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YHWH, ISRAEL AND THE GODS
IN THE METAPHORICAL LANGUAGE USAGE
OF THE BOOK OF JEREMIAH

by

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THESIS

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Declaration

I the undersigned hereby declare that the work contained in this dissertation is my own original work and has not previously in its entirety or in part been submitted to any university for a degree.

Signature:.....

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andries Boshoff', is written over a dotted line. The signature is stylized and cursive.

Andries Jonathan Boshoff

Date: December 2000

Summary

This study consists of three main aspects. Firstly, an overview of the major theories of metaphor as proposed during the past two millennia was given. The overview concluded with a summary of the most important aspects, which should be considered in the interpretation of metaphor. It was indicated that the conceptual theory of metaphor provides an effective definition to identify and interpret metaphors.

Secondly, the most prominent problems pertaining to the exegesis of the book of Jeremiah, which could influence the interpretation of metaphors, were identified and discussed. In the light of these problems, a canonical approach of the book of Jeremiah was opted for in order to focus on the theological significance of expressions, and passages.

Thirdly, the diction and metaphorical concepts pertaining to the relationship between YHWH, Israel and the gods were identified. Selected terms, names/epithets of gods, and worship details were discussed in order to compile a picture of the nature and extent of the idolatrous involvement of Israel. Occurrences of these expressions elsewhere in the OT, and information from extra-Biblical and archaeological sources were examined in order to glean information for the interpretation of metaphors. Selected metaphors referring to the gods were analysed, as well as the Jeremianic marriage metaphor.

This study showed that metaphor is the only way in which the devotee cognitively can understand and experience the divine, and ultimately express himself/herself religiously. The analyses of metaphors and related terminology indicated that the ANE theological worldview constitutes an important factor in the interpretation of these metaphors. The other deities were denigrated in pejorative language to the status of non-gods by the Yahwistic prophet/author(s), and described as lifeless, worthless deceptions that are of no benefit to Israel. In contrast, YHWH is exalted e.g. as the caring Husband, Leader, Advisor and Rainmaker, the true, living God and King, worthy of his status and the worshipping of Israel. Israel is described in accusatory language as the guilty party, and as sufferer under the punitive measures of YHWH. The Yahwistic interpretation entailed that Israel's involvement in idolatrous activities caused the fall of the Judean kingdom and the exile. In this, YHWH is depicted as the Punisher who is actively involved in Israel's disastrous circumstances and who employs nations to serve his goal. However, He was also actively involved in preparations of a new future for the remnant of Israel.

It was concluded that the polemic against the other gods in the poetry was directed mainly towards the images representing the deities, as well as the alliances formed by Israel with foreign political powers and their gods. The images of the other gods and the foreign powers were regarded as intruders in YHWH's territory, and as third parties meddling in his relationship with Israel. The worthlessness of the other gods was viewed against the ANE concept, namely that a deity worthy his status must provide security, agricultural blessings and guidance to the devotees in his territory. Against this background, YHWH is celebrated by the Yahwists as the incomparable, one and only, true and living God who is worthy of his status as deity and is capable of helping Israel. Israel is called upon to trust in Him to secure their future, and not in mortal beings and their human-made idols.

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OoooOOOoooo

Dedicated to

Doreen, Mariette, Louis, and Pieter

With love and thanksgiving!!

Abbreviations

ANE	Ancient Near East or Ancient Near Eastern
BHS	Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia
BT	The Bible Translator
DBI	Dictionary of Biblical Imagery
DDD	Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible
JSOT	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament
JNSL	Journal of North Semitic Languages
MT	Massoretic Text
NEB	New English Bible
NGTT	Nederduitse Gereformeerde Teologiese Tydskrif
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version 1989
OT	Old Testament
OTE	Old Testament Essays
RSV	Revised Standard Version
TDOT	Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament
UBS	United Bible Societies
VT	Vetus Testamentum

Abbreviations of OT books (in accordance with computerised UBS texts)

Gen	Genesis	Psa	Psalms	Hag	Haggai
Exo	Exodus	Pro	Proverbs	Zec	Zechariah
Lev	Leviticus	Ecc	Ecclesiastes	Mal	Malachi
Num	Numbers	Sng	Song of Solomon		
Deu	Deuteronomy	Isa	Isaiah		
Jos	Joshua	Jer	Jeremiah		
Jug	Judges	Lam	Lamentations		
Rut	Ruth	Ezk	Ezekiel		
1 Sa	1 Samuel	Dan	Daniel		
2 Sa	2 Samuel	Hos	Hosea		
1 Ki	1 Kings	Jol	Joel		
2 Ki	2 Kings	Amo	Amos		
1 Ch	1 Chronicles	Oba	Obadiah		
2 Ch	2 Chronicles	Jon	Jonah		
Ezr	Ezra	Mic	Micah		
Neh	Nehemiah	Nam	Nahum		
Est	Esther	Hab	Habakkuk		
Job	Job	Zep	Zephaniah		

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introductory comments

The traditional view of the uniqueness and incomparability of YHWH as presented in Old Testament (abbreviated as OT in the text following here after) literature has become a much-debated issue lately. This issue is frequently used in the debate regarding the traditional Christian claim that the God of the Bible is unique and the only Saviour. Several pleas were recently voiced, locally and abroad, even in traditional reformed circles, to promote the believe that all religions worship the same god and will lead to the salvation of their devotees.¹ This is not only a plea for more tolerance among religions,² but an effort to level the playing field between religions and gods. It is alleged that the various gods are interrelated by sharing many commonalities, and this could open the door for the possibility of one united religion in the future. In some circles this line of thought is labelled as the New Age Movement. The subject is indeed of current interest in religious circles in South Africa and worldwide.³

Traditionally the Christian view, supported by OT studies, claimed that YHWH is the only God, incomparable to others who are nothing but false or no-gods.⁴ Traditional OT theology and history books rather focus on the differences between YHWH and these gods, usually resulting in the declaration of the superiority of YHWH and the loss of god-status of any other gods.⁵ This view has been challenged lately from within OT, but also especially from archaeological circles and students of Ancient Near Eastern (abbreviated

¹ In Afrikaans circles the names of Spannenberg and De Klerk can be mentioned. Several articles regarding this debate were published in issues of the 'Die Kerkbode' during 2000. Bishop Tutu also alluded to this topic in several interviews in 1994/5. See Le Roux 1996:400-422 for an article in Afrikaans re. A rainbow god for a rainbow nation.

² For a plea for more tolerance in the current SA context see Klopper 1992:188ff.

³ See the article by Kruger (HAJ 1995:241-261) regarding OT studies and a sociological approach relating to the relationship Yahweh and the gods.

⁴ See Saggs 1978:3-4 for a discussion of the tendency of authors in this regard. See Labuschagne (1966) for a study in Afrikaans on this topic.

⁵ Scholars attempted to discover the distinctive nature of the OT religion by identifying a central concept or idea e.g. Lindblom (1936) identifies Yahweh as the God of history; Eichrodt (1961) opts for the covenant concept; Vriezen (1974) prefers the idea of communion between God the Holy one and his people; See

as ANE in the text following here after) religions and Israel's history.¹

Many OT scholars, and students in archaeology, and comparative ANE religions, recently tend to emphasise the continuities between the religious ideas of Israel and the religions of the ANE.² Statements of OT prophets regarding other gods, e.g. Deutero-Isaiah, have been heavily criticised as '*highly selective*' and '*conscious distortion*', placing '*a phenomenological description of Mesopotamian religion alongside a theological description of Yahwism*' (Saggs 1978:14-15). Yahwism, as presented by the Bible, is an edited and censored version, offering a picture of what Yahwism should have been (i.e. a theological version), rather than a true picture of what it was in the past (i.e. an historical version).³ Saggs's (1978:28-29) investigation of themes such as the involvement of the divine in creation, history, good and evil, communication between man and the divine, personal religion and universalism, revealed many continuities and commonalities between Yahwism and other ANE religions. The same characteristics traditionally used in defense of the Christian view in support of the uniqueness of YHWH, are precisely those used by ANE devotees to claim the uniqueness of their deities.

The influence of the above-mentioned debate has already crystallised in many respects in recent studies on the book of Jeremiah. In light of the above, some critics view the book of Jeremiah as the ideological propagandistic literature of a minority Yahwistic, monotheistic group who seized the opportunity to gain ground and popularity among the Israelites during and after the traumatic experience of the Babylonian Exile. The commentary of Carroll (1986) e.g. is based on this ideological assumption. According to Carroll (pp48,59) the person of Jeremiah is a fabricated character which disappears if the interpolations and additions of the ideological motivated redactors are removed. 'Stories were created' (p60) to make sense of the collapse of the Judean society and the fall of Jerusalem in 587/6 BC, and therefore represent clear signs of theological propaganda in the literature of the book

also Bright (1953) for the theme 'The Kingdom of God'; Wright (1968) focuses on 'What great nation hath a God like the Lord?' See Hasel 1972:49-63 for a summary of distinctive theological focal points. Kaufmann (1961) gives account of the history of the religion of Israel focusing on its distinctive nature. See also Clements 1978: 72-78.

¹ Gnuse 1997:62ff. See the summary and discussion in chapter 3 below.

² To name a few: Gnuse 1997:21; Saggs 1978:6-8.

³ See Snyman 1992:70-88; Saggs 1978:22; Human 1999:497.

of Jeremiah. On the other hand, recent conservative commentators, e.g. Holladay (1986 and 1989) in his approach, still stay with the notion that the book of Jeremiah presents a historical version of events and attempts to provide settings for all oracles. The theological interpretation and preaching of the book of Jeremiah in the contemporary practice of the ministry could therefore be highly affected by these trends, but is also forced to take note of the new currents in these debates. In sum, with the exception of a few, the book of Jeremiah is viewed by many critics as a compilation from a variety of sources and redactional levels, attributed to several historical editors with some or other theological motive.¹

1.2 The aim of this study

The book of Jeremiah and its theme and statements regarding the relationship YHWH, Israel and the gods, frequently referred to in the above-mentioned debate, provide an interesting scope for the study of religious practices and beliefs in the ANE and the involvement of Israel in such practices. A study of this phenomenon however entails the vast field of almost the entire OT as well as the new theories and extra-Biblical material regarding Israel's history, religion and their ties with the ANE. These aspects will be taken into account, but can only receive brief attention in a study of this nature. However, the main thrust and aim of this study will be to investigate the diction used in the book of Jeremiah regarding the relationship YHWH, Israel and the gods. This will be done in order to identify the metaphorical language usage and analyse some selected concepts and terminology in search for the theological significance of these expressions.

It is envisaged that the metaphorical language usage in the religious literary work as presented in the book of Jeremiah could reveal affinities, emotions, commitments, attitudes, and contrasting beliefs, regarding these relationships. Whether propagandistic, or the work of a Yahwistic minority group, the book of Jeremiah is canonized religious material for Christianity, and therefore part of the Christian Bible on which theological viewpoints regarding other religions and gods are or should be based. This study will

¹ Almost every commentary consulted is based on this assumption as initially posed by Duhm (1901), with the exception of e.g. Holladay 1986 and 89, Thompson 1989, and Van Selms 1972, who allow minor interpolations.

attempt to investigate the available Biblical and extra-Biblical material, including the latest archaeological findings and resultant theories, in order to determine the nature, and the extent of the idolatrous practices condemned and addressed in the book of Jeremiah, as well as the theological impact thereof.

1.3 The scope of the study

For the purposes of this enquiry, the scope of this study is limited to the OT prophetic literature of Jeremiah. Particularly, it is confined to the contributory cause of metaphorical language usage, its function and interpretation in the book of Jeremiah. The book of Jeremiah presents a diversity of metaphorical language usage and symbolism, especially in one of the major themes, namely the prophet's struggle against the gods, which provides a challenging scope of research.

Recently, new archaeological discoveries shed new light on the origin of Israel in the ANE context, the emergence of Israelite monotheism and the place and role of Israel's own idolatrous practices. This new information and approach force OT scholars to rethink and rewrite OT histories, commentaries, and theologies.¹ It is envisaged that a research in the metaphorical language usage of Jeremiah could make a contribution toward some new insights regarding the literary unity and the continuity and/or reinterpretation in theological thoughts in the book of Jeremiah. Furthermore, it could bring about additional significant insights concerning the subject of the incomparability of YHWH, the finality of Old Testament, and Yahwistic monotheism.

1.4 Motivation and key questions

A *first question* deals with the character and function of the metaphor phenomenon in distinction to simile, metonymy, and analogy. The history of development and the different theories will be investigated to extract an appropriate theoretical framework of guidelines for the analysis of metaphorical language in the exegetical process. This study is motivated by the vast quantity of literature as well as the presentations of a variety and sometimes most confusing terminology and theories on the topic.

¹ Gnuse 1997, Thompson 1991, Miller 1991, several articles in Miller e.a. 1987, and Scheffler 1998:522.

Secondly, the study will identify and classify the diction as well as the types of metaphorical language and contexts used in the different relationships i.e. between YHWH and the other deities, Israel and the other deities, and between YHWH and Israel. It will also analyse some of the diction used as well as the selected metaphorical concepts to determine the nature, extent, historical background, and theological significance of the conflict between YHWH, Israel and the gods.

Other motivating aspects for this study include the far-reaching exegetical implications of theories posed by the 'new archaeology' regarding the origin of Israel, the emergence of Israel's monotheism, the continuity with the Canaanite Baalism, and the resultant late dating of Biblical literature. Furthermore, in view of the challenges aimed against the traditional views regarding the incomparability of YHWH and the Christian claim concerning the uniqueness of Christ, the traditional approach necessitates rethinking and reinterpretation within a new South African dispensation, which demands religious tolerance and cooperation. The question at stake in this debate is therefore: Can OT theology, and especially a study of metaphorical language in OT prophecies, make any contribution to the debate regarding the origin and the belief in the uniqueness of YHWH and his special relationship with Israel?

1.5 Outline and objectives

Chapter one contains a general introduction, the setting out of the aim, the scope of the study, the motivation and the key questions, the outline and objectives as well as some practical aspects.

Chapter two contains a summary of (1) the history of research on metaphor from Aristotle to the present; (2) a discussion of the resultant main theories of metaphor; (3) the relevance of metaphor for Biblical studies with brief attention to the OT prophecies. It also contains (4) guidelines on how to identify Hebrew metaphors, and (5) a summary of elements of importance for the interpretation of Biblical metaphors. In fact, the main objective of this chapter is to highlight the major elements of metaphor, which should be taken into account in the exegesis and explication of metaphor.

Chapter three discusses some exegetical issues regarding the book of Jeremiah, namely theories regarding (1) the person of Jeremiah, (2) the scepticism towards Biblical literature, (3) the dating of the OT, (4) the origin and identity of Israel, (5) the development of Israelite monotheism, (6) the text, language usage and literary genres; (7) the scenario of conflict and 587/6 BC, and (8) and the issue of ideology and aspects of Biblical monotheism. The aim of this chapter is to identify the exegetical problems in the book of Jeremiah, which must be considered in every study of the literature.

Chapter four contains a selection and classification of diction and metaphorical language pertaining to the relationship of YHWH, and the gods, following the guidelines extracted in chapter two. Some selected terms and names/epithets of the gods were analysed in an attempt to identify these gods. Some metaphors were selected from poetic and prose sections respectively and analysed. The objective of this was to determine the continuity or discontinuity of metaphorical language usage between prose and poetic sections, as well as the theological thoughts and the ANE background of these expressions, specifically regarding the conflict between YHWH, and the other gods.

Chapter five contains a selection and analysis of particular terminology and metaphors pertaining to the relationship between Israel and the gods. The aim was to compile a picture of specific idolatrous activities of which Israel was accused of, as well as the extent and nature of these practices. Furthermore, this chapter endeavours to gain more information about the aniconic nature of the monotheism promoted in the book of Jeremiah. Archaeological discoveries as well as that of iconography and the latest theories regarding the emergence of Israelite monotheism were also taken into consideration.

Chapter six contains an exegetical analysis of the marriage metaphor occurring in Jer 2:2b, which depicts the relationship between YHWH and Israel within the context of the struggle against the other gods. The Israelite and Canaanite sociological, cultural, and theological contexts, as well as the marital customs against the background of the ANE were also taken into account. This is followed by an attempt to demonstrate that an interpretation, in which the marriage metaphor is maintained and continued, makes sense

if the line of thought is followed in 2:3-4:2. This chapter is an attempt to gain more information about the Jeremianic style in the usage of metaphorical language, as well as the relationship between YHWH and Israel.

Chapter seven contains an evaluation and conclusion.

1.6 Some practical aspects

- 1.6.1 Abbreviations of Biblical books** are in accordance with the latest United Bible Societies (UBS) computerised texts. (See ‘Abbreviations’).
- 1.6.2 Abbreviations for Jeremiah:** References to the Biblical book of Jeremiah as well as references to the prophet Jeremiah are rendered in full. Quotations of Biblical verses and references from the book of Jeremiah are abbreviated with Jer (without the full stop) in accordance with the UBS texts mentioned in 1.6.1.
- 1.6.3 Quotations of Bible texts** are from the latest UBS Hebrew, LXX and NRSV OT texts, except where specified differently. Bible quotations of full verses in English are marked by double inverted commas and presented in italics. However, words and phrases of the Biblical text in English are marked by single inverted commas, but not printed in italics. The Hebrew script used is SIL Ezra and the Greek script, SIL Galatia as used in the UBS computerised texts.
- 1.6.4 Quotations from sources** are printed in italics. In cases where an author used italics, quoted italic words or phrases are underlined. Full sentences or phrases of authors or translations (in italics) are marked by double inverted commas, and typical words or expressions of an author or translations are marked with single inverted commas, but not printed in italics.
- 1.6.5 Conceptual metaphors** are rendered in capital letters only in quotations from sources and in the discussions of the theory as they appear in the original (i.e. in chapter two). In the application of the different categories of conceptual metaphors in the chapters concerning the analysis and exegesis of Biblical metaphors, the concepts are printed in bold upper and lower case e.g. **People are plants**, or **Other**

deities are worthless. The summarised views of the different parties involved in the relationship YHWH, Israel and the gods, as presented by the prophet/author(s) are also rendered in italics without inverted commas.

1.6.6 Reference technique: A combination of the Harvard and footnote-technique has been used. To facilitate the identification of a source, the volume number, an indication and date of a reprint, as well as further specifications regarding translator/s and original source, have been given in the Bibliography. In cases where references to the same author are repeated consecutively in the text, only the page number or the name of the author if the page number is the same has been given.

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Chapter 2

METAPHOR

2.1 INTRODUCTION

“A ‘metaphorical term’ involves the transferred use of a term that properly belongs to something else;” (Aristotle 384-322 BC).¹

“Language is ‘vitally metaphorical.’” (Shelley 1840).²

“...[M]etaphor is not just a matter of language, ...on the contrary, human thought processes are largely metaphorical. Metaphors as linguistic expressions are possible precisely because they are metaphors in a person’s conceptual system.” (Lakoff and Johnson 1980).³

The above-mentioned quotations reflect a history of development regarding the theory of metaphor covering more than 2000 years. This development process progressed from the initial focus on a single word to the current notion that metaphor is the linguistic product of our cognitive processes that are fundamentally metaphorical in nature. Therefore, knowledge of metaphor provides an important key to the interpretation of any language situation and text. In fact, by means of the poet in all of us, language enables us to cope with our world in a sensible and orderly manner as expressed in the following quotation: *“Before the poet comes along, the earth, for us, is without form and void, and darkness is upon the face of the deep. The poet divides the light from the darkness, and gives us an ordered world.” (Eliseo Vivas 1955).⁴*

Knowledge of metaphor is therefore also have the utmost importance in the hermeneutical process of the interpretation of ancient Biblical literature. Sally MacFague (1982:15,16)

¹ See Soskice 1985:4.

² See Hawkes 1972:38.

³ In *‘Metaphors we live by’*, Lakoff and Johnson 1980:6.

⁴ See Van Niekerk 1994:279.

correctly comments that “*poets use metaphor all the time because they are constantly speaking about the great unknowns – mortality, love, fear, joy, guilt, hope, and so on*”, but for the same reason “*religious language is deeply metaphorical*”. Korpel (1990:77) observes, “*there is no basic difference between religious and other metaphors. To speak about the ‘arm’ of God is just as accurate, or inaccurate, as to speak about a ‘black hole’ in modern astronomy.*”

A student in theory of metaphor enters the interesting fields of linguistic, literary, philosophical, and cognitive theories as well as the socio-cultural and historical background of the text, which are of the utmost importance for the exegetical process. It is a subject, which developed greatly in recent years¹ and provides an exciting scope of research for many scholars. It is envisaged that by the year 2010 every student will be engaged in some or other study of metaphor (Newsom 1987:188).

However, studies of metaphor produced a diversity of theories and terminology, which necessitate some guidance to be given to practising ministers of religion.² In this study, it will be attempted to illustrate and apply some models of metaphor in order to explicate the significance of competent interpretation of metaphorical language usage in homiletics.

2.1.1 The term ‘metaphor’

Etymologically speaking, the term ‘metaphor’ derives from the Greek verb μεταφέρειν, constructed from μετα = over, with, between, after, and φερειν = to bear or to carry, which in combination means: to transfer, to change, and to carry over. The derived form μεταφορα, figuratively used to denote the language phenomenon, means, ‘transferring to one word (object) the sense of another,’ thus ‘a figure of transference.’³

¹ Shibles, W. 1971b in ‘*Metaphor: An Annotated Bibliography and History*’, lists a bibliography of more than 4000 works published on the subject during the thirty years prior to his book.

² See Gumpel 1984:239ff, for criticism on the resemblance between theories and the confusing terminology used by proponents.

³ See Hawkes 1972:1 and Eksteen 1971:14.

2.1.2 An inexhaustible subject

This lexical meaning of the word metaphor, however, is not a suitable definition and totally inadequate to identify or explicate the phenomenon in any literary work or language situation. The concept underwent a history of development of more than 2000 years in which a wide range of definitions, theories, and related terminology emerged to describe its nature, contents, functions, and interpretation. Soskice (1985:15) mentions that one student of metaphor listed 125 variations of definitions, and reckons that this is “surely only a small fraction of those which have been put forward”. Many scholars over the centuries were occupied in studies regarding this intriguing and challenging phenomenon. Shibbes (1971) lists more than 4000 titles in his bibliographic work on metaphors. Black (1979:19) claims that the vast amount of books and papers published on the subject during the past 40 years suggests, “*the subject is inexhaustible.*”

2.1.3 Two Millennia of development

For almost 2000 years, the Aristotelian theory of metaphor, merely representing it as a rhetorical tool of ‘transferring a word (a name of a thing) to another thing’, dominated the scene of metaphor study. Accompanying this view, the transference was usually based on substitution or comparison on grounds of resemblance, similarity, or analogy. But during the past century phenomenal advances were made and new theories came to light putting metaphor in a totally different perspective, namely as a basic part of our thought processes and the resultant language through which we communicate.

2.1.4 Misleading Textbook definitions

It is therefore somewhat of a disappointment to note that contemporary school textbooks in South Africa and dictionaries in current use, maintain definitions of metaphor based on the Aristotelian theory of comparison or substitution on grounds of similarity.¹ According to this traditional theory, metaphor is nothing more than decorative or ‘fanciful’ language, which could just as well be expressed literally. Developments and advances made in the study of metaphor during the past century, and especially the past 30-40 years, are not reflected at all, and could result in a simplistic understanding of metaphor by those who

¹ See Hermanson 1996:4ff, who mentions Zulu and English textbooks as well as standard dictionaries.

are not well informed. The danger of this is that the reader, also the Bible reader, student, exegete and homilist, influenced by the textbook-definition, could unknowingly pass over a metaphorical expression, regarding it as merely being an ‘image’, or only a ‘figurative’ use of a word or a form of ‘picture language.’ From this follows that it does not convey any meaning or truth and could easily be replaced by a literal meaning or with the reader’s own, sometimes attenuated, interpretation. This could happen at a time when metaphor is valued as a semantic innovation offering new meaning and information produced by our metaphorical thought processes.

2.1.5 The aim and scope of this chapter

Any study of metaphor needs to take note of the history of the development of the concept of metaphor to avoid the pitfalls and over-simplification of the phenomenon. The metaphors in language that we encounter, read or hear, entail much more than meet the eye, and cannot be viewed as mere products of substitution or the skillful handling of a language device. Metaphor can be regarded, in Beardley’s formulation, as: “*a poem in miniature.*” (see Ricoeur 1976:46). We indeed live by metaphors (suggestive of the title of Lakoff and Johnson 1980).

It is hardly possible within the scope of this chapter to give a full account of all aspects of the history of development and all theories in connection with the concept posed during the period of more than 2000 years. At best, only a condensed version of the Aristotelian tradition and related theories, the Interaction theory and the Conceptual theory of metaphor can be given. The aim will be to highlight important considerations in the treatment of metaphor for utilization by the homilist.

2.2 THE TRADITIONAL RHETORIC METAPHOR - a first attempt to define metaphor: Aristotle

2.2.1 Transference, comparison, substitution

Aristotle (384-322 BC) in his works *Poetics* and *Rhetorica* regarded metaphor as “*the application to a thing of a name that belongs to something else, the transference taking place from genus to species, from species to genus, from species to species, or*

proportionally."¹ Although the Sophists before the time of Aristotle most probably already designed the term and utilized the metaphor for rhetoric purposes in their education in politics, the works of Aristotle represent the first written evidence of a theory of metaphor.² Classified as a trope, metaphor belonged to the language game of naming things.

In sum, the Aristotle metaphor entails the transferring of a name (word), with an aesthetic intention, on grounds of resemblance (Stutterheim 1941:76). Riccoeur (1994:3) summarises as follows:

"The rhetoric of metaphor takes the word as its unit of reference. Metaphor, therefore, is classed among the single-word figures of speech and is defined as a trope of resemblance. As figure, metaphor constitutes a displacement and an extension of the meaning of words; its explanation is grounded in a theory of substitution."

From this, it naturally follows that the comparison statement or simile, where the comparative term is described as 'is like...', was regarded as nothing more than an expanded form of metaphor [i.e. metaphor = a shortened simile (Searle 1984:105)]. Eventually this led to the inversion by Cicero and Quintilian who regarded metaphor as an abridged comparison (Riccoeur 1976:47). Aristotle's basic notion that metaphor is to be an implicit comparison, based on the principles of analogy, also made him the father of the modern version of the comparison theory (Ortony 1984a:3) as well as the substitution theory as mentioned by Riccoeur above.

2.2.2 A theory of language: Words are names

Presuppositions underlying this approach are firstly based on an objectivist theory of language and meaning (Johnson 1987:67), typical of literal-core theories such as the comparison, substitution, and similarity theories. According to Johnson's summary an objectivist view of metaphor entails:

¹ In *Poetics* as quoted by Riccoeur 1976:47. See Soskice 1985:4ff for more quotations.

² For the pre-Aristotelian history of the term metaphor, see Stutterheim 1941:60-64.

“The objective world has its structure, and our concepts and propositions, to be correct, must correspond to that structure. Only literal concepts and propositions can do that, since metaphors assert cross-categorical identities that do not exist objectively in reality. Metaphors may exist as cognitive processes of our understanding, but their meaning must be reducible to some set of literal concepts and propositions.”

Ortony (1984a:1) describes this position as the ‘doctrine of logical positivism,’ pervasive of philosophy and science up to fifty years ago, with its roots in the Aristotelian view of language. Their basic notion was *“that reality could be precisely described through the medium of language in a manner that was clear, unambiguous, and, in principle, testable – reality could, and should be literally describable.”* He classifies this approach to metaphor as ‘non-constructivism’ where metaphor is viewed *“as deviant and parasitic of normal usage”*, opposed to ‘constructivism’ ascribed to modern approaches, which regard metaphor to be *“an essential characteristic of the creativity of language”* (Ortony 1984a:2).

A more simplistic version of the language theory underlying the Aristotelian approach, is the approach classified as the ‘Name Theory’, where each word has its own standard or, in the words of Aristotle, ‘current’ meaning. The meaning of words is determined by rules applied in the speaker’s language, which eventually forms a fixed lexical code. In Aristotle’s approach, in fact in the whole of the rhetoric tradition, this so-called ‘name theory’ of language dominates. The theory avers that a word can only have a meaning if there is a corresponding object that gives meaning to the word. Words give names to, and in fact belong to the things or matters they denote and therefore all words are names.¹

2.2.3 Metaphor as deviation: Unconventional language

However, these lexical words can also be used with figurative significations by ‘transgressing’ the closed word-object-meaning relation. Therefore, metaphor is extraordinary or unconventional language usage. Metaphor is in fact a deviation from the lexical or ordinary meaning of a word. It primarily functions as a figure with the purpose

¹ See Hester 1967:49; Ingendahl 1971:17; Shibles 1971:116; Verster 1975:12

of filling the semantic gap in the ordinary vocabulary or as a decorative in rhetoric discourses to please, persuade, impress, or influence an audience. This then is where rhetoric and poetry come into play. Furthermore, metaphor is regarded as a poetic and rhetorical figure where resemblance is the key for deviation or to substitute a literal word with the figurative as a decorative ornament.¹ However, it can also be used to fill the lacuna where an appropriate word lacks in the conventional vocabulary, but as Ricoeur (1976:48) repeatedly emphasised, without the importation of any new creative meaning. Thus, in the words of Max Black (1984:22), the followers of Aristotle “*have supposed metaphors to be replaceable by literal translations*” because they do not represent objective realities. Therefore, according to the Aristotelian view, metaphor is dispensable in human communication, because it merely serves an ornamental function often plagued with ambiguity.

2.2.4 Functions of the rhetoric metaphor

Concerning the functions of metaphor Aristotle viewed the phenomenon as a stylistic figure of speech with decorative qualities for rhetoric and poetic purposes. He regarded ordinary language as more literal and non-metaphorical without any doubts about its clarity. He prefers literal language in logic and rhetoric. However, metaphor can be used as a strategic means for obtaining certain responses. Metaphor provides that quality of dignity and charm to language usage to impress and please the hearer. He also emphasises the illustrative value, which promotes clarity and distinctiveness in rhetoric. Metaphor is therefore a useful didactic tool to provide clarity to a literal statement by ‘putting things before our eyes’ through an image by which things are animated, illuminated, and visualised. In addition, the impact of an excellent metaphor through its elements of surprise, shock, humor, antithesis, and paradox, enhances one’s insight in matters.²

¹ Aristotle maintained three different categories for language usage namely: Logic, rhetoric, and poetry. Especially poetry relied heavily on metaphor because it entails “imitation” as a means of expression. See Hawkes 1972:6-7.

² For more details of the functional aspects and nature of the Aristotelian metaphor see Stutterheim 1941:64-81; McCall 1969:24-53; Shibles 1971:121ff; Hawkes 1972:8ff; Verster 1975:16ff.

2.5 An underlying theory of art: imitation

Another contributing factor to Aristotle's view of metaphor as a decorative addition to ordinary language usage, which should be taken into account, is his theory of art as described in *Physics*. He defines it as follows: "*Art either imitates or else gives finishing touches to what nature has left incomplete*" (a translation by Wheelwright 1968:8). This theory played a dominating role, at least in poetics for many years and consequently also in the approach to metaphor, up to the Renaissance (Stutterheim 1941:98; Hawkes 1972:6 and 11).

2.2.6 Evaluation

Although the Aristotle metaphor concept is rather simplistic in comparison with modern theories of metaphor, his theory forms the basis of the history of the development of theories of the phenomenon. Ortony (1984a:2) states that "*Any serious study of metaphor is almost obliged to start with the works of Aristotle.*" Viewed as a stylistic linguistic figure, a mere ornament to normal language, it was a first effort to define and analyse an important language phenomenon for the invention and utilising of metaphor in rhetoric, logic, and poetry arenas. His view eventually accumulated to what we generally call the comparison, similarity, and substitution theories of metaphor. Although these theories cannot be viewed as the ideal for defining and identifying metaphor, it was a basic and indispensable step in the history of research, which dominated the scene for almost 2000 years.

Many students in metaphor followed his theory and principles of (1) resemblance, analogy, similarity; (2) transference, substitution; (3) deviation in use of word and meaning; and (4) emotive and visualising aspects. Although many modern scholars tend to discard the Aristotelian theory, these principles remain the starting-points of many approaches to metaphor in the history of the development as well as in current investigations of the phenomenon (Dagut 1976:22 and Gumpel 1984:239ff). Searle

(1984:99) classifies the 20th century substitution theory of Paul Henle (1965)¹ as a close resemblance to the traditional Aristotelian theory. Riccoeur (1994:23) admits that Aristotle was correct in saying “*the greatest thing by far is to be master of metaphor. It is the one thing that cannot be learnt from others; and it is also a sign of genius, since a good metaphor implies an intuitive perception of the similarity in dissimilars*”, and “*to be at inventing metaphors was to have an eye for resemblances.*” (1976:51). Riccoeur (1994:4,5) also emphatically states that the theory of metaphor as transposition of a name is actually not wrong, because it helps with the identification of metaphor in a statement by focusing on the deviant word. He demonstrates in two studies that a linguistics that does not distinguish between semantics of the word and the semantics of the sentence or unilaterally concentrates on one aspect such as the word-metaphor, cannot give an adequate account of the phenomenon.² In his review of the modern Conceptual theory of metaphor of Lakoff and Turner (1989), Jackendorff (1991:326) suggests that the addition of the identifying aspect of literal incongruity or deviance in a metaphorical expression, should be added to their theory, proposed in ‘*More than a cool reason*’.

Modern Bible translators, for instance John Beekman and John Callow,³ are advocating the substitution or comparison theory, based on Aristotelian principles, as a solution to translate metaphor from one culture to another. Majola, who favours the application of the interaction theory for the translation of metaphors, seeks refuge in this theory as a solution to translate metaphor from one culture to another “*when dealing with more crucial metaphors.*”

The importance of Aristotle’s pioneering work cannot be ignored and perhaps modern scholars tend to minimise his contribution and over simplify his approach. As in many studies and developments in history, one theory leads to another, or inspires a new insight or idea. Aristotle must at least be credited with laying the foundation for the study in theory of metaphor, which led to further extensions and triggered new insights and approaches to metaphor. Riccoeur (1994:9ff) gives us a more appreciative account of Aristotle’s contribution in the history of the development of metaphor. He summarises this

¹ See Haverkamp 1983:80-105 for Henle’s version; and Riccoeur 1994:188-191 for his comments.

² See Riccoeur 1994, studies 4 and 5, p101ff and p134ff.

³ Discussed by Majola 1993:347.

history of development as starting with the Aristotelian focus on a *word* as a unit of reference, which eventually led to the focus on a metaphorical *sentence*, which progressed to the emphasis on metaphorical *discourse* (p3). In the interpretation of metaphor, the focus on the word is still indispensable.

Furthermore, it also remains a debatable question whether modern theories could be fully applied to literary works of artists dating from the times when followers of the Aristotle viewpoint were in fact educated in these principles. Obviously, they deliberately would have applied ‘fancy’,¹ decorative, and emotive metaphors in their works congruent to the contemporary theory of their time. So, current students of metaphor in ancient and even modern literature will have to be alert to the possible use of a ‘fancy’ metaphor, a mere comparison with an emotive or didactic intention by an author. Although modern theories maintain that metaphor is a natural phenomenon, inherent to our conceptual and language abilities, artists trained in specific rhetoric principles of metaphor, would have at least applied the phenomenon in line with the current functional purposes prescribed for their times. Even in the process of their invention of metaphors, the principle of similarity, resemblance, and analogy will play a decisive role, but as a mere technical device or ‘game of words’, seeing that they had no insight in the thought processes involved.

It also remains an open question whether prophets of the OT were trained in or were maintainers of any theory of metaphor at all. Their main concern was to proclaim the Word of God in the language of their day i.e. in well-known everyday terminology, expressions, analogies, and images. Therefore, in the process of speaking about and on behalf of God naturally they would have used the principle of association, similarity, resemblance, which in itself is also a natural aspect of the human learning and thought processes. The same argument may apply regarding the motives for the utilisation of metaphor in their messages. Surely, they would have applied the best metaphors, images, and associations available in their culture to convince or shock their audiences. Or can modern conceptual theories account for this phenomenon in the Bible opposed to the emphasis on the functional usage of metaphor? However, the metaphorical style and

¹ Coleridge’s term. See Hawkes 1972:47.

functions of metaphor usage as well as the interpretation, also form part of the scope of this study and will be tested in the metaphorical language usage in the book of Jeremiah.

However, it remains a fact that the traditional rhetoric theory was based on the false viewpoint of assuming that metaphor represents the addition of a figurative word usage to normal objective language, not conveying any autonomous meaning and that it could be replaced by a literal word. Max Black (1984:22) correctly comments that this approach invites the question: *“If the metaphor producer didn’t mean what he said, why didn’t he say something else?”*, resulting in a situation where *“we are headed for the blind alley taken by those innumerable followers of Aristotle who have supposed metaphors to be replaceable by literal translations.”*

Modern theories maintain that not only our language, but in fact our thought processes through which metaphors are produced, are indeed metaphorical and therefore *“the essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of a thing in terms of another”* (Lakoff and Johnson 1980:5). Mac Cormac (1985:5) explains the underlying viewpoint of his cognitive Interaction theory as follows: *“The production of metaphors is not just a linguistic phenomenon on the surface of language; it arises from a deeper cognitive process that creatively envisages new possibilities for meanings.”* These insights only started to develop in studies on metaphor during the 19th century and eventually found their proper place in theories developed during the 20th century. Examples of the latter include, the Interaction Theory,¹ and the Conceptual Theory,² which will be discussed under 2.6 and 2.7 below.

2.3 FURTHER DEVELOPMENT: After Aristotle to the Renaissance

2.3.1 After Aristotle to the Middle Ages

Scholars, who have studied the historical literary material from the period after Aristotle to the Middle Ages, state that the concept metaphor had hardly undergone any meaningful

¹ Richards in 1936; Black in 1955; and others.

² Lakoff, Johnson, Turner and others in 1980 and further.

renewal during this period. Further development during this period merely entailed the continuation of the Aristotelian ideas.¹

2.3.1.1 One of many tropes

In fact, metaphor was now filed into a complex tropological system of ten tropes and approximately sixty-four categories of figurative language, and was therefore actually reduced in status. Hawkes (1972:14) gives more details of the tropological system: "*It lists 45 Figures of Diction, including 10 Tropes, of which metaphor is one, and 19 Figures of Thought, of which Simile is one.*" Mooij (1976:7n) mentions the ten tropes, namely: allegory, accentuation, euphemism, hyperbole, irony, litotes (diminutives), metaphor, metonymy, personification, and synecdoche. The ultimate function of metaphor however remained as being 'the supreme ornament of style' and in nature a 'trope of transference' (Hawkes 1972:13-14).

2.3.1.2 Image

During the Middle Ages the study of metaphor was neglected and mainly entrusted to the grammarians. Stutterheim (1941:116) reckons that this might be the period of transition in the meaning of the concept of metaphor to 'exemplum, parable' and where the terms 'image,' 'firbiliden,' and 'beeld' came into play

2.3.1.3 Deeper meaning

Christian circles of the Middle Ages emphasised the functional nature of metaphor. According to their view, the world consists of metaphors written by God through which he wants to communicate with human beings if only they can interpret these correctly. The meanings of these metaphors, however, are much more loaded with meaning than what we actually deduce from the physical words. Especially Dante² provides a new scheme for the

¹ See Stutterheim 1941:88ff; McCall 1969:24-53; and Hawkes 1972:11ff who indicates this in the writings of Cicero, Horatius, Longinus, Quintilianus and the anonymous writings *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (86BC).

² In his famed letter to *Can Grande della Scala*. See Hawkes 1972:17ff, also for more details about the Christian viewpoint of metaphor during the Middle Ages.

proper interpretation of metaphor, namely: firstly ‘the literal meaning,’ but then follows the higher meaning levels i.e. allegorical (symbolic meanings), anagogical (spiritual meanings) and tropological (personal or moral) meanings (Hawkes 1972:17). Apparently, the main task of the poet was to discover God’s meaning through His metaphors, and definitely not a case of the poet’s own efforts trying to express himself or decorate his work with metaphors.

2.3.2 Renaissance and further development: Logic

During the Renaissance, the Aristotelian view¹ again played a dominating role in the revival of the concept ‘proportio.’ The humanists reduced the number of tropes. This is especially true of Vossius² who maintained a tetrad division namely: metaphor, irony, metonymy, and synecdoche. Metaphor, however, was still treated as the transference of a ‘name’ based on analogy. It describes exactly the same as the literal but in a more aesthetic and attractive way. The contemporary pedagogical theory of art initiated the view that metaphor, due to its ‘beauty and clarity’, contributes to better lecturing and conveyance of knowledge and in the drama world, it functioned as dramatic expressions.

Ramus (1515-1572 AD), an influential French humanist, philosopher and rhetorician, whose method was later called ‘Ramism’, made logic the determining basis for poetry and rhetoric and therefore also for metaphor. “*Ramism meant that, in short, poetry could be thought to be grounded in logic like all reasonable discourse, and therefore concerned with the arrangement of thought in an orderly manner*” (Hawkes 1972:23-24). Due to his influence, metaphor remained a decoration. The only difference was that of the explicit requirement of logic as basis for resemblance in creating a metaphor to ensure clarity. Accompanied by the requirements of correctness and inexplicable grammar, the influence of Ramism can easily be traced in the literature, poetry, and approaches to metaphor until late in the 18th century and was the heritage of our modern world. “*The pursuit of ‘clarity’ and ‘distinction’ naturally took its toll of metaphor.*” (Hawkes 1972:30).

¹ His *Poetica* and the writings of Cicero, Quintillianus and *Rhetorica ad Herennium* received new attention. See Stutterheim 1941:123.

² See Mooij 1976:6-7 and also Stutterheim 1941:127-132 who mentions the important contributions made by Humanists such as Melancton, Erasmus and Scaliger as well as Vossius (Stutterheim pp132-137).

2.3.4 Summary and evaluation

The traditional rhetoric theory of metaphor, with its rhetorical objectives to influence and convince people, viewed the functional aspects of the phenomenon mostly as decorative, i.e. an ornament in addition to ordinary, lexical language. The rhetorician could utilise metaphor to impress, to convince, and to decorate his language usage. Even in prose and poetry, the ideal was to use metaphor only to describe things in an aesthetic way. This view also played an important role in the hermeneutical approach. Indeed, this is also applicable to early Biblical hermeneutics and exegesis of the period during which this theory dominated.

The above is a condensed version of a history of development covering a period of almost 2000 years, from Aristotle up to the nineteenth century AD. During this period the Aristotle rhetoric principles dominated the scene, leaving very little room for renewal. Ricoeur (1976:48-49) summarises the basic presuppositions of the traditional rhetoric view of metaphor, which remained constant through the tradition, as follows:

- “(1) Metaphor is a trope, a figure of discourse that concerns denomination.*
- (2) It represents the extension of the meaning of a name through deviation from the literal meaning of words.*
- (3) The reason for this deviation is resemblance.*
- (4) The function of resemblance is to ground the substitution of the figurative meaning of a word in place of the literal meaning, which could have been used in the same place.*
- (5) Hence the substituted signification does not represent any semantic innovation. We can translate a metaphor, i.e., replace the literal meaning for which the figurative word is a substitute. In effect, substitution plus restitution equals zero.*
- (6) Since it does not represent a semantic innovation, a metaphor does not furnish any new information about reality. This is why it can be counted as one of the emotive functions of discourse.”*

These presuppositions formed the basis of all theories, which originated from this period such as the Substitution, Comparison and Similarity theories. However, it must be added that some modern theories are also based on some of these postulates. Seeing that many of these points were discussed above, a brief account of the Substitution and Comparison as resultant theories, as well as an evaluation with some conclusions, will be in order for utilisation in this study. Due to similarities with the substitution and comparison views, the Similarity theory will not be discussed

2.4 RESULTANT THEORIES

2.4.1 Substitution theories

The Substitution theory, also called the literal theory, is commonly regarded as an inheritance from Aristotle and the rhetoric tradition, which dominated the scene until late in the eighteenth century and still appears in modern lexicons. According to Black (1968:31), the essence of a substitution view of metaphor is one “*which holds that a metaphorical expression is used in place of some equivalent literal expression,...*” or “*a word substituted for another on account of the Resemblance or Analogy between their significations.*” Thus, in the metaphoric expression, ‘Richard is a lion (M),’ the author could just as well have said ‘Richard is brave (L),’ but he substitutes M for L, and it is the reader’s task ‘to decipher the code or riddle.’ The metaphoric expression (M) means nothing more than the literal expression (L), and only serves stylistic, decorative, and didactic purposes, in order to please, shock, surprise or teach the hearer. Soskice (1989:24,25) formulates this metaphorically correct in saying: “*Metaphor has the virtue of clothing tired literal expression in new garb, or alleviating boredom, and, as Aquinas says, of being accessible to the uneducated, ‘who are not ready to take intellectual things neat with nothing else.*” Richards (1936:70) comments: “*metaphor has been treated as a sort of happy extra trick with words, ...something in place occasionally but requiring unusual skill and caution. In brief, a grace or ornament or added power of language, not its constitutive form.*” According to its proponents, a more advanced and justified use for substitution metaphors, is to fill the gaps in the literal vocabulary in cases where there are no literal equivalents available.

Evaluation

Evaluations of this theory generally comment on several points regarding the underlying theories of language, and meaning, reflected by the substitution theory. Soskice (1989:25) raises an important criticism against the theory by stating that

“its suggestion that the poet, scientist, or theologian, in using a metaphor, is doing no more than translating from a prior and literal understanding into an evocative formulation, runs counter to the experience of the maker of metaphor: the latter realizes that the particularity of a metaphorical description is not that it translates literal thought, but that the very thinking is undertaken in terms of the metaphor. What interests us in metaphor is precisely that we find in it an increment to understanding.”

For this researcher it is obvious that in their emphasis on metaphor as a language and meaning inventive device, critics tend to underplay the intentional and functional objectives of the maker of metaphors. Some metaphors, although not created by a simplistic process of substitution, are indeed radical, didactic, pedagogical, emotive, decorative, and deliberately applied by the author as such in order to shock, please, teach, comfort or impress the hearers. Gumpel (1984:259) in her proposal of a viable theory of metaphor places great emphasis on the intention of the author for the invention and grammatical formulation of metaphorical expressions. This is indeed applicable to Biblical authors and especially the prophets, who are commissioned to convey God’s Word of judgement, call for repentance and salvation promises. Macky (1990:65,245) in his analysis of Biblical metaphors, identify several performative functions such as to draw the attention, play on the affection, and stimulate the imagination of his hearers/readers by using metaphors.

2.4.2 Comparison theory

Black (1968:35) defines the comparison theory¹ as a view holding that *“the characteristic transforming function involved in metaphor ...consists in the presentation of the underlying analogy or similarity.”* He considers this theory as a special case of a

¹ Also called ‘Object-comparison theory’ by Beardsley 1962:293.

‘substitution view,’ for it maintains that a metaphoric expression can be substituted by an equivalent literal comparison and therefore metaphor is viewed as nothing more than a condensed simile.¹ For example, ‘Richard is a lion (M),’ can be replaced with ‘Richard is brave like a lion (L),’ producing a definite and predetermined formula for the abstraction of the literal meaning (L), from the metaphorical expression (M), i.e. A is like B in the respect of P.

Evaluation

Black (1968:37) formulates his objection to the substitution view as follows:

“We need the metaphor in just the cases when there can be no question as yet of the precision of scientific statement. Metaphorical statement is not a substitute for a formal comparison or any other kind of literal statement, but has its own distinctive capacities and achievements.”

Regarding the important element of similarity in the metaphorical process, he emphasises that: *“it would be more illuminating in some of these case to say that the metaphor creates the similarity than to say that it formulates some similarity antecedently existing.”* Beardsley’s complaint entails that such an application of comparison could limit the interpretation possibilities and produce an incorrect and incomplete explication of metaphor (1962:293ff).

It seems plausible to this researcher that the concepts of analogy, similarity, comparison, resemblance, and the resultant associations play an important role in some way in the invention and interpretation of some metaphorical expressions. Our thought and understanding processes, through which we organise reality, operate partially on the principles of association and analogy, searching for comparisons and similarities. If our thought processes are fundamentally metaphorical as posed by Johnson, Lakoff, Turner,

¹ Comparison views probably derive from Aristotle. See Black 1968:36n. The Iconic Signification theory of Paul Henle is viewed to be a modern version. See Beardsley 1962:296 and Black 1968:36.

and others,¹ these concepts must come into play in our experiencing and understanding of some realities in terms of another.

Indurkha (1992:1,2) in this regard, distinguishes between conventional metaphors, similarity-based metaphors and similarity-creating metaphors. He explains: “*Similarity-based metaphors invite the reader to make a comparison between the source and the target, as the transference of meaning is based on some existing similarity between them.*” But in a similarity-based metaphor there exists a notable difference entailing that:

“there are no similarities between the source and the target when the metaphor is first encountered. Yet, after the metaphor is assimilated, (if it is assimilated at all), (sic) there are similarities between the source and the target. Thus, the metaphor creates the similarities between the source and the target.”

In a similar way, Macky (1990:67) identifies comparison or similarity metaphors in Biblical literature as well as interaction (p63) and functional ornamental metaphors (p65). Therefore, the relevant concepts will be used in this study where it seems to be applicable. However, this will not be done in the context of a simplistic Comparison theory. Rather it will be used to denote the special cognitive process of analogy or association in the invention and interpretation of metaphor.

2.5 ROMANTICISM

2.5.1 Introduction

With the rise of Romanticism after the Renaissance, linguistics started to flourish during the 19th century, which brought important gains for the development of metaphor. In short, the Romantic view of metaphor entails the idealisation of metaphor. The theory of art regarding all true art as allegoric and the notion that music is a powerful means of expression, played a vital role in this development (Stutterheim 1941:151). Some critics tend to ascribe this swing in approach of metaphor to the rediscovery of Plato, and the rejection of the Aristotelian principles. Romanticists reckon that their affinity with Plato is

¹ See the discussion on their Conceptual theory of metaphor under 2.7 below.

due to his view of language entailing that words as names of things do not contain an inherent correctness. Rather, they are fixed by custom and convention. Language usage is not only controlled by internal language rules, but also by external principles applied by the language user. Plato also does not maintain a distinction between poetic, rhetorical and ordinary language. The language of the poet, philosopher, politician, or orator derives from one fundamental source of all human communication, namely the ordinary oral dialogue and therefore, every discourse should be “*constructed like a living creature*” and forms a unity. (Hawkes 1972:35) In these Platonian principles, Romanticists found linkages for their foundation of the relationship between language and metaphor as well as the role of imagination. In the works of the Romanticists, we indeed find the roots of many ideas and principles developed and implemented in modern theories of metaphor.

2.5.2 A new theory of language

The most outstanding difference between the approach of the Romanticists and the traditional rhetorical theory of metaphor lies in the relation between language and metaphor. Opposed to the traditional notion of metaphor as an addition to normal language, Romanticists worked with the idea that metaphor plays a vital role in the origin and nature of language.

As early as 1725, the Italian rhetorician G. Vico stated that

“primitive man possessed of an instinctive ‘poetic’ wisdom (sapienza poetica) which evolved through metaphors, symbols and myths towards modern abstract and analytical modes of thought. We live in a world of words, made for us by our language, where ‘minds are formed by the character of language, not language by the minds of those who speak it.’”¹

According to Vico, metaphor is not just a game with words to decorate language usage, but a way of experiencing the realities of society and life itself. It is a way of progressive thinking and living, from childhood to maturity, from primitive to developed societies. It is a process by which concrete language develops to become more rational. Through this

¹ As paraphrased by Hawkes 1972:38.

process, by means of the invention of myths, fables and metaphors, the societies' culture and beliefs eventually were constituted. Although fabricated, but not as lies, it represents rather an imaginative projection of the truths and hopes experienced by man. In this thesis of Vico we find the origin of the modern approach to cultural relativism as well as that of cognitive theories of language, meaning and metaphor.

2.5.3 The source of inspiration: Spirit and body, imagination

A second major difference between the traditional view of metaphor and that of the Romanticists has to do with the origin or production of metaphor. The traditional theorists maintained that transferring one word to another primarily shapes metaphor, and based on resemblance. In contrast, the Romanticists maintained that metaphor is the product of the imaginative power of the human mind and forms a vital part of language. Richter played a leading role in this process by identifying the human's unity of two entities, spirit, and body, as the source of inspiration in inventing metaphors. His main contribution was a new approach to metaphor by which the phenomenon is regarded as containing or entailing a worldview of the author and his cultural society. The result was that the study of metaphor now moved out of the domain of the rhetoric to enjoy wider attention from other sciences (Verster 1975:23-25).

2.6 NEW DEVELOPMENTS: INTERACTION

2.6.1 Introduction

Searle (1984:99) divides theories of metaphor into two types, namely:

“Comparison theories assert that metaphorical utterances involve a comparison or similarity between two or more objects (e.g., Aristotle, 1952a, 1952b; Henle, 1965), and semantic interaction theories claim that metaphor involves a verbal opposition (Beardsley, 1962)¹ or interaction (Black, 1962b) between two semantic contents, that of the expression used metaphorically, and that of the surrounding literal context.”

¹ See Haverkamp 1983:120-141 “Die Metaphorische Verdrehung” for his version in German.

The latter is the product of developments during this century commencing with the pioneering work of the English poet I A Richards¹ in 1936, followed up by the English philosopher Max Black² in 1955. An analysis of the main elements of their theory and contributions by others will be discussed below.

2.6.2 Interaction Theory

2.6.2.1 A definition

In answering the question: *“What do we mean by metaphor?”* Max Black (1968:27) states: *“In general, when we speak of a relatively simple metaphor, we are referring to a sentence or another expression in which some words are used metaphorically while the remainder are used nonmetaphorically.”* Opposed to the traditional, substitution and related theories of metaphor based on Aristotelian rhetoric principles, a new semantic approach namely, an Interaction theory was promoted by Richards (in 1936) and Black (in 1955) as the leading exponents. With this approach, it was discovered that metaphor is not just a matter of the extension of the meaning of a word (name) through deviation from its literal meaning, but *“it has to do with semantics of the sentence before it concerns the semantics of a word.”* (Riccoeur 1976:49). Metaphor only makes sense in an utterance and it is not just a case of a word used metaphorically, but rather the result of two terms in contradiction or tension with each other in the metaphorical utterance. The meaning of the metaphor depends on the interrelations between the different components of the sentence.

Richards (1936:93) initially defined metaphor as follows: *“In the simplest formulation, when we use a metaphor we have two thoughts of different things active together and supported by a single word, or phrase, whose meaning is a resultant of their interaction.”* This principle was only rediscovered some twenty years later by Black, who developed it into an acceptable interactionistic theory for metaphor. With these new insights, metaphor was freed from rhetoric limitations, and classified as belonging to semantics, and many students from different fields contributed to the further development of the theory. Ortony (1984a:4) concludes that the study of metaphor now involved the interest of other

¹ See Haverkamp 1983:31-52 *“Die Metapher”* for his version in German.

² See Haverkamp 1983:55-79 *“Die Metapher”* for his version in German.

disciplines such as philosophy, linguistics, cognitive psychology, and even from educational spheres, “*for the topic is truly multidisciplinary.*”

2.6.2.2 Five principles

Max Black¹ summarises the five pillars, on which the Interaction Theory stands as follows. This is opposed to the traditional substitution and related theories:

- “ (1) *A metaphorical statement has two distinct subjects, to be identified as the “primary” subject and the “secondary” one....The duality of reference is marked by the contrast between the metaphorical statement’s focus (the word or words used non-literally) and the surrounding literal frame.*
- (2) *The secondary subject is to be regarded as a system rather than an individual thing. (A revision of his previous viewpoint, which regarded both subjects as systems).*
- (3) *The metaphor utterance works by “projecting upon” the primary subject a set of “associated implications,” comprised in the implicative complex, that are predicable of the secondary subject. (Black replaced the expression ‘system of associated commonplaces’ with the label ‘implicative complex’ - AJB).*
- (4) *The maker of a metaphorical statement selects, emphasizes, suppresses, and organizes features of the primary subject by applying to it statements isomorphic with the members of the secondary subject’s implicative complex.*
- (5) *In the context of a particular metaphorical statement, the two subjects “interact” in the following ways:*
 - (a) *the presence of the primary subject incites the hearer to select some of the secondary subject’s properties; and*
 - (b) *invites him to construct a parallel implication-complex that can fit the primary subject; and*
 - (c) *reciprocally induces parallel changes in the secondary subject.*

¹ In Black 1984:28,29, he presents a revision of the seven claims proposed in 1962:44

2.6.2.3 Application: an example

The development of the Interaction Theory is characterised by contributions by many exponents during the past century,¹ but also by a variety of terminology, sometimes very confusing for students and homilists for their study and exegetical efforts. The above five claims of the Interaction Theory are frequently explained by means of Black's (1968:39) much quoted (and by now fossilised) metaphorical example namely, 'Man is a wolf'. For the sake of clarity and in order to explain the different terminology and the main elements of the theory, the example will be utilised in this study.

2.6.2.4 Two thoughts/ideas in one

Richard's (1936:93) definition of metaphor states that in metaphor we have "*two thoughts of different things active together,*" and therefore metaphor always requires two ideas "*which co-operate in an inclusive meaning*" (p119). To illustrate: in the expression 'Man is a wolf,' we generally recognise it as being metaphorical due to the metaphorical use of the word 'wolf' in an otherwise literal remainder. Black (1968:28 and 39) terms the metaphorized word, 'wolf,' in the expression, the '*focus*' of the metaphor, Richards (1936:96) prefers the term '*vehicle*', Abraham (1975:22) calls it '*part*', to denote the subsidiary subject mentioned in (1) above. "Man" in this metaphorical expression is the '*frame*' (Black), '*tenor*' (Richards), '*remainder*' (Abraham), and denotes the principal subject. The expression describes, or focuses on, or wants to convey 'something' about man, but uses animal-language.

2.6.2.5 A sentence/utterance, not only a word

From this follows that metaphor is not merely a word but a sentence or utterance, which is context-dependent for the correct interpretation. Kittay (1987:22) correctly characterises the first basic features of the Interaction theory as the recognition that metaphor is a sentence, consisting of at least two components, and not only an isolated word. Ricoeur (1976:50) concludes: "*So we should not really speak of the metaphorical use of a word,*

¹ Mooij 1976:73 mentions W Stählin (1914) and K Bühler (1934) as early contributors before Richards (1936) and Black (1955). Ricoeur 1976:49 adds Monroe Beardsley, Colin Turbayne, and Philip Wheelwright. He nominates the work of Richards being "*truly pioneering because it marks the overthrow of traditional problematic.*"

but rather of the metaphorical utterance. The metaphor is the result of the tension between two terms in a metaphorical utterance.”

2.6.2.6 Interaction

The ‘interplay’ or ‘interaction’ between the focus (wolf) and the frame (man), which Richards (1936:94) describes as being “*fundamentally a borrowing between and intercourse of thoughts, a transaction between two contexts*”, causes a tension between two opposed interpretations of the utterance. The Riccoeurian interactionism holds that metaphor involves a non-conventional interpretation, because a conventional interpretation is ruled out by the context. In other words, a ‘split reference’ occurs, which creates a ‘tension’ demanding an alternative to the conventional interpretation.¹ An attempt to interpret the expression literally creates a ‘tension’ (Riccoeur), an ‘absurdity’, a ‘contradiction’ (Black and Beardsley), a ‘semantic impertinence’ (Jean Cohen), a ‘category mistake’ (Ryle), and can only make sense if we apply a meaning or a ‘metaphorical twist’ (Beardsley’s term, 1962:298ff).²

2.6.2.7 An implications-complex (or system of commonplaces)

The copula-verb ‘is’ in the utterance, relates, or actually identifies ‘man’, the primary (principal) subject, with a ‘wolf’, i.e. the secondary (subsidiary) subject. In order to grasp the meaning of the expression, the reader should be familiar with “*the implicative complex*”³ of the word ‘wolf’. The wolf-system comes into play with its “*associated implications*” (or related commonplaces) or ideas about a wolf and evokes characteristics such as: “*he preys upon other animals, is fierce, hungry, engaged in constant struggle, a scavenger....*,” hateful, alarming, etc (Black 1968:41-42). A competent reader will be able to identify the applicable characteristics from the wolf-system (called the wolf-system of implications) to construct a meaningful picture of man in terms of wolf-language.

¹ Indurkha 1992:74, on Riccoeur’s view.

² All mentioned in Riccoeur 1976:50,51.

³ Black 1984:28, also called “*the system of associated commonplaces*” in Black 1968:40.

2.6.2.8 Metaphor as a ‘screen’ or ‘filter’

The metaphor acts as a ‘screen’ or ‘filter’ and the wolf-system of associated commonplaces as gridlines on the screen or filter through which man is viewed according to projection of the implication-system. In the process, the “*wolf metaphor suppresses some details, emphasizes others – in short, organizes our view of man.*” To rephrase Black’s example of his chess/battle metaphor in terms of the wolf-metaphor: the wolf vocabulary “*filters and transforms: not only selects, it brings forward aspects of*” man “*that might not be seen at all through another medium.*” (Black 1968:42).

Riccoeur (1994:212ff) in his discussion of the role of the image/icon concept in resemblance accepts Hester’s contribution of the notion of ‘seeing as,’ which brings resemblance into play. Hester (1967:180), who holds an iconic theory of metaphor, defines ‘seeing as’ as follows: “*Seeing as is an intuitive experience-act by which one selects from the quasi-sensory mass of imagery one has on reading metaphor the relevant aspects of such imagery.*” This emphasises the ‘pictorial capacity of language,’ especially through metaphor.

However, it also emphasises the fact that ‘seeing as,’ being half thought and half experience, is the intuitive relationship that keeps the sense (of the words) and image (of the metaphor) together. Riccoeur (1994:214) argues that the notion of ‘seeing as’ is complementing the interactionist’s theories of ‘fusion’ (Richards), and ‘tension’ (Riccoeur), and ‘interaction’ (Black). “*‘Seeing X as Y’ encompasses ‘X is not Y’; seeing time as a beggar is, precisely, to know also that time is not a beggar.*” (p215).

This interesting combination creates new possibilities, because one could say that Black’s ‘screen’ or ‘filter’ can now be considered as a ‘pictured’ (with a beggar-image) ‘screen’ or ‘filter’, enabling one to *see* ‘time’ *as* some aspects of the beggar-image. Through ‘fusion’ or ‘interaction’ of sense and imagery, the ‘tension’ is resolved, and a new meaning denoting ‘what time *is*’ in terms of the beggar-picture, is created. However, at the same time the ‘is not’ part is gradually suppressed, depending on the degree of comprehension of the metaphor.

2.6.2.9 A creation of untranslatable but ambiguous meaning

In this way, metaphorical shifts between two systems of concepts could lead to extensions of meanings in both subjects' implication complexes (systems of associated commonplaces). Black (1984:30) observes:

“the relation between the meanings of the corresponding key words of the two implication complexes can be classified as (a) identity, (b) extension typically ad hoc, (c) similarity, (d) analogy, or (e) what might be called “metaphorical coupling” (where as often happens, the original metaphor implicates subordinate metaphors).”

Furthermore, the interaction between the two complexes creates an irreplaceable and new unit of information and meaning, which is untranslatable in a good metaphor. Ricoeur (1976:52) formulates as follows: *“Within a tension theory of metaphor,...a new signification emerges, which embraces the whole sentence. In this sense a metaphor is an instantaneous creation, a semantic innovation...”* Black (1984:23), formulates more carefully by stating *“the meaning of an interesting metaphor is typically new or ‘creative,’ not inferable from the standard lexicon”* and again emphasises that *certain metaphors* possess the power *“to present in a distinctive and irreplaceable way, insight into ‘how things are.’”* Nevertheless, because they create their meaning and offers new information, an interaction metaphor is not translatable. However, Black (1984:30) reminds us: *“Since we must necessarily read ‘behind the words,’ we cannot set firm bounds to the admissible interpretations: Ambiguity is a necessary by-product of the metaphor’s suggestiveness.”* Searle (1984:123) states that the metaphor cannot even be adequately paraphrased without losing some contents comprehended by the hearer.

2.6.2.10 Metaphorical thought

The interaction account of metaphor, which views metaphor as *“an instrument for drawing implications grounded in perceived analogies of structure between two objects belonging to different domains,”* has definite cognitive implications. Metaphorical thought processes, whether in creating or interpreting metaphors, produce flashes ‘of insight’

(Black 1984:32). Cognitive conceptual boundaries are flexible and imaginative power is demanded in the invention and interpretation of metaphor (p34).

2.6.2.11 The role of the hearer

Searle (1984:123) emphasises the role of the hearer in the comprehension process of metaphor as such:

“The expressive power that we feel is part of good metaphors is largely a matter of two features. The hearer has to figure out what the speaker means – he has to contribute more to the communication than just passive uptake – and he has to do that by going through another and related semantic content from the one which is communicated.”

2.6.3 Evaluation

The Interaction theory is widely regarded as a major breakthrough in the history of the study and development of the metaphor. The view that metaphor is a vital part of language, that it entails a linguistic device which not only creates new meaning, but conveys meaning regarding reality and truth, as well as the focus on the metaphoric utterance, opened up a new world for the understanding of the correlation between our language abilities and cognitive processes. This development also assisted Biblical exegesis to break away from the traditional notion to view metaphor as mere ‘figure of speech’ in need of some ‘real meaning’ explanations (Tracy 1979:95).

In *“Metaphor Reexamined”*, Gumpel (1984), in her effort to present a non-Aristotelian perspective on metaphor, also evaluates modern theories in terms of the Aristotelian view. She states that almost all theories of metaphor, including the modern Interactionists, called neo-Aristotelian theories (p239ff), are followers of Aristotelian postulates. She avers that the only difference between the Aristotelian tradition and modern theorists is the fact that the latter make use of complicated, and mostly metaphorical terms (admitted by Black 1984:20), to describe more or less the same concept or idea. For example, instead of the Aristotelian transference on grounds of analogy, Chomsky seeks *“proxy-tenet transference in selectional violation of the lexicon,”* and Ryle designs the term *“category-*

mistake.” These definitions are all based on the Aristotelian assumption of meaning of words and his theory of language. “*Reference in meaning is confused with a direct representation of the empirical reality*” (Gumpel 1984:2,3).

In her effort to re-examine the different aspects of metaphor Gumpel lists a number of epithets designed and used by critics to designate metaphor under the heading “*Metaphor in a museum of metaphors*” (p235). She concludes that despite colourful terminology used to avoid resemblance, the Aristotelian idea remains the same, namely that metaphor is viewed as an abridged simile (p238). She classifies the four main streams of modern followers of Aristotle as follows (keywords of proponent’s theory in brackets):

- (1) Anglo-Saxon Pairing (p239), associated with the interaction theories of Richards (tenor and vehicle, interanimation), Black (focus and frame, filter), Beardsley (metaphorical twist), and Wheelwright (epiphor, diaphor, semantic movement);
- (2) Grammarians and Linguists (p244), such as Brooke-Rose (replacement), Chomsky (selectional violation), and Levin (deviant expressions, semantic calculator);
- (3) German Iconoclasm: The Absolute or Bold ‘Bild’ (p249) with leading critics, Friedrich (‘Bild’ and ‘Sache’, ‘Einblendungstechnik’), Harold Weinrich (‘image-receiver’, ‘image-spender’, ‘image-span’, ‘supra-concept’) and Ingendahl (metaphorical outreach, ‘meta-physical’ transcendence of language);
- (4) French Deconstruction and Reconstruction (p254) with major critics Derrida (syntax, deviation, deconstructive diachronics, sublation), Riccoeur (category-mistake, tension, redescription), and Riffaterre (icons, ideograms, rewriting).

Gumpel points out that all these theories reflect Aristotelian principles such as transference and deviation, and is lacking in clearly defined definitions for language, meaning, and the metaphorical process.

Although in agreement with some of Gumpel's criticism, especially regarding confusing and metaphorically fabricated terminology, it seems to this researcher a fact that some Aristotelian principles cannot be avoided. Analogy, similarity, imagery, as well as tension, and controversies in terms of semantic clashes, play an important role in the invention and interpretation of metaphor. The question regarding the 'how?' is however the creator of differences among the major proponents. Nevertheless, metaphor is now lifted out of the showcase by the Interactionists, and placed on the playing field of creative and meaningful language as well as that of our imaginative cognitive processes. This fact indeed constitutes a vital difference.

2.7 CONCEPTUAL METAPHOR THEORY

2.7.1 Introduction

In their book *Metaphors we live by*, (1980), Lakoff, a linguist, and Johnson, a philosopher, teamed up to present a new approach to metaphor, and developed a cognitive linguistic theory of metaphor. They state that metaphor is pervasive in our everyday life and language, and in fact in the totality of our ordinary conceptual system. To them the human thought processes, i.e. our conceptual system, are basically structured and defined in a metaphorical manner. Our conceptual system in terms of what we perceive, think, experience, and do, as well as the language through which we ultimately communicate these activities, is primarily metaphorical in nature. Therefore, metaphor is not merely an art of playing with words, or even a phenomenon present in the words we use, but it is rather fundamentally the way in which we conceptualise or understand the realities of the world and ourselves.

2.7.2 Understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another

Metaphor thus means 'metaphorical concept'. For example, in a normal situation of an argument the conceptual metaphor of ARGUMENT IS WAR is reflected in our language usage. A wide variety of expressions used, contain war terminology. In fact, many of the things we refer to or actually 'do' when arguing, are partially structured by the concept of war. In our everyday language in an argument situation we normally say: He *attacked every weak point* in my argument; His criticisms were *right on target*; I *demolished* his

argument; Okay, *shoot!*; He *shot down* all my arguments. This clearly indicates that an underlying metaphorical concept namely ARGUMENT IS WAR operates in the structuring of how we understand things, do things and how we formulate ideas when we reason. Although no physical war takes place in the argument, a verbal war is reflected in the way in which the argument is structured, understood, performed, and verbalised. According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980:5) an appropriate definition for metaphor would therefore be: *understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another.*" Metaphors are indeed 'concepts we live by.'¹

2.7.3 Metaphorical types

To demonstrate and explain their thesis of the vital role of metaphor in our understanding of things as expressed in our everyday language, Lakoff and Johnson distinguish three of the basic metaphorical types namely structural, orientational and ontological (physical).

2.7.3.1 Structural metaphors

Structural metaphors are defined as the kind of metaphorical concept where one concept is metaphorical structured in terms of another. The following properties are noticed:

2.7.3.1.1 Metaphorical systematicity and coherence

An important part of their point of departure in the study consists of the perceived fact that there exists a definite systematicity and coherence in which metaphorical expressions in our language usage are tied to metaphorical concepts. Therefore, "*we can use metaphorical linguistic expressions to study the nature of metaphorical concepts to gain an understanding of the metaphorical nature of our activities.*" (Lakoff and Johnson 1980:7). A metaphorical concept such as TIME IS MONEY and its resultant metaphorical expressions in everyday English, can give us insight into the metaphorical nature of such a concept that structures our everyday life. For instance, when we say: You're *wasting* my time; This gadget can *save* you hours; How do you *spend* your time these days; I've *invested* a lot of time in her; You need to *budget* your time; You're *running out* of time; I *lost* a lot of time when I got sick; it shows that time in our Western culture is valuable,

¹ The title of their first chapter, pp 3-6.

limited, in fact, money in terms of production and constructive use of time etc. From the main metaphorical concept TIME IS MONEY, systematic related sub-categories follow, characterising entailment relationships between metaphors. Examples include TIME IS A LIMITED RESOURCE (This gadget can save you hours), TIME IS A VALUABLE COMMODITY (You're wasting my time). That is due to the fact that in our society we act as if money is time, valuable, limited and therefore understand, experience and evidently express time metaphorically in terms of money spent, wasted, saved, and invested. These values are relatively new in the history of the human race and part and parcel of our culture, but not of all cultures. Nevertheless, when we talk about a concept or an aspect thereof, whether it is ARGUMENT or TIME for instance, our thoughts usually follow patterns, which shape our language. *"Because the metaphorical concept is systematic, the language we use to talk about that aspect of the concept is systematic."* (Lakoff and Johnson 1980:7). Furthermore, *"metaphorical entailments can characterize a coherent system of metaphorical concepts and a corresponding coherent system of metaphorical expressions for those concepts."* (p9).

2.7.3.1.2 Highlighting and hiding

However, Lakoff and Johnson (1980:13), in their thesis that our concepts are structured by metaphor, emphasise the fact that it is only partially structured, though it can be extended beyond our literal or conventional way of thinking by means of figurative, fancy, poetic thought and language, but again not completely. If the metaphorical structuring (also the figurative poetic structuring) involves total structuring, it would mean that the one equals the other in which case it cannot be a matter of understanding the one in terms of the other. *"The very systematicity that allows us to comprehend one aspect of a concept (thus highlighting one aspect - ajb) in terms of another (e.g. comprehending an aspect of arguing in terms of battle) will necessarily hide other aspects of the concept."*¹ Time, for example, is not really money, because there is no time bank, you cannot be refunded for time spent if something does not work, etc. Therefore, only some part of the metaphorical concept fits and is highlighted in the structuring, while the other is hidden because it does not and cannot fit.

2.7.3.2 Orientational Metaphors

Another kind of metaphorical concept is the one which *organises* a system of concepts with respect to one another. Lakoff and Johnson (1980:14) call these

“orientational metaphors, since most of them have to do with spatial orientation: up-down, in-out, front-back, on-off, deep-shallow, central-peripheral. These spatial orientations arise from the fact that we have bodies of the sort we have and that they function as they do in our physical environment.”

Such metaphorical orientations are not done at random, but emerge from physical and cultural experiences and therefore can differ between cultures.

This is best explained by examples used by Lakoff and Johnson (1980:15-17). To mention a few: (1) HAPPY IS UP (My spirits *rose*), SAD IS DOWN (I’m feeling *down*) for example emerges from the physical upright bodily posture which projects a positive attitude and the drooping posture which typifies sadness. (2) HAVING CONTROL or FORCE IS UP (I am *on top of* the situation), BEING SUBJECT TO CONTROL or FORCE IS DOWN (His power is on the *decline*) finds its physical basis in the fact that bigger is stronger and in a fight the winner is always on top. (3) VIRTUE IS UP (She is an *upstanding* citizen), DEPRAVITY IS DOWN (That was a *low* trick), is an entailment derived from the concept GOOD IS UP (i.e. the physical basis) and the social basis, to be virtuous is to act according to the rules set by your society. (4) RATIONAL IS UP (I *raised* the discussion back *up to the rational* plane), EMOTIONAL IS DOWN (He couldn’t *rise above* his *emotions*), has a physical and cultural basis due to the fact that our culture maintains a view of the superiority of man over animals, plants and environment. Our ability to reason gives us control and thus the main concept CONTROL IS UP leads to the sub-category entailment MAN IS UP which provides a basis for RATIONAL IS UP. (5) HIGH STATUS IS UP (She’ll *rise to the top*), LOW STATUS IS DOWN (She *fell in* status), emerges from the social and physical basis that power (social and physical) is UP.

¹ Lakoff and Johnson 1980:10. See also Turner 1987:35.

2.7.3.3 Ontological Metaphors

Lakoff and Johnson (1980:25ff) also identify ontological metaphors, that is, ways in which we experience, understand and view events, activities, emotions, and ideas as physical objects and substances. They provide another basis for the metaphorical understanding of our experiences in terms of entities and substances by which we purposefully identify, refer, quantify, categorise and group our non-physical experiences enabling us to converse about them. For example, the concept INFLATION IS AN ENTITY enables us to deal rationally with the non-physical phenomenon by viewing it as a physical object resulting in sayings such as: *Inflation is lowering* our standard of living; We need to *combat inflation*; *Inflation makes me sick*. A more elaborated example in our culture is: THE MIND IS A MACHINE, evident in expressions such as: I'm *running out of steam*; I'm a little *rusty* today; My mind just isn't *operating* today.

2.7.3.4 Container metaphors

Lakoff and Johnson (1980:29ff) also distinguish other kinds of ontological metaphors namely 'Container metaphors'. Because we are physical beings, bounded in our bodies, we view every thing of the world we live in as outside us and therefore project our in-out and bounded orientation onto other physical objects (for example the expression: There is a lot of land *in* Kansas, where Kansas is viewed as a container). To Lakoff and Johnson (p33ff) personification, where the physical object or our non-human experience is further specified as a person and comprehended in terms of human characteristics, actions and motivations, is one of the most obvious extensions of ontological metaphor. In short, in many cases we make sense of the world by viewing non-human entities as human. For example, we personify 'inflation' when we say: Our biggest *enemy* right now *is* inflation; Inflation *has robbed* me of my savings. These sayings do not merely emerge from the metaphorical concept INFLATION IS A PERSON but from the more specific extension, namely INFLATION IS AN ADVERSARY.

2.7.4 Metaphor in ‘fixed speech formulas’ of everyday language

To indicate how metaphor pervades everyday language usage, Lakoff and Johnson (p46) list numerous examples of everyday idiomatic speech formulas, which we hardly recognise as metaphorically structured although we indeed talk of one thing in terms of another. These ‘fixed-form expressions’ or ‘phrasal lexical items’ are so fixed in the language, that they act in many ways as a ‘single word’ and can be regarded as literal expressions structured by metaphorical concepts. To mention a few examples: (1) By means of the concept THEORIES (and ARGUMENTS) ARE BUILDINGS we conceive and formulate: Is that the *foundation* of your theory?; We need to *construct a strong* argument for that; The theory will *stand or fall* on the *strength* of that argument. (2) With respect to life and death IDEAS ARE ORGANISMS, either PEOPLE or PLANTS in expressions such as: He is the father of modern biology; Whose brainchild was that? or PLANTS in: The *seeds* of his great ideas were *planted* in his youth; Mathematics has many *branches*. (3) Through UNDERSTANDING IS SEEING we construct: I *see* what you’re saying; I view it differently; Now I’ve got the *whole picture*. (4) Consider the concept LOVE IS MADNESS when we say: I’m *crazy* about her; She *drives me out of my mind*; or LOVE IS MAGIC in: She is *bewitching*; She had me *hypnotized*. (5) EMOTIONAL EFFECT IS PHYSICAL CONTACT leads to: His mother’s death *hit* him *hard*; I was *struck* by his sincerity. In all these so-called standard, normal, generally regarded as literal language, the expressions are coherently structured from basic metaphorical concepts and thus enabling us to experience, conceive and talk about life situations metaphorically.

2.7.5 Interaction between domains

To summarize their viewpoint of the metaphorical process, Lakoff and Johnson’s descriptions in terms of the interaction between domains are as follows: “*Because concepts are metaphorically structured in a systematic way, e.g., THEORIES ARE BUILDINGS, it is possible for us to use expressions (construct, foundation) from one domain (BUILDINGS) to talk about corresponding concepts in the metaphorically defined domain (THEORIES).*” (1980:52). Thus, another way of defining metaphor is: “*Metaphors allow us to understand one domain of experience in terms of another.*” (1980:117). Basic domains of experiences such as ‘love’, ‘time’, ‘argument’ are

conceptualised and defined by our understanding in terms of other basic domains of experiences like ‘journeys’, ‘money’, and ‘war’. A basic domain of experience can be defined as a structured whole within our experience, conceptualised and constituted as an ‘experiential gestalt’ of a natural recurrent kind of human experience (i.e. products of human nature, for instance our bodily experiences, or interactions with our physical environment and with other people).

2.7.6 Summary

2.7.6.1 Several contributors

This theory of metaphor was further developed and refined by several individual efforts by Lakoff, Johnson, Turner, and as a joint effort by Lakoff and Turner. Lakoff (1987), deals with the importance of categorisation in our experiencing and understanding of our world, as well as how it relates to our comprehension of metaphor. Johnson’s contribution (1987), shows how metaphor is motivated by our bodily experiences, for instance, UP/DOWN, PART/WHOLE, which he calls ‘kinaesthetic image schematic concepts’. These schemas serve as source domain for mapping to the target domain, a characteristic feature of metaphor (p276). Turner (1987), and also together with Lakoff (Lakoff and Turner 1989), present a theory of poetic metaphor and demonstrate how poetic metaphor utilizes everyday metaphorical language available to speakers of a language, and to extend the basic conceptual metaphors of that language (Turner 1987:51f,54ff). They also demonstrate the sharp contrast between their theory and the traditional Aristotelian substitution, comparison and similarity theories as well as the modern theories of the Interactionists, Black and Richards (Lakoff and Turner 1989:124ff).

2.7.6.2 Basic claims

Jackendorff and Aaron (1991:320) give us a summary of the basic claims repeatedly made throughout the book, which forms the basis of their approach to metaphor namely:

“(1) Metaphor is not a ‘figure of speech’, a linguistic object. Rather, it is a conceptual or cognitive organization expressed by the linguistic object. As a consequence, many different linguistic expressions may evoke (or invoke) the same metaphor.

- (2) *Metaphorical expressions pervade ordinary language; they are not just used for artistic purposes. These everyday metaphors reveal cognitive cultural conceptions of the world.*
- (3) *Metaphor in poetry is not a distinctly different phenomenon from metaphor in ordinary language. Rather, poetic metaphor exploits and enriches the everyday metaphors available to any competent speaker of the language.*
- (4) *The act of reading texts is a cognitive process of bringing one's construal of the world to bear on the concepts evoked by the text."*

The first two claims were the central theme of Lakoff and Johnson's book *Metaphors we live by* (1980).¹ In *More than a cool reason: A field guide to poetic metaphor*, by Lakoff and Turner (1989), the focus is on the application of their claims about poetic metaphor in literary material. This account viewed metaphor as the mapping of the conceptual organisation from one domain, the source domain, to another, the target domain.

2.7.6.3 Metaphorical mapping

Metaphorical mapping as explained by Turner (1987:63,64) by means of the example LIFE IS A JOURNEY, consists of the following:

- “ - *Slots in the source-domain schema (e.g., journey), which get mapped onto slots in the target domain (e.g., life).*
- *Relations in the source domain (journey), which get mapped onto relations in the target domain (life).*
- *Properties in the source domain, which get mapped onto properties in the target domain.*
- *Knowledge in the source domain, which gets mapped onto knowledge in the target domain."*

¹ See Indurkha 1992:293 for a summary of their thesis.

2.7.6.4 Meaning

Another aspect of their theory relates to their view concerning the meaning of words. Turner (1987:109) summarises this stating that words evoke much more in the mind than what they strictly designate. The conceptual content that words evoke, rather than the physical words on paper, conveys meaning. Therefore, meanings are in people's minds, not merely in the words written on the page. He concludes: *"To study metaphor is to be confronted with the hidden aspects of one's own mind and one's own culture."* (p214). Sweetser (1990:5) confirms the notion by concluding:

"Rather, it is our cognitive structuring of the world which can create such an identification. And if language uses a word for our cognitive category, then language cannot be described in terms of pure fit between Word and World: unless, by World, we mean our experiential picture of the world."

2.7.6.5 Culture

Regarding the vital role of culture, the proponents of the conceptual theory of metaphor claim (Turner 1987:51) that basic conceptual metaphors form coherent and systematic structured wholes in which members of a culture share.¹ They are usually understood in terms of common experiences typical of a culture. Therefore, through convention, their occurrences in language as well as the cognitive process involved are unconscious and automatic. Turner (1987:26) states: *"Basic metaphors are part of those conceptual resources, part of the way members of our culture make sense of the world."* The poets from a specific culture and language group are also inclined to use the same basic conceptual apparatus available to all the members of such a group. However, they may implement or express their ideas in new and unusual ways as well as bold images in order to offer new modes of metaphorical thought or to reveal the inadequacies of current or former ideas (p51).

¹ Sweetser (1990:9,42 & 45) shows that there might be cross-cultural if not universal concepts as reflected in his study of OT Hebrew and English expressions regarding physical hearing and obeying.

2.7.7 Evaluation

One may agree with Jackendorff and Aaron (1991:321,325), that the scope of the term metaphor and what is regarded as metaphor, is overstated and well beyond the standard application of the term. Mac Cormac (1985:chap 3) raises a similar criticism stating that Lakoff and Johnson's definition of metaphor as "*understanding and experiencing one kind of thing or experience in terms of another,*" is too wide and fits any semantic process involving symbols and their meanings (Mac Cormac 1985:57ff).¹ He refutes the Lakoffian definition on the grounds that it is based on the assumption that all language is metaphorical. He argues that the distinction between literal and metaphorical language is now replaced by a classification of literal and figurative metaphors. The metaphorical expressions in conventional language as identified by Lakoff and Johnson, are all 'dead metaphors,' i.e. it has acquired literal status through frequent use. That is also the reason why they struggle to categorise metaphors adequately. He further criticises Lakoff and Johnson's account of the grounding, structuring and categorisation of concepts, especially those derived from 'direct bodily experience,' and also their claim that some of these spatial concepts may vary from culture to culture. If this is the case, "*on what basis can one be sure that spatial concepts emerge directly rather than emerge as mediated metaphorical concepts?*" (Mac Cormac 1985:68). Indurkha (1992:295ff) comes to the conclusion that the differences in the debate derive from the author's different approaches to metaphor, and what a 'dead metaphor' entails, as well as their different views of the 'literal meaning theory.'²

However, the conceptual theory represents a fresh approach, which explains more about the cognitive process involved and accommodates interesting possibilities to identify domains and categorise concepts, which seems to be a viable option, especially for Biblical exegesis relating to metaphor. However, one should be aware of the pitfall of over emphasising the 'etymology' (or history of development) of a metaphorical concept rather than its context and fixed meaning.

¹ Mac Cormac (1985:5,6) defines metaphor in two senses: "*(1) as a cognitive process by which new concepts are expressed and suggested, and (2) as a cultural process by which language itself changes.*" He states that his theory is a formal version of Black's interaction and presents a cognitive interaction theory (p6).

² For a summary of and critique on the Lakoff – Mac Cormac debate, see Indurkha 1992:292-301

2.8 IMPORTANT DISTINCTIONS

In a literary work or language situation, a reader (or hearer) can encounter a variety of metaphorical concepts. Scholars use a great variety of terminology to typify and classify different aspects and kinds of metaphors. Only some of the more general categories will be discussed for purposes of clarity.

2.8.1 Dead or Alive

One of the major categories, debated in almost every work consulted, is the distinction between 'dead' or 'live' metaphors. Black (1984:26) reckons that this is an incorrect contrast because 'dead' means what it says and therefore a dead metaphor is not a metaphor at all. He prefers the contrast 'extinct,' 'dormant,' versus 'active' or 'vital' metaphors. He explains that emphatic metaphors are those where a low degree of implicative interaction is present, i.e. it allows no variation upon or substitute for the words (focus) used. The 'expendable,' 'optional,' 'decorative,' and 'ornamental' (the typical Aristotelian types) metaphors can be considered as the opposite of emphatic metaphors. Black (1984:26,27) also mentions the category of resonant metaphors, which entail a high degree of implicative elaboration. He prefers to concentrate on what he calls a strong metaphor, which is both emphatic and resonant opposed to the weak metaphor with a low emphasis or resonance. It is clear that he tries to avoid the distinction of literal and figurative language.

Beardsley (1962:293) contributes to the debate by explaining his view of 'dead metaphor' with a simple example. He says a metaphor is dead when the metaphor's connotation becomes standardised through frequent use. For example, the word 'tail', used to denote a car's rear lights in 'tail-lights', is part of conventional language through frequent use. It has no connotation of an animal's tail any more and can be learned and understood by somebody who is not familiar with animals and their tails.

For Ricoeur (1976:52) 'live', metaphors are 'metaphors of invention,' which create a new extension of meaning not having any status in the established language. However, if it

were striking and become popular through frequent use, and/or is needed, then it becomes part of the lexicon, thus 'dead.' Therefore, one would find no 'live' metaphors in a lexicon, but only 'dead' ones.

Gräbe (1990:55) emphatically states her view as follows:

“Although metaphoric or nonliteral language is not limited to poetic texts but functions communicatively in any linguistic text, whether spoken or written, there is an important difference between the ‘dead’ or lexicalised expressions of standard language and the unconventional or innovative metaphoric constructions used in poetic texts. This difference is manifested in:

- *the high incidence of textual amplification or content specification of metaphorically qualified words and constructions, and*
- *the way in which syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations determine one another in poetic texts.”*

It is clear that proponents from the transformational grammar school maintain sharp boundaries between poetic metaphor and conventional language. Oomen (1977:175) does not deny the occurrence of striking creative metaphors in everyday language, but notes that besides them, there exists a great number of fixed, rigid expressions recorded in the lexicon of a language, and which cannot be viewed as creative. She emphasises that poetic metaphors create new terminology where needed, extend the vocabulary if a metaphor becomes popular, and give new life to rigid expressions. Thus, there exist several ties between poetic metaphor and conventional language, but we need to differentiate between them (p176,177).

Soskice (1985:73) poses three rough guidelines to distinguish between living and dead metaphors:

“The first is that one recognizes a dissonance or tension in a living metaphor whereby the terms of the utterance used seem not strictly appropriate to the topic at hand; a second guideline is the relative ease of paraphrase (in the case of a dead metaphor – ajb). Finally, the most important means by which one distinguishes dead

from living metaphor, and both from non-metaphorical speech, concerns the relationship of metaphor to model. An originally vital metaphor calls to mind, directly or indirectly, a model or models....”

However, she finally comments that the dead metaphor’s reliance on a model (image), if it were still in some sense active, makes it more attractive and suggestive.

In their analysis of metaphor in everyday language, Lakoff and Johnson (1980:55) give an opposite opinion, claiming that conventionally fixed metaphors in the lexicon are very much ‘alive’ because they are ‘metaphors we live by.’ For Mac Cormac (1985:59ff) this approach means that the barrier between metaphoric and non-metaphoric utterances is lifted and moved to a distinction between literal and figurative metaphors.

An appropriate distinction between ‘live’ and ‘dead’ metaphors is vital for this study, but could create some problems. It is clear that the proponents of the ‘live’ and ‘dead’ metaphor theory, maintain a distinction between ordinary, literal, lexical language on the one hand and creative, figurative, poetic metaphors on the other hand. However, in Biblical exegesis one encounters the problem that nobody can claim to be a mother tongue speaker of ancient Hebrew, or an experienced member of that culture, which are prerequisites for the identification of metaphors in a language situation or literary work (Korpel 1990:620). Furthermore, there exists only a small quantity of literature of Hebrew if one considers the hundreds of years (involving millions of speakers) covered by Biblical literature. In available lexicons, which are indispensable aids, the different uses and the semantic field of a term is given, but also that of its metaphorical uses. In sum, these factors are complicating the task of the researcher to distinguish between ‘dead’ or ‘live’ metaphors, especially when a ‘chain’ or ‘network’ of metaphors and related concepts are involved.

By focussing on conventional (‘dead’) and poetic (‘live’) metaphors (in other words on the total diction), the conceptual theory of metaphor opens up several possibilities for identifying extensions of metaphor in a context or literary work as a whole. Therefore, the notion as posed by Lakoff and Johnson will be applied in this study, but with the necessary

caution, bearing in mind that the history of the development of a metaphorical concept ('etymology') does not necessarily determine the meaning of an utterance in its present context, and especially not independent of its context.

2.8.2 Distinctions between metaphor and other tropes

2.8.2.1 Introductory remarks

Tropology, the classification of tropes or figures of speech, is something inherited from Aristotelian days. Ricoeur (1994:45ff) criticises the approach of rhetorical tropology to metaphor, which reduces it to a trope (figures of deviation), a mere word that changes in meaning because of its deviant use. This has to be avoided because it promotes a misguided focus on the word as the unit of meaning and could create an interpretation solely based on deviant word meaning. He identifies several unacceptable postulates that constitute the model of tropology namely, the postulate of: (1) *"the proper versus the improper or figurative"*; (2) *"the semantic lagoon"*; (3) *"borrowing"*; (4) *"deviation"*; (5) *"the axiom of substitution"*; (6) *"the paradigmatic character of the trope"*; (7) *"exhaustive paraphrase"*; (8) *"no new information"*; (9) *"the decorative function"*. These presuppositions support the typical 'idea-word pair' definition of a trope, which states: *"Tropes are certain meanings more or less different from the primitive meaning, which words, when applied to new ideas, evince in the course of the expression of thought."* (p48). However, although he rejects the tendency of limiting metaphor to a *"word-focused figure of speech"* (p6), he comes to the conclusion that the model of tropology might be adequate for static figures of speech, but *"it fails to explain the production of meaning as such"* (p4), and should therefore be avoided.

To Soskice (1985:54ff) metaphor is commonly accepted as a figure of speech, a trope amongst the trope, and definitely at the center of figurative language such as simile, metonymy, and synecdoche. Clear distinctions, often lacking in accounts of metaphor (p54), are of the utmost importance especially in religious language where figures of speech *"are the vessels of insight and the vehicles of cognition."*

In view of the fact that many scholars and commentators make use of the distinctions of the tropological model, those applicable to the topic of this study will be briefly discussed.

2.8.2.2 Simile

Ortony (1984b:188), emphasises the important role of similarity in the processing and comprehension of both metaphor and simile. According to him, the major difference between the two phenomena entails: *“A metaphor is a kind of use of language, whereas a comparison is a kind of psychological process, which while quite possibly an essential component of certain kinds of language use, is not the same thing as such use.”*

Miller (1984:218), a simile theorist and psychologist, distinguishes between literal comparison statements, similes, and analogies. He says:

“Comparison statements are easily recognizable by their use of one or another copula of similitude: ‘like,’ ‘is like,’ ‘acts like,’ ‘looks like,’ ‘as,’ ‘is as Adj as,’ ‘resembles,’ ‘reminds me of,’ ‘is the same as,’ ‘is similar to,’ ‘the same way,’ and so on.... For example, ‘John’s wife is like his mother...’”

Although related to metaphor in using comparison as starting point, the grounds of comparison in a literal statement are more obvious than in a simile. *“A simile is a comparison statement involving two unlike things”* (p220), and can also be recognised by the copula of similitude, for example, *“Telling John not to worry is like telling the wind not to blow.”* *“What makes a simile striking,...is an author’s sensitivity to previously unnoticed resemblances; it can link together two spheres of knowledge or experience in novel and revealing ways.”* (p222). It is clear that Miller works with the Aristotelian element of comparison (p226) when he concludes that:

“The grounds for a metaphor,..., can be formulated as relations of similitude that can be expressed as comparison statements” and *“the comprehension of literal language requires all the apperceptive psychological machinery needed to account for the comprehension of comparison statements”*,

as well as for the comprehension of metaphorical language.

Black (1984:31,32) rejects views that regard metaphor as a mere stylistic variation of a simile, differing in form only, and thus an implied comparison. Although similarity, analogy, or an identity of structure between the implication-complexes of the secondary and primary subjects, plays an important role in the interaction process of metaphor, it cannot be reduced to a mere simile. Metaphor entails a direct covert identification and to call it *“a simile or comparison is either to say too little or too much.”* Metaphor is by no means an ‘open’ or ‘point-by-point comparison’. He complains: *“In discursively comparing one subject with another, we sacrifice the distinctive power and effectiveness of a good metaphor.”*

Soskice (1985:58ff) criticises Black’s arguments that simile lacks the impact of metaphor and its richer interactive meaning. She accuses interaction theorists of using simple uninspiring examples of similes to prove their point. More striking similes, especially those used for ‘illustrative’ and ‘modeling’ purposes, are more than straightforward point-by-point comparisons, and could be regarded as metaphorical expressions.

To my mind, simile is also a cognitive and linguistic activity of experiencing, understanding, and speaking about one thing in terms of another. Sometimes the similarity and comparison in a simile are clear and straightforward (as in some metaphors). But in other cases it can be more challenging or even entail rather dissimilarity or conflicting and shocking comparisons (as in metaphor). Although this viewpoint also boils down to the fact that the difference between metaphor and simile is only noticeable in the difference in their grammatical forms, it regards simile as a metaphorical device of our thought processes.

2.8.2.3 Synecdoche and Metonymy

Soskice (1985:57,58) argues that synecdoche and metonymy qualify for the Aristotelian label *“for being primarily ornamental ways of naming.”* *“Synecdoche is a trope in which one uses a species term to stand in for a genus, or a genus term for a species, or a more comprehensive term for a less and vice versa.”* For example, ‘the ships opened fire,’

meaning ‘the gunners on the ships started firing the cannons.’ “*Metonymy is similar, except that here one uses an adjunct to stand in for the whole.*” For example, ‘Pretoria/ the White House/Jerusalem did not listen,’ when we mean the government (Pretoria, White House) or the citizens or royal house (Jerusalem) did not respond. The ‘stand in’ function of synecdoche and metonymy is what distinguishes it from metaphor, because semantically one word or phrase in both instances represents a more obvious straightforward reference based on a relationship between the two entities. Ricoeur (1994:45) comments that there is little difference between the tropological definitions posed for synecdoche and metonymy.

Lakoff and Johnson (1980:35ff) prefer not to distinguish between metonymy and the traditional rhetoric synecdoche, but rather view the latter as a special type of metonymy. Metonymy (like metaphor) is also pervasive of our everyday thinking, acting, and talking, and therefore is not only reserved for poetry or rhetoric. Metonymic concepts like THE PART FOR THE WHOLE “*allow us to conceptualize one thing by means of its relation to something else.*” (p39). These concepts, like metaphorical concepts, are also grounded in our experience (though more direct or causal than metaphor), function actively in our culture as well as reflecting something of our culture.

“Metaphor and metonymy are different kinds of processes. Metaphor is principally a way of conceiving of one thing in terms of another, and its primary function is understanding. Metonymy, on the other hand, has primarily a referential function, that is, it allows us to use one entity to stand for another. But metonymy is not merely a referential device. It also serves the function of providing understanding.”

Lakoff and Johnson (p38) present the following examples of metonymic concepts that exist in the Western English culture (examples of expressions in brackets): THE PART FOR THE WHOLE (We need a couple of *strong bodies* for our team = strong people); THE FACE FOR THE PERSON (We need some *new faces* around here); PRODUCER FOR PRODUCT (I hate to read *Heidegger*); OBJECT USED FOR USER (The *buses* are on strike); CONTROLLER FOR CONTROLLED (*Napoleon* lost at Waterloo); INSTITUTION FOR PEOPLE RESPONSIBLE (*Exxon* has raised its prices again); THE

PLACE FOR THE INSTITUTION (*Wall Street* is in a panic); THE PLACE FOR THE EVENT (*Watergate* changed our politics). These concepts are not arbitrary occurrences, but systematic and affect and organise our thoughts and actions “*using one entity to refer to another that is related to it*” (p35 and 39).

Lakoff and Johnson (p40) also emphasise the important role of metonymic conceptual systems in the symbolism of our culture and religion, for example, the dove, and the cross, which are metaphorical in nature. They say:

“Symbolic metonymies are critical links between our everyday experience and the coherent metaphorical systems that characterize religions and cultures. Symbolic metonymies that are grounded in our physical experience provide an essential means of comprehending religious and cultural concepts.”

However, Turner (1987:103,104), a joint proponent of the Lakoffian theory, summarises and warns against confusion in distinguishing metaphor and metonymy. He explains the difference as follows:

- “ - *In metaphor, there are two conceptual domains, and one is understood in terms of the other.*
- *In metaphor, a whole schematic structure (with two or more entities) is mapped onto another whole schematic structure.*
- *In metaphor, the logic of the source-domain structure is mapped onto the logic of the target-domain structure.*

None of these is true in metonymy.

- *Metonymy involves only one conceptual domain. A metonymic mapping occurs within a single domain, not across domains.*
- *Metonymy is used primarily for reference: via metonymy, one can refer to one entity in a schema by referring to another entity in the same schema.*
- *In Metonymy, one entity in a schema is taken as standing for one other entity in the same schema, or for the schema as a whole.”*

Turner also explains the similarities between metaphor and metonymy namely, that both are conceptual in nature; mappings from one domain to another; can be conventionalised; and are means of extending the linguistic resources of a language.

The theory posed by Lakoff and Johnson, complemented by the explanations of Turner concerning the similarities and dissimilarities, seems to this researcher as a viable and acceptable possibility to apply in the present study. The traditional tendency of viewing metonymy as a mere 'stand-in' word and a static 'figure of speech' is eliminated, and metonymy is transferred to the realm of metaphorical conceptualising, categorisation and our experiencing and understanding of our world, culture and religion.

2.8.2.4 Analogy

"Analogy as a linguistic device deals with language that has been stretched to fit new applications, yet fits the new situation without generating for the native speaker any imaginative strain", for example, the word 'riding', was perhaps initially applied to horse riding but is now also appropriate to bicycles (Soskice:1985:64). In the same way, we speak analogically of God by saying he is one, good, infinite, perfect, or transcendent.

Miller (1984:225) poses a different view by stating that analogy can be regarded as any expression of similarity or resemblance. However, although similes also express analogies, he prefers to distinguish analogy in a narrower sense as those constructions using four terms: $x:x':y:y'$, for example, 'Toe is to foot as finger is to hand.'

These two viewpoints represent a major problem encountered in this research namely, the variety of definitions, contradicting use of terminology, and opposing theories regarding linguistic aspects. The above-mentioned viewpoints resemble the static and technical word-orientated analysis of language posed by the traditional rhetorists. 'Analogy', according to WHUD (1964:39) generally means: *"Agreement, resemblance or*

correspondence in relations between different objects."¹ It seems that the terms, analogy, similarity, and resemblance, are synonymous and are used as such in the traditional, substitution and related theories of metaphor. But on the other hand, van Niekerk (1994:283), a philosopher, for instance states that theological language is generally and basically analogically structured and therefore based on metaphors and models, which cannot be denied.

In the light of Ricoeur's criticism on tropology (1994:45ff) and van Niekerk's application of analogy in theology (1994:279ff), as well as the possibilities embedded in the application of the Conceptual theory of metaphor (viewing metaphor as experiencing and understanding one thing in terms of another), the term 'analogy' in this study will only be used to refer to the metaphorical process, and especially in the context of God-talk.

2.9 METAPHORICAL LANGUAGE IN THE OT

2.9.1 Usage in the prophetic literature

Prophets of the Old Testament are renowned for their utilisation of the creative and performative power of metaphor. Accounts discussed below usually ascribe some unsurpassable quality to the literary style of each prophet.

2.9.1.1 Hosea

If figurative language usage in the proclamation of God's message has to be taken as an indication of the success of a messenger, Hosea would have qualified with a distinction, according to Botha (1993:57). Hosea implements some sixty-seven similes and numerous metaphors as well as allegories, and Wolff² "*is confident that no other prophet, no one writer in the entire Old Testament, uses as many similes as he does.*" In his study concerning the communicative function of comparison in Hosea, Botha (p70) concludes that Hosea's application of comparison "*is more than the added significance through the*

¹ Also in HAT, p34, rendered as "1. Gedeeltelike ooreenkoms tussen twee dinge wat in ander opsigte verskillend is: Daar bestaan 'n analogie tussen die menslike hart en 'n pomp. 2. (taalk.) Vorming na die voorbeeld van verwante woorde of vorme: Die meervoud gaaie het ontstaan na analogie van paaie."

² Wolff 1974:xxiv as quoted by Botha, p57.

transfer of associations, resolution of the tension it might create or the performative, expressive or evocative use it is put to: it is the impact of life itself as an argument." By implementing Mac Cormac's (1985 ch 6:159ff) notions of a cognitive approach, the role of analogy and comparison in metaphor as speech act with performative functions, Botha (p69) demonstrates Hosea's functional implementation of similes in order to inform or to shock the people, to proclaim in YHWH's name, to express emotions, feelings and attitudes on YHWH's behalf and to evoke responses of fear, or endearment from the nation.

Kruger (PA 1983:10-36) demonstrates the dominant role of the marriage metaphor in Hosea, with succeeding metaphors and similes, 'as if the prophet is stringing beads.' However, they form a systematic structured metaphorical field, and often one triggers another new or closely related image. For instance in Hos 1-3, which comprises a literary complex, symbolic acts are combined with metaphorical language presented in the form of a marriage lawsuit. However, simultaneously and primarily it serves to launch an attack on the concepts of the fertility cult, while some expressions not only inform the nation but in fact perform the break-up of the relationship between YHWH and Israel (Kruger PA:1992:8-12). He also comments on Hosea's exclusive style in avoiding direct identifications of YHWH with something else through metaphor, by rather implementing similes with the characteristic particle ׀.

2.9.1.2 Amos

Hermanson (1996:112) quotes Paul¹ who appreciatively describes the literary style of Amos as follows:

"Amos blended his new teaching with time-honoured traditions in a very polished and artistic fashion. His extensive array of literary genres includes judgement speeches, dirges, disputation sayings, exhortations, admonitions, vision reports, and eschatological promises. He exhibited a great finesse in rhetorical forms and dynamic oratory skills. His rich imagery was influenced by his profession and his

¹ Paul (1991:4-5) in his commentary on Amos, quoted in Hermanson 1996:112.

acquaintance with nature.... His metaphors and similes are abundant..., and he had a penchant for paronomasia.... He also adeptly and effectively employed the literary convention of irony... and sarcasm....” (text references omitted).

In the same fashion, Mays¹ complements Amos on his literary skills by stating:

“Many of his metaphors come from observation of the country life which he knew as shepherd and farmer.... But countryman from Tekoa though he was, his rich and polished speech warn that he is not to be taken for a simple and uncultured person. No prophet surpasses him in the combination or purity, clarity and versatility that characterize his language.”

Hermanson (1996 and 1998:438ff) identifies and categorises numerous metaphorical concepts in Amos for translating into Zulu, but in the process indirectly confirms the statements regarding Amos’ rich metaphorical “vocabulary” and linguistic competence with the phenomenon.

2.9.1.3 Deutero-Isaiah

Four types of figurative expressions can be identified in Deutero-Isaiah, namely single metaphors, metaphorical descriptions, comparisons as well as a number of parables. It is further suggested that Deutero-Isaiah frequently uses unrelated metaphors in the same context, not only to convey the meaning of his message, but to increase the emotional impact, for instance in 49:14-26. In 54:1-17, however to the contrary, Stassen (1993:5) identifies several different metaphors, which seems unrelated to each other, but indeed can be associated with the main marriage (husband/bride) metaphor. In his research regarding the covenant and apocalyptic in Isa 55-66, Kruger (HAJ 1984) identifies and discusses a variety of theological root metaphors and related metaphorical terminology describing YHWH’s covenantal Kingship in terms of, for instance: a Warrior and the military related terminology (p70ff); a Judge and the related juridical terminology (p79ff); a Comforter (p85ff); a Saviour (p88ff); a Shepherd of his flock (p91ff); and a Father (p101).

¹ Mays 1969:6 as quoted by Hermanson 1996:pp112,113.

2.9.1.4 Ezekiel

In her study concerning Ezekiel, who may be described as ‘the maker of metaphors’, Newsom (1987:188) states that “*one finds in Ezekiel a greater number of elaborately worked out metaphors, allegories, and symbolic speech than in any other prophet.*” Ezekiel’s style can be characterised by the fact that he begins with a familiar concept with which the people could identify positively. He then, for instance in his oracle against Tyre, elaborates, questioning the people’s view of it and how they measure up to the standard. “*Finally, Ezekiel uses the metaphor to demonstrate the appropriateness and the inevitability of Yahweh’s judgement on the nation in question.*” Newsom (p199) emphasises the importance of the analysis of the rhetoric of metaphor in critical exegesis. The Israelites, and the peoples of the ANE, like modern peoples, perceive religious realities through metaphor. She concludes: “*Ezekiel reminds one that it is a prophetic activity to define what these metaphors are, to subject them to critique, and to make new ones which can redescribe reality in a liberating manner.*”

2.9.1.5 Jeremiah

According to Brueggemann (1992:14,15) Jeremiah reflects a robust view of YHWH. This is evident in Jeremiah’s “*liberated speech about God, his rich metaphorical language which honors no convention*” for instance presented in Jer 2:2 as the abandoned bridegroom; in 2:13 as the fountain of living water; in 3:19 as a betrayed father; in 5:6 as a lion, a wolf, a leopard; in 8:18 as a man with heart trouble; and in 18:1 ff as a potter who discards mistakes and start over again. By means of imaginative poetry and rich metaphorical language, YHWH is presented as “*a free, passionate God who presses Israel’s speech to its imaginative limit*” (p15). Holladay (1989 2:77) comments that Jeremiah, although an unmarried man, speaks remarkably ‘tenderly of women’ and ‘has an eye for a woman’ as reflected in his use of metaphorical expressions. In his application of the marriage metaphor, he prefers the bride image and avoids harsh and ugly judgmental language in contrast to Hosea and Ezekiel. When using harlotry accusations he quickly passes over it. However, against the background of conflict, as proposed by Seitz (1989:3 and 6), Jeremiah’s usage of metaphorical language reflects conflict: conflict within YHWH, between YHWH and the people and vice versa, conflict between the prophet,

himself and YHWH, and YHWH, his prophet and Israel regarding many issues including their idolatrous practices, and finally, conflict between YHWH, his prophet and the gods.

2.9.2 Deliberate makers of metaphor?

The question arises: Were the prophets aware of the fact that they were implementing metaphors and similes in their effort to describe God and his message? In answering this question, Korpel (1990:82) says:

“it is possible to demonstrate that writers of the holy texts of both Ugarit and Israel knew perfectly well that it is impossible to describe the divine in any adequate, realistic way. They managed as well as they could with human, every-day language, and they did so in a more or less systematic way.”

Korpel¹ further demonstrates by means of examples from the OT [e.g. the ‘warrior’-God (Isa 42:13) and ‘fire’ regarding theophany] that writers knowingly used similes and metaphors, but were also aware of the fact that it renders no satisfactory descriptions (e.g. the visions and terminology of Ezekiel questioned by himself and the people).

2.9.3 Religious ‘network’ and ‘root’ metaphors

The above brief discussion illustrates that the OT prophetic literature and its authors were quite familiar with and competent in their handling of the multi-dimensional uses of metaphor. However, in addition, they were also skilled in implementing metaphors in a network or chain. Ricoeur (1976:64), in his effort to explain the relation between metaphor and symbol, makes the following important statement regarding network metaphors:

“One metaphor, in effect, calls for another and each one stays alive by conserving its power to evoke the whole network. Thus within the Hebraic tradition God is called King, Father, Husband, Lord, Shepherd, and Judge as well as Rock, Fortress, Redeemer, and Suffering Servant. The network engenders what we can call root

¹ Korpel 1990:86,87 and 620,621.

metaphors, metaphors which, on the one hand, have the power to bring together the partial metaphors borrowed from the diverse fields of our experience and thereby to assure them a kind of equilibrium. On the other hand, they have the ability to engender a conceptual diversity, I mean, an unlimited number of potential interpretations at a conceptual level. Root metaphors assemble and scatter. They assemble subordinate images together, and they scatter concepts at a higher level. They are the dominant metaphors capable of both engendering and organizing a network that serves as a junction between the symbolic level with its slow evolution and the more volatile metaphorical level.”

In the same vein, Tracy (1979:89) comments that it is commonly accepted that all major religions are grounded in certain root metaphors. Such root metaphors *“form a cluster or network in which certain sustained metaphors both organize subsidiary metaphors and diffuse new ones. These networks describe the enigma and promise of the human situation and prescribe certain remedies for the situation.”* He argues that it is of vital importance that the study of metaphor and more specifically, the religious and theological use of metaphor, must receive more attention from scholars. The treatment of metaphors as ‘decorative’ substitution, mere ‘stand-ins’ for a ‘real’ literal meaning, has marked the history of Christian exegesis and preaching (p90). Fortunately, the interest and the approach to root metaphors changed for the good, due to shifts in hermeneutical methods and other factors. This resulted in a change from the substitution to modern interaction or tension theories in the analysis of metaphor, viewing it as productive of meaning (p95).

Soskice (1985:112) makes a meaningful contribution to the topic by stating that in practice Christians tend to elevate one root metaphor (which she calls model) above others as central to their understanding and experience of their relationship to God. For example, the model of God as ‘Father’ in the NT is central for many compared to God as ‘Judge’, or ‘King’. This is due to the fact that the model of God as ‘Father’ is more personal and intimate, and it provides them with an explanatory basis as well as a depiction of the reality of their relationship with him. The comment is also applicable to OT exegesis and theology reflecting a history of efforts to centralise one or other concept, to list a few, such as ‘covenant’ (Eichrodt), ‘Kingdom’ (Klein), ‘God’s Lordship’ (Köhler, regards the ruler

ship and kingship as mere corollaries to His Lordship), ‘communion between god and man’ (Vriezen).¹

Although scientists claimed in the past that they can only rely on empirical truth and therefore insisted on precise literal formulations, science, like theology, rests upon tentative and hypothetical metaphors, according to Mac Cormac (1976:99). He illustrates this by comparing basic root metaphors used in science and theology discourses. Science used the root metaphor, the ‘world-as-organism,’ up to the nineteenth century when a major shift to the ‘world-as-process’ as root metaphor has occurred. In the same fashion, Christian religion used the root metaphor ‘religion-is-the-objective-truth-in-the-Bible’. Subsequently it changed to ‘experience-of-the-divine-in-human-life’ (Schleiermacher), which led to the apologetic root metaphor ‘religion-is-a-personal experience.’ Mac Cormac (p98ff) concludes that both science and religion involve human experience, and neither could flourish without the language of metaphor. Because both must convey ideas of the unknown, both have the need to change and create new terminology, and offer new ways of understanding by means of conceiving analogies from existing knowledge and experience.

2.9.4 Religious language, metaphor and Theology

According to MacFague (1982:31), “*metaphor is the way we think,*” and she states that “*a metaphorical theology is indigenous to Christianity*” for “*poets use metaphor all the time because they are constantly speaking about the great unknowns – morality, love, fear, joy, guilt, hope and so on.*” Therefore, “*religious language is deeply metaphorical.*” Contrary to the Aristotelian view of metaphor and language, which regards metaphor as an ornamental rhetorical device superimposed on ordinary language, she states that “*metaphor is ordinary language. It is the way we think*” (MacFague 1982:15-16).

Korpel (1990:77) apparently agrees when he states:

“Because of its special capacity to hint at truth that cannot be described adequately in terms of general human experience, metaphor is the ideal vehicle to talk about

¹ See Hasel 1972:49ff for a discussion of different models proposed for the center of OT theology.

God whom 'no one has ever seen.' In this case too, extended usage or tradition eventually creates a solid basis of common experience allowing believers to communicate in a meaningful way. Religious tradition is a form of rule-following, whereas religious innovation is a legitimate attempt to create new rules through the coining of new metaphors."

2.9.5 Myth and metaphor

One of the major problems in the defense of the Christian religion's reliance on metaphor, as identified by Soskice (1985:x), relates to terminology imprecision where terms such as 'metaphor', 'model', 'analogy', and 'myth' are used almost synonymously. She states (p56): *myth is all too often not distinguished in theological discussion from metaphor. Like allegory and satire, myth has its locus in textual or narrative analysis; and not in discussion of figures of speech.*" A common assumption is that language in its pre-scientific modes of thought was originally mythically originated, but then lost its mythical value and became 'mere metaphors'. She summarises this assumption as follows: *That metaphor has its origins in myth and that it is a mode peculiar to primitive peoples who are unable to distinguish the literal from the metaphorical;*". The related postulates underlying this assumption are typically of the traditional notion, namely:

"that each metaphor has two meanings, a literal meaning and a metaphorical one, and that correspondingly every metaphor is simultaneously both metaphorically true and literally false, and, finally, that a metaphor, if it is to be credited with cognitive significance, should always be reducible without loss to a literal statement" (Soskice:68).

2.9.6 Metaphor and religious experience

The task of theology is primarily to determine *"how a dialogue between God and man that took place and is recorded in the language and thought forms of ancient eras in Palestine can actually be heard, understood, and entered into by modern man."* (Smart 1964:13). For effective communication, the ancient language, culture, and thoughts need to be interpreted, and translated into the modern idiom. If this does not happen, we will stay *"prisoners of the words and concepts"*, who cannot be free to become *"prisoners of the*

hidden word that makes them (us) free, really free, for God's service in their (our) own time." (Smart 1972:163,164). Jüngel (1974:122) emphasises this urgent need as follows: *"Die Ausarbeitung einer Metaphorologie ist sowohl für die Dogmatik als auch für die Praktische Theologie ein dringendes Desiderat."* TeSelle (1975:30f) also warns that *"if theology becomes overtly abstract, conceptual and systematic, it separates thought and life, belief and practice, words and their embodiment, making it more difficult if not impossible for us to believe in our hearts what we confess with our lips."* In his discussion of 'How the Bible becomes Contemporary', Smart (1972:164) states that the contemporary 'lostness' of preaching and the Bible is not to be blamed on the Scriptures. It must rather be attributed to *'our obtuseness in binding them to the words and concepts of Biblical times, or of some era in the history of the church, in such a way that they are not free to speak in their own way to a new and different day.'*

Brueggemann (1992:14,15) also complains about domesticated language usage in ministry, which reduces God to a narrow and predictable entity. He reckons (p15) that *"The reduction of metaphor not only abuses the text but betrays the available energy for its present interpretation."* Each and every time Jeremiah speaks about YHWH, he has the amazing capacity to create a new scenario. He concludes that *"Predictable language is a measure of a deadened relationship in which address is reduced to slogan and clichè."*

Soskice (1985:159) emphasises the importance of the OT and its metaphors as the source of Christian descriptive language rendering the embodiment of people's understanding and experiencing of God. However, it is a commonplace that the twentieth century believer has lost his appreciation of and living sense for Biblical metaphors. It has been asserted that this is due to urbanisation, which caused ignorance of metaphors of God as shepherd and his people as sheep, the vine keeper and his people the vineyard. This problem can also be ascribed to the fact that people no longer read the Bible. However, one tends to fully underwrite Soskice's opinion that experience is the corner stone of religion, and *"All the metaphors we use to speak of God arise from experiences of that which cannot adequately be described"*, and ultimately, *"progress towards God is a progress from experience to images, and from images to prayer."*

2.10 ON IDENTIFYING HEBREW METAPHORS

“Metaphor is a phenomenon of predication, not denomination”. This statement of Ricoeur (1994:50) represents in a nutshell an important difference between the traditional approach and modern views of metaphor. In addition the observation of the Lakoffian conceptual theory namely, that metaphor is the product of a cognitive process,¹ clearly shows that the development in the theory of metaphor has progressed to an advanced, multi-dimensional linguistic and cognitive stage. However, the literature which deals with the subject, represents a great variety of viewpoints and theories, and produces much confusing and conflicting terminology. Thus, the question remains: How do the practicing minister and ordinary Bible student, identify metaphor in a literary context? One conclusion may be drawn when studying metaphor and that is that metaphor is a vital, versatile but open-ended linguistic phenomena as demonstrated and proved by the metaphorical word game of proponents in formulating their theories.

Gumpel (1984:2) refers to what she calls the ‘Ingendahl Experiment’. This is based on Ingendahl’s experiment using a group of individuals to identify the metaphorical words in a newspaper article. Only two out of the fifty-eight metaphors in the article could be identified by all participants. This is an indication of the difficulties and differences encountered when it comes to the identification of metaphor by the ‘ordinary’ language user, as well as the literary experts. Even among researchers, there are vast differences as to what should be considered as metaphor. For example, Ingendahl laments the outcome of his experiment, but Gumpel asks: *“What does literary language have to do with a feuilletonistic write-up?”* This question (an implied statement) is a clear indication that some regard metaphor as belonging to the poetic, literary sphere, and others as part of all language situations. Recognising metaphors and the proper analysis thereof² is of vital importance in Biblical studies, exegesis, translation, and theologizing, in order to explore

¹ Which Mac Cormac 1985:4, assumes to be the human brain that acts as a computational device to generate metaphors.

² See the comments by Gräbe (1990:59) on the importance of skilled handling of poetic and narrative conventions; Newsom (1987:199) on exegesis; Tracy (1979:89-104) on a better understanding of religion and liberation of theological concepts; Del Corro (1991:114ff.) and Majola (1993:341ff) on Bible translation.

the performative functions and inherent wealth of meanings accommodated in the phenomenon.

Loewen (1982:238ff) points out that “*several kinds of ‘meaning-stealing’*” could be the result if a translator does not recognise a figure of speech. This is also in some regard applicable to the Bible reader and exegete disregarding or misunderstanding metaphor. He warns translators against the following:

- (a) *“The translation will sound like nonsense.”*
- (b) *“The translation will confuse the readers and the hearers.”*
- (c) *“The translation will be understood easily and quickly, but with a different meaning and sometimes even the wrong meaning.”*
- (d) *“The local culture will tend to give the literal translation a very wrong meaning.”*

Hermanson (1995:111ff and 1996:67-78), correctly observes “*From literature consulted, it appears that although the writers have much to say about metaphor in the Bible, they have little, if anything, to say about how Hebrew metaphor may be recognised.*” He lists and discusses six different characteristics highlighted by various researchers, which seems to be in compliance with the theory applied in their work namely:

- (1) *“Metaphor affirms one thing ‘to be’ another.”*
- (2) *“Hebrew metaphor is a simile without the comparative particle ׀”*
- (3) *“Metaphor is a literary genre.”*
- (4) *“Metaphor is an individual flash of imaginative insight.”*
- (5) *“Metaphor is an unconscious synopsis of similar phenomena in the perceptible and imaginative spheres.”*
- (6) *“Metaphor is understanding or experiencing one thing in terms of another.”*

Soskice (1985:15) stresses the importance of a working definition with basic properties in order to identify metaphors, and suggests the following: “*metaphor is that figure of speech whereby we speak about one thing in terms which are seen to be suggestive of another.*” She argues that metaphor is a figure of speech and therefore a form of language use and not a mental event such as a process of imagination, perception, or an emotive response

(p16). Nor should metaphor be classified in grammatical categories such as noun, verb, or adjective, because it does not appear in one syntactic form only, but is distinguished by semantic and pragmatic criteria (pp18,19). She concludes: *“a metaphor is established as soon as it is clear that one thing is being spoken of in terms that are suggestive of another and can be extended until this is no longer the case.”* (p23).

Black (1984:25) opposes the notion of predetermined rules for identifying metaphors. He only offers the rule of ‘violation’ occurring in the metaphorical statement, but immediately adds: *“there can be no rules for ‘creatively’ violating rules. And that is why there can be no dictionary of metaphors.”* He emphatically states his viewpoint on this namely: *“Any attempt to be more precise about identifying and individuating criteria for metaphorical statements will be embarrassed by.....different and even partially conflicting readings”* of the same metaphorical statement.

Riccoeur (1994:247) in his study of the creation of meaning in language, constantly uses the theory of ‘tension’ (or ‘controversion’) as guidance. To my mind, this is a close resemblance to the ‘violation rule’ of Black or even to Aristotle’s ‘deviation rule,’ which could be used as an identifying characteristic of metaphor in statements and literature. Riccoeur provides three applications of his notion of tension, namely:

- (a) *“tension within the statements: between tenor and vehicle, between focus and frame, between principal subject and secondary subject; (one might add, between source and target domains - ajb).*
- (b) *“tension between two interpretations: between a literal interpretation that perishes at the hands of semantic impertinence and a metaphorical interpretation whose sense emerges through non-sense;”* (or tension between the understanding or meanings of two concepts – ajb).
- (c) *“tension in the relational function of the copula: between identity and difference in the interplay of resemblance.”* (or tension in the syntactical construction, suggesting an experience of one in terms of the other - ajb).

2.11 A WORKING 'DEFINITION'

In conclusion, a condensed version of this researcher's approach on how to recognise metaphor, abstracted from this study as a whole, as well as a hermeneutical model as applied in the rest of this study, will follow.

2.11.1 Identification and categorisation

To recognise and select metaphor in this study, the working definition of the Lakoffian Conceptual theory of metaphor will be applied (Lakoff and Johnson 1980:5). The definition reads as follows: "*The essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another.*" The methods of domain mapping, from source to target domain, and categorisation according to metaphorical conceptual structures, will be employed where needed and possible in order to analyse the nature of the relationship YHWH, Israel and the gods.

Commentaries and related articles, lexicons and concordances will be used as aids to identify every expression in this relationship where something or someone is conceived and described in terms of something else. Special attention will be given to so-called submerged metaphors,¹ where A is B, but only B is mentioned. Verbs, copula and nouns in metaphoric expressions, the so-called 'dead'-metaphor, and other related metaphoric tropes such as similes and metonymy will be identified. Finally, the role of analogy and resemblance will be taken into account. All these will be engaged in order to determine individual and so-called 'chain' or 'network' or 'root' metaphors and related concepts implemented in the Jeremiaic version of the conflict between YHWH, Israel and the gods.

Mac Cormac's distinction of levels in the cognitive process, by which metaphors are generated, renders a workable scheme for recognising and analysing metaphor. The levels are: Level 1: Surface language; Level 2: Semantics and syntax; Level 3: Cognition;

¹ The *submerged metaphor* is characterised by the fact that the tenor is never mentioned in the micro nor macro contexts of the text, thus totally suspended, due to the fact that the vehicle has become self-reliant. A *suspended metaphor* is characterised by the tenor not mentioned in the micro-context of the pericope though present in the macro-context of the literature. (See Ingendahl 1971:44; Maartens 1982:17).

(1985:2 and 21). The focus on the metaphorical discourse,¹ sentence and word (in that order) as observed and suggested by Ricoeur (1994:3), complemented by the cognitive element emphasised by the Lakoffian theory and Mac Cormac's cognitive interaction theory, will be taken into account.

2.11.2 Hermeneutical guidelines

However, once the metaphorical concepts are identified, classified in domains and categorised in root concepts, the exegete will need a hermeneutical guide for understanding and interpretation of metaphor. Korpel (1990:617,618) in his study regarding the comparison of similarities and dissimilarities in Ugaritic and Israelite terms to describe the divine, presents his view of metaphor within the framework of a language and meaning theory (related to Wittgenstein's notion that 'meaning is use'). Although rather lengthy, it is quoted in full, because it renders a workable account for an adequate theory of language as well as for understanding and interpreting metaphor (author's bold print added in the quotation):

1. *A sign is the use of a perceptible form with the intention to communicate meaning.*
2. *Mostly, however, intended meaning is communicated by means of a finite set of signs like a word, a sentence or a text.*
3. *The choice of the set of signs is determined by the context of the user and probably by the idea the user has of the context of the receiver of the message.*
4. *From the viewpoint of the receiver the understanding of a set of signs is a most hazardous affair. Since the context of the user is unique to every individual, full understanding of the meaning of a set of signs is often unattainable. What the receiver of a set of signs might be tempted to call "understanding" is often merely an interpretative hypothesis about its meaning based on an arbitrary reconstruction of the user-context. This is the reason why so many interpretations happen to be utterly wrong.*

¹ Regarding surface language Ricoeur (1994:50) reminds us that "*metaphor is the result of the tension between two terms in a metaphorical utterance.*" He elaborates further, saying: "*By this I mean that the tension is not simply between two words, but within the very copula of the metaphorical utterance.*" (p68).

5. *Fortunately, rules may restrict the possibilities of free interpretation. If the receiver is a good sport, playing according to the book, full understanding is possible for every sign governed by a rule. A well-defined explanatory context may act as such, but also grammar, intonation, diction and emphasis.*
6. *Because full understanding is dependent on rules or customs, it would be impossible to understand anything new if not **a mechanism for the creation of new rules** had been invented. The driving forces of this mechanism are the neologism and the trope, especially **the metaphor**.*
7. *The metaphor may be defined as the **deliberate use** of a set of signs (vehicle) **against the rule**, in order to give the set of signs **a new meaning by association** (tenor). As with signals in general, **the rules of context** are our most precious help in interpreting and understanding metaphor. At first, when a metaphor or simile is still fresh, the **comparison** involved is nothing more than an **interpretation** which may prove to be false. Other interpretations are possible and the process is essentially a **multi-dimensional exploratory effort**.*

*This lends a certain open-endedness to metaphors and similes. From the moment of their creation they are subject to the semantical process. Just as any other sign or set of signs can be part of a semantic sphere of related concepts, metaphors can form loosely structured **multidimensional sets** which can be placed under the heading of **one basic metaphor**. Through repeated use **metaphors become conventionalized**. It follows from our distinction between a rule (normal use) and the initial anomaly of metaphor that we do not believe in theories claiming that all language is basically metaphorical.”*

Equipped with this working definition, the prophetic literary material of the book of Jeremiah will be explored for creative and conventional metaphoric concepts employed by the ‘maker/s of metaphor’ in the relationship YHWH, Israel and the gods. It will hopefully become clear that concepts which were employed in the book of Jeremiah, reflect the nature and extent of the traumatic conflict and threatening experience of the developing Yahwistic monotheism during the events of especially 597 to 586/7 BCE and later.

Chapter 3

THE BOOK OF JEREMIAH – WHOSE LITERATURE?

3.0 Introduction

Any study of the book of Jeremiah should give attention to the general questions about the author/s, the dating, and the compilation of the material and contents. In addition, especially in a study regarding the relationship Israel, YHWH and the gods, the theories regarding the origin of Israel in relation to the Canaanites as well as the emergence of Israel's monotheism, cannot be ignored. These issues are not always clear at first sight in the book of Jeremiah and very controversial in recent studies. Therefore, the aim of this chapter is to investigate the controversial exegetical issues, problems and questions at stake in the Book of Jeremiah as well as its place and role in the literature of the OT canon.

3.1 Is Jeremiah present or absent?

An investigation of recent studies regarding the authorship of the book of Jeremiah compels one to ask: Where is Jeremiah? Traditionally the older, and even some more recently published conservative commentaries,¹ usually devote a separate chapter or section to the person and office of Jeremiah. Commentators focusing on the life and character of Jeremiah, tend to analyse every oracle and narrative in the book in relation to the chronology of his life as well as a historical setting. In this approach, the emotional, prayer and spiritual life, personality and personal struggles of Jeremiah are reconstructed from the given information in the book of Jeremiah and exegesis is applied accordingly. Thus, it is concluded that we know more about the prophet Jeremiah than any other Biblical character.²

¹ See Leslie 1954:17ff and 332ff; Keil 1975:11-20; Thompson 1989:3ff and 94ff; and most extensively Holladay 1989:24-35, and to deny Jeremiah's existence, Carroll 1986:55-64.

² See e.g. Holladay 1989:1.

In contrast, recent studies tend to ignore the person and character of Jeremiah. Scholars state that the person of Jeremiah almost disappears if the interpolations of reinterpretations and ideological additions to the original prophecies by later redactors are to be eliminated. Deuteronomistic interpolations and ideologies were superimposed over the original work of the prophet, to the point that the genuine Jeremiah is hardly recognisable. On this basis it is alleged that we know very little of the personal life and ministry of Jeremiah, as is the case with other prophets in the Old Testament. Despite all information about Jeremiah given by the book under his name, Carroll (1986:58-64) nevertheless states that this information represents the fabrication of the Deuteronomists and their ideology. He further states (p64) that Jeremiah is *“not a real person but a conglomerate of many things reflecting the fortunes of various Jewish communities during and after the Babylonian exile.”* Smith³ emphatically states that Biblical texts consist of *“layer over layer of deposits from generation after generation of nameless persons who lived in these structures, added, destroyed, remodelled and left the complex to their successors for further alterations.”* This is especially true of the book of Jeremiah. Therefore, according to these proponents (Carroll 1986:57,58), there is not necessarily a connection between Jeremiah the prophet and the poetry or ‘confessions’ presented in the book of Jeremiah. In fact, it is alleged that identifying *“the ‘historical’ Jeremiah is, at least, as difficult as finding the historical Jesus”* (p63).

The result of the non-Jeremianic approach is that according to these scholars, the historical contexts of oracles are almost unidentifiable due to the use or ‘abuse’ of the original material by later interpreters. The exegete and homilist find themselves between these two extremes, as well as some compromising viewpoints, when studying commentaries on the book of Jeremiah. On the one hand, through the implementation of theory upon theory, assumption upon assumption, literally ‘layers upon layers’ of proposals, assumptions and emendations, the book is declared as a literary work fabricated of ‘layers over layers’ of redactional reinterpretation and additions. Almost nothing is left as original and authoritative Jeremianic preaching or as biography. On the other hand, the more conservative commentators tend to force acceptable historical settings for oracles to prove

³ Smith 1984:256, see Carroll 1986:81.

Jeremiah's involvement and only give recognition to a few minor redactional additions also by means of 'layers upon layers' of assumptions, theories, and emendations.

Nevertheless, an exegete is compelled to give an account of the person and role of Jeremiah. In this regard Carroll's warning (1986:65), that we actually know very little about the person of Jeremiah and the questions regarding the style, reasons, locations and the identity of the author(s) of the Jeremianic literature, should be heeded. We can only rely on assumed knowledge and theories and not on controlled facts or that which is presented in the book of Jeremiah as *prima facie* evidence. Furthermore, Carroll (1986:85) notes that literature with so many metaphors, ambiguities, lacking consistency in contents and with little information about important issues as the book of Jeremiah, generally speaking requires in many cases a minimalistic or agnostic approach in which one would rather confess: 'I don't know.'

However, that could and perhaps should be the distant and indirect approach of the historical method aiming to construct a factual history or biography. The Old Testament as part of the Bible is a document of recorded faith and beliefs of the divine involvement of YHWH in the history of Israel as well as the world. Authors and redactors of the Old Testament give an account of their theological insights and interpretation of historical events and folk legends as they believed, received from the divine. Whether propaganda of a specific ideology or political or theological approach, nothing can change the facts of this theologized history as recorded by the Biblical writers. Although exact historical facts might be lacking and the method of writing history is not compliant with the Western method of histography or autobiography, the fact remains that the Old Testament (as well as the New Testament) is a canonical theological document, which should be treated and approached as such.

In this regard, Miller (1989:153) states: "*It seems to me, in fact, that historical-critical methodology would collapse altogether if the traditional Judeo-Christian understanding of God's dynamic involvement in human history were even taken as a possibility.*" To the contrary, it seems to the present author, that the pillars of Old Testament and Christian theology and faith would be removed, if the historical-critical methodology does not

recognise the reality of interpreted and theologized history of divine involvement, which must be accommodated in theological studies of the Biblical literature. The same applies to the person, character and preaching of Jeremiah as formed (or fabricated for that matter) from collected material, interpretations and reinterpretations and other experiences ascribed to him.

It seems that following an ideological or rigorous historical-critical method, he will indeed disappear, although he plays an important theological role in the canonised book of Jeremiah. Therefore, the figure of Jeremiah, although not always in the traditional detailed picture, is indispensable for understanding the theological history as presented in the book of Jeremiah. The present study is based on this approach. The indispensable advisory role of the prophet in the Israelite community and royal house, his authority, the importance of divine prophetic oracles, opinions, predictions of future events, and theories of historical events, as well as the theological impact of the fulfilled prophecies, in the Israelite and ANE societies can only be ignored or underestimated at a cost.¹

3.2 Growing scepticism towards Biblical literature

Another controversial issue relates to the trend of a growing scepticism towards Biblical literature, particularly prophetic literature, as unreliable historical sources. In the circles of historical criticism the rule that a Biblical source must be supported by extra-Biblical evidence before it could be regarded as reliable historical data, is generally maintained.² Lemche,³ a proponent of the new archaeology movement, explicitly states that only “*archaeology and critical historical methods must be used to reconstruct Israel’s history*” due to the fact that the Hebrew Bible “*is a very late document from the Hellenistic era with theological fictions for narratives.*” Therefore, “*the OT narratives of the conquest*”

¹ See Von Rad 1965 II:3-125. Also Von Rad 1973 regarding the message of the prophets; Lindblom 1967; Koch 1983; Tucker 1987:27-40, and Wolff 1987:14-26 re. future events; Malamat 1987:33-40 re. Mari prophecies and the Bible; Walton 1989:201-216 re. Biblical prophetic literature and ANE prophecies; Verhoef 1993; Kruger P 1999:73-82; Fabian 2000:9-25 re. prophetic fulfillment in Deuteronomistic works; Also Deist 1990:71-84, re. problematic issues relating to the office of the prophets; For the viewpoint of the canonical approach, see Childs 1985:122-144 re. the office and function, and true and false prophets.

² Rendtorff 1988:1-10; Kruger HAJ 1996:53,54; Lemche in Thompson 1992:133, and Scheffler 1998:522.

³ Lemche’s view is summarised by Gnuse 1997:45,46 and critically analysed by Thompson 1992:129-138.

and by implication other OT material “*cannot be taken at face value in a historical sense*”. Miller’s (1989:152) paraphrasing of Long’s (1984:3) viewpoint reflects the current trend, namely that “*we cannot extract trustworthy historical information from a holy book that tells stories.*” However, this issue is typical of and related to a historical approach, which focuses only on the reconstruction of Israel’s history. In a theological canonical approach, the questions regarding the historical aspects cannot be ignored completely, but equally or even more important, the acknowledgement of the development of the theological ideas, the authority and canonical status of the religious literature is indispensable and a vital determining factor (Childs 1987:43-49).

3.3 Late dating of OT literature

The recent trend among OT scholars to assign a much later dating to all OT literature as earlier scholars understood it is another factor that must be considered. A post-exilic dating due to ideological motives during the Persian times¹ or even during the Hellenistic period,² is a common trend among the so-called ‘late-daters.’³ Lemche for example, goes to the extreme and states that OT literature cannot be dated before the second century BC because no extra-Biblical evidence (except for the Qumran-documents) exists to support any other view.⁴ Such an approach undoubtedly holds far-reaching consequences for the reconstruction of the history of Ancient Israel as well as the interpretation of OT literature. OT commentaries, histories, and theologies based on generally accepted views, will eventually become something of the past and outdated (Scheffler 1998:522). Although the exact dating of the prophetic literature and every oracle is not a first priority in a theological and canonical approach, the historical circumstances of the period and the development of the literature through the different stages are of importance to understand the meaning behind the language.⁵ For the purpose of this study, the pre-exilic period starting with the reign of Josiah (621/620 BC), the exilic, and the period of the return from

¹ See Carroll 1986:65-82.

² See Lemche as quoted by Scheffler 1998:522 and Gnuse 1997:46.

³ This is Scheffler’s term, who pleads for the necessity of an open and penetrating debate between the late-daters and the traditional historical-critical scholars (Scheffler 1998:531).

⁴ Lemche 1995 in an oral conversation with Scheffler 1998:527.

⁵ Von Rad 1973:62,63 emphasises ‘the word of power’ in the ANE where the etymology, the play on words, and associations play an important role in creating meaning.

exile until the end of the sixth century BC, will be regarded as the time of the origin, recording and development of the book of Jeremiah.

3.4 The origin of Israel and the emergence of monotheism

To demonstrate the growing scepticism towards Biblical literature and the tendency of late dating, one example of the latest theories regarding the origin of Israel and emergence of monotheism will suffice. Halpern's statement e.g. has alarming consequences for the exegesis of Jeremiah and the gods or any other Old Testament topic. He¹ states: *"Scholars sometimes speak of the "introduction" of the cult of Baal into Israel in the ninth century B.C.E., of Canaanite influence on Israel's religion.....But Israelite religion did not import Canaanite religion. Israel's religion was a Canaanite religion.....Israel's religion – the practice of the people – did not develop along the lines of the expurgated fragments the Zadokite clerisy enshrined."* This view can be compared with the traditional viewpoint of Kaufmann (1961:2). He states: *"...Israelite religion was an original creation of the people of Israel. It was absolutely different from anything the pagan world ever knew; its monotheistic world view had no antecedents in paganism."* Nevertheless, one must agree with Gottwald² who stated that *"only as the full materiality of Ancient Israel is more securely grasped will we be able to make proper sense of its spirituality."*

The above-mentioned contradictory statements about Israel's religion, implies another determining factor which needs to be considered in the present study. The latter relates to the latest evidence from archaeological circles especially regarding the religion and cult of Israel. Theories regarding the origin of Israel and the emergence of its monotheism are at stake here. A brief summary and discussion under separate headings 3.5 and 3.6 follows.

3.5. Theories regarding the origin of Israel

Before the issues regarding Jeremiah's authorship, date, and contents, as well as Israel's monotheism, can be addressed, an appropriate theory regarding the origin of Israel should be identified. Understanding the Israelite conquest and settlement process is of the utmost

¹ Halpern 1983; see Dever 1987:215.

² Gottwald 1979; see Dever 1987:214.

importance. This will provide the necessary insights into the origin of Israel and the emergence and nature of their religion, especially its monotheistic character in the context of the ANE. In this regard, use will be made of the recent summary of Gnuse (1997:24-61).

3.5.1 Traditional theories of Israelite settlement

Three traditional theories of Israelite settlement, which dominated the scene of OT theology, histories, and commentaries since 1945 until 1975, can be distinguished. In sum, these theories propose either that the conquest was a violent invasion of the land or a peaceful infiltration or an internal revolution. This took place during the Iron Age 1 (1200-1050 BC) in Palestine. Under these circumstances an Israelite highland nation with a unique culture and religion, came into being. The religion of Israel, the worshipping of YHWH based on covenantal commitment, stood in direct opposition to the Canaanite religion of the land. However, by means of compromises with the Canaanite religion, and idolatrous policies implemented by some kings, religious syncretism occurred. To combat this trend, some prophets and kings, who were reform-orientated, launched several attempts to restore the original Yahwism. In the conflict with idolatry, Israel's involvement was viewed as 'backsliding,' and the preaching of the prophets as a call to return to the pure traditional Yahwism. The restoration of true Yahwism was eventually achieved during the Babylonian exile in the years 586 to 539 BC, resulting in a true monotheistic religion for all Jews (Gnuse 1997:13). A brief overview of the different nuances of these theories will suffice.

3.5.1.1 Gradual and peaceful infiltration by semi-nomadic Israelites¹

This theory, which mainly originated among German theological circles, held that pastoralist or semi-nomadic people from the Transjordan region, peacefully infiltrated into the Cisjordan highlands of Palestine. Their movements were of a typical migratory nature, but eventually they settled and took up farming. In a later stage they expanded in numbers as well as territory, which brought them in armed conflict with the Canaanite lowlanders.

¹ First proposed by Alt, later by Noth, recently by Weippert and supported by Israeli archaeologists Mazar, Aharoni, Kempinski and Zertal. See Gnuse 1997:24,25 for a summary. Also Miller 1989:156.

This conflict in turn inspired the folk tales of a conquest. Gradually a sense of an own identity developed, and a twelve-tribe league was formed. The monarchy emerged from the latter system. The final unity was achieved during the reign of David.

3.5.1.2 A violent conquest by means of a systematic, military invasion by Joshua¹

An American model of a violent invasion, supported by Israeli archaeologists and historians, followed the basic Biblical account of the origin of Israel. This approach posed that Joshua led a well-planned military invasion of Palestine, which was probably more extensive as described in the Biblical accounts. The proponents of this theory associated archaeological evidence dating from the Late Bronze Age regarding certain events in Egypt and a pattern of city destructions in Palestine with the Exodus from Egypt and the conquest of Canaan.

3.5.1.3 An internal revolution by oppressed and para-social bandits²

The hypothesis of an internal revolution also called the ‘peasant revolt’ model, proposed that poor Canaanites, oppressed by Egyptian taxation and structures, rebelled against their masters and fled to the highlands. A group of YHWH-worshippers from Egypt initiated the revolt and they also influenced other bandit migrant groups in the highlands to join in worshipping the new god YHWH. This newly formed Israeli group finally defeated the Canaanite lowland cities under the leadership of David. Unfortunately Solomon started a new policy, which lead to a syncretism of religions.

3.5.1.4 Criticism leveled at the traditional theories

The understanding of the settlement process affects the interpretation and theological application of Israel’s faith and culture. Proponents of the traditional theories usually put great emphasis on Israel’s superior culture, morality, and religion in comparison with their

¹ The leading proponents were Albright, Wright, Kaufmann, Glueck, Bright, Lapp, Yadin, Malamat. See Gnuse 1997:25,26, and also Miller 1989:156.

² Advocated by Mendenhall and Gottwald. See Gnuse 1997:26,27,28 for a brief discussion. He classifies Mendenhall’s presentation as a more covenantal approach. Dever (1987:214) characterises Gottwald’s paradigm presented in his work: *The tribes of Yahweh: A Sociology of the Religion of Liberated Israel, 1250-1050 B.C.E.* (1979), as an inauguration of a new era in the investigation of the history of Israel, but “uncomfortably close to Marxist (or other) theories of economic determinism.”

contemporary neighbours' cultures, especially the Canaanites. Interpretations of the revolutionary models for example inspired theologies of liberation, and the peaceful infiltration models implemented the theory of evolution to explain the process of Israel's cultural and religious development (Gnuse 1997:23).

Extensive critique on these theories came mainly from archaeological circles.¹ They pointed out that no substantial archaeological evidence exists to confirm a large infiltration of outsiders, whether peaceful or violent, into Palestine. However, commonalities, and continuity between Israel's culture and the late Bronze Age Palestine (1550-1200 BC) and their contemporary Canaanites, indicate that the Israelites could not have been outsiders. Furthermore, archaeological findings of the destroyed cities in Palestine point to different times of destruction and speak against a violent invasion during the time of the conquest allocated by these theories. For example, Jericho and Ai show no signs of conquest in the Joshua-era. According to recent archaeological findings, destroyed cities in Palestine were more likely attacked by Egyptian forces during an earlier era. Other destroyed cities mentioned in Biblical records were uninhabited during the so-called conquest era. It seems that archaeological data from another era, namely the period of 1220 to 1200 BC, were used to support their theory of a violent invasion during 1200 –1050 BC.

Furthermore, critics also point out the lack of evidence for a peasant revolt in Palestine, or anywhere in the ancient world. Proponents of the social revolution theory are accused of imposing modern revolutionary or Marxist ideas upon the small communities of ancient Palestine. A lack of knowledge of nomadism, the tribal structures, the bandit phenomenon and the egalitarian village life, is also conspicuous in the different theories.

3.5.2 New archaeology models

Recently new models based on recent archaeological discoveries have eroded these theories.²

¹ See Gnuse 1997:28-31 for a brief overview.

² For a summary of critique see Gnuse 1997:28-31, and Dever 1987:211-217 for brief discussions on the utilisation of archaeological discoveries in the major publications regarding the history of the religion of Israel during the past century.

Dever¹ remarks:

“...the ‘archaeological revolution’ in biblical history that Albright foresaw has come at last, but it may have sobering consequences. The ‘new archaeology’ may be, in fact, far more revolutionary than anyone has yet grasped – if we give it a chance.” He also issues a warning that *“archaeological discoveries are literally forcing us to rewrite the entire history of ancient Israel, from the so-called conquest to the exile and return.”*

On these bases two contradictory histories could be produced, namely ‘a history of ancient Palestine’ based on archaeological evidence, and ‘a history of Israelite religion’ based on texts of the Hebrew Bible. Thompson (1991:92) concludes:

“The synthetic approach to historiography, which has dominated our field at least since Eduard Meyer, must now be abandoned. If we are ever to achieve our exegetical goal of allowing the biblical narrative to be heard and understood within the modern context of our discipline, the first and primary need is to establish, in all the fullness and detail possible, an independent history of early Palestine and Israel that might serve as the historical context from which these narratives speak. Without such an interpretive matrix, we continue to read the biblical tradition in faith – as through a glass darkly.”

Gnuse² rightly admits that these latest theories regarding the origin and emergence of Israel, have far reaching implications for the theological understanding and interpretation of the settlement of Israel as well as the emergence of monotheism.

3.5.2.1 A new paradigm

The new model of the ‘new archaeology’³ of the 1970’s and 1980’s, proposes that Israel gradually emerged through a process of internal and peaceful transformation. This theory

¹ See Dever 1991:108 and 1987:216.

² Gnuse 1997:17 and 22 in his work *“No other gods: Emergent monotheism in Israel.”*

³ Dever’s description of the movement in 1987:219.

is based on recent archeological findings of significant population growth and peaceful expansion on the highlands of Palestine and a simultaneous decline in the population of lowland Canaanite cities. Archaeological discoveries also indicated *“the continuity between lowland urban Canaanite and highland village Israelite culture, especially in regard to pottery, farming techniques, tools and building construction”* (Gnuse 1997:32). On this basis a new paradigm emerged, suggesting that *“in some way Canaanites gradually evolved into Israelites as social and political conditions changed at the beginning of the Iron Age”* (p33). However, the causes of the process of peaceful transformation are presented in a variety of proposals by the various researchers, which can be divided into four categories (following Gnuse 1997:33ff).

3.5.2.1.1 Peaceful Withdrawal

A first group of scholars suggests a peaceful withdrawal into the highlands due to: conflict in the lowland valleys (Callaway); severe economic and social pressure (Lenski); agricultural intensification and diversification (Hopkins); an urban collapse of Canaanite cities (Frick); violent perpetration by Egyptians and sea peoples (Ahlström and Meyers), and to evade taxation (Soggin and Romer). According to these theories, no settlement of outsiders occurred, only movements of indigenous people from the valleys and the fringes of the desert to the highlands took place (Gnuse 1997:33-38).

3.5.2.1.2 Internal Nomadism

A second group of scholars poses a model of internal nomadic settlement suggesting that Israel: (1) was an ethnically united group long before the conquest, who moved between cities and urban areas and eventually settled to farming (de Geus); (2) originated from a group who migrated from Egypt, ‘culture-land nomads’, who settled in the plains (Fritz); (3) was initially a group of ‘enclosed nomads’ with a distinct identity, who moved into the highlands due to wars and subsequently expanded as pastoralists, and settled down during the thirteenth century which eventually led to the formation of a state (Finkelstein). Again, these theories suggest peaceful settlement and extensive contact and a symbiosis with the Canaanites (Gnuse 1997:38-44).

3.5.2.1.3 Peaceful Transition or Transformation

The theory of peaceful transition or transformation poses the view that Israel emerged from the expansion of the indigenous highland population. A lower mortality rate due to improved agricultural conditions and natural population growth facilitated the expansion. Lemche,¹ classified as a 'late dater' (Scheffler 1998:522), is an outspoken proponent of this theory. His statements entail that Israel never had a distinct identity until after the Exile. Biblical texts, which are documents allegedly dating from the Hellenistic period, invented a fictional history and identity of Israel for theological purposes and therefore pre-exilic people were unaware of any exodus or conquest traditions.

According to his view, the so-called Canaanites gradually transformed to so-called Israelites due to socio-economic factors. Furthermore, a history of Israel cannot be constructed from Biblical sources due to their unreliability. A true picture can and must be presented only through archaeological and critical historical methods.

Other proposals in support of the theory of peaceful transition indicate the following contributing factors: climatic changes such as drought in the lowlands and favourable agricultural conditions in the highlands stimulated the latter's population increase (Stiebing); violent conflict and advanced weapons and fighting skills led to a transition of power to the highland society (Drews), and a social-historical process over a period of more than two millennia in which the collapse of the trade routes played a significant and final role (Coote and Whitelam, and also Albertz).²

All the above-mentioned theories has in common the fact that Israel settled and emerged through an internal, gradual and peaceful process by means of social and agricultural development. This caused a transition of power to the highlands community from which Israel eventually emerged.

¹ As discussed by Gnuse 1997:45ff. For a more detailed and critical discussion of Lemche's viewpoint see Thompson 1992:129-138. Thiel labelled Dever's version as the new 'evolutionary model'. Albertz calls it a 'digression model' (Gnuse 1997:47).

² See Gnuse 1997:47-52 for more details.

3.5.2.1.4 Peaceful Amalgamation or Synthesis

Since the early nineties a new variant of these models was posed by scholars suggesting a combined process of peaceful withdrawal, internal nomadism and peaceful transition together with a complex synthesis or amalgamation of several different groups of people which eventually produced Israel.

Halpern (1983:47ff) was the first to pose an amalgamation of groups for the origin of Israel. The highland community had to absorb some bandit elements and outsider groups which *“included a core group from Egypt with the memory of an exodus experience”* bringing with them the name of the deity known as Yahweh. Larger groups from Syria, responsible for the creation of the name Israel, also moved in and brought with them the customs of circumcision and the rejection of eating pork. A confederacy, conscious of their distinct identity, and drawn together by some mutual military activities and economic concerns about trading links and surplus produce, already existed by the beginning of the first millennium BC.¹ This confederacy later developed into an Israeli monarchy. Halpern’s (1983:239) viewpoint sums up the situation: *“Historical Israel is not the Israel of the Hebrew Bible. Rather, historical Israel produced biblical Israel.”*

Dever (1987:236) previously supported the ‘peasant’s revolt’ model opposed to the ‘nomadic infiltration’ and ‘conquest’ models as maintained by the scholars of the past. However, Gnuse (1997:54), on the grounds of Dever’s latest proposals classifies him as a proponent of the amalgamation theory. According to Dever, Israel originated by the twelfth century BC, from the farming community of Palestine. This community was gradually constituted from among withdrawn lowland Canaanites, urban refugees, social bandits, revolutionaries, and nomads. These groups transformed themselves when they moved into the highlands and eventually became aware of an own identity. He distinguishes between the urban and rural populations rather than working with the traditional Israelite/Canaanite dichotomy.²

¹ See Gnuse 1997:52,53.

² See Gnuse 1997:54,55, also footnotes, for Dever’s latest contributions.

Thompson (1992:1-170) elaborates on the priority of archaeological evidence above Biblical sources in the process of reconstructing the history of Israel.¹ He also advocates a very slow natural process of change over millennia mainly caused by climatic and economic factors. The latter forced the indigenous population and some smaller outsider groups to move from the towns to the highlands (Thompson 1992:324 and 328). These groups only formed a political unity as late as the eighth century BC under Assyrian domination. The Biblical account of an Israelite identity and two unified Israelite and Judahite monarchies is simply a fictional fabrication during the post-exilic period under the influence and with the assistance of the Persians. Thompson (1992:422,423) concludes his work with the following statement:

“The linguistic and literary reality of the biblical tradition is folkloristic in its essence. The concept of benei Israel: a people and an ethnicity, bound in union.....has its origin and finds its meaning within the development of the tradition and within the utopian religious perceptions that the tradition created, rather than within the real world of the past that the tradition restructured in terms of a coherent ethnicity and religion.....It is in the Persian period, quite specifically to be identified with the theologized world of the biblical tradition, within which Israel itself is a theologumenon and a new creation out of tradition.”

This period must be regarded as era of the origin of the identity and the economic unity of Israel.²

Weinfeld³ presents a variation on this theme. His amalgamation theory claims that tribal groups, each with their own history and traditions, including a Joshua group, which most probably arrived later than the others, invaded the land and established camps. From these bases they launched attacks against other tribes and the surrounding cities. These tribal groups eventually merged with each other and with some smaller groups of pastoralists, outlaws, and refugees from cities, constituted Israel. The tribal groups each had their own

¹ Thompson (1992) devotes four chapters of his work, *‘Early History of the Israelite People,’* on this.

² Thompson 1992:127-422. See Gnuse 1997:55,56 for a summary of Thompson’s viewpoint

³ In his work: *‘The Promise of the Land: The Inheritance of the Land of Canaan by the Israelites’*, 1993; summarised by Gnuse 1997:57.

folkloristic tales, which became common property of the newly formed Israel. According to Weinfeld these stories were recorded in the biblical books of Joshua and Judges, and contain many authentic historical memories.

In sum, the amalgamation theories combine factors such as nomadic movements, peaceful withdrawal, and transition of power, human reproduction, and refugee elements into one theory. The complexity of the internal peaceful process, as well as the diversity of the people which gradually formed a unity, are both emphasised.

3.5.3 Evaluation and conclusion

For the present purpose the exegete must rely on the dating and interpretations of archaeologists. Previously archaeological evidence was usually interpreted and dated to support biblical historical accounts. The 'new archaeology' tends to re-date and re-interpret both archaeological findings as well as the accounts of the Biblical events. In turn, this results in the rejection of Biblical records as being fabrications on the one hand and on the other, the acceptance of the interpretation of archaeological findings as the only trustworthy data for the reconstruction of Israel's history of origin. In the archaeological circles this trend causes doubt in the trustworthiness of Biblical records, but in the theological circles doubt is cast on archaeological assumptions regarding interpretations, motives and methods as well as the dating of findings. In some cases if the dating were to be moved with only a few years, a totally different picture will emerge. Furthermore, it seems, in the words of Miller (1989:154), "*that archaeologists tend to be over-confident regarding the possibility of reconstructing the details of Biblical history.*"

Miller (1989:153) calls this a 'methodological minefield.' Archaeology claims that 'The stones don't lie,' but in actual fact they are silent, until they are interpreted. Artifacts and archaeological findings are fragmentary and references to Israeli history are sparse and rather biased, if it does occur at all. On the other hand, according to critical literary analysis of sources, traditions, and forms, Biblical records indeed show signs of theological, ideological, cultic, and even political motivations for their compilation, interpretation, and re-interpretation by pre-exilic, exilic and post-exilic authors and editors (Miller 1989:153).

Silberman (1992:22-31) points out that every generation tends to interpret the Israeli history of origin through the values of its own age. In our ever-changing society today there is a need for gradual peaceful transformation. Some interpreters in their theories regarding Israel's origin project this need. In the same fashion, Gottwald (ABD VI: 83-84), a proponent of the revolutionary model, complains that the notion in favour of a peaceful model is born from the tendency to promote an attitude of easy acceptance of social injustice and imperfections of our time. It is rather obvious that revolutionary (even Marxists), as well as older and modern scientific evolutionary theories are playing a decisive role in interpretation. Gnuse (1997:59) correctly warns that when "*we articulate our theories, we also must be willing to step back and look at our theories as partially an expression of our own contemporary religious and existential needs.*"

For the purpose of this study, the researcher will not attempt to design a new theory regarding the emergence of Israel. One tends to agree with Kaiser (1998:xii) to "*take the Bible on its own terms,*" because "*The text is not guilty until proven guilty.*" Miller (1989:152ff and 1991:93ff) admits that it is almost impossible to represent a reconstruction of the history of Israel due to the wide variety of theories and approaches. Proponents of the new theories do not acknowledge the OT as a reliable source of history. Factors which disqualify the Bible as reliable source, include the intervention of the divine, the lack of external evidence, and the role of individuals and their subjective reports of events (Kaiser 1998:2-8). The new theories and approaches to the history of Israel led to a stalemate position between the study of theology and the religion of Israel. Recently Childs (1985) in his canonical approach, focused on theological reflection on the received Hebrew Scriptures as canonical religious traditions of Israel. This approach might break the checkmate position: "*in order to free the Old Testament for a more powerful theological role within the life of the Christian church*" (p6).

Nevertheless, considering all facts and theories, the proposal of Weinfeld (1993:99-155) entailing an amalgamation theory of different groups entering the land at different stages or periods, each with their own folkloristic legends and religious experiences, seems

attractive and plausible.¹ One must accept that the emergence of Israel and its settling in Canaan did not happen as a transplant or the movement of a complete united people from Egypt to Canaan. One kernel group with an Exodus experience and a Yahwistic religion, from which monotheism may have emerged, probably entered the land. However, there were many other groups infiltrating the land and the original inhabitants as well. In the history of the development of Israel, the Exodus group propagated their ideals and religion, but initially not as a majority group. Sometimes a king was loyal or sympathetic to their cause and did much to promote Yahwism and the ideal of a united Israel. Others were more inclined to follow their own policy or were forced to compromise their ideals to that of a conqueror. The possibility exists that Israel could have developed over a long period of time from a variety of groups with diverse religious goals into a people with similar goals, shared religious beliefs, values, and aspirations. The OT reflects some evidence of different groups and the different sources of encounters with the divine. The emergence of monarchies, especially the Davidic monarchy, also played a unifying role. The fall of the Northern Kingdom (721 BC) and later the fall of the Judean society (587/6 BC) were experienced as disruptive stages for this development of unity, but simultaneously provided challenges to the ideal of unity, especially with the Northern tribes in diaspora. The role of the Exile and the return of the elite to Jerusalem in this unifying process cannot be underestimated. Therefore, the approach in this study, although mainly based on a canonical theological method, will be open to the new theory of the emergence of Israel and will take into consideration the possibility of such a process, although it will be regarded as a possibility and not as proven historical facts

3.6 Theories regarding the emergence of Israelite monotheism

3.6.0 Introductory comments

Although it is generally accepted that the OT promotes a basic monotheism from which the Jewish and Christian faiths stem, the debate concerning the origin, development and nature of this monotheism is far from exhausted. Especially since the eighties this matter

¹ Perhaps the sociological model of the development of the Afrikaans language, culture, and beliefs in South Africa, plays a decisive role in this choice. In the history of the Afrikaners, the experiences and battles of various small groups in different periods, locations and of a variety of motives, also gradually became the history of a majority or a large portion of the Afrikaner people.

became a much-debated issue due to new archaeological, epigraphic and iconographic discoveries. These discoveries resulted in the quest for Israel's true historical origins, the process of the conquest and the pre-exilic existence of the twelve tribes and the monarchy. The trustworthiness of Biblical sources to provide reliable facts to reconstruct Israel's history became questionable because of presumptions that later exilic and post exilic redactors collected, arranged, and edited much of the Biblical material and utilised it to promote their own political and especially their theological viewpoints. This was followed by late dating of OT texts. Proposed dates vary from exilic to the Hellenistic period. Together these factors led to a review of the development process of Israeli monotheism. These viewpoints, which strive to reconstruct a true historical account of Israel, its origins and monotheism from extra Biblical sources, stand in sharp contrast to the traditional Biblical history as presented and interpreted from the OT.¹

3.6.1 The major questions in the debate

A variety of questions are at stake in this debate,² namely: What can be defined as true monotheism? How did Israeli monotheism develop in a polytheistic environment? Was monotheism a 'received reality', or designed by a leader or leaders, or did it develop through a quick revolutionary process or processes, or did it emerge through a gradual evolutionary process, or by means of a combination of several of these processes? The motives and reasons for the development of this monotheistic movement in the midst of a polytheistic world provide additional challenging questions. Furthermore, at what point or stage in Israel's history did they convert or develop into true monotheists?

¹ A clear distinction in this debate should be drawn between 'Biblical history' as presented by Biblical sources, and 'Historical Israel' as extracted from extra Biblical sources.

² In this debate there is a need to clarify the applicable terminology such as monotheism, monolatry, henotheism and henolatry to understand the stages of development to monotheism, as rightfully stated by Human (1999:492). His summary of adequate definitions, is therefore quoted in full and will also be taken into consideration in this study: "*Bertholet (1952:320) defines **monotheism** as 'the faith in one single God, which, in distinction from monolatry and henotheism, excludes the faith in the existence of other gods totally'. **Henotheism**, on the contrary, denotes 'the temporary worship of a specific god' (Hartman 1980:79), while **monolatry** expresses 'the worship of one single god without denying the existence of other gods'. Both these terms presuppose the existence or functioning of a polytheistic pantheon. Henotheism in the Ancient Near East applies especially to a crisis situation where a god is invoked to help a supplicant. As soon as the crisis is solved or the need relieved, the other gods are involved in the worship again. **Polytheism** then means the faith and worship of many gods."*

The debate, especially since the eighties, is marked by the trend to view the development of Israelite monotheism as a slow, gradual process that underwent several stages of a revolutionary development and only came to its fullness much later in Israel's history. Although it is still regarded by proponents as a unique development in a polytheistic environment, the recording of this phenomenon in the OT is also viewed as a much later occurrence in Israel's history than traditionally accepted.

3.6.2 Biblical evidence reconsidered

The image of Israel's monotheistic faith presented by the OT reflects a peculiar double picture, which must be recognised. On the one hand, multiple references occur in which the prohibition of the worshipping of other gods and commands to worship YHWH alone are explicitly stated (e.g. Ex 20:4; 20:23; 34:17; Deu 5:8; 10:20). YHWH is exalted as the incomparable in several expressions declaring 'there is none like thee' (e.g. Ex 8:6 (NRSV v10); 1 Sa 2:2; 2 Sa 7:22; 1 Ki 8:23; Jer 10:6,7; Ps 86:8),¹ and 'who is like YHWH?' (e.g. Ex 15:11; Deu 3:24; 4:7; Jer 49:19 = 50:44; Isa 44:7; Job 36:22; Mic 7:18 and multiple references in Psalms).² YHWH is declared as the only God (e.g. Deu 4:35, 39; 7:9; 2 Sa 7:22; 1 Ki 8:60; 2 Ki 19:19; 1 Ch 17:20). Denials of the existence of other gods also occur, especially in Deutero-Isaiah (e.g. Isa 43:10; 44:6 and 8; 45:5,6,14,18,21,22; 46:9), as well as their degrading to a non-god status (2 Ki 19:18 = Isa 37:19; Hos 8:6; Jer 2:11; 5:7; 16:20). These occurrences are clear testimonies of a monotheistic creed, which prohibits involvement in polytheism.

On the other hand, the worshipping of other gods seems to have been a popular practice among the Israelites judging to the references to the presence of household gods among the family members of ancestor Jacob (Gen 31:19; 35:2-4). Despite the denials of the existence of other gods (non-gods), YHWH is also declared to be 'the God of gods, Lord of Lords' (Deu 10:17). In the days of the Judges conflict flared up between Gideon, his father, and the citizens about idolatry objects, which belonged to his father but also to the citizens. It reflects the existence of a family and city cult (Jug 6:25-32). Several reports are recorded of cults established by some of the kings as state religion as well as reports

¹ See Labuschagne 1966:11ff for an analysis of these expressions.

² See Labuschagne 1966:20ff for an analysis of these occurrences.

regarding the reform efforts by other kings to remove the idolatrous objects and practices instituted by their predecessors, are recorded. In the Northern Kingdom e.g. Jeroboam (1 Ki 12:28), and Ahab (1 Ki 16:31-34), were the main protagonists who established and promoted idolatrous state religions. 1 Ki 18:17-40 gives a detailed report of the conflict between Elijah and Ahab's state religion of the Baalim and Asherahs. Jehu also launched extensive reform efforts (2 Ki 10:18-28) against the idolatrous institutions of Ahab. In Judah e.g. Ahaziah (2 Ki 8:25-27), Ahaz (2 Ki 16:2-4), and Manasseh (2 Ki 21:2-9) are nominated as the leading idolatrous kings, while Jehoiada the priest (2 Ki 11:18), king Hezekiah (2 Ki 18:4), and finally king Josiah (2 Ki 23:4-15, 24) launched reform attempts. The prophetic literature gives account of the condemnations of the prophets against the existence of idolatry practices in which Israel was involved, especially in the books of Amos, Jeremiah, Isaiah, and Deutero-Isaiah.

In sum, the picture presented by the OT literature reflects a complex situation of early polytheism, but also of imported cults, mainly due to royal policies, diplomatic relations or the presence of a conqueror, as well as local Canaanitic influences. It seems that the Israelites also worshipped and inquired other gods and divine objects for assistance over and above YHWH.

3.6.3 Available extra-Biblical evidence

Extra-Biblical evidence, especially from the archaeological excavations and iconographical depictions, indicates the presence of idolatrous practices throughout the different periods covered by the OT. Archaeological findings indicate signs of extensive involvement in the worship of the fertility goddess Asherah, and other Canaanite gods as well as the participation in pagan astral cults, child sacrifice, and cultic prostitution. Only some of the latest findings need to be discussed to illustrate the above mentioned (see Dever 1991:110ff for a summary of more findings).

The findings at the shrine of Kuntillet 'Arjud (Kades), dating from the eighth or ninth century BC, produced two inscriptions of significance regarding this statement. The inscriptions read: 'I bless you by Yahweh of Samaria, and by his Asherah', and 'Yahweh of Teman and his Asherah'. A similar inscription comes from Khirbet-el-Qôm (Hebron)

dating from the middle of the eighth century BC, and reads: 'Blessed be Uriah by Yahweh and his Asherah'. These discoveries produced a variety of interpretations suggesting that Asherah was a deity, most probably YHWH's consort, or a cultic object, and that Teman, situated in the wilderness, might be a reference to the origins of archaic Yahwism.¹

Another contributing discovery is that of the bull-shrine excavated in the heartland of Yahwism, namely on the highlands of Samaria, which dates from the early settlement period. Equally important evidence is provided by the discovery of the cult stand at Ta'nach, where signs of the worship of YHWH by way of a sun disk image were found, as well as that the worship of Asherah were popular practice during the early history of Israel. On grounds of these discoveries, many scholars have come to the conclusion that the popular religion of the pre-exilic period consists of a polytheistic Yahwism.²

According to proponents of the new theory, these discoveries testify to a situation, which entails more than syncretism between Israelite and Canaanite religions. It rather suggests that a pure monotheistic Yahwism may never have existed, except perhaps among a minority group responsible for the Biblical literature. It is further alleged that Yahwism developed much later from the Canaanite religion during the late pre-exilic, exilic or even the post-exilic period. The Biblical authors did not merely condemn Israel's involvement with the Canaanite cult practices, but in fact attacked the popular early Yahwism, which were essentially polytheistic. In this sense the Biblical writers as representatives of a small minority monotheistic group, described and promoted Israel's religious history according to their perspective of what monotheistic Yahwism should have been (Gnuse 1997:72,73).

3.6.4. Different theories on the development of monotheism

A variety of theories were posed thus far to accommodate the archaeological discoveries together with the double picture presented by the OT. In light of the new archaeological findings, the older paradigms such as the gradual evolutionary process with several stages as well as the opposing revolutionary model were no longer regarded as acceptable explanations of the history of the development of the religion of Israel. New paradigms

¹ Gnuse 1997:69-71. See Keel 1998:225ff for text of inscriptions and discussion. Also Human 1999:493.

² See Ackerman 1992:66 who concludes that this was definitely the case during the sixth century BC.

have been presented. These entail a combination of evolutionary stages interrupted by revolutionary events or stages. A brief discussion of the evolutionary model and the revolutionary model will be followed by a discussion of the trends in the framework of the latest approaches.¹

3.6.4.1 The Evolutionary models

Influenced by the Darwinistic theory of evolution in nature, nineteenth century historians began to view human development in terms of a gradual evolutionary process. This trend also influenced Biblical studies and many scholars applied an evolutionary scheme to the development of Israel's religious beliefs and ideas, especially monotheism as presented in the OT literature.

On this basis, Wellhausen (1973), and Smith (1972), were of the first to present a well-developed evolutionary scheme for the development of Israel's history. Their evolutionary theory, which claimed that Israel's monotheism developed slowly and gradually through several stages of animism to totemism, polytheism, henotheism and finally to monotheism, dominated the scene for nearly sixty years. Wellhausen, for instance, views Amos as the first real monotheist (Gnuse 1997:63,64).

3.6.4.2 The Revolutionary models

Proponents of revolutionary theories reacted to evolutionary theories.² They pose that monotheism in Israel, developed through a single or several revolutionary events. In this regard, Wright (1968:29) e.g. states that Israel's religion "*suddenly appears in history as a radical break with the mythopoeic approach to reality.*" He states that an evolutionary process, what he calls 'a metaphor of growth', by which Yahwism slowly evolved from polytheism, seems impossible (p28). He underwrites Albright's statement that the belief in the uniqueness of YHWH as the only God, superior to all, also the false gods, was the 'new creation' of Israel's religion. According to him, this idea, together with the fact that

¹ The recent summary of Gnuse 1997:62ff is used as a basis. See also Human 1999:491-505.

² A front-runner in this regard was Albright, followed by Kaufmann, Wright, and Bright.

the new religion was established early in Israel's history by Moses at Sinai (Deut 34:10), represents the primary data of the OT (p29).

Moses and the revolutionary thirteenth century BC Exodus event are generally nominated as the character and the opportunity for the monotheistic breakthrough. Moses is viewed as the founder and pioneer who cast the Egyptian monotheistic influences of pharaoh Amenophis IV or Ichnathon (1364-1347 BC) into a basic Yahwistic religion (Albright 1957:271,272). During the period after Moses, the majority of the nation was Yahwists, and only a minority of superstitious ignorant and 'moronic' people were polytheists.

The prophet Amos, and all the other prophets addressed the problem of backsliding and syncretism under the Canaanite influences. The prophets and the Deuteronomistic reformers called the people back to the old tradition of Mosaic monotheism, but they were not successful until the exile when the Israelis came to full commitment (Albright 1957:288). Kaufmann (1961:135) takes this further and argues that the Biblical account is exaggerated and generalised, viewing the sins of a particular group as representative of the entire nation. Syncretism, idolatry and also paganism were never threats to the genuine Yahwism because it was "*shallow*", "*magical, fetishistic, ritualistic, and never attained the level of a cultural force.*" (p147).

The revolution theory dominated the scene from 1940 to 1970 and exercised a significant influence on the writing of histories and textbooks. Mendenhall and Gottwald presented a renewal of this viewpoint by focusing on the idea of an internal revolution as paradigm for the conquest and the establishment of monotheism. Much emphasis was put on the great contrast between the Canaanite beliefs and the new revolutionary religion of Israel. This in turn inspired theologies of liberation for the modern society and appealed to Christians to become involved in liberation and social actions in their communities (Gnuse 1997:68).

In sum, the revolutionary theory claims that monotheism came into being through a radical revolutionary process during the Exodus with Moses as a leading proponent. As a new creation it stood in sharp contrast to the Canaanite and ANE religions. Syncretism

occurred through contact with the Canaanites, and the prophets had to call upon the people to return to pure Mosaic monotheistic Yahwism.

3.6.4.3 A combination of the Evolutionary and the Revolutionary models

The crux of the recent proposals entails the view that the Israelite monotheism developed progressively through several revolutionary stages as well as intermediate periods of gradual evolution. A great variety of role players and events as recorded in the OT literature are implemented to explain the process of development. The proponents mostly nominate an exilic and/or a pre-exilic stage for the fruition of a matured monotheism. In this regard, the origin and main characters and events however differ considerably.

Some scholars do not accept the Sinai experience as starting point,¹ or the proposal that the religion of YHWH was imported by the Joshua exodus group.² Ahlström (see Gnuse 1997:78) suggests that the reference 'Yahweh at Teman' at Kuntillet 'Arjud together with the Biblical reference to Seir (Deu 33:2; Jug 5:4), imply that YHWH was from Edomite origin. Nicholson (1986:191-217) claims that YHWH emerged from the Canaanite religion, because of the many commonalities that could be identified between the two religions.

These scholars view the early history of Israel including the pre-monarchial period as reflecting the different phases of the familial, clan and regional religions. YHWH is viewed as a god of a pantheon, or involved in a merger with El or Baal, or an offshoot of Canaanite religion to which unique divine aspects were added. Eventually YHWH absorbed the divine domain and was elevated to head of the pantheon or national high god during the monarchial period by the state religion.³

¹ As proposed by Baly (1970); See Gnuse 1997:74.

² Proposed by Theissen; See Gnuse 1997:93.

³ The view of Albertz, and Lohfink; see Gnuse 1997:74 and 91 respectively.

In this regard, Ahlström (see Gnuse 1997:78) suggests that the high god YHWH was served by assistant deities such as Asherah, Baal, Shamash (sun), and Yerach (moon), and was later elevated by Saul, then significantly by David, and later by Hezekiah and Josiah for political reasons. However, Ahlström (1991:140) also states that ‘normative Yahwism’ was the goal of the Biblical writers, and not necessarily of the royal houses of Judah.

Elijah is nominated by some scholars as one of the first pioneers of monotheism, due to his name which means ‘Yahweh is god’, regarded as a merger between YHWH and El.¹ Smith traces the origin of his ‘Yahweh-alone’ party² to the conflict between Jezebel and the Yahwistic prophets, and suggests that they assisted in the overthrow of the Omride dynasty. The prominent role of David as the one who brought YHWH to Jerusalem to merge with Elyon, and popularised him, is acknowledged in the theories of Smith and Ahlström.³ The reforms of Hezekiah and Josiah in Judah are generally regarded as important revolutionary stages in the process of the development of monotheism. Saggs (1984:64ff; see Gnuse p81) acknowledges the prominent roles of Jeremiah and Deutero-Isaiah as monotheists. The latter is clearly reflected in their oracles. Smith⁴ states that despite Josiah’s reform effort, it is clear that Jeremiah as proponent of monotheism and his group still represented a minority group during the pre-exilic period. Keel⁵ finds extensive iconographic evidence, which reveals continuity between the Israelite and other neighbouring ANE cultures, and therefore regards monotheism as a late development, under the leading role of Deutero-Isaiah.

The exile and post-exilic periods are generally viewed as the time of the major revolutionary breakthrough for monotheism, to which Deutero-Isaiah contributed a fair share (E.g. Smith, Keel, Saggs, Lang; see Gnuse p77, 86, 82, 90 respectively). Lang argues that monotheism arose in exile to explain the reason for Israel’s destruction and also to give them hope. Saggs views the oracles of Jeremiah and Deutero-Isaiah as reacting to the Babylonian empire and its creator deity, Marduk, and not as a response

¹ Nicholson 1986:191-217; see also Mahalik in Gnuse p79.

² Gnuse 1997:76. Smith was the first to propose the existence of a minority Yahweh-alone party. He argues that the majority belonged to the syncretistic party.

³ See Gnuse p76 and 79.

⁴ See Gnuse p76f.

⁵ Gnuse p86f.

based on the Mosaic tradition. Smith (for a summary of Smith's proposal see Gnuse 1997:75-77.) comments that although the cult of YHWH is the primary concern of the OT, Biblical monotheism as presented in the OT, was not the only cult in the broader religious spectrum of Israel. The Bible and the archaeological findings give evidence of the presence of other deities and their worshipping practices. Therefore, it could be assumed that the majority of Israel were involved in a syncretistic religion. Even in the days of Jeremiah (until 580 BC) the monotheists were still a minority group. The syncretists did indeed worship YHWH as their most important deity, but they also worshipped others along with YHWH. However, in the crisis of the exile the syncretists were confronted by the Babylonian cult of idolatry. They had to make a commitment not to become involved in the foreign practices, and thus became monotheists.

Although a variety of interpretations is presented in these theories, Gnuse (1997:105) concludes that a consensus can be sensed in the presentations. The proponents of the combined model view the process of the emergence of monotheism as *"an evolutionary process, which moves through various stages of monolatrous or henotheistic intensity in the pre-exilic era to form a pure monotheism which arises in the exilic era."* However, they also accommodate the occurrences of radical revolutionary interruptions in the form of crises or conflicts in which a leader or leaders take action to boost the monotheistic religion. The exile is generally viewed as the crucial revolutionary opportunity for the final stage of the establishment of monotheism as religion of the remnant of Israel.

3.6.5 Evaluation and conclusion

One of the major points of criticism which could be leveled against these theories, is the fact that the Biblical figures of Moses and Joshua disappear in their presentations. Much of the Biblical account of the history regarding the role of the ancestors, the exodus and land taking, the judges during the pre-monarchial period and the role of the kings, have been ignored or rather ascribed to the deliberate projection into the past by a minority group. The scepticism is obvious towards parts of the OT as reliable accounts of the history of Israel or for argument's sake also of the history of the religion of Israel.

This scepticism is taken to the extreme by the approach of the so-called ‘minimalists’¹ who claim that monotheism only started developing during the exile and the post-exilic eras and that no development of monotheism occurred during the pre-exilic period. This view is based on the assumption that the OT is an exilic and post-exilic product, created or fictionalised by the Jews in exile and beyond, even as late as the Hellenistic period after 300BC. The ‘minimalists’ claim that the pre-exilic history of the development of Israel’s religion, which was most probably predominantly polytheistic, cannot be reconstructed from the Biblical accounts due to the fact that they represent mainly post-exilic created fiction for ideological purposes. With this approach, the OT as reliable source of information about Israel’s history and religion is completely nullified and therefore unacceptable for the devoted OT theologian and the church.

On the other hand, new archaeological findings, and the accompanying theories, necessitate the rethinking and reinterpretation of the traditional views of the process of the emergence of monotheism. It is obvious that in our world of ideas and ideologies, nothing come to us in one radical breakthrough as a given and fully developed idea or design. A period of incubation and a background of the birth and growth of an idea and several stages in the breakthrough on some levels usually precede the final stage of fruition, which is followed by stages of progressive improvements.

In the rethinking of the process of the fruition of monotheism, factors to be reconsidered are the development over a longer period (probably six centuries) with revolutionary inputs at several stages. It also should include the background of the ANE religious world from which Israel’s religion evolved and operated, the commonalities and distinctive aspects between these two religious entities, and the influential role of the exilic and post-exilic devotees. From a theological point of view, the role of the Biblical narratives and Biblical characters cannot be ignored.

The divine prophetic word as well as the interpretations and experiences of divine interventions, played a decisive role in the religious world of Israel as well as the ANE.

¹ The contributions of Lemche, Thompson, Garbini, Niehr and Davies are summarised in Gnuse 1997:109-115.

These were preserved for ages, especially in cases of fulfillment. A situation in which the Biblical sources is regarded as unreliable or as fabricated fiction, can therefore not be accepted. It rather necessitates a rethinking and reinterpretation of the hermeneutical process to accommodate the new findings and some aspects of the new theories. In terms of the popular saying of these theories, it must be emphasised that the evolutionary process of our understanding of Biblical monotheism, needs a radical revolutionary input or more to grasp the nature of the emergence of this creation in a polytheistic world.¹

3.7 Other exegetical factors

Related issues which should be taken into consideration for the exegetical process and which are generally raised in the commentaries on the book of Jeremiah, are as follows:

3.7.1 The LXX text versus the MT

A remarkable difference exists between the MT and the LXX² texts of the book of Jeremiah. The LXX lacks 2700 words of the MT text, and contains 100 words lacking in the MT. The LXX is about one eighth shorter than the MT. To complicate matters, fragments of the Qumran discoveries produced evidence to the validity of both text traditions. Janzen (1973:127f) claims that the MT shows signs of additions of names, titles and epithets and explains some of the terminology. Expansions and additions to some expressions by using parallel or related texts from elsewhere in the book of Jeremiah, as well as from outside (i.e. from the rest of the OT), are obvious. This is especially true of the prose sections, although no additions were made in the poetic sections.

¹ See Gnuse (1997:115) who states that the minimalists *"too easily surrender the biblical text as source."* Scheffler (1998:522-533) raises important aspects for the debate between 'late-daters' (and 'minimalists'), and the traditional historical critical scholars. Kruger HAJ (1995:241-261) emphasises the importance of the sociological reading of the OT, to open up new ways for the understanding of the social processes behind the OT texts, in order to discover the uniqueness of YHWH and its relationship to the NT message. Greenstein (1999:47-58) comments that although the god of the OT may not differ substantially from the neighbouring gods, it is important to bear in mind from a theological as well as a sociological perspective, that the OT in its formulations insists on the fact that Israel worship its own God, and him alone and he is different. Human (1999:503) stresses the fact that these newly formulated theories contain many uncertainties, and therefore *"the debate must go on!"*

² See Würthwein (1957:34ff for a discussion. Also Holladay 1989:3-8, and McKane (1986:i-xcix) who focuses on text differences and regards the LXX and other ancient versions as early witnesses to the exegesis of the Hebrew Bible. See also Epstein (1994:322-329) who argues that the debate regarding the original LXX is still open pending the discovery of more archaeological evidence.

The arrangement of the material also differs. The following may serve as examples: chapters 46-51 of the MT follow on 25:13 to form chapters 25:14-31:44 in the LXX. The actual oracles of dooms therefore join and follow on the announcement of the dooms on the surrounding neighbours mentioned in vv8-13. Chapters 25:15-45:5 in the MT equal chapters 32:1-51:5 in the LXX.

Janzen (1973:128) states that the former view, which considers the LXX as an abridged translation, cannot be maintained anymore. He claims that the MT presents a revised text and views the shorter LXX as authentic and authoritative.¹

For the purpose of this study the MT will be regarded as the basic text for the OT and therefore the traditional canonised text of OT and Christian theology. However, the LXX version as well as the Qumran discoveries will be taken into account where applicable and when uncertainties must be resolved.

3.7.2 The compilation of the material

The book of Jeremiah, consisting of 52 chapters, is generally regarded as a complex composition of different material, dating from different stages from the pre-exilic, through the exilic and post-exilic eras. Carroll (1986:33-50) identifies many features as well as discrepancies which allegedly point to the fact that the book of Jeremiah represents a long history of compilation. Many editors have contributed to this end. Even Holladay (1986 and 1989) struggles to find suitable historical settings for the different oracles and narratives. The lack of historical settings, especially in the first nineteen chapters of the book, and opposed by the different names and settings given in 20-45 and 51-52,² complicate the task of the reconstruction of the origin and history of the material.

Mowinckel's (1914) classification of the three types or genres of material, namely (1) poetry as 'A', (2) biographical material as 'B', and (3) sermonic prose as 'C', is still

¹ For Janzen's viewpoint see Holladay (1989:3). Others following him in this are e.g. Ackerman (1992). Deist (1989:9-20) claims that the OT is a theological concept and therefore something different to the 'hebrew bible' or Massoretic text.

² Seitz (1989:8-13) illustrates that in these sixteen chapters more than fifty individuals can be identified. He claims that this kind of details testify against a theory which poses that they represent invented characters. These facts were important to the compiler of the material, as well as to the audience.

regarded as a valid distinction by many commentators. He claims that there exists a remarkable resemblance between the sermonic prose (C) and Deuteronomy as well as the Deuteronomistic redaction of Kings.¹

The contents of the book of Jeremiah can be divided into two parts, namely: (1) chapters 1-25, which contains mainly prophetic poetry addressed to Jerusalem and Judah; (2) chapters 26-52, which contains biographic material in prose about Jeremiah's encounters and life (ch. 26-45), prophecies of doom (mainly in poetry) against the nations (ch. 46-51), and especially Babylon (ch. 50:1-51:58). The book ends with a historical appendix as closure (Jer 52 = 2 Ki 24:18-25:30 with minor differences).

In the present study, the complexity of the compilation of the material of the book of Jeremiah will be taken into account. This opens the way to more possibilities to view the different oracles and narratives against different historical settings, but especially in connection with different ideological motives and sociological readings.²

3.7.3 Deuteronomistic influences

A great deal of the interpolations and additions of the book of Jeremiah is generally ascribed to Deuteronomistic influences. Of interest in this debate and for this study is the fact that the influence can be detected especially in the prose sections (Mowinckel's source C) and frequently in references to idolatrous practices. Many commentaries refer to the Deuteronomist and the Deuteronomistic historian/editor. Many allusions and quotations from the book of Deuteronomy are indicated³ as well as from the historical works from Josiah to Kings. The debate concerning the origin and the identity of the Deuteronomists (i.e. the group or school) produced a variety of suggestions. General consensus exists that the group played a major role in the promotion of monotheism. But who were they and when did they operate?

¹ See Holladay's (1989:2 and 11-14), and Weinfeld's (1972:27ff) comments on this.

² A brief overview of the material as well of commentaries, reveals different motives, objectives, themes, and ideologies at work behind the text. See the brief discussion of other motives and influences as well as ideology below.

³ Weinfeld (1972:4n) makes the following distinction: "By 'the Deuteronomist' I mean the editor of the historical books (Dtr), by 'the deuteronomistic editor' either the Deuteronomist or the editor of the prose

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A recent plausible theory is the one proposed by Braulik (1999:13-32). He argues from the perspective of the so-called Sociology of Knowledge. His idea of a 'conservative reform', and covering the two periods, namely the Josianic period, and the Babylonian Exilic period, seems to have proved to be the most productive phase regarding literary activities in the history of Israel.¹ "*The first, pre-exilic version of the so-called 'Deuteronomistic History' was supposed to legitimate the Josianic reform and its claims by means of a presentation of the history of Israel up to that point and time.*" (p17). The second, "*Deuteronomy and the exilic edition of the Deuteronomistic history attempted to mediate insight into the breaking of treaty by Israel theologically and historically.*" (p27).

During these periods different versions of Deuteronomy² were produced by an educated elite, first by the *Josianic Renewal Movement* and later by the *Babylonian Return Movement*, which leads to the logical conclusion that a social or at least an ecclesiastical theory can be identified in the book and the history. This theory provides an acceptable sociologically grounded explanation for the variety of themes and sometimes contrasting accents the exegete encounters when dealing with the Deuteronomic history, including the book of Jeremiah.

3.7.4 Other factors, motives and role players

In stead of going into the details of a historical background for the book of Jeremiah, which some commentators claim to be impossible to reconstruct, it would seem more practical for the purpose of this study to attend to the importance of certain factors, motives and role players in the literature.

sermons of Jeremiah. (Mowinckel's source C,...). Both are to be distinguished from the 'author of Deuteronomy'."

¹ Opposed to the suggestions of the new theories for the emergence of monotheism (discussed in 3.6 above) which claim that the exilic and post-exilic periods were the most literary productive era (Gnuse 1997:109). Braulik views the book of Deuteronomy as the origin of monotheism, and Deutero-Isaiah as a further development of Deuteronomistic monotheism (see Human 1999:502).

² Mayes (1993:13-33) argues that the purpose of Deuteronomy can be viewed as "*the systematic formulation of a new world-view in response to the culture shock of Assyrian domination, presenting traditional faith in a revitalised form.*"

A brief overview of the book of Jeremiah and commentaries, indicate that the fall of Jerusalem in 587/6 BC,¹ and its causes, but also the hope for a new future beyond 587/6 BC, constitutes a major theme in the book of Jeremiah. Brueggeman (1992:4) emphasises the influence of the traumatic experience of “587 BCE”, which is presented by the prophets Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Deutero-Isaiah as a ‘metaphor’. The metaphor ‘587’ denotes the pivot of the end of a known world and the dawning of a new world for Israel. The prophets’ task was to aid the nation through the experience of breaking with “*the known world and its relinquishment*” and to convince them to receive and except the “*new world given by God.*”

Seitz (1989:3ff) senses a scenario of conflict in the literature of Jeremiah. The prophet Jeremiah is in conflict with himself, with the community, and with God, and he is living in times of conflict. Brueggemann (1992:10) describes the prophet Jeremiah as “*designed for conflict*”. Seitz (1989:4,5) rightly argues that not only the fall in 587 BC must be considered as a traumatic experience, but also the first exile in 597 BC, as well as the decade in between 597 and 587 BC. It was a time of unprecedented conflict due to this initial geographical separation of the community.

Braulik (1999a:13-32) comments that the shock of the Assyrian conquest must not be forgotten. By means of his sociological approach, Braulik describes the period of Assyrian oppression as one of causing an identity crisis within Judah. Confronted with the Assyrian’s military power and victory in the name of their god Asshur, their economic strength and impressive cult, the small state Judah experienced a ‘culture shock’. Their traditional faith in YHWH became ridiculed and insignificant in these circumstances, and therefore eventually supplemented by Asherah-figurines, the cult of the queen of heaven and Moloch, resulting in the decline of YHWH’s influence.

During the reign of Josiah (640-609 BC), the Assyrian influence weakened to such an extent that a national and religious renewal movement seized the opportunity and reconstituted YHWH-worshipping and an independent state. A united Davidic Kingdom, a

¹ The exact date is much debated. Brueggemann uses 587 BC, Braulik uses 586 BC. For the purpose of this study the date of the fall of Jerusalem will be referred to as 587/6 BC.

centralised cult with Jerusalem as headquarters, and a return to traditional “*Mosaic-conservative theology*” (Braulik’s term, p17) inspired by the discovery of the so-called ‘Proto-Deuteronomy’ and the prophetic activities of Zephaniah, Isaiah, and Jeremiah, were part of their objectives. This resulted in a reworked Josianic version of Deuteronomy, which is a typical example of theology “*as answer to plausibility crises in emerging pluralistic situations*” (Lohfink 1977 as quoted by Braulik 1999:18).

However, the catastrophic fall of Jerusalem in 586 BC put Judah before new challenges. Not only was the capital destroyed, but they lost their land, family properties, their king, and the temple. The leading class was scattered, some into exile while others fled to Egypt. Furthermore, a theological crisis arose and justification for YHWH’s ‘failure’ or/and a diagnosis of sins as cause of the catastrophe was urgently needed. “*Thus, not only crisis management, but also therapy for the future, becomes possible*” (Braulik 1999:27). In this context an exilic version of Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic history, including Jeremiah, originated in order to declare YHWH’s direct involvement as initiator of the punishment of Israel’s sins which caused the crisis, but also painting a new future.

Furthermore, the experience of the elite in Babylon, probably also including members of the Deuteronomistic/monotheistic movement, played an important role, which is reflected in the Book of Jeremiah. The exiles were confronted by the impressive idolatry cult of Marduk, the creator and war deity and his polytheistic pantheon.

A brief overview of the contents of the book of Jeremiah indicates also several other motives and influences, which will be mentioned briefly. The ideal of the unification of the Northern Kingdom in diaspora and Judah (e.g. in 3:12 and v18), can be identified as well as the ideal of the centralisation of the YHWH cult in Jerusalem. Much emphasis is on the fulfillment of prophecies. Conflict between pro- and anti- Egyptian, Assyrian (e.g. 2:18), and Babylonian groups (e.g. ch.38) is reflected. The latter can be viewed as an aspiration toward political independence. Accusations are frequently directed against certain kings, and the false prophets and priests (most probably members of the royal staff). Furthermore, the apparent silence about the reform of Josiah and his sudden death

in the book of Jeremiah raises questions. Lastly, the promotion of an aniconic religion and the aversion against idolatry constitutes one of the major themes in the book of Jeremiah.

3.8 Ideological motives?

The commentary of Carroll (1986) is based on the assumption that the book of Jeremiah represents ideological literature of a minority group. He does not acknowledge the historical Jeremiah (p33) in his exposition, because the literature does not contain his actual sayings, acts, and experiences. Rather, it represents an end product of editors, influenced by their group interests (pp48,57). The book of Jeremiah is therefore not a historical document containing biographical information about the prophet, but in many instances presents fabricated stories by editors, to serve their ideological motives in the form of 'the story of Jeremiah' (pp59,60). Although the literature reflects the existence of conflicting groups, the presence of the monotheistic Yahweh-alone group (e.g. in 2:10-13 – p126f), the conflict with the pro-Egyptian, pro-Assyrian, and pro-Babylonian ideologies (e.g. in chapters 27-29,34,37,44), and most importantly the influences of the Deuteronomistic ideology,¹ can be detected. It therefore seems that the book of Jeremiah reflects a struggle between ideologies for the political and theological power during the exilic and post-exilic periods.

Carroll's identification of ideologies at work in the book of Jeremiah is important, because ideology implies a 'system of ideas which is capable of motivating behaviour'.² It is important for the exposition process, namely to determine all role playing factors. We have limited knowledge of the actual historical setting, and circumstances. We do not have first hand experience of the circumstances, and we are compelled to work with the written document. As outsiders, we have limited knowledge of their language, and the world of thoughts, the myths and theories, the beliefs and superstitions, the symbolism and images, the cultural background and sociological factors at work, which control their worldview. All these factors are at work in language, contribute to the 'body language' and actual

¹ However, Mayes (1999:57-82) argues that "no essential distinction can be made between ideology and theology, and that the deuteronomistic contribution to Old Testament theology is to be described by reference to how deuteronomistic perception(s) of the nature of Israel in its relationship to Yahweh are taken up and revised in the Pentateuch."

² Le Roux 1993:16 who quotes Carroll 1981:17,18.

meaning of language, and therefore must be taken into account in the interpreting process. Therefore, an important factor such as an ideology or ideologies in the playing field in the composure of literature cannot be ignored.

3.8.1 A working definition

Hamilton (1987:18-38, see Turner 1996:112)) defines the concept of ideology as follows: *“a system of collectively held normative and reputedly factual ideas and beliefs and attitudes advocating a particular pattern of social relationships and arrangements, and/or aimed at justifying a particular pattern of conduct, which its proponents seek to promote, pursue or maintain.”* Deist (1990:120) formulates ideology as follows: *“The ideas and manner of thinking characteristic of an individual or group, shaped by political, social, religious and other factors (conscious, unconscious and sub-conscious) providing the frame of reference within which he or they judge and act.”* His definition for ideology critique reads: *“The process of discovering and describing the ideology underlying any human activity in order to establish the conditions under which statements, actions, decisions etc. are produced and to assess by the ideological standards the truth contained in such products.”*¹

The above seems to be adequate guidelines for the discussion pertaining to the aspect of idol-worship versus monotheism as religious ideologies. This subject is important for this study regarding the relationship YHWH, Israel and the gods.

3.8.2 Idol-worship as an ideology

Idolatry is to be understood as an ideology in terms of above-mentioned definitions. The practice of idolatry was inherent to the Canaanite religion and the ANE neighbours of Judah and Israel. It was the very essence of their religion, but is presented in the OT, and especially, in the book of Jeremiah as undermining to the Israelite faith in YHWH. However, the role and function of the Canaanite religions (in fact for the whole of the ANE religious world) in the fertility life, warfare and the inquiring about future events of the ANE devotee, is of decisive interest. Despite the aversion to idol-worship, to other

¹ See Turner 1996:112,113.

gods and to some ANE religious practices and beliefs indicated in the OT, and especially in the book of Jeremiah, the religion of Israel had its origin and reached maturity in this world of ANE religious thought. The ANE world of religious thought as ideological role player should therefore be taken into account in a study of this nature, in which the relationship between deities and their relationship with people are at stake.

3.8.3 Anti-idolatry or Yahwistic monotheism as an ideology

The strong appeal for monotheistic standards as well as the negative evaluations of other deities and religious practices could be interpreted as an ideological frame of reference of action and judgment. Carroll (1986:60) goes even further and describes the literature of the book of Jeremiah as propagandistic and intolerant to any form of syncretism. He also detects a power struggle between different groups, which sometimes can be regarded as of a political nature (pp70,71). However, the theological interests of the YHWH-alone party (p80) are explicitly promoted, as well as the additions of the Deuteronomistic critique on the religious life of Judah and the cult in Jerusalem (p66). It is clear that the people, the royal houses of Judah, and the cultic staff of the temple, are blamed for the fall of Jerusalem. The blame is put on the impurity of worship, in which the sin of idol-worship seems to play a major role. The question in this regard therefore seems to be: Against which framework of reference were these evaluations and critiques formulated by the prophet/author(s) in the book of Jeremiah. A brief overview of Biblical references reveals the following:

3.8.3.1 The prohibition of idol-worship in Israel's religion

The OT literature reflects a picture of a Yahwistic monotheism religion, which contrasts sharply with the ideas and practices of its ANE neighbours. The prohibition of the worship of images, idols, and other gods is clearly and repeatedly stated in the OT (Ex 20:4-5; 20:23; 34:17; Lev 19:4; 26:1; Deu 4:15-19,25; 5:8). In many cases the quality of the reigns of the kings of Israel and Judah were evaluated only in terms of their conduct for or against idolatry practices. The prohibition of idols underlies the prophetic struggle and polemic against idolatry as well as their condemnation of Israel and Judah. The question is whether this represents the theological framework of the majority or a minority group in Israel. Whose picture and evaluation of the history of the kings is recorded in the OT? The

latest trend in OT studies is to ascribe the OT literature and therefore also the book of Jeremiah, to a minority monotheistic Yahwistic group. This possibility posed by the latest proposals will be taken into account in this study, although not as a crucial determining factor.

3.8.3.2 The origin of the prohibition

It is difficult to date the origin of the prohibition of idol-worship due to differences of opinion among scholars. The assumed dating of original sources, editorial work, and final redaction, especially of the Pentateuch, plays a decisive role. Nevertheless, general agreement among more conservative scholars exists that the prohibition might have been conceived by the time of the eighth century prophets Isaiah, Hosea, and Micah. The latest theories regarding the emergence of Israelite monotheism however allege that idolatrous practices among Israelites were the popular religion until the exile in 586/7 BC. It is further alleged that real monotheism only came to maturity during and after the exile.¹ The OT utilizes many words, in fact a special diction, to demonstrate a negative attitude against idol-worship, mocking the idol-fabricator, his methods, and material used in the making of an idol as well as the theological value of these idols. The analysis of some of these expressions of aversion falls within the scope of this study and will be presented in chapters 4, 5, and 6.

3.8.3.3 Motivation for the prohibition of idol-worship

The OT does not render a clear motivation for the prohibition of idol-worship (Curtis, 1992:378, see Turner 1996:112f) other than the sovereignty of YHWH and the abominable and detestable nature of the idolatrous customs of the Canaanites and the idol worshippers of the nations. The only alternative explanation can be found in Deut 4:12ff where it is stated that YHWH makes himself known through his words and not through form, thus implying the prohibition on the making of images of other gods or of himself.

Furthermore, the OT states that YHWH is a jealous God who does not tolerate any rivals or competition. Perhaps the most important motive is of a pragmatic nature as an attempt

¹ See 3.6 above for a discussion of the different theories regarding monotheism.

to reduce the risk of the assimilation of foreign religious influences and the resulting syncretism (Turner 1996:114). However, the aspect of the distinctiveness and incomparability of YHWH and the worship he demands, constitute important factors that should be considered in the debate regarding the uniqueness of YHWH. Recent theories regarding the emergence of Israel and its monotheistic religion¹ tend to focus on the commonalities between Israelite and Canaanite religions and even allege that Israel as well as YHWH grew out of the Canaanite religions and their gods.

3.8.3.4 The extent of idol-worship in Israel's history

The impression created by the OT is one of a continuous struggle against idolatry throughout most of the history of the Northern Kingdom and Judah. According to the account of Baal worship (1 Ki 18:19) in the days of Ahab of Israel, the prophet Elijah managed to assemble 450 Baal prophets and 400 prophets of Asherah at Mount Carmel, which could be an indication of the popularity of idol-worship during Ahab's reign.

This practice was probably thriving at times despite the strict prohibition of the worship of images, images of other gods, other gods without images, as well as the worshipping of YHWH by means of images representing him. Despite several attempts of partial and thorough reforms during the history of Israel and Judah, including a final reform by Josiah of Judah, the problem persisted until the Babylonian exile and was probably only effectively expunged long after the exile. References in Isa 65 and 66 seem to confirm these or related idolatrous practices after the Exile.

However, determining the full extent to which idolatry was practised among the general population is almost impossible due to the lack of statistical evidence in Biblical and extra-Biblical records and sufficient convincing supportive archeological findings. OT accounts tend to unmask mainly the practices of the leadership rather than that of the population. Furthermore, the prophets depict the people as not strictly obedient to YHWH and his covenant, and as frequently involved in idolatrous practices.

¹ Discussed in 3.5 and 3.6 above.

On the other hand, the prophets or redactors of their work might be guilty of a tendency to generalise or to summarise the complete history of the sins of idolatry of Israel and Judah. In many cases, it is clear that the complete history is meant, from land taking until the date of the prophetic oracles, including all sins of idolatry of the ancestors, previous generations, and kings.

3.9. A CANONICAL APPROACH

In the light of the exegetical problems discussed above, which leaves the exegete in a checkmate position, a more acceptable approach currently followed by many authors is the canonical view of Childs (1985:6) and others.¹ This approach brackets out all historical questions and accepts the given text as a literary and canonised unit, in order, as Brueggemann (1992:11) states: *“to get on with the interpretive task at hand.”* In this approach the fact is accepted that OT material was the result of lengthy re-interpretation processes, theologically shaped and re-shaped up to the final stage of canonisation, in order to address the needs of contemporary and future generations. However, the emphasis lies on the canonical form and theological function of the OT literature as authoritative scripture.

OT theology is considered a theological science, which forms part of Christian theology, and not merely a history of Israel’s religion entailing efforts to render objective historical descriptions. Although this is a disappointing approach to historians who demand explicit rules for the treatment of Biblical sources, it is a way out of the dilemma into which the late-daters forced exegetes. This resulted from their treatment of the OT as fabricated fiction for ideological purposes. According to this approach, the OT and therefore also the prophetic literature can be read as a coherent unity, not as a historical source in the first place, but primarily as literature with a theological intention and nature.

¹ See for e.g. Brueggemann 1992:11. See Voigt and van Zyl (1991:561-573) for a critical evaluation in which the problem of the neglect of the historical-critical method could lead to priority of subjectivity in the process of interpretation, is emphasised. Childs (1987:43-49) however argues that *“a major literary and theological force was at work in shaping the present form of the Hebrew Bible”* and that the canonised text *“establishes a platform”* for exegesis in stead of *“a barrier”* for creative theology. Kruger HAJ (1994:181-197) comments that *“the historical-critical method was never fully integrated with theological studies in South Africa.”* He agrees with Morgan who argues *“canonical study is simply the application of traditional methods to a body of literature viewed holistically, presupposing a particular use, function, and context.”* For a critical summary of the canonical approach, see Janse van Rensburg 1988:22-32.

To my mind, this is the most important achievement of the canonical approach, because our understanding of the NT and Christian faith depends on our attitude and interpretation of the OT. This also applies to OT theology, which influences our preaching, as Goldingay (1981:11-15ff) correctly commented on this problem in his answer to the question, *'What does the Old Testament text in its historical meaning say to mankind in the eschaton of Jesus Christ?'*

3.10 Summary and conclusion

For the purpose of this study, although aimed at the literary and linguistic phenomenon of metaphor, all text-critical, literary, linguistic, historical, sociological, and psychological aspects will be considered. However, the heart of this study will focus on the function and theology of the metaphors in the relationship YHWH, Israel and the gods. Therefore, the book of Jeremiah will be approached as a theological work, a literary unit, canonised by the Christian Church, and more specifically, as found in Protestant circles. The MT is regarded as the received canonised text, and comparisons with the LXX will be made where applicable. Exegetical factors and problems as indicated above will however be considered in the analysis and exegesis of the relevant expressions and passages.

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Chapter 4

YHWH AND THE ‘OTHER GODS’

4.1 INTRODUCTION

4.1.1 The scope of this chapter

This chapter endeavours to investigate the diction and metaphorical concepts employed in the book of Jeremiah to describe the relationship of YHWH and the ‘other gods’ involved in the polemic against idolatry in the book of Jeremiah. Firstly, all terminology referring to the relationship between YHWH and the gods in the book of Jeremiah will be identified. Special attention will be given to the identifying of the metaphorical concepts used regarding the gods in the poetic as well as the prose sections. The results of the investigation of the anti-idolatry texts in prose and poetry will be compared in order to determine whether there exists any difference in language usage or literary continuity. Following that, selected diction and metaphorical concepts describing the ‘other gods’ will be analysed and clarified in the light of existing Biblical and extra-Biblical information. Special attention will be given to the usage of terminology and metaphors against the background of the ANE fertility and war cult and the typical ANE theological values and expressions. Ultimately, the study will focus on the drawing of conclusions concerning the theological significance of the statements regarding YHWH and the gods.

4.1.2 Provisional comments on idolatry in the Book of Jeremiah

Frequent references to idolatry in the book of Jeremiah create the idea that the struggle against idolatry is one of its major themes. In fact, as a literary unit, the book of Jeremiah conveys the idea that the idolatry of Judah was one of the main causes, if not the main cause, for the fall of Jerusalem in 587/6 BC. The usual argumentation claims that the wrath of YHWH turned against Judah and Jerusalem because of “*all their wickedness in forsaking me; they have made offerings to other gods, and worshiped the works of their own hands*” (1:16). Jer 1:16 constitutes the first reference where idolatry is mentioned as the cause of the judgement of YHWH and the subsequent disastrous fall of the kingdom

of Judah. This statement quoting the sin of idolatry and the subsequent punishment is repeated throughout the book of Jeremiah in several versions with more or less the same notion.¹

In addition, especially in the prose sections of the book of Jeremiah, the answer to the rhetorical ‘Why-question’ (Why is the land/city in this state? Why has the LORD done this to the land?), is repeatedly given as ‘idolatry’.² Furthermore, several shorter references serving as accusations of Israel’s involvement in idolatry appear in the poetic³ and prose sections,⁴ which together with the above-mentioned occurrences, create the impression that idolatry was a popular practice during the pre-exilic period of Judah, despite Josiah’s reform efforts.

4.1.3 The issue of methodology

The historical approach⁵ dominated the scene of OT theology for the past century, resulting in some valuable insights and viewpoints for OT studies and theology. The historical method was also applied to the book of Jeremiah by many commentators and especially to the anti-idolatry texts with the result that the majority of these texts were consistently treated by commentators as imported by later, mainly Deuteronomistic redactors.⁶ These commentators⁷ tend to treat the authenticity of texts opposed to idolatry, especially those in the prose sections of the book of Jeremiah, with suspicion. Even modern commentators⁸ who do not follow the historical-critical method, have continued this notion of questioning the originality of these texts by ascribing them to the ideological views of movements within the exilic survivor-groups with their own agendas.⁹ A growing scepticism¹⁰ regarding the trustworthiness of OT literature as a

¹ See Jer 5:7-9; 7:18-20; 7:30-34; 8:1-3; 11:10-13 and 17; 13:9-11; 16:16-18; 17:1-4; 18:15-17; 19:3-13; 25:3-11; 32:27-35; 35:15-17; 44:2-6 and 21-23.

² See Jer 5:19; 9:12-16; 16:10-13; 22:8-9.

³ See Jer 2:5,8,11,13,20,23,25,27,28,33; 3:1,2,13,23; 13:27; 16:19b; 23:11 and 13.

⁴ See Jer 3:6-10,24; 7:6,9; 8:19b; 12:16; 23:27; 44:8,9, 17-19 and 25.

⁵ With Bernard Duhm 1901: pp.xvi-xx, as a major contributor.

⁶ See Weinfeld 1972:27. Thiel 1973, is used by Carroll (1986) as basic reference in his commentary.

⁷ Duhm *ibid.*, Mowinckel 1914.

⁸ E.g. Carroll (1986). Scheffler (1998:530) reckons Carroll does ask typical historical questions but prefer to answer it negatively.

⁹ See Turner 1996:111-128 regarding the role of similar passages in Isaiah.

¹⁰ See HAJ Kruger 1996:53; Rendtorff 1988:10. See discussion in chapter 3 above.

source for a true and balanced account of historical events and situations in Biblical times dominates the above mentioned approaches.

4.1.4 Resulting explanations for idolatry references

Commentators in the past, especially those from the form-critical and historical-critical schools, proposed a variety of explanations for the occurrences of idolatry texts, especially for those in the prose sections of the book of Jeremiah. Until recently, references to idolatry were treated as:

- (1) Deuteronomistic scribal interpolations;¹
- (2) The work of the YHWH-alone group, i.e. the promoters of Yahwism and monotheism;²
- (3) Deuteronomistic ideological influences;³
- (4) Predominantly the work of Jeremiah and Baruch.⁴

Only a few commentators tend to treat the majority of idolatry sayings as original words of Jeremiah. Furthermore, the majority of commentators under the influence of Duhm (1901) tend to treat the poetic oracles as the original sayings of Jeremiah and most of the prose as imported from elsewhere.

4.1.5 Method followed in this chapter

Unfortunately the significance of the literary unit of the canonised theological text was mostly neglected in the application of the historical critical method. In the present study, the investigation will take into consideration some of the results of the historical-critical method, and therefore does not reject the theories of later interpolations by redactors.⁵ Rather, it intends to determine the possible literary, ideological and theological motives and significance of the poetic as well as that presented in the so-called inserted anti-idolatry texts, i.e. within the compiled literary unit as canonised. Although this study will

¹ Weinfeld 1972:9 and ch III:158-178. He calls the group חכמים סופרים (wise men and scribes). Also Leslie 1954:283,312.

² Smith 1971 and 1984; Lang 1983:13-59 (see Gnuse 1997:76 and 81 respectively).

³ Carroll 1986:126,127. He states that a Yahweh-alone ideology dominates in the book of Jeremiah.

⁴ Holladay 1989: 24,25 and 53. Also Keil 1975:29.

⁵ A genuine theological canonical approach does not ignore the historical factors.

treat the book of Jeremiah as a literary unit, the applied distinction and comparison between the diction of prose and poetry will serve the purpose of determining relations in the diction and the theological motives in the language usage in both. In the light of the fact that language usage in poetry and prose may differ due to advanced linguistic/artistic applications, the diction will be compared. Selected metaphorical concepts will also be analysed against the sociological background of the pre-exilic and post-exilic periods as well as the theological language of the ANE.

Firstly, a brief overview of occurrences, expressions, and statements regarding the nature and the role of the ‘other gods’ in the book of Jeremiah will be given. In the canonical literary unit these expressions about the gods mostly occur as the statements of YHWH, or Judah’s denial or admittance of guilt, both uttered by the prophet/author(s). In an application of the historical method, the statements are usually attributed to the author/redactor, Jeremiah and Baruch his scribe, or the Deuteronomistic scribes/redactors, of which the latter are viewed as being motivated by a specific ideology or a political stance.

4.2 AN OVERVIEW

In the following overview only the given canonical text as presented in the MT ¹ will be analysed to determine the applicable terminology and metaphorical concepts in the polemic: YHWH versus the gods. The historical, ideological, and sociological aspects, as well as the LXX text where applicable, will be taken into consideration in the more detailed exegesis presented in the second section.

4.2.1 Terminology used to describe the deities

The deities other than YHWH involved in Israel’s idolatrous practices are generally and most frequently referred to as ‘other gods’ (אלהים אחרים). The descriptions ‘no gods’ (לא אלהים) and ‘foreign gods’ (אלהי נכר) are less frequently used.

¹ See chapter 3 for a discussion of the MT and LXX texts of the book of Jeremiah.

4.2.1.1 Other gods (אלהים אחרים)

The expression ‘other gods’ (אלהים אחרים), appears in 1:16; 7:6,9,18; 11:10; 13:10 16:11,13; 19:4,13; 22:9; 25:6; 32:29; 35:15; 44:3,5,8,15. All 18 occurrences appear in prose sections. The poetry prefers metaphorical concepts when referring to other gods. Only 25:6 appears to be presented as the words from the prophet himself quoting YHWH’s fruitless appeal to Israel to repentance. In 44:15, part of the narrative account of the conduct of the refugees in Egypt, the prophet/author describes the refugees as worshippers of other gods. All other references to ‘other gods’ are presented as direct speech of YHWH. The expression ‘other gods’ emphasises *YHWH’s viewpoint of the other deities, namely as ‘other deities than himself’*.

4.2.1.2 Foreign gods (אלהי נכר)

In 5:19 the expression ‘foreign gods’ (אלהי נכר) occurs in a prose section comprising of 5:18-19, which is inserted in a poetic section as an utterance of YHWH, instructing Jeremiah what to answer the people. The description of *YHWH’s view*, namely that *other deities are foreigners to Israel*, is at stake here. Of importance in the context is also the reference to ‘your land’, which implies that other deities are foreigners in the land. These descriptions could be regarded as forming the metaphorical concept **Other deities are foreigners** as will be indicated in the analysis.

The occurrence of the expression ‘foreign vanities’ (בהבלי נכר), rendered as ‘foreign idols’ in the NRSV, in the poetry of 8:19, supports the idea that the other deities are foreign (see 4.2.3.2 below). More support comes from expressions such as ‘gods nor you or your ancestors have known’ occurring in e.g. 7:9, and 19:4.

Related to this expression is the reference to other deities as ‘strangers’ (זרים) found in the poetry of 2:25 and 3:13. Both form part of the direct speech of YHWH accusing Israel of idolatry. In the prose sections the only occurrences of the expression are found in 5:19 and 30:8, and both probably refer to imperial forces. The use of ‘strangers’ in the poetry reflects the metaphorical concept **Other deities are strangers** in the utterances of

YHWH stating that Israel's other deities are strangers in the sense of being foreign to them. In the prose sections the concept **Imperial forces are strangers** means that YHWH views the imperial forces to be strangers to Israel. In the light of the fact that there exists a close relationship between the nations and their gods, and the land they occupy, especially in a situation of war, both concepts will be investigated below.

4.2.1.3 No gods (לא אלהים)

The other deities are referred to as 'no gods' (לא אלהים) in poetry sections, i.e. in 2:11; 5:7 and 16:20. In 2:11 and 5:7 YHWH addresses the idolatry sins of Israel, and in 16:20 the conclusive answer to the question of the prophet/author(s) "*Can mortals make for themselves gods?*" rings: "*Such are no gods!*" The use of the term 'no gods' represents *the viewpoint of YHWH and the prophet/author(s) regarding other deities as being 'no gods.'*

4.2.1.4 Selection for analysis

In the light of the fact that the term 'gods' (אלהים) generally refers to the deities of the nations (e.g. Jug 2:12; Ps 96:5; 1 Ch 16:26; also Jer 2:11) or deities in general, only the terms 'other gods' (אלהים אחרים), 'foreign gods' (אלהי נכר), and 'no gods' (לא אלהים), will be analysed in the exegetical section below (see Ringgren 1974:267-284 for an article on אלהים, and Cross 1974:242ff on אל).

Special attention will be given to the usage of the metaphorical concepts **Other deities are foreigners**, and **Other deities are strangers**, and will be discussed under the section of concepts classified as metaphors. Although not all of these other terms represent metaphorical concepts, they reflect within their contexts theological significance. Therefore, the aim of the analysis entails the determining of theological, ideological, and sociological background information for the exegesis of the metaphorical concepts. To determine the identity of these 'other', 'foreign', 'no gods', is another important issue to be investigated.

4.2.2 Epithets and names of the gods

The only names of other deities involved in Israel's religious practices mentioned in the book of Jeremiah are those of 'Baal' and 'Molech'. In addition, the epithets 'the sun, moon, and all the host of heaven', 'the whole host of heaven' as well as 'the queen of heaven', appear to describe some of the deities involved. The following presents a brief survey of the occurrences of these names and epithets:

4.2.2.1 Molech (מֹלֶךְ)

The name of 'Molech' is only mentioned once i.e. regarding child sacrifice, in the prose of 32:35. The context presents the accusation of YHWH addressed to the royal house, the priests and prophets, the people of Judah, and those in Jerusalem. In other words, the whole nation is accused. The identity of 'Molech' as well as his association with 'child sacrifice' is an important factor involving idolatry and needs further investigation.

4.2.2.2 Baal (בַּעַל)

The name of 'Baal' occurs three times in poetic sections, i.e. firstly in 2:8, as YHWH's accusation of the prophets of the house of Israel who 'prophesied by Baal'. Secondly, it occurs in 2:23 as the denial of Israel's involvement in Baal worship. Thirdly, it occurs in 23:13 where YHWH mentions the sins of the prophets of Samaria who 'prophesied by Baal'.

The prose sections yield ten cases where the name 'Baal' are found i.e. in 7:9; 9:13 (NRSV v14); 11:13 and 17; 12:16; 19:5(2x); 23:27; 32:29 and 35. All occurrences appear to be utterances of YHWH in direct speech. The majority appears in the first part, i.e. chapters 1-25. Only in 32:35, which appears in the second part of the book of Jeremiah, the names of 'Baal' and 'Molech' are connected regarding 'child sacrifice'.

4.2.2.3 The sun, moon and all the host of heaven

The expression occurs in the prose of 8:2 as part of a report of the prophet regarding YHWH's statements about the royal houses of Judah and the people of Jerusalem's involvement in the worship of 'the sun and the moon and all the host of heaven' (לשמש ולירח ולכל צבא השמים).

4.2.2.4 The whole host of heaven (לכל צבא השמים)

The expression 'the whole host of heaven' occurs in the prose of 19:13. The expression is rendered in a report of the prophet regarding YHWH's statements about the kings of Judah and the people of Jerusalem's involvement in the worship of 'the whole host of heaven'.

4.2.2.5 The queen of heaven' (למלכת השמים)

The epithet 'the queen of heaven' occurs in the prose section of 7:18, as a reference to the identity of the 'other gods' worshipped by Israel, in a discussion between YHWH and his prophet. In the prose of 44:17,18, and 19 it occurs in the replies of the refugees in Egypt to the prophet's accusation of involvement in idolatry. The reply can be viewed as an admittance of guilt of their own involvement as well as a history of involvement of Judah's royal houses and ancestors in the practice of worshipping the queen of heaven. In verse 25 YHWH quotes the reply of the refugee group in his address of the problem.

4.2.2.6 Selection for analysis

Scholars usually ascribe the absence of the names of gods to the tendency of the Massoretic scribes to omit the names in order to erase the signs of Israel's love of idolatry (Houtman 1999:678). However, according to this overview all names and epithets of the gods mentioned in the book of Jeremiah appear more frequently in the prose sections, which are generally regarded as additions and interpolations of later redactors. The poetry sections, generally viewed as the original work of Jeremiah, only use the name 'Baal'

three times. Even the LXX, which is regarded in some circles¹ as the more authentic version of the book of Jeremiah, does not give clearer indications of the names of the gods involved. The question arises whether a minority propagandistic group would not have denounced the other gods in bolder terms and by name.

The mentioning of ‘the sun, moon, and all the host of heaven’ as well as ‘the whole host of heaven’ and the ‘queen of heaven’ obviously point to astral related religious activities. However, any effort to identify the gods from the literary unit presented in the book of Jeremiah as the only source, including the presumably obvious names of Molech and Baal, is almost impossible. Clearer identification will have to be found in other Biblical texts, extra-Biblical texts, iconography, and archaeological findings. Such identification is the aim of the second part of this chapter in order to determine the nature of idolatrous practices in the pre- and post-exilic communities of Israel. Therefore, Israel’s religious involvement in the worship of ‘Baal’, ‘Molech’, and the engagement of these deities in ‘child sacrifice’, as well as ‘the queen of heaven’ and ‘the astral cult’, will be investigated.

4.2.3 Adjectival descriptions of the gods

In the book of Jeremiah, YHWH and/or the prophet/author(s) describe the other deities in a variety of terms. It is important to note when deities in general or the deities of other nations or the other deities of Israel are indicated. Some of the expressions are also typical poetic expressions. The analysis below will attend to these aspects. The following expressions describe the nature and the qualities of the other deities pertaining to Israel, and presented as the view of the Yahwistic movement.

4.2.3.1 They are ‘vanity, emptiness, worthlessness’ (הבל)

The description of the other deities as ‘vanity, emptiness, worthlessness’ (הבל), occurs in 2:5; 8:19; 10:3, 8, 15; 14:22; 16:19; 51:18 (all= nouns); and 2:5 (= verb). All occurrences are regarded as poetry, and all contains the words of YHWH in direct speech, delivered by the prophet to Israel, except for 16:19, which is a personal commitment of the

¹ The viewpoint e.g. of Ackerman (1992), McKane (1986), Janzen (1973) in Holladay (1989:3n14).

prophet/author(s) to YHWH. The use of **הבל** in these occurrences invokes the metaphorical concept **Other deities are worthless** which is presented as the view of YHWH, as well as the view of the prophet/author(s), namely that *the deities inherited by the ancestors of the nations are worthless*.

4.2.3.2 They are ‘foreign vanities’ (בהבלי נכר)

The description ‘foreign vanities’ (בהבלי נכר), which could also be translated as ‘foreign idols’ (NRSV), occurs in 8:19, a poetic section containing the weeping of YHWH regarding Israel’s sins. The NRSV renders the sentence in which the expression appears in brackets, probably to indicate a redactional insertion. The related expression ‘foreign gods’ (אלהי נכר) occurs in the prose of 5:19 as an utterance of YHWH. The metaphorical concept **Other deities are foreign vanities/idols** presented as YHWH’s view, is detected in these occurrences.

4.2.3.3 They are ‘things that do not profit’ (לא-יועלו and בלוא יועיל)

In three occurrences in poetry, i.e. 2:8,11 and 16:19, Israel’s other deities are described in direct speech by YHWH as ‘things that do not profit’ according to the prophets’ oracles. The expression represents the metaphorical concept **Other deities are unprofitable** in the utterance of YHWH.

4.2.3.4. They ‘cannot save’ (ישע) Israel

The accusation of YHWH that Israel’s other deities ‘cannot save them....in their time of trouble’, occurs once in poetry i.e. in 2:28, and reads: *‘Let them come if they can save you, in your time of trouble.’* The expression also occurs once in the prose i.e. in 11:12 regarding the impotency of the other gods, and reads: *‘but they will never save them in their time of trouble.’* The statement regarding YHWH’s view that ‘the other deities are incapable of saving Israel in their times of trouble,’ supports the notion of the **worthlessness** and the **unprofitable** nature of Israel’s other deities. Furthermore,

according to the context of 2:28, YHWH accuses Israel of only knowing him in their time of trouble to save them, which implies that he alone can save them.

4.2.3.5 They cannot bring rain (גשם)

The prophet/author, in his mediation on behalf of Israel with YHWH, in the poetry of 14:22, asks a rhetorical question implying that none of ‘the idols of the nations’ (בהבלי הגוים) can bring rain (גשם). This statement not only strengthens the notion of the **worthlessness** and the **unprofitable** nature of all other gods, but also the fact that YHWH of Israel is the only god who can bring rain.

4.2.3.6 Lies and nothing but lies (שקר and אך־שקר)

The term ‘lies’ (שקר) in 13:25, occurs in a poetry section containing direct speech of an oracle of YHWH against the king and the queen mother. The use of the expression in this context however, does not clearly state that a relationship with other deities is at stake. The occurrence in 10:14 (= 51:17) states that the images of the deities of the nations, fabricated by their goldsmiths, are ‘false’ (שקר). In 16:19, clearly in a context of idolatry, the expression ‘nothing but lies’ (אך־שקר) is used in combination with ‘worthless things in which there is no profit’, in a response of the prophet/author(s) to an accusation and judgement oracle of YHWH. The metaphorical concept **Other deities are lies** is presented in these expressions stating the prophet/author(s) view.

4.2.3.7 A delusion (שוא)

In the poetry of 18:15 the term שוא occurs in the oracle of YHWH in direct speech regarding the sins of Israel, describing the other deities as ‘a delusion.’

The term תעע (to mock) occurs in 10:15 (=51:18), in the expression ‘the work of delusion’ (the RSV version of מעשה תעתעים), in a poetic section as the words of the author/prophet in a praise song in favour of YHWH, exalting him above the other deities.

It seems that two metaphorical concepts are at stake here. In 18:15 the concept **Other deities are delusions** is presented as YHWH's viewpoint. In 10:15 (=51:18) the concept entails **Other deities are the works of delusion** in the statement of the prophet/author(s).

4.2.3.8 Carcasses of detestable idols

The expression 'carcasses (from נבלה) of detestable things (שקויץ - usually referring to idols),' occurs in the prose of 16:18. This appears in YHWH's announcement of Israel's punishment, ascribing the cause as being the pollution of YHWH's land by Israel by means of 'the carcasses of their detestable idols' (בנבלת שקוציהם). The images of Israel's other deities are therefore, metaphorically viewed as carcasses, which are specified as detestable to YHWH. The metaphorical concept therefore invoked entails **The images of the other deities are detestable carcasses** according to YHWH's view.

4.2.3.9 An abomination (תועבה)

In the poetry sections two occurrences of the term תועבה (abomination) are found, namely in 4:1 and 13:27. The occurrence in 4:1 represents the first appearance of the term in the book of Jeremiah. This verse contains YHWH's appeal to Israel to return to Him, and to remove their abominations from His presence. However, the immediate context does not provide a clear reference to idols or images. According to 13:27, YHWH claims that he is aware of the 'abominations' of the king and the queen mother. Other sins mentioned in connection with 'abominations' are the accusations of their 'adulteries', 'neighings', and 'prostitutions' *'on the hills of the countryside'*. This occurrence of the term 'abomination' in association with the latter expression can be viewed as a clear reference to idolatrous activities, and/or objects such as images of other deities.

Two of the three occurrences in the prose sections, i.e. 7:30 and 32:34, express YHWH's accusation regarding the evil deed of Judah in setting up *'their abominations in the house'* of YHWH. In 16:18 the accusation of YHWH against Israel rings: they *'have filled my inheritance with their abominations.'*

A preliminary conclusion from these appearances regarding the metaphorical concepts at stake, can be formulated as follows: **YHWH views The images of other deities are abominations and/or The idolatrous practices in favour of other deities are abominations.**

4.2.3.10 A shameful thing (הבשת)

The only appearance of the term the ‘shameful thing’ (הבשת) as subject in the OT with ה, occurs in the prose of Jer 3:24 as a confession by the prophet/author(s), and reads: *“But from our youth the shameful thing has devoured all for which our ancestors had laboured”*. The only related occurrence is found in the prose of 11:13 in a context of idolatrous practices where the altars for making offerings to Baal are specified as *‘altars you have set up to shame’*. The metaphorical concept **The other deity (Baal) is a shameful thing** can be considered in 3:24, in the light of the fact that **בשת** is often used as a term of mockery for Baal.

4.2.3.11 Selection for analysis

In sum, the above-mentioned descriptive adjectives and identified metaphorical concepts contain definite indications of emotional elements and attitudes in the relationship of YHWH/the prophet/the author(s) representing the Yahwistic theology, towards the other gods, representing the Canaanite belief in Baalism. The metaphorical concept of other gods being ‘vanities, worthless, empty’ together with ‘foreign vanities’, as well as the concept of being ‘unprofitable’, will be discussed under the same heading namely **‘Other deities are worthless’**. The description of the other deities as ‘foreign vanities’ will also be included in the discussion of the metaphorical concept **Other deities are foreigners and strangers**. The statement that the ‘other deities cannot bring rain’ will be included under this heading because it represents a demonstration of the worthlessness of the deities. The metaphorical concept describing the other deities as being ‘lies’ (שקר) will also receive brief attention under the heading **‘The other deities are deceptions’** as supplementing the concept of the worthlessness of the gods.

The descriptions of other deities as ‘carcasses of detestable things’ and ‘abominations’ as metaphorical concepts will not be discussed in this chapter. It will receive brief attention in chapter 5. Lastly, the metaphorical epithet ‘**The other deity is a shameful thing**’ will receive brief attention in the discussion regarding Baal.

The analysis of the metaphorical expressions will mainly focus on the worthlessness and foreignness of the ‘other gods’.

4.2.4 Provisional conclusion

It is clear from the above overview that terminology, names and metaphors used in the polemic against the gods contain emotive elements as well as mockery. Indications of conflict between YHWH, the prophet/author(s) and the foreign gods are observed. Furthermore, it appears that the analysis of these terms in their contexts as well as against the background of other appearances in the OT and in extra-Biblical material could produce more information about the didactic and promotional nature of monotheistic Yahwism. Obvious differences as well as continuities in the poetic and prose diction exist. Furthermore, clear signs of what is generally regarded as the usage of ANE fertility and war cult terminology in the struggle against idolatry are observed. These aspects will be investigated in the analysis of the selected expressions below. The focus will be on all expressions relating to the worthless and foreign nature of the other gods.

4.3 CLARIFICATION OF TERMINOLOGY REGARDING THE GODS

4.3.0 Selected terms

The analysis of selected terminology in 4.2.1.4 namely ‘other gods’, and ‘no gods’ may contribute some theological significance to the nature and intensity of the polemic against the other deities involved.¹ This could serve as background information for the identifying and analysing of the metaphorical language in the book of Jeremiah.

¹ The expression ‘foreign gods’ is indicated as a metaphorical concept and will be discussed in the section for the analysis of metaphorical concepts below.

4.3.1 Other gods (אלהים אחרים)

The term ‘other gods’ (אלהים אחרים) represents the common expression in the prose sections of the struggle against idolatry in the Book of Jeremiah, Deuteronomy and the so-called Deuteronomistic literature. The majority of commentaries consulted pay no or very little attention to the expression ‘other gods’. This study endeavours to discover some theological nuances in its usage.

4.3.1.1 Occurrences in the book of Jeremiah

The construction of אלהים אחרים with ל occurs in 1:16; 7:18; 19:4,13; 22:9; 32:29; 44:3,5,8,15 and without ל in 7:6,9; 11:10; 13:10; 16:11,13; 25:6; 35:15. All occurrences (18) appear in the prose sections only. In the above-mentioned occurrences Israel is accused of ‘going after’, ‘serving’, ‘worshipping’, ‘pouring out libations’, ‘sacrificing’ to these gods. In the process the people of Israel have ‘forsaken’ YHWH, and ‘provoked YHWH to anger’.¹ These other gods were deities which neither Israel nor their ancestors have known (7:9,19; 19:4;), but also gods of their ancestors who taught them these things (9:14; see also 44:9). On several occasions it is alleged that the other gods are the work of their hands (1:16; 2:28; 25:6,7; 32:30; 44:8). Israel followed this practice to their disadvantage (7:6; 25:7; see also 2:5,8,11,28; 3:24)

4.3.1.2 Meaning of אחר in אלהים אחרים

אחר occurs 161 times in the OT of which 62 occasions are in combination with אלהים. The combined expression (אלהים אחרים) is usually found in covenant related passages in the Deuteronomistic literature, especially Deuteronomy (18x), Jeremiah (18x), Jos 23 (3x), and 2 Ki 17 (4x) (Erlandsson 1974:201,202). The singular, אחר in combination with אל (= other god), appears only once in the OT i.e. in Ex 34:14 (Brown e.a.1968:29).

¹ See the discussion of these expressions in chapter 5 below.

Weinfeld (1972:320) prefers the translation ‘foreign gods’ for אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים, but all English versions use ‘other gods’. In the majority of contexts the term אַחֵר first of all means ‘additional, other, another’ in the sense of:¹

- (1) ‘*an extra, further, in addition*’ e.g. ‘an *additional* vessel’ (Jer 18:4); ‘a *further* (new) scroll’ (Jer 36:28, 32);
- (2) Or, if something is ‘replaced and is *different from* or a *substitute* for’ that which was used earlier e.g. ‘*other* garment’ (Ezk 42:14); ‘*different (substitute)* money’ (Gen 43:22);
- (3) Or, with the definite article, it expresses a direct relationship to the previously mentioned, and then ‘*other = second*’ e.g. ‘the *other* or *second* wing’ (2 Ch 3:12); or also the ‘*next, following* year’ (Gen 17:21) in expressions of time;
- (4) In some cases it is used for something ‘*different*’ e.g. ‘*another* spirit’ (Num 14:24). Only when the difference is viewed negatively, אַחֵר is synonymous with ‘*foreign, strange, alien*’ e.g. ‘a *foreign* tongue’ (Isa 28:11).

In sum, the term אַחֵר expresses relationship, and generally means ‘other, another’ when used in combination with a subject in a text (Erlandsson 1974:201-203). In the combination אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים it means ‘additional’ deities. However, in some contexts it can also denote the ‘foreign’ or ‘different’ nature of the deities (e.g. Deu 31:16,18; Jos 24:2,23; Jug 10:13,16).

4.3.1.3 Theological significance

In the light of the above, one can conclude that אַחֵר, in the expression אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים conveys a double meaning with the negative connotation of ‘other, foreign additional gods opposed to YHWH’. The Ten Commandments (Ex 20:3; Deu 5:7) uses

¹ For meanings as presented below see Erlandsson 1974:202 and Brown e.a. 1968:29.

this expression to state explicitly that YHWH demands exclusive loyalty. No rival, no other, extra, foreign, and/or additional gods were permitted beside him. *“The religion of Israel was the only religion that demanded exclusive loyalty,”* and excluded all possible competition in contrast with other religions where devotees were permitted and bound to several relationships with a variety of gods (Weinfeld 1972:81,82). Rephrased in terms of the claims of the latest theories regarding monotheism, exclusive loyalty to YHWH is demanded by the Yahwistic minority group in their promotional efforts to convert the polytheistic majority of Israel during the pre-exilic and post-exilic periods.

Although **אלהים אחר** occurs frequently in Deuteronomy, Weinfeld (1972:2) does not regard this expression as being a typical Deuteronomistic phrase, but rather *“part and parcel of the common Hebrew vocabulary”*. This means that it was a conventional expression, well-known to all clergy and devotees in OT times. Frequent occurrences of this phrase in Deuteronomy and Deuteronomistic history could be ascribed to special contexts dealing with idolatry, which necessitates its use. The phrase is used as a collective expression to include all imaginable gods, which Israel might possibly worship, and which are foreign and additional to the covenant relationship with YHWH (Erlandsson 1974:202).

Carroll (1986:108) emphasises the importance of this expression by stating: *“The worship of other gods motif is a theme of the prose elements in the tradition and its occurrence here (i.e. in 1:16 ajb) indicates an editorial history of the prologue which includes a Deuteronomistically influenced explanation for the catastrophe of 587.”* The use of the expression ‘other gods’ in the book of Jeremiah and in the rest of the OT has definite significance pertaining to the issue of monotheism in order to emphasise the idea of YHWH alone is God. The scenario of conflict (as indicated by Seitz 1989:3,4 and Brueggemann 1992:10) between YHWH and the other deities as well as the polemic nature of the Jeremianic literature (and the greatest part of the OT) is reflected by the use of this expression. It reflects the presence of other parties in the relationship between YHWH and Israel and that constitutes a breach of covenant (Thompson 1989:154). In the contexts in which it appears, the expression ‘other gods’ emphasises *YHWH’s viewpoint of the opposing deities namely as ‘other than himself’*.

According to the older and/or more conservative theories regarding Israel's monotheism, the Biblical references to idolatry represent backsliding and syncretism, with Josiah's reform as the turning point (Ackerman 1992:213). Later traditional theories regarding the emergence of monotheism in Israel's religion posed that monotheism developed gradually and only came to absolute monotheism during the post exilic period. New theories, based on new archaeological findings tend to combine the traditional evolutionary theory and the revolutionary theory. It is alleged that the development of monotheism progressed through several revolutionary as well as evolutionary stages of development. True monotheism was only achieved during the post-exilic and even later Hellenistic history of Israel (Discussed by Gnuse 1997:62-128 and summarised in 3.3 above).

In the light of the claims of the latest theories regarding monotheism, one must admit that the preaching of the classical prophets as portrayed in the OT reflects a situation where idolatry or polytheism prevailed during the pre-exilic and exilic periods in the religious history of Israel and Judah. It can even be regarded as the popular religion among the majority of Israel during the sixth century (Ackerman 1992:213-217).

One can assume that during the period covered by the book of Jeremiah, some polytheistic groups worshipped other gods, and still other syncretistic groups worshipped other gods in addition to YHWH. The expression **אלהים אחר** was extensively utilised by the Yahwistic elite group to address the problem of polytheism and syncretism practised in the land and in the history of Israel as well as among contemporary members of Israel, and probably also among members of Yahwistic religious beliefs. However, it was also utilised to promote and strengthen the monotheistic ideal of the Yahwistic group during the pre- and post-exilic periods.

In the book of Jeremiah, the expression 'other gods' is mainly presented in direct speech as the words of YHWH to emphasise the authoritative nature of the claims of the Yahwistic group. Therefore, the expression renders assistance in their purpose of conveying the theological message of the God of Israel, i.e. in the polemic against the other gods. The expression 'other gods' may refer to the deities involved in Canaanite

Baalism, and the astral cult. However, the concept of foreign deities of the imperial forces and allies as well as the Babylonian cult of Marduk must also be borne in mind in interpretations.

The expression ‘other gods’ emphasises ‘otherness’ in the sense of foreignness¹ of all these other deities in the midst of Israel. However, it especially emphasises the ‘otherness’ and the sovereignty of YHWH opposed to these deities. He needs no assistance from supplement gods for he is the only God of Israel. Interpreted in this way, it supports the statements regarding the incomparability and distinctiveness of YHWH as promoted in the OT (Labuschagne 1966:4 and 134), and therefore can still be considered as characteristic of the Biblical literature. The new theories regarding the emergence of monotheism therefore represents no major threat to these claims, but would only demand a few adjustments concerning the relationship between Israel and the Canaanites and Israel’s involvement in the Canaanitic Baalism, and foreign cults for diplomatic reasons. The identity of the other deities and the nature and extent of the worship as well as the theological significance of utterances against the other deities, are matters which fall within the scope of this study and will therefore be further investigated below.

4.3.2 The other deities as ‘no gods’ (לא אלהים)

According to the book of Jeremiah, YHWH refers to the other deities as ‘no gods’ (לא אלהים) in the poetry of 2:11a and 5:7. In 16:20, also in poetry, the conclusive answer to the question of the prophet/author(s) “*Can mortals make for themselves gods?*” rings: “*Such are no gods!*” The designation of other deities as ‘no gods’, their occurrences in the book of Jeremiah and the rest of the OT, the motivation for this designation as well as its theological significance, will be explicated below.

4.3.2.1 The occurrence in Jer 2:11a

Commentators generally agree that 2:1-6:30 forms a unit, which presents a summary of Jeremiah’s earliest preaching probably delivered during the reign of Josiah. The unit is compiled from several independent oracles with almost no indication of time settings. Indications of addressees are rendered in the introductory v1 containing YHWH’s

¹ See the discussion of the metaphorical concept **Other deities are foreigners** below.

instruction to Jeremiah to “*Go and proclaim these words in the hearing of Jerusalem*”, and the references in v4 (“*the house of Jacob, and all the families of the house of Israel*”), 4:3,5 (Judah and Jerusalem), and 5:20 (the house of Jacob, Judah). The only indication of a time setting is given in 3:6, which refers to ‘the days of Josiah’. Some commentators argue that the greatest part of the compiled preaching, especially 2:2-4:2, was intended for the Northern Kingdom of Israel. The preaching is introduced by a positive utterance regarding the relationship of YHWH and Israel in terms of the marriage metaphor.¹ However, the quarrel starts in v4.

4.3.2.1.1 Text and context

Jer 2:11 forms part of the literary unit of 2:4-13 (see Craigie 1991:20,21). Craigie demarcated this passage on the following grounds: the subject, internal literary criteria, and the number and gender of forms of address. He reckons that it forms part of a lawsuit between YHWH and Israel, and vv10-11 constitutes the charge against Israel, namely that Israel has changed its God (Craigie 1991:27). Carroll (1986:126), who opts for a ‘family quarrel’ rather than the setting of a lawsuit, notes that the charge in 2:10-13 is the same as formulated elaborately in vv5-9, but vv10-13 uses a different diction.

In vv4-8 the charge entails that Israel went after (הלך אחרֵי) other ‘worthless things’ (v5), ‘things that do not profit’ (v8), and did not ask ‘Where is the Lord...’. This is followed by a repeat of YHWH’s intention to charge Israel (v9). In vv10-11, all hearers/readers (the audience/Israel), are requested to observe whether any nation (as far east as Kedar or far west as Cyprus)² has done such an unthinkable thing, namely to have changed their gods. Verse 11b states that this is precisely what Israel did. They have ‘changed their glory (כבוד designates YHWH) for something that does not profit (בלוא יועיל).’ The heavens is called upon as witness (v11) to witness this shocking conduct of Israel. Verse 13 once again formulates this offence in striking metaphorical language describing the change as comparable to somebody who owns a fountain of

¹ See chapter 6 below for a detailed discussion of the marriage metaphor as well as the form, setting and addressees in 2:2-4:2.

² Commentators generally agree on this interpretation of Cyprus and Kedar. See Carroll 1986:126; Holladay 1986:90; Keil 1975:56,57; Jones 1992:86.

living water (i.e. YHWH) but exchanges it for cracked and handmade water cisterns (i.e. presumably other gods). Verse 11 reads as follows:

הַהִימִיר גּוֹי אֱלֹהִים וְהִמָּה לֹא אֱלֹהִים

Has a nation changed its gods, even though they are **no gods**?

וְעַמִּי הִמִּיר כְּבוֹדוֹ בְּלוֹא יוֹעִיל:

But my people have changed their glory for something that does not profit.

LXX reads: εἰ ἀλλάσσονται ἔθνη θεοὺς αὐτῶν καὶ οὗτοι **οὐκ εἰσιν θεοί**

ὁ δὲ λαός μου ἠλλάξατο τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ ἐξ ἧς οὐκ ὠφελήθησονται.

According to Weinfeld (1972:3 and 171ff) the use of rhetoric and the rhetorical question is characteristic of the Deuteronomistic editors and scribes for didactical purposes. The first half of the question: ‘Has a nation changed its gods?’ supposes an emphatic ‘no’ as an answer, and alludes to the first ‘evil’ namely Israel has done so. Only Israel in the religious history of the then known world has done such an unthinkable thing. This evil is described in v5 as they ‘went far from’ YHWH and ‘went after’ other worthless things, and it is repeated in v13 as ‘they have forsaken (עזב)’ YHWH.

4.3.2.1.2 The first evil

The phenomenon of the relationship between the nations and their gods versus that of Israel and YHWH surfaces here. It is alleged that polytheists will change the names of their gods, or change their rating in the hierarchy of the pantheon (Thompson 1989:170), or take over other nations’ gods to incorporate them into the pantheon (Van Selms 1972:47; König 1975:3). However, although heathen traders will eagerly exchange goods, the polytheists will never exchange gods (Holladay 1986:90). Therefore, Israel’s conduct is without precedent and parallel in the history of religious behaviour among the nations (Carroll 1986:126). In addition, Israel represents the only nation among the nations with one single true god while all others have many no-gods. However, now they have become the only nation to have ever exchanged gods (Craigie 1991:27; Holladay 1986:90). They treated their deity as something/somebody who can be exchanged, thus a submerged

metaphor of ‘a business deal’ is at play, namely **YHWH is an Exchangeable item** and **Israel is an Exchanger**. The irony and emotive elements involved in this polemic are already surfacing here, but thus far presents only half of the story.

4.3.2.1.3 The second evil

The tragedy of the episode is further emphasised in the second half of the rhetorical question which specifies the gods of the nations as ‘no gods.’ The nations stay loyal to their deities even though these deities do not deserve the status of deities according to the viewpoint of YHWH and his devotees. The expression ‘no gods’ in 2:11 therefore refers directly to the gods of the nations and no other qualifications are attached to them in the immediate context. However, the most shocking aspect of this exchanging of gods entails the fact that Israel has exchanged **YHWH**, her **Bridegroom**, and **Husband** (v2b), **the Leader** of the Exodus and the settlement eras (vv6,7), **the Advisor** of the nation (vv6,8), **the Owner** and **Heritor** of the land (v7), who is **Israel’s ‘Glory’** (v11), **the Fountain of living water** (v13), for ‘something that does not profit’, ‘worthless things’ (v5), ‘cracked cisterns that can hold no water’ (v13). The attributes of the parties involved in the exchange are described in negative metaphorical language and that of YHWH in contrasting positive diction. This once more highlights the argument and emphasises the appalling and unthinkable nature of Israel’s religious conduct, but it also alludes to the bad choice (‘business deal’), which Israel has made. Although YHWH was humiliated in the event of the exchange, he is exalted by the Yahwistic prophet as **the Glory** (כבודם) **of Israel**, **the living Fountain**, **the Leader** of the Exodus, and the **Landowner**.

4.3.2.1.4 The quest for an identity

Note must be taken of the fact that the description of ‘no gods’ in 2:11a refers to the deities of the nations. The identity of the other party involved in the exchange, which Israel made, has not been revealed yet. Mention is made of ‘something that does not profit’ (v11b and 8), ‘cracked cisterns that can hold no water’ (v13), and ‘worthless things’(v5). Commentators usually accept the expression ‘the prophets prophesied by Baal, and went after things that do not profit’ (v8) as the first indication of identity. The rhetorical question in v11a is taken as a clear reference to the fact that other gods are

involved. However, this question in v11a can also be interpreted as structured in such a way in order to compare it with something else. In 2:32 e.g. the bridal ornaments do not represent YHWH. The point of comparison is the fact that Israel has forgotten YHWH. It seems that the rhetoric style of Jeremianic literature includes this peculiar technique of comparison. The rhetorical question and the following comparison in v11 put emphasis on the act of changing a deity or deities. In the case of Israel it is not mentioned that they have changed YHWH for another deity, but for ‘something that does not profit’ (בלוא יועיל),¹ which can indicate ‘a bad business deal’. In v8 this is also mentioned about the prophets who ‘prophesied by Baal and went after things that do not profit’, which can imply that they followed bad advice resulting in unprofitable deals. Although the expression is used in the poetry of 16:19 in connection with idols (and ‘no gods’), and elsewhere in e.g. Isa 44:9 and v10 (but rather refers to the fabricators of idols and ‘the things in which they delight in’), the identity of the unprofitable thing in 2:11 is not clearly indicated.

The issue of the identity of the ‘something that does not profit’ becomes more confused by the contents of vv14-18, which follows immediately after the metaphorical depiction of the exchange denoting the other party as ‘cracked cisterns’, dug out by themselves, ‘which can hold no water.’ Verse 14 describes Israel as a plundered slave after the transaction, attacked by invading powers (v15 refers to lions), humiliated by Egypt and Assyria where they sought assistance (vv16 and 18). Furthermore, the metaphor of water in v13 is a perfect match with the metaphor of drinking water from the Nile and the Euphrates. It seems that political alliances and treaties with foreign powers for assistance are at stake in the context.

4.3.2.1.5 Political allies?

It is therefore proposed that Jeremiah addresses the political blunders of the royal houses of the fallen Northern Kingdom in Diaspora in front of an audience in Jerusalem, to demonstrate the futility of such policies. A policy of this nature in ANE theological terms,

¹ The term **יעיל**, translated by the LXX with $\acute{\omega}\phi\epsilon\lambda\acute{\epsilon}\omega$, means ‘gain, profit, benefit’ (Brown e.a. 1968:418). It is used in a negative sense to refer to ‘things that cannot profit or save’ in general (1 Sa 12:21), false prophets (Jer 23:34), and to Egypt as ally (Isa 30:5).

and especially in Yahwistic theology, entails the admittance that the deity of the nation is not capable of handling the crisis. It means a submission to the other force involved and their deity/deities, admitting that one's own deity is weaker. In the light of this, the accusation formulated in the rhetorical questions of 2:6-8, entails that Israel sought the assistance of foreign powers and their gods (Egypt and Assyria, v18), in stead of the guidance of YHWH. They were accused of not asking: 'Where is the Lord... of the exodus- and the settlement-eras?', in other words they did not seek his help in their dilemma. This approach would also help to explain the many references of criticism in Kings/Chronicles and Jeremiah against the involvement of royal houses in idolatrous practices and their political policies regarding external affairs. The references to 'foreign gods' and the poetic terminology with double references to gods and political allies such as 'strangers', 'lovers', and 'worthless things', can be explained in a better way. Jeremiah supported the political and religious reform of Josiah by promoting independence and the removal of all the foreign diplomatic idolatry objects and practices during his earlier years as reflected in 2:2-4:4. The sudden death of Josiah in his battle against a foreign power, i.e. Egypt, and that despite the fact that he promoted the Yahwistic creeds, might be the reason for the alleged silence of Jeremiah during the period following immediately after Josiah's reign (Holladay 1989:26 indicates 622-609 BC as the 'silent period'). Shock and disappointment brought him to a temporary silence to reconsider and reinterpret the situation. That also explains his change of approach in promoting submission to Babylon in his later preaching. Later Yahwistic/Deuteronomistic redactors emphasised Israel's involvement in these idolatrous practices with interpolations and additions to further the promotion of Yahwism.

The aim of this study is not the presentation of a new theory to explicate the book of Jeremiah. However, the possibility of a struggle against the influences of the foreign powers and their foreign deities due to diplomatic relations, must receive attention in the analysis of the references and terminology used in the polemic. The new theories regarding the emergence of monotheism entail that the struggle with idolatry according to the book of Jeremiah is basically aimed at the syncretistic Canaanitic Baalism, characterised by the incorporation of some elements of the Assyrian and Babylonian

cults, or briefly, the Canaanitic/Palestinian version of ANE Baalism.¹ In other words, according to these theories, local Baalism, Baal's consorts, the other deities of the pantheon and the related idolatrous practices, come under fire in the book of Jeremiah and therefore also in 2:11b as well as in vv5,8 and v13. It is alleged that Israel did not exchange gods with the nations from abroad but was involved in the local Canaanite Baalistic cult. However, in addition it is also possible that Jeremiah addresses the problem of international political policies followed by Israel's royal houses in the past as well as that of the contemporary government. Political independence was the ideal strived for since the Assyrian domination in Judah through to the initial period of the resettlement after the exile. It should also be noted that in the book of Jeremiah the deities are very seldom called Israel's personal gods (as in 'your gods'),² but to the contrary, they are mainly described as 'other gods' and 'foreign gods'.

4.3.2.1.6 All other deities are non-gods

However, in several references in the macro context of the book of Jeremiah, the gods of the nations are specifically disparaged and denigrated as worthless idols, fabricated by human artisans. Especially notable is 10:1-16 (in which 10:14-15 = 51:17-18), which is generally regarded as the only occurrence of this nature in the book of Jeremiah, and reflects much of the style of Deutero-Isaiah who mainly addresses the fabrication of the impotent gods of Babylon. Jeremiah also condemns the gods of the nations in chapters 46-52, but it contains no references to their attributes. Based on the nature of the poem in chapter 10 and other references to the impotency of the other gods, one can assume that the general attitude reflected in the book of Jeremiah entails a view that *all other deities are non-gods and useless*.

Commentators generally find something of the emotional and ironic nature of the comparison in which the other gods are ridiculed and YHWH exalted. Keil (1975:57) detects a wordplay and alliteration in v11 between the terms אלהים and אלילים, resulting in the comparison of 'no gods' with 'nothings.' Thompson (1989:170)

¹ See 'Towards the identification of the gods' under 4.4 below

² With the exception of 2:27 which states that the royal house of Israel are people "who say to a tree, 'You are my father,' and to a stone, 'You gave birth to me.'" See also 2:28 and 11:13.

formulates the offense as: *Yahweh's people had abandoned him, the Living God, her 'Glory' for 'The Useless One.'*" He also identifies a play on the name of Baal in the expression בָּלוֹא יוֹעִיל, a possibility which inspired Bright (1965:11, see Thompson p170n) to translate: *"They've traded my Presence for 'Lord Useless.'*" Holladay (1986:91) states that *"There is a kind of ultimate horror in the fact that Israel should barter away her sovereign Lord, ...for some god or other of nature, a will-o'-the-wisp Baal who claimed much brought nothing to the worshiper."* Jones (1992:87) comments: *"Ironically Israel has settled for a poor deal, for she has exchanged the invaluable for the worthless."* Leslie (1954:28) concludes that it entails *"the exchange of a moral God of glorious majesty for idols – impotent nonentities."* One can imagine that the understanding and interpretation of this expression entailed much more for mother tongue speakers in the days of Jeremiah.

The occurrence of 'no gods' in 2:11a is specifically aimed at the gods of the nations. They are 'no gods', non-entities. Likewise, the foolish exchanges which the Northern Kingdom made in history and the attempts of the contemporary government to seek assistance from Egypt and Assyria and their foreign gods, were worthless. An effort is launched to convince them to unite with Judah (3:12ff; 4:1-2), and Judah must learn the lesson that whoring after foreign powers and their gods are worthless and unprofitable exercises, because the gods of the mighty forces are nothing but 'non-gods'. This lesson also served a didactic purpose in Babylon where they were confronted with an extensive idolatrous cult of Marduk to emphasise that the gods of the foreign power are non-gods and therefore powerless. The same applies for the challenges during the resettlement in the country after the return of the exiles. In the different situations of pursuing political independence, it could have served as an example of the past failures of the gods of the nations and the futility of following a policy of seeking assistance from foreign powers by means of alliances.

4.3.2.2 The occurrence in Jer 5:7a

Jer 5:7 occurs in the first unit of Jeremiah's earliest preaching presented in 2:2-6:30, which commentators generally regard as a summary compiled from several short oracles. The lack of information about the addressees and time settings complicates the

interpretation of the first half i.e. 2:2-3:5. However, some commentators agree that this half (or some parts of it) refers to the history of ancient Israel and the Northern Kingdom. In 3:6-11 the time setting is indicated as during the reign of Josiah, and the contents compare the conduct of two faithless sisters who are identified as the Northern Kingdom and Judah. An appeal to the Northern Kingdom to return to YHWH follows in 3:12-4:2. However, as from 4:3 the addressees are clearly indicated in 4:3 as ‘the people of Judah’ and ‘the inhabitants of Jerusalem’, and repeated in 4:5, followed with several references specifically to Jerusalem in 4:10,14,16,31; 5:1; 6:8. In 5:11 however, there is a change of addressee to ‘the house of Israel’ and ‘the house of Judah’. The reference is repeated in 5:15 and v20. Chapter 6 again deals with Jerusalem as reflected in references in 6:1,2,6 and v8. Although it is rather difficult to determine the addressee of each oracle, it is clear that 5:7 forms part of a poetic unit, which deals specifically with Jerusalem.

4.3.2.2.1 The text and context

Jer 5:7 reads:

אי לזאת אסלוח בניך עזבוני וישבעו בלא אלהים

How can I pardon you? Your children have forsaken me, and have sworn by those who are **no gods**.

The LXX version reads:

ποιῶ τούτων ἴλεως γένωμαι σοι οἱ υἱοὶ σου ἐγκατέλιπόν με καὶ ὤμνησον ἐν τοῖς
οὐκ οὖσιν θεοῖς

Verse 7a forms part of the poetry section demarcated as 5:1-9, which addresses the theme “*The Unpardonable Sin and Moral Depravity of Jerusalem*” (Thompson 1989:233). It is presented as a dialogue between YHWH, his prophet, and the personified city. YHWH calls for a search in Jerusalem (v1) for one person who acts justly (**משפט**) and seeks the truth (**אמונה** also = faithfulness, honesty). If such a person could be found, it would be sufficient grounds to pardon the citizens of Jerusalem. However, they swear falsely by the name of the Lord, refuse to take correction and to turn back to the Lord (vv2,3). After a fruitless visit to the poor, the prophet undertakes to visit the elite group to see whether they know the way of the Lord, but it also turns out to be in vain. They have also broken

the yoke and burst the bonds (vv4,5), and therefore there will be no safety outside the cities for anyone because wild animals (or metaphorically the invaders) will attack them. In verse 7a YHWH asks the fatal rhetorical question, which in fact states that there exists no mitigation for the people of the city of Jerusalem. Once again the reason given is the fact that the citizens of Jerusalem (her children) have forsaken YHWH and have sworn by those who are 'no gods'. The sin is further elaborated on and described in terms of adultery and prostitution in vv7b and 8. In v9 YHWH states that his divine judgement was inevitable under these circumstances.

4.3.2.2.2 Keywords

Several covenantal keywords appear in the passage to denote the search for **משפט** (justice), and **אמונה** (truth), **ידעו דרך יהוה** (know the way of YHWH), opposed to the findings of **שקר** (falseness), **מאנו לשוב** (they refuse to return), **שברו על נתקו מוסרות** (they have broken the yoke, burst the bonds). The findings constitute clear evidence that the covenant has been broken and therefore no acquittal is possible as proposed in v1. The reason is given in the formula: Jerusalem's children i.e. the citizens, have forsaken (**עזב**) YHWH, and have sworn (**שבע**) by those who are no gods.

עזב = to forsake, abandon, leave

The verb **עזב** (to forsake, abandon, leave)¹, used in the first summary of the national sin of idolatry in the prose of 1:16, is frequently employed in the poetry of Jeremiah (2:13,17,19; 5:19; 17:13) in the sense of Israel's forsaking of YHWH (in 9:1 also in terms of YHWH's abandonment of Israel). It is used several times in the context of Israel's forsaking YHWH for other gods (2:13; 5:19; 16:11; 19:4), forsaking his covenant (22:9), and forsaking YHWH and his law (16:11). Deu 28:20 alludes to the disaster that follows if Israel forsakes YHWH, and in Deu 31:16,17 prostitution with other deities is viewed as forsaking YHWH and a breach of covenant, which will kindle the anger of YHWH and will result in his forsaking of Israel.

¹ See Brown e.a. 1968:736; Holladay 1986:41,42. See Lisowsky 1958:1040ff for occurrences of **עזב**.

שבע = to swear

The combination of ‘forsaken’ (עזב) together with ‘swear’ (שבע) in the formulation of 7a, namely ‘Jerusalem’s citizens have abandoned YHWH and have sworn by no gods’, seems to be an unique formula in the book of Jeremiah as well as the rest of the OT. Several references to the act of ‘to swear in the name of a deity’ occur e.g. in the book of Jeremiah, namely in 4:2; 5:2; 7:9 and 12:16. Among the many occurrences of the word in Deuteronomy¹ only two refer to this act, i.e. in 6:13 and 10:20. The act of swearing by the name of a deity seems to entail more than just a verbal utterance. The reference in Deu 6:13 demands ‘to fear and serve YHWH’ in combination with ‘by his name alone you shall swear’, which is immediately followed by ‘do not follow other gods’ in v14. Equally, in Deu 10:20 the act of swearing by YHWH’s name is mentioned together with ‘fear YHWH, worship him alone, and hold fast to him.’

In the book of Jeremiah ‘to swear by the name of YHWH’ is viewed as a covenantal commitment or renewal as expressed in 4:1 and 2, which rings: *“if you return to me, if you remove your abominations...and if you swear, ‘As the Lord lives!’ in truth, in justice, and in uprightness, then the nations shall be blessed...”* The lack of the occurrence of truth, and righteous acts in the lives of the citizens of Jerusalem is therefore, viewed as false swearing to YHWH in 5:2. The expression entailing ‘the act of swearing in the name of YHWH’ constitutes the covenantal commitment of loyalty, as well as a confession of faith² from Israel’s side. This is based on the covenant oath of YHWH which he has sworn to Israel’s ancestors. Therefore, ‘swearing falsely’ and ‘swearing in the names of other gods’ (as in 5:2 and 7a) are viewed as forsaking YHWH for other gods. The submerged metaphor **YHWH is the King** of the covenant/treaty and **Israel is the subordinate** partner/vassal, is at play in this expression.

¹ The occurrences in Deuteronomy predominantly refer to the covenant, which YHWH swore to Israel’s ancestors, or the land promised by oath to Israel’s ancestors.

² See Jer 16:14 and 15. The swearing credo “As the Lord lives” is used in relation of the belief of the Exodus. It will however change after the return from Babylon.

The making of a treaty with another political force was accompanied by oaths, and covenants sworn in the name of the other deities. In this sense the formulation of 5:7a serves as a metonymy, metaphorically constructed from the part-whole scheme of worshipping, to denote the sin of idolatry, and thus disloyalty to the covenant, and/or the worshipping of other gods in a political context. This offense is elaborated upon in the metaphorical expressions of **prostitution** and **adultery**¹ in vv 7b and 8, which can refer to the involvement with allies and their deities, and/or involvement in the Canaanite cult, as well as an immoral lifestyle.

4.3.2.2.3 An unforgivable sin

The reason for the fall of Jerusalem is therefore once again stated as Israel's involvement in idolatrous practices in a new poetic formulation. Carroll (1986:176,177) suggests that 5:1-6 serves the purpose of providing a theodicy or a warrant in hyperbolic language for YHWH's action of destruction against Jerusalem. Verses 7-9 contain the conclusion that the community cannot be forgiven because their idolatrous practices have alienated themselves from YHWH (p179). The focus on Jerusalem as religious but also political capital as well as the role of the rich elite, i.e. the leaders, may point to the imported cults of their political allies. To swear loyalty to these 'no gods' in the view of the Yahwists constitutes an unforgivable sin. In this regard, pejorative language is used to describe the unthinkable and foolish behaviour of Israel's leaders and the citizens of the capital to exchange 'the way of the Lord, his covenant,' for 'the way of a covenant with' non-gods. The other gods are thereby degraded by the direct words of YHWH as non-entities. *YHWH and his Yahwistic devotees view these substitute deities of Israel as 'no gods'.*

4.3.2.3 The occurrence in Jer 16:20

The occurrence of 'no gods' in 16:20, which appears in the typical Jeremianic question-answer structure (see 2:11; 5:7 above), refers to the human-made images of the deities of the nations. The prophet/author(s) expresses the view that one day in the future the nations will confess that their gods are deceptive, worthless, unprofitable things (v19).

¹ Carroll (1986:179,180) states that it is difficult if not impossible to determine whether these expressions represent metaphorical religious concepts or moral issues. Thompson (1989:240) argues that the terminology seems to be clear metaphorical descriptions of idolatry.

The nations will then share the insight of the Yahwistic group, namely that all gods made by mortals are ‘no gods’(v20).

4.3.2.3.1 The text and context

Jer 16:20 reads:

הִיעֲשֶׂה-לוֹ אָדָם אֱלֹהִים וְהָמָּה לֹא אֱלֹהִים:

Can mortals make for themselves gods? Such are **no gods!**

The LXX version reads:

εἰ ποιήσει ἑαυτῷ ἄνθρωπος θεοῦς καὶ οὗτοι οὐκ εἰσὶν θεοί.

Verse 20 occurs in a short poetic hymn of praise to YHWH consisting of vv19 and 20. It forms part of the prose unit 16:14-21. The greater prose unit, running from 16:1 –17:4, addresses the following topics: in vv1-4 Jeremiah is prohibited to marry; verses 5-9 contain the announcement of the destruction of the house of mourning; vv10-13 contain the announcement of exile as the punishment (v13) for the sin of idolatry of the ancestors of Israel (v11) as well as the sin of stubbornness and refusal of the contemporary generation to listen to YHWH.

This is followed by an oracle of hope in which YHWH promises to bring Israel from the north back to their own land. Commentators generally limit the verses of consolation to vv14-15 and view these verses as a duplication of 23:7-8, secondarily inserted here (Holladay 1986:474). Verses 16-18 present a continuation of the theme of the announcement of the punishment and the sins of idolatry of Israel (vv10-13). The interruption of the prophet’s hymn of praise follows in vv 19-21. The theme of punishment is closed in v21 with YHWH’s assurance that he will teach them a lesson.¹ 17:1-4 starts a new description of Israel’s sin.

4.3.2.3.2 Consolation in vv14-21

It seems to this researcher that commentators in their quest for an historical setting or a Deuteronomistic contribution for the passage, especially vv14-21, fail to recognise the

¹ See Thompson 1989:410; Carroll 1986:345; Holladay 1986:477.

unity in the theme of this passage. In a canonical reading of the text the inserted verses 14-15 seem to be a suitable introduction to a theme of consolation, which is continued in vv16-21. It appears then that the event of the return of Israel will receive a positive response from all the nations of the earth (v19b), but first YHWH will punish them for their iniquity and sin (vv16-18). Consequently, it is concluded that the nations will learn about the power and might of YHWH from the events of the return of Israel and their punishment by him (v21). A similar line of thought, although in different diction and application, appears in Isa 45:20-24 and Ezk 36:22-24 and hints at a universal response of the nations to the only God, YHWH, who will sanctify his name.

If vv14-21 were to be considered as a unit, the occurrences of the reference to the idols in v18, v19b and v20 indicate the idols of the invading nation or nations including 'all who ate from Israel' (see 2:3). It can therefore be interpreted in the sense that not even the ways and iniquity of the invaders are concealed from YHWH (v17). They are accused of having polluted YHWH's land with the detestable corpses of the images of their deities.

For the first time in the book of Jeremiah the role of the invaders, is acknowledged, whether Egyptians, Assyrians or Babylonians, in the flourishing of idolatrous practices in Israel and among Israelites. The passage 2:5-4:2 e.g. is marked by the alternating occurrences of the references to Israel's involvement with other deities on the one hand and to alliances with foreign political powers on the other. This can therefore be interpreted as representing an aversion to the diplomatic alliances with foreign forces and the presence of foreign invaders and their gods, because Israel must acknowledge their gods and consequently did become involved in the worshipping of these gods. However, in 2:5-4:2 Israel is blamed for their share in this, but in 16:8 the invaders are blamed for their share in polluting the country.

4.3.2.3.3 A hymn of praise and humiliation (vv19-20)

In this context the prophet/author(s) raises a hymn of praise to YHWH. He is a refuge in times of trouble, the one who oversees and controls everything on earth, and to whom all nations shall come. The nations will indeed confess that the nature of their idols, inherited from their ancestors, represent worthless, unprofitable lies. To this the prophet responds

with the rhetorical question: *Can mortals make for themselves gods?* Obviously, the answer is an emphatic negative. A human being cannot create or fabricate a divine being, therefore the images of the deities of the nations are not only detestable carcasses, or worthless, unprofitable frauds, but also non-deities.

In pejorative language usage in poetic style, and consecutive expressions the deities of the nations are humiliated, and in conclusion viewed to be non-entities. The view of the Yahwistic group should therefore be formulated as *the images of the deities of the nations are no gods*. The Yahwists shared the belief that one day all nations will admit this and will acknowledge YHWH as the one who brought Israel from exile back to their own land. The conviction of the Yahwists that YHWH represents the only god and that the gods of all other nations are non-gods, is clearly expressed and interpreted in the history of the return of the exiles, and the punishment of the invader nations. The Yahwist describes YHWH in a rich variety of metaphors in vv14-21, e.g. **YHWH is a Leader** who brought Israel from Egypt and now from Babylon (vv14,15), **YHWH is an Employer** of fishermen and hunters (v16), **an Observer** of nations (v17), **a Punisher** of nations, **a Landowner**, and **an Heritor** of land (v18), **a Strength**, **a Stronghold**, **a Refuge** for the prophet in times of trouble (v19), **a Warrior**, and **a Teacher** of nations. YHWH is definitely not a worthless, human-made non-god, but the mighty **universal King** (v21) of all, who is actively involved in the world events and in the life of Israel.

4.3.2.4 Occurrences of ‘no gods’ in the rest of the OT

Two occurrences of significance, namely 2 Ki 19:18 and Isa 37:19, are found in the almost identically worded passages of 2 Ki 18:17-20:6 and Isa 36:1-37:35. These occurrences need further discussion in the light of the fact that the contexts also provide more information about the views of two individuals from different religious groups, namely the Assyrian Rabshakeh, and the Yahwistic Hezekiah.

4.3.2.4.1 Isa 37:19 and 2 Ki 19:18

The most prominent references to the term ‘no gods’ are found in 2 Ki 19:18 (= Isa 37:19) in the prayer of Hezekiah. This is part of the account of the confrontation between

the Rabshakeh of the Assyrian king and Hezekiah, recorded in 2 Ki 18:17-20:6 and Isa 36:1-37:35. The Rabshakeh boasted that none of the other deities of the surrounding countries could deliver their people from the Assyrian onslaught, and therefore YHWH will not be able to save Israel from their attack (2 Ki 19:10-13; Isa 36:18-20). In his prayer Hezekiah considered these statements as mocking the living God (2 Ki 19:16 and Isa 37:17). However, he makes humiliating references to the other gods, which were destroyed in the fire by the Assyrians. These gods of the other nations were ‘no gods’, the work of human hands, fabricated from wood and stone, and serve as fuel for fire. Hezekiah in his prayer *“calls them ‘gods’ for argument’s sake, he says, but in fact does not consider them to be real gods, since their worshippers carved them out of wood and stone (37:19)”*.¹

The remarks of the Rabshakeh and that of Hezekiah confirm the ANE belief that the deity of a country, or rather a specific deity has the task to be the war-deity and has to protect his people and land against enemies in a situation of war.² Hezekiah’s view of YHWH reflects the Yahwistic idea that YHWH alone is Israel’s deity (2 Ki 19:15,19 and Isa 37:16,20). The belief is expressed that YHWH is the creator and living God, and will save Israel from the Assyrians. The Yahwistic view is once again expressed, namely that the deities of the other nations are lifeless stone or wooden ‘no gods’, human-made images incapable of saving their people in time of war or trouble.

4.3.2.4.2 Hos 8:6

Hos 8:6 refers to the calf in Samaria (also v5), which represents a design of the Northern Kingdom and made by an artisan on order by Jeroboam (1 Ki 12:28). Therefore, this product of human craftsmanship is a ‘no god’ and shall be broken to pieces when YHWH punishes the Northern Kingdom.

2.3.2.4.3 Summary

The ideas expressed by Hezekiah and Hosea are also accommodated in the utterances of Jeremiah in 2:11a; 5:7a and 16:20. The occurrence in 16:20 summarises the theme: *“Can*

¹ Kruger HAJ 1996:392.

² However, Kruger HAJ 1996:392 and 397n3 argues that none of the gods indicated in Isa 36:18,19 and 37:12-13 are warrior gods.

mortals make for themselves gods? Such are no gods." These utterances reflect some of the aspects of the struggle against the other deities involved in Israel's religious practices. This is especially clear in the polemic against the *iconic* representations of deities, for Yahwism represents an *aniconic* religion. **YHWH is the living God**, but these idols are lifeless. **YHWH is the King and Creator** of all, but these idols of the other nations need to be fabricated by mortal human beings. **YHWH is the Saviour** of the nation in their time of trouble, but these deities are worthless non-gods.

Jerusalem was miraculously saved from the Assyrian attack (2 Ki 19:35), and Hezekiah and his people experienced the protection of YHWH in this war situation. The Assyrian gods were defeated. This experience probably led to the over-confident utterances of the false prophets that Jerusalem is untouchable, which obstructed the acceptability of the message of Jeremiah regarding the pending destruction of the city.

However, after the fall of Jerusalem and during the exile, although confronted with Israel's defeat by the powerful Babylonians and the impressive idolatrous cult of Marduk, the Yahwistic group persisted in their belief that YHWH is the only living God, who controls everything and every nation involved in Israel's fate. The fall of Babylon and the return of Israel to their homeland, and the fall of Babylon, once again demonstrated to them that all human-made idols are non-gods, and YHWH is their only Saviour in time of trouble.

4.3.2.5 Theological significance of the expression 'no gods'

The occurrences analysed reflect something of the poetic mockery by the Yahwists directed to the other deities, especially the images of the other deities of the foreign powers, as failures in the contemporary situation of Israel. It also emphasises the fact that only YHWH is God and none other. The idols of the nations are 'no gods' because they are human fabrications, homemade do-it-yourself (DIY) products and therefore incompetent to save Israel in their time of trouble. These idol-images are worthless and unprofitable because they cannot save Israel from the enemy, cannot give rain (14:22), cannot control events and tell what they plan for the future (Isa 41:22-24), and cannot

even walk, or talk, or do anything be it good or evil (Jer 10:5). They are lifeless, dead entities, and so are their advice rendered, nothing more than wood and stone.

It is clear that much of the polemic against the other gods is aimed at the images, and particularly hand-made images and idolatrous objects. The aniconic nature of Yahwism is defended, protected, strengthened, and promoted. The Yahwistic monotheism represents and presents a unique religion in the light of the fact that YHWH cannot be visualised and depicted by images and idols. It is different from that of the other nations in that no concrete, visible image of the deity is worshipped. Furthermore, the above-mentioned occurrences emphasise and promote the uniqueness of YHWH as the only living God,¹ the Creator and King of all the earth, and to the whole nation of Israel.

4.4 TOWARDS THE IDENTIFICATION OF THE GODS

In search for the identity of the ‘other gods’ featuring in the book of Jeremiah, the following names and epithets need to be investigated: Molech, Baal, the Queen of Heaven and the host of heaven. Molech and Baal’s association with child sacrifice is another important aspect, which needs further attention. However, information provided in the book of Jeremiah is insufficient to draw any conclusions regarding the identity of these gods, and therefore the references in the rest of the OT as well as the information provided by extra-Biblical sources will be taken into consideration.

4.4.1 Molech (מֹלֶךְ)

The single occurrence of the name of ‘Molech’ in the prose of 32:35 appears in an accusation by YHWH addressed to the royal house, the people in Jerusalem, and Judah. In this context Molech’s name is associated with the offering of children at the high places of Baal in the valley of the son of Hinnom. In this section only the quest for the identity of Molech will be investigated. In the light of the fact that Baal is also associated

¹ Kruger 1996:391 following Oswalt 1986:646, states that the expression ‘living God’ appears mainly in contexts of conflict with idols. See e.g. Isa 37:17 and Jer 10:10 and 2:13 = YHWH ‘the fountain of living water.’

with child sacrifice, the phenomenon of child sacrifice will be discussed separately in 4.4.4.

The majority of the commentaries consulted do not give much detail on the identity of Molech (מִלֶּךְ) in Jer 32:35, probably because the problem is a complex one (Holladay 1989:219). It is generally referred to as a cult, which involved child-sacrifice (Thompson 1989:594). Holladay (1989:220) adds that it is a Canaanite cult, which was well established in the reign of Ahaz and was practised in Jerusalem perhaps until its fall in 587/6 BC. The LXX renders the term as a noun with ‘ruler’ in the occurrences in Leviticus, as ‘king’ in 1 Ki 11:7, and as proper name ‘Moloch’ in 2 Ki 23:10 and Jer 39:35 (MT=32:35), thus providing no extra information (Heider 1999:581).

An explicit prohibition of child-sacrifice to Molech occurs in Lev 18:21, which reads: *“You shall not give any of your offspring to sacrifice them to Molech and so profane the name of your God: I am the Lord.”* This appears in the context of prohibited sexual relations and practices (18:1-30). The motivation for these statutes for sexual conduct entails: *“You shall not do as they do in the land of Egypt... and the land of Canaan. You shall observe my ordinances... keep my statutes...I am the Lord your God ...by doing so one shall live”* (18:3-5). The question is whether the references to Egypt and Canaan could be regarded as the origins of this cult. The prohibition is based on the fact that the institutions of YHWH are distinctive from Egypt, where Israel comes from, and Canaan, the country of their destiny. Further information comes from Lev 20:2-5 which describes sacrificing one’s child to Molech as ‘prostituting’¹ oneself to Molech (v5). It was regarded as an act that ‘defiles’ YHWH’s sanctuary and ‘profanes’ his Holy name (v3), and carried the death penalty (v2).

Weinfeld (1972:216n) suggests that the cult of Molech, which could be identified with Baal-Hadad, was probably introduced by Ahaz (2 Ki 16:3), under the influence of Assyrian domination. Another proposal comes from Heider (1999:583 and 585) who suggests that the name ‘Molech’ represents the general divine name of a West Semitic ANE deity, involved in the cult of the deceased ancestors [a proposal which is accepted

by Holladay (1989:220), but rejected by Ackerman (1992:133)]. It is also alleged that מֶלֶךְ can be vocalised to present Molech and 'king' as epithet for YHWH, and therefore YHWH could be equated with Molech (see Kruger 1991:189). Another proposal claims that the name Molech derives from a combination of מֶלֶךְ (king) and the vowels of כִּשְׁתָּ (shame), and represents a technical term for child-sacrifice and not a name of a deity (see Holladay 1989:219 and Ackerman 1992:134). Ackerman (1992:131) agrees with the proposal of Eissfeldt in 1935 that the term Molech, as in the Phoenician/Punic cult, represents a technical term for child-sacrifice. Eissfeldt claimed that there existed no Molech deity and that children were sacrificed to YHWH. Equally Ackerman (1992:137) concludes that *"no Semitic deity Molech or Melek received child sacrifices in the Hebrew Bible in lieu of the god of Israel. Rather, the cult of child sacrifice was felt in some circles to be a legitimate expression of Yahwistic faith."* This argument is based on texts of the first millennium BC, which associated human sacrifice with the god El (King 1993:137). Ackerman (1992:137) declares El, the Mediterranean Baal Hamon, as the god of child sacrifice, who was known in Israel by his epithet Yahweh.

It seems impossible to identify Molech as a deity with any other known deity in Canaan or the ANE. However, the multiple references to the practice of child-sacrifice and extra-Biblical evidence in support of the existence of such practices in the ANE, at least point to a Molech cult. Weinfeld (1972:84 n4) is convinced that the hesitance of Deuteronomy to use the word 'king' to refer to YHWH but only uses it for the earthly king is intentional. The association of YHWH with Molech is deliberately avoided, and the worshipping of Molech strongly condemned in the Deuteronomic literature. The metaphor King and Kingship of God only became important in the liturgy of Israel during the post exilic-times.¹ Another factor, which points to a well established cult of Molech, is the identification of the metaphorical usage of Molech imagery by Irwin (1995:93-112) in the Ezk 38 and 39 to describe the mass destruction of a foreign power (Gog). The repeated use of 'the Baal' in Jer 19:5 and 32:35 may also indicate that Molech was 'a Baal'. If some of the above-mentioned assumptions were correct, all points to a well-

¹ However, in v6 'turning to mediums and wizards' is also regarded as 'prostituting themselves to them.'

¹ Kruger HAJ (1984:32ff) indicates and discusses multiple references to the kingship of YHWH in Deutero-Isaiah.

settled Baal-Molech cult in Israel in the pre-exilic period. The argument of Ackerman, following Eissfeldt, fits in with the latest theories regarding the emergence of YHWH from El and the absorption of Baal by YHWH. YHWH developed out of these gods but he absorbed the divine domain including Baal, and was elevated above them all. Perhaps the addition ‘which I did not command...nor did it enter my mind’ in 19:5 and 32:35, is an indication that the children were sacrificed to the old concept of the deity/deities Baal and/or Molech under the impression it was done for the new YHWH. Hopefully the discussion of child-sacrifice below will shed more light on the subject.

4.4.2 Baal (בעל)

In the book of Jeremiah, the name of ‘Baal’ as identification of an ‘other deity’ involved in Israel’s religious practices, occurs three times in poetic sections, i.e. in 2:8 and v23, and 23:13. In the prose sections ten occurrences are found i.e. in 7:9; 9:13 (NRSV v14); 11:13 and 17; 12:16; 19:5(2X); 23:27; 32:29 and 35. However, efforts of scholars to identify this deity or deities produced a variety of theories, which should be taken note of and will therefore be discussed below.

4.4.2.1 Etymology

The basic verb form בעל, from which the noun derives, generally means ‘to marry’ or ‘to rule’. In many contexts it could also denote ‘to own’ or ‘to possess’. A person may own or rule over a house (Ex 22:8), or rule over a country or people e.g. Moab (1 Ch 4:22). It can also be used metaphorically to indicate the rule or the lordship of YHWH (as master, lord, husband) over his people as in Jer 3:14 and 31:32. The verb also occurs in the sense of ‘to marry’ (Deu 24:1; Isa 62:5) as well as to denote metaphorically the establishing of the relationship between YHWH and his people as ‘to marry’ (Isa 62:4,5) (Brown e.a. 1968:127; Ellington 1993:425).

The noun בעל, a common Semitic word which appears in Akkadian, Ugaritic, Phoenician, and Aramic languages of the ANE (De Moor 1975:181), has multiple related uses in the sense of owner (Ex 21:28 and 29), husband (Ex 21:3), inhabitants (Jos 2:11), and rulers (Isa 16:8). The noun is also frequently used in idiomatic expressions to denote

contexts ‘of relation’ e.g. in Gen 37:19 the NRSV ‘dreamer’ is literally in Hebrew described as ‘owner of dreams’, and in Jer 37:13 the RSV ‘sentinel’ is literally ‘owner of supervision’. In the same sense ‘birds’ for example in Pro 1:17 and Ecc 10:20 are described as ‘owners of wings’. The term **בעל** is also frequently used in the OT as the divine name of the deity/deities of the Canaanites and Philistines (De Moor 1975:181; Ellington 1993:525ff).

4.4.2.2 Occurrences in the book of Jeremiah and the OT

In the book of Jeremiah the proper name of the deity **בעל** is found without the article in 11:13, and with the article as **הבעל** in 2:8; 7:9; 11:13 and v17; 12:16; 19:5; 23:13 and v27; 32:29 and v35, and in the emphatic plural **בעלים** in 2:23 and 9:13. LXX renders the references in 2:23; 7:9; 11:13 and v17 and 19:5 as ἡ Βααλ.¹

Multiple references are also found in the rest of the OT. In fact, Baal as a divine name occurs seventy six times in the OT of which the majority is found in singular (and always with the article) i.e. fifty eight times in the singular and eighteen times in the plural (Mulder 1975:192). It occurs especially in the so-called Deuteronomistic works of Judges and the books of Samuel and Kings. The prophet Hosea refers to ‘Baal’ i.e. in 2:10 (NRSV v8; in LXX as ἡ Βααλ); 2:15 (NRSV v13; = **בעלים**); 2:19 (NRSV v17 = **בעלים**); 9:10 (= Baal-peor); 11:2 (= **בעלים**) and 13:1 (in LXX as ἡ Βααλ). Among the other prophets only Zephaniah refers once to the deity by name i.e. in Zep 1:4 (Brown e.a. 1968:127).

According to Mulder (1975:192,193) the use with the article or the plural in Hebrew does not denote that the terms Baal or Baalim represent a collective name for different deities from different locations whose names are unknown. Appearances of the name in the OT as well as in the discoveries at Ras Shamrah clearly indicate that the term Baal refers to a specific god, most probably to the god of storm and fertility of the Ugaritic texts.

¹ The LXX renders the references in 2:23; 7:9; 11:13 and 17 and 19:5 as ἡ Βααλ. Mulder 1975:193 views the use of the feminine article as a clear sign of the growing aversion against the Baal cult in later times.

De Moor (1975:182,183) observes that the term Baal in a genitive construction was used in early Mesopotamian literature as an epithet of different gods, due to a probable hesitation to pronounce the actual name of the deity. However, he states:

“One can hardly fail to see that the Egyptians, the Amarna scribes, the Ugaritic scribes, and perhaps also the Amorites, and later the Phoenicians, the Punic scribes, and the Israelites frequently called the storm-god simply b'l, even though this may not have been clearly understood as his proper name, but an epithet which was not clearly intelligible without more precise definition. Thus, no later than the middle of the second millennium century B.C. on, when Western Semitic peoples used b'l or b'lm in an absolute sense, they were thinking of a single god Baal, who could probably assume different forms and certainly existed in many local settings, but in general represented the same concept of deity.”

In Ugarit however, Baal in a genitive construction simply denotes the storm god Hadad, but then again, Hadad is the name of the national god of the people of Ugarit.

It seems that the use of the singular or plural constructions with the article sheds no light on the identity of the Baal of the OT. One should also be hesitant to transfer all Ugaritic applications of the fourteenth century BC to Israelite literature of the sixth century. This undoubtedly was the trend in the seventies as applied by de Moor in his article. Therefore, it seems that the terms Baal and Baalim represent terms by which a single deity or collection of deities can be denoted. There might be a name behind the different Baals of the various regions, but perhaps due to the ANE hesitance to pronounce the names of deities, it was mainly omitted in writings.

4.4.2.3 The popularity of Baal

The popularity of Baal in the ANE is clearly reflected in the compound names of places, regions, and persons containing a Baal-element. The name of Baal appears frequently in

the names of places and proper names of people in the OT literature e.g. Baal-gad (Jos 11:17), Baal-zephon (Ex 14:2), Ethbaal (= 'he who is with Baal', 1 Ki 16:31, the Phoenician king of Tyre and father of Jezebel). Even devoted Yahwists have given their sons names containing a Baal-element e.g. David's son was named Beeliada, Saul named his son Eshbaal and Jonathan his son Meribbaal (see Kaufman 1961:138). In fact, ostraca discovered in Samaria of the Northern Kingdom produced almost as many names containing the name of Baal as with YHWH. A 7:11 ratio in favour of YHWH exists. Interestingly enough, no names with Baal have been discovered in Judah so far.¹ Kaufman (1961:123, 138) concludes from the appearance of names with Baal-elements among devotees of YHWH that Israelites in earlier times simply called YHWH Baal (lord). El-berith, also presented as Baal-berith presumably referred to YHWH. He argues that this must not be viewed as a merger between YHWH and Baal into one god, but simply a matter of a merger of titles in which Baal became an epithet of YHWH.

The OT reflects a history of Israel's involvement in idolatry, especially Baal worship. In the Northern Kingdom it all started with the two images of the golden calves of Jeroboam (1 Ki 12:28), a cult practice that was followed by his predecessors. However, the name of Baal only appears for the first time in the account of Ahab and his Tyrian wife Jezebel who launched an attempt to install Baalism as a state religion (1 Ki 16:31). In the list of the sins of idolatry mentioned as the cause of the Assyrian invasion and the fall of Samaria (2 Ki 17:7-18), general terms occur such as 'other gods', 'the customs of the nations', 'false idols', and 'cast images'. Only in verse 16 a short reference to Baal occurs. This reads 'and they served Baal' together with they 'worshiped all the host of heaven', although many of the practices mentioned were associated with Baal in other OT references. The Northern Kingdom also suffered from the exposure of the religious practices of people from different religions and regions who were transferred there by Assyria. A situation developed of 'they worshiped the Lord but also served their own gods' (2 Ki 17:34). This probably inspired Kaufman's (1961:140 ff, 273ff) viewpoint that Baalism was actually exclusive to the Northern Kingdom and was not extensively practised in Judah. He states that Jeremiah addressed the idolatrous practices of the past,

¹ See Bright 1974: 257 and Albright 1969:155.

which occurred in the history of the whole of Israel, and not the practices of his contemporaries.

Although Solomon built high places for Chemosh, Molech and other gods in Jerusalem (1 Ki 11:5-8), according to 2 Ki 8:25 and 26 the OT maintains that Baal worship was imported into Judah by Ahaziah (who reigned only one year) and his mother Ataliah (granddaughter of Omri, daughter of Ahab). Baal worship according to the Biblical account of the history of the kings was popular among some of the kings especially Ahaz (2 Ki 16:2-3 - who reigned 16yrs), and Manasseh (2 Ki 21:2-7 - who reigned 55 years), who continued the abominable practices of idolatry. In the end, Manasseh was blamed for the fall of Jerusalem because of his idolatrous practices (vv 10-15).

4.4.2.4 Aversion to Baal

However, clear signs of aversion to the name Baal and the cult also appear in OT literature. Over and above the preaching of the prophets Hosea (especially 2:16-17 MT) and Jeremiah (especially 11:13) against the Baal cult, compound names containing Baal-elements have been altered by writers and scribes. In many cases the Baal-element was substituted by bosheth (shame) e.g. Eshbaal (1 Ch 8:33 and v39) became Ishboseth in the occurrences in 2 Sa 2 – 4. Meribbaal (in 1 Ch 8:34 and 9:40) became Mephibosheth in the fifteen occurrences of 2 Samuel. Jerubbaal, appearing frequently in Jug 6 –9 and 1 Sa 12:11 became Jerubbesheth in 2 Sa 11:21 (Ellington 1993:428,429). De Moor (1975:193) states that the use of the feminine article in the LXX texts represents a clear indication of the growing aversion to Baal worship in later times. Bright (1974:98,99) reckons that the patriarchs worshipped their deity/deities under a common denominator, namely, the creator father god, El, which is a general Semitic word for 'god'. The development of Israel's religion shows that the epithets and titles attached to El such as El 'Elyon, El Shaddai, El 'Olam, El Ro'i etc were acceptable in the later stages of development and therefore transferred to YHWH. This however was not the case with Baal who fell out of favour due to the opposition of the prophets (especially Hosea, see 2:18) to the Baal cult (see also Kaufman 1975:133ff).

The OT reflects a history of conflicts between Yahwism and Baalism e.g. in the Northern Kingdom the conflict between Elijah and the Baal prophets at Carmel (1 Ki 18:22-40), and Jehu versus Baalism (2 Ki 10:18-28). Jehu also wiped out Ahab, Jezebel and their royal house, family, and friends (2 Ki 10:11). In Judah when Joash (who reigned forty years) became king, the priest, Jehoiada, tore down the house of Baal, his altars, and images and killed his priests (2 Ki 11:18). Later the reform efforts of Hezekiah followed. He reigned twenty-nine years (2 Ki 18: 4). A final reform attempt before the fall of Jerusalem (587/6 BC) was launched by Josiah who reigned thirty-one years, i.e. 640-609 BC (2 Ki 23:4-20, 24).

Although some reform attempts seem to be thoroughly executed and lasted for several years under the reigns of the respective kings,¹ Israel's involvement (North and South) in Baalism seems a fact, which is also confirmed in OT literature. Ackerman (1992:213ff), following the new theories regarding monotheism, concluded her study of several accounts in Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Isaiah, stating that idolatry constituted the popular religion of the pre-exilic Israelites. However, the notion of the proponents of the new theories entailing that Israel's religion was purely and simply a Canaanite religion seems to be an over-statement. Rather it seems from OT evidence that several kings were followers of Yahwism and each had their supporters. Others were accused of serving foreign gods, which can be an indication of the implementation of external policies of alliance with foreign powers. In some cases it was simply a matter of domination by conquerors which led to the acknowledgement and worshipping of the master's deities. The common Israelite however rather tended to incorporate other gods together with Yahwism in order to cover the whole spectrum of gods for every aspect of life. It remains an open question whether this constitutes backsliding or development², or syncretism, or an important stage in the development of a post-exilic monotheism, or the polemic of a minority group against idolatry, or a way of defense against the local and Babylonian Baalim.

¹ A fact which seems to Kaufman (1961:273-275) enough to state that Baal worship in the Northern Kingdom was limited to the royal house and in the south to Manasseh. He claims that there is no evidence of syncretism and that the Baal cult was not a factor or danger for Yahwism.

² A question which Ridderbos (1928:10) also asked at the beginning of the previous century.

4.4.2.5 A pantheon, epithet or a proper name

Biblical and extra-Biblical texts provide ample evidence to prove that Baal frequently appeared in different variations depending on his locality or regional manifestations. The OT (see Mulder 1975:192-198 for Baal in the OT) mentions Israel's participation in the worship of Baal-Peor in Moab (Num 25:3 and 5; Deu 4:3; Hos 9:10) entailing sacred prostitution and meals as rituals of devotion to Baal. The Baal-Peor cult also included a sanctuary (house of Peor) and a sacred mountain (Deu 3:29; 4:46; 34:6; Jos 13:20). Israel was also involved with another Baal mentioned in Jug 8:33 and 9:4, named Baal-berith (Baal of the Covenant). He was the deity of Shechem. In line with Baal traits, his worshippers celebrated the grape harvest (Jug 9:27). Baal-zebub (lord of the flies), the god of Ekron of the Philistines, was consulted by Ahaziah, king of the Northern Kingdom, during his illness resulting from an injury (2 Ki 1:2, 3, 6 and 16). The name Baal-zebub seems to be a deliberate distortion of the name Baal-zebul (lord of the ill/sick) (see Mulder 1975:1940. In the NT Jesus due to his association with the healing of the ill, was also called Beelzebul by the Jews in Mat 10:25 and 12:24).

Jezebel, wife of king Ahab of the Northern Kingdom, attempted to establish the worship of the Tyrian Baal, (presumably Baal-Melqart), as state cult. For this purpose, king Ahab ordered the erection of a sanctuary, an altar and a sacred pole in Samaria (1 Ki 16:31-33). Even the name of the Babylonian deity 'Bel' mentioned in Isa 46:1, Jer 50:2 and 51:44, could be related to the name 'Baal' in the light of the fact that the consonants of the names are the same (Ellington 1993:426). However, de Moor (1975: 183) argues that 'Bel' simply means "lord" in Babylonian and served as a title for their god Marduk.

This difference of opinion regarding proper name versus title or epithet represents only one of the debatable issues in the attempts of scholars to identify the true Baal of OT times. It would seem that Israel, during its Biblical history, was involved with several Baals at various stages and that the reference to Baal in plural form could have served as a collective concept denoting this tendency. Hosea (9:10) who lived centuries after the Baal-Peor incident (Nu 25:1-5), is familiar with it and rebuked Israel for their participation in the rituals. The option to view the term Baal as a fossilised metaphorical construction from the meaning 'master, owner' to designate an ANE chief deity, seems a

plausible possibility. This investigation thus far however has produced no absolute clarity about the real proper name(s) of the Baal or all Baalim of the OT.

4.4.2.6 Baal cult practices

The multiple references to Israel's involvement in the Baal cult indicate that it was a popular practice in the history of Israel, perhaps from the time when the first Yahwistic group entered Canaan or the time when the Yahwistic consciousness started to develop.

In the book of Jeremiah, the nation is accused of (1) The burning of incense/offerings to Baal (11:13,17 and 32:29, see also 7:9); (2) Reference is made to 'altars to make offerings to Baal' in 11:13; (3) References to the 'high places of Baal', which are situated in 'the valley of the son of Hinnom' and used for child sacrifice to 'Molech', occur in 32:35 and 19:5; (4) Offerings were made 'on the roofs of their houses' (9:13 and 32:29) together with 'the pouring of libations'; (5) They have sworn by Baal (12:16); (6) The prophets prophesied by Baal (2:18; 23:13); and (6) Israel burned 'their children in the fire as burnt offerings to Baal' (19:5).

All these occurrences represent accusations addressed to Israel regarding their worshipping activities of Baal. Scholars usually classify these expressions as typical Deuteronomic phraseology used as warnings against foreign worship (Weinfeld 1972:324-326). These expressions however, could also be regarded as standard or conventional worship related phrases, or metaphorically constructed metonymies based on the part-whole schema [argued according to Lakoff and Johnson (1980:35ff) regarding metonymy]. Only one or two aspects of the worship in combination are used to denote the total activity of worshipping devoted to a deity. These activities were standard procedures in the worship rituals of every ANE religion and even in the Yahwistic cult (except perhaps for child-sacrifice). A part of the worship stands in to describe the act of worship in its totality.

The frequent occurrences of these expressions, especially in the prose sections, are an indication of the popularity of the Baal cult among the Israelites. These expressions are

also frequently used in contexts in which the cause of the fall of the country and Jerusalem is indicated as punishment for Israel's worshipping of foreign or other gods. In the above occurrences the other or foreign deity is identified as Baal. The question remains whether the term Baal or Baalim represents Canaanite Baals or foreign Baals of the surrounding neighbours in the ANE, or that of the conquerors, or an addition to syncretistic Yahwism. The ANE represents a Baal infested world.

4.4.2.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, it must be noted that Yahwism existed and had to survive in a Baal-world. According to ANE theology the incorporation of other gods was general practice. The Yahwistic Israelite obviously was either confronted with this idea or as ANE civilian was familiar with these customs. On the other hand, the royal house was sometimes compelled to participate, something which the majority of the kings of the Northern Kingdom as well as the Judean Kingdom easily accommodated. The possibility exists that the prophets were actually addressing the sins of the different royal houses of the past for their involvement in promoting foreign Baalism among the people. Archaeological evidence confirms the presence of extensive idolatry and Baal cult practices. Many possibilities exist, but theories tend to opt for only one. The question remains: Do the OT prophecies address the problem of involvement in Canaanite Baalism, or the conquerors' Baalism, or both? In a literary canonical reading the Marduk cult could also be included in the sense of an exilic and post-exilic warning to Israelites by the Yahwists to demonstrate that idolatrous ANE Baalism does not pay.

4.4.3 The association of Baal and Molech with child sacrifice

In the prose of 7:31; 19:5 and 32:35 it is alleged that Israel 'burned/offered in fire' (לשרף את-... באש) 'their sons and daughters'. Child-sacrifice is associated with Molech in 32:35, but according to 19:5 also with Baal. The occurrence in 32:35 reads: "*They (Israel) built high places of Baal in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to offer up their sons and daughters to Molech.*" However, the reference in 19:5 reads: "*and had gone on building the high places to burn their children in fire as burnt offerings to Baal...*" It appears as if Molech and Baal were either identical, or that the high places of Baal were

also utilised for Molech practices. The reference in 7:31 does not shed any further light on the issue but only confirms the venue mentioned in 19:6 and 32:35 namely at ‘Topheth in the valley of the son of Hinnom.’ All references explicitly mention the fact that YHWH ‘did not command’ the offering of children ‘nor did it enter his mind’.

Other occurrences in the OT¹ entail the prohibition of child-sacrifice (Lev 18:21),² which carried the death penalty (Lev 20:2-6). The sin of participating in child-sacrifice is described as ‘prostituting’ oneself to Molech, which is also regarded as an act that ‘defiles’ YHWH’s sanctuary and ‘profanes’ his Holy name (v3). However, in v6 ‘turning to mediums and wizards’ is also regarded as ‘prostituting themselves to them.’ According to 2 Ki 3:27, the king of Moab, in his battle against king Jehoram of Israel, king Jehoshaphat of Judah and the king of Edom, offered his firstborn son as burnt offering on the wall of the city. Israel’s response was one of great wrath and withdrew from the battle. In the list of the idolatrous sins of Manasseh presented in 2 Ki 21:6, he among other things made his son pass through fire. It must be noted that both Manasseh and Ahaz’s acts of child-sacrifice took place in a time of crisis. In 2 Ki 17:17 regarding the crisis of Israel’s invasion by Assyria, YHWH’s explanation of the cause entails punishment for, among other sins, the fact that they made their sons pass through fire.

In this regard, the findings of Assyrian legal documents of the ninth to the seventh century BC, also mention ‘the burning of children’ in the ‘hamru’ to the deities Adad, Adadmilki (god-king), Ishtar and Belet-seri, as a threat against the party who broke the contract.³ In the light of this, and the Biblical evidence, child sacrifice was most probably viewed in the ANE as the sacrifice of the extremes.

In the language of Mic 6:7 the sacrifice of the first born represents the ultimate sacrifice to please the deity. Examples of child-sacrifice in a situation of military emergence and crisis occur, as well as child-sacrifice as punishment for the breach of contract. However,

¹ 1 Ki 16:34 is not a reference to child sacrifice but the fulfillment of a prophecy of Josuah (6:26) regarding the man who rebuilds Jericho.

² It appears in the context of prohibited sexual relations and practices (18:1-30).

³ Weinfeld 1972 in *“Molech in light of Assyrian documents”* as provided in a handout by Keel 1993 OTSWA Stellenbosch.

according to this investigation, enough supplementing archaeological evidence exists to state that child-sacrifice was also generally practised by the ordinary people.

Several proposals were produced in the debate regarding child-sacrifice. Weinfeld (1972:216 and n1) observes that the earlier laws of the human firstborn,¹ reflected in Ezk 20:26 and Mic 6:7, are avoided by Deuteronomy. This is probably due to the possible association, which could be drawn with the rites of the consecration of the firstborn to 'foreign gods (molech, מֹלֶךְ), which flourished in those days. His viewpoint is that the worship of the 'molech,' introduced by the Assyrians, was first practised by Ahaz (2 Ki 16:3). He quotes Deller (1966:382-386) who argues that 'burn the first son' should not be taken literally but means 'consecrating to the God-King Adad.' This ceremony usually took place at a *hamru* and for Weinfeld this location was the 'topheth' in the valley of the son of Hinnom just outside Jerusalem. The burning of sons at the Tophet was none other than consecration of the firstborn to the foreign god-King Adad (= Baal).

Keel² posed three possibilities, namely:

- (1) the burning of live children as offering,
- (2) the children are killed and then offered,
- (3) or children who died were sacrificed (= cremation burials).

He reckons that child-sacrifice to Baal was not general practice everywhere in the ANE, but probably restricted to certain areas as suggested by the occurrences in Jer 19:5 and 32:35. According to Phoenician texts, child-sacrifice at Carthage refers to funeral rituals. A high mortality rate among children was typical of that time.

According to Carroll³ to devote a child to a god, it had to be passed through fire. He views the expression **בֵּן (וּבַת) בָּאֵשׁ** - 'to pass the son (and daughter) in fire', as a typical Deuteronomistic⁴ metaphorical expression to indicate the devotion of children to other gods.

¹ Ex 13:2, 12-16; 22:28-9; 34:19-20; Lev 27:26-27; Num 18:15-18.

² Keel 1993 in his presentation at Stellenbosch, OTSWA 1993.

Archaeological evidence indicates that child sacrifice was practised widely in the ANE. Texts dating from the first millennium BC associate child-sacrifice with the deity El (King 1993:137). Excavations of burial sites dating from 750 to 146 BC at the Phoenician city Carthage, revealed urns and cremated remains among other artifacts and ample evidence that children were sacrificed at an open-air walled precinct (Tophet). The so-called Tophet was dedicated to the god Baal Hammon (identified with El), and the love and war goddess Anit (identified with Astarte en Asherah) (King 1993:137,138). Memories of the practice of child sacrifice to the god Kronos (Saturnus=Baal Hammon) in Carthage, are recorded in the ancient Greek writings of Kleitarchos dating from the end of the fourth and the beginning of the third centuries AD. Several other Greek writings dating from the first to the third centuries AD also confirm these inhuman Phoenician practices at Carthage.¹ Ackerman (1992:133) is convinced that the Phoenician/Punic cult of child sacrifice and the ‘child sacrifices = worship of Molech’ (taking Molech to mean a technical term of sacrifice) of the OT is the same, and that these sacrifices were made by some to YHWH under the impression that it was legitimate.

4.4.3.1 Conclusion

In conclusion, Biblical evidence, as well as extra-Biblical artifacts, especially from Phoenician Carthage, bear evidence to a widely practised cult of child-sacrifice in the ANE. Ackerman’s proposal to interpret Molech as a technical term denoting a special sacrificial offering of a child, resolve the problem of the identity of Molech as well as the references in Jer 19:5 and 32:35 to ‘the Baal’. Children were sacrificed in fire at Tophet as special devotional, sacrificial offerings of worship to ‘the Baal.’ However, the identity of the Baal is still unresolved.

The suggestion that the sacrifices were made to YHWH by a group who was under the impression that it was a legitimate practice, seems to fit a certain approach or theory. In

³ Carroll 1986:222, and in his presentation at Stellenbosch, OTSWA 1993.

⁴ See Weinfeld 1972:322. See Deu 18:10; 2 Ki 16:3; 17:17; 21:6. See also 2 Ki 23:10 (with למלך) and Ezk 20:31. In Lev 18:21 זרע העביר comes with למלך and not with באש.

¹ Keel 1993, unpublished paper at OTSWA, 1993, Stellenbosch, contained ten quotations of this nature. See Ackerman 1992:124, and 136,137 for quotations of procedures for offerings.

the light of this theory, the emphasis on the fact that YHWH 'did not command', could relate to the fact that these people still served the old Baal according to his customs. However, although the new Baal, YHWH, absorbed all deity functions, he did not absorb this inhuman practice. This portrayal however does not conform to the Biblical picture of YHWH and represents only a theory among many others.

The Assyrian influence in Israel cannot be underrated, although it is alleged that they did not force their religion onto vassals (Ackerman 1992:95 quotes Cogan and McKay). Royal houses had to conform to the conquerors' customs and stipulations. Polytheistic groups with their idolatrous practices were moved into the Northern and later the Southern Kingdom (2 Ki 17:24, and especially vv33,34). The local Baalism was also flourishing and ideas and practices intermingled and formed a local Canaanitic cult in which the Israelites participated. These practices, including child sacrifice, were viewed as forsaking YHWH, things which he did not command, which were foreign practices of foreigners. The claim that YHWH is different and distinctive to this ANE Baal-world is once again emphasised. Child-sacrifice is viewed as an attempt to please another Baal deity through a special offer, which means disloyalty to YHWH.

4.4.4 The queen of heaven (למלכת השמים)

4.4.4.1 Introductory comments

According to Study Bibles consulted, this concept represents the worshipping cult of Astarte, the fertility goddess of the Assyrians/Sidonians (e.g. BIP 1993:1079), or a cult in which Astarte together with Ishtar, the fertility goddess of the Assyrians/Babylonians, were worshipped under one common denominator i.e. the Queen of heaven (NAVV 1998:1607). However, the unraveling of this denominator entails much more.

Twice in the prose of the book of Jeremiah the people were condemned for the involvement of their children, fathers, and wives in the worshipping of the Queen of heaven. Unfortunately, only the epithet and not her proper name, is mentioned in 7:18; 44:17-19 and 25. According to Houtman (1999:679), the tendency to avoid the names of gods could be viewed as typical of a religious atmosphere in which the emphasis is on the

qualities of a deity rather than on his name. However, it also can be viewed as a deliberate omission of the names of gods in order to cover up the reality of Israel's involvement in idolatrous practices (Ackerman 1992:5n).

4.4.4.2 MT vocalisation

A comparison of readings between the MT and the LXX, Vulgate, Targum, Peshitta and other Hebrew manuscripts,¹ suggests that the Massoretic tradition has changed the vowels of **למלכת** to read 'the work/host of heaven'. If this vocalisation of the Massoretic has been a suggestion that these references deal with the worship of astral bodies, the identification of the Queen of Heaven would have been less of a problem. The Targum renders the expression as 'the Star of Heaven', and this could perhaps signify the acquaintance of the translators with the cult.² However, scholars commonly accept that the change was intentional in order to remove the evidence that the people of Judah were engaged in the worship of the Queen of Heaven.³ Preference is given to the LXX version of the epithet rendered in Jer 44: 17-19,25 (LXX=51:17-25), reading τῆ βασιλίσση τοῦ οὐρανοῦ (the Queen of Heaven), although the reference in 7:18 is translated with τῆ στρατιᾶ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ (the host of heaven).

4.4.4.3 An identity crisis

Presently, scholars cannot reach any consensus regarding the identity of this goddess. Several different candidates are proposed namely, Shapshu, Anat, Astarte, Ishtar, and Asherah.⁴ In addition there are scholars who hold that it is impossible to identify the Queen of Heaven on grounds of available data. The majority view is divided between the Assyro-Babylonian Ishtar (according to Ackerman 1992:8) and the west Semitic Canaanite Astarte (according to Holladay 1986:255). Ackerman (1992:34) however suggests that the Queen of Heaven was a syncretistic combination between the west Semitic Astarte and the east Semitic Ishtar. It seems as if the re-vocalisation of the expression by scholars created an even greater 'identity crisis'.

¹ See McKane 1986:170 and Ackerman 1992:5n.

² First posed by Wellhausen, mentioned in Houtman 1999:679. See McKane 1986:170.

³ Ackerman 1992:5n; Houtman 1999:678.

⁴ Ackerman 1992:11; Keel 1998:338.

4.4.4.4 References in the book of Jeremiah

In reviewing the Biblical references, the following can be noted. The occurrence of the epithet 'Queen of Heaven' in 7:18 appears in the prose unit 7:1-8:3, which begins with the temple sermon (1-15), followed by the condemnation of several cult practices, i.e. the worship of the Queen of Heaven (7:16-20), child sacrifice (7:29-34), and the worship of astral bodies (8:1-3). Holladay (1986:252) dates 7:16-20 towards the end of 601, directly after the burning of the scroll by king Jehoiakim. It is alleged by proponents that the style of speaking concretely of the gods, opposed to the style of the author of Deuteronomy to use more general terms, is typical of the Deuteronomist (Weinfeld 1972:6). Furthermore, several characteristic Deuteronomistic phrases in 7:22,23, confirm that the sayings (7:16ff) appended to the temple sermon are from the Deuteronomistic editor/s of the book of Jeremiah (Weinfeld 1972:5,6; Ackerman 1992:6).

However, the account of the conflict between Jeremiah and a group of refugees in Egypt (586 BC) after the fall of Jerusalem regarding the cult of the Queen of Heaven, described in 44:15-25, can be considered as from the prophet himself. The response of the group to Jeremiah's accusations stating that they will continue their practices 'just as we and our ancestors, our kings and our officials, used to do' in Judah and Jerusalem (v17), contains important indicators. It is a clear indication that the worship of the Queen of Heaven had its origin in the pre-exilic Judah, and was widely practised in the late pre-exilic Judah (Ackerman 1992:7,8).

The cult was not only practised by individual families or by the rural lower classes, but also by the elite, kings and officials included, and throughout Judah and in Jerusalem, as confirmed by Jeremiah (v21). The response of the group (v18) might also be viewed as their negative reflections on their experience and interpretation of Josiah's reform and the fall of Jerusalem (Holladay 1989:304) in relation to the cult in saying: "*but from the time we stopped making offerings.....we lacked everything and have perished by the sword and by famine.*" Therefore, both accounts namely, the Deuteronomistic (7:18) and the

Jeremianic (44:17,18,19, and 25) versions indicate the cult of the Queen of heaven, and can be considered as reliable indicators of the existence of the cult in the pre-exilic period. In fact the practice was continued after the fall of Jerusalem during the exilic period, at least among the Judahite refugees in Egypt.

4.4.4.5 Other Biblical references

No other references are made in Biblical records to the epithet 'Queen of heaven'. Hosea in 3:1 does mention Israel's love for raisin cakes in an idolatry context, but he uses a different term for 'cakes', and offers no extra information about the cult of the Queen. The book of Jeremiah refers to the 'sun, moon and all the host of heaven' in the prose of 8:2 and in the prose of 19:13 to 'the whole host of heaven'. Similarly, 2 Ki 21:3 refers to Manasseh who worshipped 'all the host of heaven'. 2 Ki 23:4,5, regarding Josiah's reform attempt, mentions his actions to dispose of among others, the vessels made for 'all the host of heavens,' and the priests who made offerings to 'the sun, the moon, the constellations and all the hosts of heaven'.

From these references in the book of Jeremiah and 2 Kings it seems clear that there existed a separate cult worshipping a variety of astral bodies. However, no single astral body is identified as a leading goddess to qualify for the epithet of the Queen of Heaven. The vessels made for the cult purposes relating to Baal, Asherah, and the 'queen/or the host of heaven,' were kept in the temple of YHWH and ordained priests made the offerings. It is not clear whether the vessels were stored in the temple or were in active use. Furthermore, there is no indication whether offerings were made in the temple or at the high places. On the other hand, it seems rather unpractical and unlikely that the temple only served as a storage place.

The reference to the abominations in YHWH's house (Jer 32:34), as well as the account of Josiah's reform actions in cleaning up the temple of idolatry elements, could be an indication of the performance of such offerings in the temple. Again, the contexts offer no extra information about the cult of the Queen of heaven. An investigation to identify and analyse the nature and extent of the cult has to rely on the Biblical references in Jer 7 and 44, supplemented by archaeological data.

4.4.4.6 A summary of Biblical evidence

In considering the Biblical evidence given in Jer 7 and 44, Ackerman (1992:10,11) identifies four elements of the cult of the Queen of Heaven, namely:

- (a) Her epithet 'Queen of Heaven' (7:18; 44:17,18,19,25);
- (b) Some worship practices such as the burning of incense, the pouring out of libations and the baking of cakes (44:19);
- (c) Her associations with fertility and warfare (44:17,18);
- (d) She has a special appeal for women (7:18; 44:15,19,25).

In addition, the reports in the book of Jeremiah reveal that the whole family was involved in the cult in which the women played the leading role. However, it cannot be viewed as a private family cult, because the ancestors, kings, and officials of the past were also involved in the worship. No mention is made of a sanctuary for the Queen of heaven, only that the cult was practised in the cities of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem.

4.4.4.7 The epithet 'Queen of Heaven'

The epithet 'Queen of Heaven' could signify that the goddess is an astral divinity, but it seems that the epithet rather qualifies its bearer better as a leading goddess. Ishtar, Anat and Astarte were all called Queen of Heaven. Of these three, Ishtar and Astarte were associated with Venus and astral features.¹

4.4.4.7.1 Anat

Artifacts of goddesses dating from the Late Bronze Age (1550-1150 BC) found at Beth-Shean, situated east from the Galilee and the central hill country show Egyptian influences. These artifacts bear epithets typical of the Egyptian goddess Anat such as 'Mistress of heaven' and 'Mistress of the Gods', but portray a mixed Canaanite-Egyptian

¹ Ackerman 1992: 10 and 21,23,29; Houtman 1999:678.

culture. However, Anat was a warrior goddess. The same applies to the goddess of Beth-Shean. Identification with the Queen of Heaven is therefore unlikely (Keel 1998:86ff). Ugaritic iconography and literary texts (also from the Late Bronze Age) concerning Anat, indicate her association with the fertility cult in addition to her warfare features (Ackerman 1992:15). In the Ugaritic texts she is described as a fertility goddess, the consort of Baal, but also as the mythological warrior and hunter. Her participation in sexual activities as prostitute, as alleged by some scholars from the texts, has recently been challenged and proved to be unsubstantial (Day 1999:36,37).

However, the above-mentioned evidence dates from the second millennium BC. The Aramiac Hermopolis material dating from the fifth/sixth-century Egypt contains a dedication to the temple of the Queen of Heaven, a reference to an Elephantine priest of Anat, and some personal names derived from Anat.¹ On these grounds some scholars argued that Anat must be identified with the Queen of Heaven (Day 1999:42). Furthermore, the existence of a temple in Syene, close to where the Jewish refugees settled,² is an indication of Anat's popularity in both Jewish and Egyptian colonies at that time (Ackerman 1992:14,17,18). A recently published eighth-century inscription from 'Ana', in the middle of the Euphrates, designates Anat as "*the strongest of the 'Astartes' (in other words, 'goddesses' ...)....*" (Keel 1998:105 n51).

Despite the above-mentioned first millennium BC evidence, everything points to the fact that Anat was not a popular goddess in the first millennium BC religion in the west Semitic world. Unlike Astarte and Asherah, she is not mentioned in Biblical sources. She also lacks the features of the offering of cakes, astral association, and the special attraction for women (Ackerman 1992:19).

4.4.4.7.2 Ishtar

Archaeological findings from the Akkadian period of the twenty third century BC show that the baking of sacrificial cakes is much older than that mentioned in Jer 7 and 44

¹ The name of the birthplace of Jeremiah, Anathoth (Jer 1:1), is most probably derived from the Canaanite goddess Anat according to King 1993:107.

² Pathros is the Hebrew for 'land of the south', i.e. upper Egypt, the Nile valley lying north-south between Cairo and Aswan (King 1993:104).

(Keel 1998:164). The word used for ‘cakes’, i.e. כּוּנִים, which occurs only in Jer 7:18 and 44:19 in the OT, is an Akkadian loanword occurring in the Gilgamesh epic and can indicate sweetened cakes used in the Mesopotamian cult of Ishtar (King 1993:103; Holladay 1986:254). Jer 44:19 describes the cakes as formed to the image of the goddess by using לְהַעֲצֹבָה (from עֲצַב meaning ‘idolatrous image’).

This statement led scholars to search for a shape of the cakes. The possibility that כּוּנִים derives from the Akkadian word for ‘Saturn’ is posed, suggesting that the cakes could be representations of a star, indicating that the Queen of Heaven could be a heavenly body or ‘a great star’.¹ The discovery of forty-seven clay molds at Mari, located in the Middle Euphrates, includes a mold (no 1044) of a nude goddess, which may represent Ishtar. In addition, a great number of eighth/seventh century BC clay figurines of a nude goddess were excavated from Israelite sites, including Jerusalem, near the temple site (King 1993:105,106). In this regard the reference in Am 5:26 stating: “*You shall take up Sakkuth your king, and Kaiwan your star-god, your images, which you made for yourselves*”, might support an identification proposal of the Queen as Ishtar.

Although Ishtar is the only Assyrian deity who appears in anthropomorphic form on artifacts, and is apparently connected to astral bodies, Keel (1998:292,294) holds that she cannot be exclusively identified as the Queen of Heaven due to lack of iconographical evidence supporting her presence in Judah and Jerusalem during the sixth century BC.

4.4.4.7.3 Astarte

Astarte is the Greek and Latin equivalent of the Hebrew name Ashtoreth, “*written with the vowels of the word boset, ‘shame,’ to be read instead of the proper name of the pagan deity.*” Ackerman (1992:24) states that the Hebrew noun Ashtoreth (Keel 1998:105 suggests that ‘Ashtoreth’ and ‘Astarte’ can be translated as “*(protecting) goddesses.*”), is derived from the divine name Astarte, which means ‘increase, progeny’. This seems to be an indication of her association with fertility. Astarte, the consort of the storm god Baal, was a west Semitic goddess of sexuality, fertility and warfare. She is therefore considered

¹ See McKane 1986:170 who mentions the star-theories of Rashi and Kimchi.

as a strong candidate for the title Queen of Heaven mentioned in Jer 7:18 and 44:17,18,19,25.

Second millennium BC artifacts discovered in Egypt indicate Astarte's association with the heavens in titles such as 'Lady of Heaven' and 'Mistress of all gods'. She is called 'Astarte of the highest Heavens' as well as 'our Lady, the Queen' in the Sidonian Eshmunazor inscription of the first millennium BC. First millennium BC inscriptions discovered in Kition on the southern coast of Cyprus dating from the same time as Jeremiah, describe several similar worship practices as mentioned in the book of Jeremiah regarding the worship of the Queen of Heaven.¹ In the lists of the monthly expenditures for the temple of Astarte in Kition, Astarte is referred to as 'the Holy Queen', and 'the Holy One'. In the Greek world, Astarte was identified with the oriental Greek goddess, Aphrodite, whose cult was apparently active in the latter half of the first millennium BC and spread throughout the Mediterranean region. Aphrodite, the goddess of Venus the morning and evening star, was also known by the title οὐρανια, 'the Heavenly one' and 'Aphrodite of the Heavens'. In many fourth century BC and later artifacts, Astarte's association with Aphrodite of the Phoenicians, the Ashkelonites, the Palestinians, and Roman Africa, is clearly indicated, showing that the Canaanite goddess Astarte enjoyed great popularity as well as compatibility and fluidity during the first millennium BC. (King 1993:106; Houtman 1999:678, and Ackerman 1992:20-23.)

Furthermore, she is associated with astral features as depicted in iconographical material, namely as a star, and identified with Venus, the morning and evening star, like Ishtar and Aphrodite. This is clearly portrayed in many findings (Ackerman 1992:23). Her association with fertility is particularly clear in Ugarit and other Egyptian material dating from the second and first millennia. Similarly, although not as well depicted as her fertility features, is her association with war in epithets like 'a shield to Pharaoh', 'Lady of combat', 'Mistress of Horses', and 'Lady of the Chariot'. In pictorial evidence she is often depicted as a goddess with a shield and a spear, and on horseback carrying weapons (Ackerman 1992:24 and 25; Wyatt 1999:111).

¹ Jer 7:18 and 44:15-19,25. See King 1993:107.

Furthermore, there exists enough evidence to suggest that the element of the baking and offering of cakes was part of the cult of Astarte. The fifth century BC Phoenician Kition tariff inscriptions as well as the Hellenistic so called 'votive model' found off the Phoenician coast, bear witness of such practices devoted to Astarte (Ackerman 1992:26). The inscription found in Kition describes the festivities devoted to the Queen of Heaven, which can be identified as Astarte. The baking of bread for Astarte and cakes for the devotees is mentioned. The festivities entailed a procession through the streets, accompanied by singing and lighting a fire (King 1993:107)

Concerning the popularity of Astarte during the first millennium BC, there is no doubt that she enjoyed a prominent and important place in the religions of Phoenicia, North Africa, Egypt, and Israel (Wyatt 1999:110-112). The theophoric element of her name as well as the title 'queen' occurs in many first millennium BC Phoenician and Punic names. Inscriptions from Egypt similarly prove her popularity in Memphis (Ackerman 1992:27).

In the OT the occurrence of repeated accusations of worshipping Astarte against the people of Israel,¹ also bear witness of the popularity of Astarte in Israelite religion. Of special importance is the appearance of the name of Astarte in the account of Josiah's reform in 2 Ki 23:13. In addition to the mentioning of the destruction of the Asherah worshipping objects ('vessels' in 2 Ki 23:4), her image (v6), and the houses of her male temple prostitutes (v7), the name of Astarte also appears in the list of high places which were demolished. The origin of these high places east of Jerusalem is ascribed to king Solomon of Israel who had built a high place for 'Astarte the abomination of the Sidonians' (v13) among others.²

Ackerman (1992:28) concludes that the above-mentioned evidence makes Astarte a strong candidate for the title 'Queen of Heaven', because "...*Astarte was pre-eminent in first millennium Canaanite religion*" However, Keel (1998:339) claims that the cult of

¹ See e.g. Jug 2:13; 10:6; 1 Sa 7:4; 12:10; 1 Ki 11:5,33.

² Solomon also built high places for Chemosh and Milcom as mentioned in 1 Ki 11:5,33. The Chronicle account of the history of the kings, does not mention the name of Astarte for example in the account of Josiah's reform in 2 Ch 34:4-7. However, the LXX renders the MT's 'asherah' in 2 Ch 15:16 with 'Astarte' in reference to the image made by the queen mother, and the plural 'asherim' in 2 Ch 24:18 regarding the return to idolatry after Jehoiada's death, with 'Astartes.'

Astarte as well as the worship of Baalshamen with whom she was associated was not generally practised in Jerusalem and Judah during the seventh and sixth centuries BC.

4.4.4.7.4 Asherah

The Hebrew term **אשרה** has a double meaning and can designate the goddess 'Asherah', but also the cult object 'asherah'. Frequent occurrences (x 40) of the cult object asherah in singular and plural (**אשרים**) are found in the OT. 'Asherah' the goddess, was an ancient Canaanite fertility goddess linked with Baal in several references in the OT. In the OT version of the worship of Asherah, she is represented in a variety of forms such as a figurine, as a wooden likeness or in the form of a green tree (Deu 16:21), or as tree trunks.

The presence of the asherahs as cultic objects, and the worshipping of Asherah the goddess by Israel, probably continued after the reform effort of Josiah, and constitutes part of the popular religious practices of the majority of the Israelite population during the sixth century BC (Ackerman 1992:61, 217). The asherah probably was considered as a legitimate and acceptable cultic object in the Yahwistic cult for most of the history of Israel's religion. Elijah and Jehu did not seem to oppose the prophets of Asherah. Only later, during the reform efforts of Hezekiah and Josiah, the presence of asherahs were regarded as illegitimate (Gnuse 1997:184).

In the prose of Jer 17:2, the plural form with **אשריהם** from **אשרה** (= sacred wooden pole, or tree), is used in an accusation against the people of Judah, stating *"their children remember their altars and their sacred poles, beside every green tree, and on the high hills, on the mountains in the open country."* This indicates that the **אשרים** were usually set up near altars and on hills, beside green trees. The poetic formulation found in 2:27 is also a clear reference to the worship of Asherah. It reads: *"who say to a tree, 'You are my father,' and to a stone, 'You gave me birth.'"* This is an indication of the material used in the fabrication of cultic objects, namely a tree for asherahs, or stone for sacred pillars. Multiple references concerning the fabrication of idolatry objects and images occur in the book of Jeremiah, which indicates the human made nature of these objects, including the

‘asherah(s), i.e. ‘gods you made for yourselves’ (2:28; 16:20), ‘the work of your hands’ (1:16; 25:6,7; 32:30; 44:8).

Sacred wooden poles as symbol of the evergreen tree as image of fertility, representing the female aspect, and sacred stone pillars to present the male aspect, were erected for the goddess Asherah (NAVV p1606). However, the expression ‘under every green tree’, which is frequently used in the book of Jeremiah (2:20; 3:6,13; 17:2) and elsewhere in the OT (e.g. 1 Ki 14:23; 2 Ki 17:10), does not only refer to the idolatrous venue, but most probably indicates that living trees were cut and pruned into a cultic shape to represent the asherahs (Taylor 1995:29-54). It is therefore alleged that asherahs were either fabricated from wood when no living tree was available, or trees were specially planted, and stylised to represent the fertility goddess Asherah (Ackerman 1992:61,65 and 189). These asherahs were ‘made’ (e.g. 1 Ki 14:15; 16:33), ‘planted’ (Deu 16:21) at ‘high places’ ‘under’ or ‘besides every green tree’ next to ‘altars’ and ‘pillars’ (Jer 17:2). According to Taylor (1995:48) the presence of these asherahs in the worship practices, confirms the important role of the interplay of sexual forces in the Canaanite fertility rites. The goddess Asherah was the wife or consort of El, and a symbol of El was always accompanied by the symbol of the goddess. The frequent occurrences of the term in the Deuteronomistic history, namely twenty-four of the forty OT references, bear witness to the struggle of the Yahwistic party to wipe out the presence of asherahs and the worship of Asherah (Wyatt 1999:102).

The singular, אֲשֵׁרָה, used to denote the goddess ‘Asherah’, does not appear in the book of Jeremiah at all, although it is frequently found in OT. (i.e. in Jug 3:7; 1 Ki 15:13, 18:19 and in 2 Ki 21:7 regarding the image of Asherah, which Manasseh erected in the temple; 2 Ki 23:4,6,7 regarding Josiah’s reform efforts mentioning the removal of the image of Asherah; and 2 Ch 15:16 (= 1 Ki 15:13) regarding Maccah’s image of Asherah, which was cut down and burned by king Asa). Ample archaeological evidence exists to attest the presence and worship of Asherah in the ANE. Her existence is confirmed in the Ras Shamra tablets, in Ugaritic literature, the fifteenth-century BC letter from Ta’anach, Akkadian and Hittite documents from Mesopotamia, and the Philistine inscriptions found at Tel Miqne/Ekron. It is generally accepted that she has a West Semitic origin, and was

known as the 'Great lady', 'mother of the gods' and 'consort of El' in the Ugaritic sources.¹

One of the most debated and recent archaeological discoveries bearing on Asherah, is the findings of Hebrew inscriptions at Kuntillet 'Arjud, a shrine dating to the first half of the eighth century BC, thirty km south of Kadesh Barnea in the Sinai desert, as well as at Khirbet el Qom, ten km east-southeast of Lachish.² The inscriptions refer to 'Yahweh and his Asherah.'³ Scholars differ on the interpretation of these inscriptions. Some view the expression as referring to an object or cult symbol,⁴ or a shrine.⁵ McCarter (1987:149) argues that the asherah mentioned in the inscription refers to the symbolic wooden pole in the sanctuary of YHWH. The asherah represents the symbolic personification of the consort of YHWH, namely Asherah the Israelite goddess (not the Canaanite version), who was part of a form of locally developed Yahwism, which did not conform to the Yahwism of the prophets and the reformers.

However, the popular view among scholars presently is to interpret the inscription as a direct reference to the goddess Asherah as consort, wife of YHWH (Wyatt 1999:104). Ackerman (1992:66) reckons that an association of Asherah's cult object with YHWH occurs in these inscriptions, and therefore implies an association of YHWH with Asherah, i.e. they are paired. The worship of Asherah was generally practised in the Northern Kingdom and Judah, and was regarded by many as a legitimate part of the Yahwistic religion. Wyatt (1999:104) argues that if YHWH developed from El, continuity of the relationship between El and his consort as at Ugarit is to be identified.

¹ McCarter 1987:144; Wyatt 1999:99-105.

² See Keel 1998:210ff for a detailed description of the findings, and King 1993:107, Ackerman 1992:62 for discussions.

³ See Keel 1998:225ff for details of the inscriptions, and p228ff for a discussion of the expression 'Yahweh...and his asherah.'

⁴ E.g. Hestrin, mentioned by King 1993:107.

⁵ See Keel:1998:231 for the names of proponents.

The latest trend among scholars to view YHWH as emerged from Baal, led to the conclusion that Asherah is the consort of YHWH-Baal.¹ However, Keel (1998:237) states:

“Neither the iconography nor the texts force us to interpret the relationship between ‘Yahweh...and his asherah’ in the Iron Age IIB in the sense of a (sexually-determined) relationship of two forces that are paired and thus compel us to assume that the asherah has the status of a partner. ‘Yahweh’s asherah’ does not have equal rank with Yahweh but is rather a mediating entity that brings his blessing and is conceived in the mind in the shape of a stylized tree that was thus subordinate to Yahweh.”

Keel (1998:248 and 370) concludes his investigation of the findings at Kuntillet ‘Arjud and Khirbet el-Qom, by stating that no evidence is provided to oppose the theory that the worship of YHWH during the Iron Age IIB (925-720/700 BC) was predominantly monolatrous. The evidence rather testifies against the notion that YHWH had a female partner during this period.

Although Biblical and extra-Biblical evidence indicate that Asherah was a popular goddess in Israel during the sixth century BC, Asherah is viewed by some scholars as an unlikely candidate for the epithet ‘Queen of heaven’ (e.g. Ackerman 1992:8ff did not consider Asherah as a candidate in her discussion). She has no astral associations, or a cult which includes the baking of cakes and the leading role of women.

4.4.4.8 Conclusion

Houtman (1999:679) states that it is difficult to identify the Queen of Heaven the basis of the available evidence. He reckons that the choice must be made between Anat of the fifth century BC Elephantine papyri, Asherah (2 Ki 21:7; 23:4,7), and the West Semitic Astarte. Equally, King (1998:106) gives the best possibilities namely Astarte, Ishtar, Asherah and Anat, but does not come to a conclusion. Ackerman (1992:34) suggests that

¹ Keel 1998:201 comments that the link between Baal and Asherah is still unconfirmed in Northwest Semitic inscriptions up to date. They are only paired in the Biblical texts of the Deuteronomistic redactor.

the Queen of heaven is a fusion between the West Semitic Astarte and the east Semitic Ishtar, which was incorporated in the syncretistic Yahwism. Her choice is based on the fact that Ezk 8:14 mentions women involved in the mourning of the death of the Mesopotamian east Semitic deity Tammuz. Ishtar was the bride or consort of Tammuz (p82). The death of Tammuz is related to the mythic cycle of the dying and rising fertility deity, Baal from Ugarit. Although Ishtar is not mentioned in the OT, she was familiar to the mourning women in Ezk 8:14, because of the syncretistic fusion between Astarte and Ishtar (p91). The Queen of Heaven therefore represents the epithet of an Israelite/Canaanite creation, which consists of the combination of Astarte and Ishtar.

However, Keel (1998:339. See also n70) is not convinced that the cult of Astarte¹ was widespread in Jerusalem and Judah during the pre-exilic period. He supports the proposal of Koch (mentioned in Keel 1998:339 and n70) that the “‘*Queen of Heaven*’ should be identified with the *Asherah* that has been equated with the Assyrian Ishtar.” The findings of “*asherah-pillar figurines*” in private homes, tombs, and palaces (Keel 1998:328ff and n54) and the fact that “*Yahweh’s Asherah*” at Kuntillet ‘Arjud and at Khirbet el-Qom, rendered the same services as the Queen of Heaven, i.e. “*blessing in the form of sufficient food, health, and security (Jer 44:17f.)*”, points in the direction of the Judahite Asherah. On the basis of iconographic evidence, Keel (1998:340) therefore opts for a combination of the Palestinian Judahite Asherah [Keel (1998:237) views “*Yahweh’s asherah ..as.. a mediating entity... subordinate to Yahweh.*”] and the Assyrian Ishtar. Although the Queen of Heaven cannot be viewed as a complete merger between the two, they operated under the epithet each with her own function, e.g. Asherah cared for the deceased, and Ishtar still retained her astral symbolism.

It seems that the identity of the Queen of Heaven is still a secret due to the lack of sufficient evidence. Either the theory posing that the Deuteronomistic polemic against the other gods and goddesses resulted in the loss of their names in texts or that the Massorettes removed the evidence of Israel’s involvement in idolatry (McKane 1986:170; Ackerman 1992:5n) or both are true. It could also be ascribed to the notion of ANE

¹ Keel 1998:105 views the term Astarte/Astheroth “*as a generic indicator and is to be translated as ‘(protecting) goddesses.*” He therefore does not support the merger between Astarte and Ishtar proposed by Ackerman.

religions to regard the name of a god with respect and not to pronounce it frequently. Another contributing factor could be ascribed to the ANE tendency to regard the qualities of the god as more important than the name (Houtman 1999:679). Nevertheless, it is clear from Biblical references that the worship of the Queen of Heaven was viewed as idolatrous and illegitimate by the Yahwistic movement. She is regarded as one of the 'other gods' (7:18; 44:8,15) worshipped by Israel. It is also stated that this sin is the cause of the fall of the temple (7:20), Jerusalem and the land (7:20; 44:6,22). However, the refugees in Egypt claim that the lack of peace and provision is due to their quitting of the practice of the cult of the Queen of Heaven. Both parties in the argument, i.e. the Yahwistic group and the Judahite members of the refugee group, express the belief that the worship of a deity, secures peace and stability as well as fertility rights (Carroll 1986:739).

Although commentators follow Thiel (1973:120) in viewing the expression 'in the towns of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem' a typical Deuteronomistic phrase, this conforms to the festivities devoted to the Phoenician Astarte from Kittion. Equally, the Deuteronomistic expression 'upon the roofs of their houses' (19:13) may point to the location of the worship of astral bodies and/or the worship of the Queen of heaven, to pour out libations to the goddess(es), especially at night time (Holladay 1986:255). For some scholars it appears that the prohibition of the cult of the Queen of Heaven hints at the minimising of the role of the women in the Yahwistic cult. Bird (1987:411) ascribes the fact that the participation of women was restricted during the pre-exilic and post-exilic periods to the demolishing of multiple cultic centers in order to centralise and control the cult. Reorganisation of the cult, hierarchical struggles and the emergence of the powerful status of the priesthood, all appear to have contributed to a situation of the limited role of the women.

Lastly, the reply of the refugee group to Jeremiah in 44:16f confirms that the worship of the Queen of Heaven was widely practised by the Judahite families, communities as well as the royal houses and their ancestors in the past (v17). They probably stopped the worship during the reform of Josiah, but then disaster struck between 597/6 and 587/6 BC. This changed their mind and convinced them that the cult of the Queen of Heaven

would be more beneficial to them. The Yahwistic prophet/author(s) did not share this opinion, although he was on the losing end because of the destructive conditions in Judah. YHWH provides security, peace and agricultural produce and food. However, he is a jealous deity and demands to be worshipped alone. No other gods or goddesses are allowed to be worshipped, not even the Queen of Heaven, who is regarded by the ANE as the mother of the universe.

4.4.5 Sun, moon and the host of heaven

The occurrences of the description ‘host of heaven’ and the additions of ‘the sun, the moon and stars’ in the book of Jeremiah and the rest of the OT need to be supplemented by extra-Biblical information and will be discussed below.

4.4.5.1 Occurrences in the book of Jeremiah

The book of Jeremiah gives more details about the ‘other gods’ involved in Israel’s idolatrous practices in its references¹ to the title or description ‘the host of heaven’ (19:13) and ‘the sun and the moon and all the host of heaven’ (8:2). However, no name of a specific deity or deities is mentioned. The descriptions of the worship of the ‘host of heaven’ provide more detail in order to form a picture of this practice. It was practised by the kings of Judah, the royal house officials including their employed priests and prophets, as well as the citizens of Jerusalem (mentioned in 8:1 and 19:13). The devotees made offerings¹ on the roofs of their houses to the ‘whole host of heaven’ (19:13). Israel has ‘loved’ (אהב), ‘served’ (עבד), ‘followed’ (הלך), ‘inquired’ (דרש) and ‘worshipped’ (חזק) the sun, moon and the host of heaven (8:2).

4.4.5.2 A Biblical picture of the worship

The picture of the worship of the ‘host of heaven’ given in the book of Jeremiah, is confirmed and supplemented by several references in the rest of the OT. The prohibition

¹ The reference in 33:22 refers to ‘the host of heaven’, which cannot be numbered. It is used in a comparison with ‘the sands of the sea’, and therefore clearly points to the innumerability of the celestial bodies

of the worship is recorded in Deu 4:19 and 17:3. Israel was forbidden to 'serve' and to 'bow down' to the sun, moon, stars, and the host of heaven. The conviction of participating in the cult carried the death penalty (17:5). The worship of the host of heaven was widely practised in the Northern Kingdom. Assyria's invasion of the land during the reign of king Hoseah is ascribed to the Northern Kingdom's sin of the worshipping of other gods, among others, the worship of 'all the host of heaven' (2 Ki 17:16).

In the history of Judah, Manasseh (who reigned for fifty five years) is nominated as the main culprit, who among other practices, 'worshiped' and 'served' all the host of heaven. He also erected altars for 'all the host of heaven' in the two courts of the temple in Jerusalem (v5). In the report on Josiah's reform (2 Ki 23:ff) mention is made of the removal and burning of the 'vessels' made for 'all the host of heaven', which were in the temple (v4). Priests, ordained by the kings of Judah, to make offerings to 'the sun, the moon, the constellations, and all the host of heaven', were disposed of (v5). Josiah also removed 'the horses' located in the precincts at the entrance of the temple, which were dedicated to the sun by the kings of Judah, and he burnt the 'chariots of the sun' with fire (v11). Jeremiah's colleague, Zephaniah (1:5) mentions the priests, who bow down on the roofs to 'the host of heavens' in a context in which the Lord threatens to remove every remnant of Baal (v4) and those who bow down and swear to Milcom (5b).

The above-mentioned Biblical picture bears witness to the widespread worship practices of the cult of the host of heaven in the history of Israel. It was practised in the Northern kingdom and prevailed until the fall of Samaria in 721 BC. In Judah it was also a popular cult, at least under the reign of Manasseh until the reform of Josiah. However, it is doubtful whether it was totally extinct, because it did re-emerge after Josiah's death (Ackerman 1992:94).

¹ The reference in 19:13 is followed by the description "and libations have been poured out to other gods" (on the roofs of their houses), which can also be regarded as a reference to a practice in favour of the host of heaven.

4.5.5.3 Separate cults?

The formulation of Biblical references of the cult as the worship of ‘the sun, moon, stars and the host of heaven’ gives the impression of a total astral cult. Holladay (1986:272) in his commentary on 8:2 claims that “*The phrase ‘host of heaven’ denotes the celestial army made up of the heavenly bodies, animated by divine spirits and in control of human destiny.*” Keel (1998:318n38 and 345) also regards the phrase as a collective name denoting primarily the stars, which can also include the sun and moon. Ezk 8:16 however, refers to twenty five sun worshippers¹ in the inner court of the temple with their backs turned to the temple, facing the east and bowing down toward the sun, thus indicating the existence of a separate sun cult. This is confirmed by the report on the reform of Josiah, which mentions the removal of horses and chariots of the sun from the temple. The cult was therefore probably practised in the temple of Jerusalem.

The existence of a sun cult in Israel is generally acknowledged by scholars, but consensus regarding their origin whether from Egypt, Mesopotamia, or Assyria is still debated.² Ackerman (1992:98) suggests an indigenous Syria-Palestine cult existed, which combined elements of the Mesopotamian Shamash and the solar goddess from Ugarit, Shapshu. Biblical names of places containing the name of the sun god e.g. En-Shemesh (Jos 15:7; 18:17), Bêt-Shemesh (Jos 15:10) and the personal name Samson, bear testimony of the existence of a sun cult in early Israel. The solar goddess from Ugarit, Shapshu, was closely associated in the mythological and cultic material with the cult of the dead, and similarly her Mesopotamian equal, Shamash (Ackerman 1992:97). In the myth regarding the dying and rising fertility god, Shapshu was praised for her role in assisting Baal in his victory over the deity of death (Môt) (p96). She is described as the goddess who travels in daytime to observe everything that happens in the living world, and at night she visits the underworld and interacts with the dead.

¹ LXX=20 which was the holy number of the sun-god Shamash in Mesopotamia.

² Egypt is regarded as the least likely origin. It is argued by Cogan and McKane that the Assyrians did not impose their cults on vassal states and therefore it is unlikely that Manasseh introduced the cult under influence of or obligation to the Assyrians. See Ackerman 1992:93,95. However, the Assyrian religious influence cannot be underestimated. The Assyrians also imported foreign pagan groups with idolatrous practices to reside in the Northern kingdom territory. See 2 Ki 17:29-34. Keel (1998:367) detects a declining Egyptian and an increasing Assyrian influence in the iconography of the 720/700-600 BC era.

In both contexts of Jer 8:2 and 19:13 the possibility exists that the references to the exposure of the bones of the dead to the host, allude to more than the dishonouring of the death by means of grave robbery.¹ It seems that the spreading of the bones before the sun, moon, and host of heaven alludes to the exposure of the bones from the underworld to be spread in daylight before their beloved sun god who judges the death at night, but also sees everything that happens in daytime. The occurrence in Jer 8:2 states that the exposure of the corpses/bones of the kings to the elements will cause rotting and it will become like dung to the soil. Jer 19:13 states that the houses involved in the worship of the host of heaven will be defiled like Tophet.

Although the moon is included in the Biblical expressions referring to the astral bodies, influence of a separate cult of a Moon-god in the religious history of the Northern and Southern Kingdoms are detected by scholars (Schmidt 1999:586). The worship of the moon was a widespread phenomenon in the ANE. According to Mesopotamian traditions the Moon-god, known by at least three names, i.e. Nanna, Suen, and Ashimbabbar, was the senior in the astral pantheon, and created before the sun-god, he was the creator of the other celestial bodies. The Moon-god played an important role as fertility god, ruling the skies at night and controlling the time periods, as well as influencing the agricultural and human fertility life by its monthly disappearance and reappearance.

The existence of a Moon-god (named Yarikh) cult in the Syrian traditions is also well attested in findings at Ebla and Ugarit (Schmidt 1999:587). In Ugarit texts, Yarikh fulfilled the roles of judge and gatekeeper of the netherworld, but held a subordinate role to the Sun-goddess. Yahwistic lunar symbolism and the interpretation of Biblical references to these astral cults seem problematic and indicate a mixture of the Mesopotamian and Asiatic traditions (Schmidt 1999:588). The fact that the Assyrians were strong supporters of the Moon-god of Harran (Sin), and also exported the cult to other regions of their empire, had a definite influence in Israel (Keel 1998:369). Neo-Assyrian iconographic evidence shows that the horse was an attribute animal for the sun

¹ Carroll's view (1986:225), and also Holladay (1986:271f) specify grave robbery. Holladay refers to the records of a campaign of Assyrian king Ashurbanipal, which mentions the transfer of the bones of the kings of his enemies to Assyria, causing 'restlessness upon their spirits, and depriving them of food offerings and libations.'

god, although the idea of a solar chariot drawn by horses is thus far unattested (Keel 1998:344n79). However, the horses and chariot of the Sun-god of 2 Ki 23:11 can be associated with Assyrian divination practices (Keel 1998:371). Furthermore, some personal names as well as place names (e.g. Jericho), as well as solar motifs in the iconography of Judahite name seals and rosette stamps, bear witness of the practising of lunar cults. Several Biblical references allude to the fact that the powers of the Moon-god were absorbed by YHWH (Schmidt 1999:589; Keel 1998:351ff).

Biblical references mentioned above, as well as iconographic and archaeological findings testify that astral religion, especially the moon and sun cults, were popular and probably part of the Yahwistic religion of the seventh century BC and later (Keel 1998:318). Schmidt (1999:592) concluded that the prohibition against the making of an image of YHWH (Deu 4:15-20) actually indicates that Yahwism preferred different iconographical symbols to that used by the ANE astral cults. The condemnation of the astral cults was actually directed towards the infiltration and influence of non-indigenous astral cults such as the Assyrian and Babylonian versions, which caused a threat to the Yahwistic indigenous version.

Although this theory provides an attractive explanation for the frequent references to 'the gods Israel have not known', 'strangers' and 'foreign gods', it does not conform to the Biblical picture, and there is insufficient extra-Biblical evidence in support of such a theory. However, it remains a fact that the prophets addressed a widespread worship practice of the sun and moon and other astral bodies. In this regard the worship of astral bodies, consisting of burnt offerings on roof tops, obviously at night time, as mentioned in Jer 19:13 and 8:2, seems to be confirmed. The burning of incense to the host of heaven on roof tops was presumably made on brick roof tiles, or small cuboid incense limestone altars, or clay stands of which several specimen were unearthed at Gezer, Lachish and other sites (Ackerman 1992:176,178).

4.4.5.4 Conclusion

In the contexts of the utterances in Jer 8:2 and 16:13 it therefore can be assumed that the exposure of the corpses to ‘the whole host of heaven’, is an ironic reversal of the belief in the god and goddess of the underworld. The astral deities which they loved and served will be their judges because such exposure of corpses “*meant that the Moon-god and Sun-god had determined that such ghosts could not be properly cared for and therefore would never rest in peace*” (Schmidt:1999:592).

It is generally accepted that the description ‘host of heaven’ can refer to the stars (as e.g. in Deu 17:3 and Jer 8:2) but can also include the moon and sun as well (e.g. Deu 4:19 and 2 I 23:5) (Keel 1998:318n38; Schmidt 1999:585). At the origin of the epithet ‘host of heaven’ lies two OT concepts, namely the metaphor of YHWH as warrior and his army (e.g. 2 Ki 6:17; Isa13:4-5; Jo 4:11 etc.), as well as a later development of the divine assembly (1 Ki 22:19), with YHWH as king and the host of heaven in a subordinate position next to him. This probably is also the origin of the title of YHWH, i.e. ‘LORD of the hosts’ used by Isaiah (6:3,5) and frequently by the book of Jeremiah (Niehr 1999:428; Keel 1998:345f). “*The phrase Yahweh, God of Hosts thus gathered up a considerable range of ideas and presented Yahweh as the ultimate power and authority in the universe*” (Thompson 1989:244).

Although the recent proposed theories suggest that sun and moon veneration and the astral cults were legitimate Yahwistic phenomena throughout Israel’s biblical history (Gnuse 1997:187,189; Schmidt 1999:592), the OT presents a different picture of Yahwism. The Genesis report on the creation implies that God was not dependent on the sun and moon for light during day or night. He only created the sun, moon and stars on the third day, and allotted their duties to them. In the same fashion, Deu 4:19 declares that the astral bodies are things that YHWH has allotted to all people everywhere (see also Isa 40:26). The heavenly beings are called up to worship the Lord (Ps 29:1,2), and YHWH is exalted above all heavenly beings in the sky or earth beneath. Nobody can be compared with the Lord of the hosts. There is no one like him (1 Ki 8:23; Ps 89:6-8). The prayer of Nehemiah (9:6) reflects the view and beliefs of the Yahwists, namely: “*You are the LORD, you alone; you have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the*

earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. To all of them you give life, and the host of heaven worships you.” It remains a remarkable achievement that Yahwism entered into the ANE world or as suggested, originated from the polytheistic world of the fertility, war and astral cults of the ANE, and managed to survive and to develop into the monotheistic religion of Israel presented in the OT.

4.5 METAPHORICAL CONCEPTS REGARDING THE GODS

The metaphorical concepts selected for analysis below are the following: (1) **Other deities are worthless** including the concept **Other deities are unprofitable** as well as the statement ‘The other deities cannot bring rain’, and **Other deities are deceptions**; (2) **Other deities are foreigners and strangers**. The aim of the analysis of these metaphors entails an investigation pertaining to their meaning and use in the struggle between YHWH, including his prophet and the Yahwistic editors, and the gods. Ultimately, the nature of the struggle as well as the theological significance of these utterances must be determined.

4.5.1 The other deities are worthless

The description of the other deities involved in Israel’s religious practices as **הבל** (‘vanity, emptiness, worthlessness’), occurs mainly in the poetic sections i.e. in 2:5; 8:19; 10:3,8,15; 14:22; 16:19; 51:18 (= noun); and 2:5 (= verb, stating that Israel ‘became worthless themselves’). All occurrences are presented in direct speech as the words of YHWH addressed to Israel, except 16:19, which is a personal commitment and confession of the prophet/author addressed to YHWH.

The term **הבל** (literally meaning ‘wind, breath’) is drawn from the domain of nature to describe deities in the divine domain invoking the metaphorical concept **Other deities are worthless**. It is presented as: *YHWH views Israel’s other deities as being worthless (vanities)*. However, in 16:19 it can be formulated as: *The Yahwistic prophet/author views Israel’s other deities as being worthless*. The occurrence in 8:19 differs in that it uses the expression **בהבלי נכר** (foreign vanities), which can also be translated as ‘foreign idols’

(NRSV). The metaphorical concept **Other deities are foreign vanities** is at stake here describing YHWH's view of the other deities as: *YHWH views Israel's other deities as being foreign vanities (idols).*

4.5.1.0 The term הבל

The term הבל, its semantic field, meaning and occurrences will be analysed below in order to explicate its metaphorical usage.

4.5.1.1 The semantic field of הבל

Semantically הבל belongs to a group of words meaning 'vanity, emptiness'. The following related terms and expressions form part of this semantic field (Seybold 1978:314,315):

- (a) The term תהו meaning 'emptiness, vanity, nothing', appears e.g. in Isa 49:4 in combination with ריק and הבל. Verse 4 reads: 'I have labored in vain (ריק), I have spent my strength for nothing (תהו) and vanity (הבל);...' In Jer 4:23 e.g. the land is described in wordplay as 'waste (תהו) and void (ובהו)'. However, תהו does not occur in idolatry contexts in the book of Jeremiah.
- (b) The word ריק ('empty, nothing, in vain') occurs in Jer 51:34 in the sense of 'he has made me an empty vessel' and in v58 'the peoples exhaust themselves for nothing.' In Isa 30:7 ריק appears with הבל stating 'For Egypt's help is worthless (הבל) and empty (ריק),...' (For the occurrence of ריק in combination with תהו and הבל in Isa 49:4 see pt1 above).
- (c) The term שקר meaning 'deceit, falsehood, lie, deception', occurs in Jer 10:14 and 15 where the term is used in parallelism with רוח and הבל regarding the fabricated images, describing it as 'for their images are false (שקר), and there is no breath (רוח)

in them. They are worthless (הבל), a work of a delusion (תעתעים from תעע).’ In Jer 16:19 the term is used together with הבל and לא יעל regarding idolatry to admit: ‘Our ancestors have inherited nothing but lies (שקר), worthless things (הבל) in which there is no profit (ואין-בם מועיל).’ The occurrence in Pro 31:30 states e.g. ‘Charm is deceitful (שקר), and beauty is vain (הבל).’ The usage of the term שקר, plays a significant role in the themes of the book of Jeremiah, also regarding idolatry (Overholt 1970:1), and will need further discussion under the heading **‘Other deities are deceptions’**.

(d) שוא = ‘deceit, falsehood, worthlessness, vanity’. In Zec 10:2 a sequence of related terms in this semantic field are used together with שוא in the utterance: ‘For the teraphim utter nonsense (און), and the diviners see lies (שקר); the dreamers tell false (שוא) dreams, and give empty (הבל) consolation.’ In Jer 18:15 the YHWH’s complaint rings: ‘But my people have forgotten me, they burn offerings to a delusion (לשוא):...’ Other occurrences in the book of Jeremiah refer to actions which are ‘in vain’ (e.g. 2:30; 4:30; 6:29; 46:11). The appearance of the term שוא in the book of Jeremiah will be discussed under a separate metaphorical concept namely **‘Other deities are deceptions’**.

(e) און = ‘deceit, mischief, evil’. The RSV translates with ‘nonsense’ in Zec 10:2 reading: ‘For the teraphim utter nonsense (און),...’

(f) לא יעל = ‘to have no value, be good for nothing, be of no profit’. In Jer 16:19 the term is used in combination with הבל and שקר in the expression הבל ואין-בם מועיל to formulate an admittance, which reads: ‘Our ancestors have inherited nothing but lies (שקר), worthless things (הבל) in which there is no profit (ואין-בם מועיל).’ The expression ואין-בם מועיל also occurs in Isa 30:7 (referring to

Egypt's inability to assist Israel); 57:12 (referring to Israel's righteousness and works which will be of no help); Lam 4:17 (referring to Israel's hopes placed on a nation that could not help them). The occurrence of the expression לֹא יֵעַל referring to idolatry in the book of Jeremiah will be treated as a separate metaphorical concept, namely **'Other deities are unprofitable'**. However, in the light of the fact that it alludes to the worthlessness of the deities, it will be treated as contributing to the general metaphorical concept **'Other deities are worthless'**.

As indicated above in the quotations, the terms in the semantic field of הִבֵּל are frequently utilised in combinations in consecutive sequences to create emotionally laden utterances. Furthermore, Seybold (1978:315) states: *"the range of meaning of hebhel is open. It has a broad emotion-laden stratum with strong evocative possibilities, and it is especially suited therefore to be a keyword or catchword."*

4.5.1.2 Occurrences in MT and other Semitic languages

The noun occurs 73 times and the verb 5 times in the MT (Lisowsky, 1958:378) of which more than half of the noun occurrences (38 times) are to be found in Ecclesiastes in the sense of 'vanity of all vanities, all is vanity'. Seybold (1978:313) states that occurrences in the MT *"are found more frequently in the later strata of OT Hebrew"* and *"the earliest example of the root which can be dated with certainty is at Isa.30:7 (or Dt.32:21;...)"*. The so-called הִבֵּל-Abel passages cannot be considered because of uncertainty regarding its dating and whether the name 'Abel' (Gen 4) and the root הִבֵּל are related. The proposed link between הִבֵּל and old Canaanite fertility god, the so-called Hubal, that was associated with rain and agricultural prosperity, is uncertain and can probably not be demonstrated (Becking 1999:43). In post-OT Hebrew, West and South Semitic languages the root הִבֵּל does occur, but these uses are dated later and in some cases seem to be partly influenced by its use in the OT. According to Seybold (1978:320), *"The spectrum of possible uses of hebhel in the OT is for the most part maintained in postcanonical (sic) writings"*, including the Qumran Literature.

4.5.1.3 Occurrences in the LXX

The LXX translates the concrete meaning of **הבל** in the sense of ‘cloud, mist, smoke’ with **αμμς**, e.g. in Gen 19:28; Lev 16:13; Ezk 8:11; Hos 13:3 and Jol 3:3. In other cases of the concrete meaning the LXX prefers to translate **הבל** with:

- (a) **εἰδῶλον** (= idol) as in Jer 14:22, which reads: **ἐν εἰδῶλοις τῶν ἔθνων** [‘idols (**הבל**) of the nations’], and in Jer 16:19, which reads: **ὡς ψευδῆ ἐκτήσαντο οἱ πατέρες ἡμῶν εἰδῶλα καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν αὐτοῖς ὠφέλημα** [‘Our ancestors have inherited nothing but lies, worthless things (**הבל** / εἰδῶλα) in which there is no profit]. (see also Deu 32:21); and
- (b) **καταιγίς** is used to render the meaning ‘storm’ in Isa 57:13.

The majority of the translations of **הבל** in the LXX however, occur in the abstract meaning of ‘vanity, emptiness’ and rendered as:

- (i) **ματαιότης** (emptiness) or other forms of the root **ματ** e.g. in Ecc 1:2; 2:2 and 9:9. The phrase ‘worthless things and became worthless themselves’ in Jer 2:5, is rendered as: **τῶν ματαίων καὶ ἐματαιώθησαν**. The expression ‘foreign idols/vanities’ in Jer 8:19 is translated with: **ἐν ματαίοις ἀλλοτριόις**. In Jer 8:19 (**ἐν ματαίοις ἀλλοτριόις** = foreign vanities/idols), and also 10:3 and 15 (**μάταια** from **ματαιος** = false).
- (ii) **κενος** (empty, vain) is used e.g. in Job 7:16; 21:34; 27:12.

According to Seybold (1978:315), the above-mentioned translations indicate that the LXX emphasises “*that the abstract is the essential meaning of the word.*”

4.5.1.4 The meaning of the word הבל¹

According to Seybold (1978:314), הבל represents “in all probability a special onomatopoeic word formation of Hebrew”, and has many uses and meanings in literal and figurative constructions. Although it consistently retains its literal meanings of ‘breath, wind, vapor, mist, smoke’, the associated abstract ideas of ‘nothingness, emptiness, worthlessness’, create a variety of opportunities for metaphorical meanings. This is achieved by utilising a concept from the nature domain to evaluate, understand and describe human beings, their works, beliefs and other matter.

Uses of the term in combination with מן and ל in comparative constructions (e.g. Pro 13:11; Ps 144:4), also with the particle כ (e.g. Ps 78:33), and as an adverb (e.g. Isa 49:4; Zec 10:2; Job 9:29), as well as the predicate of a nominal sentence, are indicative of the fact that comparisons are made and evaluations are expressed about people and/or things (Seybold 1978:314). The value judgements are usually with negative qualifications and loaded with emotional impact. Qoheleth utilises the versatility and evocative possibilities of this term extensively with great skill in a variety of constructions as catchwords and keywords to convey and emphasise his theme ‘all is vanity’.

4.5.1.5 The הבל metaphor in the book of Jeremiah

The noun form of הבל (= vanity, nothingness), occurs frequently in the poetry of the book of Jeremiah, namely 8 times regarding other deities, their devotees, and their makers. These occurrences are found in 2:5; 8:19; 10:3, 8, 15 (=51:18); 14:22; 16:19, and the verb only once, i.e. in 2:5. References to the idols and their worthlessness (see 2:5; 8:19b; 10:8, 15; 16:19) as well as their fabricators (10:3), and worshippers (see 2:5) occur. Of these passages, 51:18 is a duplicate of 10:15, and 8:19 is most probably a later addition, influenced by Deu 32:21 (Weinfeld 1972:324). The root in verb form referring to the words of the false prophets only occurs once in the prose sections i.e. in 23:16.

¹ הבל is used in parallelism with רוח (= wind) in Jer 10:14 regarding idol-images (see also Isa 57:13; Ecc 1:14). See Jer 5:13 for the use of רוח in a similar meaning to הבל regarding the prophets.

The use of **הבל** (vanity, nothingness) is listed by Weinfeld (1972:323,324) as a typical Deuteronomistic idiom utilised in the polemic against idolatry, but he also states that it is to be regarded as part of the poetry of ‘genuine Jeremiah’. The idiom is also quoted (in the same phraseology) in the prose of 2 Ki 17:15 (however translated in the NRSV as: “and went after *false idols and became false*”) as an accusation against the Northern Kingdom during the reign of Hoshea. Weinfeld also mentions other references in the Deuteronomistic writings relating to the expression in Jer 2:5 i.e. 1 Sa 12:21; 1 Ki 16:13, 26 as well as Deu 32:21, as from which the idiom and other related sayings in the book of Jeremiah originated.

To my mind the following should be taken into account: The prophet/author(s) and editors of the book of Jeremiah shared in a common theological vocabulary of their time. They were familiar with the vocabulary of contemporary theological legends, myths, oral traditions and writings of their history as well as with related and secular literature of their neighbours in the ANE. Not every Biblical poet, author, prophet, or redactor was bound to be an artist gifted with all the poetic and linguistic skills, or was compelled to use original creations only. The frequent occurrences of a word or phrase do not necessarily indicate that an expression derives from the same author. Furthermore, every application and use of a word or phrase could differ in intention, meaning and theological content, in a specific context. Holladay (1989:15) comments on the style of Jeremiah as follows:

“More substantial even than common vocabulary across the presumed ‘sources’ (i.e. the A,B and C sources of Mowinckel – ajb) is the identification of what I may call the ‘authentic voice’ of Jrm in all the ‘sources.’ This ‘voice’ is not easy to specify in the abstract. Its characteristics include surprise, freshness, imagination, and irony. Words are often exploited for multiple meanings; conventional views are often reversed.”

This aspect will be taken into account in the analysis of the occurrences of **הבל** when explicating its usage in the poetry of the book of Jeremiah.

4.5.1.5.1 The occurrence in Jer 2:5

The first occurrence of the word **הבל** in the book of Jeremiah is found in the double constructed expression **ההבל ויהבלו** of 2:5. It forms part of the opening question of a family quarrel (Carroll 1986:123) or lawsuit (Holladay 1986:73) presented in Jeremiah's earlier preaching, delivered during the reign of Josiah, which is generally demarcated as running from 2:2b to 6:30. Verse 5 follows the introduction of the preaching presented in vv2b-3, which uses the marriage metaphor describing YHWH's precious memories of Israel's devotion of her bridal days and his care for his bride. The marriage metaphor will be discussed in more detail in chapter 6, and the questions of addressees and context were discussed in the analysis of Jer 2:11a (4.3.2.1) above. Therefore, v5 will only receive brief attention here.

In verse 5, YHWH acts simultaneously as the prosecutor and plaintiff, or the aggrieved husband, by querying the conduct of the ancestors of Israel.

The text of 2:5 reads:

כה אמר יהוה מה מצאו אבותיכם בי עול כי רחקו מעלי

Thus says the LORD: What wrong did your ancestors find in me that they went far from me,

וילכו אחרי ההבל ויהבלו:

and went after **worthless things, and became worthless themselves?**

The LXX version reads:

τάδε λέγει κύριος τί εὔροσαν οἱ πατέρες ὑμῶν ἐν ἐμοὶ πλημμέλημα ὅτι ἀπέστησαν μακρὰν ἀπ' ἐμοῦ

καὶ ἐπορεύθησαν ὀπίσω τῶν ματαίων καὶ ἐματαιώθησαν.

This opening rhetorical question represents a kind of psychological approach, which does not directly blame the other party, but points firstly to the complainant. However, the question "*What wrong (עול) did your ancestors find in me?*", evokes a negative answer, denying any fault or wrong doings from YHWH. The supposed answer echoes the words

of the song of Moses in Deu 32:4, which reads: “*The Rock, his work is perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful god, without deceit (וְאֵין עוֹלָה), just and upright is he;*” (Holladay 1986:85). The guilty party, namely the ancestors of Israel, designated in v4 as ‘the house of Jacob, and all the families of the house of Israel’ as the addressee, probably represents a reference to the Northern Kingdom, and perhaps particularly their royal houses of the past. It can also be interpreted as a statement, which indicates that the complete earlier history of Israel is one of apostasy (Carroll 1986:123). **Israel, i.e. the wife**, ‘went far from’ (רָחַק) **YHWH, i.e. the Husband**, and ‘went after’ (הִלֵּךְ אַחֲרָיו) a third party. According to the OT marital customs, the wife may not divorce her husband. The husband however, has the right (Deu 24:1) to divorce his wife when he finds some indecency in her (Holladay 1986:85). YHWH is actually the impaired and humiliated party, because his wife abandoned him for a third party, but she is in the wrong and must answer to his queries.

The identification of the third party, described with the term **הַבֵּל**, is not clear from the immediate context. Commentators assume that it refers to Baal, and that it must be interpreted as the forsaking of the true God for a false faith (Craigie 1991:28). The expression **וַיִּלְכוּ אַחֲרֵי הַהֵבֶל וַיְהִיבֵלוּ**, contains typical Hebrew wordplay in **וַיְהִיבֵלוּ**, which occurs only in the poetry of 2:5 in the book of Jeremiah. The NRSV translates: “*and went after worthless things and became worthless themselves;*” the NEB’s version reads: “*pursuing empty phantoms and themselves becoming empty;*” Thompson (1989:165) suggests: “*and followed ‘The Delusion’ and became deluded.*” Holladay (1986:49) suspects “*that a verb closely resembling וַיְהִיבֵלוּ (in its original form without vocal points - ajb) has dropped out by haplography,..*” and prefers to translate: “*and walked after a nothing, shared in nothingness <<...(?)>>.*” The quotes from these translations indicate how translators attempt to capture the poetic wordplay.

However, the question remains: Who are these ‘worthless things? In the explanation of the cause for the fall of Samaria presented in 2 Ki 17:15 the same expression is used, namely **וַיִּלְכוּ אַחֲרֵי הַהֵבֶל וַיְהִיבֵלוּ**, but translated by the NRSV as “*They went after*

false idols and become false". Hos 9:10 expresses a similar thought regarding the sin of the Northern Kingdom's relationship with Baal-peor, but uses different diction, i.e. **וינזרו לבשת ויהיו שקוצים כאהבם** (= 'and consecrated themselves to a thing of shame, and became detestable like the thing they loved'). The statement in Hos 9:10 clearly refers to Baal-peor, but in 2 Ki 17:15 the immediate context mentions the transgression of the covenant and that the Northern Kingdom has followed other nations which YHWH did not command. Although the idolatrous practices of the Northern Kingdom are mentioned in vv16 and 17, and conform to that of Judah mentioned in the book of Jeremiah, the possibility of a reference in v15 to treaties and alliances with foreign powers cannot be excluded. Commentators tend to treat the expressions referring to idolatry as Deuteronomistic phrases, which can be interpreted as a general stereotypical utterance to designate idolatry.

However, Jeremiah exploits the term **הבל** in his own style, but it seems to this researcher that there is a definite purpose in his use of the term. The possibility exists that he deliberately uses the familiar thought of Hosea and the wording stating the sin of the Northern Kingdom in 2 Ki 17:15 to address the remnant of the Northern Kingdom. In the process, Jeremiah addresses the sins of the ancestors in which the Northern Kingdom shared. Simultaneously, he uses their history as example for Judah to address their idolatrous transgressions. The prose section 3:6-11, containing the story of the two faithless sisters, which is inserted in the poetic unit 2:2-6:30, plays a pivotal role in this. On the one hand, it serves to compare the sins of the Northern Kingdom with that of Judah, and the possibility of restoration of the former, as part of YHWH's people. The sins of the Northern Kingdom are addressed in 2:2-3:5, and they are called upon to return to YHWH and to unite with Judah (3:12-4:2). On the other hand, the example of the Northern Kingdom also serves as a demonstration to Judah that YHWH is willing to take these deserters (his wife) back. In 4:3-6:30 Judah is addressed and called upon to repent or face disaster.

It is therefore posed that the expression in 2:5 addresses the sins of the whole of earlier Israel, and more particularly that of the Northern Kingdom. The interpretation to view

הבל as Baal is an attractive one. Commentators point out that there is a play on the name of Baal in the use of the term, similar to that constructed by Hosea (Thompson 1989:67; Holladay 1986:86). The mentioning of Baal in v8 regarding the prophets who prophesy by Baal, and the reference in v11 to the gods of the nations, seem to support the interpretation regarding Baal as the identity of the הבל in 2:5. However, this interpretation causes multiple problems in the interpretation of the rest of the oracle, e.g. 2:14-18 and 2:36,37, as well as the interpretation of 'lovers' (2:33; 3:1,2) and 'strangers' (2:25; 3:13). Commentators do not provide a satisfactory explanation for the effect of 'worthlessness' caused by the 'worthless things' to Israel.

The term הבל is used in a metaphorical construction in the poetry of 2:5, which creates an open-ended feature for its interpretation. In the metaphorical expression **Other parties are worthless** it can designate either the allies of Israel or their gods or most probably both. Political alliances and treaties with foreign powers, involved the deities of the superior force and the subordinate or vassal had to acknowledge and pay homage to them. Jeremiah, in support of Josiah's reform efforts of political and religious independence, criticizes these policies with foreign political parties and their deities applied in the past, as well as the contemporary remnant of the Northern Kingdom in diaspora for following the same policy. It led to the destruction of Samaria and the kingdom. They themselves became 'worthless nothings' because they forsook **YHWH**, their **Husband** (v2b), and their **Leader** of the Exodus and land-taking who proved his worth (vv6,7). They preferred to follow other nations and their deities. The Northern Kingdom became proverbially like the policy they applied, and the deities to the people 'like father, like son.'

In ANE theology the nation is measured in terms of the power of its deity/deities to protect them from enemy forces and to win wars (2 Ki 18:33ff; 19:13ff), as well as to provide rain (10:13; 14:22) and agricultural crops (.14:2-9). Baal-Hadad from Ugarit was regarded as the fertility god, who died when the season changed to winter, which meant the end of the harvest time. His resurrection from the death in spring introduced the new life of the new season of agricultural growth and harvest. He was also the war-god who had a consort, goddess Anat, who assisted him in battles (De Moor 1975:187,188).

According to the Yahwistic view expressed in the book of Jeremiah, YHWH fulfilled his divine task as **Leader** deity of Israel during the Exodus and settlement periods (2:6-7) and still fulfills his duties as war and fertility god among others. However, Israel, and especially the Northern Kingdom, did not seek the assistance of YHWH, and followed their own way. The end-result was the fall of Samaria, exile, and hardship, while the contemporary generation was still wandering from one foreign empire to another (Egypt and Assyria, 2:18, 36,37) and became their slave (v14). The policies of the ancestors as well as that of the contemporary generation were in vain and caused the nation's worthlessness. The usage of the term **הבל** in the metaphorical construction in 2:5 therefore reflects not only the Yahwistic experience of the third party/parties described as **הבל** with which Israel collaborated, but also the nation itself due to its desertion of YHWH, their faithful **Husband** and **Leader** of the Exodus and settlement eras.

4.5.1.5.2 The occurrence in Jer 8:19b

The expression **בהבלי נכר** ('foreign idols' or 'foreign vanities') appears only once in the book of Jeremiah, namely in 8:19, which reads as follows:.

הנה-קול שועת בת-עמי מארץ מרחקים

Hark, the cry of my poor people from far and wide in the land:

היהוה אין בציון אִם-מלכה אין בה

"Is the LORD not in Zion? Is her King not in her?"

מדוע הכעסוני בפסליהם בהבלי נכר:

("Why have they provoked me to anger with their images, with their **foreign idols**?")

The LXX reads:

ἰδοὺ φωνὴ κραυγῆς θυγατρὸς λαοῦ μου ἀπὸ γῆς μακρόθεν μὴ κύριος οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν Σιων ἢ βασιλεὺς οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκεῖ διὰ τί παρώργισάν με ἐν τοῖς γλυπτοῖς αὐτῶν καὶ ἐν ματαίοις ἀλλοτριόις.

(a) A Deuteronomistic gloss or genuine Jeremianic poetry?

Some commentators regard the phrase in 19b i.e. “*Why have they provoked me to anger with their images (פסלים), with their foreign idols? (בהבלי נכר)*”, as a Deuteronomistic gloss.¹ Evidently, the NRSV follows suite and brackets the question. The argument offered is that the question is no answer to the rhetorical question of the people and spoils the lament (Carroll 1986:235,236). However, Holladay (1986:293) convincingly points out that, although the contents of the question presents the standard Deuteronomistic answer to the problem raised, the bicolon fits in with the poetry structure. He also suggests that the interruption by YHWH is deliberate in order to create a rhetorical effect. Thompson (1989:305) also rejects the idea of a gloss and argues that v18b represents an interruption of the lament by YHWH in order to explain the reason for his absence in Jerusalem. In agreement with Von Rad (1965 II:200,201) the variation of the voices in this lament can be regarded as characteristic of the poetry of Jeremiah, which cannot be classified under any literary category but rather represents ‘free lyric poetry’ inspired by his ‘poetic impulse.’ Verse 19b will therefore be considered as genuine part of the lament presented in poetry consisting of vv8:18-9:1 (MT= 8:18-23).

(b) The context: 8:4-17

The lament follows on the poetry section in 8:4-17, which contains the argumentation of YHWH with the people about their attitude towards him describing their sins (vv10b-12 = 6:13-15), the announcement of punishment (vv10a and 16,17), and the depressing voice of the despairing people as a response to the disaster (vv14-15).

(c) The cry of the people

The speaker in v18 and 19a, the prophet,² expresses his sickening grief experienced by hearing the cry of his people coming from all over the country. He quotes their questions regarding the presence of king YHWH in Zion, in his temple in Jerusalem, the symbol of his presence (Ps 46:6; 84:8; 99:2). They always found comfort in the words of the

¹ Giesebrecht, Volz, Hyatt, Rudolph and Bright, all listed in Holladay 1986:293, and Carroll 1986:235,236, who follows Thiel.

² Carroll 1986:236 opts for the wounded city of Jerusalem as speaker. All other commentaries consulted opted for the voice of the prophet.

prophets, which proclaimed that YHWH is in Zion in Jerusalem (Clements 1988:53). The questions forming the cry of the people imply that YHWH is absent in Zion and has forsaken them in their distress. Their cry echoes' 14:19, which reads: *'Why have you struck us down so that there is no healing...peace...a time for healing, but there is terror instead.'*¹ They are obviously experiencing a situation of destruction of their fields, the countryside and their family life (vv10 and 14) by conquerors (vv10, 16 and 17). Israel's queries in fact entail Where is YHWH?² Why has this happened? Why is the YHWH not helping us? Is he not present in Zion anymore? Is he not in charge anymore?

(d) YHWH answers, the people respond, the prophet weeps

The voice of YHWH interrupts the lament by answering their why-question with his why-question and stating the cause of the disastrous situation, namely 'Why have they aggravated me with their foreign idol-vanities?' The response of YHWH is followed by the voice of the people describing their dilemma as: *"The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved"* (v20). In other words, harvest-time is over and nothing has been yielded,³ and for this incurable wound of the people, there exists no healing balm or physician (v22) (According to Leslie (1954:80) and Carroll (1986:237) the balm was made from the fragrant resin of the styrax tree, for which Gilead was famous). This situation caused the emotional response of the weeping prophet in sympathy with his people (9:1 = MT 8:23). The lament is therefore, actually presented as a dialogue between the prophet, the people and YHWH.

(e) Verse 19b

The foregoing poetry of 8:4-12 elaborately focuses on the general nature of the sins of Israel, namely their unwillingness to return to YHWH (v5), and to repent (v6), ignorance of his law by the scribes, wise, prophets and priests (v7-11), greediness and dishonesty among the prophets and priests (v10), and their shameless conduct in committing

¹ See the similarity in diction and line of thought of 8:15 and 22 in 14:19.

² See 2:6 and 8 where it is alleged by YHWH that they did not asked for him, and 2:27b where Israel is accused of only knowing him when they are in trouble.

³ See Carroll (1986:237) for a similar explanation of the expression. Holladay (1986:291,293) views the expression as a metaphorical or proverbial expression and a possible reference to drought. However, Keil (1975:181) opts for the possibility of the people looking for rescue in vain.

abomination (v12). In the short compact question of YHWH in v19b, namely: "*Why have they provoked me to anger with their images, with their **foreign idols?***" these sins are specified as idolatrous practices and therefore also indicated as the reason for the doomed situation of the land and the people.

The description '**foreign vanities**' (בהבלי נכר), which could also be translated as '**foreign idols**' (NRSV), is rendered by the LXX with ματαίους ἄλλοτριούς (ἄλλοτριός = foreigner, stranger). 'Their images' in the foregoing expression is rendered by MT as פסליהם (from פסל = carved or hewn image) and the LXX as τοῖς γλυπτοῖς (from γλυπτος = image).

The accusation of an aggravated YHWH, stating the involvement of Israel in idolatrous practices is raised once again, this time yet again presented by the Yahwistic (Deuteronomistic) prophet/author(s) in a new formula. Weinfeld (1972:340) lists the expression 'to provoke YHWH to anger' (כעס) as Deuteronomic phraseology to describe disloyalty, as well as the term הבל as a typical Deuteronomistic cliché in the poetry of Jeremiah (p361) [Not all the occurrences of similar expressions can be regarded as Deuteronomistic interpolations in the book of Jeremiah. In some cases he refers or quotes warnings from the prophets e.g. Huldah's warning in 2 Ki 22:17 in 7:6 and 7, or Mosaic stipulations and commandments from Deuteronomy (Deu 32:21a)].

However, the usage of פסל and הבל in this context to denote 'idols' can also be regarded as an ironic and mocking expression. Furthermore, the combination of הבל and נכר in the expression בהבלי נכר (foreign vanities/idols), which Holladay (1986:288) prefers to translate with 'alien nothings,' represents the metaphorical concepts indicating the view of YHWH regarding the other gods involved in the idolatrous practices of Israel as **The other deities are vanities** and **The other deities are foreigners**. These terms are used in a progressive parallel construction with פסל (which designates an object hewn or carved, Holladay 1986:293), to contribute to the specifications of these פסלים as being 'foreign' and 'good-for-nothings' to Israel. In

other words, YHWH views the status of the images of these other deities as being ‘no good’ foreigners/intruders/aliens to Israel. The metaphorical concepts which come into play, therefore should read **The images of the other deities are vanities** and **The images of the other deities are foreigners**. The context of war and the lack of peace, as well as the reference to the shortage of agricultural produce and the metaphorically expressed need for healing as presented in 8:4-9:1, clearly represent hints to an ANE war and fertility diction. According to the theological values and expectations of the ANE cults as expressed in its theological diction, the deity of the land must protect his people and provide for them in circumstances such as war and drought. The images representing these other deities of Israel’s idolatry involvement are incapable of doing this for Israel because they are **הבל**, only a mere breeze, breath, actually nothing, due to the fact that they are human fabrications and therefore no gods.

Although YHWH abandoned Israel and they are experiencing circumstances of hardship which could justify their complaint, the destruction is ordered by YHWH who has good reasons and who is still in control of everything. Under no circumstances can he be regarded as being nothing or doing nothing, although his country and city and the people are experiencing hardship and complaining to him. The reason for the hardship is obvious to the Yahwistic prophet/author(s), namely the idolatrous sins of Israel, which provoked YHWH to anger and motivated the implementation of the curses of the covenant for these offenses (Deu 7:12-15; 11:26-28). He therefore ordered the plundering of their fields (or drought) as well as the conquerors of their cities to punish Israel for their offenses of the covenant (Deu 8:18-20; 11:8-17). The other deities however in comparison with YHWH are unable of doing anything to the situation, because YHWH is totally in control. Furthermore, the impotence of the other deities in this situation of the hardship of the people can be ascribed to the fact that they are foreigners in the country, which belongs to YHWH. Their presence in the land is regarded as *“an invasion of YHWH’s territory, ... an encroachment on his sole sovereignty over Israel”* (Thompson 1989:305), and therefore these intruder deities are out of their jurisdiction, and impotent to help. The expression ‘foreign vanities’ (**בהבלי נכר**) represents a double metaphorical concept combining the concept **The images of the other deities are worthless/vanities** and the concept **The images of the other deities are foreigners**. The worthlessness of the images of the other

deities is experienced from the concept of ‘wind, breeze, breath’ drawn from the domain of nature. The foreignness of these deities is expressed in terms of a concept drawn from the domain of human links regarding the rights of citizenship.

(f) Theological significance

The Yahwistic prophet/author(s) presents this double metaphorical description of the other deities as the view of YHWH regarding them as worthless intruders and therefore incapable of rendering any assistance to Israel. Israel and the land are YHWH’s domain and property where he constitutes the ruling deity and represents the only deity who control things and can save Israel. YHWH is understood, experienced, and described by the Yahwists in a rich variety of metaphors in the context, e.g. **YHWH is a Farmer** (v13), **a Water supplier** (v14), **a Snake Handler** (v17), **a King** (v19), also **a covenant/treaty King** (vv7,12b), **a Punisher** (v12b), **a Controller of seasons** (v20), and **a Healer** (v22). The foreignness of these idols can also be interpreted as an indication of the implacable value and viewpoint of monotheistic Yahwism namely, images of YHWH are prohibited. Yahwism represents an aniconic religion. The king is indeed in Zion, but not to bless them with his presence, but rather to implement the curses of the covenant due to the presence of idolatrous images in the land. Their involvement in idolatry resulted in his rejection by Israel, and therefore they deserve punishment. The cause of the disasters, i.e. the drought, the Babylonian invasions in 597/8 and 587/6 BC, the fall of Jerusalem and the temple as well as the exile, is once more indicated as being the history of Israel’s idolatrous practices and disloyalty to YHWH.

4.5.1.5.3 The occurrences in 10:3,8,15(=51:18)

The occurrences of הבל in the poetry of chapter 10 appear in vv3,8,15 (=51:18) in the following expressions: (1) v3 - the expression חקות העמים הבל = the customs of the peoples are *false*; (2) v8 - the expression ויכסלו מוסר הבלים עץ הוא = the instructions of *idols* is no better than wood; (3) v15 (= 51:18) - the expression הבל המה = they are *worthless*. In these occurrences the metaphorical concept **Other deities are worthless** is implemented in the context of 10:1-16 what could be regarded as “a taunt-song with

elements of praise” (Van Zyl 1976:29; Kaiser 1975:369; Brongers 1982:189; Long 1984:24, quoted in Kruger HAJ 1993:8) pertaining to the relationship between YHWH and the other gods. The occurrences of **הבל** in 10:1-16 will therefore be analysed in the various contexts.

(i) The text of 10:1-16

The LXX version of the text presents substantial differences to that of the MT e.g. v9 of the MT is included in v5 of the LXX, and vv6-8 and 10 are omitted in the LXX version of vv11-16 of the MT. Furthermore, the duplicated passage in 51:15-19 (10:12-16) of the MT is recorded in 28:15-19 of the LXX version (Holladay 1986:324ff). The Qumran discoveries bear witness of both text traditions, and therefore do not shed more light on the topic. Verse 11 is rendered in Aramaic, which indicates it as a later interpolation (Jones 1992:172). Despite the differences in the text traditions and although v8 does not appear in the LXX, the MT text will be regarded as the canonical text for the analysis of the occurrences of **הבל** in 10:1-16.

(ii) Literary genre of 10:1-16

The passage consisting of 10:1-16 represents a unique appearance of this type of literary genre in the book of Jeremiah, which reflects a divergent style and contents to the rest of the book, as well as a resemblance with occurrences of similar passages mocking idols found in Deutero-Isaiah, especially Isa 44:9-20. Biblical writers employed a variety of genres and techniques in their mockery of other deities (Holladay 1986:328). This includes the didactic wisdom material (according to von Rad 1975:179), and the taunt- or mock song, all applicable to Jer 10:1-16. The use of ironical and derogatory language, metaphorically and in wordplay, in structures which display a “raggedness” in shifts from singular to plural as well as in the poetic structure, create the impression and possibility “*that the literary form of mockery of idols demanded a sort of doggerel that was intended to spoof its subjects.*” (Holladay 1986:325). Another approach to 10:1-16 is presented by Jones (1992:172) who regards the passage as especially built up to its present form in the exilic period to serve as “*preaching to the exiles.*” He detects “*a sort of liturgical*

coherence in the alternating pattern of vv1-16,” which had to serve the purpose of appropriate teaching in order to face the exilic and post-exilic challenges.

(iii) The theme of 10:1-16

The Yahwistic prophet/author(s) presents the utterances in vv2-5 and v11 in direct speech as the words of YHWH, while the rest of the poem i.e. vv6-10 and 12-16, is presented as the response of the prophet/author(s) to the words of YHWH. McKane (1986:217) summarises the theme of 10:1-16 as *“Idols are vacuous, but Yahweh is the Creator.”* The inabilities of the images of the other deities of the religions of the nations surrounding Israel in contrast to the creative power of YHWH, the King and Lord of Israel, forms the major theme of this passage. The impotence of these idols is obvious in their inabilities listed by YHWH namely they cannot move (v4), cannot speak or walk, and neither do evil nor good (v5). Contrasted with these passive idols, the true living God and everlasting King, YHWH, is praised by the prophet/author(s) as the one who causes earthquakes (v10), who made earth, and established the world, who stretched out the heavens (v12), who utters his voice to make the rain, mist, lightnings, and winds to blow (v13), who formed all things (v16).¹

(iv) The occurrence of הבל in 10:3

Reference is made in v2 to ‘the way (דרך) of the nations,’ which represents in the context a clear reflection on the religious habits of other idolatrous nations to consult the signs of heavens. The house of Israel is warned not to learn this or to be dismayed by these astral practices and/or the fabricated images of their deities. However, no reference is made to the identity of these nations in 10:1-16. The question therefore is whether the contents of the poem is a reflection on the Canaanite Baalism, or the worship of ‘the queen of heaven’ (7:18 and 44:17,18,19 and 25), or ‘the host of heaven’ (8:2; 19:13), or specifically aimed at Babylonian religious practices or is the reference directed to the astral and idolatrous practices of all other nations surrounding Israel in general. The

¹ See Rudman 1998:64 who summarises the statements of Brueggemann (1988:98,99) in this regard.

references to Tarshish and Uphaz as the sources for silver and gold¹ respectively, most probably denote general sources for all the nations of the ANE, and therefore do not contribute evidence to the identification. It rather enforces the possibility that the song includes all nations who are involved in these practices. However, the insertion of 10:12-16 in 51:15-18, which forms part of the judgement on Babylon, hints at an exilic context and a later addition, at least for this passage.

The attack on the idolatrous practices of the nations in the rest of the poem i.e. from vv3b-5, 8-9, 14-15, is clearly directed towards the human fabrication of idols. Holladay (1986:331) reckons that 3a-4 introduces a new topic and creates a comparison in which it is stated that the awesome astral phenomenon is nothing more significant than the fabrication of an idol by the idolatrous devotees and their craftsmen. However, it seems that the parallelism in the references to the 'ways' (דרכי) and 'the customs (חקות) of the peoples' refers in general to the religions of other nations (following Thompson 1989:327) including the astral practices as well as the fabrication of idols.

In this context it is therefore stated that the religions of the nations, their "*religious ordinances*" (Thompson 1989:327) in sum, are a הבל, in singular. Holladay (1986:322) prefers to translate the expression חקות העמים הבל with "*the customs of the peoples are a nothing*," Carroll (1986:252) translates as the NRSV with "*the customs of the peoples are false*", and Thompson (1989:323) proposes "*the religion of the peoples is a delusion*." In the light of the analysis above it seems plausible to change the metaphorical concept at stake to **The customs of the nations are vanities**. The usage of הבל in the expression חקות העמים הבל denigrates the religious customs of the people, which include the inquiring of astral bodies, and especially the fabrication of idol-images, to the status of 'empty vanities/nothings'.

¹ See Thompson (1989:329) on this. Following Albright [1953, 3rd:136 or '69, 5th), he suggests the possibility that the noun 'tarshish' means 'refinery' so that silver 'from tarshish' may mean 'refined silver.' Likewise

(v) The occurrence of **הבֹּל** in 10:8

Following on the praise song/poem of the incomparability of YHWH (vv6-7), the prophet/author switches to a new section of mockery of the idols of the nations (vv8-9). He elaborates on the picture given by YHWH in vv3-5, but also admits and confirms the basic theme of their hand-made nature. The expression ‘They are both stupid and foolish,’ creates translating problems. Holladay (1986:332) proposes a highly ironic interpretation in which the hearer may understand **בער** (= to be stupid) as ‘to burn’ and therefore translates with: “*Let them burn as well as be foolish.*” Thompson (1989:329) suggests that the expression refers to the instructions and the idols giving the instructions, and Carroll (1986:259) proposes that the idols and their worshippers are both meant to be stupid and foolish. It seems that v8 picks up the thought expressed in vv2-5, namely the false customs of the nations to fabricate their idol-images. Both, i.e. the fabricated image counseled by the worshipper as well as the instruction given by the image, are foolish, because the instruction is no better than the wood used to fabricate an image.

The expression **ויכסלו מוסר הבלים עץ הוא** (NRSV = the instructions of *idols* (**הבֹּל**) is no better than wood), literally reads ‘the instruction of “nothings” is wood’ in the MT. The phrase produced a variety of suggested translations¹ e.g. NEB obviously refers to the wise men of the nations in v7 and translates: “*learning their nonsense from a log of wood,*” and Harrison (1973:93) suggests: “*An instruction of vanities is the tree itself.*” Ackroyd (1963:388) proposes that wood refers to the fact that the instruction of idols “*is apart from counsel*” i.e., it is foolish. ‘Wood’ in this context obviously represents a metaphorically constructed play of thoughts, in which an instruction given by an idol is experienced and expressed in terms of the material used for the fabrication of images. Both, i.e. the image and its instruction, are therefore to be considered as stupid and foolish. It is also implied that the so-called instruction received by the devotee is as ‘false’ and ‘worthless’ as the wooden image itself. The usage of the plural form **הבֹּלִים** serves to emphasise the worthlessness of these hand-made wooden idols and the equally

¹ ‘uphaz’ may mean ‘refined’ or ‘fine gold.’

¹ See Thompson (1989:323/4n6) for Harrison’s view, and the argumentation of Ackroyd. Thompson prefers the translation ‘The religion of idols is foolish.’

worthlessness of their instructions. One can assume that the term **הבלים** developed into a conventional term to designate ‘idol-images.’ The underlying metaphor entails **Idols are worthless** and so their instructions.

(vi) The occurrence of **הבלי in 10:15 (=51:18)**

Verse 15 continues the theme of v8 regarding the foolishness of idolatrous practices. In v 8 the practice of consulting idols as well as the advice given by the idols were disparaged. Verse 14 apparently addresses the stupidity of the idol worshippers, and the goldsmiths who will be humiliated by their false and lifeless images.

Rudman (1998:73) argues that vv12-16 represents a denial of the creative power of human craftsmen to make an idol. Simultaneously, it is an attack on the implied creative power of the deity involved, who must give life to the manufactured image. Jacobsen (1987:14ff) explains the special Babylonian procedures to consecrate and inaugurate a newly made idol in terms of ‘a mouth-washing ritual’. In this ritual, the first step occurs in the workshop where the craftsman denies his share in the manufacturing before he hands it over to the priests. The priests take the image to the riverbank to perform their ritual of mouth-washing, which apparently indicates the use of water as a live-giving medium through which the deity gives life to the idols. After an over-night stay in the orchard among the trees from which it originates, it is taken back to the riverbank to celebrate the birth of the idol, the son of the deity it represents. Only then the idol is ready to be transported in a procession to the temple for its inauguration and installation. The basic principle of this ritual boils down to the denial of human involvement in the manufacturing of the idol, and the creative life-giving power of the deity who accomplishes the birth of the idol in heaven.

It is alleged that the prophets, and especially Jer 10:12-16, totally ignored and denied the assumed effect of this ritual, and therefore launched their attack on the reality, namely that the idol remains an human made product, fabricated from a block of wood (Jacobsen 1987; Rudman 1998:73 and 1999:114ff). It is argued that the prophets did not compare

YHWH with the idols, but the comparison was made between YHWH and the idol fabricators who claimed to possess creative knowledge and skills.

In this regard, YHWH is exalted in 10:12,13 as the only Creator of all on earth and in heaven, and the assumed creative power of the makers of idols is nullified. Verse 14 clearly states that the goldsmiths are without this knowledge and stupid, and that they will be humiliated by their work, because their images are false, and lifeless. Verse 15 adds to the list of denigrating descriptions of the qualities of the idols by emphasising that they are worthless (הבל המה), a work of a delusion (מעשה תעתעים), and at the time of their punishment [(The Qumran version 4QJerb reads 'when I punish them.' (Holladay 1986:324)], they shall perish. The idols and the deities they represent, cannot create something or bring rain, only YHWH can.

The occurrence in 51:18 forms part of the passage vv 15-19 appearing in the judgement on Babylon, and which represents an almost exact repetition of 10:12-15, thus sharing the same immediate context (10:14 = 51:17) as the occurrence in 10:15. Holladay's translation (1986:324) reflects his interpretation of the verse namely: *"They are a nothing, a work of mockery, at the time of their punishment they shall perish."* The use of the singular הבל together with 3rd person plural creates the concept of 'in sum, altogether, all idols constitute a singular nothing (zero).'

The metaphorical concept **Other deities are vanities/worthless** is at work again, but it seems that the usage is aimed at the hand-made idols (פסל = idol usually from wood or stone, carved to the likeness of man or animal. Brown e.a. 1968:820), and images (נסך = molten image. Brown e.a. 1968:651). Therefore, the metaphorical concept should be adapted to read **The images of the other deities are vanities/worthless.**

(vii) Theological significance

The counseling of and the advice given by these vanities are denigrated by a double metaphorically constructed expression in 10:8 used by the Yahwistic prophet/author(s)

and devotees in a didactical hymn/poem. The vanities and their instructions are contrasted with the greatness and wisdom of the incomparable YHWH. In comparison with the true and living YHWH, the religious customs of the nations (10:3), as well as their makers of idols and their idolatrous products are false, worthless, lifeless, nothings (vv14,15). YHWH is metaphorically depicted in 10:1-16 as **The Universal** (v9), **everlasting** (v10) **King, the True deity** (v10), **the Living deity** (v11), **the Creator** (vv12,16), **the Weather deity** (v13), **an Heritor** of a nation (v16), **the Chief of the hosts** (v16).

This and the whole of 10:1-16 had to serve as spiritual strengthening and comfort for the Yahwists in their struggle against the overwhelming power of the Babylonian conquerors and their cult. It also exalts YHWH among those who are suffering in exile from the disappointment in their religious beliefs, whether they were polytheists, or syncretists, or devoted Yahwists. The terms **הבל** and **הבליים** contribute to the strong derogatory metaphoric language utilised in the struggle against the enemy and its apparent powerful deities, which in 10:1-16 is focused on the apparent weak point, namely the iconic nature of their religion. Carroll (1986:256,257) comments on the occurrence of v11 in Aramaic as follows: *“Against such frightening powers (cf. v. 2) the hurling of incantatory formulas may have been the only defence available to a weaker cult (...).”* However, only during the post-exilic era, after their experience with the Persian world power, and the fall of Babylon, as well as the return of the exiles, could Israel truly appreciate the truth of the greatness and wisdom of YHWH, as well as the stupidity of idolatry.

The struggle against the other deities was aimed at the nations’ custom of making and worshipping images of their deities. The aniconic nature of monotheistic Yahwism was therefore, promoted by verbally illustrating the nothingness/worthlessness of these hand-made wooden images. The fall of Assyria and Babylonia, and their respective cults, provided ample evidence of this and must have boosted the promotion of Yahwism. They indeed perished under the punishment of YHWH and proved to be worthless.

4.5.1.5.4 The occurrence in Jer 14:22

Verse 22 forms part of a communal lament consisting of vv19-22 in which the prophet identifies himself with the nation. He confesses their guilt and expresses their beliefs on their behalf in a situation of drought and destruction (Holladay 1986:423,439; Thompson 1989:386). The confessions can be regarded as a projection of the Yahwistic beliefs on the nation regarding the calamity, namely that YHWH has rejected Israel (v19). The cause of their calamity entails the sins of their ancestors and the contemporary generation (v20). YHWH is about to break the covenant with them (v21), and YHWH, not the idols, brings/gives rain (v22).

(1) Text and context

Jer 14:22 reads:

הִישׁ בַּהֲבֵלֵי הַגּוֹיִם מִגִּשְׁמִים וְאִם־הַשָּׁמַיִם יִתְּנוּ רֶבֶבִים

Can any idols of the nations bring rain? Or can the heavens give showers?

הֲלֹא אַתָּה־הוּא יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְנִקְוָה־לְךָ כִּי־אַתָּה עֹשֵׂת אֶת־כָּל־אֱלֹהִים

Is it not you, O LORD our God? We set our hope on you, for it is you who do all this.

The LXX version reads:

μη ἔστιν ἐν εἰδώλοις τῶν ἔθνῶν ὑετίζων καὶ εἰ ὁ οὐρανὸς δώσει πλησμονὴν αὐτοῦ οὐχὶ σὺ εἶ αὐτός καὶ ὑπομενοῦμέν σε ὅτι σὺ ἐποίησας πάντα ταῦτα.

The two rhetorical questions presume both an emphatic ‘no’ as an answer. This is all about the rainmaking capabilities of the ANE deities versus that of YHWH. The first question, הִישׁ בַּהֲבֵלֵי הַגּוֹיִם מִגִּשְׁמִים [can any *idols* (vanities) of the nations bring rain?], refers to the incapability of the idols of the nations. It is alluded that in their capacity as so-called rainmakers they are ‘nothings’, הַבְּלִים, a Jeremianic poetic term to designate ‘idols’. The term מִגִּשְׁמִים (rain-bringers) represents another unique Jeremianic poetic design (Holladay 1986:439). The second question: ‘Or can the heavens give showers?’ comes as a surprise, because as today the OT people also looked at the sky for signs of rain (1 Ki 18:43-45; Deu 11:11). However, the Yahwistic view entails that YHWH is the creator of heavens, therefore the book of Jeremiah utilises the term unbiased in many respects (e.g. 2:12; 10:13) despite the threat of a widely practised astral

cult in Israel and the ANE (see the discussions on ‘Queen of Heaven’ and ‘Host of heavens’ above). However, the reference to heavens can also be viewed as a deliberate usage to refer to the astral cult and its impotency regarding the provision of rain. Thompson (1989:396/7n) suggests that the idols of the deity Baalshamen (‘the Baal of heaven’), the storm-god, well known from Phoenician and Aramaic inscriptions down to the Hellenistic period, is at stake in the first question. The two questions therefore set the Baal-idols and the astral cult in parallel to state that both are incapable of providing rain in their situation of drought, famine, and destruction. In contrast, in the third rhetorical question it is not only implied but clearly stated that only YHWH can give rain. He is the rainmaker (14:22) who through his utterances commands the elements of nature to provide rain (10:13), who determines the seasonal rains and phases of growth for the harvest (5:24). However, he is also the one who withholds the rain (3:3) and brings droughts and pestilence (14:11-16).

(2) YHWH’s involvement in the drought in Jer 14

The context of a devastating drought is among others one of the determining factors of the calamity of Israel described in chapter 14. The circumstances are described as: the water cisterns are empty (v3), the ground is cracked and the farmers dismayed (v4), the doe forsakes her newborn (v5), the wild asses pant for air (v6), because there has been no rain (v4), and therefore there is no pasturage available (vv5,6). The Yahwistic prophet/author(s) depicts YHWH’s involvement in the disastrous situation by means of a rich variety of metaphors. YHWH is called upon as **The Hope of Israel, Israel’s Saviour in time of trouble** (v8), but he appears to be **A Stranger, A Traveler, A mighty but confused and impotent Warrior** (vv8,9).

Israel accuses YHWH of wandering off and not helping them, but the charge is reversed by YHWH, who accuses Israel of their apostasy wanders (v10). Therefore, their punishment will entail that YHWH will consume them ‘by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence’ (vv11,15; 15:2). Israel is depicted as **A severely wounded daughter**, struck down by the actively involved **Warrior**, YHWH, who implements the curse of war and famine as punishment for her wickedness. The unbearable situation is lacking peace and healing, because YHWH, **the King** has left his throne in Zion and has rejected his people

as a result of their wickedness (implied in the rhetorical questions and statements of vv19-21), as experienced by the Yahwistic prophet.

The only solution proposed by the Yahwistic prophet demands Israel's acknowledgement of guilt. Israel is invited to share the Yahwistic theological insight, namely that the images of the gods of the nations cannot help, cannot bring rain, because they are vanities, capable of nothing. However, Yahweh is exalted by the Yahwistic prophet/author(s) as the only **Hope of Israel**, the one who brings rain, Israel's **Saviour in time of trouble**. He is Israel's God. This is expressed by the Yahwist in the typical terms depicting YHWH's intimate and active relationship with Israel, namely 'our God'. This in turn echoes the confession of the people in v9 that YHWH is 'in the midst of us, and we are called by your name!' As in the conflict between YHWH and Baal at Carmel (1 Ki 18), there is no doubt about the questions, 'Who is really God?', 'Who gives rain?'

(3) The OT view of the gods and the weather conditions

In addition to the information regarding YHWH's involvement in weather conditions given in the book of Jeremiah, the rest of the OT reflects a similar picture. Rain is a gift from YHWH,¹ but drought and lack of vegetation result due to his punishment for disloyalty to him (Hab 3:17). In Hos 2:5-12, Gomer, the wife of Hosea, was under the impression that her lovers provided in her wealth of produce, but it was YHWH. Therefore, he will take back the grain harvest, wool, and fruit by means of a drought. However, he promises a future of reconciliation when He will 'answer the heavens, and the heavens shall answer the earth, and earth shall answer the grain, wine and the oil...' (Hos 2:21-22).

During the drought of the time of the conflict between Elijah and Ahab's Baal-cult, YHWH explicitly says that there will be neither dew nor rain, except by YHWH's word (1 Ki 17:1). The blessings for obedience to YHWH include YHWH's gift of rain and agricultural prosperity (Lev 26:4,6,10; Deu 11:13-15; 28:11-14), but the curses for disobedience equally include among others that YHWH will send drought (Deu 11:16-17;

¹ See Lev 26:4; Deu 11:11-17; 28:12,24; Jug 5:4; 1 Sa 12:16-18; 1 Ki 8:35-37; Am 4:7-13; Hab 3:10; Zec 10:1; Ps 68:8-10, 36; 77:17-19; Jol 2:23-24; Ezk 34:26-27.

28:22-24), which will affect the agricultural crops (Deu 28:16-18). Zec 10:1-2 teaches the people to ask YHWH for rain and the vegetation of the land, because the teraphim, diviners, and dreamers are false. In this regard, the book of Jeremiah employs several terms of mockery to describe the incompetence of the images of the pagan deities. They are metaphorically typified as ‘worthless’, ‘false’, ‘unprofitable’, ‘deceptions’ and ‘lies’, because they cannot among other things give rain. In many of the above-mentioned references, the worshipping of other gods and the occurrence of drought are associated with YHWH’s punishment. In the final analysis, the land of Israel is *“a land that the Lord your God looks after. The eyes of the Lord your God are always on it, from the beginning of the year to the end of the year”* (Deu 11:12). The OT view conforms with the view of ANE regarding the involvement of the deities in the weather conditions.

(4) The ANE concept of the deities and weather conditions

In terms of the ANE concept of a deity, the deity’s duty is to provide rain, agricultural produce, fertility, as well as peace and stability for the people in the land of his jurisdiction. These duties were often delegated to a specific deity or several deities of the pantheon (Ringgren 1974:271). In the Ugaritic texts, El was regarded as the father and creator god, head of the pantheon (Cross 1974:242,245). However, the storm-god, Baal-Hadad, was mythically depicted as the dying and rising deity responsible for the changing of seasons. His death caused the end of summer and the beginning of winter and his resurrection from the underworld meant the beginning of spring and the season of the harvest (De Moor 1975:188-190).

A curse of drought for the offense of a vassal is expressed in a treaty of the Assyrian Esarhaddon, and reads: *“May they (i.e the gods) make your ground like iron, so that no one can plow it. As rain does not fall from an iron heaven, so may rain and dew not come upon your fields and pastures.”* (Bernhardt 1978:131). Similarly, the OT covenant curses predict that drought and heat will follow disobedience, and *“The sky over your head shall be bronze, and the earth under you iron. The Lord will change the rain of your land into powder, and only dust shall come down upon you from the sky until you are destroyed”* (Deu 28:22-23). It seems that the OT view conforms with the view of the ANE in many aspects regarding the involvement of the deities in the weather conditions.

4.5.1.5.5 The occurrence in Jer 16:19

The context and structure of 16:14-21 in which v19 occurs, were extensively discussed in the analysis of the occurrences of the term ‘no gods’ in 4.3.2.3 above. The expression, **הבל ואין-בם מועיל** ... **אך-שקר** (=...’nothing but lies, **worthless things** in which there is no profit’), will therefore receive only brief attention in this discussion. The term **הבל** is used by the prophet/poet together with **שקר** and **לא יעל** regarding idolatry, to formulate the admittance of the nations on their behalf, namely: *“Our ancestors have inherited nothing but lies (שקר), worthless things (הבל) in which there is no profit (ואין-בם מועיל).”* Verse 19 is a clear example of the versatility of the term **הבל**, which can be used together with other terms in its semantic field in order to heighten and intensify a statement.

The prophet/author(s) expresses the Yahwistic view and ideal that YHWH will receive universal recognition in that the nations in the near future will confess to YHWH that the deities that they have inherited from their ancestors are worthless, unprofitable lies, made by mortal humans, and who are in fact not deities. The might and power of YHWH, demonstrated in the return of Israel from Babylon (v14-15), as well as his coming punishment of Babylon in the near future, will inspire the nations to acknowledge the worthlessness of their deities in comparison with YHWH.

The Yahwistic prophet/author(s) uses several metaphors to describe YHWH’s attributes, namely **YHWH is the Leader** of the nation (vv14 and 15), **an Employer** of fishermen and hunters (v16), **an Observer** of the deeds of nations (v17), **a Punisher** of nations (v18), **a Landowner, an Heritor of land** (v18), **a Strength, a Stronghold, and a Refuge** of the Yahwist (v19), **a mighty Warrior**, and **a Teacher** (v21). YHWH is the deity to seek in times of trouble, and not the deities of the nations, because they are incompetent non-gods. Once again the attack on the other deities is launched in pejorative metaphorical language, at the images (called ‘detestable carcasses’ in v 18) of the deities of the nations, at their worthlessness, and the fact that they are human-made, and

therefore 'no gods'. It is metaphorically stated clearly **The images of other deities are worthless.**

4.5.2 The other deities are unprofitable

The term **יעל** ('to gain, profit, benefit'. Brown e.a 1968:418) appears in the following forms: **לא-יועלו** or **בלוא יועיל** (= thing/s that have no value, are good for nothing, be of no profit', Seybold 1978:315) in the book of Jeremiah. The expression in the negative form occurs in 2:8,11; 12:13 and 16:19 in the poetic sections of the book of Jeremiah, and in 7:8 and 23:42 in the prose sections. In the prose of 12:13, 7:8 and 23:32 the term is not used in connection with idols but regarding hard work, words, and deceiving prophets respectively. Thus, only three occurrences referring to idols in the poetry i.e. 2:8,11 and 16:19 are applicable to the discussion of the metaphorical construction **Other deities are unprofitable**. Of these occurrences 2:11 has been discussed extensively regarding the term 'no gods', as well as 16:19 regarding the metaphor **Other deities are worthless**. Therefore, these occurrences will receive brief attention. In the light of the fact that the expression **לא + יעל** forms part of the semantic field of **הבל**, the expressions in the metaphorical concept **Other deities are unprofitable** were viewed as supportive to the basic concept **Other deities are worthless**.

According to the prophet's oracle in the poetry of 2:8, as interpreted by commentators, Baal appears to be described as 'things that do not profit'. However, it seems to this researcher that this formulation is not a clear reference to Baal. An alternative interpretation is possible. In vv 6-8 it is alleged that the leaders of the royal house, as well as the priests did not seek the guidance of YHWH, although he successfully led them during the exodus and the sojourn through the wilderness. It is further alleged that the prophets 'prophesied by Baal, and went after things that do not profit.' It has been argued in the discussion of 2:2-4:2 that the core of the oracles in this passage is aimed at the Northern Kingdom. It seems that 2:8 is included in these oracles.

Reference is made to the prophets of the Northern Kingdom (as in 23:13). The mentioning of the name Baal does not necessarily mean that the expression 'unprofitable

things' refers to Baal. The 'unprofitable things' can be interpreted as the guidance and advice given to the prophets by Baal. The 'worthless things' referred to in 2:5 are not identified in the immediate context, and the term **הבל** is rendered in plural. Equally, the term **יעל** in the expression 'things that do not profit' (**לא־יעלו**) is also in plural. This might point to futile advice of an unacceptable policy given by the prophets to the royal house, e.g. an alliance or treaty with a foreign force. The prophets inquired of Baal, instead of YHWH, and received and followed unprofitable counseling, most probably to seek assistance from Egypt or Assyria (see 2:17,18 and 36,37). If this assumption is correct, the expression refers to a **'third party' or 'parties'**, which became a threat to the relationship between YHWH and Israel.

In 2:11 it is alleged that Israel has exchanged their glory for 'something that does not profit' (**בלוא יועיל**). According to this researcher, it is doubtful whether this occurrence refers to Baal or other deities. It seems that the expression in the context of the marriage metaphor in 2:2-4:2, may refer to the involvement of third parties in the relationship between YHWH and Israel. These third parties can be interpreted as being political alliances and their deities, thus invoking the metaphorical concept **The 'third parties' involved in the relationship between YHWH and Israel are unprofitable**. They are cracked water cisterns, dug out by Israel themselves. This issue was already argued in the above-mentioned discussion of 2:11.

The reference in 16:19 is a clear reference to the images of the deities of the nations. The term is used in combination with **הבל** and **שקר** in the expression **הבל ואין־בם מועיל** to formulate an admission of the nations to YHWH, which reads: 'Our ancestors have inherited nothing but lies (**שקר**), worthless things (**הבל**) in which there is no profit (**ואין־בם מועיל**).' This is followed by the rhetorical question as response of the prophet, which reads: 'Can mortals make for themselves gods?' The answer to the Yahwist is clear: 'Such are no gods!' The occurrence therefore focuses on the gods of the nations (who can be identified as Babylon), as well as the iconic representations of their deities.

The expression **ואי־בם מועיל** also occurs in Isa 30:7, referring to Egypt's inability to assist Israel, and in 57:12, referring to Israel's righteousness and works which will be of no help). Only two from the seven occurrences in Isaiah (i.e. 44:9 and v10), refer to idols. In these prose passages the makers of idols, as well as their products, which they delight in, are being presented as unprofitable. In Lam 4:17 the expression refers to the fact that Israel's hopes were placed on a nation that could not help them. These occurrences indicate the versatility of the expression in its application, and the fact that it does not necessarily refer to idols in every context

In sum, the metaphorical poetic construction expression, 'unprofitable thing/s', represents another ambiguous term in the same fashion as **הבל**. The usage of the term in the book of Jeremiah expresses the unprofitable policies and exchanges followed by Israel, which included involvement in the idolatrous practices of the deities of the allies or overlords. Their religious and political 'business deals' did not pay dividends, and nothing was gained in the process. The context implies that YHWH alone, Israel's caring and helpful husband, can assist and guide them in their time of trouble. He is the Leader/Husband who led them through the exodus and difficult times of the wilderness sojourn during which he proved himself as the Saviour and 'profitable' deity. The references in the poetry of 2:28 and the prose of 11:12 in which it is stated that the other gods cannot save Israel in their time of trouble render more support. These gods of the foreigners and locals are incompetent and incapable of saving Israel in their time of trouble, and when YHWH brings disaster upon Israel (11:11,12).

4.5.3 The other deities are deceptions

The word **שקר** (meaning 'lie, falsehood, deception') referring to idols, occurs in the poetry sections of 10:14 (=51:17), 13:25 and 16:19, and seems to be the most important term in this category. The term also falls within the semantic field of **הבל** and therefore an analysis of its occurrences can contribute to the idea of the worthlessness of the other deities.

4.5.3.1 The term שקר

The term is one of the distinctive Jeremianic vocabulary used in three main themes, namely regarding the false sense of security which prevailed among Israel, the false prophets, and the falseness of idolatry (Overholt 1970:1). The usage of this word occurs in the prose, poetic and biographical sources (the so-called A, B, and C sources of Mowinckel. See Holladay 1989:15). The noun occurs one hundred and eleven times in the OT of which thirty-six are found in the book of Jeremiah. Overholt (1970:1) suggests that *“this sudden burst of occurrences in the book of Jeremiah”* raises the suspicion that *“the concept of falsehood had a special significance in the message of the prophet.”*

An analysis of the occurrences in the Pentateuch (8 x), Proverbs (20 x) and Psalms (22 x) indicates that a legal background dominates the usage of שקר (Overholt 1970:91). According to Overholt (p101) it seems that the key to the understanding of the dominating role of falsehood in the message of Jeremiah, lies in the fact that the term שקר *“implies the operation of a destructive power, and is thus peculiarly applicable to the social, political, and religious situation in which the prophet worked.”*

4.5.3.2 A metaphor?

Although שקר can be regarded as a conventional term due to its frequent occurrences in the OT, it is drawn from the legal source domain of humans to experience and describe among others the target domain, namely a deity in the domain of the divine. In terms of the Lakoffian definition, one kind of thing (a deity) has been understood and experienced in terms of another (human legal matters). However, it can also be viewed as originated from the secular values of the human domain regarding the integrity of a person. Nevertheless, the use of the term regard idolatry or the deities invokes the metaphorical construction **Other deities are false/lies or deceptions.**

4.5.3.3 The occurrence in 10:14 (= 51:17)

In Jer 10:14 the term שקר is used together with רוח regarding the fabricated images, describing it as ‘their images are false (שקר), and there is no breath (רוח) in them.’ This

expression is extended in v15 with ‘They are worthless (הבל), a work of a delusion (תעע from תעתעים).’ The text, literary genre, and theme of Jer 10:1-16 were discussed extensively in 4.5.3.3 regarding the metaphor **Other deities are worthless**. The analysis of the usage of הבל against the other deities, including the occurrence in v15, indicated that the images of the other deities are at stake in this song of praise for YHWH, which humiliates the images of other gods.

Although no time setting is indicated for the song in 10:1-16, it can be assumed that the references to the images of the other gods point to the Marduk cult of the Babylonians and the idolatrous cults of the other nations in the ANE, in the same style as Deutero-Isaiah. The craftsmen who produced the idol-images of the nations and the images, are ridiculed and humiliated in pejorative metaphorical language. In 10:14 (= 51:17) it is stated that the images of the goldsmiths are false and there is no breath in them. The human-made nature of these images disqualifies them to enjoy the divine status of being deities, because humans cannot create divine beings. Therefore, these images are false, and lifeless, worthless and the work of delusion. In this context YHWH is exalted as the **Creator** of everything (v12), the **King** above all (vv7,10), the **Living God** (v10), and the **Weather god** (v13). The metaphorical concept reflecting the Yahwistic view of the other deities therefore reads **The images of the other deities are false**.

4.5.3.4 The occurrence in 16:19

In Jer 16:19 the term שקר is used together with הבל and לא יעל regarding the idolatry of the nations, who admit: ‘Our ancestors have inherited nothing but lies (שקר), worthless things (הבל) in which there is no profit (ואין־בם מועיל).’ The occurrence in 16:19 is discussed extensively in 4.3.2.3 in the analysis of the term ‘no gods’, and briefly in 4.5.3.6 regarding **Other deities are worthless**, as well as in 4.5.2 regarding the concept **Other deities are unprofitable**.

Verse 19 occurs in a praise hymn for YHWH, in which the prophet expresses the Yahwistic ideal of a universal God. He envisages that all nations worldwide will confess

to YHWH in the near future that they have inherited ‘lies’ from their ancestors. The nations ridicule and humiliate their own idol-images in their confession as ‘nothing but lies’, ‘worthless things’, and ‘unprofitable’ to them. In the context, the true God is presented as the deity who is active on the world scene of the nations. He observes the deeds of the nations, punishes the guilty parties, and promises to bring Israel back from exile to their homeland. He is the refuge and stronghold for the Yahwists in time of trouble (see 4.3.2.3 and 4.5.3.6 for the variety of metaphors for YHWH at stake in this context). In reality, the images of the deities are fabricated by mortal human beings, which in itself is fraud, because human beings cannot create divine beings. The metaphorical view of the Yahwists therefore entails **The images of the deities of the nations are lies/deceptions.**

4.5.3.5 The occurrence in Jer 13:25

The occurrence in 13:25 YHWH accuses the royal house that they ‘have forgotten me (YHWH) and trusted in lies (שקר). Chapter 13 begins with the report of the symbolic act with the linen-cloth, which depicts the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem (vv1-11). Verses 12-14 includes a short passage announcing YHWH’s intention to destroy (to fill them with drunkenness metaphorically) the inhabitants of the land, Jerusalem and especially the royal house of Israel. Verses 15-17 represent the response of the prophet’s grief over the prospect of the nation’s captivity. The commentators consulted prefer to divide vv18-27 into two separate units, namely vv18-19 addressed to the king and the queen mother to announce the end of their reign, and vv20-27 regarding the theme about the lot of Jerusalem, who does not want to change. The utterance in vv20-27 is regarded as directed to Jerusalem (Thompson 1989:373; Holladay 1986:413) on the basis of the feminine imperatives in v20 and the reference to Jerusalem in v27b.

However, a case can be made out for a unity consisting of vv18-27 addressing the king and queen mother. The question: “*Where is the flock that was given to you, your beautiful flock?*” (v20b), and the difficult reading of v21a, translated as: “*What will you say when they (the enemy from the north in v20a) set as head over you those whom you have trained to be allies?*”, can be viewed as referring to the royal house. The reference to Jerusalem can be viewed as a metonymy for the government in Jerusalem. The theme of

an attack by the prophet on Jerusalem, specifically aimed at the royal house in the capital city, the king, his officials, the prophets and priests in his service, recurs regularly in the book of Jeremiah (e.g. 2:8; 4:9; 5:5; 6:5,6; 8:1; 19:10,13).

In this context v25b, which reads: *“This is your lot.... Because you have forgotten me and trusted in lies”*, can then be viewed as an accusation against the king and the influential queen mother. The ‘abominations’, ‘adulteries’, ‘neighings’, and ‘prostitutions on the hills of the countryside’, which represent metaphorical constructions from the domain of human sexual behaviour to denote cultically unacceptable worshipping practices, appear to be the sins of the royal house. Verse 25b echoes the complaint of YHWH formulated in the questions of 2:6 and v8, i.e. *“They did not say, Where is the Lord,...”* The royal house has followed a policy of seeking assistance elsewhere, from foreign powers, and therefore they have forgotten YHWH and trusted in a/the lie. This constitutes prostitution with foreign gods, a violation of the marriage relationship between YHWH and Israel.

The expression ‘lift up the skirt’ which occurs in v22b and v26 represents a metaphorical concept, based on the prohibitions of sexual offenses regarding nakedness (see Lev 18:16-19 and 20:17-21). Jeremiah, Deutero-Isaiah (47:3), and Nahum (3:5) use this metaphorical expression to describe a situation of humiliation and disgrace in terms of an euphemistic metaphorical description of sexual violation of a woman’s private parts or nakedness (Thompson 1989:373; Holladay 1986:416). Jeremiah describes the humiliation, which the royal house in Jerusalem, and therefore Jerusalem itself, will experience. Isaiah uses the expression in a prophecy of doom against Babylon, and Nahum speaks out against Nineveh.

YHWH himself, the husband, is in charge of the situation in Jer 13:20ff and will determine the lot of the faithless wife by exposing her nakedness. This may also be an allusion to Hosea’s reference regarding the practice of stripping an adulterous woman of her garments (2:3 =MT v5). Carroll (1986:304) opts for the reality in time of war when aggression is directed against women for the source domain of the metaphor, and proposes a description of violent rape by the invaders. However, the corresponding submerged metaphor for YHWH designates him as a rapist, which does not fit the

marriage metaphor. The comparison in the passage seems to be the fact that the husband, YHWH, saw the prostitutions of Israel, the wife, and therefore her punishment will be the humiliating exposure of her nakedness by YHWH for everyone to see. YHWH is depicted as the husband who observes all the sins of his unfaithful wife and in the end determines her punishment (see Hos 2:3 and v10).

Bright (1965:95) views the reference to שֶׁקֶר as indicating another god, which most probably could be the Canaanite fertility Baal. The reference however, is too ambiguous, and commentators are hesitant to identify ‘the שֶׁקֶר’ as a deity. The term represents another metaphorical concept with a double meaning and use of which Black (1984:30) says: *“Ambiguity is a necessary by-product of the metaphor’s suggestiveness.”* Metaphor is an open-ended linguistic phenomenon, which sometimes occurs without a clarification of the exact meaning in a context. The use of the term in a context, which addresses the royal house, can be viewed as referring to worthlessness and the deception of a policy of alliances with the pagan foreign powers. In terms of Jer 17:5 it is stated in 13:25b: *“Cursed are those who trust in mere mortals....Blessed are those who trust in the Lord...”*.

4.5.4 The other deities are foreigners and strangers

The expression ‘foreign gods’ (אֱלֹהֵי נֹכַר) occurs only once in the book of Jeremiah i.e. in the prose of 5:19, but other related expressions are found in the poetry of 8:19 stating that they are ‘foreign vanities’ (בְּהַבְלֵי נֹכַר), and in the poetry of 2:25 and 3:13 they are called ‘strangers’ (זָרִים). Expressions stating that the other deities are gods that neither Israel nor their ancestors have known (e.g. 7:9, and 19:4) also contribute to the metaphorical concept invoked, namely **Other deities are foreigners and strangers**.

4.5.4.1 The occurrence of ‘foreign gods’ (אֱלֹהֵי נֹכַר) in 5:19

The occurrence of ‘foreign gods’ (אֱלֹהֵי נֹכַר) in 5:19 forms part of a short prose passage consisting of vv 18-19. The prose passage appears to be inserted in a lengthy poetic section which runs from 4:3 to 6:30 and which in its totality is presented as the words of

YHWH. Verse 19 contains the characteristic Jeremianic ‘Why-question’ and answer regarding the cause of the destruction of Israel’s land, cities and people. In the literary context, part of the answer reflects *YHWH’s view of the other deities as being foreign to them*. It reads as follows:

והיה כי תאמרו תחת מה עשה יהוה אלהינו לנו את-כל-אלה

And when your people say, “Why has the LORD our God done all these things to us?”

ואמרת אליהם כאשר עזבתם אותי ותעבדו אלהי נכר בארצכם

you shall say to them, “As you have forsaken me and served **foreign gods** in your land,

כן תעבדו זרים בארץ לא לכם:

so you shall serve strangers in a land that is not yours.”

The LXX version reads:

¹⁹καὶ ἔσται ὅταν εἴπητε τίνος ἕνεκεν ἐποίησεν κύριος ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν ἡμῖν ἅπαντα ταῦτα καὶ ἐρεῖς αὐτοῖς ἀνθ’ ὧν ἐδουλεύσατε **θεοῖς ἄλλοτρίοις** ἐν τῇ γῆ ὑμῶν οὕτως δουλεύσατε ἄλλοτρίοις ἐν γῆ οὐχ ὑμῶν.

4.5.4.1.1 Occurrences of נכר (foreign) in the OT

Although נכר (= foreign, strange) appears 130 times in the OT (Lisowsky 1958:931), only 5 occurrences are in the context of ‘foreign gods’ i.e. Jos 24:20; Deu 31:16; 32:12; Jer 5:19; Mal 2:11. The singular synonymous expression ‘strange god’ (אל זר) appears only in Ps 44:20 (MT v21) and 81:10. The logic conclusion would be to nominate Deu 31:16 and 32:12 as the origin of Jer 5:19’s terminology (Holladay 1986:191). However, Deu 31:16 speaks of the possibility that Israel might prostitute themselves with “*the foreign gods in their midst, the gods of the land into which they are going*”, i.e. Canaan the promised land, and not of consequential punishment in case of their disobedience. Deu 32:12, i.e. the song of Moses (in poetry), mentions YHWH’s sovereign guidance regarding Israel stating “*no foreign god was with him.*” The redactor or scribe in Jer 5:19 was obviously familiar with the terminology, but applied it in a new and creative way,

and presented it in what may be regarded as almost poetic form.¹ Even in Jer 16:13 where the same line of thought is expressed, the composition is in the more commonly used terms and in lengthy explanatory language, typical of prose style. An analysis of Jer 5:10-19 will be appropriate.

4.5.4.1.2 Analysis of Jer 5:10-19

The contents of the poetry in 5:10-17 reveal that YHWH announces the pending destruction of the vineyard, i.e. of Judah-Israel (v10), the reason being that they are not his property anymore, due to their disloyalty to him (vv10b,11). False prophets misled the people with words of denial about the coming judgement (v12). According to them YHWH will do nothing. These prophets and the people are condemned (v13), and will become firewood to YHWH's word through his prophet, which will be the fire to destroy them (v14). The theme of the destroyers from the north mentioned in 4:6 and 16 is continued in vv15-17: They shall eat up..... everything.

Although commentators tend to distinguish several units in the poetry of vv10-17, the approach to consider vv10-19 as a complete unit, which starts with the phrase and idea of "*not a full end*" in v10, which is repeated in v18, is an attractive one.

(a) Verses 10-17

Carroll (1986:181) prefers the possibility that vv10-14 may be compiled from five different fragments, and that vv15-17 forms another unit. He argues that each fragment reflects another editorial strand in the tradition, which appears not to be clearly related to each other and could hardly form a coherent statement. It also lacks clear indications of speakers and addressees. However, Holladay (1986:183) sets forward a plausible effort to provide every saying with a speaker, based on several text emendations, and a sound argument for the unity of vv10-17.

¹ The phrase **אלהי נכר** does not occur elsewhere in the book of Jeremiah and **נכר** (foreign) only appears in 8:19 in connection with idols. The feature of unique expressions and literary creativeness in redaction could be ascribed to later developments in the Deuteronomic composition (Weinfeld 1972:4,6).

Whether the prophecy in vv10-17 should be dated before or during the events of 599/8 BC or 588/7 BC is debatable (Clements 1988:41), but is in any case irrelevant for the present purpose. The description of the anonymous disaster on hand and the existence of the assumption that nothing will happen might support an early dating before or during 599/598 BC.

(b) Verses 18-19

Verses 18-19 are generally considered as prose and is regarded as a Deuteronomistic reflection or a scribal commentary on or a summary of the disaster announced in the poetry section.¹

(c) Verse 18

The phrase in v18 "*I will not make a full end*" could be considered as a completion of the theme that the destruction would not be total. The theme was taken up in v10 with the same statement. The idea expressed in v18 could also be viewed as a later gloss, added early in the exilic period (as Holladay 1986:190). To Carroll (1986:186) the phrase is in unity with v19 and "*is more likely to be genuine and an integral part of the verse (18) than in 4:27 and 5:10.*" Nevertheless, the finality of the total destruction announced in the poetry unit, vv10-17, rather suggests that both settings of the phrase "*not a full end*" in v10 and v18, could be regarded as later interpolations. These words could have been inserted in v10 and v18 (also in 4:27) to soften the verdict of the total destruction prophesied, and to 'counterbalance' (Holladay's term) the perception of the survivors as a remnant of Israel in the exilic and post-exilic period.

The social reality of the survival of a remnant of the nation, and their particular religious and psychological needs of hope, necessitated a reinterpretation of the prophecies of Jeremiah in the period after the disaster struck. Typical of Jeremiah's earlier prophecies, where the only mitigation would follow on repentance, he proclaimed the coming destruction in harsh terms. This indeed happened, and Jeremiah's prophecies achieved 'canonical status'. However, not everything happened precisely according to his earlier

¹ Carroll 1986:185; Also Leslie 1954:291/2. Carroll ascribes it to the Deuteronomist on grounds of the fact that v19 uses the qal perfect (past tense) in 'he has done' (עשה).

prophecies, which contained no element of hope for the remnant. The latter was a later insight and recorded in the ‘book of consolation’ of chapters 30-33. Reinterpretation necessarily had to follow, probably as early as during the rewriting of the first scroll which was destroyed by Jehoiakim (Jer 36: 32).

(d) Verse 19

To this researcher it seems plausible to consider v19 with its parallelism and semantic wordplay, as part of the poetic unit in vv10-17, at least for exegetic and homiletic purposes. If the theory that verses 18-19 were placed at that point by a redactor is sound, it was indeed skillfully and effectively done. Verse 19 links up with and follows the line of thought of the statements about Israel’s ‘many transgressions and apostasies’ in 5:6, their ‘faithlessness to YHWH’ in 5:11. It also links up with the metaphorical description of YHWH’s charge of idolatry against them in 5:7-9, which reads: *“I fed them to the full...they committed adultery....”*

The ‘why-question’ i.e. *“Why has the LORD our god done all these things to us?”* in line with so many references in the book of Jeremiah (9:12-16; 16:10-13; 22:8-9)¹ and echoing Deu 29:22-28, is posed in v19. The answer, also congruent with these appearances, is given in a clear condensed form: ‘You abandoned YHWH *and served foreign gods* (ותעבדו אלהי נכר) *in your own land* (בארצכם).’ The punishment for this is: ‘*You shall serve strangers* (תעבדו זרים) *in a land not yours* (בארץ לא לכם).’ (The LXX translates with same word (ἄλλοτριός) for ‘foreign’ in 5:19 as used for ‘strangers’ e.g. in 2:25 and 3:13. But the expression ‘other gods’ is also translated with ἄλλοτριός.) There is a definite purpose in the use of אלהי נכר (foreign gods) in stead of the commonly used אלהים אחרים (other gods).

¹ In 16:10-13 as in 5:19, the why-question (16:10) refers to what the LORD has done to the people Israel; In 9:12-16 it (v12b) refers to what the Lord has done to the land; In 22:8-9 it (v8) refers to what the Lord has done to the city of Jerusalem. The why-question (v8) and answer (v9) also appears in 1Ki 9:6-9 regarding the destruction of the land and Solomon’s temple. In Deu 29:22-28, the Why-question (v24) refers to the land and the answer (v25) contains the element of the transgression of the covenant as well as the worshipping of other gods.

The idea of the Deuteronomistic/Yahwistic theology namely that idolatry caused the disaster must be conveyed, and dominates in the book of Jeremiah but not always in a stereotypical way. Contrasts between 'your land' and 'a land not yours' as well as between 'served foreign gods' and 'you shall serve strangers', create a tension and impact to emphasise the seriousness of the message.

It is alleged that the influence of Deu 31:16, 32:12 and Huldah's phraseology in 2 Ki 22:17 might play a role in the diction of 5:19. However, the theological idea that Israel's idolatrous sins caused the fall of the country, which dominates throughout the book of Jeremiah, is once again conveyed in a new creative form. A concept drawn from the domain of human links, to be precise the domain of the rights of citizenship and land-occupation, is being applied to the divine world invoking the metaphorical concept **Other deities are foreigners**. This concept is presented as YHWH's view that Israel's other deities are foreigners to them and the land.

(e) Theological significance

According to Carroll (1986:186), the Deuteronomistic explanation for the disaster is recorded in 5:19 for the future generations in order to teach them a moral lesson. But there may be more to it. The theological problems encountered during the disaster of 587/6 BC, which destroyed the symbols and anchors of Israel's faith, must be dealt with. Whether belonging to the Yahwistic Deuteronomistic, or syncretistic groups and/or the theology of the royal house, the faith anchors of Israel, entailing 'a-YHWH-protected-society, -land, -city, -king and -temple, are all destroyed. Many intriguing theological questions were asked. Was YHWH absent and/or impotent and not able to cope with the enemy and their gods in this disaster?

However, the disaster presented an opportunity to evaluate the past and identify the mistakes as well as to provide new theological answers to the dilemma in the light of the monotheistic ideal. In addition, it presented an opportunity to unite the different theological groups within Israel. The answer is therefore, aimed at the strengthening of the monotheistic theology and is a typical Yahwistic/Deuteronomistic reinterpretation and solution presented as the authoritative words of YHWH to state: 'Idolatry is the cause of

the disaster.’ Furthermore, YHWH, who is the only god of the people and the land, was fully involved. In fact, he was fully in charge of everything, and executed the sentence himself. The following metaphorical concepts depicting YHWH and Israel can be identified in 5:10-19 to illustrate YHWH’s active role in the context, namely: **YHWH is a Vine-grower, Israel is a vineyard** (v10); **YHWH is the Husband or covenant King, Israel is a wife or a vassal** (v11); in the eyes of the prophets of Israel **YHWH is a passive deity** (v12); **YHWH is an Arsonist (or a magician?)** (v14); **YHWH is a universal King of the hosts** (v14), and a **universal King of the nations** (v15), but also a **deserted or deceived Husband and covenant King** (vv11,19); and a **Punisher of the nation** (vv15,17,18).

The expression ‘foreign gods in your land’ also reflects on the ANE theological idea that a land belongs to a specific deity. Therefore, the expression implies that YHWH is the deity of the land, and all others are therefore foreign intruders. Israel should view them as aliens. According to Deu 31:16 states that the gods of Canaan, the land which they are about to enter, are foreign gods, although they are indigenous gods. This can be viewed as referring to the fact that these gods are intruders in YHWH’s land, which was allotted to him.

Hints at the ANE fertility cult regarding the land also appear in the foregoing poetic section in 5:12 and 17. The prophets were wrong in their assumption that YHWH is a passive deity and Israel not guilty and therefore there will be no *war* or *famine* (v12). YHWH, Israel’s fertility deity, ‘who fed them to the full’ (5:7) in providing them with agricultural fertility produce,¹ will bring upon them a nation of mighty warriors who will ‘eat up’ their harvest and food, their flocks and herds, their vines and fig trees, and their sons and daughters. Therefore, the punishment for their faithlessness entails firstly that the owner of the land and people will employ a foreign power in war to strip Israel of all its fertility privileges provided by YHWH. The references in 5:22 and v24 in actual fact elaborates further on the ownership of YHWH in stating that he is the Creator and Weather God who gives rain in the specific seasons and provide the harvest for the land.

¹ See Deu 8:12-16 and 11:14-15. In 8:19-20 it is stated that the punishment will entail that they will perish under the destructive action of YHWH. 11:17 predicts drought, no rain, and no harvest of fruit.

In this context, it is then announced that Israel's final punishment will be to serve 'strangers'. The term 'strangers' (זָרִים), is a poetic term used in the book of Jeremiah to refer to foreign powers and their gods (2:25 and 3:13), but is also used in the prose regarding foreign political powers (30:8). Typical of the open-ended-ness of the poetic language demonstrated in the use of the term 'strangers,' their ultimate punishment will entail service to a foreign political power as well as their god or gods in a foreign land.

The idea that Israel will worship the gods of foreigners in a foreign land, is also expressed in 16:13. It reads: *"Therefore I will hurl you out of this land into a land that neither you nor your ancestors have known, and there you shall serve other gods day and night..."* However, the utterance employs the more commonly used 'other gods' and *"a land that neither you or your ancestors have known."*¹ The identification of the land of exile, namely Babylon, is only revealed much later in the book of Jeremiah, i.e. in 21:4.

In addition to the above, Israel's history of disobedience to YHWH, especially in their involvement in the idolatrous practices of the fertility cult, is in fact to the Yahwistic interpretation, the cause of the fall of the country and the subsequent exile. It is therefore proof of the seriousness and truth of the covenant stipulations of obedience and its blessings and curses (Deu 7:12-15; 11:26-28).

Thus, the lesson to be learned by the contemporary and future generations constitutes the importance of the covenantal demand of obedience to YHWH who is the giver and taker of fertility privileges (Deu 8:18-20 and 11:8-17). Carroll (1986:186) concludes that *"poetic justice"* prevails. Keil (1975:130) formulates *"The penalty corresponds to the sin"*, because Israel served foreign gods in their own land, YHWH's land, and therefore a just punishment determined by YHWH will be that they must serve strangers in a foreign land.

¹ The phrase אֱלֹהֵי נֹכַר does not occur elsewhere in the book of Jeremiah and נֹכַר (foreign) only appears in 8:19 in connection with idols. The feature of unique expressions and literary creativeness in redaction could be ascribed to later developments in the Deuteronomic composition (Weinfeld 1974:4,6).

4.5.4.2 The other deities are foreign vanities (בהבלי נכר) in 8:19

The occurrence of the expression ‘foreign vanities’ (בהבלי נכר), rendered as ‘foreign idols’ in the NRSV, in the poetry of 8:19, rather refers to the idolatrous images (פסלים), which provoked YHWH to anger. The NRSV reads: “*Why have they provoked me to anger with their images, with their foreign idols.*” This question/statement already received attention and was analysed above as part of the הבל metaphor. The term נכר (= foreign) was also analysed in 4.5.4.1.1 above. What follows will be a brief summary, but special attention will be given to the emphasis on the foreign nature of the idols (or vanities) to Israel expressed in the utterance.

The phrase is generally regarded as a Deuteronomistic gloss inserted in the context of the mourning prophet/author. It is however alleged by this researcher¹ that the interruption of YHWH is deliberate to explain the reason for the disaster, and is typical of the ‘free lyric poetry’ style of Jeremiah. The lament of the prophet/author(s) is presented in the form of a dialogue between the prophet, the people, and YHWH.

The people were obviously experiencing hardship due to the destruction of their fields and cities as well as the disruption of their families (vv10 and 14) by conquerors (vv10,16 and 17). The prophet hears the cry of the people, which creates a sickening grief in his heart (v18), inquiring about the presence or the apparent absence of YHWH in Zion (v19a). YHWH answers the questions of the people with his question, asking: ‘*Why have they provoked me to anger with their foreign images, with their foreign idols*’ (בהבלי נכר). Herewith, the cause of the disaster is indicated to be the idolatrous sins of Israel, which are being punished by YHWH. Once again in the book of Jeremiah YHWH states the aggravating cause, which led to the destructive punishment of the people and the land, but this time the presence of and Israel’s involvement with idol-images, i.e. foreign nothings, are to blame.

¹ Following Holladay (1986:293), Thompson (1989:305), and Von Rad (1965 II:200,201).

The emphasis on idol-images therefore invokes a double metaphorical construction reading **The images of the other deities are foreigners and vanities**. The idea of 'worthlessness' is experienced through a concept from the domain of nature, namely 'a wind, breeze, breath.' The status of 'foreigner' is drawn from the domain of human links, which entails that a person who leaves his territory and enters another bears the status of a foreigner in the latter. Therefore, YHWH and his devotees view the images of the other deities as intruders in the land and in the midst of Israel, which are unable to be of any help to them. To the contrary, the Yahwistic prophet/author(s) depicts YHWH in the metaphorical language as active and in full control of the situation, e.g. **YHWH is a Fruit-farmer, Israel is the fruit orchard** (v13); **YHWH is a Water-supplier or Fountain**, (2:13) but this time feeds his people poisonous water (v14); **YHWH is a Covenant/treaty King, Israel is his vassal/people** (vv7,12b,19); but **the King is a Punisher** of his disloyal people (vv8,12b); therefore **YHWH is a Snake-handler** (v17); and passive **Weather/Fertility deity** (v20); and a **Healer/Physician** who is not available(v22).

The usage of agricultural fertility and war terminology play an important role in the specification of the 'foreignness' of the images representing the other deities in the land. The presence of the images and idols in the midst of Israel created a situation of "*The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved*" (v20). In other words, harvest-time is over and nothing has been yielded (v14), and for this wound of the people there is no balm or physician available (v22). YHWH did not fulfill his duties as deity congruent to the standards for an ANE deity and the expectations of the devotee (Ringgren 1974:270-274) According to the Yahwistic Deuteronomist this is due to the apparent absence of YHWH, as experienced by the people. YHWH is the owner and ruler of the land and the people, and therefore he is the only deity who could resolve the problem.

Furthermore, the situation of hardship is due to the presence of the foreign idols (or literally 'foreign vanities') who are good-for-nothing intruders and unable to do something to the situation. The terminology used in the polemic against the images of other deities to denote metaphorically that these **intruder deities are 'out of bounds,'**

out of their jurisdiction, and therefore impotent, represents typical ANE theological ideas. The deity is master of his land and therefore responsible for the fertility and peace in his land.

However, for the Yahwist there is more at stake. YHWH gave instructions to the conquerors to plunder the fields and invade the country, because Israel's meddling with foreign idol-images provoked him to anger. He therefore implemented the curses of the covenant (Deu 7:12-15; 11:26-28), resulting in their experience of the lack of agricultural crops, healing, and peace. The ANE theological aspects are therefore accommodated in a new and different application of the covenant in contrast to the typical ANE myths of the deities and their consorts. The focus on the idol-images and the derogatory metaphorical language usage also represents the aversion and prohibition of these practices promoting monotheistic Yahwism as an aniconic religion.

The idea that the usage of agricultural and human fertility terminology plays an important role in the specification of the 'foreignness' of the other deities in the land, and is further supported by the occurrence of the expression 'foreign idols (vanities)' (בהבלי נכר) in 8:19. In verse 19 the mourning author/prophet states that Israel has provoked YHWH to anger with their foreign idols. Although the foregoing poetry of 8:4-12 elaborately focuses on the sins of disobedience, deceitfulness and dishonesty, idolatry is indicated in verse 19 (obviously an insert) as the reason for the doomed situation of land and people (vv14 –17). The weeping author/prophet hears the cries of the people for help from all over the land: *"Is the Lord not in Zion? Is her King not in her?"* The absence of YHWH in Zion, and the presence of Israel's images and idols, created a situation of *"The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved"* (v20). In other words, harvest-time is over and nothing has been yielded (v14),¹ and for this wound of the people, there is no balm or physician available (v22). According to the Yahwistic Deuteronomist this is due to the absence of YHWH, the only deity of the land who could resolve the problem.

¹ See Carroll (1986:237) for a similar explanation. However, Keil (1975:181) opts for the idea of the people looking for their rescue in vain. Carroll (p236) further states that the mourning voice is that of the personified city and that verse 19 must be treated as a Deuteronomistic addition (p235).

Furthermore, this is due to the presence of the foreign idols (or literally ‘vanities’) who are good-for-nothing intruders and unable to do something to the situation. Clearly this constitutes an ANE fertility context using fertility terminology in the polemic against the other deities to denote metaphorically that these **intruder deities are ‘out of bounds’, out of their jurisdiction**, and therefore impotent to help.

4.5.4.3 The other deities are strangers (זָרִים)

The description of the other deities as ‘strangers’ may also render some support to the concept of the foreignness of the other deities in Israel. The references to other deities as ‘strangers’ (זָרִים), found in the poetry of 2:25 and 3:13, is related to the expression ‘foreign gods’ (בְּהַבְלֵי נֹכַר) and contributes to the metaphorical concept **The other deities are foreigners**. Both occurrences form part of the direct speech of YHWH accusing Israel of idolatry. Other occurrences in the poetry i.e. 18:14; 51:2 and 51 are in other contexts not referring to idols. In the prose sections occurrences of the term appear in 5:19 and 30:8, and both refer to imperial forces.

The use of ‘strangers’ in the poetry invokes the metaphorical **Other deities are strangers** stating that Israel’s other deities are aliens to them. In the prose the concept **Imperial forces are strangers** entails that the imperial forces are strangers to Israel. In terms of ANE religious and political ideas there existed a close relationship between the nations and their gods, especially in a situation of war.

4.5.4.3.1 The meaning of the word זָר (stranger)

The word זָר (stranger) derives from the root זָרַר, which concretely means ‘to turn aside, deviate, go away’ (Snijders 1980:52ff; Brown e.a 1968:266 = to be a stranger) The participle זָר can be translated ‘one who distances himself or removes himself’, e.g. to denote ‘water that has seeped into the ground’ in Jer 15:18 translated as ‘deceitful brook’.

In metaphorical language, the usage usually refers to the wicked or apostate who rejects the familiar customs and traditions of the community and then becomes a dangerous alien

to his own people. It can be used in various contexts of conflict regarding social relations such as within tribes, families, peoples, or religious groups to designate the deviant from the traditional. The prophets often use the word to designate the political enemy and imperial forces, which violently disturb life and order.

The זרִים are people of a different nature and principles, who overthrow the traditional order and destroy what is sacred in the community. In Jer 51:51 the reference is aimed at Babylon who illegitimately entered the holy places of the house of the Lord. The word זרִי can refer to the third party with whom a woman commits adultery, but also to the foreign power of a treaty, or foreign nations who abuse the land (Ezk 16:32; Hos 7:9). It can also refer to insiders who turned against their own people, or turned away from YHWH to serve other gods, thus putting the future of the people in jeopardy (see Hos 5:7). The term is not only used to designate hostile nations but also their gods who are regarded as dangerous and corruptive to Israel's religious convictions. Foreign nations and their gods are closely related because the latter embodies the nation's political power and religious ideas. In the cult the deviant incense, or the unauthorised person in the sanctuary, could be regarded as alien. The term זרִי has a variety of concrete and especially metaphorical applications, due to its flexibility to designate alienation and deviancy in various contexts. (Snijders 1980:52-58)

4.5.4.3.2 Occurrences in the OT

Only two occurrences from the eight found in Isaiah refer to strange gods, i.e. 17:10 and 43:12. The occurrence in 17:10 appears in the poetry in an oracle concerning Damascus and refers to their alien god of the harvest. Deutero-Isaiah in 43:12, which is part of a consolation oracle in poetry, refers to circumstances where no strange god was among Israel. In the seven occurrences in Ezekiel, only 16:32 in prose may refer to idols in a context, which contains an extended metaphor of adultery with the Egyptians, Assyrians and Chaldeans as well as idols. Snijders (1980:54) interprets the occurrence as reflecting a double meaning, which refers to the other men with whom the woman commits adultery, but also to the foreign nations involved in their treaties. Hosea does not use the term to refer to idols and in Deuteronomistic works only one reference about strange gods

is made in Deu 32:16 in the poetry of the song of Moses stating that Israel made YHWH jealous with strange gods, abhorrent things, demons, deities they have never known (see also v17).

4.5.4.3.3 Occurrences in the book of Jeremiah

The occurrence of ‘strangers’ (זָרִים) in the poetry of 2:25b contains an acknowledgement of Israel’s love for strangers and reads: “*It is hopeless, for I have loved strangers, and after them I will go.*” The imagery presented in feminine gender in vv16-25 indicates the presence of a submerged husband/wife metaphor (Carroll 1986:133). Carroll comments that the married man enjoyed a greater degree of sexual freedom than the married woman. Sexual transgressions of a wife outside the marital bond labeled her as a whore and subjected her to severe punishment. Thompson (1989:179) identifies the ‘strangers’ as the false gods of Canaan. Holladay (1986:102) prefers the double reference of the term to ‘alien gods’ and ‘foreigners’. This interpretation seems viable to this researcher. It has been argued in the analysis of occurrences in 2:2-4:2 that the core of its oracles is about the Northern Kingdom and their efforts to survive in diaspora. They had a history of treaties and alliances with foreign powers and involvement in their idolatrous practices. Even in diaspora they sought the assistance of these forces (Egypt and Assyria, 2:18 and v36). The term is ambiguous and may refer to foreign powers involved in Israel’s alliances and treaties, as well as their gods. The extended usage of the term by Ezekiel e.g. in ch 16:30-34 also indicate a similar application. The same applies for the occurrence and use of the term in Jer 3:13. Although the stereotypical expression to denote idolatrous practices, namely ‘under every green tree’ occurs in combination with the accusation that Israel ‘scattered her favours among strangers’, the use of the expression ‘rebelled’ against YHWH, implies a transgression of the covenant. However, again the marriage metaphor may also play a role. Nevertheless, worshipping of the Baalims of the allies or overlords also occurred at the high places, and was metaphorically viewed as ‘whoring’ and ‘prostituting’.

4.5.4.4 Theological significance

The metaphorical usage of the term זָרִים supports the interpretation of the expression ‘foreign gods/vanities’ as suggested above. The gods of foreign powers are intruders in the land, as well as the political forces, which they represent. The land not only became polluted by the carcasses of their detestable idols (16:18), but the presence of these foreigners and Israel’s love for them, aggravated YHWH, and therefore he implemented the curses of the covenant. The oracles containing 2:25 and 3:13 served as lessons to Israel during the reform of Josiah, during the exile in Babylon, as well as in the post-exilic period. The Yahwists claimed that YHWH is the only deity of the land and the nation. He is the only **Leader**, **Advisor** and **Saviour** of his people, and needs no assistance from any mortal political powers and their human-made lifeless non-gods.

4.6 CONCLUSION

The above analysis of terms and metaphors employed in the book of Jeremiah in the struggle against the gods was firstly aimed at obtaining background information to interpret the metaphors. The analysis of metaphors pertaining to the gods was focused on the ‘worthlessness’ and ‘foreignness’ of these ‘other gods’. The following can be concluded from the analysis:

4.6.1 The extent of idolatrous involvement

The ANE represented a Baalim-infested-world. This also dominated the religious scene in Israel. In addition, practices such as child-sacrifice, as well as the worship and inquiry of astral cults flourished. The various polytheistic and syncretistic religious groups, which constituted Israel, and who were part of the ANE-world, participated in a variety of these Canaanite cults. The analysis confirms the statements of Ackerman (1992) and the new archeological theories (Gnuse 1997), namely that Israel was deeply involved in Canaanite idolatrous practices.

The picture compiled from the analysis of selected passages, as well as the information gathered from other Biblical references, conform to the suggestion that the popular religion of the majority, or at least certain (majority?) groups of Israel, probably consisted

of a religion marked by idolatrous and polytheistic features. Especially some royal houses and their supporters were deeply involved in these practices. This tendency prevailed during the time of Jeremiah (the sixth century BC) until the Exile.

However, many of the analysed passages indicate that the foreign cults of the invaders were also targeted in the struggle. These cults exerted a substantial religious influence and must be linked to the Canaanite factor. In this 'Umwelt', which represents an ANE polytheistic and idolatrous world, the Yahwistic religion not only had to survive, but also had to be justified, and promoted in circumstances of a national disaster.

4.6.2 ANE theology

The analysed terminology and metaphors used in the struggle between YHWH and the gods reflects typical ANE theological thoughts and values. The typical ANE religious thought regarding a deity or deities, e.g. that the worship of a deity must produce dividends for the devotee, dominates the descriptions of the other deities involved in the struggle. A deity worthy of his status provides guidance, sound advice, protection against enemies, victory in battles, agricultural and human fertility, including rains in season. In accordance to this idea, deities were compared, denigrated or exalted in the struggle. The metaphorical concepts discussed in this chapter, indicated that they were not merely borrowed by the prophet/author(s) from the religions of the surrounding nations. It formed part of the prophet/author(s) natural cognitive processes involved, expressed in terminology based on ANE theological concepts. These theological concepts represent the way in which ANE devotees religiously and metaphorically understood, experienced and expressed their relationship with their gods.

4.6.3 The other deities are worthless

The other deities in the book of Jeremiah are regarded as 'no gods', 'worthless', 'unprofitable' and 'deceptions'. The reason is that they were impotent in performing their duties. They are denigrated in pejorative language to 'lifeless nothings'. Metaphorical language was used to demonstrate that Israel's involvement in these idolatrous practices was unprofitable and in vain. The Yahwists consistently pointed out that Israel's history

of idolatry, from the Exodus up to the contemporary generation, was the cause of the destruction of the land, the city Jerusalem, the temple, the kingdom, and the resultant exile. According to the Yahwists, this is to be blamed to the presence of the idols and Israel's idolatry. The idols were unable to save Israel from the enemy, to bring rain, and to handle their contemporary situation of disaster. They are therefore labeled as worthless and unprofitable.

4.6.4 The other deities are foreigners/strangers

The other deities are regarded as 'foreign deities', strangers and 'other deities', because they are out of their jurisdiction. The land belongs to YHWH and represents his heritage. This reflects another ANE theological idea, namely a particular land belongs to a specific deity. Not only the people Israel (e.g. 2:3; 10:16), but also the land (e.g. 2:7), represents YHWH's possession. Therefore, all other deities acknowledged and worshipped in the land, whether local Baalism and astral cults, or those from the invaders or allies, are foreigners and intruders. This implies that they have no jurisdiction, no authority or power to perform the duties of a deity of the land.¹ Therefore, these foreign deities are worthless.

However, note must be taken of the fact that in the references to the worthless aspects of these deities, it appears that alliances and treaties with foreign powers also came under fire. According to ANE religious customs, alliances with foreign powers also entailed alliances with their deities. The parties involved in these alliances are called 'strangers', a term which also reflects the 'foreignness' of these parties. The ambiguity of the term 'strangers', permits an interpretation of reference to the foreign power as well as to its deity/deities. Therefore, the references to 'worthless things' and 'things that do not profit' can refer to both deity *and* political power and thus indicate that such alliances are 'worthless' and 'unprofitable'. These powers and their deities are out of their jurisdiction, and impotent to help Israel in their times of trouble. To follow a policy of an alliance with a foreign power and its deity constitutes an admission that one's own deity is unable to

¹ The emphasis on foreign gods' can also indicate that the Yahwists regard them as foreign to Israel, because Israel had no contractual commitment with them (Hos 13:4). Furthermore, it can perhaps allude to the gods of the invader-nation or ally, with whom a treaty or alliance was formed (see Jer. 12:14 -17, especially v16). In addition, the post-exilic society had separated itself from the 'foreign' religions from the past and their contemporaries (Keel 1998:404), and might be responsible for this emphasis (Neh 9:2).

help, as well as a submission to the deity of the foreign power.¹ Furthermore, it means to put one's trust in mortal beings and their non-gods made by mortals, instead of trusting in YHWH, the fountain of living water.

In this light, Jeremiah in his earlier preaching condemns the policies of the past, especially that of the Northern Kingdom (2:2-4:2). These practices were worthless and caused the fall of Samaria, making them worthless (to YHWH). In support of Josiah's reform effort, Jeremiah promoted political and religious independence by denigrating the so-called allies and their gods as 'worthless' and 'unprofitable' deceptions. In the process, he utilises strong emotive and pejorative metaphorical expressions. However, in addition, and above all, he proclaims trust in YHWH alone for the contemporary as well as all future generations.

4.6.5 A Theodicy

It is generally accepted that the book of Jeremiah presents a theodicy for the disaster of the fall of Jerusalem and the Exile. The circumstances of drought, attacks from the enemy, a destroyed city and temple, and eventually an exiled elite group, represented a challenge to Yahwism. Despairing devotees and other religious groups alleged that YHWH was incapable of providing agricultural crops and protecting Israel, Jerusalem and the temple against the enemy. The Yahwists were confronted with a situation in which Yahwism was discredited as a worthless, unprofitable cult (Jer. 44:17-19). The answer presented by the Yahwists for this theological problem identifies Israel's history of idolatrous practices as the cause. They stated that YHWH is not a worthless, unprofitable deity, but Israel abandoned him for worthless solutions.

A rich variety of metaphors drawn from several domains of life as indicated above, depict YHWH's active role as the Warrior and Punisher. The Yahwists utilised emotive and pejorative metaphorical language to denigrate the apparent superiority of the deities of the Babylonians bringing about Israel's defeat. In terms of ANE theology, a victory of the

¹ Schmidt 1999:592 suggests that the Assyrian and Babylonian cults of e.g. their lunar religions posed a threat to the Biblical Yahwism. These influences were perhaps more extensive than generally accepted. Archeological findings as well as the fierce attack of Biblical writers on competing cults in disparaging language, support this theory.

enemy meant a defeat for the conquered nation's deity. The Yahwistic interpretation held that the deities of the Babylonian invaders were not victorious but worthless. YHWH however, is the only true and living God, the universal King of the nations, the gods of the nations, and the hosts of heaven. He is actively involved and manipulates the nations to punish but eventually also to save Israel. He instructed and used the enemy and was fully in control of the situation.

4.6.6 Aniconic versus Iconic

It is clear from the analysis of the above passages pertaining to the 'worthlessness', 'falseness' and 'unprofitable' nature of the other gods, that the struggle was directed mainly towards the representative images of the other deities. The emotional and ironic nature of the metaphors and language used in the polemic, surfaces in many of the occurrences analysed. By means of poetic mockery, these idols are ridiculed and humiliated as lifeless, worthless non-gods, to demonstrate the futility of trusting in mortal allies and their hand-made gods. The analysis of the occurrences of the term 'no-gods' indicated that the iconic representations of the deities were mainly targeted in the polemic. Iconic representations of the deity constituted another religious custom of ANE nations. Yahwism represented an aniconic religion, which is unique in the ANE. The Yahwistic prophet/author(s) promoted their unique insight regarding this distinctive aspect of their religion. The images of the other deities are human-made nothings, incapable of helping Israel in their dilemma.

4.6.7 YHWH alone!

In contrast to the 'worthless nothings', the mortal imperial forces and their gods as well as all the Canaanite gods and goddesses, YHWH is exalted as the true and living God, the King of all. He is the one who was active in the history of Israel and the nations, but who is also active in the present events. A variety of metaphors depict YHWH as the only deity who can save, bring rain, give sound advice, heal, restore Israel's future and hopes, and who indeed performs his duties as deity. In this context, the other deities are useless, because they represent lifeless, hand-made idols and are therefore incapable of doing anything good or evil.

In summation, the usage of metaphorical expressions, based on ANE theological ideas, as well as those drawn from nature, human links and activities were utilised by the monotheistic Yahwists to promote YHWH as the only true god. All 'other gods' of the nations and allies are 'no gods', and therefore worthless, unprofitable deceptions. Only YHWH can help and be trusted to secure Israel's existence and future.

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Chapter 5

ISRAEL AND THE 'OTHER GODS'

5.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to investigate Israel's activities regarding the idolatrous practices in which they were involved and accused of in the book of Jeremiah. All applicable diction and descriptions regarding the relationship between Israel and the 'other gods' will be identified and discussed where applicable in order to form a picture of the phenomenon. It is envisaged that this overview can contribute information to supplement the picture of the nature and extent of the practices. It can also provide an indication whether the prophet/author(s) of the book of Jeremiah are exaggerating, generalising or include the complete history of Israel's religious history in their utterances.

Furthermore, the Jeremianic view will be supplemented with the information deduced from new archaeological and iconographic findings in order to reach a fuller picture of the idolatrous activities of Israel. This will provide more background information for the understanding of the metaphors employed to describe the worthlessness and foreignness of the deities in the relationship between Israel and these deities, in contrast with YHWH's active and intimate role regarding the relationship between YHWH and Israel.

5.2 ISRAEL'S IDOLATROUS PRACTICES IN FAVOUR OF THE GODS

The following represents an overview of Israel's religious activities related to the worship of other deities as described in the book of Jeremiah. The picture will be supplemented by information from the rest of the OT and/or from extra-Biblical sources where applicable.

5.2.1 Israel followed (הלך אחר־י) other deities

The accusation of YHWH against Israel ringing: 'Israel followed/ went after (הלך אחר־י lit. = go after) other gods', occurs frequently in the prose sections i.e.7:6, 9; 11:10; 13:10; 16:11; 25:6; 35:15. Various specifications are attached to this activity in these appearances such as: Israel went after other gods

- (i) ...'to their own hurt' in 7:6;
- (ii) ...'they have not known' in 7:9;
- (iii) ...'to serve them' in 11:10 and 35:15;
- (iv) ...'to serve and worship them' in 13:10; 16:11 and 25:6;

In 35:15 and 25:6 the phrase appears in the prohibitions 'do not go after other gods and serve them,' and 'do not go after other gods to serve and worship them,' respectively, which according to YHWH's accusation were persistently proclaimed to Israel by the prophets.

The verb **הלך** also occurs in 8:2 referring to those of Israel who 'followed the sun, moon, and the whole host of heaven' and who were buried in the Topheth. In 9:14, the accusation is made that Israel followed their own hearts and have gone after Baals, as their ancestors taught them. In 16:11, the verb **הלך** occurs in combination with 'forsake' in the statement that Israel's ancestors have forsaken YHWH in following other gods to serve and worship them.

The accusations of YHWH in the poetry sections do not refer to 'other gods', but rather use poetic expressions with no clear specification. In 2:5, the accusation implies: Israel's ancestors 'went far from' (רחק) YHWH 'and went after' (**הלך אחרי**) 'worthless things' (**הבל**). It is alleged in 2:8 that the prophets of Israel who prophesied by Baal, 'went after things that do not profit' (**ואחרי לא ייעלו הלכו**). In 2:23, YHWH repeats Israel's denial of being guilty of following the 'Baals', but YHWH also states in 2:25 their trend/tendency to persist in following 'strangers'.

Weinfeld (1972:320) lists the expression **הלך אחרי** as an idiom of the Deuteronomic phraseology. It appears in a political context in the Akkadian usage of the term in the El-Amarna letters. It became an idiomatic expression, utilised in the struggle against idolatry. Thompson (1989:167) also views the term against a covenantal background which he bases on the occurrences of the expression in treaties meaning 'to serve as a vassal' is to

follow your master/overlord. However, it seems that both the Akkadian and Hebrew terms also have connotations in the domain of the marital relationship (e.g. Jer 2:2, 25; Hos 2:7,15) (Weinfeld 1972:83 n2).

The usage of the expression in the struggle against idolatry in the book of Jeremiah stands in contrast to the covenantal loyalty demanded by YHWH (as King or husband) from Israel (his servant or bride/wife). The expression 'to go after' is frequently used in the OT in relation to YHWH, i.e. 'to go after YHWH' (הלך אחר יְהוָה) (e.g. Deu 13:5, 1 Ki 14:8; 18:21; 2 Ki 23:3; Hos 11:10).

The expression 'go after' will be analysed and discussed in chapter six in relation to the occurrence of the marriage metaphor in 2:2b-4:2. What is of importance here, is the fact that the basic metaphorical concept **Life is a journey** or **Life is a way**, occurring in almost every language can be identified in the usage of the expression in Hebrew. The concept is applied to the human religious life to experience loyalty to a deity as to follow him. There is no need to explain this expression in terms of vassal treaties as borrowed from the ANE. The users of the language or languages of the ANE treaties were apparently all familiar with the basic concepts from which metaphors are constructed, and equally so the authors of Biblical literature.

According to Lakoff and Johnson's (1980:5) definition of metaphor, namely "*the essence of metaphor is the understanding and experiencing of one kind of thing in terms of another*", religious loyalty of a devotee as expressed in his worship of a deity is experienced as a journey, namely to follow after the deity. In the interpretation of the expression it means that it can be viewed against a covenantal as well as a marital, or even a nomadic background.

Israel paid tribute to and worshipped other deities than YHWH. Their religious activities of loyalty and worship were directed towards the Canaanite Baal and astral deities as well as the foreign gods of foreign powers with which they had no contractual relationship. This however led to their destruction.

5.2.2 Israel burned sacrifices/incense (קטר) to other deities

According to Carroll (1986:105n, 729n) the verb קטר is better translated with ‘burn’ in the sense of ‘burning a sacrifice’ than the ‘burning incense’. He therefore prefers understanding it as ‘to offer sacrifice’. The NRSV renders the expression קטר לאלהים אחרים as ‘made offerings to other gods’, and the NEB translates with ‘burning sacrifices to other gods’. The latter is preferred by Thompson (1989:155) while Holladay (1986:42) opts for ‘sacrificing to other gods’. Holladay argues that “*the traditional translation (RSV, JB, NAB) ‘burn incense’ is too specific.*”

An offering to YHWH is referred to in the book of Jeremiah as: (1) ‘a burnt offering’ (the noun עולה in 6:20; 7:21,22; 14:12; 17:26; 33:18), which the devotee can ‘bring’ (בוא in 17:26) or ‘offer’ (the verb עלה in 33:18). However, the reference to children as ‘burnt offerings’ to Baal in 19:5 also uses the noun עולה; (2) ‘a sacrifice’ (the noun זבח in 6:20; 7:21,22; 17:26; 33:18) which the devotee can ‘bring’ (בוא in 17:26) or ‘make’ (the verb עשה in 33:18); (3) ‘frankincense’ (לבונה in 6:20; 17:26); (4) ‘a grain offering’ (מנחה in 14:12; 17:26; 33:18) which the devotee must ‘burn’ (the Hiphil of the verb קטר in 33:18); and (5) ‘a thank offering’ (תודה in 17:26).

Of importance in these occurrences is the fact that according to Jer 6:20 and 17:26 the burning or an offering of incense (לבונה) to YHWH was a legitimate part of his cult. Ackerman (1992:173,185) reckons that it was certainly part of the Yahwistic cult during the sixth century BC and that incense was probably offered at the high places to YHWH but also to other deities. She prefers the traditional view, namely that the term קטר refers to the burning of incense. The Hiphil form of the verb קטר is usually used for the burning or offering of incense to YHWH (except in Jer 48:35 which uses the Hiphil regarding the offerings of Moab to their gods, and also in 1 Ki 11:8; Hos 2:15; 2 Ch 34:25). The Pi’el form of the verb קטר is generally reserved for illegitimate cultic practices to other gods or incense/offerings burned to YHWH at the condemned high places (במזות) and occurs only

in the historical books and in the prophets (Holladay 1986:42; Ackerman 1992:174). The rituals of burning incense in vessels, or on bricks, or on small incense altars,¹ on the roofs of their houses to the Babylonian deities correspond to the rites practised to the 'host of heaven' referred to in Jer 8:2. The historical books of Kings and Chronicles in several references also associate the burning of incense/offerings with high places. In 2 Ki 12:3,4 (NRSV vv2,3) e.g. it was said of the forty year reign of king Jehoash that he did what was right in the sight of the Lord. *"Nevertheless the high places were not taken away; the people continued to sacrifice (זבח) and make offerings (קטר) on the high places (במות)."*

In the light of the fact that the verb form זבח is not used in the book of Jeremiah to refer to these offerings to other gods, it can be assumed that the offerings were not slaughtered offerings.² It seems that the verb קטר in Hiphil is generally used to refer to offerings which are to be burned, such as grain offerings (Jer 33:18), fat offerings (1 Sa 2:16; Ps 66:15), or incense (6:20), all to YHWH. However, the Pi'el form is mainly used to refer to the burning of offerings, probably including incense among others, to other gods. The present study will therefore use the translation 'burning of sacrifices'.

Israel's illegitimate practices of burning sacrifices as described in the book of Jeremiah were directed towards the following deities:

5.2.2.1 To 'other gods' (קטר לאלהים אחרים)

YHWH accuses Israel of burning sacrifices to 'other gods' in general in 1:16; 44:5 and v8 as well as 11:12 (using מקטרים להם - Pi'el), 19:4 (using ויקטרו־בו - Pi'el) and 44:3 (using the expression ללכת לקטר - Pi'el). In 44:15 the description of the prophet/author's report regarding the attitude of the members from the Israeli refugee group in Egypt (כי־מקטרות נשהם) - Pi'el), implies that he is familiar with their

¹ Several findings of small limestone altars dating from the fifth and sixth century BC at Gezer, Tell Jemmeh, Tell Sharuhem and Lachish have been recorded. See Ackerman 1992:178.

² The combination of the noun and the verb of זבח is found e.g. in Isa 57:7; 65:3; 66:3; Ezk 16:20, 20:28; 34:3; 39:17, 19; Hos 8:13; 13:2.

involvement in burning sacrifices to other gods (see chapter 4 for a discussion regarding the expression ‘other gods’).

5.2.2.2 To Baal

References to Israel’s sacrifices burned to Baal occur in the accusations of YHWH in 11:13,17 and 32:29. In 11:13, a reference to the ‘altars’ to burn sacrifices to Baal is made. In the argumentation of YHWH in 7:9 a list of sins are given including the burning of sacrifices to Baal, to confront Israel with the statement whether they would do these sins and then enter YHWH’s house and still feel safe. Jer 19:5 mentions ‘high places of Baal’ where among other activities, Israel’s children were burned in fire (שרף) as burnt offering (using the singular noun עלה) to Baal (see also 32:35 which uses the verb ‘to pass through fire’ - עבר). The issues of the identity of Baal and child-sacrifice were discussed in more detail in chapter 4.

5.2.2.3 To the whole host of heaven

The accusation of the burning of sacrifices made to ‘the whole host of heaven’ only occurs in 19:13 using the form קטרו (Pi‘el). The activity took place on the roofs of houses, which probably is an indication of night-time worshipping of astral deities. The identity of these astral deities was discussed in more detail in chapter 4.

5.2.2.4 To the Queen of heaven

Several references to the activity of burning sacrifices are made in the narrative of the confrontation between the prophet and the refugee group in Egypt, i.e. in 44:17,18,19,21,23 and 25. In 44:17 and 18 (both use לקטר - Pi‘el) the group’s reply to the prophet implies their admittance of guilt of being involved in such activities. In 44:19 (using מקטרים - Pi‘el) the women voiced their intention to continue with these practices. In 44:21 (using את־הקטר אשר קטרתם, i.e. noun + Pi‘el verb, meaning ‘the sacrifices that you have made/burned’) and v23 (which uses קטרתם - Pi‘el) the prophet addresses the group and explains the consequences of their conduct. Verse 25 (using לקטר) forms

part of YHWH's verdict regarding the group's attitude, delivered by the prophet (see chapter 4 for a more detailed discussion of the worship of the Queen of heaven).

5.2.2.5 The venues used for sacrificing

Several venues for the burning of sacrifices are mentioned. Sacrifices to the Queen of heaven were made 'in the towns of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem' in 44:21. In 19:4, YHWH accuses Israel of burning sacrifices to other gods in 'Topheth' situated in 'the valley of Hinnom'. According to 32:29, sacrifices to Baal as well as to the whole host of heaven according to 19:13, were made 'on the roofs of their houses'.

5.2.2.6 Occurrences in the poetry

There is only one occurrence of this expression in the poetry, namely in 18:15, reading: 'they (Israel) burn offerings to a delusion.' In typical poetic metaphorical language this deed is viewed as the 'most horrible thing' Israel has done (v13,14), and in the process of burning sacrifices to a delusion they have 'forgotten' YHWH, have 'stumbled in their ways', followed 'bypaths', and 'not the highway' (v15). However, the identity of the delusion is not specified, although it seems to refer to idolatrous images.

5.2.2.7 The implications of 'burning a sacrifice to other gods'

The expression קטר לאלהים אחרים (to burn a sacrifice to other gods) finds its precise equivalent in the oracle of Huldah the prophetess in 2 Ki 22:17 and 2 Ch 34:25, as well as in 2 Ch 28:25 regarding the practices of Ahas. Holladay (1986:42) regards this as an indication that Jeremiah in his preaching sought to continue the theme of the prophecy uttered by Huldah, because he had the insight that these words of Moses became reality in his time. The very first occurrence of the expression is found in Jer 1:16, which represents the first mentioning of the reason for the coming disaster from the north. In this announcement Israel's worshipping of other gods described as "*they have made offerings to other gods, and worshiped the works of their own hands*", is viewed by YHWH as 'all their wickedness in forsaking me' and the cause of his decision to punish Judah. This is repeated almost stereotypically, although with variation in the use of worship-related

expressions, in multiple references throughout the book of Jeremiah (see 4.1.2 below for the references).

5.2.2.8 Conclusion

From these occurrences of the expression, only a few deductions can be made of which the first is that some people worshipped other gods such as Baal and/or astral bodies and/or the Queen of heaven. These practices of burning sacrifices took place on the roofs of their houses, but also in the streets of Jerusalem and the towns of Judah and at high places. Ordinary people and their families, as well as the royal house, the priests and the prophets, including their ancestors, participated in these practices (7:17,18; 32:32; 44:17). The occurrences in the book of Jeremiah and elsewhere in the OT, as well as evidence from extra-Biblical and archaeological sources, indicate that the Yahwistic prophet/ author(s) were annoyed by those who devoted themselves to these other gods, as well as those who worshipped other gods as well as YHWH. According to Ackerman (1992:185), many worshippers considered the burning of sacrifices to other gods as a legitimate part of the cult of YHWH, in other words they were not true monotheists in the sense of the norms of the monotheistic prophet/author(s).

Weinfeld (1972:321) and Carroll (1986:105) list the expression as typical Deuteronomistic phraseology used against idolatry. However, the fact that the expression ‘to burn incense to other gods’ is used on its own, but also in combination with other expressions of worship activities, indicates that the description of one or two activities of the cult are utilised to describe the total worship. The expression ‘to burn incense to other gods’ can therefore be viewed as a metonymically constructed concept based on the **Part-whole** schema to designate the worship of a deity or deities. It became part of the conventional vocabulary or the worship-related expressions utilised in the polemic against the other deities.

5.2.3 Israel served (עבד) and worshipped (חווה) other deities

The expression עבד אלהים אחרים (to serve other gods) is the most common description of idolatrous practices in the OT and stands in contrast with עבד יהוה (to serve YHWH).

The expression, and other politically diplomatic terminology of the ANE such as 'go after', 'to turn to', 'to fear', 'to swear' etc. became part of the permanent vocabulary in Israel's religion to express religious loyalty or treason.¹

YHWH accuses Israel in several prose references of 'serving' other deities (עבד אלהים אחרים) and 'worshipping' them (ולהשתחות להם) or also in the combination of 'serving and worshipping' them (לעבדם ולהשתחות להם). According to these references Israel served or/and worshipped:

- (1) The work of their own hands: 1:16 (worshipped)
- (2) Foreign gods in their land: 5:19 (served).
- (3) Other gods: 11:10; 13:10; 16:11; 22:9; 44:3.
- (4) The sun and the moon and all the host of heaven: In 8:2 it is mentioned that some of Israel's kings, officials, priests, prophets and the inhabitants of Jerusalem buried in Topheth, served and worshipped *'the sun and the moon and all the host of heaven.'* The accusation regarding their actions towards these other deities is elaborated on by the use of the expressions, they 'loved' (אהב), 'followed' (הלך) and 'inquired of' (דרש) these astral deities.

5.2.3.1 Other combinations

The combination of 'to serve' (עבד) and 'burning sacrifices' (קטר) to other deities is only found in 1:16 and 44:3. The latter occurs in the confrontation between the prophet and the group of refugees in Egypt regarding their involvement in the cult of the Queen of Heaven.

Israel is also accused in 11:10 of deliberately having 'gone after other gods' (הלכו אחרי אלהים) 'to serve' (לעבדם) them. That happened despite the explicit prohibition persistently proclaimed by prophets in the past, appearing in 35:15, which reads 'do not go after other gods and serve them.' Also in 13:10 and 16:11 it is further

¹ Weinfeld 1972:84. He (pp321/2) renders 'to serve' (עבד) as 'to bow down to'.

alleged that Israel 'have gone after other gods' ...'to serve and worship' (לעבדם ולהשתחות להם) them. Again, a similarly formulated prohibition appears in 25:6, warning them 'do not go after other gods to serve and worship them' (ואל-תלכו אחרי אלהים אחרים לעבדם ולהשתחות להם).

The only occurrence in the poetry, which hints to the act of the worshipping of idols, is found in 2:27. It addresses 'the house of Israel', explained as consisting of their kings, officials, priests and prophets, which indicates that the expression 'house of Israel' can also represent a metaphorically constructed metonymy to refer to the royal house, and in this occurrence specifically to the royal house of the Northern Kingdom. Nevertheless, the house of Israel is accused of being worshippers "*who say to a tree, 'You are my father,' and to a stone, 'You gave me birth.'*" Again, the gods involved are described in poetic language in terms of the material they are made of, with no reference to the names of the deities involved. Over and above mocking with stone and wooden idols, irony and sarcasm come into play in the switch of gender presenting the tree, symbol of the feminine Asherah, as masculine, and the male symbol, namely a stone pillar, as feminine (see Holladay 1986:104). While the subject of idolatry is addressed in accusatory language in the prose, utterances in the poetry tend to be pejorative, mocking and formulated in expressions of irony.

5.2.3.2 Conclusion

According to Weinfeld (1972: 83 n4, 332), the Akkadian equivalent of the verb עבד (to serve) in the El-Amarna letters appears in a political context of state or vassal treaties between the king and his subjects or vassal. In Deuteronomy it occurs regarding service to YHWH in 6:13; 10:12, 20; 11:13; 13:5; 28:47, and also in Jos 22:5, 24:14a; 1 Sam 12:14, 20, 24. Weinfeld (1972:332) comments regarding the verb עבד (to serve) as follows:

"It occurs very often in predeuteronomiac literature. However, there it stands by itself and has predominantly the meaning of cultic worship, whereas in the deuteronomiac literature it is always accompanied by other expressions of devotion, such as אהב 'to love', ירא 'to fear', הלך אחרי ה' 'to follow the Lord', שמע בקול ה' 'to

hearken to Yahweh's voice', etc., or by adverbs such as בכל לב 'wholeheartedly', באמת, בתמים 'sincerely', which point towards the understanding of the verb as loyalty."

Again, these expressions can be regarded as conventional metonymies or worship-related terminology, which are utilised in various combinations with other expressions in the struggle against idolatry.

In sum, from these occurrences, all in the prose sections, it can be deduced that Israel have gone after other (foreign) gods, forsaking YHWH as master or husband, to serve and worship them. Even some of the kings, officials, priests and prophets of Judah participated in worshipping, and in the inquiring of astral bodies. Although YHWH explicitly commanded them through his prophets not to go after other gods to serve and worship them (25:6; 35:15), Israel persisted in these practices and in the process abandoned the covenant with YHWH. Therefore, Israel's punishment will entail exile where they shall 'serve other gods in a foreign land' (16:13).

5.2.4 Israel poured out libations (הסך נסכים)

Israel have been accused by YHWH for being involved in the practice of 'pouring out libations' to: (1) 'other gods' in 7:18; 19:13; 32:29, and to (2) 'the queen of heaven' in 44:17,18,19,25. These occurrences are all found in prose sections, and appear in association with the worshipping practices in the astral cults of 'the queen of heaven' (see 7:18, 44:17,18,19,25), and of 'the whole host of heaven' (19:13), but also to other gods (32:29). These activities all took place on 'the roofs of the houses'. According to 32:29, the libation offerings directed to other gods were accompanied by offerings to Baal. In 19:13 it is stated that the offerings to 'the whole host of heaven' were accompanied by libation offerings to other gods. The practice of making offerings as well as libation offerings to the queen of heaven, are indicated as part of the cult of the queen of heaven in 44:17,18,19 and 25.

The cultic or liturgical act of ‘pouring out libations’ seems to be a common and general religious practice among cults in the ANE, and may also denote an offering to YHWH (Num 28:7). It entails a drink-offering (Keil 1975:161), and may consist of water (1 Sa 7:6), or oil (Gen 28:18), or wine offered with other sacrifices (Num 15:5-10) (NAVV 1998:1719). Num 28:7 mentions a drink-offering consisting of ‘strong drink’ which must be offered together with a burnt offering to YHWH. However, all occurrences of the expression in the book of Jeremiah refer to offerings to other gods. The references to offering of libations on the roofs of houses to other gods (19:13; 32:29), may indicate the worship of astral deities (Holladay 1986:255). The expression is regarded as another Deuteronomistic phrase (Weinfeld 1972:322), or can also be viewed as a worship-related expression representing part of the worship to designate the worship in total, utilised in the struggle against idolatry.

5.2.5 Israel practised child-sacrifice

The statement entailing the ‘offering of children in fire’ (לשרף את-... באש) occurs in the prose of 7:31; 19:5 and 32:35. According to 19:5, this practice can be associated with the worshipping of ‘Baal’. Jer 19:5 states that Israel had ‘gone on building high places of Baal to burn their children in the fire as burnt offerings to Baal.’ However, it is also associated with ‘Molech’, according to 32:35, which reads: ‘Israel built high places of Baal in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to offer up their sons and daughters to Molech’. Molech and Baal were either identical, or the high places of Baal were also utilised for Molech practices. The reference in 7:31 only confirms the location mentioned in 19:5 and 32:35, namely ‘Topheth in the valley of the son of Hinnom’. All references explicitly mention the fact that YHWH ‘did not command’ the offering of children ‘nor did it enter his mind’.

References in the rest of the OT confirm that child sacrifice was practised in the ANE. According to 2 Ki 3:27, the king of Moab, in his battle against Israel and Judah offered his firstborn son as burnt offering on the city wall. However, it was also practised in Israel. In the Yahwistic explanation of the fall of the Northern Kingdom (2 Ki 17:17) it is stated that the invasion by Assyria was among other things due to Israel’s practice of making “their sons pass through fire’. In the list of idolatrous sins of Manasseh of Judah presented in 2

Ki 21:6, he, among other things, ‘made his son pass through fire’. These expressions are viewed by some scholars as stereotypical Deuteronomistic phrases (Weinfeld 1972:322).

Child-sacrifice in the ANE and biblical Israel is a much-debated subject among scholars. The question entails whether Israel actually sacrificed their children or whether they were consecrated to Baal/Molech. One must choose whether the expression ‘pass through fire’ represents a euphemistic formulation of the actual sacrificing procedures, or whether the expression ‘offering children in fire as burnt offering’ indicates an exaggeration of the consecration of children to a god, which is described as ‘making the children pass through fire’. Jer 19:5 mentions that the children were burned in fire (שָׂרַף) as burnt offering (using the singular noun עֹלָה) to Baal, but 32:35 uses the verb ‘to pass through fire’ (עָבַר). Furthermore, the identity of the deities Molech and Baal who are associated with child-sacrifice in the OT references is another debatable issue.

Extra-Biblical evidence, especially from Carthage in Phoenicia, indicates a widespread practice of child-sacrifice during the first millennium BC until the second century BC. Some proponents view ‘Molech’ as a technical term to denote a special offering of a child, and others as a reference to the God-King Adad of the Assyrians. It therefore seems that the practice of child-sacrifice was also part of Israel’s idolatrous practices which was continued during its history until at least before the fall of Jerusalem in 587/6 BC. The reform effort of Josiah was short-lived, or did not have a lasting influence (Thompson 1989:285). The Yahwists however, maintained that YHWH is different and distinctive to the ANE Baal-cults. The issues of the identity of Molech and Baal, and child-sacrifice are discussed in more detail in 4.4.1, 4.4.2 and 4.4.3 below.

5.2.6 Israel have sworn (שָׁבַע) by other gods, by Baal

In the poetry of 5:7, it is stated that Jerusalem’s inhabitants (or royal house) ‘have sworn by those who are no gods.’ Typical of the poetry sections is the fact that no names of gods are mentioned and many poetic references to Israel’s involvement in idolatrous practices allude to the policies of royal houses to seek assistance from foreign powers, or their

engagement in treaties. In the prose of 12:16, it is alleged that the neighbouring invaders taught Israel to swear by Baal.

Opposed to the swearing by other deities, the act to swear to/by YHWH is mentioned in the poetry of 4:2. Israel is accused of swearing falsely in his name in the poetry of 5:2 as well as in the prose of 7:9.

The act of swearing is discussed in 4.3.2.2 regarding the analysis of Jer 5:7 in more detail, therefore it will only receive brief attention here. Weinfeld (1972:83,84) states that the expression originates from the ANE diplomatic vocabulary utilised in the treaties. The act of swearing therefore entails more than a verbal utterance by the name of a king or deity. In the ANE-world as well as in the OT, it constitutes a covenantal commitment of loyalty by the subordinate to a king and his deity/deities, and equally in a religious context to a deity or deities. Israel's swearing to 'no gods' or to Baal denotes a commitment to these gods, and thus disloyalty to YHWH. The expression 'to swear' therefore can also be viewed as a worship-related metonymy designating commitment to a deity or disloyalty in the case of false swearing. The Yahwists condemned Israel's willingness to swear by other deities, because it meant false swearing by the name of YHWH, but also to forsake YHWH (5:7). Loyal commitment to YHWH alone is demanded.

5.2.7 Israel's prophets prophesied (נָבֵא) by Baal

Two references are made in the poetry sections to the fact that prophets 'prophesied by Baal', i.e. in 2:8 and 23:13. However, in both cases it is clear that reference is made to the actions of the prophets of Samaria, the Northern Kingdom. It is alleged that these prophecies led to the downfall of the people. In 2:6 and 8 it is mentioned that nobody asked: Where is the Lord? In other words, they did not seek his guidance as their deity. Instead, they prophesied by Baal, and went after things that do not profit (2:8), and led YHWH's people Israel astray (23:13). This implies that only YHWH can provide the prophet with sound advice and guidance concerning the future. The important role of the prophet in the ANE world, as well as in the OT-world, to provide divine oracles and advice, is once again emphasised (see chapter 3). The conflict between the royal prophets of Jerusalem, i.e. those appointed by the royal house, and the Yahwistic prophets, who

regarded the former as false prophets, comes to surface in these expressions. It is implied that the custom of prophesying by Baal, constituted the trend amongst those prophets in the service of the anti-Yahwistic royal houses or those who supported the latter, since the days of the prophets of the Northern Kingdom, and which evidently caused its downfall.

5.2.8 Israel have inquired (שׁוּרְרָ) the sun, moon, and all the host of heaven

In the prose of Jer 8:2 Israel is accused of having ‘loved’, ‘served’, ‘followed’, and ‘worshipped’ the ‘the sun and the moon and all the host of heaven’, but also ‘which they have inquired of’ (שׁוּרְרָ = to seek, resort to, consult, inquire of. Brown e.a.1968:205). ANE worshippers had expectations regarding their deities’ abilities to provide them with guidance, advice, and information about current and future events and therefore sought the counseling of their deities on a regular basis. This, and other privileges, such as the fertility benefits, forms part of the advantages and benefits of having a deity (Ringgren 1974:268-274). The book of Jeremiah condemned these practices and describes the idols as worthless and unprofitable in this regard. Jer 10:8 comments on these instructions given by hand-made idols stating that it is ‘no better than the wood’ they are made of.

According to the OT, several kings called on prophets ‘to inquire of ‘ the word of YHWH e.g. Jehoshaphat who called on four hundred prophets, but also wanted the prophetic word of Micaiah, (1 Ki 22:5), and Zedekiah, who called on Jeremiah (Jer 21:2 and 37:7). Both instances happened in a situation of war in which the kings wanted the approval of YHWH for their decision and/or information about outcome of the battle. King Ahaziah of Samaria was reproached by the prophet Elijah for his act of inquiring of Baal-zebub (Lord of the flies, but actually Baal-zebul = Lord of the ill), the Philistine god of Ekron, during his illness, instead of approaching YHWH (2 Ki 1:2,3,5,16).

It is clear from the OT references that the prophets played an important role in the inquiring of YHWH. Prophets called upon the nation to seek YHWH, e.g. Amos in 5:4-6, Hosea in 10:12, and Deutero-Isaiah in 55:6. Ezekiel turned down the requests of certain idolatrous or syncretistic Israelite elders (14:7,10; 20:1,3), who approached him in Babylon to inquire of YHWH. In poetic metaphorical language, Jeremiah (10:21) accuses

the leaders (shepherds) of Israel of stupidity for not inquiring of YHWH, which resulted in devastating consequences for the people, namely the lack of prosperity and a scattered flock. According to the Yahwistic belief, the inquiring of other gods, especially the astral deities, leads to the disadvantage of the worshipper (Jer 44:6,22, but see 44:17,18 for a contradicting belief). However, YHWH promises the restoration of their fortunes, if they 'seek him with all their heart' (Jer 29:13,14). In this regard the utterance in Deu 4:29 and 30 is frequently echoed in terms of important keywords in the message of the book of Jeremiah, and supports the new theories regarding the emergence of monotheism, which claims that the minority Yahwistic group seized the exile as an opportunity to promote monotheism among other Israelites. It reads: *"From there (exile) you will seek (בִּקֶּשׁ) the LORD your God, and will find him if you search (דַּרְשׁ) after him with all your heart and soul. In your distress...you will return (שׁוּב) to the LORD your God and heed him."*

5.3 DESCRIPTIONS OF ISRAEL'S IDOLATROUS SINS

5.3.1 Conventional terms

The nature of Israel's idolatrous sins are described as: (1) 'wickedness' (רָעָה e.g. in the prose of 1:16, 44:3 and 5, but also in the poetry of 3:2), and 'act wickedly' (6:28); (2) 'evil way' (מִדְּרֹכֵי הָרָעָה in 35:15), 'doing evil things' (7:30; 32:30), and 'evil doings' (44:22); (3) they have 'forsaken YHWH' (עָזַב frequently in prose e.g. 1:16; 5:19; 16:11; 19:4, but also poetry e.g. 2:13,17,19; 5:7); (4) 'they have turned back (שׁוּב) to the iniquities of their ancestors of old' (11:10); (5) 'broken (פָּרַר) or abandoned (עָזַב) the covenant of YHWH' (11:10; 22:9); (6) in the process they have 'provoked YHWH to anger' (כָּעַס e.g. in 7:18; 11:17; 25:6,7; 32:29,30,32; 44:3,8); and (7) have forgotten (שָׁכַח) YHWH (e.g. in 2:32; 3:21; 13:25; 18:15).

5.3.2 Marital and sexually related terminology

The idolatrous sins of Israel are depicted in a rich variety of metaphorical expressions in the poetry of the book of Jeremiah, namely (1) Israel 'exchanged' gods in business style in

2:11; (2) In terms of the marriage metaphor and sexual related terminology, the wife is accused of ‘playing the whore’, ‘whoring’, (e.g. 2:20; 3:1,2 but also in the prose of 3:6,8,9), with lovers and strangers. The wife Israel is accused of having been ‘lain with’ (3:2), ‘prostituting’ (13:27), ‘adultery’ (in the prose of 3:8 and 3:9, but also in the poetry in 5:7, 9:2, 23:10 and 14, although the use in poetry might also refer to physical adultery or other sins), and ‘scattering favours’ among strangers (3:13). She is described as an animal on heat/in season (2:23b and v24), who participated in ‘orgies on the mountains’ (3:23). The majority of these expressions occur in the poetry of Jer 2:2-6:30 and the in-between prose section 3:6-11. The occurrences in prose clearly refer to idolatry, but in the poetic usage of these terms it is more difficult to determine whether it refers to idolatry, or the sins of false prophets (see e.g. 23:10,14), or political allies (Carroll 1986:142, in his comment on 3:1ff).

5.3.3 Many gods

The accusation that Israel had as ‘many gods as they have towns’ occurs in the poetry (2:28) as well as in the prose (11:13). The occurrence in 11:13 adds ‘and as many as the streets of Jerusalem are the altars....to make offerings to Baal’, a phrase which is added to the LXX version of the MT version of 2:28 (Carroll 1986:135, and Holladay 1986:54). In 3:1 (poetry) it is alleged that Israel had ‘many lovers’. These allegations, although it occur only in a few references, strengthens the impression that the majority of Israel were mainly involved in polytheistic religious practices, throughout its history until at least during or after the exile. The Yahwists condemned these practices in conventional language, but probably following Hosea, also in strong emotional and sometimes obscene metaphorical language drawn from human and marital sexual relations.

5.3.4 Defiled (טמא)

According to the poetic expression in the rhetorical question in 2:23, Israel became ‘defiled’ (טמא = to become ceremonially unclean – defiled. Brown e.a. 1968:379), due to their involvement in idolatry. The verb טמא is used elsewhere in the book of Jeremiah to denote ‘defiling’ by means of idolatry in the following cases: (1) the land (in the poetry of

2:7); (2) of houses (in prose, 19:13); (3) places e.g. Tophet (19:13), and the house of YHWH (in the prose of 7:30 = 32:34).

The verb **טמא** is used in various contexts in the OT to denote how one can defile oneself, the nation, and the land among others (see Brown e.a.1968:379). To mention a few: One can *defile oneself* by means of sexual misconduct (e.g. Lev 18:20-30), with any swarming creature (e.g. Lev 11:43,44), by going near a dead person (e.g. Ezk 44:25) and idolatrous practices (e.g. Ezk 20:7,18,30; 22:3 and 4); *The nation* also defiles itself by idolatrous practices, described as whoring (e.g. Ezk 23:7,13) in the metaphorical account of the conduct of the two sisters presented in Ezk 23 (also Hos 5:3;6:10); Defiling of *the land*, occurs by means of sexual misconduct (e.g. Lev 18:28), by bloodshed (Nu 35:34), by allowing the dead body of an executed murderer to hang on the tree overnight (e.g. Deu 21:23), and by means of idolatry (e.g. Ezk 36:17 and 18). In sum, **טמא** belongs to the religious cultic sphere denoting ceremonial uncleanness caused by transgressing religious purity laws of which idolatry and sexual impurities are among others.

The Yahwistic group experienced the involvement of Israel in idolatrous practices against the background of sexual misconduct and therefore as culturally unacceptable. Jer 2:7 states that Israel 'defiled (the verb **טמא**) YHWH's land and made his heritage an abomination' (the noun **תועבה**), which apparently hints to acts of the nation's infidelity to YHWH by their involvement with other parties (idols and/or political allies). This occurrence and the one in 2:23 referring to the defiling of Israel by Baal form part of the extended marriage metaphor in 2:2b-4:2. In this context several sexually related terms are used to accuse Israel of idolatrous practices e.g. 'whoring' (2:20; 3:1,2) and having an extra-marital affair with lovers and strangers. Jer 2:22 refer to 'the stain of your guilt', which can be viewed as a stain of blood shed by a violent person (Holladay 1986:99) as referred to in 2:34, or a stain of menstrual blood on a woman's clothes (Zipor 1995:89 who views the *hapax legomenon* **כתם** as a metonym for menstrual blood). The stain, whatever the nature or cause may be, forms the evidence for the accusation that Israel became defiled, and that she followed the Baalim.

The status of the wife Israel as a defiled woman, can also be viewed against the background of the marital law presented in Deu 24:4 regarding the divorced wife who married a second husband but who cannot return to the first. Deu 24:1-4 in fact forms the background for the hypothetical divorce case with which Israel is confronted in 3:1. It is alleged that in case a divorce between YHWH and Israel should become a reality and Israel (i.e. the Northern Kingdom) then wants to return to YHWH, it will be impossible, because 'the land will be greatly polluted' by such an act (using double verb forms of חנף). The above-mentioned actions however are not only conceived as cultic impurities, but as conduct not acceptable for the Holy God and his holy people of Israel, who are committed to a special relationship with each other (see Weinfeld 1972:226).

5.3.5 Abominations (תועבה and שקיץ)

The noun תועבה (abomination), is also a strong cultic term used in a ritual and ethical sense (Brown e.a. 1968:1072/3). According to Jer 2:7 (in poetry) Israel made the heritage of YHWH, the land, an abomination. The book of Jeremiah also uses the noun in the prose sections to describe the sins of Israel regarding false prophecies (6:15 = 8:12), unjust gain and unwise handling of YHWH's law (8:8,9), but mainly to describe their idolatrous practices (7:10; 44:4 and 22), idols (16:18), and child sacrifice (32:35). The report regarding Manasseh's abominable practices (2 Ki 21:2-9), who in fact is blamed for the fall of Jerusalem (Jer 15:4; 2 Ki 21:11-16.¹), presents almost an exact summary of all the accusations made in the book of Jeremiah against Israel regarding their idolatrous practices.

The almost synonymous term שקיץ (detested thing – translated by NRSV with abomination) is used in the prose sections in 7:30 and 32:34, referring to the 'abominations' of the people set up in the house of YHWH, and 16:18, also in a clear idolatrous context.

¹ See Halpern 1998:473-514 on this.

Occurrences in the poetry include firstly the appeal to Israel to remove their **שְׁקוּצִים** (abominations) recorded in the poetry of 4:1. However, no direct indication of the nature of the detested things (NRSV = abominations) is given. The only possible clue is given in 3:24 in prose, which follows directly after the mentioning of idolatrous practices in the poetry of 3:23. Verse 24 alludes in wordplay to the ‘shameful thing’, Baal, which is an indication that no strict distinction between poetry and prose can be maintained. In many instances, the poetry serves as a ‘reservoir’ for the prose to draw from, but the prose in many instances provides explanations for terms used in the poetry (see McKane 1986:xlii on the ‘reservoir’ theory). Holladay (1986:128) suggests that the term “*serves as a kind of cover-word for pagan deities, a word carrying a high level of repugnance.*” In the light of the fact that much of 2:2b-4:2 is directed towards the Northern Kingdom, and that Jeremiah borrowed the marriage metaphor from Hosea to address the Northern Israelis in diaspora, the origin of this use of the term can be viewed as from Hos 9:10. In this verse, the consecration of Israel to Baal-peor is addressed, stating that they became as detestable (**שְׁקוּצִים**) as their beloved thing of shame (Jer 3:24 also refers to the shameful thing, **בַּשֵּׁת**). The poetry of 13:27 describes the ‘detested things’ in terms of ‘adulteries’, ‘neighings’, ‘prostitutions’, performed ‘on the hills of the countryside’, thus, a clear idolatrous context, which draws its vocabulary from the human sexual domain.

It seems that the prose sections tend to use both terms predominantly in idolatrous contexts, but in the poetry it is not always clear what causes it. In fact, there is no doubt in the prose sections about what it entails, as expressed in 32:34 and 35 where the verb ‘defile’, and the nouns, ‘abominations’ and ‘detested things’ are used in combination against Jerusalem (= inhabitants), declaring: “*They set up their abominations (**שְׁקוּצִים**) in the house that bears my name, and defiled (**טִמְאוּ**) it. They built the high places of Baal in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to offer up their sons and daughters to Molech, though I did not command them, nor did it enter my mind that they should do this abomination (**תועבה**), causing Judah to sin.*”

Furthermore, both terms, ‘abominations’ and ‘detestable things’, are used together with the verb ‘polluted’ in the prose of 16:18, perhaps giving a partial explanation of the poetic expression used in 2:7, by saying: *“And I will doubly repay their iniquity and their sin, because they have polluted (חלל) my land with the carcasses of their detestable idols (שקוצים), and have filled my inheritance with their abominations (תועבות).”*

5.3.6 Conclusion

Although some of the terms used to describe Israel’s sins are listed as typical Deuteronomic phrases (see Weinfeld 1972:323 and 341ff) and can be considered as conventional theological vocabulary of the OT, the book of Jeremiah employs a rich variety of metaphorical expressions to condemn Israel’s transgressions. Concepts drawn from the human marital and sexual domain dominate the early preaching of Jeremiah (2:2-4:2). This can be viewed as borrowed from Hosea in order to create a well known and fulfilled prophecy as starting point for negotiations with the members of the Northern Kingdom to unite with Judah. In addition, it serves as an example to Judah of a history of idolatrous relationships and sins which failed and was punished by YHWH, and towards which they are heading.

The Yahwist prophet condemns Israel’s conduct as well as that of Judah in strong and sometimes obscene and robust metaphorical terms in support of Josiah’s policy of political and religious independence. The popular religion of Israel’s history and the contemporary generation contain polytheistic and iconic elements which is unacceptable for the aniconic monotheistic Yahwists, and is therefore rejected in harsh formulations. Return to YHWH and his way, his covenant, the only living god and glory of Israel, is the only answer to experience the blessings of YHWH (4:2) and a restored Israel (3:15-18).

Furthermore, concepts from the cultic domain with strong overtones of unacceptable sexual misconducts are utilised to describe the metaphorical pollution of the holy land, the nation and holy places, to emphasise the foreignness of these transgressions to pure Yahwism as well as their destructive nature. The Yahwistic group experienced the guidance and blessings of YHWH throughout the history of the Exodus and their settlement in Israel. However, many influences from the local Canaanite Baalism and

foreign cults from invaders and neighbouring countries, as well as the cults of migratory groups, dominated the greatest part of Israel's history, except for a few reform efforts. Josiah's reform effort created a new opportunity, but did not have a lasting influence. The exile was the sign for the Yahwists that the prophecies of Hosea, Isaiah and Jeremiah materialised, and therefore another opportunity arose to promote Yahwism and condemn idolatry in the face of the Babylonian idolatrous religion. The prophecies of Jeremiah served as an important grounding for their claims. Israel's idolatrous sins caused the destruction of Jerusalem, the temple, the land and nation as well as the exile.

5.4 IDOLATROUS OBJECTS

5.4.1 Idol-images

One of the important themes in the struggle against the other gods entails the aniconic nature of Yahwistic monotheism versus the hand-made idols of the other deities. Several references are made in a variety of formulations to accuse Israel of being involved in the worship of hand-made idols, especially in the prose. The matter is also addressed in the poetic sections, but in many instances, the focus is on the gods of the nations, and referring to foreign invaders, e.g. the Egyptians, Assyrians and Babylonians, all with whom Israel formed alliances or treaties. Mocking, and sarcastic remarks, in which irony plays a major role, are aimed at the idols, the manufacturing material, the craftsman's role, and the worshippers, to humiliate and denigrate these 'other gods'. The following expressions and issues pertaining to the hand-made nature of the 'other gods' or rather their images, are at stake:

5.4.1.1 They are 'gods Israel made for themselves' (אלהיך אשר עשית לך)

The accusation of YHWH that Israel fabricated gods for themselves, occurs in the poetry of 2:28. In 16:20, also in poetry, a similar line of thought is expressed in the question of the author/prophet that rings: "*Can mortals make for themselves gods? Such are no gods!*" (see the discussion of 'no gods' in ch 4). These expressions invoke the metaphorical concept **Other deities are fabricated objects**. It reflects the views of YHWH as well as the prophet/author(s), namely: *Israel's other deities are objects fabricated by themselves*. According to the contexts of these occurrences, it is clear that

reference is made to the idol-images of the other deities of foreign invading powers (or the nations in general). These images, although numerous present in Israel, are non-gods, worthless deceptions, and incapable of saving Israel in their time of trouble.

5.4.1.2 The work/s (מעשה) of Israel's hands (ידיים)

A similar concept to the idea that Israel fabricated the other deities is expressed in the phrase ‘the work/s of their/your (Israel's) hands’ used in the prose sections. It also hints to the worthlessness of the gods. This expression occurs in the following formulations:

- (1) 1:16 in the plural as ‘*the works of* (the 3rd person plural) *their hands*’ (למעשי ידיהם), which were worshipped by Israel and is mentioned as cause of the pending disaster coming from the north;
- (2) in 25:6,7 in the singular as ‘*the work of* (the 2nd person plural) *your hands*’ (במעשה ידיכם), which provoked YHWH to anger, which refers to Israel's worship-activities to other gods;
- (3) in 32:30 in the singular as ‘*the work of* (the 3rd person plural) *their hands*’ (במעשה ידיהם), which provoked YHWH to anger, but probably refers to the offerings and libation-offerings made to other gods and Baal;
- (4) and in 44:8 in the plural as ‘*the works of* (the 2nd person plural) *your hands*’ (במעשי ידיכם), which provoked YHWH to anger, but refers to the offerings made to other gods.

Many MSS use the singular מעשה (“work”) in 1:16 as the standard expression for the productions of the hand (Keil 1975:46), in stead of the MT's plural מעשי. However, the singular is also found in the book of Jeremiah (cf. 25:6, 7, 14; 32:30), as well as a further appearance of the plural in 44:8. The appearances in the two recordings of Huldah's oracle, widely accepted as the source of the book of Jeremiah's statement in 1:16, namely

in 2 Ki 22:17 and 2 Ch 34:25, differ in their use of noun-forms. The latter uses the plural form as in Jer 1:16 and the former, generally accepted as Deuteronomistic, the singular. Holladay (1986:22) opts for a singular reading in 1:16 seeing that earlier occurrences in Isa 2:8; Hos 14:4; Mic 5:12 and others favour the singular. A further important fact is that the LXX translates the noun in both 2 Ki 22:17 (MT singular) and 2 Ch 34:25 (MT plural) as well as Jer 1:16 (MT plural); 25:6 (MT singular) and 51:8 (MT 44:8 plural) with the plural ἔργους. The references in Jer 25:7,14 and 32:2 are omitted in the LXX version, but these references are not applicable to fabricated images, because they refer to Israel's worship activities to other gods as 'the work of their hands'.

The variations in the usage in the MT and the LXX indicate that both readings are acceptable and in any event do not affect the meaning of the expression. Furthermore, note must be taken that the expression 'work/s of your/their hands' is ambiguous and the context determines whether reference is made to the idol image as 'work/s of Israel's hands', or to the worship activities to other gods (Thompson 1989:512). Therefore, the reference in 1:16 represents the only expression that qualifies for the purpose of this discussion regarding the images as human-made. Both concepts of the expression 'work/s of their hands' are used in 1:16, namely the worship-activities as well as the fabricated gods. However, only the latter is specified as 'works of their own hands'. The former rather represents an idiomatic expression meaning a person's deeds, and particularly worshipping deeds in the occurrences mentioned above.

The use of the expression in 1:16 evokes the metaphorical concept **Other deities are human made** and reflects the Yahwistic view, namely *Israel's other deities are the works of their hands (or their hand-made gods)*. Although the expression refers to 'other gods' as hand-made products, it is however clear from the context that the reference is aimed at the idol-images.

Several references to the hand-made nature of the other deities are found in Deuteronomy (e.g. 4:28; 27:15; 28:64; 31:29), in the historical books (e.g. 2 Ki 19:18 = Isa 37:19), and the other prophets (e.g. Isa 2:8; Hos 14:4/NRSV v3; Mic 5:12/NRSV v13). Weinfeld (1972: 324) lists these expressions occurring in the prose of the book of

Jeremiah as Deuteronomistic phrases utilised in the polemic against idolatry. He argues (p367) that the polemic against idolatry started with Hosea (4:12; 8:6; 13:2; 14:4/NRSV v3), Micah (5:12/NRSVv 13), and Isaiah (2:8), and was developed further by the Deuteronomistic scribes in Deuteronomistic works and the book of Jeremiah, but reached a climax in Deutero-Isaiah (40:19-20; 41:6-7, 24; 44:9-20; 46:6.7).

5.4.1.3 Idolatrous images

Different Hebrew words are used for the NRSV's version of 'idol/image.' Each will be discussed separately.

5.4.1.3.1 Idol (פסל)

In 10:14 = 51:17, both in poetry sections, the term מפסל (ם + פסל = idol) occurs together with נסכו (from נסכ = molten image) in a context entailing an exaltation by the prophet/author(s) in favour of YHWH above the idols. This combination is also found in the poetry of 8:19, which uses the noun form בפסליהם (from פסיל + ב). Other occurrences are found in YHWH's judgment on Babylon's idol images in the poetry of 50:38; 51:47 and 52 (using פסלים = images; על-פסילי = images; and על-פסיליה = idols, respectively. Translations as rendered by the NRSV). The nouns פסל and פסיל are derived from the verb פסל (to hew, to hew into shape) and designates therefore something hewn or carved (Brown e.a.1968:820; Holladay 1986:293). The reference in the poetry of 10:14 mocks and insults the goldsmiths whose idols will put them to shame. The mockery is taken further by describing these 'images' (נסך) as 'false' (שקר), and 'without breath' (רוח). In the prose of 8:19b it is stated that YHWH was provoked to anger by Israel's images, further described as foreign (נכר) vanities (הבל). The references in the oracle of doom against Babylon mention that Babylon is a land of images, something the Babylonians delight in (50:38), and that YHWH will punish the images of the Babylonians (51:47, 52). The term is frequently used by Deutero-Isaiah, mainly mocking the idols of Babylon (i.e. 40:19,20; 42:17; 44:9,10,15,17; 45:20; 48:5),

but also in Deuteronomy in reference to the prohibitions against involvement in the making of idols (i.e. 4:16,23,25; 5:8; 27:15).

5.4.1.3.2 Idol (גלול)

In the judgment of YHWH on Babylon, the term גלוליה (from גלול = image, idol, logs, shapeless things, dungy things. Brown e.a. 1968:165), a popular term in Ezekiel with 37 occurrences,¹ is used in the poetry of 50:2 in combination with עצב (idol). It is stated that Babylon's גלולים will be put to shame, and his עצבים will be dismayed. Both terms contain an element of contempt (Holladay 1989:415).

5.4.1.3.3 Idol or image (עצב)

The term עצביה (from עצב = idol, always in plural עצבים. Brown e.a. 1968:781) occurs in the poetry 50:2 in parallel with גלולים, regarding the idols of Babylon. The prophet Hosea uses this term frequently in his polemic against idolatry in the Northern Kingdom, i.e. in 4:17; 8:4; 13:2; 14:9 (NRSV v8). In Hos 8:4 and 13:2 reference is made to the fact that the עצבים are fabricated objects. Isa 10:11 also uses the term in YHWH question: *“shall I not do to Jerusalem and her idols (אליל)² what I have done to Samaria and her images (עצבים)?”* Deutero-Isaiah (46:1) sympathises with the animals that must carry the idols, but mocks the heavy burden of Babylonian idols.

5.4.1.3.4 Molten image (נסך)

In the poetry of 10:14 (= 51:17) the term נסך (= molten image, the noun form derived from the verb נסך = to pour or cast. Brown e.a. 1968:650,651) is used together with ‘idol’ (פסל), to mock the goldsmiths and their fabricated images. It also occurs in the prose of 8:19 in combination with ‘idol’ (פסל), stating that Israel provoked YHWH to anger with

¹ AV83 translates with ‘drekcode’.

² The term אליל = idol, is frequently used by Isaiah, i.e. in 2:8,18,20; 10:10,11; 19:1,3; 37:7.

these images. Isa 48:5 e.g. uses three terms in parallel to state: ‘My idol (עצב) did them, my carved image (פסל) and my cast image (נסך) commanded them.’

5.4.1.3.5 Summary

The great variety of terms used to describe the idol images probably indicate that the polemic against idolatry versus the emphasis on and promotion of an aniconic religion, forms a major and important theme in the OT, and particularly in the book of Jeremiah. The terms however also give clues regarding the nature of the idols and the fabrication methods used, e.g. נסך = molten image, and פסל = hewn or carved, as well as reflecting elements of contempt e.g. גלולים and עצבים. Therefore, the terms cannot be regarded as completely synonymous. The different combinations used in the OT, especially in the prophetic utterances, suggest different types of images such as asherah-trees or wooden pillars, phallic stone pillars, carved wooden images covered with silver and gold, and cast images of metal or clay pillar figurines.

In the battle against the images of the gods, nothing slips the eye or mind and every term and expression available is used to mock, humiliate and condemn the hand-made nature of these idols. This is especially true of the poetic utterances of the prophets. The prose sections tend to contain stereotypical expressions focusing on YHWH’s condemnation of and aversion to the idols and the worship-practices compared to YHWH’s laws and covenant. The poet expresses an insight that the idols are ‘nothings’, worthless and impotent because they are human-made, fabricated from stone and tree, silver and gold, and therefore lifeless, non-gods.

5.4.1.4 Tree (עץ) and stone (אבן)

In 2:27, the house of Israel (the kings, officials, priests and prophets, probably of the Northern Kingdom) are accused by YHWH of being people ‘*who say to a tree, “You are my father.”*’ In addition, the above accusation in 2:27 is complemented by ‘*who say ... to a stone, “You gave birth to me.”*’ The combination is also found in the prose of 3:9, in which YHWH accuses Judah of committing adultery with stone and tree. Again, the unity

in the use of terminology and expressions in the poetry and prose sections, especially in the so-called compiled unit of 2:2-4:2, is obvious.

Deuteronomy uses the association of wood and stone regarding 'other gods' to refer to the material of which they are fabricated, i.e. in 4:28; 28:36,64; 29:16. In all these occurrences, reference is made to the 'other gods' of the nations, e.g. Egypt and the nations Israel passed through during the Exodus (29:16), and the nations which Israel will serve in exile (4:28; 28:36,64). The combination 'other gods' and 'wood and stone' as used in Deuteronomy clearly refers to the images of the other gods and the material they are made of. The same applies to the gods of the nations which Assyrian forces destroyed in fire, described by Hezekiah in his prayer (2 Ki 19:18 = Isa 37:19) as 'though they were no gods but the work of human hands - wood and stone -...' Likewise, Ezekiel (20:32) expresses the wish that the custom of the nations to worship wood and stone will never again materialise in Israel. However, Hosea 4:12 refers to the idol consulted by the Northern Kingdom as 'a piece of wood'. Weinfeld (1972:367) suggests that this expression in Hosea is the origin of the Jeremianic reference in 2:27. Above-mentioned occurrences appear to be metonymic constructions based on the concept **Material for an entity** (see chapter 2, pt. 2.8.2.3 regarding metonymy) in which 'wood and stone' represents the idol or the deity.

However, the expression in 2:27 has more associations attached to it than the reference to the material of which the idols are fabricated. A personal relationship between the worshipper and the 'tree and stone' is expressed. Furthermore, it entailed turning their backs to YHWH, but in time of trouble the 'tree and wood' idols were of no help and could not save them, therefore they had to turn back to YHWH for assistance. The expression therefore reflects the typical expectations of the ANE worshippers to receive help in their times of trouble from their deity. Furthermore, it alludes to a particular cult frequently described in the OT. The passage Deu 16:21-22, contains a prohibition/warning against the planting of a tree as a sacred pole and the setting up of stone pillar beside the altar made for YHWH. Josiah destroyed the high places, broke the pillars in pieces and cut down the sacred poles (2 Ki 23:14), which indicates that the cult was a popular practice during his times.

Stone pillars and wooden poles (asherahs) were symbols of the fertility cult, denoting birth and parenthood (Craigie 1991:39). Jeremiah not only makes a mocking reference to these practices, but changes the masculine to feminine calling the female symbol father and the male symbol mother, and thus creates a strong ironic satire (Thompson 1989:180). The feminine symbols, asherahs, were made from wooden trunks, but probably were also living trees pruned into a particular cultic form, where trees were available or specially planted for this purpose at the high places (Taylor 1995:51). This also explains the frequent occurrences of the expression 'under every green tree' in the book of Jeremiah and the rest of the OT when referring to idolatrous practices at high places. A tree, especially a great tree received the respect of the ANE civilian and was regarded as sacred (Taylor 1995:40ff). The stylised living tree was the symbol of fertility and life in the ANE, and was a fitting symbol for the fertility and protection goddesses Asherah and Astarte, as depicted in iconographic findings (see Keel 1998:331ff, and the discussion in chapter 4 regarding Asherah).

5.4.1.5 Deity or idol

Utterances against other deities in the book of Jeremiah almost every time boils down to an attack on the images, except in the cases of astral deities, or when Baal or Molech is named. The question arises whether the prophets misunderstood the ANE concept of the relation between the deity and his image. Surely, the prophets must have been aware of the fact that the image represents the deity, but is not the deity in itself. In the prophetic polemic against idolatry, the images are labelled as non-gods, nothings, without breath, worthless, deceptions and unprofitable things. The prophets do not show much respect for the Mesopotamian worship of graven images (Jacobsen 1987:15). To the contrary, sarcastic mocking of the idols occurs frequently in Biblical prophetic literature especially in the book of Jeremiah (10:1-16) and Deutero-Isaiah (40:19,20; 41:7; 44:9-20; 46:5-7).

Jer 10:1-16, which plays an important role in the understanding of the references to idols in the book of Jeremiah, was discussed in detail in chapter 4. The hymn of praise to YHWH, denigrates the idols of the nations to human-made, lifeless, impotent, nothings (vv3-5, 8-9 and 14-15). However, more is at stake in these references. Rudman (1998:64)

states that vv12-16, echoes terminology of the account of the creation and the fall in the book of Genesis. He concludes that the Babylonian customs of the making of idols, ascribed knowledge and skills of the creation of life to the craftsman and the deity of the image. Instructions and procedures for the making of an idol were allegedly prescribed by the gods themselves, as recorded in the ninth/eighth century BC Babylonian Erra epic (also in Egyptian sources). The Babylonian custom of idol making assumed that the deity as well as the fabricator of the idol possessed the knowledge and skills to create life, and thus were co-creators (Rudman 1998:73). This aspect is refuted by the prophets in passages mocking the craftsmen involved in the manufacturing of idols (e.g. Jer 10:12-16). The assertion that idol makers possess creative knowledge to fabricate a 'living' image as a representation of the dwelling of the spirit of the deity is denied. The comparison in 10:12-16 is not between YHWH and the idols, but rather between YHWH the creator of all, and the Babylonian idol maker who is granted divine status as a creator of idols (Rudman 1999:114,115).

Furthermore, in the Babylonian instructions and procedures for the making of an idol, a special ritual called a 'mouth washing' ceremony, was prescribed to bring the idol to life (Rudman 1998:69; Jacobsen 1987:23ff). This ritual entailed the nullification of the craftsman's share in the fabrication of the idol, and the birth of the idol in heaven as son of the deity, initiated by the deity himself (Jacobsen 1987:28). In his analysis of several Babylonian inscriptions, Jacobsen (1987:16-18) concludes that the Babylonians on the one hand regarded the cult statue of the deity as being the deity itself, but on the other as not being the deity, due to the fact that the multiple statues of the deity existed. "[T]he god *is* and at the same time *is not* the cult statue" (p18).

In their polemic against the images of the deities, the prophets totally ignored the ritual and its assumed creative power, and viewed the image for exactly what it was, namely a human-made image from a block of wood, decorated with silver and gold (Jacobsen 1987:28). The prophets refuted the assertions of the Babylonian inscriptions, which granted creative powers to the deity and the craftsman, and viewed the image as the product of lifeless material, reworked by a human craftsman. A mortal being cannot create a living deity, and therefore the images are regarded as fakes, frauds, worthless,

unprofitable, and lifeless non-gods. The Yahwists claimed that YHWH has a monopoly on the knowledge and skills to create life (vv10,12-13,16). He alone is the one and only Creator of living things (Rudman 1998:73). In this way, the apparent weakness of the idolatrous practices of the Babylonians, namely their human-made lifeless idols, was identified and mocked by the prophets. The Babylonian cult of Marduk constituted a threat to the Yahwistic aniconic cult which represented a cult without any visible, concrete representations of their God. In the ‘Sitz im Leben’ of the Babylonian exile, the Yahwists pointed to YHWH, the only true and living God, the Creator of all in heaven and on earth, and ridiculed the apparently mighty Babylonian statues of Marduk and his pantheon.

5.4.2 Altar (מזבח)

The term for the religious object **מזבח** (altar) appears in the idolatrous contexts of the prose in 11:13 and 17:1 and 2. The accusation of YHWH against Israel in 11:13 is directed towards their many gods and altars, in which case ‘altars’ are specified as ‘*altars to make offerings to Baal.*’ In 17:1 and 2, containing a description of Israel’s sin and punishment by YHWH, mention is made of the sin of Judah, which is engraved on ‘*the horns of their altars.*’ The horns of the altar “*were especially for the application of the blood of the sin-offering in the ritual*” (Brown e.a. 1968:259). In addition, mention is made of the fact that Judah’s children have memories of Judah’s altars, together with ‘*their sacred poles, besides every green tree, and on the high hills, on the mountains and the open country.*’

5.4.3 Sacred pole (אשרה)

In the prose of 17:2 the term **אשרה**, denoting ‘a sacred wooden pole’, usually set up near the altar (see 17:2), appears in an idolatrous context. In this context, YHWH states that Judah’s children will only have memories of Judah’s altars and ‘*their sacred poles, beside every green tree, and on the high hills.*’

The asherah, as used in the OT, represented the symbol or image of the fertility goddess Asherah. It can be interpreted as a carved wooden log or a stylised living tree (Taylor 1995:51). The asherah was usually erected near the altar at a high place and seems to have

been part of a popular Asherah-cult throughout the history of the Northern Kingdom and Judah, even in Jerusalem and also during the post-Josianic reform era (Ackerman 1992:61). The report on the reform efforts of Josiah mentions vessels made for Asherah which were removed from the temple and burned. This is an indication that libation offerings to Asherah the goddess, at the altar with her symbol next to it, were made, probably also in the Temple of Jerusalem. (See the discussion of Asherah in chapter 4, as well as ‘under every green tree, on a hill’, and ‘high places’ below)

5.4.4 Cakes (כֹּנִים)

In 7:18 and 44:19, both in prose sections, the baking of sacrificial cakes, *‘for the queen of heaven’* (7:18), *‘marked with her image’* (44:19), is mentioned as a religious activity and an important element in the worshipping of *‘the queen of heaven.’* This aspect was discussed in chapter 4 in the investigation into the identity of the queen of heaven. It is alleged that these cakes were either star-shaped or moulded in the image of the naked goddess. The identity of the queen of heaven, however, remains unresolved, but several mergers were proposed by scholars thus far. The names of the Canaanite Asherah and the Babylonian Ishtar seem to be the most prominent in these proposals. Both are fertility goddesses with astral associations.

5.5 IDOLATROUS VENUES

Several idolatrous venues or sanctuaries, where worshipping of and offerings to the other deities involved in Israel’s religious practices took place, are mentioned in the Book of Jeremiah. The following indications of such locations are found:

5.5.1 Under a green tree, on a high hill

The expression: ‘under every green tree’ (וּתַחַת כָּל-עֵץ רֵעֵן) ‘and on every high hill’ (עַל-כָּל-גִּבְעָה גְבוּהָ), to denote ‘a tree (עֵץ) on a hill (גִּבְעָה)’ as an idolatrous venue or object, appears in poetry in 2:20 and 3:13 (reads only ‘under every green tree’), as well as in prose in 3:6 and 17:2 (adds ‘on the mountains in the open country’). Israel’s idolatrous activities at these venues are usually described as ‘whoring’ (see 2:20; 3:6 and 13).

In some cases only the term 'hills' features in the reference to the venue, e.g. in the poetry of 3:23 and 13:27. The reference in 3:23 appears to be in the context of Israel's admission of guilt and commitment to YHWH, presented by the prophet/author(s). In 13:27, YHWH accuses Israel of 'shameless prostitutions on the hills of the countryside.'

Weinfeld (1972:322) lists the expression 'on every mountain/hill and under every tree' as a stereotypical Deuteronomistic phrase used in the struggle against idolatry. The phrase occurs frequently in the OT and the different uses provide details of the venues and the cultic activities. These sanctuaries were located on mountain heights and hills (Deu 12:2; 1 Ki 14:23; 2 Ki 16:4; 17:10; Ezk 6:13; 20:28; Hos 4:13), but were also built at all the towns and watchtowers (2 Ki 17:9), and under every green/leafy tree (Deu 12:2; 1 Ki 14:23; 2 Ki 16:4; 17:10; Isa 57:5; Ezk 6:13; 20:28) of which the oak (Isa 57:5; Hos 4:13), poplar and terebinth (Hos 4:13) were the most popular. The sanctuaries were called high places (1 Ki 14:23; 2 Ki 16:4; 2 Ki 17:9; Ezk 20:29), and were furnished with altars, pillars, sacred poles, and idols (Deu 12:2; 1 Ki 14:23; 2 Ki 17:10; Ezk 6:13).

Cultic activities such as the serving of gods (Deu 12:2), sacrificing and offering (2 Ki 16:4; Hos 4:13; Ezk 20:28), including the burning of incense and libation offerings (Ezk 20:28) were performed at these high places. Sexual activities are alluded to in the reference to the presence of male prostitutes in the land (1 Ki 14:24), as well as the reference of Isaiah (57:5) which rings 'burn with lust among the oaks', and Hosea's references to the spirit of whoredom (4:12), the daughters who played whore, the daughters-in-law who committed adultery (4:13b) and the men who sacrificed with prostitutes (4:14). Ackerman (1992:187,188) argues that the reference in Hos 4:12-13 as well as the references in Jer 2:20; 3:6, 13 to harlotry, undoubtedly describe sexual activities which occurred 'under every green tree'. The mentioning of leafy/green trees implies that this was practised during summer season when drought and sterility threatened the fertility of the land (p188n92). These fertility rituals 'under every green tree' can be associated with the fertility goddess, mother of the gods, Asherah, whose symbols were the sacred tree or pole (asherah), and the lion (p191. See the discussion of Asherah/asherah in chapter 4, as well as the discussion of high places below).

It may be assumed that the expression ‘under every green tree, and on every high hill’ and its variations, represent conventional metonymies in which the whole (in this case the worship venue) is experienced and described in terms of a characteristic aspect of the whole (i.e. a hill, and/or a green tree).

5.5.2 Topheth (תַּפֶּת)

Mention of Topheth occurs in two prose contexts, i.e. chapter 7 (vv.31,32) and chapter 19 (vv.6,11,12,13 and 14). In these references, YHWH accuses Israel of being guilty of ongoing building activities of the ‘high place (בְּמוֹת) of Topheth (תַּפֶּת)’ for child sacrifice purposes (7:31). It is also mentioned that the Topheth was a general burial place (7:32; 19:11), situated in the valley of the son of Hinnom (7:31; 19:6), at the entry of the Potsherd Gate (19:2) outside the walls of Jerusalem.

The role of the place called ‘Topheth’ and the phenomenon of ‘child sacrifice’ at this venue, as well as the connection with ‘Baal’ mentioned in 19:5 and 32:35, were discussed in chapter 4.

5.5.3 The high places (בְּמוֹת)

According to 32:35 and 19:5 in the prose sections, the ‘Tophet’ is associated with (or identical to) the ‘high places of Baal’ (בְּמוֹת הַבַּעַל), which are also situated in ‘the valley of the son of Hinnom’ and used for child sacrifice to ‘Molech.’ The description of people making offerings to their deities at a high place also appears in the judgement on Moab in the prose of 48:35.

Kaufmann (1961:162,431) argues that the high places were effectively destroyed during the reform of Josiah on the basis that 2 Kings does not report anything about the rebuilding of high places after Josiah’s death. However, the book of Jeremiah mentions a thriving cult at Tophet outside Jerusalem (7:30-34; 19:1-13; 32:35) after Josiah’s death, while the high places were fully operational (13:27; 17:1-4) (Ackerman 1992:48,51)

Traditionally, the high place was viewed as an open-air sanctuary located on a man made elevated site, a hill or a mountain top where cultic activities took place. References to 'the hills' and 'under every green tree' clearly indicate such high places. However, reference is also made to high places at Tophet in the valley of Hinnom (Jer 7:31; 19:5-6; 32:35). Recently, some scholars pointed out that the traditional view can be misleading because in many cases cultic buildings are associated with the term **בְּמִזְבֵּחַ**, which rather indicates a building or installation equipped with cultic furniture within which cultic activities can be performed (Ackerman 1992:175n43). One of the cultic objects provided at a **בְּמִזְבֵּחַ**, besides an altar for sacrifices, and the stone pillar and asherah as fertility symbols, e.g. was a small limestone altar or clay stand for the burning of incense. Literally hundreds of these small cuboid altars were excavated at sites at Gezer, Tell Jemmeh, Tell Shurahen, and Lachish dating from the seventh to the fifth century BC (Ackerman 1992:178n51-56), as well as clay incense stands at a sanctuary at Hazor (p185n84).

Ackerman (1992:185) suggests that the **בְּמִזְבֵּחַ** sanctuaries were considered as legitimate Yahwistic shrines from the early period of Israel's history, even up to the days of Josiah. Samuel (1 Sa 9:11-26) and Solomon (1 Ki 3:4) sacrificed at a **בְּמִזְבֵּחַ**. The Assyrian Rabshakeh was familiar with the high places and altars of YHWH, which were removed by Hezekiah in his reform effort in order to centralise the cult in Jerusalem (2 Ki 18:22). After Josiah destroyed the **בְּמִזְבֵּחַ**, he invited the clergy of the high places to serve at the temple in Jerusalem (2 Ki 23:8-0). The high places, where Israelites worshipped YHWH as well as other deities and Asherah, became a major obstacle in the way of the ideal of a centralised cult in Jerusalem, and was therefore targeted by the reform efforts of Hezekiah and Josiah.

5.5.4 Upon the roofs of the houses (הַבָּתִּים עַל-גַּגֵּיהֶם)

In the prose of the book of Jeremiah, two accounts, namely 19:13 and 32:29, mention the idolatrous activities by people (even the kings – see 19:13) 'on the roofs of their houses' in Jerusalem. In 19:13 the offerings are directed towards '*the whole host of heaven*', and in 32:29 to '*Baal*.' In both accounts the activity of '*the pouring of libations*' are meant for

'other gods' in general. In 19:13 the mention of a rooftop as an idolatrous venue, occurs in a judgement of YHWH following the symbolic action of the broken earthen jug performed by the prophet Jeremiah. In 32:29 it appears in YHWH's answer to the prophet Jeremiah's intercession for city and the people (see chapter 4 for the discussion of astral cults).

5.5.5 In the house of YHWH

According to the prose references in 7:30 and 32:34, YHWH accused Israel of performing idolatrous activities in his house. In both cases the activity entails the setting up of '*their abominations*', in a location described in 7:30 as *בבית אשר נקרא שמי* ('in the house that is called by my name'), rendered in the NRSV of 32:34 as 'in the house that bears my name.' These references represent evidence that pagan rites were practised in the temple area (Holladay 1986:267). Post -Josianic kings probably practised cults in the temple, which included the cults of the Queen of Heaven and other astral bodies (Ackerman 1992:50).

5.6 EPITHETS AND DESCRIPTIONS OF ISRAEL'S PARTNERS

5.6.1 Strangers (זרים)

In poetry sections the only cases of the appearance of *זרים* (strangers), apparently referring to other deities, are found in 2:25 and 3:13. Both form part of the direct speech of YHWH accusing Israel of idolatry. In prose sections the only occurrences of the expression are found in 5:19 and 30:8, and both most probably refer to imperial forces.

The use of 'strangers' in the poetry invokes the metaphorical concept: **Other deities are strangers**. In the prose, the concept reads: **The imperial forces are strangers**. A close relationship and association exist between the ANE imperial forces and their gods, especially in a situation of war.

In poetry sections the only occurrences of *זרים* (strangers) referring to foreign powers and their idols are found in 2:25 and 3:13. Other occurrences in poetry, i.e. 18:14; 51:2, 51, are in other contexts not referring to idols. In prose sections only 5:19 refers to gods, the only

other occurrence being 30:8 (see chapter 4 for the discussion of the metaphorical concept **Other deities are foreigners and strangers**).

From eight occurrences in Isaiah, only two (17:10 and 43:12) refer to strange gods. In Ezekiel (7 x), only 16:32 in prose may refer to idols which contains an extended metaphor of adultery with the Assyrians and idols. Hosea does not use the term to refer to idols and in Deuteronomistic works only one reference about strange gods is made in Deu 32:16 in the poetry of the song of Moses (Snijders 1980:52ff).

5.6.2 Lovers

The following synonymous terms in Hebrew are being used for the RSV translation of ‘lovers’:

5.6.2.1 Lovers (אהבה)

The term אהבה (lover) is used in the poetry of 2:33 as direct speech of YHWH’s accusation addressed to Israel. The expression also occurs in the poetry of 22:22 (ומאהביך), and in 22:20 and 30:14 in the combination כל-מאהביך (all your lovers). In 22:20 and 22 the context is YHWH’s judgment on king Jehoiakim (Coniah), and 30:14 forms part of YHWH’s announcement of the future restoration of Israel. However, it is not clear whether these references are aimed at other deities or political alliances such as Assyria and Egypt. It rather seems that the metaphorical concept: **Israel’s political allies are their lovers**, is at stake in these occurrences.

5.6.2.2 Friends/partners (רעים)

The term רעים (from רעה = friend, fellow friend), rendered by the RSV as ‘lovers’, is used in poetry of 3:1 and 2 containing the direct speech of YHWH’s accusations against Israel. In 3:2 it occurs in combination with רבים, which Holladay (1986:57) prefers to translate with ‘many partners’. Again the use of the term in these contexts could denote a

reference to political alliances evoking the metaphorical concept: **Israel's political allies are their friends/partners.**

5.6.2.3 Paramours (ענבים)

In the poetry of 4:30 the term 'paramours' [ענבים from ענב = to desire. Holladay (1986 :145) prefers to translate as 'paramours', and the NRSV with 'lovers'], is used in the context of an oracle of doom by YHWH against Israel. Again the context seems not to be a clear case of idolatrous practices, but rather that of a reference to political alliances evoking the metaphorical concept: **Israel's political allies are their paramours.**

5.6.2.4 Summary

The use of the terms אהבה (lover), רעים (friends, partners) and ענבים (paramours), indicate the presence of a third party in the relationship between YHWH and Israel. These terms represent ambiguous references, which can designate either an imperial force or gods (especially the gods of the imperial force) or both. Again, as with the term 'stranger', the close relationship and association between the political allies and their gods, must be taken into consideration in the context of appearances. The use of these terms show that the Yahwistic approach was also aimed at the influence of foreign powers and their cults on Israel's religion. It was indicated in the analysis of the poetic sections of Jeremiah's early preaching (2:2-6:30) in chapter 4 of this study, that he supported Josiah's ideals of political and religious independence. However, Jeremiah clearly proclaimed YHWH as Israel's caring Husband, their Saviour and Leader of the exodus, the wilderness sojourn, and the settlement in the land. Jeremiah's appeal to Israel entails to trust YHWH for guidance and assistance, and not mortal political allies, called 'lovers' and 'strangers' and their gods (see Jer 17:5-14 for this emphasis in Jeremiah's preaching and which can be viewed as an extension of the theme of 2:2-13).

5.7 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the analysis of terminology pertaining to Israel's relationship with the other gods produced meaningful information to compile a picture of the nature of their

idolatrous practices. Information about the worship activities, venues, objects, as well as the descriptions of their sins produced a double-sided picture of Israel's religion and the polemic, with Yahwism on the one side, and Israel and their other gods on the other. Only a few metonymical constructions, as well as marital and sexually related metaphors were identified. The following can be concluded:

5.7.1 Prose and Poetry

The analysis indicated that the prose sections mainly employed stereotypical phrases to condemn the idolatrous transgressions of Israel in accusatory language. These expressions appear to be conventional theological language, mainly metonymically constructed, which served as descriptions of the worship-activities of Israel in favour of the 'other gods'. These terms were utilised mainly in a covenantal context to emphasise the idolatrous transgressions of Israel and the prohibitions set by Yahwism. Poetic metaphors as observed in chapter 4 were scarce and only a few were identified, e.g. in the usage of the terms for 'lovers', as well as some sexually related terms e.g. 'whoring', and 'prostituting'. However, some of the expressions, e.g. הלך אחריו (to follow after), which appears to be conventional vocabulary, fits into a metaphorically constructed covenantal or marital context.

5.7.2 Extensive involvement in Idolatry?

The usage of analysed expressions in the prose, although representing conventional stereotypical language, reflects a scenario of an extensive idolatrous involvement. This is confirmed by reports in the prose sections regarding child-sacrifice and Israel's involvement in Baal and astral cults (e.g. 7:30-8:2; 11:9-13; 19:3-13; 44:2-25, as discussed in chapter 4).

It is however difficult to determine from Biblical references only whether idolatry was extensively practised by the majority of Israel. This seems to be the picture presented by the prose sections. However, the possibility exists that Israel was constituted from a diversity of religious groups e.g. familial, regional, urban, and rural, and especially the Jerusalem-based national government (royal house) groups. Each of these groups probably

practised their own syncretistic or even polytheistic religious version. It follows that Israel was not such a unified religious people during pre-exilic times as formerly accepted. Different levels and versions of syncretistic Yahwism as well as polytheistic piety seem to have existed. These different levels should be taken into account in the evaluation of archaeological findings as well as in Biblical exegesis.¹

It seems that the prophet/author(s) of the book of Jeremiah, especially in the poetry sections, focused mainly on transgressions of the royal houses and their supporters. Much of the poetic passages analysed in chapter 4 of this study, especially those from the early preaching of Jeremiah (2:2-4:2) indicated that the attack against idolatry was mainly directed at the political policies of alliances followed by past royal houses and the contemporary generation in diaspora. These policies entailed the forming of alliances and treaties with foreign powers including their gods. This led to Israel's participation in their cults. However, in both poetry and prose, the participation in these foreign as well as the local Canaanite idolatrous practices, were condemned in terms which metaphorically labeled it as culturally unacceptable, whoring, and pollution of the holy land and the holy people of YHWH.

5.7.3 Deity and Image

The prophet/author(s) of the book of Jeremiah show little respect for the 'other deities' in their language usage. This reflects sarcasm, mockery, irony and pejorative metaphorical constructions. The 'worthlessness' of these deities is emphasised by the use of several concepts as indicated in chapter 4. This attack was mainly directed towards the images of the other deities, which were representations of the deities. One of the major aspects utilised to demonstrate the impotency of the deities, was the fact that these idol-images were human-made, creations by mortals, from wood, stone, gold and silver. This led to the conclusion that these images were non-gods, i.e. lifeless, worthless deceptions, incompetent of helping Israel in any way.

¹ See Keel (1998:406) who states that the "*Sitz im Leben*" (the level of religious practice) to which the artifacts belong, such as palace, temple, house, grave, should be considered in the evaluation of archaeological findings (similar as in the approach of the form-historical method of Biblical texts).

It seems that the prophets were aware of the special Babylonian ritual, by which the newly manufactured idol was declared as born in heaven. However, they simply ignored or denied the validity of the ritual, and focused on the reality of human craftsmen who cannot create divine beings. Therefore, these hand-made gods are invalid, they are nothing but human-made frauds, and thus worthless. Opposed to these human craftsmen and their manufactured deceptive idol-images, which are nothing more than non-deities acting as deities, YHWH is exalted as the only true living God, the Creator and King of the universe (10:10,12,16). Against this Yahwistic theological background, the other deities of the ANE are ridiculed and stripped of their deity-status.

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CHAPTER 6

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN YHWH AND ISRAEL IN THE JEREMIANIC MARRIAGE METAPHOR

6.0 Introduction

A variety of metaphors describing the relationship between YHWH and Israel were identified in the analysis of passages pertaining to the idolatrous practices in chapter 4. From this, the marriage metaphor is selected for analysis in this chapter in order to determine its theological significance, as well as its contribution to the concept of the worthlessness and foreignness of the other gods.

The marriage metaphor **YHWH is a Bridegroom/Husband** and **Israel is a bride/wife** and related terminology, as well as sexually related concepts, dominate the poetry of 2:2b-4:2, including the prose of 3:6-11. The context implies a marital lawsuit or quarrel between the husband and his faithless wife (2:5,9; 3:20). **Israel is the accused wife** (see also 2:34) and **YHWH the plaintiff Husband** (2:34). The wife pleads innocent (2:35) but later the weeping accused wife (3:21) admits her guilt (3:24,25). The references to Israel's lovers (2:33; 3:1c,2b), and love for strangers (2:25; 3:13) as well as the accusation of her whoring practices (2:20b, 3:1c,2c,3b) are also related to the marriage metaphor.

An intriguing reference to a supposed marital relationship appears in the prose story of the two faithless sisters recorded in 3:6-11. The story implies that YHWH was married to both sisters. The metaphor of the faithless whoring wife of 2:2b-3:5, i.e. the Northern Kingdom, is continued in v6 by way of introducing a comparative 'story'. After the divorce (the fall of Samaria), the one sister (Northern Kingdom) refused to return to YHWH. Her false sister (Judah) witnessed the whoring of her sister and the consequences, but followed suit and also played whore (v8), and committed adultery (v9). In terms of the marriage metaphor, this version implies that YHWH was married to the Northern Kingdom but later divorced her (the fall of Samaria in 721 BC). It further implies that YHWH was also

married to the sister Judah, because it is stated that she 'did not return' to YHWH 'with her whole heart' (which could be regarded as a reference to Josiah's reform in 620 BC). In the context of the new covenant, reference is made in the prose of 31:32 to the old covenant in which YHWH was Israel's husband.

Other references in the poetry which can also be regarded as a reflection of the marriage metaphor can be identified e.g. in 12:7b in which Israel is called 'the beloved of YHWH's heart', and v8b, which accuses Israel of 'lifting her voice' to him. Several references of related terms regarding sexual activities occur, e.g. the terms 'adultery' and 'prostitution' together (5:7; 13:27), the single use of the term 'adultery' (23:10; 23:14), and the involvement of other parties, e.g. lovers (22:20,22; 30:14). The occurrences in 5:7 and 13:27 however, appear to be references to physical adultery and prostitution (see v8), although the phrase 'on the hills of the countryside' in 13:27 can refer to fertility prostitution or idolatrous practices. In 23:10, 23:14 the prophets are accused of adultery, while 22:20 and v22 apparently refer to Jehoiakim's political allies.

The Father/mother/children metaphors can also be regarded as closely related to the marriage metaphor. The references to Israel as children (2:9,30; 3:14,21,22 – all in poetry)¹ allude to a submerged metaphor entailing **YHWH is the Father** and **Israel** (meaning the former kingdom or Jacob) **is the mother**, and the members of the contemporary generation **are YHWH and Israel's children**. A direct reference to the metaphor **YHWH is the Father** is found in poetry in 3:4 (BHS omits 'my father'). In the poetry of 31:20 Ephraim is called YHWH's 'dear son' as well as 'the child I delight in'² and Israel his 'faithless daughter' in 31:22 (but also virgin daughter in v21). These occurrences imply a marital relationship between YHWH and Israel.

The marriage metaphor and related metaphors of sexual activities and partners mainly appear in the poetry of 2:2b-4:2, and the included prose section of 3:6-11. Sporadic

¹ See Carroll (1986:122) who claims that the MT reading of 2:9 may refer to three generations, which equals the period of Babylonian exile of three generations (p125). In 2:30 the MT reads 'your children', but the BHS prefers 'fathers and sons' (Carroll 1986:137). In 3:14, the relationship between YHWH and Israel is described as one between 'master' (Baal) and 'children', although the term Baal can also refer to the husband-wife metaphor (Carroll 1986:149), and therefore can denote the father-child relationship.

² Carroll (1986:600) interprets the expressions as referring to: 'Mother YHWH and son.'

independent occurrences of the terms adultery, prostitution, lovers and strangers, appear mainly in the poetry sections. Furthermore, a variety of metaphorically constructed expressions can be identified within the framework of the main concept of the marriage metaphor, as well as closely related metaphors. This will be dealt with in the exegetical section below.

6.1 Jeremiah and Hosea

Jeremiah, like Hosea, introduces his preaching with a marriage metaphor. The difference is that Hosea was commanded to take “*a wife of whoredom and have children of whoredom*” (1:2, cf 3:1). Jeremiah on the other hand, was instructed by YHWH: *You shall not take a wife, nor shall you have sons or daughters in this place*” (16:2). Jeremiah’s celibacy had to serve as a comparative symbol of the hopelessness of the contemporary situation and the future awaiting the nation. Hosea’s marriage with a harlot had to serve metaphorically or symbolically for the purpose of his message about the deteriorating relationship between YHWH and Israel (=Northern Kingdom). Jeremiah however, does not map from his personal circumstances like Hosea. He maps from the marital relationship between opposite genders in the human social life as source domain, to the spiritual relationship between Deity and humans as target domain, thus invoking the conceptual metaphor: **the Deity and the nation are married**. Jeremiah begins on a positive note: “*The honeymoon was wonderful*”, but in the end, “*the marriage – a complete failure*’. He therefore, leaves us, like Hosea, with a message about “*a marriage turn[ed] sour*” (italics as quoted from Carroll 1986:119).

It is generally accepted among scholars that the book of Jeremiah is dependent on Hosea. Holladay (1989:45) states: “*Jrm inherited from Hosea the ruling metaphor of Israel as the unfaithful wife of Yahweh and thus vocabulary referring to Baal worship and to sexual relations in a religious context: ...*” Holladay (1989:47) identifies at least fifty points of at which the book of Jeremiah borrows from the vocabulary of Hosea. Kruger (PA 1992:7) states that Hosea was the first prophet to utilise the metaphor of marriage to describe the relationship between YHWH and Israel. He further claims that knowledge of the juridical principles of the ANE marital customs is essential for the understanding of certain aspects of Hosea’s application of the marriage metaphor. Several scholars point out that a

Westernised or Protestant view could dominate one's understanding of the marriage metaphor (e.g. Snyman 1993:95), due to a lack of knowledge regarding the Canaanite religion (Albertz 1992:134-135). In this regard, Hosea's usage of the metaphor indicates that the Canaanite fertility cult forms a background for the identity and role of Gomer (Snyman 1993:105). Furthermore, recent discoveries at Kuntillet ' Arjud and Khirbet el Qom allude to the existence of a relationship between YHWH and Asherah (Keel 1998:210ff). Asherah allegedly represented YHWH's consort in these sanctuaries or regions during the first half of the eighth century BC (Ackerman 1992:66). If this assumption was true, it could present a possibility that such a relationship in the syncretistic Yahwistic cults, triggered in the minds of the pure Yahwists the idea of a marriage between YHWH and Israel, with Israel as YHWH's consort or wife.

However, the investigating of the origin of the marriage metaphor is not the aim of this analysis, and the question will thus be left open. The aim of the analysis in this study will be to observe something of the style of the application of metaphor in the book of Jeremiah, but not neglecting the ANE background of fertility religions and marriage customs.

6.2. An analysis of the marriage metaphor in 2:2b

The first metaphorical utterance depicting YHWH as a bridegroom/husband and Israel as a bride/wife is presented in v2b of the introduction (2:2b-3) of Jeremiah's first message in Jerusalem (2:2b-4:2). It entails the complete v2b and is therefore quoted in full:

זכרתי לך חסד נעורריך אהבת כלולתריך

I remember the devotion of your youth, your love as a bride,

לכתך אחרי במדבר בארץ לא זרועה:

how you followed me in the wilderness, in a land not sown

The LXX version reads:

ἐμνήσθην ἐλέους νεότητός σου καὶ ἀγάπης τελειώσεώς σου τοῦ ἑξακολουθήσαι σε τῷ ἁγίῳ Ἰσραὴλ λέγει κύριος.

The introduction of MT, vv1 and 2a, is rendered as: καὶ εἶπεν τὰδε λέγει κύριος = And he said: ‘Thus says the Lord...’.

This verse begins with a metaphorical concept זָכַרְתִּי (‘I (YHWH) remember’), which is an anthropomorphism, metaphorically constructed on the grounds of a comparison between Deity and human beings. By mapping from the source domain of typical human intellectual activities, the target domain is experienced in terms of the human ability of remembering, invoking the concepts **The Deity is human** and **The Deity remembers**.

However, the main metaphorical concept in this verse entails the religious relationship between YHWH and Israel, which is experienced as a marital relationship. By employing the basic metaphorical schema of human relationships, and specifically the marital relationship of alliance between two members of the opposite gender as source domain, the metaphorical concept **a human’s relationship with the divine is a marriage** is invoked. The target domains, the Deity and the nation, are experienced in terms of **The Deity is a Husband**, and **The nation is a bride** respectively. Therefore, Israel is metaphorically depicted as the young bride of YHWH, which means that YHWH is the bridegroom. The metaphor is further extended by the ANE custom of the husband leading the way on a journey and the bride following him in loyalty.

The Exodus tradition, providing a historical-theological basis for the relationship between YHWH and Israel, is described here in intimate terminology, namely a young bride loyally following her husband. Typical of the prophets is the fact that these traditions are not merely repeated in archaic terminology, but almost always creatively conceptualised and moulded with poetic skill, in new appealing metaphoric language usage (See e.g. Ezk 16; Hos 11:1-4 and Isa 43:1).

6.2.1 Structural and exegetical aspects

Before the marriage metaphor can be analysed, some structural and exegetical aspects need to be discussed, as well as the ANE wedding customs and related matters.

6.2.1.1 Form and setting

According to the book of Jeremiah, the preaching of the prophet Jeremiah commences¹ on a positive note with YHWH recalling Israel's journey through the wilderness. Verses 2b-3 form a poetic preface or introduction to the larger unit of 2:1-6:30,² which is generally accepted as being part of a compiled summary of Jeremiah's earliest preaching during the reign of Josiah. Due to the fact that this unit is compiled from several independent oracles with very little indication of time settings, the analysis of structure and setting is regarded by Holladay (1986:62) as "*one of the most baffling and intricate problems in the book*". The burning of the first scroll by king Jehoiakim most likely caused this problem. The first scroll probably contained oracles against Israel, Judah and the nations (36:2 and 23). The action of the king initiated the writing of a second scroll containing all the words of the first scroll, "*and many similar words were added to them*" (36:32), to which later editors also added their share. McKane (1986:21) concludes that chapters 2-6 were presented as Jeremiah's written compositions, 'published' to be read, rather than one great sermon to be delivered in Jerusalem.

Although commentators tend to argue that 2:1-3 forms a separate unit, added later to the original oracles starting from 2:4ff and addressed to the Northern Kingdom in diaspora³, the unit is an appropriate introduction to the material that follows. Firstly, the preaching is presented to the audience/reader with a positive introduction, which purposefully recalls their theologically well-known exodus tradition. One could say that this is a sound rhetorical and psychological approach, namely to start with facts, which are familiar to the audience and positively emphasise their beliefs in this regard. Secondly, the following sections contain extensions of similar thoughts and terminology already expressed in vv2b-3 e.g. elaboration on the wilderness topic (2:6), and the marriage metaphor (see 2:6, 16, 20-25, 36f; 3:1,8). Thirdly, 2:2b-3 can hardly serve as an independent oracle if one considers that the contents only recall the good old days. Despite the gender changes (i.e. from the 2nd person feminine singular in 2:1-3 to 2nd person masculine plural in 2:4-13, and back to

¹ See Keil 1975:50 for more details about the inaugurating aspects of Jeremiah's ministry, and McKane 1986:26 for the inappropriateness of the MT's superscription in 2:1-2a in comparison with the LXX.

² So rendered by Carroll 1986:115; Thompson 1989:159; Craigie 1991:19; but Holladay 1986:47 prefers 2:1-4:4 as unit, and Van Selms 1972:41 and Keil 1975:49 pose 2:1-3:5.

³ See Holladay 1986:67 for a summary of the original and added material.

2nd person feminine singular in 2:14-19 and 20-28),¹ the unit as placed by the author, scribe, or editor/s, serves as a meaningful starting point for the shocking statements and indictments of idolatry and other sins which are to follow in 2:4ff.

The suggestion of Craigie (1991:23) that 2:2b-3 originally belonged to vv14-19 with vv4-13 as a later insertion, is perhaps a viable option. Nevertheless, no matter what setting or compilation details and procedures are allocated to 2:1-6:30, it is clear that these early chapters contain the first theological handling of the disaster of the Fall of Jerusalem in the book of Jeremiah. Carroll (1986:118) concludes: *"Its purpose is to write off the past and everything associated with it and to call the contemporary generation to devote itself to Yahweh (cf. 4.4)."* Within this context, the initial stage of the past is idealised in intimate metaphorical language in 2:2b-3, as starting point for combating idolatry or syncretism, and to promote monotheism. It can also be viewed as an excellent point of departure to promote the motive of 'return to the quality of devotion of those days', i.e. an ideal of a 'back to YHWH / 'back to the past' reform-movement.

6.2.1.2 The addressee

Some commentators (Holladay 1986:66ff) argue that a core of the speeches in 2:1-6:30 was originally intended for the Northern Kingdom. This researcher shares this view. Clements (1988:23) states that 2:2-3:5 was definitely addressed to Israel as a whole, and some sections in ch.3 as well as the repentance call in 4:1-2 specifically to the scattered remnants of the former Northern Kingdom of Israel. He concludes, *"Jeremiah and also the editors who compiled the book of his prophecies were deeply concerned to reaffirm the oneness of Israel"* (p24) – another obvious motive and ideal which is repeatedly addressed in the book of Jeremiah.²

The fact that 2:2a explicitly states that the message has to be delivered orally *"in the hearing of Jerusalem"*, does not cancel the posed destiny of the message. The LXX renders a shorter opening by omitting the addressee (see text above). A further reference to *"house of Jacob, and all the families of the house of Israel"* in v4 supports the idea that the

¹ See Craigie 1991:21 for more details.

² See 3:12, 14, 22a; 4:1 etc.

responsibility for sins in the past is placed on Israel as a whole. In this regard 2:2b-3 serves its purpose to strengthen the ideal of unity. Furthermore, if the assumptions were correct, the only suitable venue and audience for the deliverance or the public reading of such a message, also for the stateless Northern Kingdom, would have been Jerusalem, irrespective of the omission of the name Jerusalem by the shorter text of the LXX.

It should also be noted that the expression "*in the hearing of Jerusalem*" could be regarded as a metaphorically constructed utterance typical of the unconsciously used metaphors in everyday language. The expression also appears in Ex 24:7; Deu 31:11; Neh 13:1 and in the accounts of Josiah's reform in 2 Ki 23:2 and 2 Ch 34:30. All these references apply the concept '*read it in the hearing of the people.*' In Jug 7:3 it occurs as '*proclaim it in the hearing of the troops*' and in Ezk 8:18 in the context of '*the hearing of YHWH.*' Further uses in the book of Jeremiah occur in the account of Baruch's reading of the scroll in the house of the Lord, '*in the hearing of all the people*' (36:10,13,14). From these occurrences it could be deduced that this is an idiomatic but 'vivid' (Thompson 1989:162) expression, at least in the religious language of the OT, employed to emphasise that the important contents of the Yahwistic message (i.e. the Word of God) must be heard.

According to the conceptual theory of metaphor, the depiction of the expression is that **The city has ears**, and can hear. In other words, it represents a personification of the city. However, the conceptual metaphor **The people are the city** (and they can hear), is invoked here. In the OT 'ear' is associated with "*the 'heart' and 'mind' as an organ of cognition (Prov 2:2, Is 6:9,10),... and is personified as hearing and understanding (Job13:1), seeking knowledge (Prov 18:15) and testing words (Job 12:11)*" (Ryken e.a., DBI 1998:223).

True hearing involves listening and understanding (Job 34:16), and therefore, closed ears cannot listen and would not be able to understand the words and warnings of YHWH (Jer 6:10). To 'incline' one's ears to YHWH, means to listen to and obey him, something which the people in the days of Zedekiah did not do when they refused the release of their slaves after six years of service, as commanded by the YHWH (Jer 34:14).

6.2.2 Marriage customs in the ANE

The wedding, where bridegroom and bride were united in matrimonial unity, formed an important and highly valued building block of the Hebrew culture, i.e. the start of a new family. Although the actual ceremony entailed nothing more than an exchanging of vows, it was regarded as a divine institution, a covenant before God (Pro 2:17; Ezk 16:8; Mal 2:14), and a public profession of devotion to each other (Ryken e.a. DBI 1998:120-122, 938/9). Van der Toorn (1994:60) says Mesopotamian cuneiform texts are more detailed in this than the OT. Protection of the marriage bed, parenthood, as well as judgement of infidelity, especially on the part of the woman, were obviously in the hands of God or the gods in Babylonian and Israelite marital rights.¹

Although the girl rarely had any say in the choice of a partner, van der Toorn (1994:59) writes: “[I]n the ancient Near East the wedding ceremony was one of the most important events in a girl’s life, whether Mesopotamian or Israelite. Often she was not yet sixteen when it happened: she married and followed her husband in due course to the matrimonial residence.” After settling the contract and other negotiations with the girl’s parents, the ‘bride price’ (Gen 34:12; 24:53) paid and the date set, the time of espousal was the time for the arrangement of the wedding by the groom and his father (Ryken e.a., DBI:1998:938). The reference in Isa 61:10 gives us a picture of the importance of the special clothing of the bride and bridegroom for the wedding occasion as well as the bride’s jewelry, symbolising her readiness for the bridegroom (Jer 2:32). After the handing over of the daughter by the father-in-law and the actual consummation of the wedding, a feast followed, often lasting seven to fourteen days. Joyful celebrations, expressed through music and dancing (Jer 7:34a; Ps 45; 78:63), and the joyous ‘voices of the bridegroom and the bride’ (Jer 7:34b; 16:9; 25:10; 33:11), marked the festivity.

“The main event was the entrance into the bedchamber, where the newly weds would consummate their union” (Ryken e.a., DBI 1998:121). This is the custom to which Gen 2:24 refers, namely: *“Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his*

¹ See van der Toorn 1994:62,63 and pp72ff re parenthood. See Num 5:11-31 for an OT example.

wife, and they become one flesh." Van der Toorn (1994:61) indicates the resemblance to customs expressed in the Atrahasis myth, a Babylonian epic, where a decent wedding means that a man leaves his parent's home for the wedding at the house of the father-in-law. Only there, at the house of the in-laws, during the days (or rather nights) of the wedding feast, love-making may and will take place. However, in neither Babylonian nor Israelite cultures do they stay there permanently. The new husband has the right to stay over at his in-law's house with his wife for the days (and nights) of the duration of the feast, but after the festivities the bridegroom leaves for his parent's home while the bride stays with her parents for about four months. During this period, he was allowed to visit her regularly and to stay over for the night. Only after this probationary period, most probably a trial-period for fertility, the husband could take his wife to his home to settle down, after which the wedding was finally confirmed.¹

Although OT texts provide limited information in support of Mesopotamian marital rites, and take Israelite domestic customs as self-evident, some resemblance is obvious. On arrival at her new home, she receives her husband's name (Isa 4:1) and if applicable, she is introduced to the house-gods of the new in-laws. The OT however, is explicitly against inter-religious marriages (Deu 7:3-4). But the very fact that OT prophets such as Hosea, Jeremiah and Ezekiel had to fight against house-god practices and other gods, implies that it was commonly practised. Therefore, one can assume that many brides had to accept the new household's gods, as was expected by new slaves entering the household. Van der Toorn (1994:69) stretches the point by stating that Ruth's statement during the time of the judges, *'Your people is my people and your God is my God'* (Rut 1:15-16), suggests that *"these or similar words were actually pronounced by women who, as a result of marriage, switched over to the religion of Israel."* In post-exilic times the prophet Malachi was however more outspoken against a marriage with a foreigner because that implied a marriage with *'the daughter of a foreign god'* (Mal 2:11-12).

The above is only a selection of information available about wedding customs of the ANE appropriate for this study in order to interpret the marriage metaphor in the book of

¹ See van der Toorn 1994:66 and 73ff re pregnancy.

Jeremiah. The highly valued custom with its ‘associated commonplaces’ (to use Black’s term), served as source domain for metaphorical mapping to the target domain of the spiritual relationship between YHWH and Israel.

6.2.3 Metaphorical concepts

6.2.3.1 YHWH remembers/ the husband remembers (זכרתי לך)

The statement in 2:2b opens with the metaphorical (anthropomorphic) expression **YHWH remembers**, (זכרתי לך), which in the context of the marriage metaphor implies **as Husband, the Deity remembers**. The same verb זכר is “used to denote the action of the mind that is so necessary for human existence can likewise be used of God, with an efficacy that makes it possible to speak of God’s ‘conduct.’” (Eising 1980:69).

The Deity performs a human intellectual activity namely to remember, to the benefit or to the disadvantage of his people. For example, YHWH remembers his covenant (Gen 9:15; Ex 2:24; 6:5; Lev 26:42), but also the nation’s wickedness (Hos 7:2). In the book of Jeremiah, it is further stated that YHWH will remember Judah’s iniquity (14:10) but will also remember Judah and Israel’s sin no more (31:34). However, he remembers Ephraim (31:20) and Judah’s offerings to other gods (44:20). When YHWH remembered Noah (Gen 8:1) and Abraham (Gen 19:29), it was to their benefit.

Holladay (1986:82) insists that the phrase זכרתי לך contains the nuance of ‘in your favour’, which means that YHWH not merely recalls, but calls to mind with intended future action. Childs (as quoted by Holladay 1986:82) formulates: “*The act of remembrance is not simply inner reflection, but involves an action, an encounter with historical events.*” Eising (1980:66) concludes that זכר could hardly be rendered with a meaning such as ‘recall’, because it usually implies future action. In Jer 2:2b the husband (YHWH), looking back on their relationship, remembers the loyalty of his wife’s bridal days (Israel) favourably in contrast to the prevailing situation in the days of Jeremiah, but with future consequences to the benefit or disadvantage of Israel, pending their response.

6.2.3.2 The devotion of your youth (חסד נעוריך)

‘YHWH remembers’, is followed by the metaphorical concept of **A stage of the history of the nation’s religious life is a phase of human life**. YHWH recalls Israel’s חסד נעוריך (‘devotion of your youth’), where ‘youth’ refers to the historical stage of the origin of the relationship between YHWH and Israel during the forty years in the desert and the constitution of the covenant at Sinai. The conceptual metaphor, taken from the domain of the phases of human life, **The first phase of human life is youth** is employed to describe a phase in a religious relationship in terms of the first phase of marital life. Therefore, the metaphorical construction can also be formulated as **The first phase of a religious relationship is the first phase of a marriage** and equals **the first phase of human life**. The wife was obviously a young lady in her ‘bridal days.’

6.2.3.2.1 The term ‘youth’ (נעורים)

The concept נעורים ‘youth’, representing a stage in Israel’s history, is further utilised in Jer 3:4 and vv24,25. Other uses (e.g. in 22:21; 31:19; 48:11) do not refer to Israel.

(1) According to 3:4, YHWH asks: *Have you not just now called to me, “My Father, you are the friend of my youth –”*. Thus, two concepts drawn from the source domain of social relationships between people, **YHWH is a Father** and **YHWH is a Friend of Israel**, are used in this case to remind YHWH of the idyllic relationship between the deity and the nation maintained in the initial stage of their relationship. However, there is no reference to the wilderness or the Exodus tradition in the context.

(2) In 3:24 and 25, regarded by some commentators as prose and others as poetry,¹ the prophet uses words of repentance, perhaps drawn from a psalm or an early version of an exilic liturgy of repentance (Carroll 1986:154 and Craigie 1991:65).

¹ Regarded as poetry by Craigie 1991:62,63 and Holladay 1986:61, and as prose see NRSV and Carroll 1986:155.

On behalf of the people the prophet poses the ideal response to the invitation of YHWH to return to him:

*"But from our youth the shameful thing has devoured all for which our ancestors had labored, their flocks and their herds, their sons and their daughters. ²⁵ Let us lie down in our shame, and let our dishonor cover us; for we have sinned against the LORD our God, we and our ancestors, from our youth even to this day; and we have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God."*¹

An admission of guilt is stated here, which, opposed to the above-mentioned usage, clearly indicates that Israel's youth was not such an innocent period. However, again the period involved is not mentioned.

The expression is also used by other prophets to describe the earlier history of Israel. For example:

(1) **Hosea** in 2:17 (v15 NRSV), also in the context of a marriage metaphor, uses the expression 'in the days of her youth' to refer to 'when she (Israel) came out of the land of Egypt'. Hosea's combination of 'youth' and the 'Exodus' is most probably a first usage, which influenced the application of the concept in Jeremiah.²

(2) **Ezekiel** 16:22 and 43, in a covenantal context, mentions Israel's ימי נעוריה ('the days of your youth') as the birth of the nation, which she failed to remember. YHWH, however, will remember it when he makes his new covenant (v60). In 23:3,8,19,21, Ezekiel repeatedly refers to Israel's 'days of your youth' in Egypt as the origin of their idolatrous nature.

6.2.3.2.2 Loyalty, steadfast love (חסד)

¹ For a remarkable interpretation of 'bed' and 'blanket' imagery in 25a see Craigie 1991:62 and 65. ² See Carroll 1986:119 and Holladay 1986:83.

The youth stage of Israel's history is evaluated in the book of Jeremiah in terms of one of the central theological OT terms, namely **חסד** which can either be used to refer to YHWH's protecting love for Israel, or to Israel's loyalty and faithful response to YHWH. The term can be used in a spiritual or personal, or even a political relationship.¹ McKane (1986:27) cites critics who regard the reference to 'loyalty' and 'love' as referring to YHWH's attitude towards Israel. Holladay (1986:83) eventually opts for a double reference indicating YHWH's love for Israel as well as Israel's fidelity to YHWH. He also states: "*The word resonates strongly both with marriage and political imagery.*" To my mind the immediate context put emphasis on Israel's loyalty towards YHWH in the framework of the marriage metaphor. A typically human intimate quality between two people from different genders in a marital relationship namely 'loyalty/love', invoke the metaphorical concept **the nation (the bride) is loyal/loves the Deity (the husband)**. Later, in 2:6 the focus is clearly on YHWH's guidance during the wilderness period.

6.2.3.3 Israel's love for YHWH during her bridal days (אהבת כלולתיה)

In the following part of the parallel, Israel is metaphorically depicted as YHWH's bride. Mapping from the source domain, namely marriage, to the target domain, namely the spiritual relationship between the deity and his people, invokes the conceptual metaphor **A spiritual relationship between a deity and a human is a marriage**. This implies that **YHWH is a Bridegroom**, a typical submerged metaphor. The author in the book of Jeremiah utilises as grounding the familiar and much valued social and cultural concept of the marital state, which by itself has a religious basis, to describe the relationship between YHWH and Israel. Van der Toorn (1994:59) states that marriage in Israel was indeed a religious matter and not just a purely civil affair as regarded by De Vaux.² The relationship is experienced and articulated as follows: **The nation is a bride** and **The Deity is a Bridegroom**. The marriage concept is further extended by the ANE custom of the husband leading the way on a journey and the bride or wife following behind him in loyalty.

¹ See Holladay 1986:82,83 who quotes Sakenfeld's (KD 1978:173ff) analysis of the term in *The meaning of Hesed in the Hebrew Bible* (HSM 17).

² Quoted by Wallis 1974:113.

The implications of this statement however, entail that the foregoing concept **YHWH remembers**, should be reconsidered as **The Deity as Husband remembers** the loyal conduct of his young bride during the early stage of their marital relationship.

6.2.3.3.1 Love (אהב)

Although Holladay (1986:83) states that “*the root אהב 'love' itself carries a political nuance in many contexts..., so that the hearer is pressed again into the context of covenant*”, it needs to be emphasised that the immediate context here is one of love in a metaphorical marital concept. For Jeremiah the marital relationship between YHWH and Israel is not merely a matter of a figurative concept or ‘imaginary’ (as posed by Carroll 1986:120). In fact, the metaphor is such a reality that any interference, whether by political allies or other gods is viewed as a third party, or extra-marital meddling by ‘lovers’ (Jer 2:33; 20:4,6; 22:20,22; 30:14). One should take cognisance of the fact that metaphors are not simply decorative additions to language or merely figurative language without autonomous meaning. Metaphor describes reality (Riccoeur 1976:52), in fact, through metaphor we understand and conceptualise one reality in terms of another (Lakoff and Turner 1989:133). In this case, a more abstract spiritual reality is experienced in terms of a more physical human reality, in order to articulate spiritual reality in terms of language, invoking the metaphorical concept **People love the deity**.

The root אהב has many uses in the sphere of different human relationships i.e. between the opposite genders, family members, friends, inferiors to superiors, as well as for human attitudes towards objects and conducts such as sleep, eat, wisdom, and righteousness (Brown e.a. 1968:29). These secular usages of אהב serve as source domain for mapping to the target domain, namely the spiritual or religious love of YHWH for Israel and vice versa. The deity performs an intimate human abstract emotion towards his people and the people have to respond on the same terms. The usage in Jer 2:2b invokes the immediate conceptual metaphor that **The deity and the nation are lovers**. This is further specified by the designation of Israel as a bride in the construction כַּלּוּלָתֶיךָ, correctly rendered by NEB as ‘your bridal days’, and which represents a keyword for the identification of the marriage metaphor in the utterance. The invoked conceptual metaphor now reads: Israel as

The young bride is in love with her bridegroom, the deity, emphasising ‘the love of Israel as bride for YHWH’.

Although the root אהב is frequently used in the OT, Wallis (1974:104,105) warns that care should be taken not to generalise the contents, since uses vary in the different stages of the history as well as in the different literary genres of the OT. Of special importance is the author’s intentional focus on certain aspects of the love-concept. This is especially true of the prophets, to whom YHWH’s love for Israel and their failure to comply to the set standards is an important issue. Discussion of some of the usages will suffice:

(1) Hosea

The origin of the application of the concept of love and marriage to depict the intimate religious relationship between YHWH and Israel is difficult to trace, but could perhaps be ascribed to the initiative of Hosea (Kruger PA 1983:107; Wallis 1974:113; Zipor 1995:83n). Hosea’s effort, based on his own (or a symbolic marriage), was a most daring and shocking attempt to manifest “*a new understanding of God’s relationship to his people and of their response to his deeds*” (Wallis 1974:113). Based on the love between husband and wife, and the children born from the bond, Hosea depicts Israel’s disobedience and idolatry as scandalous harlotry and unfaithfulness to her husband YHWH, and provoking him to wrath.

(2) Ezekiel

Ezekiel, in chapter 16 in his application of the marriage metaphor, presents an extended metaphor of the foundling baby Judah, raised by YHWH to become his wife. He gives much detail, in harsh, crude, crass and sometimes obscure terminology, of every stage of development in the relationship. This is done in terms of the human process of growth, stages of puberty, and adolescence, the marriage, in which he indicates how she was smothered by the gifts of YHWH (v11ff). However, eventually she became a nymphomaniac whore (v15) who colluded with idols (v 17ff) and with political allies, i.e. the Egyptians (v26), the Assyrians (v28) and Chaldeans (v29), but she seems to be insatiable. She turned out to be even more

corrupt than her sisters Samaria and Sodom and their daughters.¹ Unavoidable punishment will follow (v37ff), but in the end YHWH will forgive and establish a new covenant (v53ff).

Ezekiel intentionally develops the marriage metaphor as part of his parable to convey the message of YHWH's caring love, opposed to Judah and her sisters' abominable response. His objective is to make them realise the shame and the consequences of their scandalous behaviour, the inevitability of YHWH's judgement, but also the hope of restoration presented by YHWH. Ezekiel's use of the concept appears in a clear and explicit covenantal context, and supports the idea that the marriage metaphor serves the intention of the authors to make the covenant concept more intimate, as well as to provide emotional impact to the message. Ezekiel's usage of the marriage metaphor in chapter 16 and especially in chapter 23 seems to be extensions or re-applications of Jeremiah's story about the two whoring sisters recorded in 3:6-11.

(3) Isaiah

The so-called Deutero-Isaiah (49:15, 18b, 20-25; 51:17,18) and Trito-Isaiah (61:10; 62:4,5) seems to be much more careful and not so explicit and direct in their application of the marriage metaphor. They prefer simile-constructions with emphasis on maternal love. In 49:15, Deutero-Isaiah draws a rhetoric comparison of the unforgettable bond between a woman and her child and the fact that YHWH will not forget Zion (his people), which can also count as metaphorically structured. In v18b another simile of the bride, decorated with ornaments, serves to illustrate Zion being surrounded by her builders and destroyers. The mother (Zion) with her unexplainable children (i.e. inhabitants from unaccountable origins), features in vv20-25. In 51:17,18 the city Jerusalem is personified and represents the mother of the inhabitants (her children). No reference is made to YHWH's involvement in the fathering of the children or the relationship between YHWH and Israel, rather the conceptual metaphor of **The city is the mother of the inhabitants** is at stake here.

¹ Note that in terms of Lakoff, Johnson, and Turner's conceptual metaphor theory, Jerusalem, Samaria, and Sodom are metaphors where the city represents the inhabitants invoked from the conceptual metaphor **People are the city**.

In the above-mentioned references, Trito-Isaiah also uses similes to convey the message of hope for the restoration of the land and the city. The book of Isaiah therefore does not render extensive use of, or sheds more light on the marriage metaphor or the love concept between YHWH and Israel as applied in the book of Jeremiah.

(4) The Deuteronomist

In his study on the use of אהב by the Deuteronomist, Wallis (1974:114-116) concludes that the Deuteronomistic school has developed a more advanced theological doctrine, based on a general concept of love separate from the marriage metaphor and its love concept. YHWH's love is expressed through his gifts and actions to his people's benefit. However,

“parenetically the Deuteronomist has attempted to connect the idea of God's love for his people, which had been attained by the prophets, with the concept of their responsibility, which he presents under the figure of the obedience of a vassal king to the lord of the covenant.”

(5) Jeremiah

Jeremiah, in his application of the marriage metaphor, employs his own method and approach by contrasting Israel's initial faithful love as a bride during the wilderness period with/and her conduct of infidelity after settlement in the Promised Land (2:2b,3,6,7ff). It is clear that Jeremiah, as Hosea and Ezekiel, uses אהב in the sense of 'love' in a marital relationship to designate Israel's affection towards YHWH during their 'honeymoon'. Although covenantal overtones can be identified,¹ this exegete prefers to believe that in this context אהב serves to intensify the relationship, making it more intimate than the impersonal relationship metaphor between vassal and his master, in order to create emotional impact for what follows. Israel's infidelity is further described in chapters 2-3 in highly emotional terms of the marriage metaphor, as an extra-marital love-affair with many lovers such as the gods

¹ As e.g. indicated by Holladay 1986:82-83.

and their political allies, endangering the relationship and their love for YHWH to the point of a threatening divorce.

In other occurrences in the book of Jeremiah, it is mainly used to describe Israel's love that went astray, i.e. to 'strangers' (2:25), to seek 'lovers' (2:33, see also 22:20,22; 30:14), they loved the falsities of the prophets and priests (5:31). Israel loved and served 'the sun and moon and all the host of heaven' (8:2), and loved to wander (14:10). Finally, in 31:3, the everlasting love of YHWH for Israel, the very reason for his continued faithfulness to Israel, is the hope for the restoration of Israel and the land.

6.2.3.3.2 Bride, bridal days (כלולה)

This expression, a sole occurrence in the book of Jeremiah and in the OT, can be interpreted as the actual ceremony of marriage (so Brown e.a. 1968:483 – 'thy betrothal-time'), or the first days of the marriage (honeymoon) as rendered by the NEB in the translation 'your bridal days' (McKane 1986:28). The LXX does not shed any more light on the matter with its translation *τελειώσεώς σου*, which means 'perfection, fulfillment', and thus refers to the actual consummation of marriage. The term as used in the book of Jeremiah is generally accepted as being related to the commonly used כלה = 'bride' (e.g. in Jer 2:32; 7:34; 16:9; 25:10; 33:11 and Isa 49:18; 61:10; 62:5) or also 'daughter-in-law' (e.g. in Hos 4:13,14 and Ezk 22:11). The alternate commonly used terms to refer to a wife or woman, איש/אשה, are also frequently used in the book of Jeremiah in other contexts. It seems that this special term is an apt parallel for נער (youth), used in the foregoing expression, and that it refers to 'the time when one is a bride' (Holladay 1986:83) or 'the first days of a marriage' (McKane 1986:28). The bridal days of the young bride, qualified by אהב, as recalled by the husband, were characterised as 'youthful devotion' or 'the devotion of your youth' (As translated by the NRSV. See also Thompson 1989:163).

6.2.3.4 How you followed after me (לכתך אחרי)

The verb root הלך has many uses in the sense of 'go, come, walk' in terms of persons, animals, and inanimate things (Brown e.a. 1968:229-237) to denote spatial movement

between a starting point and destination, and most probably echoing the early nomadic and trans migratory history of Israel (Helfmeyer 1978:390). Of special interest is the transpositioning from secular uses to the theological usage in metaphorical constructions. This shows that the Hebrew language is also familiar with the metaphorical concept, **Life is a journey**, which is applied as **Religious life is a journey** and **Religious (or moral) life is a way** (דרך). Moses shows the newly appointed judges ‘the way they are to go’ in Ex 18:20 (“*teach them the statutes and instructions and make known to them the way they are to go and the things they are to do*”).

The expression ‘walking before God’ in the sense of ‘live and move openly before him’, is found in Gen 17:1; 24:30; 48:14. To ‘walk with God’ is said of Enoch (Gen 5:22,24), and Noah (Gen 6:9), and is also used by Malachi (2:6), and Micah (6:8) in the sense of ‘to live a life in intimate companionship with God’ (Helfmeyer 1978:392-394).

Uses of ‘walking in the ways (paths) of YHWH’ in Deuteronomy (5:33; 8:6; 26:17; 28:9) and by the Deuteronomist (Jos 21:43f; Jug 2:22; 1 Ki 2:3; 314; 11:33,38; 2 Ki 21:22) emphasise the obedience to the commandments of YHWH as the way of life for Israel. The expression most probably “*serves to designate Israel’s covenant obligation as the holy people of Yahweh*” and in many cases “*refers to worship of Yahweh alone, to the exclusion of other gods*” (Helfmeyer 1978:396,397). Usages in the prophetic literature (Jer 7:23; Isa 42:24; 48:17; Hos 14:10 (NRSV v9); Mic 4:2) also refer to the human side of the covenant, and are based on the covenant structure. However, these occurrences might be considered as Deuteronomistic interpolations, so that the origin and first appearances of the expression can be assigned to Deuteronomy and Deuteronomistic literature.

A variety of expressions such as ‘walking in the good’ (1 Ki 8:36; Jer 6:16), ‘integrity’ or ‘uprightness’ (especially in Psalms and Proverbs), ‘uprightly’ (Isa 57:2), ‘blameless way’ (Ps 101:6), in ‘the paths of righteousness’ (Pro 8:20), in faithfulness or truth (Ps 26:3; 86:11), although not mentioning YHWH explicitly, are related to the expression ‘walking in the ways of YHWH’. More clearly related are expressions such as ‘walking in the law’

(Ex 16:4),¹ ‘walking in the name of YHWH’ (Mic 4:2; Zec 10:12), ‘walking in YHWH’s light’ (Job 29:3) or ‘the light of YHWH’s countenance’ [Ps 89:16(NRSV v15)], ‘walking in the fear of YHWH’ (Neh 5:9) (Helfmeyer 1978:396-401).

The great variety of all the above-mentioned expressions relating to the root **הלך** demonstrate clearly how these concepts became settled, and conventionalised in the Hebrew language. They are hardly recognised as metaphorically structured from the concepts **Religious life is a journey** or **Religious life is a way**. The second person feminine singular suffix of the verb makes it possible to interpret the expression **לכתך אחרי** as a continuation of the marriage metaphor denoting how **The bride followed the husband in loving loyalty**. According to the ANE marital customs, the bridegroom was only allowed to take his bride to his home after four months of the consummation of the marriage. It was expected from her to follow (after) him on the journey to his residence, which will also become her home.

The LXX omits the following expression, ‘in the wilderness, in a land not sown’, and translates the Hebrew term **אחרי** - ‘after me’, with **τοῦ ἐξακολουθησαί σε τῷ ἁγίῳ Ἰσραηλ** - ‘after the Holy one of Israel.’ McKane (1986:27) suggests the possibility that the Hebrew text available to the translators omitted the phrase and that **אחרי** was paraphrased by them as ‘after the Holy one of Israel’. The Greek verb **ἐξακολουθεω** denotes ‘to follow, in obedience, to depend on’ which fits the marriage scene. It therefore still remains an attractive option to continue the marriage metaphor in the expression ‘how you followed after me’, on the journey through the wilderness, to the husband’s residence, the promised land, called YHWH’s heritage in Jer 2:7. This notion is supported by the view, which claims that the name Asherah is derived from the Ugaritic word for ‘after’, in the sense of ‘a wife following her husband’. According to this view, Asherah therefore means ‘wife/consort’ (Margalit 1990:268). Weinfeld (1972:83n) states that the Hebrew expression **הלך אחרי** and its Akkadian

¹ Also frequently used in the books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel. See e.g. Jer 9:12(13); 26:4; 32:23; 44:10,23, and Ezk 5:6,7; 11:12,20; 18:17; 20:13,19,21; 33:15; 36:27; 37:24.

equivalent both have a conjugal connotation. This makes the expression ideal for an interpretation in a context of a marriage metaphor.

Thus, in summation, from the basic concept **Life is a journey**, the expression **Loyalty is to follow someone**, is invoked. In the context of v2bff, a religious relationship between humans and a deity, as well as religious loyalty, is experienced as to follow the deity. Therefore, the expression in v2b can also be viewed to be metaphorically structured as **Bridal loyalty is to follow your husband**, resulting in the concept **Religious loyalty is to follow your deity**.

6.2.3.5 In the wilderness, in a land not sown (במדבר בארץ לא זרועה)

The LXX translates the expression with τοῦ ἐξακολουθήσαι σε τῷ ἁγίῳ Ἰσραηλ - ‘after the Holy one of Israel.’

6.2.3.5.1 The wilderness

A major problem with the positive reference to the Sinai tradition in Jer 2:2b-3, is the fact that almost all other Biblical references are negative in describing Israel’s rebellious behaviour in the wilderness.¹ This led to the conclusion by some researchers viewing חסד and אהבה as referring to YHWH’s loyalty and love towards Israel.² Keil (1975:50,51) defends the Jeremianic statement regarding Israel’s loyalty in the wilderness by arguing:

“The youth of Israel is the time of sojourn in Egypt and of the exodus theme (Hos. ii. 17, xi. 1)The courtship comprises the time from the exodus out of Egypt till the concluding of the covenant at Sinai (Ex. xix. 8).....History knows of no apostasy of Israel from its God and no idolatry of the people during the time from the exodus out of Egypt till the arrival at Sinai, and of this time alone Jeremiah speaks.”

¹ See Deu 9:6 and 24; Ps 106:7,13,14; Isa 48:8; Hos 11:1.

² McKane 1986:27.

His argument, however, is too technical and not so convincing. Together with other commentators Israel's 'youth' is interpreted as time of 'betrothal' or 'espousal' (Carroll 1986:119), in Egypt, and the following expression 'your love as a bride' as the 'honeymoon' in the wilderness with the constitution of the covenant at Sinai as the actual wedding ceremony (Craigie 1991:24). However, the context only mentions 'the devotion of your youth' and 'your love as a bride' with reference to the wilderness period. Besides, Jeremiah and his contemporaries certainly would have been familiar with the negative side of the exodus from available sources, as for instance articulated by Ezekiel.¹

I tend to agree with Carroll (1986:119) who states that an idyllic image of the past is presented. This is due to the natural human tendency to idealise the past as 'the good old days'. In fact, if YHWH, through the formulation of Jeremiah and his contemporaries, evaluates the wilderness tradition favourably, the recent situation of their time must have been critical indeed. Nevertheless, to my mind, the brief account of Israel's loyalty during the lean years of the wilderness journey (also posed in v6) serves the purpose of setting up the positive side in contrast to the negative picture of Israel's disloyalty in the 'plentiful' Promised Land (v7) for the quarrel that follows (see Craigie 1991:23 for a similar argumentation).

6.2.4 Summary

The contents of YHWH's speech in this verse, in terms of the marriage and related metaphorical terms, could be briefly paraphrased as **YHWH, the husband, remembers positively how the nation as a young bride in loving loyalty followed him as bridegroom through the difficult times of the wilderness.**²

6.3 The continuation of the marriage metaphor in 2:3-4:2

Although the following utterance in v3 contains metaphorical constructions mapped from the cultic and/or agricultural source domain, it is an attractive option to interpret it as

¹ See Ezk 20:5-26 especially vv 7,8,13,16,21,24 where he states that Egypt is the origin of their idolatry practices which they continued during the wilderness period.

² Metaphorical language cannot be paraphrased or translated without loss of meaning, due to the fact that metaphor entails experienced truth and its 'open-endedness'. See Black 1984:23 and Searle 1984:123.

signifying the husband's attitude of appreciation for his precious bride and his loving protection against third party meddling. It could be argued that it is typical of Jeremiah's literary style to change from one metaphorical concept to another and to another which one could call poetic 'agility'. By means of this technique, he actually strengthens his main metaphor and main line of thought by employing other metaphors. This technique, called *'like stringing beads'* by Kruger (PA 1983:107ff), is also characteristic of Hosea's metaphorical language usage. Another way of viewing it is the possibility of Jeremiah applying one metaphorical concept within another, or experiencing one in terms of another or borrowing from one concept to describe another. Zipor (1995:88)¹ argues that Jeremiah applies one metaphor after the other, forgetting the metaphor he is busy with, using a technique of *"a metaphor within a metaphor"* (p88). If one of these assumptions is correct, the marriage metaphor and related terminology can be further employed in the interpretation of ch. 2:2b to at least ch. 4:2. If 2:2b-4:2 is viewed as a literary unit, regardless of the differences in gender and number of nouns and verbs, the interpretation could also be continued to follow the line of thought. The line of thought would be the uniting principle. The application of the marriage metaphor in the interpretation demonstrates that there exists a line of thought, in fact, 'a method in the madness' of 'the haphazard compilation of disparate poems' as claimed by Carroll.² It is the aim of this study to explore this thesis with the aid of the conceptual theory of metaphor. This will take place within the canonical unit of Jer 2:2b-4:2, supported by the available knowledge about the ANE customs regarding marriage and the role of a woman in the OT society.

The following presents a preliminary scanning of 2:3- 4:2 for metaphorical concepts applied to determine the viability of this assumption/thesis.

6.3.1 His precious bride

The utterance in v3 uses the terms 'holy' and 'first fruits', which are both drawn from the cultic domain, to emphasise the special status Israel enjoyed, as well as YHWH's

¹ The aim of Zipor's article (pp90/91) is directed towards the possibility of some 'personal traumatic experience' underlying the unmarried prophet's peculiar handling of metaphors within the marriage metaphor relating to the unfaithfulness of the 'hated-beloved woman'.

² Carroll 1986:115. See also his comment on p38 stating that the book of Jeremiah *"might be described better as a miscellany of disparate writings - a gallimaufry of writings..."*.

appreciative attitude towards Israel. The preciousness of this privileged status of Israel is further emphasised by the protection rendered against its enemies by YHWH. Again, eating the holy first-fruits as offering by anyone was forbidden and is also drawn from the cultic domain.

The possible metaphorical concepts at play here entail The deity regards **Israel** as **cultically holy** to him; The deity regards Israel as the **cultic offering** of the first fruits of his harvest; (The deity is a farmer?); The human act of eating means to attack someone; The eating of YHWH's holy first fruit offerings will be punished. In using these concepts from the cultic domain, the utterance in v3 emphasises the fact that YHWH viewed and treated Israel as his precious bride and wife.

6.3.2 A marital quarrel

YHWH's question in v5 could be interpreted as a marital lawsuit (Craigie 1991:27) or family quarrel (Carroll 1986:123), where the husband demands that his wife must state his wrongdoings in their ruined marriage. The wife 'went far from' her husband, in fact 'went after' worthless partners. Why? These two verbs, 'went far from' and 'went after', although standard conventional language, can be viewed as metaphorically applied in contrast to how the bride loyally 'followed' the husband in the beginning of their marriage. The husband brought her from Egypt (representing conditions of slavery), led her safely on a demanding journey through a difficult land (v6) to his heritage, a 'plentiful land' (as opposed to the wilderness). This is in line with the marital customs of ANE where a man could buy a slave to be his wife, and then takes her to his place after the marriage ceremony. Even in an arranged or ordinary marriage situation, the bride stays on at her parents' place for at least four months, after which the husband could take her to his home to stay there permanently.

The metaphorical concept of the marital quarrel namely **Quarrel is to ask for a reason**, in which the deity as the husband inquires about the reason for the wife's infidelity, is at stake here. Other concepts regarding YHWH presented here entail **YHWH is the Leader of Israel** (v6), **YHWH is an Advisor of Israel** (Where is the Lord? vv6 and 8), **YHWH is an Heritor of land** and/or **an Owner of land**, all drawn from the source domain of human

links and activities. The concepts fit in well with the ideas of the marriage metaphor presenting YHWH as the leading husband with his bride on journey to his property, and playing an advisory and protecting role in the marital relationship. Furthermore, Israel is metaphorically depicted in v5 as **The wife who deserts her husband** ('they went far from me') and **The wife who prefers other parties** ('they went after worthless things'). The religious disloyalty of a devotee to a deity, opposed to his loyalty to another deity is experienced in terms of marital disloyalty.

6.3.3 Third parties involved

Further extension of the interpretation entails that the wife, instead of gratefully persevering in her devotion to and love for her husband, she defiled and abominated his household (v7), by ignoring the husband (v6), and by transgressing every rule (v8). The husband therefore accuses her of forsaking (v13) and changing (v11) him for other worthless partners (vv11 and 13). In doing this, she became worthless (v5), plundered (v14), a slave (v14) instead of maintaining her status as holy wife (v3) of her husband. The metaphorical concepts of **YHWH as Leader** (v6), and **Landowner**, or **Farmer** as well as **Israel is an ungrateful wife who defiles YHWH's sacred heritage** with her disloyal conduct come into play in v7

6.3.4 A bad choice

The references to fountain and water in v13 and v18, if viewed against the proverb demanding marital loyalty in terms of "*drink water from your own cistern*" (Pro 5:15-20), could also be interpreted as marriage related. The wife's unexplainable (v10), shocking (v12) and stupid behaviour of infidelity, in exercising her choice in favour of third parties, caused her 'plundered' condition (v14-16). She will gain nothing from her partners/lovers (v18). She brought it upon herself by forsaking her husband (v17) and therefore will be punished by the husband (v19). The metaphorical concept of water plays an important role to emphasise the bad choice made by Israel, the wife, in leaving and exchanging YHWH for other third parties. YHWH is depicted as **the Fountain of living water**, and the third parties are **home-made, cracked water cisterns**. Again, the reference in v18 echoes the idea of 'drink water from your own cistern,' however, here in a clear political context. The

verbs meaning ‘exchanged’ and ‘forsaken’ can also contribute some metaphorical support for the marriage metaphor in the sense of **exchanging partners** or **to forsake your beloved**.

6.3.5 Accused of whoring

The argumentation in the lawsuit or quarrel further states that she broke the marital alliance a long time ago by starting to play whore at every opportunity (v20). The reference to the vine, which became wild in v 21, could be related to the unerasable stain of guilt mentioned in 22 if it refers to menstrual blood. The wife denies the accusation (23), but her argument is met by harsh counter arguments. The charge against her is formidable, her sexual lust is like an animal on heat, and nobody needs to exert any effort to find her. She is always available (v23 and 24). Despite warnings against exhaustion, she preferred to go after her beloved ‘strangers’ (v25). The basic metaphorical concept employed from the domain of marital rights entails **Whoring is marital infidelity** and invokes the concept **Religious infidelity equals whoring**. The metaphorical concepts, **The nation is a choice vine** (from **People are plants**), **The nation is a vine planted by YHWH** (depicting YHWH as a Farmer), **Israel is a wild vine** (from **People are plants**), **The guilt of the nation is an unerasable stain**, **The nation is a camel, a wild ass on heat** (from **People are animals**), and **The nation loves strangers**, serve to emphasise and elaborate on the nature of whoring as a human activity. **Religious infidelity is** therefore experienced and described as **whoring**. The wife Israel religiously degraded herself to that level.

6.3.6 Ashamed

The house of Israel, a metonymy (from the **Part for whole** schema and the basic concept **Governing people are houses**) meaning the royal families, their officials, and the cultic clergy in their service, shall or should be ashamed of their conduct. Again, this statement following after the accusation of whoring denotes that the marriage metaphor could still be in play. The metaphorical concept **To be caught trespassing is a shame**, is drawn from the human domain of crime and is applied to describe the response of devotees to their religious guilt as to be ashamed.

6.3.7 No help from the third parties

In v27 the metaphorical concepts **The deity is the father of the devotee**, and **The deity is the mother of the devotee**, most probably reflect Israel's relationship with the fertility cult of Baal and his consort. The third parties meddling in the relationship between YHWH and Israel (see 2:8,23) and with whom the wife is whoring are once again revealed. Only in times of trouble will the wife turn to the husband for assistance, but they cannot help her (vv27c, 28) probably due to the worthlessness of her lovers (see 2:5,8,11,13). Again an experience from the domain of human activities namely **Worthless is to be of no help** (which could also be viewed from the domain of the human relationship of marriage in the sense of the husband must be of help to his wife, otherwise he is worthless) invokes the concept **Deities who cannot help their devotees are worthless**.

6.3.8 No marital assistance for rebels

The wife bemoans the lack of assistance from the husband's side, but his verdict is sustained. She rebelled against him (v29). In vv 28,29, the argumentation progresses to the point where the husband in despair states that not even his punitive measures helped to bring his wife and her children to other insights. The verb 'rebelled' and the action of 'correctional punishment' are covenantal terms used in treaties between the king and his vassal, and are applied here to describe religious disloyalty. The concept **Disloyalty is to rebel** could probably also be applied within a marital context, invoking the metaphorical concept **the wife's disloyalty to her Husband means she rebels against her Husband**. According to the ANE marital customs, the husband can impose correctional punishment in reaction to his wife's uncustomary behaviour.

6.3.9 The husband was always available

Although the husband was always available, the wife preferred her freedom to meddle around with other lovers (v31). In the rhetorical question and the assumed answer, the accessibility of the husband to the wife is described in metaphorical concepts borrowed from nature. In nature, **'wilderness' and 'darkness' denote inaccessibility to humans**.

Applied to the deity and his relationship with his devotees in rhetorical style, it evokes the metaphorical concept **the Deity was never inaccessible to his devotees** or formulated positively in a marital context, **the Husband was always available to his wife.**

6.3.10 Short memory

A clear marital reference comes into play in the comparison made in v 32 between the young bride and her bridal ornamentation. She does not forget things like that. The application of the rhetorical comparative question however, falls on YHWH. In the context of a marriage metaphor, a comparison between the bridegroom and YHWH would be effective. The question is whether the metaphorical concept **YHWH is the bridal ornamentation of the bride**, is at stake here. The emphasis of the comparison however, is on the human act of forgetting the deity/her husband. The irony is that a bride will not forget something so important to her, although it represents something materialistic, but **Israel, the wife of the deity, has forgotten YHWH, Israel's husband deity.** This could be viewed in contrast with the metaphorical statement in 2:2b **YHWH, the husband, remembers Israel's primal love and devotion.**

6.3.11 Sexpert

In v 33, Israel is accused of being such experts in seeking lovers that they have taught women of reputation some tricks of the trade. Again, the metaphor of Israel as a whoring wife comes into play. The third party/parties denoted metaphorically as 'lovers of Israel', and the verb 'to seek', constitute the metaphorical concept **to meddle with third parties in a relationship with the divine is to seek lovers.** The question here is whether the concept 'lovers' in this context refer to other deities or political powers or both.

6.3.12 Proof of guilt

The proof of Israel's guilt is obvious (v34). This is expressed in a metaphorical concept drawn from the domain of the human justice system where **Evidence is proof of guilt.** Therefore, evidence for Israel's religious guilt is submitted concerning their treatment of the poor. This constitutes a sin of Israel not mentioned thus far, and is mentioned in addition to the sin of seeking lovers. The sin of maltreatment of the poor is presented in a

submerged metaphorical concept from the human domain of criminality, namely the murdering of fellow human beings. The concept of **Maltreatment of people is murder** is therefore invoked. The just evidence at the murder scene is presented as blood on the clothing of the culprit, and that constitutes undisputed evidence. Reference to the innocence of the poor is again made in terms of the metaphorical concept **evidence is proof of guilt**. The innocence of the poor is described with a concept from the crime scene namely, burglary, but nobody caught them house-breaking. Thus, no evidence of guilt can be brought in against the poor, for they are innocent people. However, the guilt of the wife Israel is undisputedly clear for YHWH the husband.

6.3.13 Innocent? Judgement is on hand

Despite this indisputable evidence of the guilt of Israel, she pleads not guilty, assuming that the anger of YHWH has cooled down (v35) and therefore handles this matter very lightly (v36a). The denial of guilt hastens the judgement by YHWH who finds no mitigation, but rather aggravating circumstances. This still fits well into the scenario of a **lawsuit** or a **marital quarrel** between husband and wife as commenced in 2:5 and 9.

6.3.14 No help, only more shame

The third parties to whom the wife has turned, Egypt and Assyria, are called by name, but unfortunately, they will not be able to help her (v36), because YHWH has rejected them too (v37b). In fact, they will add to her already accumulated shame and despair by abusing her situation of trouble. A situation of a need for political assistance from Israel's side is to be assumed here. The humiliation of Israel is metaphorically described (perhaps it represents a metonymy = **Part for whole**) in v37a as '**come away with your hands on your head**', probably an analogy of Tamar's conduct in 2 Sa 13:19 (Holladay 1986:112).

6.3.15 Beware of the point of no return

The metaphorical concepts switch back to the marital and sexually related terminology in 3:1 and 2. The rhetorical question in v1a sets up a hypothetical case of comparison, taken from the marital case of **a husband who divorced his wife and the wife remarried another man**. Can he take her back to be his wife? The answer assumes an emphatic no in

accordance with the Mosaic law in Deu 24:1-4. He is not permitted to take her back, because such an act will cause pollution of the land, and would be abhorrent to YHWH. This metaphorically signals the warning of YHWH addressed to Israel, that a second marriage of the divorced wife (3:8) with another deity/deities, will create an irreconcilable situation in the relationship between YHWH and the Northern Kingdom. It invokes the metaphorical concept **Religious disloyalty leads to a divorce between the deity and the devotee**. This is based on the basic concept **the husband has the right to divorce his unfaithful wife**.

Based on the Mosaic marital law, a second marriage would mean that the relationship will reach the **point of no return**. Although Israel is not married to another deity/deities, her meddling with third parties is however experienced in even worse metaphorical terms, drawn from the domain of human sexual conduct (v3c), than the wife in the hypothetical case (v1a). Her position is described as **'whoring with many lovers,'** a situation causing another insurmountable obstacle for the whoring wife to return to her husband. Such a wife will have no desire to return to the relationship of unity with a single husband because of her sexual experience with many lovers. Furthermore, sexual affairs of a married woman outside the marital bond were viewed as serious offenses and labelled her as a whore, which can lead to severe punishment (Carroll 1986:134).

6.3.16 Continuation in 3:2-4:2

The continuation of the line of thought in terms of the marriage metaphor can also be followed in the rest of the passage. The following represents brief comments on each verse: In 3:2 the wife is declared **Guilty of sexual promiscuity**; in v3 the Husband mentions the previous punitive measures applied, namely **Privileges (rain) withheld**; and in vv3,4 and 5 the wife is accused by the Husband of **idle talk** and taking him and the problem lightly.

The story of the two faithless whoring sisters, follows in the prose of 3:6-11, and plays a pivotal role in the understanding of the marriage metaphor in 2:2-4:2, as well as the transition from the focus on the Northern Kingdom to call to return and the case of Judah in 4:3ff. Both sisters were married to YHWH. The Northern Kingdom, as vassal and ally

of foreign powers and their gods, played whore, with the result that the Husband filed a divorce against her (the fall of Samaria). Sister Judah saw this and the consequences (v8), but followed suit. Her return to YHWH (the reforms of Hezekiah and Josiah) was not genuine (v10). A comparison of the conduct of the two sisters, although both are guilty of faithlessness, indicates the view of the Yahwistic prophet/author(s) that 'Israel (the Northern Kingdom) has shown herself less guilty than false Judah' (v11).

The story is followed by **an appeal** addressed to the Northern Kingdom **to return** to the husband in vv12 and 14, which is repeated in v22. The only condition will be **an acknowledgement of guilt** (v13). The prose of vv15-18 contains promises of the Husband **to appoint new chaperones** (shepherds = leaders), as well as the unification of the Northern Kingdom and Judah (v18). In vv19 and 20, the husband reveals something of his thoughts and intentions, but the wife's response was disappointing. The simile of the deserting wife is also metaphorical constructed and supports the theme of a context of a marital metaphor.

The Yahwistic prophet/author(s) hears the **weeping voice** of regret of the remnant of the Northern Kingdom in diaspora, this time described in terms of the **Father/mother and children** metaphor (v21). The **request to return to the father** is repeated (v22), and the poet formulates and confession on behalf of the people (vv23-25). It entails **an admission** that they rather sought assistance elsewhere, in treaties and involvement in the idolatrous practices of foreign powers, instead of seeking the salvation of YHWH (see 2:6 and v8). In the process they, their children, and the agricultural produce of the land were abused by these powers (v24). The worshipping of the gods of the foreign powers at the high places were worthless and unprofitable (2:5,8,11) endeavours with cracked water cisterns (2:13). A prospective view, addressed to Israel (= the Northern Kingdom), of the blessings and advantages of returning to YHWH who will then form a new covenant, is given in the closing verses (4:1-2). The addressee in 4:3 changes to Judah and Jerusalem.

6.3.17 Summary

The aforementioned show that a line of thought exists. 'There is method in the madness.' Although the signs of interpolation and joining of short oracles as alleged by

commentators are evident, a unity in the structuring and line of thought is not out of reach. Although some of the interpretations mentioned above appear to be far fetched, for instance, the sexual connotation regarding the water fountain and cisterns in 2:13, and the menstrual blood stains and the vine in 2:21,22, the possibilities due to the open-endedness of the poetic metaphors are endless. One must bear in mind that the prophet/author (s) did not work within strict metaphorical categories, structures, and domains according to a specific literary or metaphor-theory in mind. Poetic freedom is applied and metaphors from all over the spectrum of life are employed to convey their message or messages. They most probably did not think of a metaphor as merely a metaphor, or a figurative way of speech or only as a linguistic image as a decoration or a didactical tool. To them, metaphors described the reality of matters and conveyed the truth and the seriousness of their message. One could assume that the Yahwistic scribes, authors and editors or Yahwists were masters of their mother tongue and therefore quite competent to detect irregularities, or the appearance of an unorganised and non-sense ‘conglomeration.’

6.4 CONCLUSION

The analysis of the marriage metaphor indicated that it served as an intimate basis for the depiction of the relationship between YHWH and Israel (2:2b). It also formed the point of departure for the marital quarrel which follows in 2:5-4:2. The marriage was severely damaged by Israel’s infidelity by means of her involvement with third parties. The third parties in 2:5-4:2 can be interpreted as other gods (as generally indicated by commentators) or as political allies and their gods (as indicated in this study, in support of the suggestion of Carroll 1986:128). Several marital related concepts as indicated, are utilised in 2:5-4:2. These include: sexually related metaphors, especially pertaining to sexual misconduct, which can be interpreted within a marital context.

6.4.1 The origin of sexually related metaphors

The question arises whether these concepts were drawn from the sexual rituals of the Canaanite Baal fertility cult (see e.g. Hos 4:10-15). These terms referring to sexual practices were not investigated or discussed due to the fact that scholars differ greatly in the interpretation of this phenomenon. It is also a much-debated issue and some scholars

refute the existence of such practices, while others maintain that it was part of the fertility cult (see Ackerman 1992:112,152,182ff; Holladay 1986:98; Mulder 1975:198ff. See Slager 2000:431-438 for a summary of the terminology). The question is thus left open.

In this study, it was assumed that these concepts were metaphorically constructed from the domain of the human sexual life and its misconducts, to describe disloyalty and faithlessness to a deity. This approach is based on the fact that activities such as child-sacrifice to Molech, and the inquiring of mediums and wizards, are also described as 'prostituting oneself', to a divine entity (Lev 20:5 and 6).

6.4.2 The origin of the marriage metaphor

Hosea (chs 1-3) was the first prophet to apply the marriage metaphor on the basis of his experience or the symbolic act of a marriage. His portrayal of the relationship between YHWH and Israel represents a unique application of the bond between a deity and his people found nowhere in the ANE (Kruger PA 1992:7). Jeremiah obviously borrows this image from Hosea to address the Northern Kingdom in 2:4-4:2 and utilises it as basis for the marital quarrel to describe their sins in terms of the familiar terminology of Hosea. Ezekiel (chs 16 and 23) extended the use of the marriage metaphor in his versions and depictions of the development of the relationship between YHWH and Israel. He used Hosea's basic concept and Jeremiah's extensions of the concept (e.g. the story of the two sisters in Jer 3:6-10).

It is also possible that the marriage metaphor and its sexually related terms are not only based on the fertility prostitution customs of the Canaanite fertility cult, but also on the ANE relationship between Baal and his Asherah(s). The subject of YHWH and his Asherah as discovered in the inscriptions of Kuntillet 'Arjud and Khirbet el Qom (Keel 1998:210ff), alludes to an association or a relationship between YHWH and Asherah in pre-exilic times. To some scholars this relationship is an attested fact (Ackerman 1992:66; Wyatt 1999:104), but others are hesitant and reject the notion (Keel 1998:237). However, to this researcher it seems that the marital relationship between YHWH and Israel is the Yahwistic counterpart of the Baal-Asherah(s) relationship and could have triggered the Biblical origin and application of the marriage metaphor (see Margalit 1990:268). Israel is

not only YHWH's Asherah or consort, but his wife, and it appears that both the Northern Kingdom and Judah were accommodated in this relationship (3:6-11).

6.4.3 The function of the marriage metaphor

The usage of the marriage metaphor depicts the alienation between YHWH and Israel. This alienation entered the relationship through Israel's apostasy by meddling with third parties. Jeremiah's extension of the metaphor means that the alienation led to the separation and divorce between YHWH and the Northern Kingdom. However, the caring Husband YHWH still persisted in calling on her to return to him. Simultaneously, he called Judah to return to him in order that the marital bond between YHWH and the two kingdoms could be restored. This clearly indicates that the marriage metaphor served the purpose of promoting the ideal of a unified Israel (3:18). YHWH promised a new covenantal, marital commitment for a united Israel (Jer 31:31-34).

The Yahwists utilised this metaphor and the sexually related terminology for emotive purposes to shock the audience. They also used it for didactical purposes to convince them of their sins of apostasy. It provided impact to the message. Furthermore, the relationship between YHWH and Israel is described in terms of the intimate human relationship of marriage to emphasise the close, personal relationship that exists between YHWH and his people. The uniqueness of YHWH in the ANE-world of deities, expressed by his presence among his people (Deu 4:7 = in being near to his people) is once again emphasised through the usage of the metaphor of the intimate relationship between husband and wife.

Theologically speaking, the marriage metaphor represents a strong image of 'divine persuasion', but also of divine 'coercion' and 'divine luring'.¹ The Yahwistic prophet uses the attractive and caressing effect of the marriage metaphor to depict YHWH as the unblemished husband who is not responsible for the deterioration of the relationship and the resultant unattended needs of the wife. However, he also utilises the negative terminology pertaining to marital transgressions and sexual misconduct, to lead audiences

¹ Gnuse (1997:308f) comments that what seems harsh and tyrannical terminology to the westerner today, might have been viewed as 'divine persuasion' and 'luring' to the more primitive and rough peoples of the first millennium BC.

to new perspectives and insights in the futility of their idolatrous practices, and the fatality for not trusting in YHWH.

6.4.4 The style in the usage of metaphorical language

The analysis of the marriage metaphor in 2:2b and the effort to demonstrate the possibility of the continuation of the line of thought in 2:2b-4:2, illustrated the characteristic style of the usage of metaphor, especially in the poetic sections of the book of Jeremiah. It indicates the poetic agility applied in the tendency to change from one metaphor to another. This style was also observed in the poetic passages pertaining to idolatrous practices analysed in chapter 4.

It is clear that metaphor is not treated as a mere Aristotelian decorative addition to language. Rather, it metaphorically expresses the understanding of religious experiences and insights gained of the role of YHWH, Israel, and the gods, as experienced and handed down to the prophet/author(s) who were involved in the origin and the compilation of the book of Jeremiah. It seems that the prophet/author is not aware of the fact that he is using metaphors and thus does not attempt to explain the poetic metaphoric concepts. In a situation where an explanation was needed, symbolic acts were performed [e.g. the potter (ch 18), the broken earthenware jug (ch 19), the sign of the yoke (ch 27)]. In other cases visions were employed [(e.g. the figs (ch 24), and the cup of YHWH's wrath (25:15ff)].

6.4.5 The source domains for metaphors

The usage of the marriage metaphor, which is supplemented by related concepts and a great variety of other metaphors drawn from different source domains, indicate the prophet/author(s) concern and enthusiasm, his/their experiences and insights, pertaining to the relationship between YHWH, Israel and the gods. The great variety of metaphors utilised are drawn from a diversity of source domains including especially human links and activities, as well as from the agricultural, weather and war-domains. The aspects of culture, and customs, personal experiences as well as the ANE theological worldview and thoughts are all reflected in the usage of metaphor. The book of Jeremiah testifies about a prophet, authors and editors who are members of a broader ANE religious world.

However, they worshipped and served a unique Deity of a distinctive monotheistic religion in a polytheistic Baal-infested world.

6.4.6 Worthlessness versus an unblemished service record

Regarding the theme of this study, namely the worthlessness and foreignness of the other deities and their iconic representations, opposed to the active living and true God, the marriage metaphor contributes some meaningful insights. YHWH is depicted as the loving, caring deity, deeply involved, and accessible to his people (2:31), communicating with them through his true prophets. However, he is also the aggravated husband, aggrieved by the faithlessness and disloyalty of his wife in her involvement with third parties and their gods, which could make her inaccessible to Him (3:1). He is aggravated by the fact that they seek assistance from others (2:5,13), and gave recognition to other gods for their security and crops (2:28). They were involved in idolatrous practices and other malpractices such as oppressing the poor (2:34), and forgetting YHWH (2:32), but in their times of trouble they expected help from him (2:28).

According to the Yahwists, YHWH had a clean service record of performance throughout the history of Israel, but still the Northern Kingdom did not trust him with their security and fertility needs. They sought help from third parties and their gods, and in the process lost their land and capital Samaria. The ‘other parties and their gods’ allegedly providing fertility privileges and security against the enemy, in which they trusted for help, were “worthless” and could not save them from the punitive measures of the aggravated husband.

Jeremiah introduced his preaching by utilising Hosea’s marriage metaphor of the Northern Kingdom, to illustrate that Judah is guilty of the same and even worse conduct (3:11). The rest of the book of Jeremiah utilises sporadically marital and sexually related metaphorical terminology, together with a great variety of other metaphors, to emphasise Judah’s guilt and punishment. Judah, as well as the Northern Kingdom, is to blame for the failure of the relationship and the resultant hardship of the destruction of their land, the capital and temple and the consequent exile. Despite the whole of Israel’s history of disloyalty in the relationship, the husband still called for her return and their reconciliation. When this

failed, punitive measures had to be taken by the husband, but the opportunity for the restoration of the relationship with the remnant is still open. The prospect of a new covenant awaits them (31:31ff).

The usage of marriage and many other metaphors in the book of Jeremiah, links up with the older traditions (e.g. Hosea). However, Jeremiah utilises the terminology in his own creative way, with different as well as similar nuances. The usage, which reflects a process of the development of theological ideas as well as the metaphorical vocabulary, fits well into the idea of a progressive understanding and experience of a Yahwistic monotheism during the pre-exilic, exilic and post-exilic eras.

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Chapter 7

EVALUATION AND CONCLUSIONS

7.0 Introduction

This study regarding the metaphorical language usage pertaining to the relationship between YHWH, Israel and the gods in the book of Jeremiah represents metaphorically speaking a small leap into a large sea of metaphors. The book of Jeremiah presents a wide variety of theological metaphorical concepts mapped from a rich diversity of source domains. The favourite domains include e.g. the domain of human links and activities, and especially the domains of agricultural life, nature and war. However, it also features the creative application of conventional theological concepts and vocabulary of the OT, especially terminology drawn from the cult. In addition, typical ideas and concepts drawn from the theological ‘Umwelt’, namely the ANE religious world, constitute a major factor in the interpretation of metaphors. Through poetic metaphors, the book represents the Yahwistic theological anchors, as well as the interpretations and reinterpretations of their theology in times of several consecutive traumatic experiences in the history of Israel. On this basis the following results can now be tabled:

7.1 Israel’s idolatrous sins

Regarding the theme ‘YHWH, Israel and the gods’, the theological explanation and blame for the fall of the country, Jerusalem and the temple and the resultant exile, are ascribed to the collective sins of Israel. These sins included the idolatrous involvement of the contemporary pre-exilic Judah, its royal houses and their supporters, i.e. past and present, including the sins of idolatry of the Northern Kingdom. The desolated land, the droughts, and the lack of peace and crops during 597/6 and 587/6 BC, the occurrence of death and destruction, and especially the fall of the Judean state in 587/6 BC, are all ascribed to the punishment of YHWH due to Israel’s idolatrous history. This represents the view of the Yahwistic prophet, the exiled Yahwists who experienced the Babylonian onslaught, as well as those of them who returned to the land after the exile, and had to face the

deteriorated circumstances of their land and above all a land occupied by idolatrous foreigners (Neh 9:3). These sins were described in a variety of conventional OT terminology, but also by means of the creative application of these conventional terms, supplemented by creative metaphors, as indicated in the analysis above.

7.2 A theodicy

The explanation for the fall provides a theodicy on the questions: Where is God in our dilemma? Why did he allow these foreign powers and their gods to conquer us? Is YHWH weaker than these deities? The Yahwists had to grapple with these questions and needed to rethink and reinterpret their understanding of the role of YHWH in this. Simultaneously, the humiliating exile presented a challenge and opportunity to re-evaluate the history of the development of Israel, the royal houses, and its participation in idolatrous practices. Confronted with the mighty empire of Babylon and its impressive Marduk pantheon and iconic cult, the situation necessitated the theological justification and guidance for the interpretation of the disastrous realities of Exile. During this process of turmoil and crises, new theological concepts and ideas were created to expand the existing framework of monotheistic ideas and terminology, as well as to further Yahwistic, aniconic monotheism. After the fall of Babylon and the return to their homeland, the Yahwistic monotheists could draw from their theological experiences and understandings to guide the returned exiles and face the new challenge of intruders and foreigners in their land.

It was indicated in this study that metaphor played a major role in the Yahwistic observance and understanding processes of the role of YHWH, Israel and the gods in the traumatic experience of events surrounding and including 587/6 BC. In conveying their thoughts to fellow members of the community, the prophet, Yahwistic authors and redactors/editors, who all contributed to the literature in the book of Jeremiah, employed the linguistic creative structure and tool of their thought processes, namely metaphor, to express their convictions, to provide impact to their message and to convince their audiences. Therefore, on the basis of this study it can be stated that 'to theologize is to metaphorize'. Theological observances, experiences and understandings are predominantly metaphorically structured and verbalised, because there exists no other way in which the devotee could express theological experiences and the revelations given to

him/her. Metaphorical expressions therefore convey meaningful theological insights and provide valuable information regarding the theological significance of a concept.

7.3 A theory of metaphor for OT studies

In the overview of the development of theories of metaphor of the past two millennia presented in chapter two, it was concluded that metaphor is more than the decorative metaphor of Aristotle or even the imaginative linguistic tool of Romanticism. According to the conceptual theory “[t]he essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another” (Lakoff and Johnson 1980:5). This theory claims that metaphor is basically inherent to our thought processes which are primarily metaphorically structured. We observe, experience, understand, and eventually verbalise one thing in terms of another. In this way, our culture and worldview form an experiential basis of concepts and domains from which our thought processes will draw and map in the event of experiencing another thing.

This theoretic principle/ definition of metaphor was applied in the study to identify metaphors pertaining to the relationship between YHWH, Israel and the gods. On the basis of this study it can be concluded that the principle of ‘*understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another*’ provides a more effective way of identifying and analysing the basic metaphors of the OT, than the proposals of the substitution, comparison or interaction theories. It helps the exegete to detect and identify e.g. when a deity is experienced and described in terms of another concept. This resulted in the identification of a variety of metaphors and so-called submerged metaphors pertaining to YHWH, Israel, as well as the gods and their actions. The theory also proved to be more useful than others in its application in a canonical reading, because it helps the exegete to identify submerged related ideas and entailments in the context of the occurring metaphor(s).

7.4 Metaphor and the cultural worldview

An important factor for the exegesis of OT metaphorical language usage emphasised by the conceptual theory, relates to the fact that our experiences will differ from culture to

culture and therefore influences the process of understanding one thing in terms of another. This also affects our view of the so-called dead metaphors of the conventional language. According to the conceptual theory, the conventional language represents living concepts, because they are used frequently in an automatic and unconscious way in accordance with our culture and worldview. It is however not a case of all language is metaphor, because there exists enough basic concepts, which are not to be understood only through metaphor but rather on their own terms, and which serve as source domains (Lakoff and Turner 1989:133).

The problem identified for the exegesis of OT literature by both the above-mentioned aspects is the fact that we are far removed from the OT communities in time, language, culture, and worldview. In fact, we know very little of their world of religious thoughts, as well as the development stages of their language, to distinguish effectively between creative and conventional language usages, and to interpret these occurrences. This also includes the important role playing factors such as myths, superstitions, theological beliefs in their experience of the world of the divine, the underworld, and even their cultural and social environment. The OT represents only a minute portion of the literature of those times, or a specific era, which can provide us with information. It is only available in written form without the 'body language', the emotional aspects and a complete picture of the worldview involved. Likewise, the archaeological and iconographical evidence represents only fragments of artifacts over a period covering almost three quarters of a millennium or more. These fragments need to be interpreted through theories of people far removed in time and from that 'Umwelt'.

Nevertheless, this study indicated that the definition of metaphor posed by the conceptual theorists of metaphor, assisted in detecting more of the aspects of the OT world of religious thoughts as well as the cultural background. It helped the exegete to be more aware of and to focus on the religious thought processes and cultural factors that prevailed in the OT world, and specifically in the metaphorical language of the OT language user. The homilist must therefore expand his knowledge of metaphor and the role of our thought processes and especially the theological thoughts of the OT world by gleaning information from all extra-Biblical sources, not neglecting the OT literature as an important source.

Furthermore, the frequent occurrences of an expression does not automatically constitute it as conventional language. If that would be the case, certain metaphorical expressions (e.g. the frequently used marriage or covenant metaphors) used by Biblical writers should also be viewed as standard conventional theological expressions. To explain this, the 'distant' exegete needs an acceptable theory or a variety of possible theories regarding the emergence of Israel and its monotheism, as well as the compilation and finalisation of the OT. The process of the development of theological ideas and concepts in the OT needs to be acknowledged and reckoned with.

It can therefore be emphasised that knowledge of the latest archaeological and iconographical findings is indispensable for the exegete to broaden his/her perspective of the OT religious worldview. An approach which looks through only one keyhole by way of speaking, i.e. one fixed theory, limits the view.

7.5 The world of ANE theological thoughts

The role of the worldview of the exegete, who considers and explicates a metaphorically constructed expression, represents another minefield. He/she may unconsciously approach the marriage metaphor in the OT on the basis of a contemporary westernised concept and background of marital life, but what is at stake here are the marital life and customs of the OT and the ANE 'Umwelt' (Snyman 1993:106), together with the special motives of the Yahwistic group. In the analysis and interpretation of basic concepts e.g. **People are plants** or **People are animals**, the role of ANE symbolism and mythological thoughts cannot be ignored as expressed in iconographical evidence (Prinsloo 1999:339-359).

This study emphasised the importance of considering the role of the ANE worldview and religious thoughts, and is thus of utmost importance for the exegesis of metaphor in order to understand the basis (called grounding, or the experiential basis, or framework of reference) of the metaphorical concepts used in OT literature. Of equal importance for the exegetical process, is the fact that, when considering these worldview factors, to simultaneously focus on the context, reference, and function of the expressed metaphorical thought in the OT literature to determine its meaning. This is emphasised by the Relevance

theory of communication (Sperber and Wilson 1986), and is identified as a weakness of the conceptual theory of metaphor. Hermanson (1996:25) summarises the viewpoint as follows: *“metaphor is used and understood, not only within an individual sentence, or larger text, but also within the context of a certain situation, and within a certain society or group, speaking a specific language and having a specific culture.”*

7.6 The Jeremianic style in the usage of metaphor

The style of the application of metaphor in the book of Jeremiah can be characterised as revealing poetic agility or athleticism. There appears to be no uniformity in the usage of metaphorical language and the continuation of a specific concept as e.g. in the use of the marriage metaphor by Hosea (ch 1-3) or the extension of the same metaphor by Ezekiel (ch 16 and 23). Rather, the usage of metaphor in the poetic literature of the book of Jeremiah indicates the rapid movement from one metaphorical concept to another and back as indicated in ch 6. This feature of variation in metaphor usage constitutes indeed the methodology of the poet, namely of using one metaphor within another, discarding the metaphor presently occupying him (Zipor 1995:83-91). The variation of metaphorical concepts is generally ascribed to the compilation of various short independent oracles, or due to Deuteronomistic ‘interference’ (interpolations) by adding glosses to the original poetic text, or the use and ‘abuse’ of the original by an ideological minority Yahwistic monotheistic group. In the canonical approach of the literature, the feature of the ‘poetic agility’ of the Jeremianic style was considered and it helped the exegete to follow the development of the line of thought expressed in the oracles.

This study suggests that this feature makes sense if the line of thought in the metaphorical language usage is followed (as indicated in ch 6). Each different metaphor, rhetorical question and comparison employed, contribute to the development of the line of thought and argumentation in terms of e.g. the Jeremianic marriage metaphor. In a literary canonical reading of the poetry, employing the method of following the line of thought of a marriage metaphor occurring in 2:2-4:2, the compilation does not appear to be haphazardly organised (Carroll 1986:38ff) in an ‘untidy’ (McKay 1981:228, quoted by

Carroll p43) structure.¹ It can be assumed that the prophet/author, his scribe and/or editors, were obviously users familiar with their language. Clearly, they were linguistic, artistic experts in the art of writing in the ANE and Hebrew genres and style, especially in poetry. [see Korpel and de Moor (1988:1-61) regarding fundamentals of Ugaritic and Hebrew poetry; also van der Meer and de Moor (1988:vii-ix) regarding principles and steps of structural analysis of Biblical and Canaanite poetry]. However, these standards and style do not conform to the standards and style of the Western literary world. Therefore, one must allow the writer of OT literature to be an artist in his own milieu and individual style against the background of the ANE. This applies especially to his application of metaphor.

Furthermore, the poetic agility shown in the poetry of the book of Jeremiah indicates that the OT poet uses metaphor in a conventional way to express his thoughts, unconsciously of the fact that he is applying metaphors opposed to 'literal' language. However, the poet simultaneously applies metaphor in a conscious fashion, to express and convey his theological thoughts to his audiences in an effective way. He is indeed surfing the one wave of metaphor after another in order to illustrate, demonstrate and emphasise his message to the different audiences on the beaches of distress.

7.7 Metaphors relating to the relationship between YHWH, Israel and the gods

On the basis of the analysis of the metaphors pertaining to the relationship between YHWH, Israel and the gods, the following can be concluded:

The 'other gods' are constantly experienced and described in negative metaphorical concepts and conventional expressions. Pejorative language is employed to mock and humiliate these gods as incompetent to fulfill their duties as deities. No mercy is shown in the polemic against them and they are denigrated to the status of 'no gods', worthless, foreign, unprofitable things, who are cultically unacceptable deceptions. It is clear from the usage of these terms that they were experienced as representing a major threat to Yahwism.

¹ These comments of Carroll and McKay at least testify to the fact that the literature is not fabricated as alleged by the minimalists, but compiled from original short oracles and supplemented with redactional

In contrast to the 'other gods', YHWH is exalted in a variety of positive metaphors as the only, true, living God and King of Israel, the nations, and the universe. To name a few, He is the Husband, Advisor, Leader, Helper, Saviour, Father, Healer, Rainmaker, a Fountain of living water, etc for Israel. These expressions and many others as indicated in the analysis, promoted Him as the only living God who is actively involved in the history of Israel and their contemporary situation of distress. The Yahwists experienced, understood and expressed their concept of YHWH in metaphorical terms, which present Him as the only one who fulfills all expectations and duties of an ANE deity. However, He is also depicted in robust and negative metaphorical descriptions to indicate that He is actively involved as the Punisher, and in control of the disaster experienced by Israel (e.g. the Warrior, Judge, Snake handler, etc). The King YHWH employs nations to punish and eventually save a remnant of Israel to start a new relationship.

Israel is metaphorically presented as enjoying a special status in the relationship with YHWH (e.g. his bride, wife, the mother of his children, his daughter, the vine he planted etc). However, Israel is mainly depicted as the guilty party, responsible for the deterioration of the relationship between YHWH and Israel due to her idolatrous involvement, as well as the sufferer of her apostasy and resultant punishment.

To convey the message of the Yahwists, metaphor served as a vehicle of their thought processes pertaining to the polemic against the other gods. This message entailed that the mistakes of the past, namely Israel's apostasy to YHWH, the only true and living God, and their worship of lifeless impotent deities, caused their misfortunes. Therefore, Yahwism represents their only hope to secure their existence and future. In this, metaphor with its creative and expressive qualities, as well as its emotive, didactical, informative, and comparative functions, were effectively utilised by the Yahwists. It provided impact to their message in order to teach and convince their audiences of the beneficial nature of Yahwism, and to shock them to reality by illustrating the worthlessness of idolatrous practices.

7.8 Fabrications?

The details regarding idolatrous activities, venues, and objects, as identified in chapter 5 of this study seem to testify against the possibility of stereotypical unfounded generalisations or the fabrication of the accusations of idolatrous involvement of Israel. Details given of the idolatrous cults, echo the words of Jer 17:2, 'their children remember ...', and 9:14, they have done 'as their ancestors taught them', as well as the admission of guilt in 44:17, which reads: 'we will do everything...just as we and our ancestors, kings, and our officials, used to do.'

Several archaeological findings confirm the Biblical information. In many respects, the Biblical picture conforms to some of the recent archaeological interpretations of the findings regarding the Canaanite nature or elements of the religion of the majority of Israel. Due to its limited scope, this study cannot confirm the existence of a fully fledged Mosaic monotheism for the whole of Israel during the time of Jeremiah. However, it can confirm the existence of a well-developed Jeremianic version of Yahwistic monotheism. It can also support the claims that later dates such as pre-exilic, and Hellenistic, or even the exilic periods, suggested for the sole origin of all the oracles and narratives in the book of Jeremiah, are not justified. Some oracles addressed the problems of and provided guidance for the society in Jeremiah's time. This reflects a diverse religious society of different polytheistic and syncretistic groups. These utterances would not have been of value for the promotion of monotheistic Yahwism a century or three later. The same applies regarding the narrative reports in the prose, which describe scenarios conforming to some archaeological discoveries. Keel (1998:407) states that extra-Biblical evidence also does not confirm the existence of a fully developed Mosaic monotheism, or the popular view of the late dating for Biblical literature.

In this light, the interpretation of Biblical references, as well as archaeological findings must be dealt with in a critical way but with great care. Biblical resources should not be regarded as fabricated as done by some minimalists. However, archaeological evidence cannot be discarded or minimalised in the theological interpretation of the OT. Both

contribute to a better understanding of the development of the religion of ancient Israel and its theological significance. Theories must accommodate both.

In this regard, the advice of the Keel (1998:4,5) must be heeded. He states that a careful study of archaeological findings with accurate dating within the framework of the total picture of the Canaanite-Israelite religious history represents a sound methodology. Approaches sometimes skip periods of time. In some cases, the approaches offer questionable interpretations of fragmentary findings. Limited focus on one type of finding while ignoring others also hampers the interpretation. Therefore, the statement of Kaiser (1998:xii) is appropriate, namely that *"The text is innocent until proven guilty"*. In addition, a plea for a careful and responsible approach in the interpretation of the Biblical text and the archaeological findings, is even more than appropriate.

Furthermore, the ample details of historical settings, names and dates provided in the prose narratives, testify against the idea of a fabricated document (Seitz 1989:11f). The discovery of iconographical evidence mentioning the name of Baruch, the scribe of Jeremiah, and other officials (Keel 1998:355-357), may represent only a first of more to come, as testimonies of the authenticity of the historical details in the book of Jeremiah.

In addition, the analysis of the poetic sections, indicate that Jeremiah was a much-respected prophet in Yahwistic circles, although he did not enjoy popularity among some royal officials and offices. Not only the poetic rhythm was respected, but also especially the authority of these prophecies, which played an important role in the OT religious world, were regarded as the divine word of YHWH, and therefore preserved as received. This indicates that Jeremiah is indeed present in the literature, and he must be allowed to be prophet in accordance with the prophetic office of OT times. The Yahwistic group acknowledged the authority of his oracles and prose narratives, and expanded it with their interpretations and reinterpretations, as well as explanatory additions. They utilised it to promote the theological message, which Jeremiah proclaimed, namely trust in YHWH alone secures the existence and future of Israel.

7.9 The incomparability of YHWH

The analyses of passages pertaining to the relationship between YHWH and the gods revealed a picture of YHWH, the only true and living God, versus the human-made, lifeless, deceptions worthless, non-gods of the ANE nations. YHWH is presented and exalted as the only, living, true God, the Creator and King of the universe, who is Israel's own god, actively involved in the history of Israel and the nations. The analyses indicated that the incomparability and uniqueness of YHWH is clearly reflected and expressed in these contexts (e.g. 2:11,13; 10:6,10,16 and 16:19).

YHWH and the other gods are compared against the ANE theological background, which claimed that a deity who is worthy his status, must provide guidance, security and agricultural blessings to his devotees. The result in every utterance pertaining to the status and worthiness of the other gods entailed that these gods were non-gods in reality, worthless and unprofitable to Israel. They are viewed as foreign intruders in the land, and in the relationship between YHWH and Israel, which caused Israel's humiliation. However, YHWH is Israel's own god who guided them through their history, and the only god who could save them from their dilemma.

Human craftsmen, who do not possess the knowledge or skills to create divine beings from lifeless material, created the other deities. However, YHWH is not created and manipulated by humans, but represents the unique, living Creator god of everything in heaven and on earth. Every analysed passage reflects the idea that YHWH alone is worthy his status as deity. All functions and attributes of an ANE deity culminate in Him. In typical ANE 'god-talk' and concepts, YHWH is celebrated as God above all among the ANE gods, the only living and true God, despite Israel's humiliating circumstances. Against this background, Israel is called upon to acknowledge Him as their only God, to turn to Him for redemption, for the rehabilitation of their honour as a people, and to trust him with their future.

This study also emphasises that in the evaluation of Biblical references pertaining to the incomparability of YHWH, the following aspects must be considered:

7.9.1 Aniconic versus iconic

The polemic against the other gods, especially in the poetry, is directed mainly towards the human-made origin of the images of the other deities. The maker of idols, the material from which an idol is fabricated, the advice rendered, and their impotence to do anything, are mocked. On this basis, they are ridiculed in disparaging language to the status of worthless, lifeless non-gods. Many references fall into this category, which constitutes a context of a struggle between aniconic Yahwism and the iconic cults of the ANE. Therefore, no names of deities are mentioned or needed to be mentioned, because the images in general are under fire. The prophets targeted the apparent weakness of these cults, namely the human-made nature of these images. Although a close association existed between the deity and his image, no specific deities by name are humiliated in the polemic. Prose narratives, which mention the idolatrous practices and the names of Baal, the queen of heaven, Molech, and the astral cults, focus on the condemnation of these worship practices. It is therefore important that the church must refrain from utilising humiliating references regarding the deities of other religions. The aversion expressed, is aimed at the worship of lifeless, human-made images of deities, as if it is the deity itself, but utilized in the internal struggle between the Yahwists and the rest of Israel, in order to promote aniconic monotheistic Yahwism.

7.9.2 Political alliances

It was also found that in several cases, especially in the poetry of Jeremiah's early preaching (2:4-4:2), reference is made to the application of the policy of forming a political alliance. In terms of ANE theology, such an alliance included an alliance with the gods of the superior power. The terms utilised to designate the third party involved in the relationship between YHWH and Israel, are mainly ambiguous in meaning e.g. strangers, lovers, worthless, and unprofitable things. These terms could refer to both gods and the political powers. Jeremiah viewed these policies as the mistakes of past and contemporary royal houses. However, in targeting these policies, his motive is not political but purely religious. The message for the church conveyed by these references conforms to the

message that Jeremiah proclaimed, namely a policy of trust in mortal beings and their gods made by mortals, does not pay. Israel can only trust YHWH, the true and living God. (17:7,8,12-13).

7.9.3 The extent of the Idolatrous involvement

It is difficult to determine from Biblical references examined, whether the majority of Israel was involved in idolatrous practices and whether the Yahwists represented a minority group in the sixth century BC. One will have to accept that different religious groups existed, practising their own version of polytheistic and/or syncretistic Yahwism (Keel 1998:406). Israel was not a united and uniform religious nation during the sixth century BC as usually accepted. In several instances, royal houses, including the temple officials and prophets, and their religious conduct are targeted. Archaeological findings produced evidence of aniconic, and Torah-orientated iconography (Keel 1998:353-356,372), which can be an indication that the influence of the reform of Josiah and the activities of the Yahwists, were more substantial than alleged by the recent theories regarding monotheism. Nevertheless, whether Yahwism represented a minority group or not, their literature is canonised as the basis for the theological guidance of the church, also regarding monotheism, as well as the uniqueness and incomparability of YHWH.

7.9.4 The relationship between state, religion and land

An important factor that must be considered in the evaluation of Biblical references to other deities in the book of Jeremiah entails the relationship between state, religion and the land. According to the Yahwistic view, Israel the nation, including the land, are both YHWH's inheritance. Therefore, both religion and the government are included in this view. The other deities (and invading forces) are regarded as foreign intruders in YHWH's territory and in the relationship between YHWH and Israel, and therefore out of their jurisdiction. These references therefore can only be interpreted as applicable to the church, and not to a country or government in a multi-religious constitution.

7.9.5 Final conclusion

In conclusion, YHWH is depicted as the incomparable, living and true God, who is fully in control of the disastrous circumstances and future of Israel. Every event is theologized as his work. In the victories and the fall of the Babylonians, he represents the one who manipulates nations, and up roots and destroys Israel, and eventually their enemies, to save Israel. Therefore, He is also the one who restores, heals, and builds the future of his people (1:10; 12:11-17).

Many commonalities can be identified between the gods of the ANE and the God of Israel. Greenstein (1999:57,58) states that the major component which can be identified as a claim for YHWH and Israel to be different, is the emphasis on the fact that Israel must worship its own God, and not the gods of others. It was found in this study that YHWH is described against the background of ANE theological ideas. However, this does not constitute a case of merely borrowing concepts. It represents the characteristic cognitive processes and the worldview involved in the metaphorically structured thinking and speaking about deities of the ANE devotees. Nevertheless, the book of Jeremiah explicitly claims that YHWH is distinctive from all ANE deities. His incomparability is celebrated in a similar style, as the ANE devotees would claim for their gods. However, the book of Jeremiah represents the doxology of a Yahwistic monotheism, characterised by theological thoughts, which are more advanced and developed than that of their counterparts. This theology demands the aniconic worship of the one and only living God, and does not permit the worship of other gods and their lifeless iconic representations. In this, YHWH is incomparable in the ANE, and Yahwism represents a unique religion as portrayed in the book of Jeremiah.

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