Historical Grammatical Analysis of Exodus 33:1-6 as a response to Contemporary Interpretations of Ornaments

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Abstract

Exodus 33:1-6 stands as one of the Old Testament texts that have been used by some scholars and believers as a biblical basis to prohibit the use of ornaments and other fashion-related discourse. It has been argued tenaciously that ornaments are unbiblical, sinful and devilish with special emphasis on certain experiences from the patriarchal period of the Old Testament. Certain believers who are not using some of these ornaments like earrings, necklaces, rings or bracelets etc. see themselves as more holy and godly than those who do use them. The correct biblical position about ornaments has puzzled humanity for ages. However, the context, culture, antecedents and language used in the biblical narratives have not been carefully studied from the socio-linguistic perspective. Therefore, this work investigated the basic understanding of and rationale for ornaments. It also examined Christian attitudes to ornaments in the contemporary era, and draw implications for Christians and preachers alike. This study employed an exegetical method of biblical interpretation that utilizes discourse analysis also known as text-linguistic approach in order to bring out the nearest meaning to the author's autograph of the pericope. The study revealed that the declaration of Yahweh to the Israelite to put off their ornament was not a complete prohibition to the use of ornaments. The instruction was situational or circumstantial and should be taken as such. Therefore, against existing beliefs that ornaments are demonic and sinful, the study revealed that, this is indeed a fallacy.

Keywords: ornaments, contemporary, demonizing, prohibition, bracelets.

Introduction

The correct biblical position about ornaments has puzzled humanity for ages. For some, it is against biblical practices and beliefs, while for others, it is deeply rooted and supported by the word of God as recorded in the biblical accounts. The struggles and debates for holistic interpretation among scholars, as well as believers on this subject, are endless. Jon Paulien (1993: 193) points out that, "I have learned as a biblical scholar how easy it is to make the Bible say what you desire it to say. One's interpretation often arises out of the need to protect one's failings and shortcomings from coming to the light of scripture and the spirit's gentle persuasion."

The importation of preconceived notions into the text and reading into the passage what the passage is not saying connotes 'proof-text interpretation.' Therefore, the discourse on ornaments has been perceived by scholars differently. Larry Kilpatrick in his article "Jewelry: Can I wear it and be a Seventh-day Adventist?" looks at the passages in Exodus 21 and Deuteronomy 15 and concludes that earrings are associated with slavery. He goes on to say, "But Christians are not to be in bondage or slavery to the world" (www.greatcontroversy.org). Ellen White (1945), could find

no rationale for occupying one's time with anything but the proclamation of the gospel. Her comments on adornment are with this sense of urgency, and she wrote, "Time is too short to adorn the body with silver, or costly apparel or gold. (11-14)"

This divergence of opinion on ornaments among believers is on the increase. For example, the researcher invited a particular man of God for revival sometime ago; while the programme was ongoing, the man of God deviated to the subject of ornaments and said, "all those who are using ornaments will go to hellfire without exception, all those who put on tight (underwear) will equally go to hell." Certain believers who are not using some of these ornaments like earrings, necklaces, rings or bracelets etc. see themselves as more holy and godly than those who do use them. Older generation men and women tend to see the younger generation as being rebellious and disobedient because of their ornamentations. The complexity of adornment has not been understood for ages, which calls for serious attention and study. Therefore, this text of Exodus 33:1-6 in the attempt to narrate the dealings of Yahweh with Israel employed unique language to describe the word of Yahweh on ornaments in this context in relation to the total context of the biblical record which must be carefully examined for adequate interpretation. What is written and why is it written is the motivation of true biblical exegete. It is against this background that this study examines how the biblical perspective of ornament in the pericope of Exodus 33:1-6 is presented and the context of its relevance to the contemporary Christian life and faith.

A Biblical perspective on ornaments

William Henry (2006) affirms that, when the Old Testament books of the Bible were written, they became scripture, and because they were spoken and written by God through men, they were considered as possessing absolute authority. Therefore, the bible provides distinctive insight to the cultures, beliefs, language and Yahweh's interactions with His chosen people Israel. It is in this wise that ornament is going to be considered from the Bible beginning with certain terminologies used by biblical writers to describe jewelry. In the process of textual analysis, Hebrew words were selected that referred to jewelry types in the bible within the context of usage:

Taba'at

The word *ṭaba'at* translates ring and appears forty-six (46) times in the biblical text, thirty-nine (39) of them can be found in Exodus and Leviticus, once in Isaiah 3:21, and six times in Esther. One can notice only four of the total occurrences (Genesis 41:42; Exodus 35:22; Numbers 31:50; Isaiah 3:21) that refer clearly to rings as jewelry; other occasions do not refer to jewelry. Instead, they are part of the materials for building the tabernacle and priestly accessories; they are used as cuffs to attach pieces to each other, not as decoration.

The first of the jewelry rings, (Genesis 41:42), found in scripture refers to a signet ring that belonged to Pharaoh, which he gave to Joseph as a symbol of his high office. Therefore, it served as a sign of status and insignia of an office. Exodus 35:22 and Numbers 31:50 mentioned gold rings which are among the valuable items donated to the tabernacle. Thus, rings can also appear to be items that serve as wealth storage. Position and high social status are often associated with wealth; therefore, the functions of wealth storage and status making complemented and strengthened each other. The term *ṭaba'at*; in Isaiah 3:21 lists the jewelry worn by Jerusalem aristocrats, and thus possibly refers to jewelry as insignia of high office, or at least as forms of flamboyant consumption, which could better be used to help the poor or donate to the temple (Platt, 1979: 189-201).

There is no clear feature of gender to these rings. In Exodus 35:22, the rings belonged to, and were donated by women, while in Num 31:50 was not. The signet rings were connected with men in textual references (Genesis 41:42, Esther 3:10, 12; 8:2, 8, 10), because these men were authority figures who needed the rings to showcase their status in the society. The example from Isaiah did not clearly focus on either gender. The Jewish account affirms that both genders wore rings.

It is not explicitly stated in some instances what the rings looked like. Wildberger (1990: 154) suggests that all the occasions of the term rings referred to seal rings. This assumption is unwarranted for two major reasons. One, there is no justifiable reason to assume that the tabernacle was held together with seal rings. Properly speaking, seals were used for personal signatures, identification, and amulets, whereas rings could be metal circles serving a structural connective purpose. Two, many of the rings found in archaeological contexts are simple bands and lacked attachments for seals. The simplest assumption is that; (ṭaba'at) referred to the ring itself, and only if the function is specified did it warrant a seal attachment. Those melted down were likely also envisioned as metal bands.

Nezem

The word *nezem* also appears to have meant "ring", but unlike; ṭaba'at it referred only to jewelry. On two occasions, it was used obviously for earrings because the phrase in Genesis 35:4 is "the rings which were in their ears", the owners of the *nezamim* were of unspecified gender. In Exod. 32:2-3, the owners were female. In terms of function, the earrings in Genesis accounts were used as a guilt offering after slaughtering the men of Shechem. The Exodus earrings like the others referred to jewelry melted down for building the Tabernacle. While men are often portrayed wearing earrings in Mesopotamia and in Egypt, they are not depicted with nose rings, suggesting that nose-rings were specifically a female ornament (Andrew, 1990: 111).

In other cases, the body part on which *nezem* was worn is unclear, it may even refer to finger-rings. However, *nezem* in Exodus is used both as wealth storage and object of offering. In Hosea, it is an adornment to attract lovers and in proverbs it is an exemplar for value, and therefore fits into the wealth storage group. In terms of gender, in Hosea, it is linked with females, in Judges with males, and in Exodus and proverb it is not clear who wore the *nezem*.

Not only is the term unclear, it is also not easy to differentiate between nose rings and earrings in archaeological contexts. It appears the same types of rings were worn in both ways (Platt, 1979: 77-78). In one instance, the location of a mulberry earring in the skull of a burial at Megiddo showed that one item typically assumed to be an earring was used as a nose ring (Gold, 1948). It is even feasible that, after losing one earring, the remaining match may become a nose-ring. Platt affirms this as a type of nose ring worn by queens and brides, as stated in Ezekiel 16:12, although she acknowledged that the word also referred to earrings. It appears that only women wore nose rings, and that both wore earrings (Genesis 35:4, 32:2).

'Agilim

'*Agilim* signifies earrings (Numbers 31:50; Ezekiel 16:12), although this is made clear only in one instance (Ezekiel 16:12). Its root suggests that it is round but does not indicate where or how it is worn. Of the two (2) occurrences in the Hebrew Bible, the first (Numbers 31:50) classifies '*Agilim* as an element of plunder. This does not make it understandable whether men or women would

have worn them, but only that they had some values for a conqueror. The second reference (Ezekiel 16:12) refers to '*Agilim* worn on the ears, as part of an extensive metaphor of Israel as bride and queen of Yahweh, along with *nezem* in the nose, and several other pieces of ornaments (Platt, 1979: 77-78).

It is possible that both '*Agilim* and *nezamim* were earrings and nose rings of different types. Given that '*Agilim* are etymologically connected to the words for "round" and "circles", they are most likely the simplest objects. Neither type is probable to be the boat or lunate types, which would be more appropriately called *saharonim*. The *nezamim* might have been a kind of earring with a pendant, such as the mulberry earrings, leaving the term '*Agilim* for hoops.

Neṭifot

Neṭifot has customarily been translated as earrings or drop earring, sharing its root with words meaning "to drop, drip, or pour." It is cognate to the Arabic word for earring, however, Platt (1979) makes a compelling case for *Neṭifot* as a pendant, following Beck. Beck (1973) included dangling earrings within the *Neṭifo* and added that they were made of pearls. Platt suggested limiting them to pendants worn on necklaces, not earring, but expanded likely materials to include semi-precious stones, faience, and glass. She posited that *Neṭifot* were the beads that were suspended on necklaces.

Etymologically, the root suggests something that hangs, making the pendant claim reasonable. However, it is still unfair to limit the type of drop object without any additional information for clarity. It may have been a category of pendant, pointing to shape, rather than type of jewelry on which it was suspended. The word appears no more than two times in the Bible, in Judges 8:26 and Isaiah 3:19. In Judges they were connected with Midianite kings; they were expensive, ethnic and status markers worn by men. In Isaiah, they were part of the list of insignia of high office, of unclear gender attribution.

The context of Exodus 33:1-6

The selected text of Exodus 33:1-6 is understood to be within the broader context of chapter 33:1-23, which falls within the narration of Israel's wilderness experience after they left Egypt. This is preceded by the apostasy of the golden calf. Israelites committed idolatry with the golden calf, YHWH's anger was kindled against them, leaving Moses to try and plead with God to continue being present with them (Donald, 1994, 23). This deviation stands as a bridge of the covenant between Yahweh and the children of Israel. However, after this sin, God initially refused to be with the people and threatened to destroy them in His anger, yet because of His covenant with their patriarchs and Moses' plea, He repented of His decision.

In Exodus 32:9-10, God testified against Israel of being a stiff-necked people and said to Moses, "Let me alone that my fury may burn hot against them and I may devour them." Moses pleaded with God not to wipe out the people because, on the one hand, the Egyptians would then take pride over their demise and ascribe evil intent to Yahweh (32:12; cf. Number 14:15-16) and, on the other hand, God had sworn by his own self to their fathers; Abraham, Isaac and Israel that their offspring would take over the promised land (32:13) (McEntire, 2008: 31). So God relented from the plan to entirely destroy Israel (32:14) and punished them with massacre by the sons of Levi (32:25–29).

Then once more Moses pleaded with God to forgive the sin of Israel, "and if not, remove me, I pray thee, out of the book which you have written" (32:32). God responded to Moses that each man will be responsible for his own sin (32:33) and that Moses should go ahead and guide the people to the promised land (32:34; 33:1). But Moses still does not receive from God the promise he wanted, for God had said, "I will not ascend with you lest I destroy you on the way, for you are a stubborn people … If for a single moment I would go up with you I would destroy you" (33:3, 5). Instead of his own presence in their midst, God promised that his angel will go before them (32:34; 33:2). Moses was still not satisfied with Yahweh's concession. After the reference to Moses' communion with Yahweh in the tent of meeting outside the camp (33:7–11), Moses took up his intercession for the people again in 33:12.

The encounter between YHWH and Moses in Exodus 33 sets up the agreement of God to reside in the tabernacle, which will be constructed later. Therefore, this occurrence is a crucial turning point that sets up the continuation of the Pentateuch and the ending of Exodus. The conversation and experience between Moses and YHWH in Exodus 33:12-23 brings up many important theological ideas and issues present throughout the book of Exodus (Niehaus, 1995: 11). In this passage, the discourse between Moses and God reveals elements of their intricate relationship, God's glory, and the instructions of God's ever-changing dangerous presence. When broken down and studied, this passage is the crucial response to the golden calf episode as well as the segment that propels the Israelites into their further-developing relationship with God. This segment of Exodus also crucially precedes the descent of God's glory on the tabernacle.

Exegetical analysis of Exodus 33:1-6

In this section, the researcher engages in a contextual analysis of the Hebrew text of Exodus 33:1-6, taking into consideration the syntactical analysis which has to do with the structural elements in phrases and sentences with a view to bringing out the meaning and the import of the passage. The passage under study paints a picture of a dedicated religious leader- Moses, in his attempt to take the oppressed children of Israel through the wilderness into a land flowing with milk and honey promised by Yahweh to their ancestors as an everlasting inheritance. However, his efforts were not without certain challenges with respect to the attitudes of the Israelites to the instructions of Yahweh as they embarked on the journey. Hence, the passage examines the disobedience of the people through apostasy. Apostasy is the deviation from Yahweh's prescribed patterns and worship in pursuit of other things. The Lord was angry with them and spoke not to go up with the Israelite but would only send His messenger ahead of them. The people mourned and returned to the Lord for a rescue. Such a pragmatic response of the Israelites is the hallmark of this exegetical discourse.

Yahweh's command to Moses (Exodus 33:1a)

The verse begins with וַיְדַבֵּ֥ר waw consecutive prefixed to *Piel* imperfect, 3MS from דבר meaning "he speaks" hence " and he spoke seriously." The use of וֹ *waw* consecutive (*we* "And") in the first word of verse one denotes a continuation of the previous section. However, the *waw* consecutive also converts the word וַיְדַבֵּ֥ר : which is from the root word וַיְדַבֵּ֥ר Piel imperfect, 3MS meaning "he will speak seriously", from imperfect tense to perfect or complete tense, hence "he spoke seriously. This is to give a basic introduction to the narrative of the author of Exodus that follows.

There are have been several theories to explain the meaning of this name YHWH. From an Arabic root, it means "to show fervent love". The Ugartic (Canaanite) root explains it as "to speak".

Following the Phoenician, it is a causative participle meaning "the One who sustains," or "the One who establishes". The Hebrew *Qal* form conveys the idea of "the One who is," or "the One who is present" (in future sense, "the One who will be"); the Hebrew *Hiphil* form suggests "the One who causes to be". It also means "the ever-living, only-living One". The context of Exodus 3:13-16 a play on the imperfect form used in a perfect sense, "I shall continue to be what I used to be" or "I shall continue to be what I have always been" (Watts, 1964: 67).

In later Judaism this covenant name became so holy (the tetragrammaton) that Jews were afraid to say it lest they break the command of Exodus 20:7; Deuteronomy 5:11; 6:13. So they substituted the Hebrew term for "owner," "master," "husband," "lord"-*adon* or *adonai* (my lord). When they came to YHWH in their reading of OT texts they pronounced "lord." This is why YHWH is written LORD in English translations (www.BiblelessonsIntl.com). Therefore, וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה (*waydabber Yahweh* i.e. the LORD spoke seriously) showcases Yahweh as a speaking God.

This affirms that Yahweh speaks and started speaking at creation and has not stopped to date Genesis 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14.... (And God said...). The author of Hebrews also confirmed this saying "God, who at sundry times and in divers means spoke in the time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Has in these last days spoken unto us through his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; (Hebrews 1:1-2). Although he speaks, but He doesn't speak when there is no audience; there are celestial audience and terrestrial audience. At creation God spoke to the situation Genesis 1:2-3 "the earth was without form...and God said let there be light". The situation of the earth was what God spoke to first. He spoke to inanimate object: The ground, (Genesis 1:11), trees (Matthew 21:19), wind (Mark 4:39) and also God spoke to man (Genesis 1:28). The only comprehensive reason why God will speak is to make both his mind and also His will known to mankind. God wants to establish His will on earth and a way to do that is to speak out His mind as He did to Moses.

The exact root of the name מֹשֶׁה (Moses) is not known; some Hebrew scholars described it as a play of words between the name *Mosheh* and the rarely occurring Hebrew verb *moshah* (to draw out), found elsewhere only twice in the biblical text (Psalms 18:16; 2 Samuel 22:17); some translations read Hebrew *Mosheh* as a verb in Isaiah 63:11, "the drawer of his people (out of the water)." A more accurate etymology would produce the Hebrew passive form *mashuy,* referring to the baby Moses being drawn out of the water. So, many scholars continue to argue that there is no reason to question the Hebrew origin of the name. The question then arises, why would an Egyptian princess choose a Hebrew name? In response to this some scholars, Exodus commentary have linked the name Moses to the Egyptian verb *ms/msi* ("to give birth") or the related noun *ms* ("child," "son"), various forms of which occur in Egyptian royal and non-royal names. Some maintain that a later editor, fully aware of the name's origins, added the Hebrew etymology to bolster Moses' Hebrew identity (Keil, 2002: 945).

Then, Yahweh commanded עֲלֵה which is Qal imperative masculine singular from עלה meaning "walk" hence "depart". It suggests, "to go, behave." This verb appears in most semitic languages. The Old Testament Hebrew attests it about 1,550 times, while the Aramaic uses it a few times. It is used occasionally with a special emphasis on the end or goal of the action in mind; men are but flesh, "a wind that passeth (goes) away, and cometh not again" (Psalms 78:39). This verb can also be used of one's behaviour, or the way one "walks in life." So he who "walks" uprightly shall be blessed of God (Isaiah 33:15). This does not refer to walking upright on one's feet but to living a righteous life (Vine 1996, 437).

In the sequel to this, Yahweh declared again hleä[]. This is Qal imperative masculine singular from hl'l'[' meaning "ascend" hence "go up". Basically, *'alah* suggests a movement from a lower to a higher place. It was first used in Genesis 2:6 to reports that Eden was watered by a mist or stream that "went up" over the ground. *'Alah* may also mean "ascend" or "to rise up." The king of Babylon said in his heart, "I will ascend into heaven" (Isaiah 14:13). It can also convey the idea to mean "take a journey," as in traveling from Egypt towards Palestine or other points. The verb may be used in a unique sense meaning "to extend" or "reach (Vine, 1996: 28)."

The two imperatives mentioned above express command. They connote that "to depart" and "to go up" are not suggestions to Moses and the Israelites, but rather a command by Yahweh. The communications of Yahweh are not opinions or ideas, but orders. God doesn't speak for nothing, when there is nothing to be done, He will not speak, but when He speaks certainly, He wants to communicate His will to His people. His will is His intention, His agenda, His desire and His mandate.

The verb *'alah* is used in the causative stem to signify "presenting an offering" to God. In 63 cases, the word is connected with the presentation of the whole burnt offering (*'olah*). *'Alah* is used of the general act of "presenting offering" when the various offerings are mentioned in the same context (Leviticus 14:20), or when the purpose of the offering is not specifically in mind (Isaiah 57:6). Sometimes this verb merely means "to offer" (Numbers 23:2) (ibid).

The promise to the Patriarchs (Exodus 33:1b)

Scholars believe that the Promised Land which is also known as Canaan appears nine (9) times as the name of a person and eighty (80) times as the name of a place in the Old Testament. Canaan is first used of a person in Genesis 9:18: "…and Ham is the father of Canaan". Later God promised Abram: "Unto your descendant have I given this land…the land of the Canaanites…" (Genesis 15:18-20). The context of this work affirms that God swore to give this land to the patriarchs.

nishaba'ti is *niphal* perfect 1CS from *shaba'* meaning " I swear" hence "I have sworn". It suggests "take an oath." Often "to take an oath or to swear" is to strongly affirm a promise. Thus, Joshua commands the spies concerning Rahab of Jericho: "Go into the harlot's house, and bring out thence the woman, and all that she hath, as you sware unto her" (Josh. 6:22). David and Jonathan strongly declared their love for each other with an oath (1 Samuel 20:17). In making and keeping His promises to men, God often "swears" by Himself (Dobson, 2012: 125).

The root for "to swear" and the root for "seven" are the same in Hebrew, and since the number seven is the "perfect number," some have conjectured that "to swear" is to somehow "seven oneself," thus attach oneself with seven things. Possibly this is paralleled by the use of "seven" in Samson's allowing himself to be bound by seven fresh bowstrings (Judges 16:7) and weaving the seven locks of his head (Judges 16:13). The relationship between "to swear" and "seven" is inconclusive.

The messenger of the LORD (Exodus 33:2)

Verse two introduce another personality to the discussion of this passage *malak*. According to the MT editors, this word appears in 2nd person masculine singular absolute meaning "your messenger". However, in comparison with the *versio LXX interpretum Graeca,* it occurs in the 1st person common singular *malaki* meaning "my messenger". The LXX rendition makes the passage more understandable pointing the messenger as belonging to Yahweh and not Moses. In

Ugarititic, Ethiopic, and Arabic, the verb *le'ak* means "to send." Although *le'ak* does not exist in the Hebrew Old Testament, it is possible to recognize its etymological relationship to *mal'ak*. This word is also seen in the name Malachi which literally means "my messenger."

The word *mal'ak* connotes someone sent over a great distance by an individual (Genesis 32:3) or by a society (Numbers 21:21) in order to speak a message. The introductory method of the message borne by the *mal'ak* often contains the phrase "thus say…," or "this is what…. Says," signifying the authority of the messenger in giving the message of his master. There are human messengers like the prophets, kings etc. for Haggai called himself "the messenger of the lord" and there are also angelic messengers.

Most significant are the phrases *mal'ak 'elohim*, "the angel of God," and *mal'ak Yahweh,* "the angel of the lord." The phrase is always used in the singular. It denotes an angel who had mainly a saving and protective function; he might also bring about destruction. The relation between the "angel of the lord" and the lord is often so close that it is difficult to separate the two (Genesis 16:7ff; 21:17ff). This classification has led some interpreters to conclude that the "angel of the lord" was the pre-incarnate Christ. This messenger within the context of this discussion will drive out totally the seven kingdoms of the enemy of Israel and make the people to proceed to the land flowing with milk and honey. This is in tandem with the promise God had made with the patriarchs of Israel by oath.

The people mourned (Exodus 33:4)

The word *yitabalu* is hithpael imperfect 3rd person masculine plural from *aval* meaning "I mourn" hence "and they mourned for themselves". This word is common to both modern and ancient Hebrew. It can be used to express mourning for the dead. In addition to this, "mourning" may be over Jerusalem, over sin, or over God's judgment. The people of Israel mourned. This occurrence was sequel to the announcement of Yahweh not to go with the Israelite into the Promised Land. The main features of mourning in the Hebrew Bible are the wearing of sackcloth, shaving of the head and/or beard, tearing the clothes and putting dust or ashes on the head (Wevers, 1995). But in this passage, the people mourned for their wrongdoing by putting off their ornaments to show soberness and repentance.

Put off your ornaments (Exodus 33:5-6)

Scholars have diversely perceived this biblical injunction to mean different things. This is seen by some as total prohibition from the use of ornaments, while some see it as a situational and circumstantial rebuke which is not design for posterity. Looking at the antecedent of this scene, the linguistic and cultural context of this declaration, one can affirm that the expression of Yahweh is not a total prohibition of the use of ornament by the Israelites. The Hebrew word *nashal* signifies "to be detached", "take off" or "drive away." It conveys the idea of immediate rather than aftermath within the context of the communication between Yahweh and Moses.

In the encounter of Moses' call at mount Horeb, Yahweh commanded Moses to take off his sandal. This order did by no means suggest that Moses should never put of sandal again (Exodus 3:5). The Levites, whose function was to carry the vessel of the tabernacle, were required to take off their outer garment while performing this holy assignment. This does not mean a prohibition from wearing clothes. The same can be said about the Israelites and their ornaments.

Exegetical deductions

From the exegesis of the passage above, the following are some of the exegetical deductions from which one can base conviction:

a. Yahweh is a covenant keeper: God called Abraham and promised to give him a land that He will show him and multiply him greatly. He affirmed the same for Isaac and for Jacob. This covenant was His motivation for responding to the cry of the Israelites for a rescue in Egypt. He rescued them through the human leadership of Moses and led them by His presence into the land flowing with milk and honey. This testifies that, Yahweh is able and willing to keep every of the promises He has made to His children who trust and obey Him.
b. Yahweh punishes wrong: One of the most misunderstood part of God's love is His anger. He punishes every child (ren) He loves and accepts. Israel's sin against God is apostasy. Yahweh declared the withdrawal of His presence because of the stubbornness and sinfulness of the Israelites.
c. He forgives wrong: although He punishes wrong, He also forgives repentant hearts. The hallmark of His punishment is to bring about brokenness and repentance. Israel mourned for their wrong doing and put off their ornaments which demonstrated soberness.
d. An ornament is neither a sin nor demonic: against the existing belief that ornaments are demonic and sinful, the study reveals that, this is a fallacy. The declaration of Yahweh to the Israelite to put off their ornaments was not a complete prohibition to the use of ornaments and should be taken so. This command was situational and circumstantial.

Conclusion

The subject of ornaments has remained a controversial issue in the body of Christ particularly in the contemporary era. The struggle to use biblical evidences to support the prohibition or acceptance is endless among scholars and believers. In this process, language plays a vital role for opinion is prepared, accompanied, influence and played by language. In discourse, representation refers to the language used in a communication or text to assign meaning to groups and their social practices, to events, and to social and ecological conditions and objects (Van Dijk, 1993: 249-285). Of significance is the view concerning the role language performs in the social life, that meaning should not be derived from the perceived reality of things but rather through the understanding of the linguistic representation of a reality (Halliday, 1990: 7-36). Of course, modes of representation will vary depending on the perception from which they are constructed, whether biographical, historical, or socio-cultural. Ideology will also influence the manner in which groups symbolize matters of importance and relevance such as ornament bias (Hodge & Gunther, 1993: 27). Furthermore, inasmuch as linguistic representations determine the way in which one thinks about particular objects, events, situations, and as such, function as a principle of action influencing actual social practice (Karlsberg, 2005: 1-25), there will be competition among groups over what is to be taken as the correct, appropriate, or preferred representation.

From the analysis of ornaments, the wording of the event by the narrator connote that the absolute prohibition of ornament is linguistically incorrect. This is deduced from the situational and linguistic context surrounding Yahweh's command to the Israelites to put off their ornaments. The imperative words used in the text were relevant to this context only, depicting the circumstantial nature of the command. This insight brings clarity to the perspective for approaching ornaments within the contemporary Christian society for balance teaching and peaceful co-existence. Therefore, ornaments should be seen as gift from Yahweh, part of His manifold blessing to His

adherent. He designed it to make life and living comfortable and meaningful. The moral norms of a particular environment may influence the usage, but moderacy should be emphasized. However, this is not without a caution; idolizing it is a grievous offence to Yahweh which attracts His punishment.

Language is not merely a means of communication; rather, it connects people to each other in social relationships and allows them to participate in a variety of activities in daily life. The correlational relationship that exists between language and the society provides a strong support for the society in determining and dominating the kind and form of language spoken in its community. And in return, people's thought is strongly affected by their languages. Every little change in the thought takes language's influence to the extreme, transcending the whole society.

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