister, "'First Adam' and 'Second Adam' in 1 Cor 15:45–49 in the Light of Midrashic Exegesis and Hebrew Usage," in *The New Testament and Rabbinic Literature*, ed. Reimund Bieringer et al., JSJSup 136 (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 351–66.