PSALM 63: A STUDY OF ITS IMAGERY AND THEOLOGY IN THE CONTEXT OF THE PSALTER

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PSALM 63: A STUDY OF ITS IMAGERY AND THEOLOGY IN THE CONTEXT OF THE PSALTER

A Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Theology in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities by Zbigniew Zieba.

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ABSTRACT

An Abstract of the Thesis for the degree of PhD, presented by Zbigniew Zieba, in the Department of Theology and Religion at the University of Durham.

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'Psalm 63: A Study of Its Imagery and Theology in the Context of the Psalter'.

This thesis presents an analysis of Psalm 63, its imagery and theology in the context of the Psalter. Psalm 63 is one of the most captivating poems in the Hebrew Bible. The longing for the presence of God is a dominant theme of this psalm, which the psalmist visualises by the extensive usage of figurative language. The study undertakes an analysis of the difficult and complex metaphors and images contained in the poetical language of Psalm 63.

Part One addresses issues about the nature of poetry, its definition, elements, and the role which imagery played in the ancient Near East, biblical and modern poetry. It includes an analysis of the nature of metaphor.

Part Two constitutes the central part of this study, as it focuses on the examination of the figurative language and theology in Psalm 63. The author analyses the imagery of the initial verse and shows the theological meaning of this verse in the context of the whole psalm. This is followed by an analysis of other metaphors and images found throughout the psalm, and is presented with associated theological interpretations.

In Part Three, other biblical texts containing metaphorical language similar to that found in Psalm 63 are analysed. The role and significance of the imagery and theology of Psalm 63 in the context of the Psalter and other books of the Hebrew Bible, are addressed in Part Three.

The main aim of the study is an attempt to address and provide a new and original contribution to the theology of Psalm 63 and to the development and understanding of imagery in Hebrew poetry.

DECLARATION

I confirm that the thesis conforms with the prescribed word length for the degree, for which I am submitting it for examination.

I confirm that no part of the material offered has previously been submitted by me for a degree in this or in any other university. If material has been generated through joint work, my independent contribution has been clearly indicated. In all other cases material from the work of others has been acknowledged and quotations and paraphrases suitably indicated.

Signature: Zbigniew Zieba

Date: 29th September 2010

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

1. Periodicals, Reference Works and Series

AB – Anchor Bible

ATD – Das Alte Testament Deutch

BDB – *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, F. Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs

BEThL - Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium

BHS – Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia

Bib – Biblica

BibOr – Biblica et orientalia

BKAT – Biblischer Kommentar: Altes Testament

CAT – *The Cuneiform Alphabetic Texts from Ugarit, Ras Ibn Hani and Other Places*, Dietrich M., Lorentz O., and Sanmartin J. (eds.)

CTA – *Corpus des tablettes en cunéiformes alphabétiques découvertes à Ras Shamra-Ugarit de 1929 à 1939*, Herdner A. (ed.)

ConBOT – Coniectanea biblica, Old Testament

EB – Etudes Bibliques

EgT - Eglise et Théologie

EstBib – Estudios biblicos

FOTL – Forms of the Old Testament Literature

FRLANT – Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments

HAT – Handbuch zum Alten Testament

HKAT – Handkommentar zum Alten Testament

HSM – Harvard Semitic Monographs

HBK – Herders Bibelkommentar die Heilige Schrift

HThKAT – Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Alten Testament

HTR – Harvard Theological Review

IB – Interpreter's Bible

JBL – Journal of Biblical Literature

JQR – Jewish Quarterly Review

JQRS – Jewish Quarterly Review, *Supplement*

JSOT – Journal for the Study of the Old Testament

JSOTSS – *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*, Supplement Series

KAT – Kommentar zum Alten Testament

KTU – *Die keilalphabetischen Texte aus Ugarit*, Dietrich M., Loretz O. and Sanmartin J. (eds.)

NAB – The New American Bible

NAS - New American Standard Bible

NAU – New American Standard Bible

NICOT – New International Commentary on the Old Testament

NJB – New Jerusalem Bible

NRSV – New Revised Standard Version

NTT – *Norsk teologisk Tidsskrift*

OBO – Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis

OrAnt – Oriens Antiquus

PHPT – The Princeton Handbook of Poetic Terms

SB – Sources Bibliques

SBL – Society of Biblical Literature

SBLDS – Society of Biblical Literature, Dissertation Series

SBT – Studies in Biblical Theology

SEL - Studi Epigrafici e Linguistici

SPCK – Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge

SPSM – Studia Pohl: Series Maior

TDOT – Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament, G. J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren (eds.)

TLOT – Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament, E. Jenni and C. Westermann (eds.)

TWAT – Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament, G. J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren (eds.)

UF – Ugarit-Forschungen

WBC – Word Biblical Commentary

2. Biblical Books and Apocrypha[1]

The Old Testament

Gen – Genesis

Exod – Exodus

Lev – Leviticus

Num – Numbers

Deut – Deuteronomy

Josh – Joshua

Judg – Judges

Ruth – Ruth

1-2 Sam – 1-2 Samuel

1-2 Kgs – 1-2 Kings

1-2 Chr – 1-2 Chronicles

Ezra – Ezra

Neh – Nehemiah

Tob – Tobit

Cant – Song of Songs

Ezek – Ezekiel

Dan – Daniel

Hos – Hosea

Joel – Joel

Amos – Amos

Obad – Obadiah

Jonah – Jonah

Mic – Micah

Wis – Wisdom of Solomon

Sir – Sirach

Isa – Isaiah

Jer – Jeremiah

Lam – Lamentations

[1] In the Christian Catholic tradition, the following books are included in the Old Testament canon: Tob, Jdt, 1-2 Macc, Wis, Sir, Bar.

Jdt – Judith

1-2 Macc – 1-2 Maccabees

Esth – Esther

Job – Job

Ps(s) – Psalm(s)

Prov – Proverbs

Eccl – Ecclesiastes

Bar – Baruch

Nah – Nahum

Hab – Habakkuk

Zeph – Zephaniah

Hag – Haggai

Zech – Zechariah

Mal – Malachi

The New Testament

Mt – Matthew

Mk – Mark

Lk – Luke

Jn – John

Acts – Acts

Rm – Romans

1-2 Cor – 1-2 Corinthians

Ga – Galatians

Eph – Ephesians

Phil – Philippians

Col – Colossians

1-2 Thess – 1-2 Thessalonians

1-2 Tim – 1-2 Timothy

Tt – Titus

Philem – Philemon

Heb – Hebrews

Jm – James

1-2 Pet – 1-2 Peter

1-3 Jn – 1-3 John

Jude – Jude

Rev - Revelation

3. Ancient Versions and Rabbinic Literature.

BHS – Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia

LXX – Septuagint

M^{L} – Massoretic text based on the Leningrad Codex

MT – Masoretic text

Syr – Syriac version

Sym – Symmachus

Vg – Vulgate

4. Grammatical

fem. – feminine

hiph. – hiphil

impf. – imperfect

impv. – imperative

masc. – masculine

pl. – plural

sg. – singular

5. Miscellaneous

Akk. – Akkadian

ANE – Ancient Near East

Arb. – Arabic

cf. – compare

etc. – et cetera

e.g. – exempli gratia

Co. – company

edn; ed(s). – edition; editor(s)

fig. – figuratively

ibid – ibidem

id. – idem

i.e. – id est

Inc. – Incorporated

lit. – literally

Ltd. – Limited

Mass. – Massachusetts

NY – New York

OT – Old Testament

rev. – revised

Syr. – Syriac

tr. – translated

Ugar. – Ugaritic

U.K. – United Kingdom

Vol(s) – Volume(s)

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Finally, I thank my parents Cecylia and Henryk, who have always been a great support in the writing of this study. I dedicate this thesis to them.

I owe a debt of gratitude to all those who helped me through this invaluable experience.

Oh, come to the water all you who are thirsty;
Though you have no money, come!
Come, buy and eat.
Come, buy wine and milk without money.

Isa 55:1

Love bade me welcome: yet my soul drew back,
Guilty of dust and sin…
You must sit down, says Love, and taste my meat:
So I did sit and eat.

George Herbert

INTRODUCTION

> Quia fecisti nos ad te et inquietum est cor nostrum,
> donec requiescat in te.[2]

In this study, the imagery and theology of Psalm 63 will be examined in the context of the Psalter. The analysis will focus mainly on three issues and consequently the study will consist of three Parts. In Part One, the nature of biblical poetry and a study of imagery, particularly metaphor and other tropes of figurative language will be analysed. An examination of the imagery will enable us to provide an answer to the following questions: How do we define poetry and metaphor? Do we recognize and interpret various figures of speech in figurative language?

In Part Two, an analysis will be presented of the metaphorical language observed in Psalm 63. This psalm contains interesting and absorbing theological concepts, and a longing for the presence of God, which is a dominant theme in the psalm. This captivating theme and a theological interpretation of Psalm 63 will be the object of the analysis in Part Two.

In Part Three, Psalm 63 will be shown in the context of the Psalter and in other biblical passages too, outside the Book of Psalms, which contain similar language. Thus, the examination will focus on Psalms: 42:2-3; 84:3; and 143:6, and passages such as Jer 2:13, Isa 58:11, Jer 31:12-14 and Isa 26:8-9. These psalms and biblical passages will be analysed in the context of Psalm 63.

Metaphorical language is one of the most interesting phenomena we find in Hebrew poetry. Metaphor belongs to the stuff of Hebrew poetry and plays an important role within it. In fact, biblical poetry everywhere, to a greater or lesser

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[2] 'For you have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you'; *Sancti Augustini Confessionum,* Lucas Verheijen (ed.), (Corpus Christianorum: Series Latina 27; Turnhout: Brepols, 1981), Book I, I, 1.

degree, has a preference in the use of metaphorical language. In an analysis of imagery in Hebrew poetry, specific interest will be focused on the Book of Psalms. Psalms always played a significant role in the culture of ancient Israel. They became a part of the Jewish experience in worship because they reflected Israel's religious pilgrimage and national heritage.[3] In the psalms, Israel spoke to Yahweh in prayer and praise. Therefore the Jewish tradition has given the Psalter the title ~ylht rps *Sefer Tehilim* - 'The Book of Praises'. The Book of Psalms as poetry contains the language of emotion and imagination, which in the context of Israel's worship, allows the exploration of communion between God-Yahweh and His people. The poetic nature of the psalms allows the reader to 'understand and enter into a living communion with God'.[4] This is why the psalms have been referred to as 'theo-poetry' because they show not only aspects of human life but they are about God as the very foundation and meaning of all life.[5] 'The Psalter is the finest collection of Hebrew poetry from the ancient world.'[6] This statement reflects the judgment of most scholars. The Psalter contains ancient Jewish religious and cultic poetic materials, which gather together the essence of Israel's thought and religion. The Psalter in fact incorporates the diversity of Israel's theological concepts and theological understanding.[7]

Psalms have also had an important place in the cultic and spiritual life of Christians.[8] Many early Christians and the Fathers of the Church valued the

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[3] In his study, S. Mowinckel presents, in a comprehensive manner, the role and significance of the Psalms in ancient Israel; see Sigmund Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962).

[4] Cas J. A. Vos, *Theopoetry in the Psalms* (London: T&T Clark International, 2005), 423.

[5] See Frank-Lothar Hossfeld, and Erich Zenger, *A Commentary on Psalms 51-100* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 1.

[6] Henry Jackson Flanders, Robert Wilson Crapps, and David Anthony Smith, *People of the Covenant. An Introduction to the Hebrew Bible* (New York – Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 453.

[7] See Flanders et al., *People of the Covenant*, 458.

[8] The most recent book by Susan Gillingham, *Psalms Through the Centuries*, vol. I (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008) is considered to be one of the best studies on the role of the Psalms in both Jewish and Christian worship and liturgy. Gillingham offers a comprehensive and thorough exposition of the Psalms; their role, significance and use in Jewish and in different Christian

Psalter above all other books in the Old Testament. The *Letter to Marcellinus*, written by St. Athanasius, the prominent Christian writer of the fourth century, demonstrated the nature of the psalms and pointed to the unique place and the special role of the Psalter in the Bible.[9] He wrote:

> All Scripture of ours, my son – both ancient and new – is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, as it is written. But the Book of Psalms possesses a certain winning exactitude and announces its own promise…The Book of Psalms is like a garden containing things of all these kinds, and it sets them to music, but also exhibit things of its own that it gives in song along with them…he who takes up this book – the Psalter – goes through the prophecies about the Saviour.[10]

Athanasius notes that the psalms are different from other books of the Old Testament: they are like a garden containing all that is necessary for salvation of Christians, and they point forward to Christ.[11] His letter shows the role of the psalms in the early Church, pointing to the personal and spiritual character of the psalms. Throughout every century people have found in the psalms the language of praise and complaint, trust, doubt, petition and thanks. They have discovered that the psalms with their particular message have been speaking for them.[12] The same psalms still speak to us in contemporary society. They affect and influence modern readers and are a source of inspiration. For many, the psalms are a manual for their spirituality that envisage a relationship with God that involves both worship and engagement in a spiritual life.[13] The psalms with their poetical beauty, still capture,

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traditions. Other interesting studies on this subject are: William L. Holladay, *The Psalms Through Three Thousand Years* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1993), and John A. Lamb, *The Psalms in Christian Worship* (London: The Faith Press, 1962).

[9] See Holladay, *The Psalms Through Three Thousand Years*, 165.

[10] *Athanasius: The Life of Antony and The Letter to Marcellinus,* Robert C. Gregg (trans.), (The Classics of Western Spirituality; Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1980), 101-102, 109.

[11] See Gillingham, *Psalms Through the Centuries*, I, 29.

[12] See Ernest Lucas, *Exploring the Old Testament. The Psalms and Wisdom Literature*, III (London: SPCK, 2003), 1.

[13] See John Goldingay, *Psalms 1-41*, I (Baker Commentary on the Old Testament: Wisdom and Psalms; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 58.

inspire and elate present-day readers. 'The Psalter teaches not by telling us how to pray but by showing us how to pray… The psalms speak from God by showing us how to speak to God'.[14] Thus, the psalms dispose the reader to speak to God, to listen and express oneself 'out of the depths' as the author of Psalm 130 utters in verse 1: 'Out of the depths, I cry to you, O Lord; Lord hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications!' The psalms, with their theological richness and depth, form a bridge between God and the reader. That is why many modern interpreters and readers undertake an analysis of the psalms to fathom the mystery of the word of God who speaks both to and for them in the psalms.

In the Christian tradition, the Psalter is not only a guide to spiritual life, containing the whole range of human emotions and experiences, expressed in poetic language, but it also contains a wide range of Christian doctrine. It suggests that the Psalter might be considered as a compendium of theology. Kraus expressed a similar opinion remarking: 'The theology of the Psalms could be called 'a biblical theology in miniature'.[15] Indeed, it provides us with a revelation of God and tells us much of God's nature and His purpose.[16] It helps us to understand God's economy of salvation, and to discover what is hidden in the Old Testament, and becomes revealed in the New. This is why the Psalter has great theological value and has played an important role in Christian tradition. Martin Luther, writing about the significance of the Psalter for Christians, remarked: '[The Psalter] might well be called a little Bible. In it is comprehended most beautifully and briefly everything that is in the entire Bible…Anyone who could not read the whole Bible would here have anyway almost an entire summary of it, comprised in one little book'[17]. Christian doctrine, spirituality and experiences are found in the Psalter. The Book

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[14] Goldingay, *Psalms 1-41*, I, 23.
[15] Hans Joachim Kraus, *Theology of the Psalms* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 12.
[16] See Lamb, *The Psalms in Christian Worship*, 160.
[17] Martin Luther, 'Preface to the Psalter' in E. Theodore Bachmann (ed.), *Luther's Works*, vol. XXXV (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1960), 254.

of Psalms provides a thorough exposure to the fullness of theology. That is why the Psalter can be justifiably called a 'little Bible'.

The function and role of the Psalter within Christian tradition can be observed in the New Testament in St. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians (Eph 5:18b-20) and in his Letter to Colossians (Col 3:16-17). In Eph 5:18b-20 St. Paul states:

> Be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and inspired songs among yourselves, singing and chanting to the Lord in your hearts, giving thanks to God at all times and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This passage, as an inspired exhortation to Christian believers, indicates that those who are filled with the Spirit, who mediates the fullness of God and Christ to the believer, are exhorted to give thanks and sing the praises directed now to Christ. The attitude of thanksgiving expressed in believers' worship is clearly seen in this passage. It seems, however, that the primary focus of this passage is not the praise of God alone. Three different categories, as mentioned in this passage, i.e. the psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, are part of the liturgy of believers addressing one another in the assembly. They serve as a means of edification, instruction and exhortation. In this regard, the psalms as inspired songs and hymns (cf. also Pauline hymnic verses: Phil 2:6-11; Col 1:15-20; 1 Tim 3:16), according to Paul, play not only an important role in worship but they have also a didactic and paraenetic function.[18] Classification of the psalms permits not only distinguishing different genres, but also seem to indicate various other purposes and functions of individual psalms. It is important to observe that some psalms, for example, the 'Halleluiah Psalms' (Pss 111-113 and 146-150) focus primarily on the praise of Yahweh, whereas some other psalms are mainly addressed to people, e.g. Wisdom Psalms: Pss 1; 19; 33; 37, which serve primarily as instruction. In this regard, two

[18] See Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (WBC 42; Dallas: Word Books Publisher, 1990), 344-346.

New Testament passages: Col 3:16 and Eph 5:19, speaking about Christ and sung in thanksgiving to God, also function as instruction to people.[19]

The New Testament texts reveal to us the relationship between the Psalter and the New Testament. The scholar Goldingay, on examining some aspects of this relationship, comments:

> In general, what the Old Testament and the New Testament do is fill out the nature of biblical faith for each other. It is not the case that theological insight develops through Scripture in such a way that the New Testament provides a kind of theological filter by which unacceptable aspects of the Psalms or other aspects of the Old Testament can be strained out by being reinterpreted. The New Testament itself rather implies that the Old Testament provides the broader context in which the New Testament needs to be understood.

We find many quotations and references to psalms in the New Testament. In fact, the Psalter, together with the Book of Isaiah, is the most extensively cited Old Testament Book in the New Testament.[20] The use of these quotations, however, raises many textual and theological questions. We observe much diversity in the usage of psalms in the New Testament, both in terms of selection and function. The Book of Psalms is not only a source of quotations but also of allusions.[21] Thus, for example, in the Book of Revelation, there are no actual quotations from the psalms but there are allusions to them. For instance, in Rev 1:5, there are allusions to Ps 89:27,37; in Rev 3:26, we find allusions to Ps 2:8-9, and Rev 11:18 reveals allusions to Ps 115:13. Each of the authors of the New Testament has his own individual approach to the understanding of the Old Testament texts, including the psalms.[22] The use of the psalms and their interpretation in the New Testament is an object of debate for modern scholarly critics. The context of postmodernity gives

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[19] See Gordon D. Fee, and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible Book by Book*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 2002), 131.

[20] See Steve Moyise, and Maarten J. J. Menken (eds.), *The Psalms in the New Testament: The New Testament and the Scriptures of Israel* (London: T. & T. Clark International, 2004), 2.

[21] Ibid, 2.

[22] Ibid, 2.

us a new and fresh insight with regard to the use of the psalms by the New Testament writers.[23] Goldingay notes:

> They [the New Testament writers] were not trying to do exegesis. They were using forms of expression they found in the psalms to help them understand themselves and formulate their beliefs. It will be important that their formulations do fit in with the inherent meaning of Scripture as a whole…But they do not need to fit the results of exegesis of the particular passage they quote. The Holy Spirit who inspired Scripture is inspiring the writers to see a new significance in the words that appear in Scripture.

In the context of the relationship between the Hebrew psalms and the New Testament texts, it should be remarked that the psalms, whether they are used and interpreted by Jewish or Christian readers, contain their own perennial message, which is still addressed to modern readers, challenging both their thinking and spirituality.

Among the many captivating psalms we find in the Book of Psalms, Psalm 63 has been chosen as the object of this investigation, scrutiny and analysis. It is widely acknowledged as one of the most beautiful psalms in the whole Psalter. Hermann Gunkel, a prominent biblical scholar and a pioneer of biblical exegesis uttered a similar opinion. In his commentary on this psalm, he wrote that Psalm 63 is one of the pearls of the Psalter.[24] In biblical poetry, one finds that imagery in a poem is best introduced into a particular or specific idea or motif.[25] The leading motif of Psalm 63 is longing for the presence of God. The poet using figurative language, speaks about 'thirsting and hunger' for God. He expresses an irresistible desire to be near to God and to make his abode in God's presence. Can there be any more elevated subject in human life than 'thirsting for God'? Desire for the

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[23] See Goldingay, *Psalms 1-41*, I, 77.

[24] See Hermann Gunkel, *Die Psalmen* (HKAT; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1926), 267.

[25] An interesting study, which introduces different motifs in the Psalter see: Eric Haglund, *Historical Motifs in the Psalms,* (ConBOT 23; Uppsala, 1984).

Absolute is written into every human heart. Man is created by God and for God. Therefore only in God can man find this truth and happiness.

During his life-journey and quest for wisdom, St. Augustine discovered and understood this truth. After a long and arduous search for God, he achieved his deepest desire and life in the one, whom he finally found. In his *Confessions*, Augustine gives us a glimpse into the depth of his soul describing his quest for God and God's action in his life. He writes:

> Late have I loved you, beauty so old and so new: late have I loved you. And see, you were within and I was in the external world and sought you there, and in my unlovely state I plunged into those lovely created things which you made. You were with me, and I was not with you. The lovely things kept me far from you, though if they did not have their existence in you, they had no existence at all. You called and cried out loud and shattered my deafness. You were radiant and resplendent, you put to flight my blindness. You were fragrant, and I drew in my breath and now pant after you. I tasted you, and I feel but hunger and thirst for you. You touched me, and I am set on fire to attain the peace which is yours.[26]

The search for meaning, purpose and truth in life and the relationship between human beings and their creator is at the heart of Augustine's *Confessions*. At the beginning of his *Confessions*, Augustine made an allusion to Gen 1:26-27 in which the biblical author shows that human beings were created in the 'image of God'. Augustine portrays the inclination of human nature towards God in the image of the 'restless heart'. Every human being is made in God's image and the 'restlessness' inherent in every human heart manifests this truth. Augustine himself acknowledged that he was a person with a 'restless heart' and he would not be satisfied with anything less than God. In the first chapter of his *Confessions* he proclaims: 'You are great, Lord, and highly to be praised: great is your power and your wisdom immeasurable. Man, a little piece of your creation, desires to praise you…You stir man to take pleasure in praising you, because you have made us for

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[26] *Saint Augustine Confessions*, Henry Chadwick (ed.), (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), Book X, XXVII.

yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you'.[27] These verses capture what is truly at the core of us all. Since God has made us for himself, we will never find rest, peace or meaning in anyone or anything other than in Him. What can only be found in the greater can never be found in the lesser.

Augustine's yearning for God is echoed in Psalm 63:2, where the psalmist praises God and expresses his quest for Him: 'O God, You are my God, for you I long; for you my soul is thirsting. My body pines for you, like a dry, weary land without water'. The same absorbing motif is expressed in similar figurative language in other psalms in the Psalter. We find this in Psalms: Ps 42:2-3, Ps 84:3, and in Ps 143:6. Human beings long for their creator in order to experience His holy and eternal presence. The author of Psalm 42-43 uttered this same human desire in figurative language in verse 3: 'My soul is thirsting for God, the God of my life. When can I enter and see the face of God?' The imagery in these three psalms will be the subject of an analysis in this investigative study.

A contemporary theologian, Nicholas Lash remarks: 'Every Christian, and hence every Christian theologian is called to journey in the direction of a deeper knowledge of the things of God, and the journey is a homecoming, for God is our end as well as our beginning.'[28] A study of the psalms allows one to engage on a theological journey that explores 'the things of God' and consider God who reveals himself to human beings. The author of Deut 29:28 states, 'The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the revealed things belong to us and to our children forever, to observe all the words of this law'. Yahweh himself is both the agent and the object of revelation. He deliberately and actively disclosed himself to the people of Israel through his works and his words. Hebrew biblical writers recognized this self-disclosure. The extraordinary encounter of Yahweh with the people of Israel brings successive generations to know him better through the knowledge of biblical facts. The Book of Psalms in the opinion of some scholars is a

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[27] Ibid, I, I.

[28] Nicholas Lash, *The Beginning and the End of 'Religion'* (Cambridge: University Press, 1996), 5.

'little Bible' as was suggested already, and it may be considered as a compendium of basic theology; it shows God's revelation in a different manner to that of other books of the Hebrew Bible. The Psalter shows Yahweh revealing himself to the people of Israel in an absorbing and poetic way. The language of the psalms, in a unique manner, illustrates this special relationship of God with human beings, and it also reveals something of God's nature in respect of His divinity and attributes. Therefore, the reader of the psalms is called into a deeper understanding of 'the things of God', since it is God who is our beginning and end.

In his commentary on the Book of Psalms, Carlo Maria Martini remarked: 'Every word, every image and every symbol must be meditated with great attention because it expresses the proper richness.'[29] This comment suggests that every word, image and symbol in Psalm 63, contains its own richness and implications. In this study, the poetical beauty, the richness of images and metaphors in Psalm 63 will be addressed, explored and objectively scrutinised to reveal their theological meaning in the context of the Psalter and other biblical passages.

The analysis of metaphorical language in Psalm 63 requires a particular approach. The investigation will apply both linguistic and semantic methodologies. Metaphor cannot be properly understood and interpreted without an exegetical analysis of the verse and the context in which metaphor is used. In order to examine and research the Hebrew metaphors used in this psalm, an analysis of Hebrew biblical terminology, expressions and exegesis will play a significant role in the innovative study.

Research studies do exist, which undertake an examination of poetic language in the Hebrew Bible, including, for example, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry*

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[29] 'Ogni parola, ogni imagine, ogni simbolo dovrebbe essere meditato con grande attenzione perché esprima la propria ricchezza'; Carlo Maria Martini, *Il Desiderio di Dio* (Milano: Centro Ambrosiano, 2002), 11.

by James Kugel,[30] *The Art of Biblical Poetry* by R. Alter,[31] *Classical Hebrew Poetry* by W. Watson,[32] *A Manual of Hebrew Poetics* by L. Alonso Schökel,[33] *The Poems and Psalms of the Hebrew Bible* by S. Gillingham,[34] *Reading Biblical Poetry* by J. Fokkelman,[35] and *Seeing the Psalms. A Theology of Metaphor* by W. Brown[36] among others. These texts will constitute the foundations of the research project. An evaluation of these and other studies will follow in the next chapter. However, no one has undertaken a specific research programme and examination of the metaphorical language as contained in Psalm 63.

This study will be an original contribution to the theology of Psalm 63 and it will enhance the understanding of imagery in Hebrew poetry.

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[30] See James L. Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry. Parallelism and Its History* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981).

[31] See Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1985).

[32] See Wilfred G. E. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry, A Guide to Its Techniques* (JSOTSS 26; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1984).

[33] See Luis Alonso Schökel, *A Manual of Hebrew Poetics*, (SB11, Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2000).

[34] See Susan E. Gillingham, *The Poems and Psalms of the Hebrew Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

[35] See Jan P. Fokkelman, *Reading Biblical Poetry, An Introductory Guide* (Louisville and London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001).

[36] See William P. Brown, *Seeing the Psalms. A Theology of Metaphor* (Louisville and London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002).

PART ONE - A STUDY OF IMAGERY

Part One will address the matter of an analysis of imagery and will consist of two Chapters. Chapter One will include three sections. The first section will deal with issues on the nature of biblical poetry. This section will peruse points raised in recent scholarly debate on biblical poetry; these will include opinions and interpretations expressed by some modern biblical scholars. It will include definition, complexity, and other features, which constitute biblical poetry. The second section will focus on imagery. This section will contain a comparative study of imagery, and especially of metaphor, which is found in ancient Near Eastern literature, Hebrew biblical poetry and modern poetry. The third section will contain some conclusions.

Chapter Two will deal with an analysis of figurative language and especially metaphor. The first section of Chapter Two will contain some preliminary observations. The nature of metaphor and how it works cannot be properly apprehended in texts unless we understand the concept of metaphor. Therefore, in the second section, metaphor will be defined and placed in context using some non-biblical examples taken from modern literature and poetry. The third section will contain the typology of metaphor with its application to biblical occurrences and events. In Psalm 63 we also recognize other figures of speech. Therefore, in the fourth section, some other tropes of figurative language will be investigated and conclusions drawn. Lastly, the fifth section will present evidence based conclusions.

The aim of Part One will be to provide us with a foundation for the analysis of metaphors and images in Psalm 63; this will then be carried forward in Part Two.

CHAPTER 1 - THE IDEA OF BIBLICAL POETRY

> Images are the glory, perhaps the essence of poetry,
> The enchanted planet of the imagination, a limitless galaxy,
> Ever alive and ever changing.[37]

In his study *A Manual of Hebrew Poetics*, Luis Alonso Schökel begins a chapter dedicated to an analysis of imagery as follows: 'We come to the most important and most difficult chapter: images. Images are the glory, perhaps the essence of poetry, the enchanted planet of the imagination, a limitless galaxy, ever alive and ever changing.'[38] The remark is a concise way to express the beauty, role and complexity of figurative language. This thesis proposes a similar research paradigm to that employed by Alonso Schökel. This captivating world of images is at once so ancient and yet so new.

1. Identifying Biblical Poetry.

Psalm 63 belongs to the heart of Hebrew biblical poetic tradition. Before undertaking an analysis of figurative language in this psalm, it will be helpful to look at biblical poetry in general.

Biblical poetry is an interesting but also complex literary phenomenon. In recent years many publications have appeared about the subject of biblical Hebrew poetry.[39] Prominent biblical scholars provide us with an analysis of the nature and

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[37] Alonso Schökel, *A Manual of Hebrew Poetics*, 95.

[38] Ibid, 95.

[39] As there are many studies, the most important of which include: Luis Alonso Schökel, *Estudios de poética hebrea* (Barcelona: Juan Flors, 1963); Terence Collins, *Line-Forms in Hebrew Poetry: A Grammatical Approach to the Stylistic Study of the Hebrew Prophet* (SP.SM 17; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1978); Stephen A. Geller, *Parallelism in Early Biblical Poetry* (HSM 20; Missoula: Scholars Press, 1979); David Noel Freedman, *Pottery, Poetry, and Prophecy. Studies in Early Hebrew Poetry* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1980); Michael

characteristics of Hebrew poetry. They examine biblical poetry using different methodologies, strategies and approaches. However, defining what constitutes poetry is still not a simple matter. In our discussion, therefore it is appropriate to begin with the pivotal question of: 'What is poetry and what are its main features?' The passage from James Boswell's *Life of Johnson* gives us, perhaps, an insight:

> Sir, what is poetry?
> Why Sir, it is much easier to say what it is not.
> We all know what light is; but it is not easy to tell what it is.

This passage could also be applied to Hebrew biblical poetry. Hebrew poetry is not easy to define. Even today, after some decades dedicated to a detailed examination and analysis of biblical poetry by different scholars, the topic still remains stimulating and is the object of continuing research. Poetry uses forms and conventions which express meaning of words, and some forms of poetry are specific to a particular culture and language. Biblical poetry, for example, uses a specific approach to set rhythm. Some poetic techniques and devices such as parallelism may reveal some similarities and differences between the ancient Hebrew poetry and modern poetry. It is difficult, however, as Alonso Schökel notes, to distinguish clear techniques which would be exclusively poetic: 'Just as we cannot distinguish strictly between prose vocabulary and poetic vocabulary, neither can we distinguish techniques which are exclusively poetic'.[40] We may see

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O'Connor, *Hebrew Verse Structure* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1980); Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry*; David J. A. Clines, David M. Gunn, and Alan J. Hauser, *Art and Meaning: Rhetoric in Biblical Literature* (JSOTSS 19; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1982); Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry*; Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry*; Adele Berlin, *The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985); Luis Alonso Schökel *Manual de Poetica Hebrea* (Madrid: Ediciones Cristiandad, 1987); Herbert Chanan Brichto, *Toward a Grammar of Biblical Poetics. Tales of the Prophets* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992); Wilfred G. E. Watson, *Traditional Techniques in Classical Hebrew Verse* (JSOTSS 170; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994); David J. A. Clines, *The Poetical Books* (The Biblical Seminar, 41; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997); Fokkelman, *Reading Biblical Poetry*; and Brown, *Seeing the Psalms*.

[40] See Alonso Schökel, *A Manual of Hebrew Poetics*, 3.

some differences between biblical poetry and the poetry of modern European languages, for example, rhythm and use and understanding of Hebrew ancient images. This has come about as a result of great and fundamental cultural and linguistic differences.[41] Best poetry encapsulates human thoughts, concepts, emotions and communicates them in a brevity of expression. This language compresses a maximum of thought into a minimum of words. The differences we may find between biblical and modern poetry are a result of different historical and cultural environmental factors and languages. Biblical Hebrew language differs from modern languages. It has its own specific grammar, syntax, use of tenses, word order and vocabulary which differ in form and meaning from modern languages. The meaning of many biblical Hebrew words is uncertain for modern readers. The *hapax legomena* - words which occur only once in the Hebrew Bible are examples of this cultural difference. The meaning of these Hebrew words is often unclear and obscure for modern readers and they pose difficulties in translation and interpretation.

Therefore an analysis of biblical poetry needs a different and specific strategy of approach. A significant proportion of Israel's literature is poetic in form. The *Book of Lamentations* is a set of five poetic lamentations over the destruction of Jerusalem. A high percentage of the literature of the Latter Prophets is poetic in form. Even narrative literature occasionally contains poetic allusions, such as the Blessing of Jacob (Gen 49), the Song of the Sea (Ex 15), and David's dirge on the death of Saul and Jonathan (2 Sam 1:19-27). Hence, what is it that distinguishes biblical poetry from biblical prose? What are the characteristic features of biblical

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[41] In his study, J. Dancy briefly characterizes some main features of the Hebrew language. See John Christopher Dancy, *The Divine Drama. The Old Testament as Literature* (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2001), 14-16. For more about the history of the Hebrew language, see: Angel Sáenz-Badillos, *A History of the Hebrew Language* (Cambridge: University Press, 1993); Eduard Yechezkel Kutscher, *A History of the Hebrew Language* (Brill and Leiden: The Magnes Press, and Jerusalem: The Hebrew University, 1982); William Chomsky, *Hebrew: The Eternal Language* (5th edn., Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1975); Mireille Hadas-Lebel, *Histoire de la langue hébraique des origins à l'époque de la Mishna* (Paris: Publications Orientalistes de France, 1981).

poetry? A study of Hebrew poetry in a recent scholarly discussion highlights some of the main features of biblical poetry, which distinguish it from biblical prose. The main issues in the scholarly debate enable us to identify Hebrew poetry and its main characteristics.

The first theory on biblical Hebrew poetry, which is contained in *De sacra poesi Hebraeorum,*[42] is accredited to Robert Lowth. His theory, however, does not stand up against the test of today's criticism. It is based mainly on a determination of meter and parallelism, as constructive elements of biblical poetry. There are many poetic lines in the Hebrew Bible where parallelism is absent or is difficult to identify.[43] On the contrary, there are non-poetical discourses, which contain parallelism. Lowth defines Hebrew poetry as follows:

> It consists mainly in a certain quality, resemblance, or parallelism, between the members of each period; so that in two lines, or members of the same period, things for the most part shall answer to things, and words to words, as if fitted to each other by a kind of rule or measure.[44]

Lowth's division of parallelism into three basic categories: synonymous, antithetic and synthetic, is still widely accepted and used by many modern scholars. In contemporary research, of these three types, synthetic has attracted the most attention. However, recent years have brought new models and a fresh understanding of parallelism. Some scholars reject Lowth's tripartite division of parallelism. These scholars, by applying semantic criteria, emphasize the difference in the parts of parallelism, rather than their similarity.[45] Other scholars apply linguistic methods, describing parallel lines in terms of syntax instead of

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[42] See Robert Lowth, *De Sacra Poesi Hebraeorum* (Oxford, 1733).

[43] Stephen Geller argues that about 12 percent of Hebrew poetry exhibits nonparallel lines. See Geller, *Parallelism in Early Biblical Poetry*, 30.

[44] Robert Lowth, *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews*, trans. G. Gregory (London: S. Chadwick and Co., 1847), 210.

[45] See Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry*, 3-61, and Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry*, 1-58.

semantics.[46] The opinion of the scholarly expert Fokkelman about Lowth's model is noteworthy. He remarks: 'It neglects or ignores the contributions of phonological or grammatical factors, and concentrates almost exclusively on the level of vocabulary and word meanings.'[47] In an open discussion on parallelism in Hebrew poetry, the opinion of Berlin seems relevant and reasonable: 'If the grammatical aspect provides the skeleton of the parallelism then the lexical and semantic aspects are its flesh and blood.'[48]

In the last two decades, the question of what Hebrew poetry is and how we can define it, has become crucial for some modern scholars. Their analyses of Hebrew poetry have tended to interpret biblical texts in their own particular ways and to put biblical poetry into a framework of definition. Mainly three approaches dominate in the modern study of Hebrew poetry. Some scholars, who read the biblical texts as literature, represent a first approach. Others scholars who analyse Hebrew poetry by technical studies of Hebrew prosody, represent a second approach. Some biblical scholars, as for example, David L. Peterson and Kent H. Richards[49], interpret biblical texts in a more general way, mainly for purposes in the services of religious communities, and these represent a third approach. To the works of these latter scholars, can be added some general commentaries as for example, Calvin's and Luther's Old Testament commentaries. Of these three approaches, the first two merit some further comments and considerations.

In their analysis of biblical texts, scholars who represent the first approach, place due emphasis on such things as attention to particular literary techniques,

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[46] See Berlin, *The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism*, 18-30. Studies which develop grammatical parallelism: Edward L. Greenstein, *'How Does Parallelism Mean?' in A Sense of Text* (JQRS; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1982), 41-70; O'Connor, *Hebrew Verse Structure*; Geller, *Parallelism in Early Biblical Poetry*; Collins, *Line-Forms in Hebrew Poetry*; and Paul Raabe, *Psalm Structures: A Study of Psalms with Refrains* (JSOTSS 104; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990).

[47] Fokkelman, *Reading Biblical Poetry*, 29.

[48] Berlin, *Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism*, 64.

[49] See David L. Peterson and Kent Harold Richards *Interpreting Hebrew Poetry* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 14-16

analysis of characterization, theme, motifs, symbolism, and interpretation of texts. Among these scholars we rank, for example, James Kugel and Robert Alter. In his study *The Idea of Biblical Poetry*, James Kugel[50] concentrates mainly on such features as parallelism, words-pair and meter. He argues that Lowth's classification of parallelism into three types cannot be applied to all poetic texts. Kugel proposed his broad definition of parallelism as a rhetorical device in which two lines state that 'A is so, and what is more B'. He describes B as 'seconding' the thought of A in some way. His analysis leads him to an observation that in a number of narrative passages we also find parallelism (e.g. Gen 3:3; 9:6; 21:1,5,18; 22:12,17; Exod 2:1-7; 15:12-14; Deut 22:5; 32:1; Judg 5:3; 1 Sam 12:1; Isa 1:2; 1:10). In other words he observed that not all poetry is parallelism and not all parallelisms are poetry. Kugel argues that basically there is no distinctive difference between poetry and prose in the Hebrew Bible. Instead of the notion of 'poetry', Kugel speaks about 'elevated style'. He argues that some biblical passages are more elevated that others, but the same 'elevated style' can be found throughout the Bible. He maintains that mainly two elements, parallelism and terseness determine this 'elevated style'. Kugel concludes that there is a sort of poetry-prose continuum from parallelistic structures to the more 'elevated rhetoric' of parallelistic devices.

Many scholars have accepted his understanding of parallelism. They have also accepted his argument that the distinction between poetry and prose is not a sharp one. Thus Kugel's explanation finds greater credibility, and as in many biblical verses, the boundary between poetry and prose, seems to be fluid or unclear. However, Kugel's standpoint has been greatly criticized by many biblical scholars. Few scholars accept his criteria for recognizing Hebrew poetry. In fact, it is not solely parallelism and terseness which defines biblical poetry. Despite Kugel's nihilism in his approach to poetry, his study has started a fresh discussion

[50] See Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry,* 59-95.

between scholars on the definition of Hebrew poetry. His idea of biblical poetry certainly merits labelling as an original position.

Robert Alter in *The Art of Biblical Poetry* critically evaluates Kugel's opinion. Alter argues that Kugel's standpoint comes perilously close to concluding that there is no poetry in the Bible.[51] Alter represents a slightly different approach to Kugel's. In his study, he analyses various biblical texts. He examines what elements make up a poem in the Hebrew Bible. In his scrutiny of prophetic poetry of the Book of Job and the Book of Proverbs, he focuses on such poetic features as parallelism, word-pairs, meaning of lines, poetical structure and rhythm. An important element of Hebrew poetry, which Alter examines, and is of particular personal interest, is imagery. In Chapter Eight of his study, which concerns an analysis of metaphor in the Song of Songs, Alter shows that imagery plays an important role in biblical poetry. In his analysis of 'the garden of metaphor' Alter asserts that figurative language in the Song of Songs plays a more prominent role than is found elsewhere in biblical poetry. He provides an example from the Song of Songs 2:2-3:

> Like a lily among brambles, / so is my darling among girls.
> Like an apple tree among forest trees, / so is my lover among lads.

Alter argues that in this poem we deal with a kind of transfer of meaning that takes place when one thing is represented through the image of something else.[52] We see this in the above passage where 'my darling [girl]' is compared to 'a lily'; 'girls' to 'brambles'; 'my lover' is compared to 'an apple', and 'lads' to 'forest trees'.
Another example of biblical metaphor which Alter provides is Ps 17:8:

> Guard me like the apple of your eye,
> In the shadow of your wings conceal me.

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[51] See Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry*, 4.
[52] See ibid, 189.

Alter explains that both 'the apple of the eye' (as something to be cherished), and 'the shadow of wings' (as a place of shelter) are biblical figures of speech.[53] In the metaphor 'the apple of the eye', the word 'the apple' refers physiognomically to the pupil of the eye. This expression comes from the ancient belief that the pupil or circular aperture in the centre of the eye through which the dark retina is seen was supposed to be a globular solid body (apple-shaped body) which was essential to sight and, therefore, very precious.[54] In the figurative sense, the expression 'the apple of the eye' is used as a symbol of that which is cherished with the greatest of regard.[55] This interesting and beautiful ancient metaphor is still commonly used in modern language, preserving a similar meaning. Thus, in modern culture the phrase 'The apple of the eye' means something, or more usually someone, cherished above others.

In his study, Alter shows that imagery is one of the components of Hebrew poetry and plays an important role within it. He demonstrates that there is an observable difference between prose and poetry. However, in recognizing Hebrew poetry, Alter like Kugel, acknowledges the dominant role of parallelism. He also often refers to narrative texts in analysing Hebrew poetry. In his scrutiny, Alter examines the different poetical constituents but he does not conclude that these elements constitute biblical poetry. Therefore his idea suggests a similar conclusion to Kugel's. Although their studies bring a contribution to the understanding of biblical poetry, their conclusions do not provide a clear concept in defining Hebrew poetry. What has become clear from the studies of Kugel and Alter, is that it is necessary to look for a variety of characteristics rather than a single defining feature. A weakness in the approach of Lowth, Kugel and Alter, consists in

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[53] Ibid, 190.

[54] See J. A. Simpson and E. S. C. Weiner (eds.), *The Oxford English Dictionary*, vol. I (2nd ed., Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 573.

[55] Ibid, 573; see also Peter Richard Wilkinson, *Thesaurus of Traditional English Metaphors* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), 343.

overvaluing the semantic aspect of poetry, that is, the meaning of lines. This is a part of the truth about poetry but it is not the whole truth.

Other scholars have used linguistic methods in their attempt to understand the working of Hebrew poetry. Those scholars, who analyse Hebrew poetry by technical studies in Hebrew prosody, represent a different approach from Kugel's and Alter's. We understand the term 'prosody' following the definition of Brogan. He defines prosody as: 'Prosody is the most general term used to refer to the elements and structure involved in the rhythmic or dynamic aspect of speech. Literary prosody studies the rhythmic structure of prose and verse.'[56] Scholars who represent this approach in analysing Hebrew poetry describe poetry using the terminology of linguistic methodologies. Some of them like David Noel Freedman and Frank Moor Cross[57] have analysed Hebrew poetry by putting an emphasis on the metrical and structure analysis of Hebrew poetry. Others as for example, Terence Collins[58], Stephen Geller[59] and Michael O'Connor[60] have examined biblical poetry in order to discern its essential features and to show grammatical rules. Although an analysis of the grammar of the Hebrew poem highlights some features of Hebrew poetry, this approach has its limitations. It does not involve the semantic analysis of a poem, which in analysing and describing Hebrew poetry, should also be investigated and scrutinised.

In the group of scholars who analyse biblical poetry by the technical study of Hebrew prosody we can include J. P. Fokkelman. His analysis of poetry and narrative, particularly in the Books of Samuel, brings a valued contribution to the

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[56] Terry Brogan, 'Prosody', in Alex Preminger (ed.) *The Princeton Handbook of Poetic Terms* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 218-219.

[57] See Frank Moor Cross and David Noel Freedman, *Studies in Ancient Yahwistic Poetry* (SBLDS 21; Missoula: Scholars Press, 1975).

[58] See Collins, *Line-Forms in Hebrew Poetry*.

[59] See Stephen Geller, 'The Dynamics of Parallel Verse. A Poetic Analysis of Deut 32:6-12,' *Harvard Theological Review* 75 (1982), 35-56; 'Theory and Method in the Study of Biblical Poetry,' *JQR* 73 (1982), 65-77.

[60] See O'Connor, *Hebrew Verse Structure*.

development and understanding of Hebrew poetry.[61] In his recent study *Reading Biblical Poetry*, he examines Hebrew poetry and its ingredients. He especially addresses the structure of the poem. He identifies and then analyses the smaller textual units as cola and verses, and the larger components of the poem as strophe and stanza. Fokkelman examines various biblical texts. Among his numerous examples, he provides the example of Psalm 18, which shows how cola, strophes, and stanzas may be recognized.[62] For Fokkelman these elements are a feature of biblical poetry. In his analysis, he also provides a new and comprehensive definition of the Hebrew poem. His definition is based on taking into account both components of poetry: prosody and language. He understands prosody as: 'The measures of all textual levels together, from syllables through to stanzas or sections.'[63] He defines a poem as follows:

> A poem is the result of an artistic handling of language, style and structure, and applying prescribed proportions to all levels of the text, so that a controlled combination of language and number is created.[64]

Fokkelman's definition is an attempt to define a poem. His definition is constructive and valuable in analysing poetry because it takes into account both the semantic and the grammatical elements of poetry. However, we also need to take into account the strategies employed by other biblical scholars, in this quest to identify the nature of poetry.

In a recent and expert research work on poetry *Seeing the Psalms. A Theology of Metaphor*, William Brown[65] analyses the imaginative and effective

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[61] See Jan P. Fokkelman, *Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel. A Full Interpretation Based on Stylistic and Structural Analyses*, 4 vols. (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1981, 1986, 1990, 1993).

[62] See Fokkelman, *Reading Biblical Poetry*, 151.

[63] Ibid, 34.

[64] Ibid, 35.

[65] See Brown, *Seeing the Psalms.*

power of psalmic poetry, particularly the power of imagery. In his review on Brown's study, Patrick Miller remarks:

> This is the most important work on the poetry of the Psalms since James Kugel's *The Idea of Biblical Poetry*. Brown takes the study of Psalms poetry beyond the more functional analysis of parallelism into the way in which the varied, powerful, and often surprising images of the psalms convey their content and theology for the sake of instruction, prayer, and praise.

Brown, in a fresh and lucid manner, explores the language of metaphors and the 'iconic structure' of individual poems in order to uncover their theological meaning. In his study he examines metaphor in different psalms. He perceives imagery as an important feature of biblical poetry. Brown argues that the poetry of the psalms achieves a verbal level of iconography as for example in Psalm 139, which reveals iconic language in taking a stand against idolatry. He maintains that beside the importance of the text's form-fullness and linguistic background, images play an important role in conveying the text's meaning. He notes that word and image, form and icon are bound together in the formative aim of the biblical psalms.[66]

In the analyses of Hebrew poetry, other scholars focus their attention on different elements. Thus, for example, Mowinckel[67] argues that Hebrew poetry is characterized by the occurrence of stressed syllables, that is, metre. Many modern scholars are of the opinion that metre, rhythm and stress are vital components of biblical poetry.[68] Different metrical theories exist; these include the accentual theory in which Hebrew metre is accentual; the syllabic, which focuses on counting syllables in a line, and the accentual-syllabic, focusing both, on counting the number of stresses and syllables in a line. In addition, the quantitative method takes into consideration not only the number of syllables but also their duration.

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[66] Ibid, 4.
[67] See Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, II.
[68] See Gillingham, *The Poems and Psalms of the Hebrew Bible*, 51.

The first two strategies to meter, constitute the most common approach by modern scholars.[69]

Berlin[70] regards parallelism and terseness as the main features of Hebrew poetry. In his study, *A Manual of Hebrew Poetics*, Alonso Schökel[71] examines, in a comprehensive manner, a series of techniques, which are common in biblical poetry. He remarks that it is difficult to distinguish between prose vocabulary and poetic vocabulary, and especially to discern techniques, which are exclusively poetic.[72] In his comprehensive study *Classical Hebrew poetry*, Watson[73] provides a long list of poetic constituents and devices. He gives an account of the methods, poetic techniques and results of current scholarship. The general background and the references to non-Hebrew literature, which he provides, is particularly useful in the comparative study of Hebrew poetry and poetical texts of the ancient Near East. Freedman[74] and Dahood[75] argue that number or length of syllables is a particular characteristic feature of Hebrew poetry. Dahood's comparative analysis of biblical Hebrew with the resources of Northwest Semitic languages, specifically Ugaritic, is a fundamental characteristic in his rendition and interpretation of the Book of Psalms. This is generally regarded as an unconventional approach to the analysis of Hebrew poetry. Dahood notes that imagery plays an important role in biblical poetry.[76] He maintains that biblical imagery may find its archetype in the imagery of the ancient Near East literature. In order to support and strengthen this opinion or oppose it, it is necessary to examine the figurative language, which we find in the ancient Near Eastern literature. Metaphor is taken to be the most

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[69] See Tremper Longman III, *Literary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Academie Books and Leicester: Apollos, 1987), 133.

[70] See Berlin, *The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism*.

[71] See Alonso Schökel, *A Manual of Hebrew Poetics*.

[72] See ibid, 19.

[73] See Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry*.

[74] See D. N. Freedman, 'Pottery, Poetry and Prophecy: An Essay in Biblical Poetry', *JBL* 96 (1977), 5-26.

[75] See Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms 101-150*, II (AB 17; Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1968), XXV-XXX.

[76] See ibid, XXVI.

fundamental form of figurative language; therefore it will be helpful to our investigation to scrutinise and explore further, metaphor in the ancient Near East and modern literature context.

2. Metaphor in the Ancient Near East and Modern Literature

In an introduction to his book, Keel remarks: 'No contemporary scholarly work dispenses with at least occasional comparison of Old Testament evidence with other evidence from the ancient Near East'.[77] In the examination of metaphorical language in this study, a comparison of some images and metaphors, which are found in the ancient Near Eastern literature and in the Hebrew Bible, provide us with helpful evidence to pursue further analysis. It is necessary to consider biblical metaphorical language in the context of other literatures of the ancient Middle East.

We find the concept of metaphor in other literatures of the ancient Middle East. In order to discern possible influence of other cultures and languages on Hebrew thought, let us compare some Ugaritic and Akkadian poetic texts, which contain metaphorical language, with comparable figurative expressions as those we find in the Hebrew Bible. The Ugaritic myths and epics were written between the fourteenth and twelfth centuries B.C. at the north Syrian coastal city of Ugarit.[78] Numerous clay tablets were found in that city in the 1920s by a French team of archaeologists. Many of the discovered texts were written in prose as letters, legal documents, and financial and administrative records. Other texts are written in poetry and deal with religious and mythological themes. No doubt these texts provide us with a major insight into the culture of that period.[79] The most frequent

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[77] Othmar Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World. Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Book of Psalms* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns 1997), 7.

[78] See Simon B. Parker (ed.), *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry* (SBL Writings from the Ancient World Series 9; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), 1-5.

[79] See Lucas, *Exploring the Old Testament,* 74.

metaphors occur in the Aqhat epics. The lack of comparable context in Ugaritic prose makes sometimes the recognition and evaluation of poetic features difficult and uncertain.[80] However, metaphor can be recognized in the following passages of Ugaritic poetry.

In the Baal Cycle, the expression: 'the blood of vines'[81] (CAT 1.4: IV: 38) is a metaphor for 'wine'. There is a comparable image in the Hebrew Bible in Gen 49:11: 'in the blood of grapes'. Hamilton notes that this biblical expression in the context of v.11 refers to the crushing of the grapes.[82]

In the Epic of Kirta, the Ugaritic expression: 'Waste not your eye with flowing'[83] (CAT 1.16: I: 27) in the metaphorical sense, signifies 'weeping', 'tears'. The Prophet Jeremiah in Jer 8:23 expresses his wish that his head becomes 'a spring of water' and his eyes 'a fountain of tears': 'My head was a spring of water, and my eyes a fountain of tears'.

In the Ugaritic poetic phrase: 'And he [Baal] gives his voice in the clouds, for the flashing of lighting bolts to the earth' (CAT 1:4: V: 8-9), the relationship between storm imagery and the voice of Baal is attested, and the expression 'his voice in the clouds' may be interpreted as an understanding of 'thunder'. In the Hebrew poetic poem in 2 Sam 22:14, the author employs similar language: 'The Lord thundered from heaven and the Most High uttered His voice', and also in 1 Sam 7:10: 'The Lord thundered with a mighty voice upon the Philistines that day'. Psalm 29:3-4 contains similar figurative language:

> The voice of the Lord is over the waters;
> The God of glory thunders;

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[80] See Stanislav Segert, 'Ugaritic Poetry and Poetics: Some Preliminary Observations', *UF* 11 (1979) 733.

[81] James B. Pritchard (ed.), *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (2nd edition; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955), 133.

[82] See Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 18-50* (Grand Rapids-Cambridge: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1995), 662.

[83] Pritchard (ed.), *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 147; John C. Gibson, *Canaanite Myths and Legends* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1977), 95.

> The Lord is over many waters.
> The voice of the Lord is powerful;
> The voice of the Lord is full of majesty.

The Ugaritic verse surely connotes that flashing lightning bolts are connected with Baal's voice, just as the thunder in the biblical verses is related to Yahweh's utterance. The storm imagery is clearly seen in both, the Ugaritic and biblical verses.

In the Ugaritic text, the metaphor for passionate love between two gods: Anath and Baal, her brother, is expressed in the lines:

> She eats his flesh without a knife,
> She drinks his blood without a cup.
> (CAT 1.96:3-5)[84]

The idea of 'eating and drinking' is well known in the Hebrew Bible too. In the figurative sense, the terms 'eating together', likewise 'drinking together', express a common bond and participation in the same activity.[85] In some passages passionate love or sexual appetite is visualised in these terms, and an example is found in Prov 30:20:

> Such is the way of an adulterous woman:
> She eats and wipes her mouth,
> And says, 'I have done no wrong.'

These lines must be seen in the context of Prov 30, where the wrongdoing of 'an adulterous woman' is compared to wiping away of any fragment of food from her mouth.[86] Similar language, portraying mutual love is found in the Song of Songs 5:1:

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[84] See Michael C. Astour, 'Remarks on KTU 1.96', *SEL* 5 (1988), 18-19.

[85] See Lelan Ryken, James C. Wilhoit, and Temper Longman III (eds.), *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Downers Grove and Leicester: Inter Varsity Press, 1998), 219.

[86] See Murphy, *Proverbs*, 236.

> I come into my garden, my sister, my bride;
> I pick my myrrh and balsam;
> I eat my honeycomb with my honey;
> I drink my wine and my milk.
> Eat friends and drink; drink deep, my dearest friends.

Keel argues that terms such as 'myrrh', 'balsam', 'honeycomb', 'honey', 'wine' and 'milk' in this verse, constitute a clustering of images of the garden.[87] The term 'honey' is used as an image for the sweetness of love's pleasure, sometimes in reference to lips and tongue (cf. Cant 4:11), and 'drinking milk' naturally evokes the beloved's breasts.[88] Thus, the phrases: 'I eat my honeycomb with my honey' and 'I drink my wine and my milk' are used in the context of Cant 5:1 as images for the lovers' erotic pleasures.[89]

Furthermore, there are many singular words in Ugaritic texts which have a symbolic meaning. The Ugaritic word *qrn* with its literal meaning 'horn' in verses:

> Your powerful horns, Anath the Girl,
> Your powerful horns let Baal anoint,
> Let Baal anoint them in flight.[90]
>
> (CAT 1.10: II: 21-23)

may assume a metaphorical meaning to define 'power'. According to Dahood,[91] *qrn* is more likely to denote 'wings' rather than 'horns', in that 'wings' are needed for flight, as observed in the usage in the Hebrew Bible in Hab 3:4:

> Two wings were at his side.

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[87] See Othmar Keel, *The Song of Songs* (A Continental Commentary; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 182.
[88] See ibid, 183.
[89] See ibid, 183.
[90] Pritchard (ed.), *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 142.
[91] Mitchell Dahood, *Ugaritic-Hebrew Philology* (BibOr 17; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute 1965), 71.

The Hebrew term for 'horn' is !rq . The figurative meaning, in general, represents power or status in a social context (Deut 33:17; 2 Sam 22:3; Dan 8:20-21; Exod 34:29; Hab 3:4.). As a symbol of power the term occurs in Psalm 18:3 where God is described as:

> The horn of my salvation

indicating the sense of spiritual strength for those who trust in Him.

Many animal names are found in Ugaritic literature and in the Hebrew Bible. Often these names are used metaphorically as designations or titles for leaders or for warriors.[92] As an instance, let us examine an Ugaritic passage where Kirta invites the 'bulls' and 'gazelles' to share his banquet:

> Into her presence she causes his bulls to enter,
> Into her presence she causes his gazelles to enter.[93]
> (CAT 1.15: IV: 17-18)

Animal names are used as designations of high officials or dignitaries in Kirta's court. In these designations, we see poetic rather than formal designations. These two poetic lines are characterized by the occurrence of synonymous parallelism.[94]
In the Hebrew Bible, the metaphorical use of animal names is used extensively. They denote dignitaries and other classifications of people.[95] Let us look at some of them which occur in the Bible. The Hebrew term lya 'ram'[96] appears to designate the 'leaders' and 'nobles' (Exod 15:15; 2 Kgs 24:15; Ezek 17:13; 30:13; 31:11; Ps 58:2; Job 41:17; etc.). The metaphorical designations ryBa 'bull', 'horse'[97] are used for 'soldiers', 'princes', or 'leaders' (1 Sam 21:8; Job 24:22; 34:20; Pss 68:31; 76:6; Isa

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[92] See Patrick D. Miller, 'Animal Names as Designations in Ugaritic and Hebrew', *UF* 2 (1970), 177-186; 'El the Warrior', *HTR* 60 (1967), 411-431.
[93] Pritchard (ed.), *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 146.
[94] See Miller, 'Animal Names', 178.
[95] See Mitchell Dahood, 'The Value of Ugaritic for Textual Criticism', *Bib* 40 (1959), 161.
[96] BDB, 17.
[97] Ibid, 7.

46:12; etc.). The term rypK 'young lion'[98] is used for 'warrior' or for 'strength' and 'power' (Ezek 32:2; 38:13; Nah 2:14). The word ~ydWTy means 'he-goats'[99]. In the figurative sense, this word designates 'princes' or 'rulers' (Isa 14:9; Zech 10:3).

In Akkadian, we find the ascription of names of domesticated animals to the warriors of Sargon. In the text of Sargon, the Conquering Hero (6:44, Column II)[100], the Akkadian expression: 'the strong bulls, he put into action'; the words 'strong bulls' are designated for 'warriors'. In another Akkadian expression: 'mighty oxen' appears in Sargan in Foreign Lands (7 I 17); this term is used as an epithet for 'soldiers'.[101] In the text of King of Battle (9B:20), the word: 'steers' refers to the 'warriors'.[102]

It is significant that we find many metaphors also in Sumerian poetry. In some passages of composition such as in Lugalbanda there are clusters of numerous images.[103] For example, in lines 142-147, we find a dense cluster of six images arranged in sequence:

> Like Sara, Inana's beloved son,
> Shoot forth with your barbed arrows like the sun!
> Shoot forth with reed-arrows like moonlight!
> May the barbed arrows be a horned viper to those they hit!
> Like a fish struck with the axe, may they be magic-cut!
> Like logs struck with the axe, may you pile them up!

In these verses we identify many different images: 'the shooter' like the god Sara; 'arrows' like the sun; 'arrows' like moonlight and 'arrows' like a horned viper. The passage begins with the fierceness of the shooter (the god Sara), the 'arrows' indicate the intensity of attack (sunlight, moonlight); this is followed by their

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[98] Ibid, 498.
[99] Ibid, 800.
[100] See Joan Goodnick Westenholz, *Legends of the Kings of Akkade, The Texts* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns 1997), 67.
[101] Ibid, 85.
[102] Ibid, 117.
[103] About image clusters see more in: Jeremy Black, *Reading Sumerian Poetry* (London: The Athlone Press, 1998), 110-115.

effect on the victims (like a horned viper), and eventually the death of the victims (dead like fish struck with the axe with their corpses piled up like logs struck with the axe). The author of this passage compares human corpses to 'a fish struck with the axe' and 'logs struck with the axe'. The sequence follows through the action and the effect of shooting.[104] Such clustering of images can also be identified and found in the Hebrew Bible as in the long poems of Gen 49 and Deut 33.

This brief comparison shows evidence that similar metaphor patterns, exist in the ancient Near Eastern literature and in the Hebrew Bible. In his analysis of biblical poetry, Alter concludes:

> Although it is not very likely that the biblical writers specifically knew the Ugaritic corpus, there are persuasive grounds for concluding that a good many of them were familiar with a now lost Canaanite literature to which Ugaritic essentially belongs; biblical poetry not only repeats the system of parallelism and dozens of actual word-pairings found in the Ugaritic but also abounds in allusions to elements of the Canaanite-Ugaritic myths, and occasionally even borrows a whole line of verse from its pagan predecessors.[105]

The investigation of Ugaritic and Hebrew poetical metaphors in this chapter, provides persuasive evidence to suggest that Hebrew poetry was greatly influenced by and developed within the ancient Near Eastern tradition. We can assume that Ugaritic and Hebrew poetical verses emerged out of the same broad cultural and linguistic context. They have much in common, both in terms of language and content. We can conclude that Israel's hymns, songs, and prayers conform to the general conventions of ancient Near Eastern poetry. This substantiates and confirms Dahood's opinion.

It is important also to observe that knowledge of cultural background of the ancient people is crucial for a proper interpretation and understanding of poems from that time. Alonso Schökel notes that in analysing biblical metaphor, it is

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[104] Ibid, 113.
[105] See Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry*, 28.

important to take into account the 'oriental imagination'.[106] Biblical Hebrew poets wrote their poems in a specific imaginative style. Their poems were composed in a particular time and culture. Therefore, metaphor should be read and interpreted in the proper context of time and culture, in which it was composed. In fact, it is difficult to understand many of the Hebrew metaphors unless we acquaint ourselves with this ancient culture and literature, and understand the historical context of the biblical writers. On the other hand, contemporary culture and modern poetry also presents us with a language of images, metaphors and symbols. In fact, modern poetry abounds in poetical figures. Imagery in modern poetry is created and developed by contemporary thought, which is different from that of the biblical epoch. Therefore, it is rational to pose the following questions: Does figurative language in modern poetry differ from the biblical imagery? How do we interpret metaphor in biblical and modern poetry? Do we find similar images in both? Let us consider two examples of modern poems with biblical themes, similar, to the dominant motif of Psalm 63, and which contain metaphorical language. A comparative study of metaphor in these different styles of poetry may provide us with some ideas on biblical and modern poetry.

The presence of metaphor in modern English poetry and its connotation with the Bible's passages is seen in George Herbert's poem 'The Altar':

A broken Altar, Lord, thy servant reares,
Made of a heart, and cemented with teares:
Whose parts are as thy hand did frame;
No workmans tool hath touch'd the same.
A Heart alone
Is such a stone,
As nothing but
Thy pow'r doth cut.
Wherefore each part
Of my hard heart
Meets in this frame
To praise thy Name:

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[106] See Alonso Schökel, *A Manual of Hebrew Poetics*, 99.

That, if I chance to hold my peace,
These stones to praise thee may not cease.
O let thy blessed Sacrifice be mine,
And sanctifie this Altar to be thine.[107]

Although this poem is not one of Herbert's finest poems, it is chosen, because it is remarkable for its use of figurative language. At first glance, the allegory seems simple: the altar is a heart and the cement is tears, God is shown in metaphorical language as the stonemason and the altar is a place for sacrifice. But, when we begin to examine the terms in their interrelations, the poem reveals new metaphorical levels. It shows in an allegorical way, the relationship between man and God. A man's heart is hard. It is also 'broken', presumably by a sort of God's 'cutting', and God in order to convert the human heart allows suffering and the shedding of tears. God wishes to re-establish the old, hard heart, not in its natural heart-shape, but in the shape of an altar. These poetic lines recall verse of Psalm 51:17 'A broken and a contrite heart, O God you will not despise'. But it seems that the tears in Herbert's poem, are tears of suffering rather than tears of contrition. However, in the final lines it is presented as a request to God, that He may sacrifice the human heart, so as to find completeness in God.[108]

This poem comprises not only of clear metaphors but also certain allegorical ideas. The metaphorical sense of the whole poem, however, cannot be properly understood unless all the metaphors are accurately interpreted. In this poem, as in many other classical poems in modern languages, different metaphors are incorporated into a poem, in order to communicate both meaning and a deeper imaginative vision. The imagery adds further meaning to the literal sense. A similar kind of connotation can be seen in biblical poems where metaphors are arranged in different themes or motifs. This occurs in Psalm 63. In verses 2-5, the

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[107] Helen Wilcox (ed.), *The English Poems of George Herbert* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 92.

[108] See Helen Vendler, *The Poetry of George Herbert* (Cambridge, Mass., and London: Harvard University Press, 1975), 61-63.

metaphors are composed in the context of the motif of thirsting for the presence of God interspersed with water imagery. This will constitute the subject of further research in the next chapters of this study.

As an example of a poem from English poetry, relevant to this motif, is 'The Water-Fall' by Henry Vaughan. It is a good example of the combination of imagery with the motif of an ardent searching for God in a human life. Together with the celebration of nature, the poet plays with the image of God as the 'waterfall', his 'stream' and 'fountains of life'. The poem begins with a master line that expands into an accurate pace and rhythm, with an impressive depth and resonance, which are typical of many modern poems.[109]

> With what deep murmurs through times silent stealth
> Doth thy transparent, cool and watry wealth
> Here flowing fall,
> And chide, and call,
> As if his liquid, loose Retinue staid
> Lingring, and were of this steep place afraid,
> The common pass
> Where, clear as glass,
> All must descend
> Not to an end:
> But quickned by this deep and rocky grave,
> Rise to a longer course more bright and brave.
>
> Dear stream! Dear bank, where often I
> Have sate, and pleas'd my pensive eye,
> Why, since each drop of thy quick store
> Runs thither, whence it flow'd before,
> Should poor souls fear a shade or night,
> Who came (sure) from a sea of light?
>
> (Vv. 1-18)
>
> Fountains of life where the Lamb goes!
> What sublime truths and wholesome themes
> Lodge in thy mystical deep streams!
> Such as dull man can never find
> Unless that Spirit lead his mind
> Which first upon thy face did move,

[109] See E. C. Pettet, *Of Paradise and Light. A Study of Vaughan's Silex Scintillans* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1960), 181.

> And hatch'd all with his quick'ning love.[110]
> (Vv. 26-32)

The author of the poem interprets and discovers a waterfall in the allegorical sense as a fountain of life. Vaughan regards nature with a 'pensive eye' (v.14). Using metaphorical language, he plays with the image of water. He portrays water as a longed-for source of satiation (vv.13-14), as a source of life - 'Fountains of life, where the Lamb goes?' (v.26), and as a mystical source and inspiration - 'Lodge in thy mystical, deep streams!' (v.28). In writing about the source of life in verse 26, Vaughan presumably refers to the image of Christ - the Lamb, who as a shepherd will guide His people to the 'springs of living water' - zwhj phgaj udatwn which we find in Rev 7:17:

> For the Lamb who is in the centre of the throne will be their shepherd,
> And he will guide them to springs of living water;
> And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.

We find a similar motif containing figurative language in Isa 49:10:

> They will never hunger or thirst, scorching wind and sun will never plague them;
> For he who pities them will lead them, will guide them to springs of water.

In vv. 28-32, Vaughan transfers his figurative language into a meditation on creation. In these verses the poet apparently refers to a biblical passage from Gen 1:1-2. Jonathan F. Post grasps the point of Vaughan' vision of these verses: 'The spirit that moves in these waters reminds him both of the spirit "in the beginning" that "moved upon the face of the waters" and of the creative potential given only

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[110] John Wain (ed.), *The Oxford Anthology of Great English Poetry*, vol. I (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 392.

to those regenerated by that other fountain of life, Christ.'[111] Vaughan concludes his poem with a desire for God who releases him from the bounds of sin and He is for him, the source of longing and seeking:[112]

> O my invisible estate,
> My glorious liberty, still late!
> Thou art the channel my soul seeks,
> Not this with Cataracts and Creeks.
>
> (Vv. 37-40)

In conclusion we can state that in the poem 'Water-Fall', Vaughan using figurative language, welds in a poetic way, the water imagery and the motif of longing for God. He reveals that God remains for him the 'fountain of life' for whom he longs.

The water imagery and motif of longing for God are evidenced in Hebrew poetry. We observe this, particularly in Psalm 42:2-3 and in Psalm 63:2.

> As the deer longs for streams of water,
> So my soul longs for you, O God.
> My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.
> When shall I come and appear before God?
>
> (Ps 42:2-3)

> My soul thirsts for you, my flesh longs for you,
> In a dry and weary land without water.
>
> (Ps 63:2)

Figurative language containing water imagery enriches other exemplary psalms such as: 'The streams of water' which nourish the tree, is compared to the man of God (Ps 1:3); God leads man to 'still waters' (Ps 23:2); motif of 'deep waters' in lamentation (Ps 69:1-2,14); God as a gardener watering his creation (Ps 104:13-16);

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[111] Jonathan F. S. Post, *Henry Vaughan. The Unfolding Vision,* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 153-154.

[112] See ibid, 154.

the river whose streams make glad the city of God (Ps 46:4) and in the psalmist's imagination, springs are linked with torrents (Ps 74:15)[113].

In our conclusion to the comparison of Hebrew and modern poetry, we have demonstrated that both biblical and modern poetry share a similar use of metaphor. Metaphor as a literary device is used for imaginative purposes both in biblical and modern poetry. It communicates a relation between two concepts by using words in a figurative rather than a literal sense. The poet uses metaphor in order to transfer the meaning of something familiar to what is less known. It is exemplified in both, modern and biblical poetic imagery. The imaginative language, used in these poems, intensifies the motifs and themes giving the poem a unique form and style.

3. Conclusion

The debate of contemporary scholars on biblical Hebrew poetry provides insights into the distinctive features of biblical poetry, and allows us to draw conclusions.

Firstly, the question of recognizing Hebrew poetry is still a matter of debate among present day scholars. In their examination of biblical poetical texts, each scholar tends to emphasize a particular aspect or feature, such as parallelism, metre, line length or imagery, which distinguishes Hebrew poetry from biblical prose. Every scholar has his own unique and original strategy and approach to analysing and defining biblical poetry. This has had limited success because many of the elements of poetry overlap with prose. Therefore, it is difficult to draw a clear distinction between poetry and prose. The metrical theories and *modi operandi* fail to capture fully the essence of the poetry itself. These theories provide us with an insight into some aspects or features of biblical poetry but they

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[113] See Ryken, et al. (eds.), *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery,* 307, 729, 932.

do not define the poetry unequivocally. Hebrew poetry is complex. Like modern poetry, which utilizes an array of tropes and figures, biblical poetry also employs a wide range of poetic devices, which belong to the stuff of Hebrew poetry. Poetic devices are in the domain of stylistics and rhetoric. They are often present in poetry and they are essential and important elements of it but they do not define poetry.[114] An examination of poetry by biblical scholars demonstrates that it is a combination of features taken together that constitutes poetry. These features have to do with the nature of the language and imagery, and to the structures and forms, which are expressed in a poem. The theories of different scholars show that in analysing biblical poetry both semantic and linguistic criteria must be taken into account. Attention to all these factors produces a reliable concept of Hebrew poetry.

Secondly, the question of identifying actual poetry vis-à-vis prose is also an issue in modern poetry. The same question confronts modern readers of non-metrical verse. There are many lines in modern or classic literature where it is difficult to distinguish prose from poetry in purely formal terms. The French writer, Paul Valéry noted: 'Poetry is to prose as dancing is to walking.' Valéry's note subtly expresses the boundary between poetry and prose. Dancing is not walking, and walking is not dancing. These two things are different operations. However, walking with a graceful step can sometimes resemble dancing, and conversely. We may observe something similar in Hebrew and modern poetry and prose. Some common elements overlap in poetry and prose. They both share some common features. Hence, the borderline between poetry and prose may often be hardly discernible. This creates a difficulty in identifying clear characteristics of poetry. Perhaps we could, by the common features which poetry and prose share, identify poetry with prose or speak about poetry-prose as a continuum, as Kugel proposes. There are, however, some distinctive characteristics in different theories

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[114] See Adele Berlin, *Biblical Poetry Through Medieval Jewish Eyes* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991), 14-15.

about poetry to show that there is a rationale for the treatment of biblical and modern poetry as a phenomenon in its own right.

Thirdly, poetry is used for a purpose. Gillingham remarks that 'poetry starts with what is known and from this reaches out to convey the unknown'[115]. This statement seems at first incomprehensible but it is in fact a paradox. It suggests that the art of poetry is 'to conceal as much as it is to reveal'[116]. Thus in poetical verses, on the one hand, the reader can read the meaning of the lines, which the author of the poem intended to communicate, and on the other hand, often in the same lines the reader can discover a hidden sense, which is concealed in the form of the poem. Therefore, an identification of figures of speech, which are used in the poem, is crucial for a proper understanding of the poem. As already observed, some scholars such as Brown and Alter identify imagery as an important element of poetry. This chapter was begun with a quotation of Alonso Schökel, taken from his *A Manual of Hebrew Poetics*: 'Images are the glory, perhaps the essence of poetry, the enchanted planet of the imagination, a limitless galaxy, ever alive and ever changing.'[117] The comment reveals the nature, splendour and the special role of imagery. Images with their richness of expression have always had a special place in biblical and also in modern poetry. They are indeed part of the essence of poetry. And more importantly this 'the essence of poetry' is used for a purpose. Indeed, the imagery is used for a purpose i.e. to conceal as much as to reveal. It involves a leap from sense to transcendence and from the describable to the ineffable. It leads the reader into 'thinking more'[118].

Gillingham points out that while analytical or critical study is necessary for understanding a particular poem, the imagination is essential to appreciating the poem.[119] The imaginative appreciation of poetry involves the reader to 'looking

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[115] Gillingham, *The Poems and Psalms of the Hebrew Bible*, 15-16.
[116] Ibid, 15.
[117] Alonso Schökel, *A Manual of Hebrew Poetics*, 95.
[118] Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, 303.
[119] Gillingham, *The Poems and Psalms of the Hebrew Bible,* 4.

through' the poem and also 'looking at it'. Thus the power of poetry, specifically biblical poetry, is to invite the reader to look through and beyond the written word, beyond its poetic structure and meter, and through its symmetry and sonority.[120] Poetry requires of the reader, both understanding and appreciation of the poetic text, otherwise; it is lacking in meaning. Gillingham further notes: 'Ancient biblical poetry…has a capacity both to stir our memories with things, which are strangely familiar, and also to challenge our vision with its depiction of things, which will always remain strangely unknown.'[121] This is the reason why biblical poetry makes the familiar strange and the strange familiar, and this is one certain concept, we can conclude about biblical poetry.

Fourthly, the comparative study of metaphors found in Ugaritic, Akkadian and Sumerian texts and in the Hebrew Bible demonstrates that biblical imagery finds its archetype in the imagery of the ancient Near Eastern literature and was influenced to a certain extant by these literatures.[122] The above analysis of modern poems such as 'The Altar' by Herbert and Vaughan's 'The Water-Fall' shows also that modern poetic verses contain similar water imagery and motifs to that in Psalm 63. This demonstrates that modern poetry employs a similar metaphorical language to that which we find in biblical poetry and it shows that these both poetries share a similar use of metaphors.

Chapter One had as its purpose to demonstrate important aspects of biblical poetry, to explain imagery, and especially metaphor in its broader context; the aim was to show its place and role in Hebrew poetry, and also to show its occurrence in ancient and modern literature and poetry. This chapter provides the foundation for a better comprehension of the imagery associated with Psalm 63 in the context of the ANE, biblical and modern poetry.

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[120] See Brown, *Seeing the Psalms*, 9.
[121] Gillingham, *The Poems and Psalms of the Hebrew Bible,* 16.
[122] See Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry*, 4-10.

Chapter Two will focus on a detailed examination of the nature of metaphor. As a poetic device, metaphor requires a specific strategy of analysis and interpretation. The analysis of figurative language in the next chapter will provide us with the basis for a further examination of 'the enchanted planet of images'[123] in Psalm 63.

[123] See Alonso Schökel, *A Manual of Hebrew Poetics*, 95.

CHAPTER 2 - AN ANALYSIS OF METAPHOR

> La métaphore est une habileté, un talent,
> c'est un talent de pensée.[124]

Metaphor is one of the most powerful types of rhetorical expression. It is widely used in numerous passages of the Hebrew Bible. The domain of metaphor can be studied at many different levels. Each level and type of analysis leads to new insights into the nature of metaphor and its meaning. In order to understand the metaphors of Psalm 63, first we need to see how metaphor works and what types of metaphor exist. The metaphors found in Psalm 63 cannot be properly explained unless we understand the general linguistic definition of metaphor. This chapter will therefore focus on the two basic questions: how do we recognize metaphorical utterance, and how do we analyse it?

1. Preliminary Observations.

Metaphor belongs to a much broader network of figurative language. It encapsulates a number of metaphorical forms such as: images, symbols, allegories, analogies, idioms, personification, similes, metonymy, and synecdoche. Metaphor at its most basic level could be defined as a figure of speech founded on resemblance. All forms of figurative language are referred to as 'figures of speech' or 'tropes'. Metaphor, however, is the most fundamental form of figurative language. Some tropes such as similes, metonymy and synecdoche are different versions of the metaphor's prototype.[125] Metaphor is considered as a literary device used for imaginative purposes in poetry and literature. Metaphor, unlike simile,

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[124] 'Metaphor is a competence, a talent; it is a talent of thinking'; Paul Ricœur, *La Métaphore vive* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1975), 105.

[125] See Terence Hawkes, *Metaphor* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1972), 1-2.

does not need the use of extra words to communicate a concept. It communicates a relationship between two concepts by using words in a figurative rather than in a literal sense.[126]

In an analysis of metaphor, it is useful to begin with a clarification of some basic terms. We use terms such as: 'literal', 'figurative' and 'metaphorical'.

Firstly, in order to distinguish figurative language from literal language, it is clear that figurative language is language which does not mean what it says. Thus, if I say, 'Some hearts are ice', this does not mean that some human hearts are made of ice. It means rather that some people are rather unemotional or cold towards other people. Literal language on the other hand is language which means what it says, and it uses words in their ordinary and literal sense, derived from common usage in ordinary speech. In the utterance, 'Julia is a woman', this means exactly what the words say, namely that Julia is actually a woman, and not a man. In an analysis of figurative language in this study, frequent use will be made of the terms: 'literal' and 'figurative'.

Secondly, the term 'metaphorical language' cannot be used interchangeably with the term 'figurative language'. The term 'figurative' is relevant to a wider network of figurative language, and can be used when referring to each trope of figurative speech, whereas, the term 'metaphorical language' refers essentially to the metaphor used in a whole utterance. Of course, metaphorical language is a part of figurative language but the converse is not necessarily true.

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[126] See Winifred Nowottny, *The Language Poets Use* (London: Athlone Press, 1962), 52.

2. A Definition of Metaphor.

All metaphors share the same nature and structure. They are composed and expressed in different cultural, historical and social contexts. Therefore, in grammatical analysis of metaphor we need first to begin with a definition. The ancient Near Eastern and biblical Hebrew literatures which employ metaphorical language do not provide us with any ancient grammatical definition or explanation of metaphor. However, one can be certain that the Hebrew writers were conscious of the phenomenon even though we know of no writings on this subject. They could rightly distinguish between what they could portray as an image, and that which no image could adequately describe, for example, 'I Am who I Am'.[127] The ancient writers used figurative language in order to express an idea which could not be adequately expressed by the usage of literal language alone. Many ideas, phenomena and concepts can only be expressed appropriately by the use of non-literal language and poets frequently use metaphorical language in order to transfer the fuller meaning of something familiar to something which is less known.[128]

In the quest for the root of the definition of metaphor we have to go back to the ancient Greek world, where Aristotle is credited with the first extended analysis of the nature of metaphor. Some Greek and Roman philosophers like Plato, Socrates, followed by Cicero, Horace and Quintilian acknowledged the importance of the role of metaphor in speech.[129] Aristotle's definition exerted greater influence in the further development and understanding of the nature of metaphor. An influential contemporary writer on metaphor, Andrew Ortony has pointed out that in any serious study of metaphor, one is almost obliged to

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[127] See Janet Martin Soskice, *Metaphorical and Religious Language* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 77.

[128] See Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry,* 270.

[129] More on this topic see in W. Bedell Stanford, *Greek Metaphor. Studies in Theory and Practice* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1936).

commence with the works of Aristotle.[130] It is difficult to disagree with him. All later interpretations are based on or refer in some measure to Aristotle's classical definition, which introduces us to the notion of the mechanism of transference in language.

In his classical study *Poetics,* Aristotle defines metaphor as follows:

> Metaphor consists in applying to a thing a term [word] that belongs to something else; the transference being either from genus to species or from species to genus or from species to species or on grounds of analogy.[131]

All metaphors, according to Aristotle, fall into at least one of these four categories. The most useful category for us is the fourth category: analogy. In respect of this type of metaphor, in a further passage Aristotle explains: 'Metaphor by analogy means this: when the second is to the first as the fourth is to the third, then instead of the second the poet will say the fourth and the second instead of the fourth.'[132] In this definition, Aristotle uses terms: the first, the second, the third and the fourth, with reference to particular elements of a sentence. Thus, his perception of analogy can be presented in following manner: the second is to the first as the fourth is to the third. In order to observe this proportion in poetry, let us look at the following example:

'The evening of life'.

In applying Aristotle's explanation to the above example, we can illustrate the relation as follows:

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[130] See Andrew Ortony, 'Metaphor, Language, and Thought', in id., *Metaphor and Thought* (1979; 2nd edn, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 3.

[131] W. Nowottny, *The Language Poets Use*, 49; metafora de estin onomatoj allotriou epifora(h apo tou genouj epi eidoj h apo tou eidouj epi to genoj h apo tou eidouj epi eidoj h kata to analogon; *Aristotelis, De Arte Poetica Liber*, 21,1457b,6-9, Rudolf Kassel (ed.), (Oxford: University Press, 1965), 34.

[132] to de analogon lego(otan omoiwj ech to deuteron proj to prwton kai to tetarton proj to triton) erei gar anti tou deuterou to tetarton h anti tou tetartou to deuteron; *Aristotelis, De Arte Poetica Liber*, 21, 1457b, 16-19, Kassel (ed.), 34.

‘The evening’ (the second) is to ‘the day’ (the first) as ‘old age’ (the fourth) is to ‘life’ (the third).

Therefore, on the basis of substitution (the fourth) for (the second), ‘the evening’ is a metaphor for ‘old age’. In this example we observe the clear semantic relation between all components of verse – ‘the evening’ (the latter part of the day) corresponds to ‘old age’ (the latter part of life). However, Aristotle’s definition cannot be taken as the perfect framework for analysing all metaphorical phrases. In many poetic verses, it is difficult to observe the semantic relations between the elements of a sentence, for example in the expression:

‘A sail of the body’.

On the basis of Aristotle’s proposal we find:

‘A sail’ (the second) is to ‘the sea’ (the first) as ‘a garment’ (the fourth) is to ‘the body’ (the third).

In this example we cannot perceive a clear semantic relationship between all of the terms of the clause.[133] We find the semantic relationship between the second and the first components and also between the fourth and the third. It is difficult to observe such a clear relationship between the second and the fourth components. This demonstrates that Aristotle’s definition cannot be applied to all metaphorical phrases.

Aristotle’s account of metaphor, in modern terms, is known as the substitution or comparison theory of metaphor. In contemporary research, some analysts still accept his definition; however, a majority apply modern terms such as: ‘the topic’ or ‘tenor’, ‘the vehicle’ and ‘the ground’. The modern terms will be used in this research study. It is useful to start with Aristotle’s definition, because

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[133] See Samuel R. Levin, *The Semantics of Metaphor* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 94.

his definition emphasizes the process of transferring a term (word or meaning) from one object of reference to another; it is analogous to 'speaking of X as though it were Y'[134]. Yet, it is difficult to ascertain from Aristotle's definition whether his notion of metaphor deals with a transference of a word or a transference of a word's meaning. In fact, the Greek word *onoma* can mean 'noun', 'word' in general, or 'name'. Ijsseling's translation of Aristotle's definition takes into account this aspect. He states merely that 'metaphor as a transference of a word, i.e. the meaning of a word, to something else.'

In contemporary studies, we find many other definitions of metaphor. Perusal of three other different approaches to defining metaphor will be helpful at this stage. The first definition, which is noteworthy, is suggested by Soskice. She writes: 'Metaphor is that figure of speech whereby we speak about one thing in terms which are seen to be suggestive of another.'[135] Soskice explains that 'speaking' in metaphorical terms is a non-oral phenomenon; 'thing' signifies any object or state of affairs, not necessarily a physical object; and 'seen to be suggestive' means seen by a competent speaker of the language.[136] In the perception of Lakoff, the metaphor is not just a matter of language, but of thought and reason. He distinguishes the term 'metaphor', which refers to conceptual mapping, from the term 'metaphorical expression', which refers rather to an individual linguistic expression, which is sanctioned by a mapping. However, he argues that metaphor as a phenomenon, involves both conceptual mappings and individual linguistic expressions. Thus for him, for example, the sentence – 'Life is a journey' is a metaphor, in which 'life' is conceptualized as a journey and it is also a metaphorical expression.[137] Richards, an eminent contemporary theorist on metaphor, defines the metaphor as: 'In the simplest formulation, when we use a

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[134] Nowottny, *The Language Poets Use*, 49.

[135] See Soskice, *Metaphorical and Religious Language*, 15.

[136] Ibid, 15.

[137] See George Lakoff, 'The Contemporary Theory of Metaphor' in Andrew Ortony (ed.), *Metaphor and Thought* (1979; 2nd edn., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 208-209.

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.'[138] In this definition, Richards underlines especially an idea of two active thoughts, which remain in 'tension' and interact with each other.[139] Thus in the example: 'Life is a journey', both components of the sentence: 'life' and 'is a journey' undergo change by being thought of as in relationship to one another. We perceive life as a journey, and a journey is seen also differently like a long journey full of human experiences. The above examination shows us that language contains mechanisms of transference. These mechanisms of transference of one meaning of a word from another, we can call the rule of transference, or the metaphorical rule.[140] Essentially, metaphor can be expressed as a formula: X = 'like Y'.[141]

The mechanism of transference of one meaning of a word from another can often be observed in colloquial speech. For instance, if we say, 'I love Chopin', obviously we refer to our interest in his music and not to the man. (If he lived now we might understand this in the literal sense. But Chopin lived in the 19th century. It would be difficult to assume that someone who expresses such an opinion could really have affection for him in *sensu stricto*). Knowing that Chopin was a great composer of classic music, we speak of Chopin in reference only to his music. In this way, both of the two meanings: 'Chopin' and 'music' come into relation. The one meaning (Chopin) is transferred to the second sense (music). Hence, if we today say 'I love Chopin', we mean that we like to listen to his music.

In analysing the process of transference of meaning of a single word in metaphorical statements, it must be understood that the two terms: 'tenor' and

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[138] Ivor Armstrong Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), 93.

[139] See Sallie McFague, *Metaphorical Theology. Models of God in Religious Language* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), 37.

[140] This technical term is taken from Geoffrey N. Leech, *A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry* (1969; 6th edn., London: Longman Group Limited, 1977), 151. See also U. Weinreich, 'Explorations in Semantic Theory', in Thomas Albert Sebeok (ed.) *Current Trends in Linguistics*, III (The Hague: Mouton, 1966), 455-471.

[141] See Leech, *A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry*, 151.

'vehicle' are basic notional terms in the definition of metaphor. Richards[142] was the first person to name these terms. Some theorists on metaphor use other but similar terms. Black, for instance, calls these terms: the 'principal' and 'subsidiary',[143] and also the 'primary' and the 'secondary'.[144] However, the vast majority of contemporary authorities on metaphor prefer to use the terms 'tenor' and 'vehicle'. In this investigation, use will be made of these terms. The 'vehicle' is the term conveyed by the literal meanings of the words used metaphorically, and the 'tenor' is the term conveyed by the 'vehicle'. The metaphorical transference can only take place if some likeness or similarity is perceived between the figurative and literal meanings. In essence, the comparable interrelation perceived in metaphor is between the terms: 'tenor' and 'vehicle'.

Let us now consider the expression: 'You are a rock for me.' In this clause we identify the personal pronoun 'You' as the 'tenor', and the noun 'rock' as the 'vehicle'. Although it is difficult to perceive any 'physical and real' likeness between 'man' and 'rock', we can see a similarity on a different level of perception between these two terms. We could express this metaphorical expression as: 'You are a rock for me because like a rock, which is hard and solid, so you are reliable and trustworthy for me.' In this sense a resemblance between 'you' (tenor) and 'a rock' (vehicle) is perceived in this statement. Thus, the basic formula X = 'like Y' can be presented as follows: 'You' (X) = like a 'rock' (Y).

The relation between 'tenor' and 'vehicle' already addressed, brings us to the third notional element of metaphor, – the 'ground' of the comparison. Some scholars call this element *tertium comparationis*.[145] We find in the metaphor some common characteristics, which create the 'ground' of the metaphor. However,

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[142] See Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, 96.

[143] See Max Black, 'Metaphor' in id., *Models and Metaphors* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1962), 39.

[144] See Max Black, 'More about Metaphor', in Andrew Ortony (ed.), *Metaphor and Thought* (1979; 2nd edn., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 27.

[145] We find this term in Alonso Schökel, *A Manual of Hebrew Poetics*, 108.

there are different genres of metaphor. As Richards remarks, we can distinguish between some metaphors, which work via a direct similarity between two things, the 'tenor' and 'vehicle', and others, which work through some common characteristic we may observe in them both.[146] Another prominent linguist Ullmann names these two different kinds of similarity between 'tenor' and 'vehicle' by the terms: 'objective' and 'emotive'. He explains that we deal with the 'objective' kind when, for example, we call the ridge of a mountain a crest, because it resembles the crest on an animal's head. The 'emotive' type can be perceived for example, when we talk of a 'bitter' disappointment, because its effect is similar to that of a bitter taste.[147] Therefore, it is quite easy to find the 'ground' in some metaphors; in others, the 'ground' is much more vague or obscure. For instance, in the expression, 'I was amazed at the waves of the meadow', we find it easy to observe the 'ground' of the metaphor. We can imagine a poet, who stands and admires a meadow, which is waving and is moved by the wind. A vast space of a meadow resembles the horizon of the sea. The 'waving' meadow may be compared here to the waves on a lake or a sea disturbed by the wind. Thus the 'ground' of this metaphor may be read as waves of water in a lake or in a sea.

Another example shows the problem of establishing the 'ground' by a direct similarity of two terms. When we say, 'John is a fox', we compare in a metaphorical sense, John to a fox. In this metaphor, it is difficult to find any resemblance of John to a fox. We do not call him a fox to imply that he physically resembles a fox. Someone who utters such an expression conveys rather that a person (here it is John) is a wily and a clever schemer. A simplified account of the 'ground' of this utterance may be presented as: someone has a feeling of 'distrust and distance' for John because of John's specific attitude towards others.

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[146] See Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, 118.

[147] See Stephen Ullmann, *Semantics. An Introduction to the Science of Meaning* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1962), 213.

Thus the basic structure of the metaphor seems to be quite simple. There are three elements: the entity we are talking about, the second entity which we compare with the first, and the features they have in common.[148] Therefore the full formula of metaphor proposed by Geoffrey Leech, a modern linguist, can be presented analytically in the following way:

> 'X is like Y in respect of Z,
> where X is the tenor, Y the vehicle, and Z the ground.'[149]

This concise modern formula is a general definition of metaphor, which can be effectively applied to the majority of metaphors. In the Hebrew Bible, we find many such metaphors. We call them 'conventional' metaphors. An illustration of such metaphors can be observed in Cant 5:15:

> His legs are marble pillars,
> Set on pedestals of pure gold.
> His appearance is like Lebanon,
> Choice as the cedars.

This verse is located in the poem (5:2-6:3) where the bride describes the appearance and charm of the bridegroom. Let us explore the first two lines of this passage. We know from rational thinking that the man's legs are not columns of marble. So, this phrase must be taken as a figurative expression. In the first line, we can identify the following components of the metaphor: the word 'His legs' can be recognized as the 'tenor' (X) of the metaphor; the words 'marble pillars' can be identified as the 'vehicle' (Y) of the metaphor. We also recognize the third component of the metaphor, that is, the 'ground', on the basis of comparison of the tenor 'legs', and the vehicle 'marble pillars'. In this metaphor, we perceive an objective similarity between the two elements. The Hebrew term qAV is used

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[148] See ibid, 213.
[149] Leech, *A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry*, 151.

predominantly to describe the thigh of an animal which was sacrificed in the temple[150] cf. Exod 29:22, 27; Lev 7:32, 33, 34; 8:25, 26; 9:21, 10:14, 15; Num 6:20. With reference to people, the term qAv basically refers to leg cf. Jdg 15:8; Isa 47:2.

In Cant 5:15, the man's legs or thighs are compared to pillars of marble, which are set on golden pedestals. The term: 'the golden pedestals' should probably be identified with the man's feet, which can be seen as 'the base'. In this way, we can observe a real resemblance in the 'shape' of both components, which is the 'ground' (Z) of this metaphor. The bride compares the bridegroom to a precious material (marble and gold) and to the finest forest. The effect of the man's appearance on the woman is like that of Lebanon and the cedars. Lebanon with its mountains denotes beauty and grandeur. Similarly, the cedars with their pleasant fragrance belong to the most beautiful and majestic of trees. Hence, the bride employs the image of the cedars of Lebanon because it is an appropriate image of male strength and beauty.[151] Thus Leech's formula of metaphor can be illustrated in this example in the following manner: 'His legs' (X) are like 'marble pillars (Y) in respect of the 'shape' (Z).

Another biblical passage demonstrates two striking metaphors. In Job 29:15 we read:

> I was eyes for the blind,
> And feet for the lame.

In the Book of Job in chapters 29-31, Job delivers a soliloquy in which he surveys and sums up his case and situation. Job recalls his former good life and past lifestyle. Chapter 30 contains Job's lament over the present change in his situation. In chapter 31, Job utters serious oaths attesting to his innocence, and he concludes

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[150] See Tremper Longman III, *Song of Songs* (Grand Rapids-Cambridge: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2001), 174.

[151] See Longman III, *Song of Songs*, 174; Duane Garrett, and Paul R. House, *Song of Songs, Lamentations* (WBC 23B; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2004), 224.

his own defence with a challenge to God, to answer his arguments. Verse 15 from chapter 29 appears in the context of Job's discourse where he recalls his past strong social sense for the oppressed, the weak and the poor. In his public activities as a righteous leader, he defended, rescued and supported the downtrodden. Job describes himself as the eyes and feet of the disabled.[152] The words qdc (rightness) and jpvm (justice) in v.14 characterize Job's principles towards the vulnerable and the persecuted.[153]

We recognize verse 15 as a figurative sentence. In the first line, we identify the words: 'I was' (Job) as the 'tenor' (X) and the noun 'eyes' as the 'vehicle' (Y) of this metaphor. We also perceive a direct resemblance between these two elements, which can be defined as 'seeing' (Z). This resemblance fixes the 'ground' of this metaphor. In a similar manner, we observe in the second line, the second metaphor. Namely, the person of Job determines the 'tenor', and the noun 'feet' constitutes the 'vehicle' of the metaphor. The similarity, which is perceived between these two components, can be characterized as 'walking'. The term 'walking' specifies the *tertium comparationis* of this metaphor. Thus, in both metaphors we can easily identify all three constituents of a metaphor. We find other biblical passages where the words: rWr[(blind) and xsP (lame) occur together cf. Lev 21:18; Dt 15:21; 2 Sam 5:6, 8; Jer 31:8; Mal 1:8. In Jer 31:8, the blind, the lame, and the woman with child and the pregnant are shown as people who need special protection. God himself will be their guide to 'streams of water' (v.9). Hence by applying the formula of metaphor to this biblical example we observe: 'I was' (Job) (X) is like 'eyes' (Y) in respect of 'seeing' (Z), and 'Job' (X) is like 'feet' (Y) in respect of 'walking' (Z).

Another example of the 'conventional' metaphor is recognized in Psalm 18:3:

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[152] See Norman C. Habel, *The Book of Job* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 151-169; Roland E. Murphy, *The Book of Job. A Short Reading* (New York and Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1999), 72-78.

[153] See Norman Whybray, *Job* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 126.

> The Lord is my rock and my fortress, and my deliverer;
> My God, my rock, in whom I take refuge,
> My shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.

In this verse we focus first on the term: 'rock'. The image of God as a rock: [lS or rWc occurs numerous times in the Book of Psalms (cf. Pss 28:1; 31:3; 42:10; 62:3; 71:3; 78:35; 89:27; 92:15; 94:22; 95:1; 144:1 etc.). The term [lS (with suffix 1st person singular), occurs only in the Psalter, in Psalms 18:3; 31:4; 42:10; 71:3; and once in 2 Sam 22:2. Similarly the term rWc (with suffix 1st person singular) appears predominantly in the Book of Psalms: Pss 18:3, 47; 19:15; 28:1; 62:3, 7; 92:16; 144:1, and twice in the Second Book of Samuel – 2 Sam 22:3,47. The word: 'my rock' is the term mostly used in Hebrew poetry. Kraus notes that the concept of Yahweh as a rock derives from an early Israelite tradition in which the sacred mount rock of the Jerusalem temple is associated with the Zion cosmic conceptions of the foundation of the world.[154] This tradition was applied to Yahweh. 'Yahweh himself is the 'eternal Rock' (Pss 31:3; 42:9 [10]). All those who are in distress and danger flee for refuge to him as the 'fortress', 'shield', and 'horn'.[155]

We know by reason that God is neither a real rock nor a fortified building. So, this phrase must be considered as a figurative expression. We can identify the following elements in this phrase: the word 'the Lord' (God), is recognized as the 'tenor' (X); the nouns 'rock' and 'fortress', are identified as the 'vehicle' (Y) of the metaphor. A comparison of both identified elements: the 'tenor' 'God', and the 'vehicle' 'rock', 'fortress', fixes the ground of the metaphor. We perceive some similarity between these two constituents. Like a rock, which is hard and solid, and can be used, for instance, as a foundation for a building, and like a fortress where people can feel safe, so it is in a similar manner that God is a mainstay and

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[154] See Hans Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 1-59* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 259. For a further discussion of this concept see: Hans Schmidt, *Der heilige Fels in Jerusalem* (Tübingen: J.C.B Mohr, 1933), 94-95.

[155] See Kraus, *Psalms 1-59*, 259.

support for the people. The people find safety and confidence in him. Hence, we can determine 'stability and safety' as the ground (Z) of this metaphor. The poet describes God as a protector and deliverer in whom man can trust. The titles: 'rock' and 'fortress' portray divine strength and stability. This impressive and powerful image of God is a clear image, where we can easily identify all three constituents of the metaphor. Verse 3 contains other images such as: 'my strength', 'my shield', 'the horn of my salvation', and 'my stronghold'. These too belong to figurative language, which is clearly seen in Psalm 118.[156] Thus by application, Leech's formula of metaphor, Ps 18:3 can be illustrated: 'The Lord' (X) is like 'rock' and 'fortress' (Y) in respect of 'stability and safety' (Z).

In an examination of other metaphors, there is a problem in applying a general formula of metaphor and in identifying clearly all three components. These metaphors constitute another group. Let us examine Prov 13:9:

> The light of the righteous rejoices,
> But the lamp of the wicked goes out.

This passage is found in a major collection of proverbs attributed to Solomon (Chapters 10-22:16). The images: 'light' (ראא) and 'lamp' (רמ) occur numerous times and are key symbols in the Hebrew Bible. The expression from the first line of Prov 13:9: 'the light of the righteous rejoices' occurs as *hapax legomenon* in the Hebrew Bible, and it portrays an unusual personification.[157] The phrase of the second line: 'the lamp of the wicked goes out' is also found in other biblical passages such as Job 21:17 and Prov 24:20. Firstly, let us analyse the first line of Prov 13:9. We know that we are dealing with a figurative expression because we can only speak about 'the light of the upright' and 'the light rejoices' in figurative

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[156] G. Ravasi gives a further detailed elucidation of all the symbols which we find in Psalm 118. He distinguishes and classifies them as: symbols of stability, military symbols, cosmic and anthropomorphic symbols, and other symbols; see Gianfranco Ravasi, *Il libro dei Salmi. Commento e attualizzazione*, I (1985; 9th edn., Bologna: Edizioni Dehoniane, 2002), 327-330.

[157] See Murphy, *Proverbs*, 96-97.

terms. There is a problem in identifying the first component of this metaphor, i.e. the 'tenor'. We could consider the word: 'the light' or the expression: 'the light of the righteous' to be the 'tenor' (X). If we assume that 'the light' stands for the tenor, presumably the next part of the line: 'of the righteous' may be considered as the vehicle (Y) of the metaphor. However, the word 'rejoices' is also found to be a part or a component of this metaphor. If we consider the expression: 'the light of the righteous' to be taken as the tenor of the metaphor, the word 'rejoices' might be considered as the vehicle (Y). However, the expression: 'the light of the righteous' is in itself a metaphorical expression. Even though we fixed the 'tenor' and the 'vehicle', we would still have difficulty in establishing the 'ground' of this metaphor.

What similarity can we find between 'the light' and 'the righteous', or 'the light of the righteous' and 'joy'? As has been observed already, this metaphorical expression should be seen as a personification. The rejoicing of the light assumes human attributes. We find a similar difficulty in identifying the constituents of metaphor, in the second line of verse 9: 'the lamp of the wicked goes out'. As in the first line, we can consider 'the lamp' or 'the lamp of the wicked' to be the 'tenor' (X) of the metaphor. The 'vehicle' (Y) could be the words: 'the wicked' or 'goes out'. It is difficult to find the *tertium comparationis* (Z) of the metaphor on the basis of comparison between 'lamp' and 'the wicked', or 'the lamp of the wicked' and 'goes out'. In the Hebrew Bible, the phrases 'the lamp burning brightly' and 'the lamp going out' have figurative meanings. Kellermann argues: 'The lamp burning brightly means good fortune in life; if it goes out, it means death and demise. The extinguishing of such a lamp symbolizes misfortune and demise, since darkness resembles death and conceals its terrors'.[158] Thus, in Prov 13:9, the phrase 'the lamp going out' can symbolize the final misfortune and hopelessness of the

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[158] D. Kellermann, 'The Term ר ' in G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren and Heinz Josef Fabry, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol. X (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 21.

wicked.[159] We have to conclude that whatever interpretation we choose to construe in this metaphorical verse, we perceive certain difficulties in identifying its constituents.

The above selected examples demonstrate that some biblical and non-biblical metaphors can be identified by applying the definition of metaphor as defined by both Aristotle and Leech. This has been observed in the non-biblical poetic expression which is 'The evening of life' and also in biblical verses such as Cant 5:15, Job 29:15 and Ps 18:3. In these examples of metaphor, the above two definitions can be effectively applied. However, the analysis in this section has demonstrated also that in other examples taken from non-biblical poetry such as 'A sail of the body' and from the Hebrew Bible such as Prov 13:9 we may find some difficulty in applying the above definitions of the metaphor. These definitions, therefore, cannot be used as a perfect framework for examining all metaphors and metaphorical expressions. This clearly shows that the nature of both biblical and non-biblical metaphors, indeed all metaphors, is more complex than Aristotle's definition of metaphor and Leech's general formula of metaphor may suggest. In summary we can conclude that although these definitions are helpful in an analysis and interpretation of metaphor and can be effectively applied to many metaphors, they, however, do not define all metaphors; therefore a different approach needs to be taken into account and must be applied in the analysis of metaphor. The typology of metaphor provides us with such a means and measure to identify other metaphors and this will be presented in the next section.

3. The Typology of Metaphor.

In Psalm 63, besides 'conventional' metaphors, we find other metaphors and images which can be recognized only by the use of the typology of metaphor.

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[159] See Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs*, 560.

Therefore, a brief presentation of different types of metaphor will be helpful to include at this juncture. Indeed, in order to effectively identify some metaphors which we find in Psalm 63, an understanding of the typology of metaphor is essential.

Studies on metaphor present us with different typologies. The classification depends on the perception of metaphor. There are different approaches used by scholars and they use various keys in framing the typology of metaphor. Some[160] identify and distinguish major notional classes of metaphor. Five categories of metaphor are distinguished: the concretive metaphor, the synaesthetic metaphor, the animistic metaphor, the anthropomorphic metaphor, and the animal metaphor.

The first category is the concretive metaphor. This domain of metaphor is used to translate abstract experiences into concrete terms. Metaphors in this group attribute concreteness or physical existence to an abstraction.[161] Let us observe two biblical examples, which illustrate the concretive metaphor. Firstly, let us look at Psalm 116:3a, which appears in the context of supplication:

The cords of death encompassed me.

The poet, as sufferer, is destined for the realm of death, although the context does not indicate clearly the nature of his distress.[162] The same expression: 'the cords of death' (twm-ylbx) occurs also in Psalm 18:5, while here 'the cords of death' stands in parallel to 'the anguish of Sheol' (lAav yrcm) (v.3b). These phrases may denote the ancient concept of the kingdom of death as a prison[163] or dungeon[164]. We

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[160] As there are many linguistic studies, which provide a typology of metaphor, among the more important we rank: see Ullmann, *Semantics*, 214-218; Leech, *The Linguistic Guide to English Poetry*, 158-159; Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry*, 264-265.

[161] See Leech, *Linguistic Guide to English Poetry*, 158.

[162] See Hans Joachim Kraus, *Psalmen*, II (BKAT 15; Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1980), 970-971.

[163] See Christoph Barth, *Die Errettung vom Tode in den individuellen Klage und Dankliedern des Alten Testaments* (Zollikon: Evangelischer Verlag, 1947), 78-79.

recognize the phrase in verse 3a as a metaphorical expression. In this verse, the entity, which is 'the cords', is used in connection with the word 'death' to express an abstract experience. It is possible that the real and physical thing, which in our case is 'the cords', could encompass another entity. But it is not possible to do this with a non-material thing, which is 'death'. Death is a common and real phenomenon but it can be defined as a non-tangible reality. Therefore, if we associate the phenomenon of death with a real and physical existing thing, we are dealing with figurative language. This is the case that we see in our example.

Thus the phrase 'the cords of death entangle me' shows the transference of a concrete and tangible thing (the cords) to an abstract thing (the cords of death). In this manner, the abstract experience is translated into a concrete and real existing object 'the cords'. The author of the psalm by using this metaphorical expression conveys the idea that he is feeling intensely his approaching death, or it may be he is overwhelmed with the unbearable burden of afflictions and anguishes, and they give him a sense of the reality of death. In the face of this distress, he calls on the name of God that God may save his life (v.4). Thus this metaphor expresses a certain reality, which can be defined as an abstract experience.

Let us consider the second example taken from Psalm 80:6. This psalm is a prayer for the restoration of Israel. Verse 6 appears in the context of the psalmist recalling the wonders which God did for his people, and he puts his plea for God's intervention and the restoration of the past splendour of Israel in v.4; it is reiterated it in v.8 and v.20. Verse 6 reads:

> You have fed them the bread of tears,
> And give them tears to drink in abundance.

In this verse, the expression: 'the bread of tears' is an example of the concretive metaphor. The poet, in order to express a certain abstract reality, uses real and

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[164] In his commentary, H. Schmidt uses the term: 'dungeon of Sheol'; see Hans Schmidt, *Die Psalmen* (HAT 15; Tübingen: Verlag von J. C. B. Mohr, 1934), 210.

concrete things, which are 'bread' and 'tears'. The bread is a common food for humans, but the human tears cannot be considered as the food for people. The image of tears conveys a rather painful experience or a severe fate. Both words, 'bread' and 'tears' are linked together to express an abstract thing. Yahweh fed the people of Israel with 'something', which the poet best expresses, using figurative speech. In this image, we see the arduous lot of the people of Israel. In the theological interpretation, the expression 'the bread of tears' may be explained as toil and burdensome experiences, which the people of Israel experienced in their history. Kraus argues that verse 6 may refer to the time of the Assyrian siege which took place in 722 B.C. The Israelite population was subsequently deported, and replaced by peoples from elsewhere. The time of national disaster was the 'bread of tears' for Israelites.[165] In verse 6, the term 'tears' may indicate ritual weeping.[166] In this verse we may pick out symbols of shepherding. Yahweh is pictured as the shepherd of his flock.[167] Ravasi grasps the fate of the Israelites in an expressive way: 'For the flock, which needed nourishment, Yahweh offered bread made of tears (cf. Pss 42:4; 102:10); for the sheep, which needed guidance to the springs of an oasis, he presented a chalice of tears (v.6)'.[168]

In the Hebrew Bible we find other similar expressions, where the term 'bread' is used in a figurative sense. For example, the expression: 'the bread from heaven' (Exod 16:4 and Neh 9:15), appears in the context of the pilgrimage of the Israelites to the Promised Land. It is associated not only with physical food but also a spiritual sustenance. In the desert, God feeds the Israelites with manna and he takes care of them as a shepherd of his flock. The term 'bread' is also found in other figurative expressions such as: 'the bread of affliction' (Deut 16:3); 'the bread of

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[165] See Kraus, *Psalmen*, II, 723.

[166] See Erhard S. Gerstenberger, *Psalms and Lamentations*, II (FOTL 15: Grand Rapids and Cambridge, U.K: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2001), 105.

[167] See Frank Lothar Hossfeld, and Erich Zenger, *Psalmen 51-100*, II (HThKAT; Freiburg and Basel and Wien: Herder, 2000), 462.

[168] Ravasi, *Il libro dei Salmi*, II, 683. This is my translation of the original Italian text.

wickedness' (Prov 4:17); 'the bread of deceit' (Prov 20:17); 'the bread of idleness' (Prov 31:27); and 'the bread of adversity' (Isa 30:20). In all these phrases, the word: 'bread' conveys a figurative interpretation. In Psalm 80:6 we recognize the metaphor in which the poet illustrates that for the Israelites, tears became their daily and constant portion.[169]

Whatever construct we apply to elucidate this verse, we observe that the expression 'the bread of tears' expresses a reality which is formulated in concrete terms. The real and physical things (bread and tears) are used to show the abstract experience.

The perceptual metaphor and the synaesthetic metaphor can be ranked within the second category. The perceptual metaphor is based on the use of one of the five human senses. For example, in Cant 4:11, the bridegroom describes the beauty of the bride. He uses a metaphor to illustrate her lips and mouth:

> Your lips drip honey, my bride;
> Honey and milk are under your tongue.

The perceptual metaphor is based on one of the senses. We observe in this verse that the taste is sensual and is the centre of comparison in this figurative verse. The parts of the human body, which are 'lips' and 'tongue', can be associated with the sense of taste. Food, which is 'honey' and beverage, which is 'milk', can also be related to taste. In this way, the poet employs the attributes of the human body and delicious food in order to picture the charm and beauty of the bride. In a metaphorical manner, the poet says that the lips of the bride are sweet as honey and they taste as choice milk. The dripping rather than the pouring of honey from the lips adds additional sensual lure. The poet uses two different words in

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[169] See Alexander Francis Kirkpatrick, *The Book of Psalms* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1910), 485.

describing 'honey': tpn and vbD .[170] In the Hebrew Bible the words: 'honey' and 'milk' often form a pair (cf. Exod 3:8, 17; Lev 20:24; Num 13:27; Jer 11:5 etc.) indicating abundance, luxury and wealth.[171] The perceptual metaphor occurs often in the Book of Song of Songs, which, according to Alter,[172] can be labelled as 'the garden of metaphor', e. g. 'Your voice is sweet' Cant 2:14; 'My beloved is to me a sachet of myrrh' Cant 1:13. In these two metaphors the poet compares the human voice and the young man to delightful objects: 'sweetness' and 'scent of myrrh'.

The synaesthetic metaphor may be seen as a subcategory of the perceptual metaphor.[173] In this type of metaphor, we perceive transference of meaning from one domain of sensory perception to another.[174] In Ps 55:22 we see an example of the synaesthetic metaphor. In Ps 55:22 we read:

a. His speech was smoother than butter,
   But hostility was in his heart;
b. His words were softer than oil,
   But they were sharpened swords.

This verse appears in the context of the author of the psalm complaining about his friend with whom he shared good companionship in the past. The unfaithfulness of his friend is seen as a profaning covenant[175] (v. 21). In v. 22 we see two parallel synaesthetic metaphors: 'his speech was smoother than butter' and 'his words were softer than oil'. A similar parallel word-pair: 'butter' (cream) – 'oil', is found in Job

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[170] A. Robert and R. Tournay explain and interpret these terms, see: A. Robert and R. Tournay, *Le cantique des cantiques. Traduction et commentaire* (EB; Paris: Librairie Lecoffre, J. Gabalda et C. Editeurs, 1963), 176-177

[171] See Longman III, *Song of Songs*, 154.

[172] In his elucidation of metaphor, R. Alter focuses mainly on the Song of Solomon, see Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry*, 185-203.

[173] See Longman III, *Literary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation*, 131.

[174] See Leech, *A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry*, 158.

[175] In verses 21-22 the covenant (tyrb) is not closely identified; perhaps it was a personal covenant. Whatever kind of human bond it was, the verse emphasizes the gravity of the offense; see Marvin E. Tate, *Psalms 51-100* (WBC 20; Dallas: Word Books Publisher, 1990), 58.

29:6.[176] In v.22, in both metaphors we perceive the transfer of meaning from one sense to another: from speech to touch and taste. In the first metaphor (v. 22a), the poet uses the terms: speech – smoother – butter, in order to describe a different sensory perception. In this metaphor, the poet conveys that the way of speaking of his friend assumes the appearance of friendly speech. The words: 'smooth' and 'butter' in a figurative sense may denote gentleness and thoughtfulness. The speech of someone, characterized by using these epithets, may acquire the attributes of friendship. However, a similar phrase 'her speech is smoother than oil' (Prov 5:3) as used with reference to 'the strange woman' can also mean seductive and insincere speech.[177] In fact, the second line of Ps 55:22a describes the opposite attitude of 'friend' to the author of this poem, namely hostility. In his behaviour we can perceive falsehood and hypocrisy.[178]

A similar metaphor is observed in consecutive lines, in verse 22b. The poet compares the words of his friend to a liquid, which is softer than oil. To describe this reality, the poet uses the words which are identified with human senses: 'words' - speech, 'softness' – touch, and 'oil' - touch and smell. In this metaphor a transference from one domain of sensorial perception (speech) to another (touch) and (smell) is perceived. In verse 22 we deal with two clear synaesthetic metaphors. We find other synaesthetic metaphors and the similes in the Song of Songs, e.g. 'His cheeks are like beds of spices, yielding fragrance' (Cant 5:13); 'And your palate is like the best wine' (Cant 7:10). In these two similes, the domain of the sense of sight is transferred to the senses of scent and taste. In other Hebrew poetical books, synaesthetic metaphors occur relatively seldom[179]; perceptual metaphors are more common.

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[176] For a further discussion of this, see: Dahood, *Psalms 51-100*, II, 37.

[177] See Murphy, *Proverbs*, 31.

[178] See E. Podechard, *Le Psautier. Psaumes 1-75. Traduction littérale et explication historique,* vol. I (Lyon : Facultés Catholiques, 1949), 246.

[179] L. Alonso Schökel remarks that sense images of taste, smell and touch are rare in Hebrew biblical poetry; see Alonso Schökel, *A Manual of Hebrew Poetics*, 121.

The third category of metaphor is the animistic metaphor. Metaphors of this group attribute animate characteristics to inanimate objects.[180] The metaphor in this group is observed in Psalm 114:4

> The mountains skipped like rams,
> And the hills like lambs.

Psalm 114 is a song of praise where the poet recalls the miracles that happened during the exodus from the land of Egypt. Verse 4 is a 'figurative narration' of those events. Most likely, this verse refers to God's epiphany on the mount of Sinai.[181] The mountains and hills quake in the presence of God's appearance.[182] A comparable image to that of verse 4 is found in Psalm 29:6 where the psalmist pictures the mountain of Lebanon as it skips like a calf and Sirion like a young wild ox. In Psalm 114:4 we observe that inanimate things: the 'mountains' and the 'hills' assume an animate attribute: skipping. In these two similes 'skipping' is attributed to animals, i.e. the rams and lambs, but it is transferred to inanimate objects, i.e. the mountains and hills. A scrutiny of this verse indicates the difficulties in determining the exact literal meaning. The poet, using figurative language, is apparently describing an unusual phenomenon, perhaps an earthquake or a similar phenomenon, which might take place during God's epiphany.[183] While we cannot indicate clearly what kind of phenomenon we are dealing with here, we can state, however, that in this image the poet illustrates the powers of nature, which remain obedient to their Lord and Creator.[184] We find many occurrences of the animistic metaphor in Hebrew poetical books, e.g. 'dismay leaps before him' (Job 41:14); 'the earth sees and trembles' (Ps 97:4); 'Let the rivers clap their hands, and the

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[180] See Leech, *Linguistic Guide to English Poetry*, 158.

[181] For a further argumentation see: Gunkel, *Die Psalmen*, 494.

[182] See Kraus, *Psalmen*, II, 958.

[183] See Edward J. Kissane, *The Book of Psalms. Translated from a Critically Revised Hebrew Text with Commentary,* II (Dublin: Browne and Nolan Limited, The Richview Press, 1953), 205.

[184] See John William Rogerson, and John William McKay, *Psalms 101-150* (The Cambridge Bible Commentary; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 76.

mountains shout for joy' (Ps 98:8); 'mount Zion rejoices' (Ps 48:12), and many more.

It should be noted here that the fourth category, the anthropomorphic metaphor often overlaps with the animistic metaphor and the reverse is also true. Actually, it does not just overlap, it is a subset. In the anthropomorphic metaphor, we see a transference of human attributes to inanimate objects, and vice versa. The anthropomorphic metaphor is commonly used in Hebrew poetry. Many metaphors of this type refer to the human body and senses. The anthropomorphic metaphor is also called a personification. Let us consider the phrase taken from Psalm 46:3b:

> Though the mountains tumble
> Into the heart of the sea.

Our attention is drawn in this verse to the expression: 'the heart of the sea'. Psalm 46 is a community song of confidence.[185] Verse 3 appears in the context of the poet calling to mind, the protective power of God over the Israelites (v.2) and putting trust in God: 'Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change, though the mountains tumble into the heart of the sea' (v. 3). In this verse, the human organ, which is the 'heart', is used in a metaphorical sense. This is a common image; we use it often in present-day language. The heart stands for the seat of human personality, intellect, will and emotions. It is the place of deepest human and hidden desires. In verse 3b, we deal with a clear metaphor. The 'heart' in this verse denotes the depths or the middle of the sea. Some scholars[186] give the latter translation. However, the construal: 'the heart of the sea' renders more truly, the intention of the psalmist to demonstrate metaphor. If the poet had wished to

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[185] The community character of this psalm is seen in the use of the plural form of the personal pronoun: 'we'. Krinetzki attests the form of this psalm; see Leo Krinetzki, 'Der anthologische Stil des 46. Psalms und seine Bedeutung für die Datierungsfrage', *MThz* 12 (1961), 52-71.

[186] See Rudolf Kittel, *Die Psalmen übersetzt und erklärt (5th and 6th edn.*, KAT 13; Leipzig: A. Deichertsche Verlagsbuchhandlung D. Werner Scholl, 1929), 178; Gunkel, *Die Psalmen*, 197; Kraus, *Psalmen*, I, 494.

express this reality in terms of literal language, he would probably have used the Hebrew expression: ~y tAlcmB 'in the depths of the sea' (cf. Ps 68:23: 'from the depths of the sea'). If he chose the term: blB 'in the heart', apparently he wished to express this reality in the figurative way. The poet uses the anthropomorphic metaphor to express the extraordinary confidence of the Israelites in God. The trust of the chosen people in God will not waver, even though the mountains will sink in the waves to the bottom of the sea. This catastrophe of nature will not frighten the Israelites because the Lord of Hosts is with them and the God of Jacob is their refuge (v.8).

Another example is Isa 14:8. The prophet Isaiah writes:

> Even the cypresses, the cedars of Lebanon
> Rejoice over you, [saying]:
> 'Since you were laid low,
> No one comes to cut us down.'

This verse appears in the context of the poem 14:4-21, which is a satire on the King of Babylon, where Isaiah illustrates the downfall of this ruler and the end of his kingdom. Kaiser remarks that this poem is one of the most powerful poems not only in the Hebrew Bible but in the whole literature of the world.[187] In the first two lines of verse 8, we observe a clear anthropomorphic metaphor. Inanimate objects, which are the trees of cypresses and cedars, assume the human attribute of joy. The Hebrew term: Wxmf 'they rejoice' is used in the metaphorical sense, and it contains a concealed literal meaning, which can be better read in the context of verses 7 and 8. The prophet Isaiah in v.7 depicts no lamentation after the death of the King of Babylon. The whole world is at rest and quiet, even nature joins into shouts of joy,[188] and in verse 8 the prophet portrays this joy of nature after the death of the King of Babylon and the decline of his kingdom. The word bkv which

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[187] See Otto Kaiser, *Der Prophet Jesaja. Kapitel 13-39* (ATD 18; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1973), 21.

[188] See ibid, 31.

occurs here, is often used in other biblical books to describe 'lying' in the grave and in the underworld (cf. Ezek 31:18; 32:21; Isa 50:11; Job 7:21; 14:12; 20:11).[189] In the last two colons in verse 8, Isaiah probably evokes the long history of the exploitation of the woods of Lebanon by the rulers of Syria and other oppressors in that period.[190] The whole of verse 8 contains powerful figurative language. In the Hebrew poetical books, we observe other anthropomorphic expressions, for example: 'the sea says, it is not with me' (Job 28:14); 'wisdom has built her house, she has hewn her seven pillars' (Prov 9:1); and 'surely goodness and kindness will follow me' (Ps 23:6), and many more.[191]

The last category of metaphor, the animal metaphor, can be seen as another subset of the previous two categories. This type of metaphor transfers animal characteristics to inanimate objects or into the human realm, where they often convey humorous, ironical, or pejorative connotations.[192] We find many animal metaphors in biblical poetical books; an example is Ps 57:5:

> My soul is among lions,
> I lie among the sons of men, who breathe forth fire,
> Their teeth are spears and arrows,
> And their tongue a sharp sword.

This verse appears in a context where the psalmist complains of evil men and expresses his confidence that God will deliver him from his persecutors. The poet uses a whole range of images: lions and their teeth, sword, spears and arrows, which symbolize the lethal action of the tongue (cf. Ps 52:4; 55:22; etc).[193] In this

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[189] See Hans Wildberger, *Jesaja*, II (BKAT 10/2; Neukirchen – Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1978), 546; [English Transl. Thomas H. Trapp, *Isaiah 13-27* (A Continental Commentary; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 58].

[190] See Kaiser, *Der Prophet*, 31

[191] In his study on language and imagery in the Old Testament, Gibson provides other biblical examples of personification; see John C. Gibson, *Language and Imagery in the Old Testament* (London: SPCK, 1998), 16-18.

[192] See Ullmann, *Semantics*, 215.

[193] See Evode Beaucamp, *Le Psautier*, I (SB 1; Paris: J. Gabalda et C. Editeurs, 1976), 243.

phrase the poet compares people to lions. The image of the lion evokes power or predation. In the Psalter, wild animals often stand as a symbol of ferocity and cruelty[194]. In Psalm 57:5 the term 'lions' assumes a similar figurative meaning. The poet depicts his persecutors as 'demoniac creatures, man-eating lions with spears, arrows and swords for teeth and tongues'.[195] In this metaphor, we observe the transference of animal characteristics to humans. Animal predation and ferocity is attributed to men. In this metaphor, the poet shows people in a negative light.

The author of Psalm 74 shows the animal metaphor in a different poetical manner. In Ps 74:1 we read:

> Why does your anger burn
> Against the sheep of your pasture?

The poet feels that God forsook and rejected the people of Israel, therefore in this verse the psalmist turns to God with a question and a lament.[196] The author uses the expression: 'the sheep of your pasture'. This phrase is taken as a figurative expression. This utterance could be addressed to any shepherd in Israel in biblical times. The expression 'sheep of your pasture' must be seen in the context of the whole of verse 1, where it appears as a clear metaphor. In the Psalter, the expression: 'sheep of your pasture' indicates the designation of Israel (Pss 79:3; 95:7; 100:3).[197] The poet adopted the picture of shepherding taken from the common life of ancient people, giving it a figurative sense. This metaphor shows the people of Israel in a positive aspect. It implies that Israelites are a chosen people because they are God's chosen flock. The poet experiences the 'temporary' rejection of Israel by God but he is also convinced that the covenant of the

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[194] Cf. Pss 7:3 (lion); 10:9 (lion); 17:12 (lion); 22:13 (bulls), 14 (lion), 17, 21 (dogs), 22 (lion and wild oxen); 35:17 (lions); 58:5 (serpent and adder), 7 (lions); 140:4 (snake); See Rogerson and McKay, *Psalms 50-100,* 43. For a further exploration of biblical animal metaphors see Brown, *Seeing the Psalms. A Theology of Metaphor*, 136-153.

[195] See Rogerson and McKay, *Psalms 50-100,* 43.

[196] See Kraus, *Psalmen*, II, 679.

[197] See Podechard, *Le Psautier. Psaumes 1-75*, 323.

Israelites with God on Mount Zion was eternal. Therefore the chosen people, 'the sheep' of Yahweh, remain his inheritance for ever (v.2). The image of 'the sheep' as the people of Israel and God as their 'shepherd' stands for one of the most iconic images we find in the Hebrew Bible.

It is noteworthy that in the passage from Isa 11:6-8 there is a cluster of various animals. Isaiah uses allegory to illustrate in a striking manner an eschatological vision by using a clustering of various animal images.

4. Some Other Tropes of Figurative Language.

Besides metaphor, other figures of speech are found in Psalm 63. It is useful therefore to explore briefly some further tropes of figurative language.

An interesting trope of figurative language is the simile, which is a type of metaphor. It is important because simile appears in Psalm 63:6. This figure of speech will be addressed in my analysis, later in this study. With simile as with metaphor, there are two elements, which come into an interrelation. Transference of meaning is perceived between two objects. In the case of the simile, one thing is compared to another by using words: 'like' or 'as'. This indicates that the simile is easier to identify than metaphor. In simile, essentially what is said, is 'This thing is like that thing'.[198] Simile and metaphor do overlap to a certain extent because they express the same thing but in different ways. However, simile is more obvious than metaphor because it is more explicit, and the basis of comparison can be actually stated.[199] Before, we examine an analysis of the Hebrew simile in Psalm 63 in the next chapters, first let us consider some occurrences of simile in modern poetry, starting with lines from Shakespeare's 60th Sonnet:

> Like as the waves make towards the pebbled shore,
> So do our minutes hasten to their end;

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[198] See Nowottny, *The Language Poets Use*, 54.
[199] Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry*, 254.

> Each changing place with that which goes before,
> In sequent toil all forwards do contend.[200]

In the first two lines of this poem, we observe the simile: 'Our minutes' as like 'the waves'. In this poem, Shakespeare compares the transitoriness of human life ('our minutes hasten to their end') to the waves of the sea, which flow towards the pebbled shore. Rendition of this verse may be like: 'As the limit of the sea is seen by the waves on the pebbled shore, similarly, every human life comes to its end one day.' The transitoriness of human life is measured by fleeting time.

Another of Shakespeare's poems, Sonnet 147 also contains simile:

> My love is as a fever, longing still
> For that which longer nurseth the disease;
> Feeding on that which doth preserve the ill,
> The uncertain sickly appetite to please.[201]

Here we see a clear simile, when Shakespeare compares 'My love' to 'a fever'. The simile is often used in such a manner that the thing is already familiar enough to be in no need of explanation or definition. We can see this in Shakespeare's poems. He commonly uses the simile, to enable the reader to refer to something with which reader is already familiar in actual or linguistic experience.[202]

Metonymy is another form of figurative speech. The word metonymy comes from the Greek word metonumia which derives from meta meaning 'change', and onoma which means 'name'. In this figure of speech, the name of the thing is transferred to take the place of something else with which it is associated.[203] In other words, metonymy uses one attribute or one entity as an expression of another or related entity. Metonymy often uses one part of an entity to stand for the whole, e.g. the institution for the people, the place for the institution or for the

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[200] Wain (ed.), *The Oxford Anthology of Great English Poetry*, I, 167.
[201] Ibid, 184.
[202] See Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry*, 63.
[203] See Hawkes, *Metaphor*, 4.

event.[204] We can see an example of metonymy in the expression: 'A car caused a serious accident'. In this statement the object 'car' is used for the driver of the car. The speaker, who utters such an expression, means that the driver of the car caused the serious accident. Another example of metonymy is the expression: 'The law court passed a sentence'. In this phrase, the institution, which is the law court, is substituted for the people who present the verdict. In the Hebrew Bible, we see an example of metonymy in Gen 42:38, '[Jacob said:] you would bring down my grey hairs to Sheol with sorrow', where the 'grey hairs' of Jacob stand for an old man.

Another trope of figurative language is synecdoche, which can be seen as a subclass of metonymy. The word synecdoche derives from the Greek word sunekdecesqai which means 'to receive jointly'. In synecdoche, the transference takes the form of a part of something being 'carried over' to stand in place of the whole thing, or vice versa.[205] Synecdoche uses one part to stand for the whole or the whole to stand for the part. Thus, the expression 'ten heads in the office' is used instead of saying that there are ten people in the office. As an example of synecdoche in the Psalter we see Ps 1:1, 'Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked', where the term 'man' stands for the whole of mankind, both men and women.

5. Conclusion

The examination of metaphor in this chapter had as its purpose to provide the foundation for an analysis and interpretation of figurative language in Psalm 63. We find many and various metaphors and images in modern and Hebrew poetry. The examination of metaphors in this chapter demonstrated that there are

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[204] See Eileen Cornell Way, *Knowledge Representation and Metaphor* (Oxford: Intellect Books, 1994), 10.

[205] See Hawkes, *Metaphor*, 4.

definitions of the metaphor which establish an effective means to identify and interpret metaphors.

Thus the ancient Aristotle's classical definition of metaphor shows the mechanism of transference in language that is so valuable and useful in the examination of metaphor. We observed this in the expression 'The evening of life' where the semantic relation between all components is very clear. However, it was also observed that Aristotle's definition cannot be applied to all metaphors and the metaphorical expression 'A sail of the body' exemplifies this problem in the application of Aristotle's definition.

The modern definition of metaphor, presented in this study as the meaning and composition of metaphor proposed by G. Leech, a modern linguist, is another useful research 'tool' in analysing metaphors. This definition explains that the metaphor contains three essential elements - the 'tenor', the 'vehicle' and the 'ground' (*tertium comparationis*). We observed that in some biblical metaphors such as Cant 5:15, Job 29:15 and Ps 18:3 all three of these elements of the metaphor can be clearly recognized and therefore the application of Leech's definition to this kind of metaphor does not present any difficulty. However, in another example, in Prov 13:9 we observe that some components of the metaphor can be recondite or absent, and this makes identification more difficult and complex. Thus it was shown that the modern Leech's definition of the metaphor, like Aristotle's definition, cannot be fully applied to all metaphors. This demonstrates that the nature of all metaphor is complex and an analysis of the metaphor is more difficult than it first appears to be.

It must be stated, however, that although Aristotle's definition and Leech's general formula of the metaphor cannot be effectively applied to all metaphors, they are very useful and helpful aids in the recognition and examination of many metaphors. The modern general formula of the metaphor is still widely employed by many contemporary linguists and interpreters, and this formula constitutes a

pivotal rule and a fundamental device in analysing metaphors by many modern scholars.

In order to provide an alternative method of analysing these metaphors which cannot be fully exploited by the use of the standard definitions, we investigated also the different classifications of metaphor. This examination of the metaphor in the third section demonstrated that the application of the typology of metaphor is another useful exploratory device in the analysis of metaphor. In biblical and non-biblical poetry we recognize different genres of metaphor. As was observed, there are different approaches to the classification of metaphor. The typology of the metaphor into five types such as the concretive metaphor, the synaesthetic, the animistic, the anthropomorphic and the animal metaphor proposed in the third section of this chapter is only one of many different classifications of metaphor. The analysis showed that each of these categories has its own characteristics and these are helpful in the recognition of metaphor. Thus we observed examples of the concretive metaphor in Psalms 80:6 and 116:3a. The synaesthetic (and perceptual) was seen in Can 4:11 and Ps 55:22, and the animistic metaphor in Ps 114:4. The anthropomorphic metaphor was observed in Ps 46:3b and Isa 14:8, and the animal metaphor in Ps 57:5 and 74:1. These biblical metaphors exemplify all of the five categories. It is noteworthy that some types of metaphor such as the animistic, anthropomorphic and animal metaphors are more common in Hebrew poetical books; others such as the perceptual and synaesthetic metaphors occur comparatively less rarely.

The typology of the metaphor presented in the third section is important for two reasons. Firstly, it is another means and an alternative approach to analyse these metaphors which cannot be clearly identified and effectively interpreted by the use only of the standard definitions of metaphor. Secondly, Psalm 63 contains different metaphors and figurative figures which cannot be clearly identified only by applying the standard definitions; some metaphors and metaphorical expressions in this psalm can be only explained by the use and employment of the

typology of the metaphor. That is why this method of examination of the metaphor will be useful and helpful in the further analysis in this study.

In Hebrew biblical and modern poetry we also find other tropes of figurative language, such as simile, metonymy, synecdoche and personification which also play an important function. Some biblical and non-biblical examples of these poetic figures were presented in the fourth section of this chapter. It was important to demonstrate these figures of speech because some are found not only in Psalm 63 but in other psalms which will be examined in the next chapters.

When we read Psalm 63, we know that we are dealing with a non-literal language. This different kind of language seems to be recognizable, and even transparent. However, a closer analysis of the imagery of Psalm 63 shows that identification (and classification) of some of the metaphors and images in this psalm are more difficult to observe and define. The exploration and examination of the nature of metaphor, supported by biblical and non-biblical examples in this chapter, provide us with a foundation and framework to develop an in-depth analysis and study of the imagery in Psalm 63. A detailed scrutiny and examination of the images, symbols and metaphors found in Psalm 63, will follow in Part Two.

PART TWO - AN ANALYSIS OF FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE IN PSALM 63

In the analysis of metaphor in Part One, it was clear that the identification of metaphor can sometimes present difficulty. Part Two will focus on the issue of identification of figurative language in Psalm 63 and it will address the interpretation of imagery in this psalm. Part Two will consist of an Introduction which will present a general overview of Psalm 63, followed by Chapter Three dealing with the figurative language in Psalm 63 and Chapter Four dealing with an analysis of imagery in Psalm 63.

Verse 2 constitutes the first strophe of Psalm 63.[206] This verse contains figurative language and plays a significant role in an interpretation of the psalm. Language in this verse visualises the theme of longing for God, which is a dominant motif of this psalm. Verse 2 provides the basis and reason for the following strophes. Therefore, Chapter Three will contain a detailed exploration and examination of this important verse.

Chapter Four will then deal with verses 3-12, offering both an examination of the images and other poetic figures in these verses, and a theological interpretation.

Part Two has two aims. The first is to assess the metaphors and images in Psalm 63, making use of the analysis that was carried out in previous chapters. The second is to consider this imagery from a theological viewpoint. A particular motif, the longing for God, will be explored in Part Three, placing the psalm in a broader context.

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[206] See the Appendix.

INTRODUCTION - GENERAL OVERVIEW OF PSALM 63

> This is unquestionably one of the most beautiful and touching psalms in the whole Psalter.[207]

The above quotation from Perowne echoes my own deep conviction that Psalm 63 with its profound theological meaning, is a remarkable poem, which can be considered as one of the most beautiful and unique in the Psalter. This psalm reveals the depths of the psalmist's spirituality and portrays a special intimacy with God. Perowne's quotation corresponds well with the opinion of Delitzsch who noted:

> It is a song of the most delicate form and of the deepest spiritual contents; but in part it is very difficult to interpret…It is not merely the poetical classic character of the language, and the spiritual depth, but also this half-transparent and half-opaque covering, which lends to the Psalms such a powerful and unvarying attractiveness.[208]

The attractiveness of the psalm can be discovered not only in its spiritual and theological depth but also in the difficult but rich figurative and imaginative language used by the author, which plays a role in 'covering' (to use Delitzsch's terminology) the message of the psalm. The discovery and 'uncovering' of this, and of what the author wished to convey in this captivating psalm, is not only a challenge, but also a reward for the interpreter and reader.

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[207] J. J. Stewart Perowne, *The Book of Psalms: A New Translation with Introductions and Notes Explanatory and Critical*, II (2nd edn., London: Bell and Daldy; Cambridge: Deighton, Bell and Co., 1870), 470.

[208] 'Es ist ein Lied zartester Form und tiefinnigsten Inhalts, aber teilweise sehr schwieriger Auslegung...Es ist nicht bloß die dichterische Klassicität, die geistliche Tiefe, es ist auch diese halb durchsichtige und halb undurchsichtige Verschleierung, welche den Ps. Eine so mächtige und immer gleiche Anziehungskraft verleiht'; Franz Delitzsch, *Biblisher Kommentar über die Psalmen* (5th edn., BKAT 4/1; Leipzig: Dörffling & Franke, 1894), 423.

1. Psalm 63 Within the Psalter.

Psalm 63 is located in Book II of the Psalter (Psalms 42-72), and in the second Davidic collection (Psalms 51-72). In their commentary, Hossfeld and Zenger distinguish a group of Psalms 52-68, which they consider to be the oldest collection within Psalms 51-100, and they take Psalms 52, 54-57, 59, 61-68 to be the oldest psalms in this collection.[209] The group contains common ideas and images, and can be referred to as a 'small Psalter', marked by the figurative language containing images of war and hostility, and metaphors of God as a protecting fortress and dwelling, where the petitioner seeks refuge from his persecutors. Psalms in this collection contain both Zion and Temple theology, and refer to cultic worship. Moreover, an intimate relationship between the petitioner and his God seems to characterize the psalms in this collection, and the psalmists describe 'an encounter with God that is like what happens in the Temple, but does not occur in the Temple'.[210]

Zenger summarized the result of his work on the method of analysing the Psalms, as follows: 'Interpret the psalm, and then interpret the Psalter'[211]. A study and interpretation of individual psalms is the key to understanding the collection, and then the whole Psalter. Murphy expressed an opinion saying that instead of the usual custom of treating and interpreting a psalm in isolation, a psalm should be analysed and interpreted in the context of its position within the Psalter.[212] Although these scholars represent different approaches, both opinions assert that in analysing and interpreting a psalm it is important to take into account the

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[209] See Hossfeld, and Zenger, *A Commentary on Psalms 51-100*, 3.

[210] Ibid, 3.

[211] Quotation provided by James Limburg, *Psalms* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2000), XVII. See also Frank Lothar Hossfeld, and Erich Zenger, *Die Psalmen. Psalm 1-50* (Die Neue Echter Bibel; Würzburg: Echter 1993).

[212] See Roland E. Murphy, *The Gift of the Psalms* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2000), 17.

context.[213] In this research, an examination of the imagery and theology of Psalm 63 will take into consideration the immediate and broader context of this psalm. This strategy will enable us to better understand and interpret this psalm.

2. An Exposition of Psalm 63.

In the examination of the text of Psalm 63, which is contained in the annex of this study, four strophes are recognized:

I (v. 2) – Invocation (Personal spiritual experience)

II (vv.3-6) – Praise and Confidence

III (vv.7-9) – Thanksgiving

IV (vv.10-12) – Malediction with an Intercession Element

In order to examine Psalm 63 in a clear and transparent manner, reference will be made to these four strophes in my later analysis.

Verse 2 contains personal confessions of trust and praise without the formal petitions directed to God, which we find in many other psalms. The psalmist begins with an invocation, using the vocative: 'O God, you are my God'. The psalmist addresses God by the Hebrew term Elohim (~yhla). In their commentaries, some scholars translate the word Elohim for Yahweh as a proper name for the God of the Israelites.[214] Some interpreters, for instance Anderson, argue that the word 'Yahweh' was originally in the Hebrew text because in the Elohistic Psalter (Pss 42-83) the divine name 'Yahweh' was changed into Elohim as the name of God.[215] We can accept this interpretation that the Elohistic part of the Psalter underwent an Elohistic redaction at some time. Kraus gives possible dating

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[213] In their study, Johnston and Firth present current scholarly approaches in interpreting the psalms; see Philip Johnston and David G. Firth (eds.), *Interpreting the Psalms: Issues and Approaches* (Leicester: Apollos, 2005).

[214] See, for example, Gunkel, *Psalmen*, 265; Podechard, *Le Psautier. Psaumes 1-75*, I, 270; Kraus, *Psalmen*, II, 600; M. Mannati., *Les Psaumes*, II (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1967), 235; Aubrey R. Johnson, *The Cultic Prophet and Israel's Psalmody* (Cardiff: University Press, 1979), 282.

[215] See Arnold Albert Anderson, *The Book of Psalms*, I (London: Oliphants), 455.

of the composition of the Psalms.[216] However, Gerstenberger notes another possibility: 'Perhaps this collection preserved a fairly original mode of naming the deity, while the rest of the Psalter suffered a Yahwistic redactional revision'.[217] It has to be stated that it is difficult today to trace the process by which the partial compilation of the Psalter was carried out or to give an exact original form of Psalm 63. In a personal relationship with God, the psalmist expresses his spiritual feelings and experiences (v.2), and through his intimate confession he finds in Yahweh his own personal God who sustains and protects him (vv. 7-8). The intentions of the poet are revealed when 'seeking' and 'staying close to God' and are described as the most desirable objectives in his life (v.4).

In verses 3-6 an element of praise and confidence in God can be observed. The psalmist finds the joy of spiritual satisfaction in praising God as long as he lives (v.5). The feelings of longing and of dissatisfaction which were expressed in the opening verse, find ultimate satisfaction in worshipping in God's very presence.[218]

In verses 7-9 we find elements of confidence and thanksgiving. The psalmist describes his feelings in the moments of his private devotion (v.7). He expresses his confidence in God's help and protection (vv.8-9).

Finally verses 10-12 contain a judgment with a prayer for a king. These verses illustrate with the help of imagery, the malediction against any opponents of the psalmist; he is convinced that they (his enemies) will surely not succeed (vv.10-11). The poet expresses confidence in the protection which God grants him and to all God's worshippers (v.12).

The imagery in the whole of Psalm 63 allows us to perceive the theological message that God is the only being who can entirely satisfy and fulfil a thirsty and hungry human heart for God's presence and companionship.

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[216] See Kraus, *Psalmen*, I, 12-13.

[217] Erhard S. Gerstenberger, *Psalms with an Introduction to Cultic Poetry*, I (FOTL 14; Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1988), 37.

[218] See Craig C. Broyles, *Psalms* (NIBC 11; Peabody: Hendrickson, and Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1999), 262.

CHAPTER 3 - FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE IN VERSE 2

> Verse 2 constitutes almost the musical, poetic and spiritual statement of the whole inner movement of Psalm 63.[219]

Verse 2 is crucial in Psalm 63 and in the analysis contained in this study. This verse offers a unique language, which assumes the quality of figurative speech, and behind this language lies an interesting theological concept. Ravasi's quotation shows in a poetic manner the uniqueness and significance of this verse. In each section of this chapter, the recognition of metaphors and images in lines 2a, 2b, and 2c will precede the theological analysis.

1. Verse 2a.

1.1 Recognizing Figurative Language in Verse 2a.

Verse 2a begins with an exclamation:

&rxva hTa yla ~yhla

2a. O God, you are my God, early I seek you.

Are we dealing in this line with figurative language or not? When we speak of 'seeking' someone or something, we understand this operation primarily as a physical action. Such usage of the word 'to seek' entails a literal meaning of the phrase. However, we notice, that the word 'seeking' does not necessarily have to mean a physical operation. Colloquial contemporary language and poetry often

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[219] 'Il v. 2 costituisce quasi l'enunciato musicale, poetico e spirituale dell'interno movimento interiore del Salmo 63'; Ravasi, *Il libro dei Salmi*, II, 274.

employ the word 'to seek' in order to convey a figurative meaning. We observe this in daily speech, for instance, in the expression: 'seeking the meaning of life'. A speaker of this expression conveys that his quest is of a different nature than a physical searching. He speaks of searching in a metaphorical sense. We observe a figurative meaning of the word 'seeking' also in modern poetry, for instance, in Henry Vaughan's poem 'The Water-Fall':

> Thou art the channel my soul seeks.[220]
>
> (v.39)

The language of this line offers a similar literary concept to that in Psalm 63:2. For both poets, the quest for God is of a different nature than a physical searching. Their seeking has a particular intention. The psalmist's creative concept in verse 2a is also seen by the use of a distinctive term 'to seek early'. This kind of figurative language involves theological implications, which will be addressed in a later analysis.

1.2. An Analysis of Verse 2a.

1.2.1 A Concept of Covenant?

In his commentary, Eaton maintains that the words 'You are my God' in Ps 63:2, show the author to be the king, invoking his personal covenant with God.[221] To justify this, he refers to Psalm 89, where the concept of covenant is strongly articulated by the use of the Hebrew term tyrB and he takes the relationship in

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[220] Wain (ed.), *The Oxford Anthology of Great English Poetry*, I, 392.

[221] See John H. Eaton, *Kingship and the Psalms* (Studies in Biblical Theology; London: SCM Press, 1976), 50. Also in his commentary, *Psalms, Introduction and Commentary*, Eaton refers to a concept of Covenant in Psalm 63:2-5, in which he applies the term: the 'Covenant grace' (steadfast love); see John H. Eaton, *Psalms, Introduction and Commentary* (London: SCM Press, 1967), 161.

both psalms to be the same in that the king appears to be God's covenant-partner.[222] However, it is difficult to decide whether the author of Psalm 63 was a monarch or not, and the superscription is usually taken to be a later addition made by an editor. If the author of this psalm was not a monarch, Eaton's concept of covenant in Psalm 63:2a seems to be problematic. In order to examine his argument, let us analyze this 'half-transparent and half-opaque'[223] verse in a broader context.

In the Hebrew Bible, the expression 'My God' is used with different nuances of meaning.[224] Thus, it is used in contrast to pagan gods (e.g. Num 22:18; 2 Sam 24:24). In the literature of the ancient Near East, of course, we find many deities whom the peoples of that time believed and worshipped.[225] The Israelite God Yahweh was one deity among many others. In Ps 63:2a, the psalmist's 'My God' implies 'my personal God' and refers to the Israeli God Yahweh as his own God. The phrase 'My God' is also used in the Old Testament to express a personal relationship between the worshipper and God, whom he regards as 'his God'.[226] This is often observed, for example in the Psalter (e.g. Pss 5:3; 18:2; 40:9; 42:7; 84:4), where 'the phrase 'My God' emphasizes that the worshipper is convinced that his God is ready to hear his prayer favourably.'[227] We find this concept in Ps 63:2a, where the psalmist expresses his personal relationship with 'his God'.

Some scholars maintain that in the expression 'You are my God' we can see an ancient formula, which the people of the ancient Near East used in families and

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[222] See Eaton, *Kingship and the Psalms*, 150-151.

[223] I refer here to Delitzsch's phrase, used before in this study, to emphasize again that Psalm 63 contains some words and expressions difficult for interpretation. See Delitzsch, *Biblisher Kommentar über die Psalmen*, 423.

[224] See G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, I (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1990), 279.

[225] For a broad and detailed description of deities in the Bible and the ancient Near East, see Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking, and Pieter W. van der Horst (eds.), *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1999).

[226] See *TDOT*, I, 279.

[227] Ibid, 279.

clans to adopt a protective deity.[228] In the Old Testament the expression, 'You are my God' along with other biblical expressions such as the epithets 'the God of Abraham' (Gen 24:12,27,42,48; 26:24; 31:42), 'The God of Abraham and Isaac' (Gen 28:13; 32:10), 'the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob' (Ex 3:6,15; 4:5; 1Kgs 18:36), and 'the God of your father' (Gen 46:3; 50:17) designate God, as the God of an individual.[229] Often, these epithets illustrate the relationship between God and the patriarchs. They often express the belief and trust of the individuals in their God, portraying God as their protector.

This special relationship between the patriarchs and their God is seen in the covenants. Thus in the covenant with Abraham, God's promise contains an assurance of God's protection for Abraham, 'Do not be afraid, I am your shield, and your reward shall be very great' (Gen 15:1).[230] In the word, 'shield' we see a metaphor for God's protection (cf. Deut 33:29; Pss 18:3, 32; 84:11; 144:2).[231] In the narrative, describing the covenant with Jacob, we find the expression 'Yahweh will be my God' (Gen 28:21) which is similar to that in Psalm 63:2a.

We observe a personal relationship between the author and God in Psalm 63:2a. It is appropriate here to refer again to Eaton's concept of the covenant in this verse and to assume a position on his concept. Hence, we pose a question: Do we find the concept of a factual covenant in this psalm as Eaton suggests? The analysis, allows us to draw some conclusions. The expression, 'You are my God' (v.2a) is a personal formula, expressing the author's intimate relationship with God. This phrase appears to be the supplicant's credo, expressing his faith and trust in his God, which enables him to claim God as his own. The psalmist has no doubt about his possession of God, which gives him the basis of his right of appeal.[232] The psalm

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[228] See Gerstenberger, *Psalms and Lamentations*, II, 13.
[229] See *TDOT*, I, 279.
[230] See Ryken, et al. (eds.), *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery,* 177.
[231] See Claus Westermann, *Genesis 12-36* (Neukirchen – Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1981), 258.
[232] See W. Stewart McCullough and William R. Taylor, *The Book of Psalms* (IB 4; New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1955), 329.

contains elements of longing for the presence of God (v.2) and for his sanctuary (v.3), and of worship such as 'prayer' and 'praise' (v.4-6). It is difficult, however, to recognize the essential elements of covenant in such terms or phrases as divine election (cf. Deut 7:6), mutual obligations (cf. Deut 5:1-2) or a statement and assurance about a timeless relationship (cf. Gen 17:7). Although Psalm 63 contains metaphorical language, there is no factual sign or symbol, which would validate a potential covenant (cf. Gen 9:13).

The expression 'You are my God' may evoke covenantal language, but it is unclear what this expression would have meant in that period and for the author of this psalm. It could be presumed that the writer might be drawing on covenant language with implications of a special relationship with his God.

Therefore, as a conclusion, Eaton's opinion that the psalmist's statement has characteristics of an individual and factual covenant with God does not have a solid foundation. Nevertheless, the psalmist's confession can be clearly understood as a special and personal bond with his God.

1.2.2 Quest for God

After the personal confession directed to God, the author of the poem comes to describe the nature of his relationship with God. In the second hemistich of verse 2a, the poet reveals that he seeks God in the early morning. The Hebrew verb which he uses is not, however, the cultic verb vqB denoting 'to seek'[233] but the verb rXV . The latter is regarded as a denominative verb from rXV denoting 'dawn'; hence the verb rXV is rendered as 'to look early, diligently for'.[234] In the Hebrew Bible, this word occurs several times denoting 'seek early or earnestly', or 'look early or diligently'. The most frequent usage is in the wisdom literature (Job

[233] BDB, 134.
[234] Ibid, 1007.

7:21; 8:5; 24:5; Prov 1:28; 7:15; 8:17; 11:27; 13:24),[235] and most often the object of the seeking is God (Job 8:5; Pss 63:2; 78:34; Isa 26:9; Hos 5:15). Four of these passages present the worshipper as one who seeks God earnestly in a moment of affliction (Job 8:5; Pss 63:2; 78:34; Hos 5:15). In Isa 26:9, the author affirms his intense desire for God. In the Book of Job, God himself is the subject of man's seeking (Job 7:21). In the Book of Proverbs, Wisdom is the object of seeking (Prov 1:28; 8:17).

A special meaning of this word in Psalm 63:2a and the explicit reference to keeping vigil, observed in verse 7: 'When I remember you on my bed, in the night watches, I meditate on you', gives a basis to some interpreters that Psalm 63 belongs to the psalms of vigil.[236] McKay translates the second part of verse 2a as follows: 'I watch for you at the dawning'. He explains that in verses 2-3 the suppliant declares his purpose in keeping vigil. Spiritual thirst and longing brought the psalmist to watch for and wait for God.[237] Although the term רחש in Psalm 63:2a is more associated with the 'morning action' rather than with the vigil's activities, we find some indications which would allow us to accept McKay's interpretation.

In Isa 26:9 we find a similar usage of this term. The prophet Isaiah writes: 'My soul yearns for you in the night, and my spirit within me seeks you early'. This line contains a similar theme to that which we see in Psalm 63:2a, using metaphorical language to portray a longing for God. The verse implies action during two different time periods - in the night and in the morning – and it links both hours by the common element of watching with a longing for God. In his commentary, Wildberger renders verse 9 in this way: 'Indeed, my heart, it yearns

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[235] See Tate, *Psalms 51-100*, 127.

[236] In his study, J. W. McKay examines in a comprehensive way the day-break psalms. He points out that some of the psalms were particularly suited for the use in vigils (cf. Pss 5; 17; 27; 30; 57; 59; 63; 143). See John William McKay, 'Psalms of Vigil', *ZAW* 91 (1979), 229-247. See also Anthony R. Ceresko, 'A Note on Psalm 63: A Psalm of Vigil, *ZAW* 92 (1980), 435-436.

[237] See McKay, 'Psalms of Vigil', 234.

for you in the night, also in the morning my spirit (still) longs for you'.[238] He points out that the word 'night' is mentioned first to depict the situation of the ancient Israelites who experienced night time with great anxiety (cf. Pss 6:7; 77:7). The dark night is marked with loneliness and defencelessness, bringing disquiet and intense emotions. The worshipper yearning for God is watching and looking for the dawn. In this sense the night is linked with the morning and the day. Even when fear of the night is taken away, the longing for God is still very much alive in the heart of the Israelite. He still yearns for God. The action of turning towards God in this verse is not just a habit linked to cultic 'orthodoxy' (which might be seen in the usage of vqB) but a deep yearning for God from the heart.

In the second hemistich of the verse, Isaiah uses the Hebrew word xWr which literally means 'breath', 'wind', and in a figurative sense 'spirit'.[239] The term incorporates a whole range of human states of mind.[240] In Isaiah's verse, the term may mean 'breath' which would animate the person, or might be interpreted as 'spirit' as the seat of emotions, here - desire.[241] Assuming the latter interpretation (suggested by Wildberger in Isa 26:9), the words 'heart' and 'spirit' would indicate the figurative reality, namely that the whole person is involved in longing for God. Thus we would find a similarity in the meaning and the message of Isaiah's verse and verse 2a in Psalm 63. Both these verses appear in different contexts, but both contain similar elements. Isaiah refers to Yahweh as God's name (v. 8) stating that Yahweh is their (the Israelites) God (v.13). In Psalm 63:2a, the psalmist calls on Elohim as his personal God. The prophet in verses 8-9 depicts his soul and heart as longing for God. The worshipper seeks God early in the morning. The motif of longing for God and searching for God at the dawn is clearly seen in verse 2 in Psalm 63.

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[238] Hans Wildberger, *Isaiah 13-27* (A Continental Commentary: Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 551.
[239] BDB, 924-925.
[240] See Wildberger, *Isaiah 13-27*, 560.
[241] BDB, 925.

The similarities between verses in Isa 26:9 and Ps 63:2a help us to better understand and interpret the meaning of the word רחש . Both verses describe in metaphorical language, the motif of longing for the presence of God. In both verses the word רחש denotes the seeking of God for whom the worshippers long in the early morning. It is noteworthy that Alonso Schökel distinguishes three periods of time in Psalm 63. He points out the two opposite hours: the early morning (v.2) and the night watches (v.7). Between these two hours is a time for contemplation (vv.3-5) and a sort of banquet (v.6).[242] The three periods of the psalmist's activity can be interpreted figuratively. The poet's action involves all his activities from early morning till night, so it embraces the whole of his time. The expression 'early in the morning' can be interpreted as 'before all things'. The psalmist puts God before all other activities and desires. He seeks God in the morning just as the people of Israel collected the manna in the wilderness at the early dawn (Ex 16:8). The early morning was a source of life for the Israelites. The daily portion of the manna provided them with physical food. For the psalmist, the early morning is a source of spiritual strength and joy. The term 'early morning' can also be treated as a symbol. As the daybreak brings light and warmth to the earth, so 'the early morning' symbolizes the hope of relief from oppression and the joy of spiritual satisfaction.[243]

Thus the verb רחש in Psalm 63:2a should be identified with 'the early morning seeking' and 'watching at the dawning'. The searching, however, is of a different nature from ordinary human physical seeking. This Hebrew word implies a concealed and much deeper meaning. The psalmist's early quest for God has a special, metaphorical depth of meaning. The psalmist's searching involves his mind and heart. The psalmist seeks God in a spiritual way. The poet uses the term רחש

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[242] See Luis Alonso Schökel, and Cecilia Carniti, *Salmos. Traducción, introducciones y comentario*, I (Estella: Editorial Verbo Divino, 1992), 832-833.

[243] See Rogerson, and McKay, *Psalms 51-100*, 65.

in order to express a powerful and longing desire for the presence of God.[244] His searching for God is a spiritual desire for a refreshing and profound nearness (cf. Ps 78:34).[245] The quest assumes the attributes of a personal and intimate spiritual relationship with his God. The suppliant gets up at the dawn in order to contemplate God and to seek his presence. It is not God's physical presence which the psalmist expects to find. Participation in God's transcendent presence provides the poet with a spiritual strength as food and water provide physical strength (v.2b). Therefore the psalmist's desire is to anticipate God's presence at the dawn in order to fill his soul with the nearness of God. Intense yearning for the presence of God is the most desirable thing which the poet longs for in his life (cf. v.5), and Dahood indeed conveys such an understanding of the verb rXv , rendering it as 'for you I long'.[246] The psalmist turns to God in the early morning because he longs for God, for his presence and spiritual companionship, and deliberately chooses this Hebrew term to communicate the metaphorical character of his quest.

2. Verse 2b.

2.1. Identifying Figurative Language in Verse 2b.

Verse 2b is the central and the most meaningful part of verse 2. In this line the psalmist describes the condition of his soul and flesh in searching for God, writing:

yrfb ^l HmK yvpn ^l hamc

2b. My soul thirsts for you, my flesh faints for you,

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[244] See Tate, *Psalms 51-100*, 127.
[245] See Kraus, *Psalmen*, II, 601.
[246] See Dahood, *Psalms 51-100*, II, 95.

We recognize two specific expressions: 'my soul thirsts for you', and 'my flesh faints for you' in this verse.

First, let us examine the first hemistich of v.2b - 'my soul thirsts for you'. In an analysis of figurative language in this phrase, we find it difficult to apply the general formula of metaphor to this expression. It is difficult to identify the constituents of the metaphor in this phrase. The expression does not show which word of this phrase should be considered as the 'tenor' and the 'vehicle'. If we take the word 'soul' to be the 'tenor', we find a difficulty in identifying the other components of the metaphor. It seems that the expression does not contain the secondary subject, which we could compare to the primary one as, for example, in Psalm 131:2: 'my soul is like the weaned child', where we perceive a clear transference of meaning. In this expression 'the soul' is compared to 'the weaned child'. In Psalm 63:2b we do not perceive such a clear comparison; therefore we do not recognize a 'conventional' metaphor in this verse.

Therefore, in order to examine whether we are dealing in the expression 'my soul thirsts for you' with a figurative language, we have to look at two key terms - the Hebrew term vpn and the word amc 'to be thirsty'[247].

The term vpn denotes 'throat, gullet', 'soul', 'living being', 'life', 'self', 'person', 'desire', 'appetite', 'emotion', and 'passion'.[248] The primary meaning of vpn was assumed to be 'throat, gullet', as the organ which is used for eating and breathing, e.g. in Prov 25:25: 'Cold water to a thirsty throat, such is good news from a far country', and in 1 Kgs 17:21: 'O Lord, my God, let the life breath return to the body of this child'.[249] Another meaning of vpn which is closely related to the 'throat' is the meaning 'desire, appetite'. Thus in Hos 9:4, vpn means hunger: 'Their bread is for their hunger', and in Prov 27:7, the term vpn assumes the meaning of 'appetite': 'The sated appetite spurns honey'. The meaning of 'desire,

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[247] See BDB, 854.
[248] See ibid, 659.
[249] See *TDOT*, IX, 504-505.

longing' we also observe in Ex 23:9: 'You shall not oppress a stranger since you yourselves know the feelings of a stranger'. In the Hebrew Bible vpn is used in the sense of sexual craving and erotic desire; Jeremiah portrays Israel as a prostitute pursuing other gods 'That sniffs the heat in her desire' Jer 2:21.

Other possible translations of vpn are 'vital self' e.g. in Gen 12:13, 'life' in Job 13:14, and 'person' in Ezek 18:4. Alongside the above meanings, the term vpn is used in the sense of 'soul'. In this sense, it is used to express feelings of grief, sadness, suffering and pain e.g. in Pss 31:9; 42:6 but on the other hand, vpn it also expresses feelings of joy in life, hope and vitality e.g. Pss 71:23; 84:2; 130:5.[250]

The ambiguity of the term vpn makes recognition and interpretation problematic in Ps 63:2b. Many scholars translate this term in v. 2b as 'soul'[251]; others as 'whole being'[252]; Goldingay renders it 'my whole person'[253], Alonso Schökel renders it 'throat'[254], and Hossfeld and Zenger translate it as 'my soul/life'[255]. All translations are plausible. It seems, however, that in verse 2b the translation of vpn as a 'soul' makes better sense in the context of this psalm. As was observed already, the vpn is associated with grief, sadness, joy and hope. In Psalm 63 the psalmist, on the one hand, expresses his feelings of sadness because of God's absence (v.2), and on the other hand, he experiences the feelings of joy and hope (vv.6,8). The language in verse 9a 'My soul clings to you' also suggests that the vpn refers to the intimate relationship between God and an individual; therefore the

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[250] See ibid, 509.

[251] For instance, Gunkel, *Die Psalmen*, 265; Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 17; Dahood, *Psalms 51-100*, II, 95; Podechard, *Le Psautier. Psaumes 1-75*, 270; and Tate, *Psalms 51-100*, 123; Tate remarks, however, that the translation 'my soul' is for poetic purposes. He argues that translations such as 'my life', 'myself' or 'I' are technically more accurate in this verse; see Tate, *Psalms 51-100*, 124.

[252] See Samuel Terrien, *The Psalms. Strophic Structure and Theological Commentary*, I (Grand Rapids and Cambridge, U.K: W. B. Eerdmans, 2003), 460; Ravasi translates 'il mio essere'; Ravasi, *I Libro dei Salmi*, II, 261.

[253] See Goldingay, Psalms 42-89, 254.

[254] See Alonso Schökel, *I Salmi*, I, 942;

[255] See Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 51-100*, 119.

translation of 'soul' makes good sense in its portrayal of such a special and profound relationship between God and a human being.

An examination of the second term אמץ 'to be thirsty' is helpful in recognition of figurative language. We use the verb: 'to thirst' with regard to people and animals. It is a common term which is often used both in literature and colloquial language. The primary meaning of this term denotes a physical condition of human beings or animals, the need to satisfy fundamental human or animal needs, that is, the drinking of liquid. Speaking about 'thirsting' as, for example, in the sentence 'John is thirsty for a drink' we understand this as a physical state. In this phrase we observe literal language. On the other hand, for example, in colloquial speech we speak about 'thirsting for power', 'thirsting for love', 'the thirst for knowledge', and 'to be thirsty for friendship'. In all these phrases we understand the state of 'thirsting', not in a physical but figurative sense. It seems that in Ps 63:2b we observe the latter sense. In v.2b, the psalmist apparently understands 'thirsting' in the figurative sense, in a meaning of desire and longing. Like desiccated soil, which needs to be watered, similarly the psalmist needs to experience God's presence, His goodness and love.

Thus the language in the expression 'my soul thirsts for you' would suggest a figurative sense of this expression. Even if we use in the translation such terms as 'throat' or 'person', instead of the term 'soul', used for a poetic purpose as Tate remarks,[256] in the phrases 'my throat thirsts for you' and 'my person thirsts for you' we still observe an element of figurative speech. Thus the figurative interpretation of v.2b could be: 'The soul thirsts for God like a parched throat thirsts for water'.[257]

In the second hemistich of verse 2b, we find the phrase: 'My flesh faints for you'. If we try to apply the general formula of metaphor to this expression, we find a problem. It is difficult to recognize the components of metaphor in this

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[256] See Tate, *Psalms 51-100*, 124.

[257] See Konrad Schaefer, *Psalms* (Berit Olam. Studies in Hebrew Narrative and Poetry; Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2001), 152.

expression. The psalmist uses Hebrew word HmK which apparently denotes 'to faint', and 'to faint (with longing)'[258], but in the Hebrew Bible it appears as *hapax legomenon*.[259] The flesh constitutes a part of a human being. The term 'to faint' can be attributed to the human body. We associate the word 'faint' with a physical condition of human flesh. Thus, for instance, the expression: 'John faints', means that John weakens or swoons. It is difficult however, to apply the term 'to faint with longing' to a human body. If we say that 'Mary faints with longing for John' we take this phrase as a figurative expression. A human being can long for or faint with longing for someone or something in a figurative sense.

Therefore it seems most likely that the language, which the psalmist uses in the expression, 'My flesh faints for you' assumes the attributes of figurative speech. The figure of speech which is hyperbole can be recognized here. The poet uses a deliberate exaggeration for an effect. He apparently conveys that he longs for God. As the weak and feeble human body fails and needs to be strengthened by food and water, similarly the poet needs the presence of God to strengthen his spiritual life. We can construe the expression 'My flesh faints for you' in the following way: 'My flesh faints for God as a man weakens without food'. In this interpretation, God is compared to food. As nourishment supplies the human body with strength and energy, similarly the presence of God has an affect on the psalmist. God's companionship provides the poet with spiritual strength and comfort. A broader interpretation of this expression is: 'I long for God because he is for me, spiritual nourishment as food is for the human body.' In such an interpretation from verse 2b we identify: 'My flesh faints for you' as a metaphor, because we perceive the transference of the meaning wherein God is compared to sustenance. The psalmist longs (faints with longing) for God, as the human person needs to be strengthened by nourishment. In this metaphor we see God as spiritual food for man.

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[258] BDB, 484.
[259] See the Appendix.

Whether a further poetic device in verse 2b can be recognized or not is debatable. In the sentence, 'My soul thirsts for you, my flesh faints for you' the two words: 'soul' and 'flesh' arguably express a totality, and when a totality is expressed in abbreviated form, we are dealing with merismus.[260] Here, the expression 'soul… and flesh' may denote the whole man, with the vpn standing for the emotions, the reason and will, and the rfB indicating the physical organ. Together these human attributes are the components of a human being and the human person acts through them.[261] The human person is both corporal and spiritual. In his commentary on this verse, Kraus remarks that the human being in his totality, consists of soul, which is the principle of man's life, and flesh, which is the material form (cf. Pss 16:9; 84:2).[262] The author of Psalm 63 might here utilize merismus in verse 2b in order to express that his entire person is involved with a longing for God. However, Goldingay argues that such an understanding cannot be applied to this verse. He provides the following translation:

> 1a. God, you are my God, I search for you;
> b. my whole person thirsts for you.
> c. My body aches for you,
> d. in a land that is dry and faint, without water.[263]

He explains that the expression: 'My body aches for you' (1c) re-expresses the previous expression 'My whole person thirsts for you' (1b) forming a straight parallel.[264] Then he notes:

> The colon does not refer to the body over against the soul; the OT does not see body or flesh (*b¹´¹r*) and spirit or soul or person (*nepeš*) as a pair of complementary aspects to the human being in the way that body and soul are in English. In the Psalms, only in 16:9-10 and 84:2[3] do *b¹´¹r* and *nepeš* come together as they do here; *nepeš* refers to me as a whole being,

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[260] See Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry*, 321.
[261] See Kirkpatrick, *The Book of Psalms*, 353.
[262] See Kraus, *Psalmen*, II, 601-602.
[263] Goldingay, *Psalms 42-89*, 254.
[264] See ibid, 256-257.

> and specifically a being with longings (in this context it might more precisely suggest desire)…while *b¹´¹r* refers to me as a physical being… The final colon in the verse then provides background to what has preceded, though only in metaphorical terms.[265]

Goldingay's interpretation seems to suggest that it is improbable that we are dealing with merismus in verse 2b. A further analysis of the terms vpn and rfB which will follow in the next section will provide us with the theological interpretation of this verse.

2.2. An Analysis of Verse 2b.

In this verse, the psalmist expresses the desire of his soul that thirsts for God and his body that languishes for him. Let us focus on the first part of the sentence, namely the expression: 'My soul thirsts for you'. In this phrase the psalmist uses the word vpn . In Psalm 63:2b, the word vpn applies to the inner self and the total beingness of someone who breathes and is alive.[266] The breathing substance or the being who breathes, is identified with the soul, the inner being of man.[267] The word vpn is translated into Greek word yuch which means 'breath of life', 'life', and 'the soul'; it is understood as the seat of all feelings and desires.[268] Therefore the Septuagint renders this Hebrew word in Psalm 63:2 as h yuch. In verse 2b, the Hebrew term vpn has a reference to the word 'thirst' and appears as the seat of the appetite[269]; hence the expression is translated as 'my soul thirsts'. The recognition of vpn in this verse as the seat of the appetite indicates that we may dealing here with a perceptual metaphor. In Psalm 63, we find this Hebrew term also in verses 6a and 9a which assume a similar meaning as in verse 2b. In verse 6a, the word vpn

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[265] Ibid, 257.
[266] See Terrien, *The Psalms*, 462.
[267] BDB, 659.
[268] James Hope Moulton and George Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1929), 698.
[269] BDB, 660.

is used with the verb 'to satisfy' as the seat of the appetite and it refers to hunger:[270] 'As marrow and fat, my soul shall be satisfied'. In Psalm 63:10a this Hebrew word assumes a different meaning than in verses 2b, 6a and 9a. In verse 10a, the term vpn is used in the formula in the context of the peril of the psalmist's life. In the Hebrew Bible we find a large number of texts speaking of threats to life. This is seen in the formula: 'seek after someone's life', which appears in 1 Sam 20:1; 22:23; 23:15; 1 Kgs 19:10, 14; Jer 38:13; Pss 35:4; 38:13; 40:15; 54:5; 70:3; 86:14.[271] The same expression also appears in Psalm 63:10. In this verse, the word vpn assumes the meaning 'life'[272], denoting not life in general but an individual life.[273] In the translation in this study, the word vpn in verse 10a is rendered as 'life': 'But those who seek (to destroy) my life'.

In the Hebrew Bible, the word vpn with the meaning of 'soul' occurs many times and shows different theological concepts. In the Book of Ecclesiastes, for instance, the author describes the soul, which craves, lacks, or is filled with good things (Eccl 2:24; 4:8; 6:2, 3, 7, 9; 7:28). In the Psalter, the usage of the word 'soul' is found in reference to yearning. The objects of the soul's desire are varied such as those relating to the law (Ps 119:20), to salvation (Ps 119:81), and to God's courts (Ps 84:3). The motif of the desire of the soul for God we see in Isa 26:8-9, and Psalms 42:2-3; 63:2; 84:3, and 143:6. Psalm 107:9 shows the concept of 'the hungry and thirsty vpn ', 'For he has satisfied the thirsty soul, and the hungry soul he has filled with good things' (also cf. Prov 19:15; 25:25; 27:7). This verse appears in a similar context, as seen in Psalm 63:2b. In both these verses the term 'soul' links with the verb 'to satisfy' and is used as the seat of appetite, thirst and hunger.

In Ps 107:9 the psalmist describes the desert wanderers or leaders of caravans who lost their way (v. 4).[274] In the wilderness they experience hunger and they are

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[270] Ibid, 660.
[271] *TDOT*, IX, 513.
[272] BDB, 659.
[273] *TDOT*, IX, 512.
[274] See Kraus, *Psalmen*, 912.

liable to die of thirst (v.5). If they cry to Yahweh in their distress (v.6), he leads them to right paths so that they arrive at inhabited places that provide food and drink (v.7). God's special protection and help, gives them a reason to thank Yahweh for his goodness and his wonders (v.8). As the reward for their thanksgiving, God gives drink to the thirsty soul and he fills the hungry soul with goodness (v.9). The psalmist's concept of these verses is to show Yahweh's mercy and his wondrous intervention and help for those who are his own.[275] Some scholars point out that in Psalm 107:9, the term vpn designates 'throat'.[276] In this interpretation, verse 9 is translated: 'For he has satisfied the parched throat, and the hungry throat he has filled with good things'. The psalmist places the desert wanderers in the context of a wasted reality. The description of the hard conditions of the wilderness and the severe situation of the wanderers, described in Ps 107:4-6, indicates that we may be dealing in verse 9 with literal language rather than figurative. The interpretation of vpn as 'throat' seems to be plausible in this verse.

The suppliant in Ps 63:2b portrays a different experience than the author illustrates in Ps 107:9. God is the object of the psalmist's quest in Psalm 63:2b. The poet uses vpn in order to visualize a spiritual longing in terms of a physical craving. He describes himself as parched in his throat, faint from hunger in his body (as though starved or fasting) but what he means is that he feels an intense need or desire, for which he has no descriptive words other than the physical. The poet seeks God because he desires Yahweh and his transcendent and immanent presence.[277] In Psalm 107:9, God provides human beings with physical food and

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[275] Ibid, 912.

[276] See Gunkel, *Die Psalmen*, 468; Kraus, *Psalmen*, II, 907; Dahood, *Psalms 101-150*, III, 78. H. Seebass in the *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* explains that in Psalm 107:9 the word vpn has presumably the original meaning of 'throat, jaws, gullet'. See *TDOT*, IX, 505.

[277] J. Day points out that the Hebrews conceived of Yahweh as both transcendent and immanent. See John Day, *Psalms* (JSOT; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 128.

water. In Psalm 63:2b, God is the source of satisfaction for the longing of the human soul.

The second word, which is the object of analysis in the expression: 'My soul thirsts for you' is the Hebrew verb אמצ 'to be thirsty'. In the Hebrew Bible, we find that this word conveys a literal meaning, which is a physical thirst. Such a meaning of this Hebrew verb is found in passages such as Exod 17:3; Judg 4:19; 15:18; Ruth 2:9; Job 24:11; Prov 25:21, and Isa 5:13; 21:14; 32:6; 48:21; 65:13. Other biblical passages show a figurative usage of the word אמצ e.g. in Isa 44:3; 49:10; 55:1, and Amos 8:11. Kellermann notes: 'Thirst is also used as a term for absolute longing, e.g. for the proclamation of God's word (Amos 8:11), or the yearning desire for God himself (Ps 42:3[2]: 'my soul thirsts for God'; cf. Pss 63:2[1]; 143:6), or for salvation (Isa 55:1). In Isa 41:17 the torment of thirst is an image for the misery of the people of Israel (cf. Lam 4:4; Jer 2:25).'[278] In the Old Testament, the term 'thirst' represents spiritual dissatisfaction or a passionate searching for God.[279]

In order to observe the meaning of the words 'to be thirsty' in Ps 63:2b let us consider the passage Isa 55:1-3 where the image of thirsting is placed in the context of a feast. In Isa 55:1-3, the speaker[280] announces an invitation to a banquet:

1. Ho, all who are thirsty, come to the water.
   And you who have no money, come, buy and eat.
   Come, buy wine and milk
   Without money and without price.
2. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread,
   And your labour for that which does not satisfy?

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[278] *TWAT*, VI, 1067.

[279] See Ryken, et al. (eds.), *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, 864.

[280] The passage does not clearly indicate who the speaker is. Westermann thinks that the invitation might have been by water-sellers and others who shouted their wares in the market. J. Begrich identifies the speaker with 'Lady Wisdom', which is seen in Prov 9:1-12. H. C. Spykerboer gives an explanation that Isa 55:1-5 refers to Jerusalem. It is the water of Jerusalem to which the people are invited. K. Baltzer thinks that the most probable solution is that it is a woman, representing the city of Jerusalem, who is giving the invitation to the banquet. She is not Lady Wisdom or any goddess. She invites the people to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. The above discussion is summarized by Baltzer; see Klaus Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 466-468.

Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good,
And your souls will delight in rich food.
3. Incline your ear, and come to me.
Hear, and your soul shall live.
And I will make an everlasting covenant with you,
The steadfast mercies of David.

The author of this passage uses the verb amc (v.1) in the context of the feast, wherein the people are invited to drink and eat delicious dishes. It is likely that the author of this passage refers his invitation to the temple of Jerusalem itself (cf. Ezek 47:1) or Jerusalem in general as the 'holy city' where God reigns as a King. In his study, Spykerboer opts for the 'holy city' and for Yahweh, 'the Holy One of Israel, who has furnished his own people with glory (Isa 55:5)'.[281] The people who are thirsty are invited to the waters of Jerusalem (cf. 'living waters flow out from Jerusalem' Zech 14:8). The image in Isa 55:1-3 depicts a feast that is open to all where dishes including water, wine, milk and bread are free. These are God's good gifts and point to the goodness of God.[282] 'Souls' with their thirst and hunger, which in verse 2 may denote lives, are invited to delight in abundance. The life of souls requires 'hearing' (v.3). All those who come and listen to God's word will be satisfied. With these people God intends to make a lasting covenant, the content of which is defined in the words: the steadfast (sure) tokens of grace promised to David (cf. 2 Sam 7:8-16; 23:5; Ps 89:28-38).[283]

Common to both texts, Isa 55:1-3 and Ps 63:2b is the transferred meaning of thirsting. In the passage of Isa 55:1-3 the literal meaning of the words 'to be thirsty' is transferred to its figurative sense. In this passage the term 'thirsting' refers not to physical thirsting and hunger but to a desire for God, his word (v. 2-3) and his salvation (v.5). A similar meaning of the words 'to be thirsty' is assumed in Ps

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[281] Han C. Spykerboer, 'Isaiah 55, 1-5: The Climax of Deutero-Isaiah. An Invitation to come to the New Jerusalem,' in J. Vermeylen (ed.), *The Book of Isaiah* (BEThL 81; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1989), 357-359.

[282] See Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah*, 469.

[283] See Claus Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66* (London: SCM Press, 1969), 283.

63:2b. The thirst is not just a physical need but it portrays the soul's longing for God. For the author God is the living One and the fountain of life. He is the source of human spiritual thirst.

A continuation of the concept of longing for God is seen in the second hemistich of verse 2b. The poet says that his body languishes for God: 'my flesh faints for you'. The two Hebrew words, which draw our attention in this verse, are: rfB and hmK . The noun rfB signifies 'flesh', and the verb hmK is a *hapax legomenon* in the Hebrew Bible; in Ps 63:2 this verb is used in a figurative sense denoting 'to faint' (with longing).[284] The poet uses the image of 'fainting body' as referring to his longing for the presence of God. He illustrates his spiritual state in the images of 'thirsting soul (throat)' and 'languishing body'. In verse 2b, the poet expresses a personal affection towards God, whose loving kindness is better than life itself (v. 4). The loving kindness of God is a greater good than earthly life; in fact, it is the greatest good and the true life. As a result of being satisfied by the eternal loving kindness of God, the poet expresses a desire to meet God's presence in the sanctuary: 'I gaze on you in the sanctuary'. He praises God: 'with joyful lips, my mouth shall praise you' (v.6), and he utters a longing to stay close to God: 'My soul clings to you' (v.9).

An identification of metaphorical language in verse 2b and its interpretation is exceedingly important in an analysis of Psalm 63. Metaphors as in verse 2b play a special role in the whole of Psalm 63. First, they visualise the longing of a human being for the presence of God. Metaphorical language in this verse portrays hunger and thirst in the human soul, which literal language could not adequately render. Therefore, the poet chooses to use non-literal language in order to better express feelings, emotions and the state of his soul. Secondly, the longing of a human being for God, observed in the metaphorical language in verse 2b, is a central theme of this psalm. The next verses of Psalm 63 (vv. 3-12), to a major or lesser degree, refer

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[284] BDB, 484.

to verse 2 and develop the motif of this verse. In these verses, we find interesting images and metaphors, which continue the main theme of this psalm so clearly emphasised in verse 2. The contents of verses 3-12, allow a reader to see Psalm 63 as a whole unit. Verses 3-12 will be the object of further analysis in a later chapter in this study.

3. Verse 2c.

3.1 Identifying Figurative Language in Verse 2c.

Let us consider verse 2c, which is the object of our examination in this section:

~ym-yIB @y[w hYc-#raB

2c. In a dry and weary land without water.

In verse 2c, we can recognize a figurative meaning of the word 'weary'. The land is dry and desiccated without water. But when we speak of land using the term 'weary', we are dealing with figurative language. In an examination of the expression 'weary land' there is a problem in applying the general formula of metaphor. It is difficult to identify the constituents of metaphor in this expression. However, we find the typology of metaphor helpful in the analysis of this phrase. In the word 'weary' we recognize a human characteristic. We use the word 'weary' to refer to the human condition in meanings such as weakened, laborious, fatigued, bored and boring. All these words have a meaning which describe a human being's condition or state. Thus in the phrase 'weary land' (Ps 63:2c) we are dealing with an anthropomorphic metaphor because we perceive the transference of the human characteristic, which is 'weary' to an inanimate entity, which is 'land'. The land assumes the attribute of weariness in the sense that a human being may experience weariness. The expression 'weary land' is a clear metaphor and should be

understood as 'a parched land'. The poet uses this phrase in order to intensify and enrich the meaning of this verse. Thus in verse 2c we are dealing with both literal and metaphorical language.

3.2 An Analysis of Verse 2c.

As we have seen in the previous section, in the expression 'weary land' we are dealing with figurative language. The Hebrew adjective @y[denotes 'faint, weary'[285]. In the Hebrew Bible, this word is used with reference to: 'physical exertion and hunger', as for example in the sentences: 'Esau came in from the field, and he was weary' (Gen 25:29); 'The king and all the people who were with him arrived exhausted' (2 Sam 16:14). It is also used of 'thirst', for instance, in Isa 29:8: 'It will be like the dream of a hungry man: he eats, then wakes up with an empty belly; or like the dream of a thirsty man: he drinks, then wakes up exhausted with a parched throat'. This Hebrew adjective is used elsewhere in a figurative sense, for example, 'For I satisfy the weary soul, and every soul that languishes, I replenish' (Jer 31:25). Jeremiah speaks of a human soul, which needs spiritual support; God himself is the one, who offers a spiritual satisfaction and help to those who need it.

We find in Ps 63:2c a similar figurative usage of the Hebrew word @y[. In this verse, however, the poet uses the adjective not in connection to a human soul but to the 'land'. In the expression 'weary land', we perceive the transference of human attributes such as: 'weariness', 'tiredness', 'exhaustion' and 'fatigue' to an inanimate object, which is the 'land'. Therefore the expression 'weary land' assumes an anthropomorphic meaning. This expression could be rendered in a literal sense as 'parched land'. Thus in verse 2c, the poet speaks about dry and parched land using an anthropomorphic attribute, which is weariness. The author

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[285] BDB, 746.

of this psalm is thirsty for God as an exhausted wanderer who is thirsty for water in a parched desert.[286]

The expression 'without water' as an explanatory gloss in verse 2c, appears to be extremely flat in this verse of passionate language.[287] This expression is a *hapax legomenon* in the Hebrew Bible. A unique concept of water is distinctly observed in the Hebrew Bible. Water as an essential element of life is an important notion in the Old Testament.

In the Hebrew Bible figures of water are presented in three main ways.[288] Firstly, water is shown as a cosmic force, which only God can control and govern. Such a concept is clearly seen in the cosmology of the ancient world. In the biblical vision in the Book of Genesis, the original creation of the universe is presented in terms of the mastery of water by the divine word (Gen 1:6). God is the creator and master of cosmic order. He maintains the sea within its bounds (Job 38:11), and his voice has a great power: under his sovereign control are waters, and he is the Lord of all elements of nature (Ps 29).[289] Secondly, water in the Old Testament is seen it as a cleansing agent. The Hebrew Bible, especially the Pentateuch is full of descriptions where water is used as an essential means of cleansing. The rituals prescribed in the Mosaic Law are a handbook of how to use water in washing from defilement, which could come through contact with the dead or the contaminated, and how to wash food, utensils, clothing, and how to use bathing rituals (Lev 15:13). Thirdly, the concept of water, found in the Hebrew Bible, is a reference to water as a source of life, both physical and spiritual. Fresh and 'living' water miraculously provided by Yahweh from the rock at Horeb, is an image of God's protection over the grumbling Israelites (Exod 17:6-7).[290] The

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[286] See Anderson, *The Book of Psalms*, I, 456.
[287] See Dahood, *Psalms II, 51-100*, 97.
[288] Ryken, et al. (eds.), *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, 929.
[289] See ibid, 929.
[290] See ibid, 931.

imagery of water such as 'flood', 'sea', 'river', 'spring of water', 'well' and 'rain', is often used by authors of biblical books. Trito-Isaiah provides a powerful assurance and spiritual support for the hungry and afflicted, asserting that they will be satisfied with good things, and with renewal of strength and joy: 'The Lord will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in parched places, and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters never fail' (Isa 58:11). Isa 12:2-3 similarly presents God as a source of salvation: 'The Lord God is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation. With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation'. In the Isaianic corpus, God is shown as a spiritual strength and a source of salvation. The author uses the image of water to show that God is like a fresh fountain providing refreshment for one's spirit and is a source of inner strength and joy.

This third concept of water, namely, water as a source of life, both physical and spiritual, is seen in verse 2bc in Psalm 63. A man cannot survive in the desert where there is no water. It is water that is the essential component of physical life, which provides him with support and survival. The author of Psalm 63 conveys a similar role for God in His support of a human spirit. God is a source of spiritual strength, and joy for those who put their trust in him. Like a fountain watering the parched land, so God feeds the soul of a human being. He satisfies the thirst and hunger of a human's soul with his presence. It is God's presence that is the source of spiritual strength for a human being and gives him fullness of life.

4. Conclusion

The examination of Psalm 63:2 in Chapter Three, aimed to answer two questions: how do we recognize figurative language in verse 2, and what is the main theme of this verse? The subsequent analysis based on these questions allows us to propose the following conclusions.

Firstly, the author of Psalm 63 certainly uses figurative language in verse 2. We recognize the expressions: 'my soul thirsts for you' and 'my flesh faints for you' as figurative phrases. It is difficult, however, to apply Leech's definition of metaphor to these expressions in a strict sense. If we try to apply the general formula of metaphor to these phrases, we find a problem in identifying all elements of the metaphor, whose definition includes: tenor, vehicle and *tertium comparationis*. Thus these expressions cannot be recognized as 'conventional metaphors' in the strictest definition of metaphor. A recognition of these phrases as metaphorical is based on identifying a transference of the literal meaning to the metaphorical sense, and on the typology of metaphor. We recognize such a transference of meanings in these phrases. The poet illustrates that he seeks God in the early morning. In this quest for God, man is totally engaged in both body and soul. The poet might use a poetic figure such as merismus in order to emphasize a whole personal involvement of man in that quest. He as a whole person, both soul and body, longs for God. His body and soul hunger and thirst for God. It is a spiritual desire, which is expressed by imagery in this verse. In order to intensify the imagery, the poet uses the image of desiccated land where there is no water. Fountains, water, and wells are images, which are commonly used in the Hebrew Bible. Similar images are also used in modern poetry as we have seen in the poem 'Water-Fall' by Henry Vaughan, where the poet plays with the image of God as the waterfall. For Vaughan, God is his stream and fountains of life:

> Dear stream! Dear bank, where often I
> Have sate, and pleas'd my pensive eye.
>
> (Vv. 13-14)

> Fountains of life where the Lamb goes!
> What sublime truths and wholesome themes
> Lodge in thy mystical deep streams! [291]
>
> (Vv. 26-28)

[291] Wain (ed.), *The Oxford Anthology of Great English Poetry*, I, 392.

A similar idea is observed in Psalm 63:2, where the author plays with the image of water in order to express a spiritual condition of his soul, his inner self. The water images: thirsting soul and desiccated soil are powerful figures in this verse. As water and bread are essential and indispensable needs for a human being's existence, so God is the source of an inner and spiritual life for the psalmist. This spiritual and human condition is best expressed only by the usage of imagery. That is why the poet uses figurative language in this psalm. Figurative language is fundamental in the art of good poetry. As Gillingham remarks, the purpose of poetry is 'to conceal as much as it is reveal'.[292] The author of this psalm employs metaphors in order to conceal a meaning of the poetical lines in such a manner that a reader can discover a hidden sense in the same lines. Thus in verse 2, the psalmist uses metaphors and images such as 'thirsting soul', 'fainting flesh', and 'dry and weary land where there is no water' in order to, on the one hand, conceal a meaning of this verse, and on the other hand, to allow a reader to discover a hidden meaning, which is concealed in these images. The poet thirsts and hungers for God in a manner other than the physical. It is in fact, a spiritual desire. Thus 'thirsting soul' and 'fainting flesh' are powerful images, which exemplify a spiritual thirst and hunger of the psalmist for God. Figurative language in verse 2 shows a desperate yearning of the human soul for God in the wilderness of life.

Secondly, verse 2 plays an important role in the whole of Psalm 63. The author of this verse uses figurative language in order to portray an image of longing for the presence of God. The poetic language which the author uses in verse 2 assumes the characteristic of mystical language. The poet expresses a deep desire to be in union with God; he is seeking God early in the morning and his soul and body thirsts and hungers for God's presence. God is the object of the psalmist's longing and desire. Therefore, the theme of yearning after God is the leading motif of this psalm. It is an absorbing theme, which is continued in verses 3-12 in Psalm

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[292] Gillingham, *The Poems and Psalms of the Hebrew Bible,* 15.

63. Verse 2 gives a basis and reason for the next verses. It is, to a major degree, the decisive element that informs us about the character and nature of the psalm. In verses 3-12 we see a continuation of this same theme. In these verses, the poet uses figurative language to describe an intimate communion with God in the different circumstances of his life. In verses 3-12, the poet praises God (v.4), who has become for him a constant bastion against life's trials (v.8). These verses will be the object of a further analysis in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4 - AN ANALYSIS OF IMAGERY IN VERSES 3-12

It is a beautiful though by no means an original psalm.[293]

Psalm 63 is not only rich in language and depth of meaning but it is also one of the most beautiful psalms, found in the Psalter. Cheyne's opinion in regard to its beauty is well supported and affirmed by the analysis of the psalm in this study. However, it is more difficult to accept Cheyne's other view that Psalm 63 is not original. An analysis of verses 3-12 in this chapter aims to demonstrate that some features of originality actually do exist in this psalm.

In the previous chapter, we analysed the figurative language in the first strophe (verse 2) of Psalm 63 where the motif of an intense longing for God dominates. Verse 2, however, does not constitute the conclusion of Psalm 63. It is rather a prelude to the poem, which the psalmist develops in the course of the next three strophes. In verses 3-12, the author continues to develop the theme of yearning for the presence of God by employing other images and figures of speech. The analysis in the first section of this chapter will focus on the recognition of some of the more important images and metaphors and their theological interpretation. The second section in this chapter will contain conclusions.

The aim of Chapter Four will be to provide answers to the questions: Which key images and metaphors can we recognize in Ps 63:3-12? Why does the author of this psalm use this kind of imagery in the context of the theological interpretation of this psalm, and what original features can be found in Psalm 63?

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[293] T. K. Cheyne, *The Book of Psalms: Translated from a Revised Text with Notes and Introduction*, vol. I (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., Ltd, Dryden House, Gerrard Street, W., 1904), 268.

1. Identification of Images and Poetic Figures in Verses 3-12 and their Theological Interpretation.

In order to understand the theology of Psalm 63, we need to analyse the figurative language of verses 3-12, and identify the inherent interesting images and figures. The focus will be on some key images and figurative expressions, which play a significant role in the context of longing for God, rather than attempt to discuss all of the poetic figures, recognized in these verses. The examination will focus on the theological interpretation of these images, and we begin by considering verses 3-6, which serve as the second strophe of Psalm 63, expressing 'praise and confident part'.

1.1 Verses 3-6

The psalmist begins at verse 3 with a statement that he is seeking God in the sanctuary in order to see God's might and glory:

^dAbkW ^Z[tAarl ^ytyzx vdQB !K

3a. So I gaze on you in the sanctuary
b. To see your strength and your glory.

In v.3a the petitioner utters that he 'looks' at God in the sanctuary. The Hebrew verb which the psalmist uses here is hzx meaning 'see', 'perceive'[294]. This verb is often associated with visions and oracles of prophets[295] e.g. Isa 2:1; Ezek 12:27 and Amos 1:1. In Ps 63:3a the author uses this verb to illustrate his 'encounter' with God which 'takes place in the sanctuary'. The Hebrew term which the psalmist uses here is vdq meaning 'apartness', 'sacredness', 'a place set apart by God's

[294] BDB, 302.
[295] See *TDOT*, IV, 280-290.

presence'.[296] The latter meaning refers to the sanctuary which was the most sacred part in the Temple of Jerusalem, and in Ps 63:3a the term vdq is used in this sense. It is difficult, however, to judge what the nature of the psalmist's vision is, and where this extraordinary 'encounter' with God takes place. The petitioner may be described either his real presence in the Temple of Jerusalem at one of the major Temple festivals and the reference would be to the perception of the visible glory of God in the ritual of the sanctuary, or he may be far removed from the sanctuary and Jerusalem and he may be referring to his inner vision, by which he became conscious of God's presence and His qualities.[297] The vision of the psalmist might also be in his dream.[298] It is more likely, however, that the psalmist's reference is not to the actual reality and perception of the visible glory of God in the Jerusalem Temple but rather to his inner vision which is the consequence of the desire and longing for God' presence which he experiences.

In v.3b, the author refers to divine attributes such as power (z[) and glory (dAbK) which are elsewhere identified with the Ark (1 Sm 4:21-22), and the Holy of Holies (Ps 78:61-62); these mark God's very presence on earth. Zenger notes that this expression 'sounds like a proverbial summary of a sanctuary theology (cf. 29:1,9,11; 96:6-7) according to which, in the Temple, God's saving and sheltering ''power'' and also His special ''divine profile'' (his ''honour'' and ''glory'') can be ''beheld'' and experienced'.[299] Some interpreters, including Anderson, maintain that verse 3 in Psalm 63, could be understood as a reference to a theophany in the Temple (cf. Isa 6:1-3).[300] It is unlikely, however, that this verse has such an allusion. The psalmist, experiencing spiritual loneliness and seeking help and

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[296] BDB, 871.

[297] See Patrick Boylan, *The Psalms. A Study of the Vulgate Psalter in the Light of the Hebrew Text* (Dublin: M. H. Gill and Son, 1920), 231.

[298] See Eaton, *The Psalms*, 235.

[299] Hossfeld and Zenger, *A Commentary on Psalms 51-100*, 124

[300] See Anderson, *The Book of Psalms*, I, 456.

protection, longs to experience the signs of God's presence. Such an inner experience refers to 'the holy reality' of an earthly sanctuary.[301]

Although Zion theology is not the main theme of Psalm 63, the psalmist's reference in v.3 to the sanctuary, in the context of the theology of Psalm 63, is significant. Zion theology[302] or the concept of Zion is complex and broad; therefore an examination here will focus on some aspects of this theology with a special reference to Psalm 63:3. The term 'Zion' (!AYc) appears many times in the Hebrew Bible and has different meanings.[303] The term evokes a whole range of concepts associated with the kingship, faithfulness of Yahweh, might, justice, election, security and peace.[304] In Psalm 63 we find references to God's mighty (v.3), security (v.8), justice (vv.10-11) and the kingship (v.12).

The concept of Zion and associated with its traditions can be found in many biblical passages in the Old Testament but is evident especially in the Psalter (e.g. Pss 2; 46; 48; 65; 76; 84; 87; 95-99; 110; 122; 125; 128 and 132) and in the Book of Isaiah (e.g. Isa 1:21-31; 2:1-5; 24:21-23; 25:6-12; 26:1-6; 33:5-6,14-24; 35:10; 52:1-12; 62:1-12; 65:17-25).[305] The theology of Zion shows that the Temple of Jerusalem

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[301] See Terrien, *The Psalms*, 462.

[302] More on Temple Liturgy and Zion Theology in Susan E. Gillingham, 'Temple Liturgy, Levitical Singers and the Editing of the Hebrew Psalter', in Erich Zenger (ed.), *The Composition of the Book of Psalms* (BEThL; Leuven, 2009) (in print); or see Susan E. Gillingham, 'Temple Liturgy, Levitical Singers and the Editing of the Hebrew Psalter', paper given at Colloquium Biblicum Lovaniense LVII at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, 5-7 August 2008, 1-37.

[303] This term is used 38 times in the Psalter, and 166 times in the Hebrew Bible. The term 'Zion' probably originally meant 'citadel' and it was first applied to the ancient Jebusite fortress in the city of David (e.g. 2 Sam 5:7; 1 Kgs 8:1). Later, the biblical authors applied this term to the Temple Mount (e.g. Pss 2:6; 9:12; 48:3; 74:2), and then it was expanded to include the whole city of Jerusalem (2 Kgs 19:21). The term 'Zion' was eventually applied to the people of Israel (Is 51:16). Thus the terms such as 'Zion', 'Jerusalem', 'the city of God', 'the Holy Mountain', 'the House of the Lord' and 'the People of Israel', are not necessarily synonymous terms in the Hebrew Bible. In the Psalter, the synonymous use of these terms we find, for example, in Ps 2:6: 'I have set my King on Zion, My Holy Mountain'; Ps 51:18: 'Do good to Zion in your good pleasure; rebuild the walls of Jerusalem' (NRSV), and in Psalms 102:21; 128:5; 135:21; 147:12; see S. E. Gillingham, 'Temple Liturgy, Levitical Singers and the Editing of the Hebrew Psalter', (2008), 2.

[304] See David Noel Freedman (ed.), *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, VI (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1099.

[305] See ibid, 1099.

is the place of God's divine presence.[306] Jerusalem and associated with its name: 'Zion' (e.g. Pss 9:12; 20:3)[307], 'holy hill' (e.g. Pss 2:6; 48:2), 'holy temple' (e.g. Pss 5:8; 65:5), and 'house of Yahweh' (e.g. Pss 23:6; 27:4) plays a central role in the concept of Zion. The Temple in Jerusalem is the central place of cult and worship to which the tribes of Israel make their annual pilgrimages for the great festivals giving thanks in the name of Yahweh (Ps 122:1,4). In Jerusalem on the Mount of Zion, Yahweh 'dwells' and is enthroned there (Pss 9:12; 74:2). The longing for the place of Yahweh's presence makes the people of Israel to make their pilgrimages to the courts of the Lord and His sanctuary (Pss 63:3; 84:3), and those who cannot take part in the procession to the house of God to experience His presence are filled with sadness (Ps 42:3-5).[308]

Kingship is an important theme in Zion theology. The Psalter shows both divine and human dimensions in this status. The psalms illustrate the kingship of God where Yahweh is portrayed as the king who ascended his royal throne to wield his royal power expressing the idea of Yahweh's enthronement e.g. Pss 47; 93; 96, 97, 98, 99.[309] During the Jewish annual festival of the enthronement of Yahweh in Jerusalem, the main solemn festal procession with Yahweh's ark symbolizing God's presence, was focused on the victorious coronation entry of Yahweh to the Temple, and during this procession Ps 24 and Ps 132 were probably used.[310] It is possible that the author of Psalm 63, speaking in v. 3 about 'strength and glory in the sanctuary' refers to this solemn feast of the enthronement pointing to the symbolism of the cherubim-ark[311] or to other great Jewish festivals in which God's glory, majesty and sovereignty were emphasized. The concept of

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[306] See Kraus, *Psalms 1-59*, 68.
[307] The given examples of the psalms follow the numeration of the MT.
[308] See Kraus, *Psalms 1-59*, 69.
[309] See Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, I, 106-107.
[310] See ibid, 115.
[311] See Broyles, *Psalms*, 262.

Yahweh as the king on Zion is related to His eternal kingship.[312] Yahweh exercises His supreme authority on Zion and His reign is eternal. Zion provides testimony to theological affirmations of the invincibility, sovereignty and reliability of Yahweh, God of Israel.[313] The psalms portray also human kingship and the role of the human king who sits on the throne of David in Jerusalem and his relationship with God. In Psalm 2:7, the king is declared to be 'God's son'. The concept of the sonship of the king on Zion is based on the adoption process. The king is chosen to be the 'adopted son' and by this, he becomes the heir and representative of God's rule.[314] The aspect of human kingship with reference to Zion we find, for example, in Psalms 2:6; 20:3; (48:3) and 149:2. Psalm 63 also contains the reference to a human king in v.12 but the theological concept of Zion seen in verse 3 emphasizes, however, God's sovereignty and might as the psalmist refers to 'God's glory and strength in the sanctuary'.

Other concepts seen in Psalm 63 and which to some extend are related to Zion theology are God's help 'Because you have been my help, and in the shadow of your wings, I shout for joy' (v. 8), and justice 'But those who seek to destroy my life shall go down into the depths of the earth. They will be poured out to the hands of the sword; they shall be a portion for jackals' (v.10-11). The former image of wings portrays the concept of the divine protection of Yahweh associated with Zion. In the latter concept, the author conveys that those who do injustice and destruction surely will not succeed. These verses, however, will be an object of further examination in the next sections.

In verse 4a, we find an interesting expression:

~yYxm ^Dsx bAj-yK

4a. Because Your lovingkindness is better than life

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[312] See Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, I, 107.
[313] See Freedman (ed.), *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, VI, 1099.
[314] See Kraus, *Psalms 1-59*, 131.

Here, two key terms dsx and yx are the objects of our interest. The Hebrew term dsx meaning 'goodness', 'kindness', 'lovingkindness' appears many times in the Hebrew Bible, expressing the quality of the relationship of man towards other people, often between relatives, in actions relating to favours and benefits (1 Sam 20:15; 2 Sam 16:17; Prov 19:22; Ps 141:5).[315] In relationships between people, the character of an act of dsx can be described as a beneficence based on an enduring commitment between two people or two parties rendering assistance to a needy person or party.[316] Although the self-interest of the helper might occasionally encourage a positive action, essentially the dsx focuses the rationale for action on commitment to the needy and not on advantage to the one who helps.[317]

In the Hebrew Bible, the term dsx is used in the context of both an intimate and personal relationship, usually familiar, and also in social relationship, usually political.[318] In a familiar relationship dsx is seen, for example, between the husband Abraham and his wife Sarah (Gen 20:13), Laban, Bethuel and Isaac (Gen 24:49), and Israel and Joseph (Gen 47:29). The social and political dimension of dsx is observed, for instance, between David and Jonathan when they enter into a covenantal relationship and the concept of tyrB (covenant) appears (1 Sam 20:8,14). In his study, Glueck[319] emphasizes the close relationship between dsx and tyrB perceiving dsx as the very content of tyrB . Eichrodt expressed a similar opinion: '*Hesed* constitutes the proper object of a *berit*, and may almost be described as its content. The possibility of the establishment and maintenance of a covenant rests on the presence of *hesed*''.[320] Stoebe[321], on the other hand, associates

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[315] BDB, 338.

[316] See Gordon R. Clark, *The Word Hesed in the Hebrew Bible* (JSOTSS 157; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 267.

[317] See Freedman (ed.), *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, IV, 378.

[318] See ibid, 378.

[319] See Nelson Glueck, *Hesed in the Bible* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1967), 46.

[320] Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, I (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961), 232.

[321] See Hans Joachim Stoebe, 'Die Bedeutung des Wortes häsäd im AT', *VT* 2 (1952), 248.

dsx with the term ~ymxr meaning 'compassion'[322]. In this regard, the opinion of Johnson seems to be noteworthy: 'The term *hesed* connotes more than can be defined in the legal terminology of a *berit*. *Hesed* is ''the virtue that knits together society''.'[323] We can state that the term dsx used in human social relationships, refers to conduct in accordance with social norms but the concept itself is probably not based on legal notions and does not belong to legal terminology.[324]

In the Old Testament the term dsx demonstrates also the relationship between God and His people as a manifestation of God's kindness to Israel (Num 14:18-19; Isa 63:7; Pss 17:7; 25:6; 89:2).[325] This Hebrew word is the central term for expressing God's relationship with Israel. The people of Israel regarded Yahweh, their God, as the One who was totally committed to them in a covenant relationship, sustaining them and satisfying all their needs. They recognized Yahweh's covenant faithfulness and His utter freedom to maintain this relationship with them. The term dsx used to demonstrate this relationship between Yahweh and Israel incorporates dimensions of God's freedom, commitment and provision.[326] Thus in the covenant Mosaic tradition, the dsx highlights the freedom of Yahweh, His total commitment to the Sinaic covenant, and care and sustenance which Yahweh provided to His Chosen People (Ex 19:6). Although the people of Israel showed themselves to be unfaithful to the covenant and deserved punishment, Yahweh's covenantal relationship continues and endures. Eichrodt notes: 'In fact punishment is used to restore the disrupted covenant relationship'.[327] It is God's forgiveness and compassion as an act of His dsx that makes the preservation of this relationship. This is clearly seen in the

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[322] BDB, 933.

[323] Aubrey R. Johnson, 'HESED and HASID', *Interpretationes ad Vetus Testamentum pertinentes. Festschrift S. Mowinckel*, NTT 56 (1955), 110.

[324] See *TDOT*, V, 53.

[325] BDB, 339.

[326] See Freedman (ed.), *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, IV, 378.

[327] See Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, I, 233.

ceremony of renewal of the covenant on Mount Sinai with Moses and the people of Israel: 'The Lord passed before him [Moses], and proclaimed, ''The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin'' ' (Ex 34:6-7a). Thus God's forgiveness is a result of His radical commitment to the relationship with Israel and comes as a free act of dsX and gift from God offered to both individuals and the community. Even though Yahweh is powerful and the people of Israel are totally dependant on Him - their creator, dsX within the covenant relationship is nevertheless an attitude and action which gives Israel freedom and it embraces the deep desire of God for Israel's free response (cf. Hosea 2:17-21).[328]

The second Hebrew term yX (pl. ~yYX) which also appears in Ps 63:4a, means 'life, living',[329] and it is found in numerous biblical verses e.g. Pss 16:11; 18:47; 21:5. The term ~yYX has an extensive usage and assumes different nuances in the Old Testament but in Ps 63:4a, it refers specifically to the concept of human life and not God's divine life. Thus the author of Ps 63 uses the term ~yYX in relation to human existence and human activity.

Ps 63:4a demonstrates an original characteristic of text because this is the only psalm in the Psalter where the terms dsX and yX are used so close together. Apart from the Psalter, these terms are found together in Job 10:12, where God's lovingkindness preserves human life from death: 'You have granted me life and lovingkindness'. In other poetic verses in the Psalter, a similar connection between God's lovingkindness and human life is expressed by the use (only) of dsX: 'Return, O Lord, rescue my soul; save me because of your lovingkindness' (Ps 6:5), and 'For great is your lovingkindness toward me; you have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol' (Ps 86:13). It is interesting to note that in Ps 23:6, the term yX (life)

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[328] See Freedman (ed.), *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, IV, 379.
[329] BDB, 311-313.

appears in connection with dsx and bAj (goodness), expressing the concept that God's lovingkindness is a promise of lifelong welfare and goodness: 'Surely goodness and lovingkindness shall follow me all the days of my life'.[330] Thus the use of dsx and yx is observed in both psalms - Ps 23:6 and Ps 63:4a. However, it is only in Ps 63:4a that these terms are bound together.

It is the connection of dsx and yx in Ps 63:4a that communicates the author's theological concept, showing that life itself is the proof of God's dsx . Life and its preservation from threats such as enemies or sickness is a supreme value in the Psalms (e.g. Pss 21:4; 34:11-12; 64:1; 103:4).[331] Psalm 63 attests to this truth in v.10. The psalmist comes to the sanctuary to 'see' God's power and glory. It is God's dsx that he experiences in His Almighty's presence, and this stimulates his lips to praise God. The psalmist realizes that God's dsx is precious; it is better than life itself. The psalmist discovers that without this precious God's gift, human life would be like a barren desert – a dry and desolate experience, as portrayed in verse 2. In verse 10a, the psalmist asserts that his life is threatened but he is consoled when he knows that the danger will fade away in the awareness of God's dsx , emphasized in verse 4. In verse 4, the poet expresses the idea that God's dsx is important in the life of a human being, and 'praise of God' constitutes the meaning and goal of life itself.[332]

For the people of Israel, life was considered as Yahweh's gift, and life in the presence of Israel's God was the greatest good.[333] Psalm 63:4a introduces a new insight into the understanding of the meaning of human life and the relationship between Yahweh and the people of Israel. For those Israelites for whom life was the most valuable concept, Ps 63:4b represents a dramatic and innovative revaluation as G. von Rad notes in his *Old Testament Theology*:

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[330] See Rogerson and McKay, *Psalms 1-50*, 107.
[331] Broyles, *Psalms*, 262.
[332] See Hossfeld and Zenger, *A Commentary on Psalms 51-100*, 124.
[333] See Kraus, *Theology of the Psalms*, 164.

> The succinct statement 'for thy steadfast love is better than life' gives a glimpse of how fundamentally the relative importance of all values had changed, for normally life and its enhancement through Yahweh's blessing was all times the highest of good things for Israel. This discrimination between lovingkindness and life was something wholly new: it signified the discovery of the spiritual as a reality beyond the frailty of the corporeal.[334]

Von Rad remarks that the statement, contained in v.4a, was 'something wholly new' to the people of Israel, and therefore, it was very important in the development of the theology of the Old Testament. This new principle means that Yahweh's dsx is of greater value than even mortal human life itself. Indeed 'it is only God's lovingkindness that gives to life its true, laudable value' as Zenger concludes.[335] As was previously observed, the concept of dsx is used in the Old Testament in the context of human relationships and the covenant relationship between Yahweh and His people. In Ps 63:4a, we observe the latter aspect. Although the statement in this psalm is expressed by an individual Israelite, in its theological dimension, it extends and refers to the whole community of Israel. Throughout the history of Israel, on the basis of the covenant on Mount Sinai, Yahweh demonstrated his love, forgiveness, compassion and lovingkindness towards Israel. The Sinaic covenant became the central fact of Israel's existence and the basis of its identity. It formed the foundation for the relationship between Yahweh and Israel imposing upon the Israelites duties and obligations they must fulfil in their individual lives and in their community worship.

Psalm 63:4a communicates the concept to the people of Israel that they must transform their lives and have a new understanding of their God. Yahweh chose the people of Israel and freely and totally committed Himself to them sustaining them and giving them protection. Now, they must totally turn to Him - their God

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[334] Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, I (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1968), 403. Kraus gives the same interpretation of this verse as von Rad; see Kraus, *Theology of the Psalms*, 164.

[335] Hossfeld and Zenger, *A Commentary on Psalms 51-100*, 124.

who is the reason and goal of their lives. Yahweh is the God of love and of loyalty, compassion and kindness. The Israelites must reform their lives and show again their commitment to Him. They must cling to their God in affection because He continuously shows them His dsx in their mutual relationship. Because God's lovingkindness is granted at large to people who have no claim upon it, it is seen to be a gift of grace.[336] The Israelites must be in pursuit of God's dsx in their lives because this is the essence and reason of their existence. The newness of the concept expressed in Ps 63:4a lies in the fact that it is not human life that has the highest value but Yahweh's dsx . The psalmist conveys the idea that the greatest need of human being is communion with God. In this remarkable confession the poet shows that it is 'not life as such in its happy intensity and in its lasting extensity but the benevolently imputed communion with Yahweh that is the greatest good that humans can receive'.[337] Kraus concludes: 'Over all premier blessings and gifts of life, there is a single power that determines and alone upholds everything: dsx, by which the human being is uplifted so that he can recognize a new evaluation of his existence'[338].

Thus communion with God, graciously bestowed, is the highest and best gift for the psalmist; it is the gift of total satisfaction and fulfillment. Ps 63:4a communicates the theological idea that communion with God is the aim and purpose of human life worthy of pursuit. This new concept of God and His dsx portrayed in Psalm 63, certainly constitutes a revolutionary innovation in Jewish theology.

It can be concluded therefore that verse 4 together with verse 2 form the core of Psalm 63 and they show an important theological concept. Verse 2 contains special vocabulary portraying the intimate relationship between God and the human being, and verse 4 not only strengthens this idea but it also communicates

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[336] See Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, I, 238.
[337] Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 19.
[338] Ibid, 21.

that this communion with God is the highest and best gift, it is even better than human life. Therefore, an interpretation of these verses suggests evidence to support the claim that a mystical spiritualism is contained within this psalm. The intimate language, vocabulary and the psalmist's concept observed in vv. 2 and 4 certainly express the profound message that God is at the centre of this psalm and that the intimate communion with Him forms the prime goal of every human life.

In verse 5, the author proclaims the praises due to God's name:

ykPk aFa ^mvB yxb ^krba !K

5a. Thus I will bless you in my life,
b. In your name I will lift up my hands.

The second hemistich in this verse contains the expression: 'I will lift up my hands', which is a Semitic idiom, expressing one's attitude of praise, involving the use not only of voice and lips, but also of lifting up hands in exultation. The Hebrew term used for 'hands' is @K , which denotes 'the flat of the hand, palm'[339], so this may indicate that the petitioner turns to God in humility with open hands, which are exposed or turned upward. This word @K is used in contrast to another Hebrew word dy , which means more generally 'hand', whether open or closed in a grip or fist, and which is also used figuratively to mean 'strength, power'[340]. In Psalm 119:48, the author uses the term @K but in a different context: 'I will lift up my hands to your commandments, which I love, and I will meditate on your statutes'. The petitioner makes the gesture of lifting up his hands, whilst meditating about Yahweh's statutes[341] (cf. also Ps 63:7b). There is yet another similar use in Psalm 141:2: 'Let my prayer be set before you as incense, the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice'. The poet at the evening sacrifice, with the

[339] BDB, 496.
[340] BDB, 389-390.
[341] See Kraus, *Psalmen*, II, 1002.

gesture of lifting up his hands, brings his supplication before Yahweh.[342] Thus, the expression: 'I will lift up my hands' acts as an idiom for what may have been a liturgical gesture used in ancient Israel in the context of the worship of Yahweh.

In verse 6a, the poet uses the expression:

yvpn [BfT !vdw blx AmK

6a. As marrow and fatness, my soul shall be satisfied.

We know that the soul is a spiritual element of a human being; therefore it cannot be satisfied by physical entities such as fat and marrow. It indicates that we are dealing with figurative language in this verse. If we endeavor, however, to apply the general formula of metaphor to this figurative expression we encounter a problem. It is difficult to clearly identify all the components of metaphor that is the tenor, the vehicle and the ground. We recognize another figure of speech in this verse. Namely, the author begins this verse by using K in an extended adverbial form AmK which marks it as a simile in the figurative language which follows it. In verses 4-5 the psalmist praised God with his lips and lifted up his hands in the name of God; in verse 6a, by saying that his soul will be satisfied as with marrow and fat, he now compares the refreshing power of the nearness to God to marrow and fatness. Praise and nearness to God are, for the soul of the psalmist, like physical food. Closeness to God refreshes the power of the spirit in the same way that marrow and fat provide strength and pleasure for the physical body. Marrow is a soft, fatty tissue found in the hollow centre of an animal's bones. Modern scientists maintain that the marrow from the leg bones of a single large animal provides about 1,500 calories of protein and fat.[343]

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[342] Ibid, 1109.

[343] See John K. Williams, 'Digging-Up Our Nutritional Past - Nutrition Lessons from the Prehistoric Records', published online 23rd April 2004 <http://www.johnberardi.com>.

In the ancient Near Eastern cultures, feasting and its associations with food played an important role.[344] Fat and marrow were considered a delicacy, and were served during feasts and banquets.[345] We find this concept in the Hebrew Bible where חלב 'marrow, fat' and שמן 'fatness' stand for the best and most substantial food (Gen 45:18), and it is symbolic of delight and abundance (Ps 36:9)[346].

The use of 'fat' and 'marrow', is found, for example, in Isa 25:6, where Yahweh provides rich food for His people: 'On this mountain, the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of fat things, a feast of wine on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wine on the lees well refined.' Fat and fatness are often used in the Hebrew Bible as an image of God's blessing (Gen 27:28; Job 36:16, etc.), and the terms are also used to indicate the best part of a gift or sacrifice (Gen 4:4; Lev 3:16; Ps 66:15, etc.). In Psalm 63:6a, the words: 'marrow' and 'fat' assume a similar meaning, denoting the best and richest of food. When two separated words, usually nouns, are joined by a conjunction, to express a single but complex idea, we are dealing with hendiadys.[347] In Ps 63:6a, we recognize hendiadys in the expression: 'marrow (fatness) and fat' where one single idea is expressed by making one of the nouns a modifier that gives to the expression a specific meaning: 'abundant fat'. The psalmist delights in the 'refreshing power of God's presence', feasting on marrow and fat.[348] The Hebrew term חלב is also sometimes used metaphorically to assume a more negative meaning. In this concept, fatness has a connotation with arrogance (e.g. Deut 32:15; Jer 5:28), in that the heart of the

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[344] See Tamara L. Bray, (ed.) *The Archaeology and Politics of Food and Feasting in Early States and Empires* (New York: Kluwer Academic-Plenum Publishers, 2003).

[345] See more on social meals and banquets in ancient Israel in Roger H. Kennett, *Ancient Hebrew Social Life and Custom as Indicated in Law Narrative and Metaphor* (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), 43-45.

[346] See Kraus, *Psalmen*, II, 602-603.

[347] See Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry*, 324-325.

[348] See *TDOT*, IV, 392.

wicked is incapable of knowing God and caring for others when - 'their hearts are fat and gross' (Ps 119:70).[349]

The expression 'as marrow and fat' (v.6a) reveals both the Hebrew tradition and ancient custom. It shows a difference between peoples of ancient and contemporary cultures. In modern societies, fat is no longer considered a delicacy (at least for a vast majority of people). Fat is a food ingredient, which is no longer highly desirable and, which is carefully monitored in modern processed foodstuffs. As a result, the food industry makes efforts to produce low-fat, fat reduced or fat-free products that provide healthier food for consumers. It is therefore less likely that the modern writer would advocate fat as a delicacy as it was in ancient times (although we cannot exclude such a possibility). Contemporary society, 'fat' has mostly negative connotations as a result of medical dietary research.

The interpretation of meaning of the phrase 'as marrow and fat', in the context of Psalm 63:6, allows us to make three brief observations.

Firstly, the author of Ps 63 uses the concept and terminology of 'marrow and fat' (v.6a), as based on the experiences, customs and traditions of the people of his time. Secondly, the Hebrew particle AmK , denoting 'as' used in verse 6a, indicates that we are dealing with a poetic device, which is simile. As already observed 'marrow and fat' stand for the richest and best food, we can construe verse 6 as follows: 'As (with) the best food, my soul shall be satisfied, and with joyful lips, my mouth shall praise you'. The poet uses simile for a purpose. He attests that the human being can only be satisfied by God himself. It is in God's Divine presence that the human being is satisfied in the spiritual sense as with the best and richest food. In verses 5-6, the author states that the praise of the Lord is the deepest joy of the soul.[350] It is an even greater joy than sharing in social feasts and banquets, where delicious food is provided. Thirdly, the figurative language, observed in verse 6a, apparently refers to a banquet, and it 'may involve the symbolism

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[349] Ibid, 396-397.
[350] See Boylan, *The Psalms*, 231.

associated with thanksgiving sacrifices, where half was burnt as an offering to God and the other half was shared as a communal meal eaten before the Lord'[351] cf. Ps 22:26; Lev 7:15-16; Deut 12:5-7.

In conclusion, it can be stated that the second strophe in Psalm 63 (verses 3-6) contains elements of praise and confidence. In verses 3-6, the psalmist, employing imagery, develops the main theme of verse 2. The poet intensifies the idea of seeking and longing for God (v.2) by introducing a concept of 'feeding' of the human soul (v.6). The image of the best food, portrayed by the terms: 'marrow and fat' (v.6a), plays an important role in this psalm. It is an analogy to emphasize a spiritual desire for God, which overwhelms the psalmist. Being in God's presence (v.3), praising and blessing God with his lips (vv.4-6) and meditating on God's lovingkindness, are actions which satisfy the soul of the poet. God's presence is the spiritual food, which fulfils his spiritual hunger and thirst. The theme of praising God with one's lips (vv.4-6) and meditating on God's loving-kindness (v.7b) constitute the main message in the second strophe. This strophe portrays that the fullness of happiness can only be found in God.

1.2 Verses 7-9

In the third strophe (vv 7-9) we find a further interesting expression:

^ypnK lcbw

8b. In the shadow of your wings

In this verse the psalmist praises God who has been his help, and therefore, 'in the shadow of God's wings' he finds joy.

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[351] Broyles, *Psalms*, 261.

In Psalm 57:2 we find the same expression:

hsxa ^ypnK-lcbw

In the shadow of your wings I will take refuge.

Here, the second phrase, 'I will take refuge' indicates the protective implication: God acts to shelter, like a bird with her chicks, and this image is evoked by the wings (Ex 19:4; Ruth 2:12). We recognize figurative language in both of these biblical verses.

Verse 8 in Psalm 63 shows God's attributes and reveals a small portion of His nature. It reveals God's loving protection and care, which He grants to His people. However, in the expression: 'in the shadow of your wings' we recognize not one, but two different images; these are: 'shadow' and 'wings'. In order to interpret and understand this expression, first, we must examine the usage of these two images in the ancient Near East literature and in the Hebrew Bible, and discover their full meaning.

In Babylonian-Assyrian and Egyptian literature, the word 'shadow' is used figuratively and it is associated with characteristics such as 'blackness', 'semblance', 'coolness/protection', and 'quick, silent movement'.[352] A prime meaning and usage of 'shadow' seems to be 'protection'. In the ancient Near Eastern texts, the king is portrayed as the shadow, protecting the country and the world. In the ANE iconography, the king's sunshine symbolized his dominion.[353] The notion of 'shadow' is also used in the ANE, with a reference to gods, where it assumes a meaning of divine protection. The words 'shadow / shade' are found also in the Hebrew Bible. In his book, *Seeing the Psalms. A Theology of Metaphor*, Brown examines the image of 'shadow' in the Old Testament. Brown argues that God's 'shadow' in the Old Testament is consistently construed as a positive, rather than a

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[352] See *TDOT*, XII, 378.
[353] See ibid, 379.

negative image.[354] Thus in the Hebrew Bible, we find Yahweh, provides a shadow as a comprehensive and vital protection for those who trust in Him (Ps 91:1-2), particularly the 'weak and poor' (Isa 25:4), the 'servant' (Isa 49:2-3), and the people in general (Ps 36:8).[355] The notion of 'shadow' is seen in the Old Testament wisdom literature in Eccl 7:11-12, 'Wisdom is good with an inheritance, a benefit to those who see the sun. For to be in the shadow of wisdom is to be in the shadow of money, and the advantage of knowledge is that wisdom preserves the life of its possessor'. Bartholomew comments on these verses: 'Wisdom is closely tied here with wealth, described in terms of an inheritance and money, but both wisdom and money are likened to being in a shadow. A shadow can imply protection.'[356] In his comments, Longman explains that the image 'shadow' in this verse means protection, presumably from the hard realities of life.[357] The modern Bible translations, such as NRSV and NAB justify such an interpretation as they contain translations: 'the protection of wisdom' and 'the protection of money' (Eccl 7:12).

Brown examines the metaphor 'shadow' in the context of Psalm 121:5-6, in which God is compared to 'shade':

> Yahweh is your guardian,
> Yahweh is your shade at your right hand,
> The sun will not strike you by day,
> Nor the moon by night.

These verses illustrate well, the significance of 'shade' in the ancient Palestinian life, where 'shade' was enormously important, especially in the summer heat. In a hot Middle East climate, people and animals seek to escape the heat and retreat to the shade. Likewise, we see this poetic concept in Ps 121:5-6, where God provides

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[354] See Brown, *Seeing the Psalms*, 200.

[355] See *TDOT*, XII, 380.

[356] Craig G. Bartholomew, *Ecclesiastes* (Baker Commentary on the Old Testament; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 250.

[357] See Tremper Longman III, *The Book of Ecclesiastes* (NICOT; Grand Rapids - Cambridge: W. B. Eerdmans, 1998), 190.

'shade' from the heat of the sun and also from the moon. Brown explains that the juxtaposition of the sun and moon may serve a useful purpose in this verse, as a merismus to indicate the fullest reach of God's protection.[358] The expression 'shade at your right hand' may suggest the unfailing protection of God, by day and by night. It is more difficult, however, to ascertain whether Yahweh is portrayed as a tree or cloud or some other entity.[359] In the usage of these images, the author of this psalm conveys that God is like a shade, providing protection for those who trust in Him. The examination of the image of 'shade' in Psalm 121:5-6 demonstrates that an interpretation of this image is not easy. The meaning of this image in the context of vv.5-6 remains partly obscured and hidden. This example illustrates not only the complexity but also the beauty of metaphor. It strengthens the opinion that metaphorical language is used for a purpose, that is, to conceal as much as to reveal.

The analysis of the images of 'shadow' and 'shade' in the context of the expression: 'in the shadow of your wings' (Ps 63:8b), brings us to an examination of the second image in this verse, which is the image of 'wings'. Brown suggests that the image of 'God's wings' is perhaps the most vividly iconic image associated with refuge and divine protection.[360] The Hebrew word: @nK means 'wing'.[361] In the Old Testament, this Hebrew word was used with reference to the wings of birds such as the eagle, ostrich, hawk, stork, falcon, and dove (e.g. Deut 32:11; Jer 48:40; Job 39:13,26; Ps 68:14).[362] In the Hebrew Bible, the word @nK refers not only to the wings of birds but also to mythological figures like the two-winged and four-winged Cherubim, mentioned in connection with the Ark (Exod 25:20, 37:9; 1 Kgs

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[358] See Brown, *Seeing the Psalms*, 201.
[359] See ibid, 201.
[360] See ibid, 20.
[361] See David J. A. Clines (ed.), *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, IV (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 438.
[362] See *TDOT*, VII, 229.

6:24; 2 Ch 3:11)[363], and also to the wings of Seraphim (Isa 6:2)[364]. Zenger notes, however, that it is uncertain, and even improbable that the expression: 'in the shadow of your wings', found in Ps 63:8b, echoes the wings of the Cherubim in the Holy of Holies in the Temple of Jerusalem because 'neither in the biblical texts nor in art is there any indication that people sought protection under the wings of the Cherubim. Neither is Yahweh ever identified with these beings'[365].[366]

In the figurative sense the word 'wings' is used, for instance, in Exod 19:4, in the image of 'eagle's wings', referring to the protective character of God's care during the Exodus of the Israelites from the land of Egypt. The figurative sense of 'wings' is also seen in Isa 8:8 and Deut 32:11, where 'God's wings' protect the Israelites and their land. This powerful biblical image derives from the way in which a bird cares and protects its young.[367] The expression: 'in the shadow of your wings', found in Psalm 63:8b, reveals best its figurative sense in the context of the whole verse 8.

However, in his comments, Van der Wounde[368] maintains that the question as to whether the image of the 'shadow under the wings' of Yahweh (found also in Pss 17:8; 57:2; 61:5; 91:4) derives from the protective bird (the image shown in Deut 32:11), or whether it goes back in the final analysis to the notion of a 'winged god', found in Ugaritic literature[369]; the matter is uncertain and indecisive.[370] He argues that the biblical image probably derives from the protective character of the

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[363] See Ernst Jenni, and Claus Westermann, (eds.), *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, II (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 619.

[364] BDB, 489.

[365] Silvia Schroer, 'Im Schatten deiner Flügel' in Rainer Kessler, ed., 'Ihr Völker alle, klatscht in die Hände!' *FS*, E. S. Gerstenberger (Münster: Lit, 1997), 298.

[366] See Hossfeld, and Zenger, *A Commentary on Psalms 51-100*, 125-126.

[367] See *TDOT*, VII, 231.

[368] In the *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, A. S. Van der Wounde provides a theological explanation on the Hebrew word: @nK 'wings'; see Jenni, and Westermann, (eds.), *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, II, 618-620.

[369] The notion of a 'winged god' in the literature of Ugarit, is well presented in F. C. Fensham, 'Winged Gods and Goddesses in the Ugaritic Tables,' *OrAnt* 5(1966), 157-164.

[370] See Jenni, and Westermann, (eds.), *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, II, 619.

bird over its young, rather than from the Ugaritic texts, because Ugaritic literature does not discuss the protective function of the 'gods or goddess wings'.[371] Van der Wounde's assumption and argument seem to be unpersuasive and uncertain.

Firstly, we do not find any descriptions of the protective function of the 'gods and goddess wings' in Ugaritic literature; however, we cannot ascertain that the ancient people of Ugarit were unfamiliar with the concept of the protective character of the 'gods and goddess wings'.

Secondly, the comparative study of metaphors in the ancient Near Eastern literature and in the Hebrew Bible, presented in Chapter One, provides us with the evidence to reason, that Hebrew poetry emerged out of the same broad cultural and linguistic context, as developed in the ancient Near Eastern tradition. Therefore, we cannot reject the assumption that some of the ancient Hebrew poets and writers might have been familiar with the ancient Near Eastern literature. Ugaritic literature is only one of many ancient Near Eastern literatures (such as, for example, Sumerian, Akkadian, Egyptian, Hittite, etc.), whose texts and records were preserved to the present time.

Thirdly, we find the specific concept of the protective function of the ancient gods in Egyptian literature. The images depict a deity with outstretched wings protectively covering an individual, typically the Egyptian kings who were portrayed in this manner in Egyptian iconography.[372] The protective character of the ancient gods is seen in Egyptian representations of the Horus god, shown in iconography as a falcon, and the Amon god, who is depicted as a goose, and the Nekhebet god, who appears as a vulture.[373] In ancient Egyptian history, the protective character of wings and their function were attached also to other gods and goddesses. Some of them were depicted in ornithological form, others not,

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[371] See ibid, 619.
[372] See Brown, *Seeing the Psalms*, 20.
[373] See Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World*, 192.

such as the sun.[374] The protective function of wings is seen in the protector-goddess Isis, who is depicted with outstretched wings extending from her hips to protect her husband Osiris.[375] The gesture of blessing and protectiveness, in which Isis greets Osiris, originated in Egypt, and was adopted in Palestine and Syria at the end of the second and the beginning of the first century BC. Later, this image was transferred by the Phoenicians to the Mediterranean world and to northern Mesopotamia.[376] Thus the wings imagery observed in the ancient Egyptian iconography was used for practical purposes, and it represented 'protection'. Similarly, we observe in the psalms the image of the outstretched wings, symbolizing divine protection (for example in Ps 57:1).[377]

Thus it can be assumed that Hebrew poets and writers might have adopted the concept of the 'protective function of birds' from the ancient Near Eastern literature, because Hebrew literature itself emerged out of and developed in this ancient Near Eastern world. However, it is more difficult to assert that Hebrew writers, bearing in mind the monotheistic aspects of Israeli religion, were influenced by the usage of the image of the 'wings under the shadow' as adopted from the Ugaritic concept of the 'wings of gods and goddesses'. They were less likely to do this but we cannot be certain on this issue. It is more likely that the image of the protective function of birds over their young, emerging from the ancient Mesopotamian and Babylonian literature, that was adopted by Hebrew writers for their purposes; this positions them in a different context to other ancient writers. Such a hypothesis, however, can only be based on assumptions. It is difficult to employ a strong, convincing and cogent argument to explain with

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[374] See Brown, *Seeing the Psalms*, 20; also Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World,* 192.

[375] See Brown, *Seeing the Psalms*, 20.

[376] See Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World*, 192. More on 'wings imagery' in the Syro-Palestinian world is seen in Othmar Keel, and Christoph Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God in Ancient Israel* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), 195-198, 250-262.

[377] See Brown, *Seeing the Psalms*, 21.

certainty the usage of the expression 'under the shadow of wings' in the ancient Near Eastern literature and in the Hebrew Bible.

How do we interpret the expression 'in the shadow of your wings', found in Psalm 63:8b? It is, no doubt, a powerful expression. We assume that it may be a figurative expression, because, as we have seen in this analysis, the words 'shadow' and 'wings' are used often in the Hebrew Bible as images. The question is whether the expression: 'in the shadow of your wings' is a figurative or metaphorical expression. Is it a metaphor or a figurative statement? Can we recognize in this expression characteristics of figurative language?

The answers to these questions pose a problem. First, let us try to recognize metaphor in verse 8b. According to the rule of metaphor as shown in Chapter Two, three elements i.e. tenor, vehicle and ground constitute the notion of metaphor. In the statement: 'in the shadow of your wings' in Ps 63:8b, it is difficult to identify these components of metaphor. As we have seen in the above analysis, the words: 'shadow' and 'wings' are images often found in the Hebrew Bible. However, we find a difficulty in applying these two images to the definition of metaphor. It is also difficult to form an opinion as to which word in this statement might be tenor, vehicle or ground. In other words, we cannot recognize the constituents of the metaphor in this statement. If we cannot apply Leech's definition of metaphor to this statement, we can alternatively formulate the question: does this expression have any attributes of metaphorical (or figurative) language? The typology of metaphor is helpful here. In the statement: 'in the shadow of your wings' we may recognize an animal metaphor. In the case of the animal metaphor, as observed already, we perceive the transference of animal characteristics to inanimate objects, or the human realm.[378] In Ps 63:8b we may perceive such a transference. The author of this expression transfers the notion of the animal wings to God. He compares the protective character of God to the

[378] See Ullmann, *Semantics*, 215.

wings of a bird, which nurses and protects its young. In verse 8, the author expresses the idea that God's presence vis-à-vis man is a source of help and gives him a feeling of safety and joy. In verse 2, the psalmist experienced the absence of God together with an intense longing to meet Him but in verse 8, the psalmist experiences a 'divine protection', which is expressed by the use of this metaphorical statement.

Secondly, in verse 8b, we recognize other traits, which show that we are indeed dealing in this verse with figurative language. As seen in the analysis of the definition of metaphor, figurative language forms a broad network of various figures of speech including metaphor, images, symbols, idioms, personification, simile, etc. Hence, two images: 'shadow' and 'wings', which we find in Ps 63:8b, would permit us to assert that we are dealing in this expression with figurative language. In conclusion, we can state that the expression: 'in the shadow of your wings' is a metaphorical statement. In this expression we identify the animal metaphor (the bird wings are compared to God's protectiveness) and the images 'shadow' and 'wings' refer to the vital and protective character of God's care for those who trust in Him and seek His presence.

The special relationship of the petitioner to God and God's protective character is also seen in verse 9 in Ps 63, where the psalmist describes a 'soul experience'. The author says that his 'soul' with all its vital and emotional powers 'clings' to God and that God's right hand supports him:

^nymy hkmT yB ^yrxa yvpn hqbD

9a. My soul clings to you
b. Your right hand upholds me.

The Hebrew verb qbD meaning 'cling, cleave, keep close'[379], as used in Ps 63:9a, is the same word that occurs in Gen 2:24, where it is used in the sense of the clinging

[379] BDB, 179.

of husband to his wife in affection and loyalty. Thus, qbD means 'to keep close to someone'. In this sense, it refers to the relationship between God and His people and expresses the loyalty and fidelity of Israel to its God (e.g. Deut 4:4; 10:20; 11:22, Josh 22:5). It is difficult to recognize the constituents of the metaphor in the expression 'My soul clings to you' (v.9a). We are probably dealing in this verse with an anthropomorphic image illustrating a close relationship between God and the human being. The poet in a poetic and imaginative manner portrays this intimate relationship in his expression of his longing for communion with God. Thus the expression in verse 9a reinforces the psalmist's concept, expressed in verses 2 and 4, about the longing for the presence of God and the deep desire for union with Yahweh. In the phrase 'My soul clings to you', therefore, the poet in a poetic fashion illustrates the mystical aspect of Psalm 63. The psalmist reveals that only a deep communion with God can fully satiate the human soul and quieten its restless longing for God's presence.

In verse 9b the psalmist turns to God so that God will hold him with His 'right hand' and support him.[380] The image of the 'right hand' in the Old Testament has two dimensions. The first is one of prominent or favoured position. To sit at one's right hand signifies a position of recognition and prestige (1 Kgs 2:19). The second dimension of 'right hand' portrays an image of strength, protection and power (Pss 18:35; 21:8; 138:7).[381] Psalm 63:9 visualizes the second image, that is, God's protection and strength. However, it is also probable that the first image, which portrays a favoured position and recognition, can also be recognized in this verse. In Isa 42:6, the prophet Isaiah uses the expression 'by your hand' in the context that Yahweh chooses his servant. The author of Psalm 63 is also aware of God's companionship and a special 'divine favour', which is upon him not only at the moment of his petition but throughout his whole life (v.5a).[382] Verse 9 in Psalm

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[380] See Hossfeld, and Zenger, *A Commentary on Psalms 51-100*, 126.
[381] See Ryken, et al. (eds.), *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, 361.
[382] See Hossfeld, and Zenger, *A Commentary on Psalms 51-100*, 126.

63 signifies God's response to the psalmist's petition of longing for the presence of God, which he previously uttered at the beginning of verse 2. In verse 9, therefore, the poet portrays a deep desire for communion with God and expresses confidence in God's protection and support in his life.

1.3 Verses 10-12

The fourth strophe (verses 10-12) is called the 'Malediction part with intercessory elements'. The first part of this strophe (verses 10-11) focuses on the enemies of the psalmist and his hard plight, and the second part (verse 12) contains intercessory elements directed towards the king. In verse 12, a 'transition of the spirit' of Psalm 63 can be observed. As vv. 2-9 concentrate on the psalmist and his relationship to God; vv. 10-11 break the spirit of the preceding lines.[383] A shift from the psalmist himself (v.2-9) to the psalmist's enemies is observed in verses 10-11. In the face of attacks on him, the petitioner is confident that his foes who want to destroy him (v.10a), will eventually fail (v.10b), and will fall on the battlefield to become the prey of jackals.[384] The poet uses the phrase 'Shall go down into the depths of the earth' (v.10b) in reference to his enemies. Let us consider closer this expression:

#rah tAYTxtB Waby

10b. [They] shall go down into the depths (lower parts) of the earth.

This verse at first appears to be figurative but it presents a difficulty in recognizing the clear elements of the metaphor (that is the tenor, vehicle and ground). The expression refers to the netherworld, and should probably be understood in terms

[383]See Carroll Stuhlmueller, *Psalms,* I (Old Testament Message. A Biblical-Theological Commentary; Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1983), 289.

[384] See Boylan, *The Psalms*, 231.

of it as the place and abode of the dead. We find synonymous phrases in: Pss 86:13; 88:7; 139:15; Ezek 26:20; 31:14.16.18; 32:18.24; Deut 32:22; Lam 3:55.

The dead were understood to descend to an underworld where they were cut off from God and from the worshipping community of faith (Pss 6:5; 30:9; 88:10-12; Isa 38:18). With rare and only temporary exceptions (1 Sam 28:12-15), that journey into the subterranean region was only one-way (2 Sam 12:23).[385] As James Tabor concisely puts it:

> The ancient Hebrews had no idea of an immortal soul living a full and vital life beyond death, nor of any resurrection or return from death…For all practical purposes, death was the *end*. As Psalm 115:17 says, the dead go down into "silence"; they do not participate, as do the living, in praising God (seen then as the most vital human activity). Psalm 146:4 is like an exact reverse replay of Genesis 2:7: "When his breath departs he returns to his earth; on that very day his thoughts [plans] perish." Death is a one-way street; there is no return… All the dead go down to Sheol, and there they lie in sleep together – whether good or evil, rich or poor, slave or free (Job 3:11-19). It is described as a region "dark and deep," "the Pit," "the land of forgetfulness," cut off from both God and human life above (Pss. 6:5; 88:3-12). Though in some texts Yahweh's power can reach down to Sheol (Ps. 139:8), the dominant idea is that the dead are abandoned forever. This idea of Sheol is negative in contrast to the world of life and light above, but there is no idea of judgment or of reward and punishment…Basically it is a kind of "nothingness," an existence that is barely existence at all, in which a "shadow" or "shade" of the former self survives (Ps. 88:10).[386]

The expression: 'the depths of the earth' in Ps 63:10b should be understood in such a context, and perhaps it serves also as a merismus[387], conjuring up the broader image of death without return. Thus in verse 10, the poet makes a reference to 'the

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[385] See Ryken, et al. (eds.), *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, 198. The notion of the underworld is also presented in Nicholas J. Tromp, *Primitive Conceptions of Death and the Nether World in the Old Testament* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1969); Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World*; Lloyd R. Bailey, *Biblical Perspectives on Death* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979).

[386] James D. Tabor, 'The Future', in Morton Smith, and R. Joseph Hoffmann (eds.), *What the Bible Really Says* (Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1989), 35.

[387] See Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry*, 321.

depth of the earth' as a distant and remote place, conveying the idea that no one of his enemies will be rescued from this remoteness.[388]

The phrase: brx-ydy-l[Whryg 'They shall pour him out[389] upon the hands of the sword', which appears in verse 11a, is more opaque, and involves some text-critical difficulties. If we accept the first verb as it stands, however, we know that people cannot be 'poured out' like water or other liquids, and therefore we must be dealing with figurative language, probably suggesting that the *blood* of the enemies of the psalmist will be poured out by the sword. The expression could thus be interpreted as equivalent to 'Their blood will be shed by the sword'. However, the second part of verse 11a provides us with the premise of another possible interpretation.

The Hebrew expression: brx-ydy-l[can be literally rendered: 'upon the hands of the sword'. It is difficult to apply the formula of metaphor to this phrase because again we find difficulty in recognizing all of its defined elements. This Hebrew expression is found also in Ezek 35:5, where the phrase is used in the context of divine judgment,[390] and in Jer 18:21, where it appears in the context of Jeremiah's plea to Yahweh[391]. The Hebrew word dy used here in the plural may figuratively imply 'strength' and 'power', but also 'side' (e.g. 1 Sam 4:18; Jer 6:3; Ezek 48:1)[392]. Some contemporary Bible translations, in fact, adopt the figurative interpretation directly, for example, 'They shall be given over to the power of the sword' (NRS), or 'They will be delivered over to the power of the sword' (NAS). The alternative sense 'sides', however, might be taken more literally to indicate the edges of the weapon, hence 'Given over to the blade of the sword' (NJB).

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[388] See Terrien, *The Psalms*, 464.

[389] In the Masoretic Text, the verb 'to pour out' containing a suffix, seems to be corrupted. See a discussion on it in the philological notes in the appendix. Discussion in this chapter focuses more on recognition of figurative language in verse 11a, and the interpretation of the expression: 'upon the hands of the sword'.

[390] See Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel*, II (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 235.

[391] See William L. Holladay, *Jeremiah*, I (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 531.

[392] BDB, 390-391.

In his analysis of the same expression in Jer 18:21, Holladay (who refers to Ps 63:11a) concludes that we should retain the figure in English language: 'the translation ''hands of'', whether it means ''power of'' or not, is a reminder that a metaphorical expression lies behind the line'[393]. Whether or not the phrase 'They shall pour him out upon the hands of the sword' can be interpreted in a literal sense (to refer to edges), it also potentially contains figurative connotations.

Thus, as observed already, in Ps 63:11a the poet speaks of the shedding of human blood by the sword in an imaginative manner. One content of this verse remains uncertain. First, it is not clear whether the pronoun 'him' in the expression: 'They shall pour him out', refers to the king, mentioned in verse 12a or to the psalmist, or possibly we are dealing in this phrase with a corruption of the Hebrew text. The latter possibility is more plausible than the first. This can be explained by an argument that in verse 10, the psalmist speaks of those who are hounding him to death but that they will not succeed. They will go to the underworld to which the departed are consigned (cf. Prov 9:18). In Sheol, they will be cut off from God and those who worship Him (cf. e.g. Pss 6:5; 30:9), and they will be abandoned for ever (cf. Ps 139:8). In verse 11, the psalmist continues and develops this theme using different images and language. He speaks of enemies that will be delivered by sword, and will be consumed by wild animals. As in the preceding verse (v.10), in verse 11, the psalmist expresses his belief that his enemies will not succeed. It is not plausible that the phrase: 'They will pour him out' refers to the king, mentioned in verse 12a, because verse 12a clearly predicts a better future for the king, stating that 'the king shall rejoice in God'. The context of verse 11 rather suggests that it is not the king nor the psalmist who will be delivered by the sword but his enemies. So, verse 11, must refer to the psalmist's and the king's foes. The phrase therefore could be interpreted: 'They will pour

[393] Holladay, *Jeremiah*, I, 532.

them out'. Applying a passive form, the phrase could be rendered: 'They will be poured out'.

The above observations allow us to conclude that verse 11a can be interpreted as meaning the enemies of the author of this psalm (and the king's) will fall to the blade (power) of the sword. The interpretation of this verse could be expressed: 'They shall be given to the blade (power) of the sword'. In summary, in the context of verses 10-11, the message of verse 11a could be paraphrased as follows: the enemies of the psalmist (and the king) will certainly not succeed; they are doomed to die. They will become food for wild animals (v.11b), and their place of destination will be the netherworld (v.10b).

The interpretation of verses 10-11 provides us with evidence that we are dealing in these verses with figurative language. Phrases such as 'those who seek my life', 'depths of the earth', 'they shall pour him out' and 'the hands of the sword' attest to the figurative character of language. Verses 10-11 contain language of imagery whose purpose is to portray the difficult situation of the petitioner. Zenger aptly expresses the purpose of the psalmist in the use of this imaginative language, as he remarks: 'all these images, which constitute a provocative contrast to the intimate imagery of the rest of the psalm, are apparently intended to capture the horrible reality out of which and within which this psalm is to be prayed'.[394]

Thus verses 10-11 introduce a different element to the whole psalm and show a shift of spirit, which is quite different to that which is observed in the preceding three strophes. The fourth strophe describes a different reality to that which is seen in verses 2-9. The author uses figurative language in these two verses with the purpose of illustrating in an imaginative way his difficult situation. It should be stated, however, that verses 10-11 are not extraneous to other verses of Psalm 63, which were composed and incidentally placed in this psalm. These verses, though containing a different 'spirit' than is observed in vv. 2-9, are linked

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[394] See Hossfeld, and Zenger, *A Commentary on Psalms 51-100*, 127.

to the preceding lines. Verses 10-11 illustrate, by the usage of concrete images, the trust of the worshipper that God will grant him His protection. God is the only weapon for the psalmist. Such confidence and trust, which the psalmist places in God has already been expressed in the two preceding verses – vv. 8-9. Thus verses 10-11 seem to be a continuation of the preceding lines and these two verses should be interpreted in this same spirit.

Psalm 63 ends on a positive lyrical tone, expressing an assurance that the king will rejoice in God's presence. Verse 12 is a declaration of the king's vindication and rejoicing, and it expresses trust in the triumph of those who are loyal to God and king. It is not clear, however, whether the personal pronoun 'him' in the phrase: 'Everyone who swears by him will glory', refers to the king or to God; the latter is more probable.[395] It is possible, however, that the author meant the king because some forms of the oath 'by the king' we find in other Old Testament passages, for example, in Gen 42:15, 1 Sam 17:55; 25:26; 2 Sam 11:11; and in 2 Sam 15:21: 'As the Lord lives and as my lord the king lives, wherever my lord the king may be, whether for death or for life, there also your servant will be'.[396] Psalm 63:12 shows the basic divisions in society when the psalm was composed i.e. those who are loyal to the king and have confidence in God, invoking His name, as opposed to those who speak lies, and make chaos and confusion in the world.[397] Verse 12 is a statement of confidence and a confession of trust of those who put their hope in God. Thus verses 10-12, which contain different figures of speech, illustrate the confidence of the psalmist that God will grant him His protection, and that the triumph at the end will belong to those who put their trust in God. It should be noted that the above considerations support

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[395] See the Appendix.
[396] See Tate, *Psalms 51-100*, 128.
[397] See ibid, 128.

Kissane's opinion[398] that the last strophe (vv.10-12) of Psalm 63, which deals with the imprecation towards enemies, has the quality of confidence.

In the analysis of verses 10-12 in Psalm 63, definite parallels can be observed between Psalm 36 and Psalm 63. Psalm 36 contains the contrast between the godlessness of the wicked (vv. 1-5): 'The words of their mouths are mischief and deceit' (v.4) and the infinite goodness and unfailing love of God (vv. 6-10): 'How precious is your lovingkindness, O God! All people may take refuge in the shadow of your wings' (v.8). It is interesting too to note that 'there is no expression of anguish at the apparent triumph of the wicked…On the contrary, the mood is confident and trustful, and the psalmist's meditation flows naturally into a prayer for protection (verses 10-11) [11-12][399], culminating in a cry of victory (verse 12) [13]'[400] – 'There the evildoers lie prostrate; they are thrust down, unable to rise' (v.13). In both Psalms: 36 and 63, the authors express a similar idea that the doers of iniquity will not succeed. They will fall down and their end will be final because they will not be able to rise (Ps 36:13 and Ps 63:11). Both authors use similar figurative language. The expression: 'in the shadow of your wings' conveying God's protection, appears in both psalms (Ps 36:8 and Ps 63:8). For the author of Psalm 36, God is the 'fountain of life' (v.10) who 'gives drink from the river of His delights' (v.9). The water motif in the context of longing for God, appears also in Psalm 63:2 in the expressions: 'my soul thirsts for you', and 'In a dry and weary land without water'. In both psalms, there is the Hebrew noun: dsx expressing God's lovingkindness, goodness and steadfast love: 'Your lovingkindness, O Lord, extends to the heavens, your faithfulness to the clouds' (Ps 36:6), and 'Because your lovingkindness is better than life' (Ps 63:4). The psalmists share a similar idea that

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[398] See Kissane, *The Book of Psalms*, 268.

[399] In their commentary on this psalm, Rogerson and McKay use a different numeration of Psalm 36 than the Hebrew Bible. The quotation from their commentary contains their numeration, but other verses quoted here are based on numeration of the Hebrew text. See Rogerson, and McKay, *Psalms 1-50*, 167.

[400] Rogerson, and McKay, *Psalms 1-50*, 167.

God's lovingkindness (dsx) reaches always to those who are upright in heart and humble (Pss 36:11; 63:12). Finally, both psalms are filled with an assurance and confidence that God cares for those who trust in Him: 'O continue your lovingkindness to those who know You, and your salvation to the upright of heart!' (Ps 36:11) and 'Because you have been my help' (Ps 63:8).

In both Psalms, 36 and 63, the authors use images and other figurative tropes, in order to describe a deep reality that could not be captured by the use of literal language alone. The authors of these psalms, emphasize particular theological concepts, for example, God is presented as the One who is the source of human life and goodness and who is longed for by human beings. In order to present this theological truth without using complicated descriptions, the psalmists apply colourful figures of speech, such as 'fountain of life' (Ps 36:10) and 'my soul thirsts for you' (Ps 63:2). These ancient poets used figurative language for a twofold purpose. Firstly, to make a vivid impression, to attract attention and the reader's interest. Secondly, to prompt the reader's response in the revelation of a hidden meaning.

2. Conclusion

Chapter Four had as its aim to identify figurative language in Psalm 63: 3-12 and to interpret the contents of these verses. The analysis of verses 3-12 provides us with the evidence to propose the following conclusions.

Firstly, it must be stated that verses 3-12 are a continuation of verse 2 in Psalm 63. The motif of longing for the presence of God, observed both, in verse 2 and in verses 3-12, is a continual thread in Psalm 63. In verse 2, the author speaks of his intimate relationship with God and of his deep desire to be in God's presence. In verses 3-12, the psalmist not only carries forward this theme, but he develops it, employing various images and figures of speech. This motif is the main theme in the whole of Psalm 63. The continuation, between verse 2 and verses 3-

12, is observed also in the use of metaphors, images and other figures of figurative language in all strophes of this psalm. Verse 2 contains figurative language, which is observed in the images of 'thirsting' and 'hungering' for the presence of God. The hemistichs: 'my soul thirsts for you', and 'my flesh faints for you' are metaphorical expressions, illustrating the condition of the petitioner's soul. A similar metaphorical language is observed in verses 3-12. The expressions, such as 'my soul shall be satisfied', 'in the shadow of your wings, I shout for joy', 'my soul clings to you', and 'Your right hand upholds me', are figurative phrases, and they also, like v.2, portray the condition of the psalmist's soul. As the psalmist seeks God in 'the desert of his soul', expressing his spiritual thirst and hunger in the first strophe, so in the next three strophes, he illustrates his yearning for God, gazing on Him 'in the sanctuary', remembering and meditating on God's lovingkindness 'in the night watches', and praising and blessing God 'lifting up his hands'. All these metaphors and images are used to show an intimate relationship between the psalmist and his God, and express the condition of his soul.

Thus in Psalm 63, we observe a unique 'dialogue' between literal and figurative language which is a distinctive feature of this psalm. The psalmist portrays his intimate relationship with God, in primarily physical terms such as, 'I seek' (v.2a), 'thirsts' (v.2b), 'my flesh faints' (v.2b), 'my hands' (v.5b), 'satisfied' (v.6a), 'joyful lips' (v.6b), 'clings' (v.9a), and 'Your right hand upholds me' (v.9b).[401] The poet uses these physical terms and literal language such as 'in a dry land without water' (v.2c), 'I gaze on you in the sanctuary' (v.3a), 'I will lift up my hands' (5b), 'I remember you on my bed' (7a), 'I meditate on you' (7b) in order to show his longing and thirsting for God. The desire and thirsting for God, however, cannot be properly expressed by the use of literal language alone; therefore the poet employs figurative language to portray his longing for God. He uses figurative language because he is aware that the literal language itself is not adequate to

[401] See Schaefer, *Psalms*, 153.

illustrate his spiritual desire for God. The experience of God transcends the physical experience and symbolizes a spiritual experience. This is expressed in poetic terms and figurative language as when the psalmist's 'soul thirsts for God' and 'his flesh faints for God' (v.2b) in a 'weary land' (v.2c). The author of Ps 63 desires God therefore his 'soul shall be satisfied' with a rich food ('as marrow and fat') (v.6a) and 'in the shadow of God's wings' he shouts for joy' (v.8b). The poet's 'soul clings to God' (v.9a) and he knows that 'God's right hand upholds him' (v.9b).[402]

These figurative expressions and poetic devices are used for a purpose: to portray the poet's spiritual condition. By these means, the author of this poem demonstrates a mastery of his poetic skills. He 'plays' with words and expressions, which appear to have a literal sense but by giving them a figurative sense in the context of the whole psalm. Thus in Psalm 63 we observe that the poet intertwines literal and figurative language: the things and reality which cannot be properly expressed by the use of literal language are illustrated by the use of metaphors and images. The author uses a magnificent dialogue between literal and metaphorical language in this psalm.

Secondly, the analysis of the imagery in Ps 63:3-12, reveals much about the nature of metaphor and figurative language. It shows, on the one hand, the complexity of the metaphor, and on the other hand, the beauty of metaphorical language. Psalm 63:3-12 contain metaphorical expressions, images, and other figures of poetic speech. However, the examination of imagery in these verses, demonstrates that Leech's definition of metaphor which contains three essential elements of the metaphor (the tenor, the vehicle, and the ground) cannot be easily applied to all metaphors and metaphorical expressions recognized in Psalm 63.

In phrases such as: 'As marrow and fat, my soul shall be satisfied' (v.6a), 'in the shadow of your wings' (v. 8b), 'my soul clings to you' (v. 9a), 'the depths of the

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[402] See ibid, 153.

earth' (v. 10b), 'the hands of the sword' (v.11a), figurative language is identified. But it is difficult to recognize in all of these phrases, the components of the metaphor. The expression appearing in verse 6a seems to be a prototype of the metaphor; it is simile. The phrase 'in the shadow of your wings' (v.8b) is a metaphorical expression though it is difficult to recognize all elements of the metaphor. The typology of the metaphor is helpful in this analysis. It indicates that we are dealing in this expression with animal metaphor. The phrase: 'my soul clings to you' in v. 9a contains figurative language. However, it is not easy to define this figurative phrase by application of the formula of metaphor. We are instead dealing here probably with an anthropomorphic image which portrays the desire for intimate communion with God. Similarly the phrase 'the hands of the sword' has a feature of metaphorical thinking but it is difficult to define unequivocally. In the expression: 'marrow and fat' (v.6a) we recognize hendiadys, and the phrase: 'the depth of the earth' (v.10b) may serve as a merismus. Other expressions in verses 3-12, such as 'I will lift up my hands' (v.5b) and 'Your right hand upholds me' (v.9b) can be treated as Semitic idioms. The expression: 'Your lovingkindness is better than life' (Ps 63:4a) is unique to the Psalter. The terms 'lovingkindness' and 'life' are used together to express the author's message. They communicate the concept that God's lovingkindness which Yahweh showed Israel over the centuries is better than the ordinary sustenance of life that the literally thirsty person seeks and finds.[403]

It must be concluded therefore that Leech's general formula for metaphor cannot always define all of the metaphorical statements in Psalm 63. Instead, in the examination of imagery, we saw that the typology of metaphor was helpful in identifying, recognizing and interpreting some of the unclear metaphorical expressions in this psalm. The expressions and images in Ps 63:3-12, although they are varied in nature and type, demonstrate figurative language, and justify the

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[403] See Goldingay, *Psalms 42-89*, 258.

supposition that we should look behind the literal sense of the words if we want to fully understand their meaning. These figurative phrases and images find their proper explanation only if they are interpreted in the context of where they are placed. A holistic grasp of figurative language, as seen in this psalm, permits us to see a uniformity and cohesion between strophes, and it enables us to better understand the theological concept, which the author intended for the reader.

Thirdly, the analysis of the metaphorical language in this chapter demonstrates that the images are 'the glory' and 'the essence of poetry' as asserted by Alonso Schökel.[404] The analysis of imagery in verse 3-12 in Psalm 63 shows that 'the essence of poetry' is used for a purpose, that is, to conceal as much as to reveal. The author of this psalm uses figurative language because literal language cannot properly express what the imagery offers. The poet uses imagery in order to make an impression and attract the reader's attention. He uses imagery to prompt the reader's response to reveal a hidden meaning, which is concealed in these poetic verses. The metaphorical phrase 'in the shadow of your wings', used in verse 8b, is a good example and demonstrates well the 'metaphorical phenomenon'. First, the reader is invited to discover the meaning of the images: 'shadow' and 'wings'. This action leads the reader into 'thinking more'[405]. Next, the reader is challenged to identify a transference of meanings in this expression, and then, to reveal a hidden sense of the whole phrase. The author of Ps 63 uses the metaphorical expression 'in the shadow of your wings' to draw a picture of the vital and protective character of God's care for those who put their trust in Him. Verses 10-11 in Psalm 63, illustrate well, the purpose of using imagery in this psalm. In strophes I-III, the psalmist uses 'intimate' images, which represent his personal and intimate relationship with God. However, his life is in danger because of 'unexpected actors, who enter the drama'[406] – the assailants who appear to be his enemies. In order to

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[404] See Alonso Schökel, *A Manual of Hebrew Poetics*, 95.
[405] The expression used by P. Ricoeur; see Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, 303.
[406] Schaefer, *Psalms*, 153.

make a stark contrast with the 'intimate' images, as seen in verses 2-9, the poet uses 'bleak' images in verses 10-11, to describe his harsh and difficult situation, that is, his persecution by unidentified enemies. The author employs two different sets of images to illustrate this reality.

Gunkel notes that Psalm 63 is one of the pearls in the Psalter, and Zenger attests to the unique character of this psalm.[407] The analysis of Psalm 63 in Part Two demonstrates a unique psalm which contains 'its own delicate vocabulary'[408] with its intimate, deeply spiritual and mystical language that portrays the relationship between God and humans. The metaphorical expressions and images used, illustrate communion with God that is 'especially warm and intimate', depicting an ideal of God who shows in His relation to man in His lovingkindness that surpasses life itself.[409] A deep mystical tone permeates the entire psalm as it expresses a profound theological concept that human beings at their deepest spiritual level long for the presence of God and they can satisfy this deep longing and desire only by being in communion with God. It can be concluded therefore that the figurative language, which the author uses in this psalm, and the theological concept conveyed, is evidence that Psalm 63 has a unique character and possesses features of originality, which distinguish it from all other psalms in the Psalter.

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[407] See Gunkel, *Die Psalmen*, 267; Hossfeld and Zenger, *A Commentary on Psalms 51-100*, 121.
[408] Gerstenberger, *Psalms*, I, 13.
[409] See Eaton, *The Psalms*, 236.

PART THREE – IMAGERY AND DESIRE FOR GOD IN THE HEBREW BIBLE

The two previous Parts of this study provided an analysis of figurative language and the motif of longing for the presence of God in Psalm 63. Part Three will investigate further the imagery and theology in Psalm 63 in the context of the Psalter and other books in the Hebrew Bible, and it will have as its aim the answer to such questions as: Do we find other psalms in the Psalter, which contain similar figurative language and themes to those observed in Psalm 63? Do other texts in the Hebrew Bible contain the motif of the desire for God? If so, what is their interpretation?

Part Three will consist of three Chapters – Five, Six and Seven. Chapter Five will deal with an examination of parallel biblical texts similar to those of Psalm 63, and there will be two sections in this chapter. The first section will consist of an examination of Psalms 42:2-3; 84:3 and 143:6, and in the second section, some conclusions will be drawn from the evidence. Chapter Six will contain two sections: the first, will investigate the theme of the desire of God in the Hebrew Bible outside the Psalter in biblical passages such as Jer 2:13; 31:12-14; Isa 58:11, and Isa 26:8-9, and the second section will contain conclusions. Chapter Seven will deal with the imagery and theology in Psalm 63, and will contain five sections. This chapter will be a synthesis of material and will contain important and major overall conclusions.

CHAPTER 5 - PARALLEL TEXTS IN THE PSALTER

> This Psalm [63]… has content and thematic parallels within the Psalter.[410]

In any analysis and interpretation of the imagery in Psalm 63, it is possible to see this psalm in the context of other parallel psalms, which contain a similar language. In his commentary, Zenger notes: 'This psalm [63]... has content and thematic parallels within the Psalter in the two yearning laments, Psalms 42/43 and 84. These testimonies of personal piety all individualize Temple theology and make it metaphorical'.[411] Zenger correctly observes that there are other texts in the Psalter, which contain thematic parallels related to the content and imagery of Psalm 63, but in this chapter more specifically the metaphorical language which we find in Psalms 42:2-3, 84:3 and 143:6 will be compared with the imagery of Psalm 63, as presented in the previous chapter. This chapter will set out to answer the question: Does interpretation of figurative language and the main motif, which is observed in these three psalms, have an effect on the interpretation of Psalm 63?

1. Parallel Biblical Texts in the Psalter

Psalms 42:2-3, 84:3 and 143:6 certainly contain figurative language similar to that which is found in Psalm 63. However, the poetical language used to illustrate the motif of longing for God employed a different context in each of these psalms.

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[410] Hossfeld, and Zenger, *A Commentary on Psalms 51-100*, 127.
[411] Ibid, 127.

1.1 Psalm 42:2-3

In analysing Psalm 42:2-3, it must be noted first that Psalm 42 begins Book II of the Psalter (Psalms 42-72), of which Psalm 63 is itself a part. Psalm 42 belongs to the 'Elohistic Psalter' (Psalms 42-83), in which the designation ~yhla for God is used consistently. This Hebrew name, or its shorter form, is found in each verse of Psalm 42, except the superscription (v.1) and verse 8. In verse 9, besides the name ~yhla , the term hwhy also appears. The Hebrew expression containing the divine epithet yx la 'the living God' appears in Ps 42:3. It is interesting to note that the same expression (in this form) is found only once more in the Psalter – in Psalm 84:3 (cf. also passages outside the Psalter: Josh 3:10 and Hos 2:1).

It is also important to note that many commentators, for example, Gunkel[412], Kittel[413], Podechard[414], Kraus[415], Alonso Schökel[416], Mannati[417], Ravasi[418], Zenger[419] and others, interpret Psalm 42 as connected to Psalm 43, taking both as a single unit. They argue that these psalms originally formed one psalm, but for some, possibly liturgical reason, became separated. Together, the psalms are taken to consist of three stanzas: 42:2-6, 42:7-12, and 43:1-5. Each stanza is ended by the same refrain (42:6, 42:12, and Ps 43:5), and this incorporation of the same refrain is the key that indicates that these two psalms originally formed one unit. We may also observe the use of similar language in 42:9 and 43:2, while the consistency of content also points to this unity.

The experience of the author is recounted in descriptions of distress and misfortune: Psalm 42 provides the self-revelation of the poet who longs for God,

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[412] See Gunkel, *Die Psalmen*, 176-183.
[413] See Kittel, *Die Psalmen*, 162-167.
[414] See Podechard, *Le Psautier. Traduction littérale et explication historique. Psaumes 1-75*, 185-189.
[415] See Kraus, *Psalmen*, I, 316-322.
[416] See Alonso Schökel, *I Salmi*, I, 700-714.
[417] See Mannati, *Les Psaumes*, II, 89-97.
[418] See Ravasi, *Il Libro dei Salmi*, I, 755-774.
[419] See Hossfeld and Zenger, *Die Psalmen I: Psalm 1-50*, 265-271.

expressed in the language of complaint, and assuming the form of a lament: 'My tears have become my food' (v.4), 'Why are you cast down, my soul?' (v.6), 'My soul is cast down within me' (v.7), 'they say… 'Where is Your God?'' (v.11), etc. Psalm 43 then contains the psalmist's supplications to God, appealing for him to intervene and deliver: 'Judge me, O God, and defend my cause against an ungodly people…deliver me' (v.1), and 'Send out Your light and Your truth' (v.3). Treating Psalms 42 and 43 as one coherent unit (Ps 42-43) accordingly helps us better to interpret and understand 42:2-3.

Let us scrutinize Ps 42:2-3:

~yhla ^yla grt yvpn !K ~ym-yqypa-l[grT lYaK 2
~yhla ynP haraw aAba ytm yx lal ~yhlal yvpn hamc 3

2a. As a hind[420] longs for water brooks,
b. So my soul longs for You, O God.
3a. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.
b. When shall I come and appear[421] before God?

Like Psalm 63, 42:2-3 also contains this language expressing a desire for God, and Dahood describes it as a biblical counterpart to the treatise 'The Dark Night of the Soul', written by the mystic St. John of the Cross,[422] which tells of his mystical development and of the different stages through which he passed on his journey towards union with God. Here, similarly, the author visualises different stages of

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[420] The author uses the Hebrew word: lYa . Although the noun lYa means 'deer, stag, hart' more generally, in this hemistich, the term should be understood as female (so a 'hind', 'doe') because it is the subject of the verb grT 'long for', which is used in the 3rd person feminine singular form.

[421] The Hebrew verb: har appears in the Niphal, so can be rendered: 'to appear, present oneself', 'to be seen' and 'to be visible' (BDB, 908). An alternative rendering: 'to see the face of God' could also be plausible. Craigie remarks: 'The verb is pointed in MT as Niphal ('be seen (by) the face of God'); the pointing, which is grammatically difficult, presumably reflects the imposition of later orthodoxy, unhappy with the implication that God's face could actually be seen. But this is poetry, not dogmatic theology: the Qal is more natural grammatically and has the support of some Heb. mss'; Peter C. Craigie, *Psalms 1-50* (WBC 19; Waco: Word Books Publisher, 1983), 324.

[422] See Dahood, *Psalms 1-50*, 255.

his spiritual experience. In these initial verses, he feels a desire to experience God, visualising it through the use of images and metaphors, but he will go on to express his remoteness and isolation from God in v.4, surrounded by taunters and his oppression by the enemy in v.10. As he feels beset both 'within' his soul and 'outside', God seems to be for him far away: he thus experiences his own 'dark night of the soul'. In respect of 'outside', the psalmist experiences the mockery of others who ask 'Where is your God?' (v.4), and although he tries to question himself about his despondency, summoning himself to trust and hope in God's saving presence (v.5), his soul is nevertheless 'downcast' and 'disturbed' (v.5), so that he finds himself in a condition of 'mourning and oppression' (v.9) and of 'suffering' (v.10). In this difficult situation, the psalmist knows that he needs the presence of God, who is as water in the desert (v.2) and light in the darkness (43:3). In his journey to God, captured in the whole narrative (Ps 42-43) he experiences in incremental stages the Psalmodic elements of longing, remembrance, petition and confidence that are mixed together and expressed in a unique way.

Let us examine more closely the poetic language which the author uses in 42:2-3. In his commentary, Zenger, in analysing the first strophe (vv.2-6) of Ps 42 notes: 'This is the only biblical psalm, which begins with a comparison'.[423] Let us develop Zenger's remark. The Hebrew particle of comparison: K 'as, like'[424] indicates that we are dealing in this verse with the poetic device of 'simile'. The poet compares a wandering doe (lya), desperately searching to catch the scent of water to quench its physical thirst[425] (v.2a) with vpn ('throat', 'desire', 'self', 'life', 'living being' and 'soul')[426] which longs for God (v.2b). In our translation, we

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[423] 'Dies ist der einzige biblische Psalm, der mit einem Vergleich einsetzt'; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Die Psalmen I: Psalm 1-50* , 269.

[424] BDB, 453.

[425] See John Eaton, *The Psalms. A Historical and Spiritual Commentary with an Introduction and New Translation* (London-New York: T&T Clark International: A Continuum Imprint, 2003), 180.

[426] See *TDOT*, IX, 497-519.

rendered vpn as 'soul' but it must be stated that the usage of the translation 'soul' in every instance does not do full justice to the textual evidence[427].

The Hebrew verb gr['to long for'[428] which is used in Ps 42:2a occurs elsewhere but only in Joel 1:20:

> Even the animals of the field pant for You,
> Because the water brooks are dried up,
> And fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness.

It is interesting that in both passages gr[is used with reference to animals: a 'hind' and the 'animals of the field' (wild animals). The context of Joel 1:20 is similar to Ps 42:2a, where the wild animals in the dry pastures of the wilderness 'pant loudly' (cry out) for God. In these two biblical verses we recognize the animal metaphor. As was observed, there are many passages in the Hebrew Bible, in which we find anthropomorphic metaphors, e.g. Psalm 148 where the total inventory, including wild animals and all cattle, reptiles and winged birds are invited to praise Yahweh.[429] In Joel 1:20, however, we are dealing with an unusual, perhaps unique metaphor in the Hebrew Bible, portraying an animal that pants for God.

The author of Ps 42-43 envisages a thirsty hind searching for water in a dry landscape (v.2a). He compares it to his own thirsty soul, which longs for God (v.2b).[430] The expressions: 'as a hind longs' (grT lYaK), 'my soul longs' (grt yvpn) and 'my soul thirsts' (yvpn hamc) which the poet uses in vv.2-3, assume the quality of figurative language. Though in v.2a the simile focuses on the doe, it is the water motif, which is one of the principal poetic themes running throughout the psalm (seen clearly also in v.8, where the poet thinks of the waters of the ocean and waterfalls: 'Deep calls to deep at the sound of your waterfalls; all your waves and your billows have gone over me'). Like a thirsty animal in the parched land, the

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[427] See ibid, 508.
[428] BDB, 788.
[429] See Kraus, *Psalmen*, II, 961.
[430] See Craigie, *Psalms 1-50*, 326.

poet thirsts to worship God in the Temple for which he longs (v.3).[431] The expression: ˙yx la 'the living God' (v.3a), which occurs also in Ps 84:3, suggests the phrase for 'living water', found in the passage of Jer 2:13, speaks of God as 'the fountain of living waters'. The prophet Jeremiah portrays God as the source of fresh water running from a spring.

In analysing the figurative language and poetic devices (simile), identified in Ps 42:2-3, Craigie observes: 'The opening simile [vv.2-3] is converted into metaphor in v.4, linked by the motif of water; the one who longed for a refreshing drink, tasted instead the bitter water of tears'.[432] In v.4, the poet says: 'My tears have been my food day and night, while people say to me continually, 'Where is your God?' A similar motif of 'bitter tears' is found in Ps 80:5: 'You have fed them with the bread of tears, and given them tears to drink in full measure'. This verse appears in the context of the broken relationship of the Israelites with Yahweh and the 'restoration' and a new covenant with the Israelites.[433] Perhaps Ps 42 verse 4 indicates a time of penitential fasting. In times of suffering, the king and people were plunged into mourning and penitential rites.[434] However, in verse 6, which forms the refrain of Ps 42-43, the psalmist 'rebukes himself for his melancholy and puts his hope in God to give him 'a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair' (Is 61:3).[435] In verse 5, the psalmist in the metaphorical expression: 'I pour out my soul', expresses his grief and isolation, recalling 'better times' when he was walking in procession with joy and praise during the regular pilgrim festivals to the house of God, where the Temple was thronged with worshippers. But a nostalgia for those 'better times' does not substitute for the bleak reality, which the refrain clearly emphasizes: 'Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you

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[431] See ibid, 326.
[432] Craigie, *Psalms 1-50*, 326.
[433] See Tate, *Psalms 51-100*, 314.
[434] See Eaton, *The Psalms*, 180.
[435] Geoffrey W. Grogan, *Psalms* (The Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids-Cambridge, U.K: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2008), 97.

disquieted within me?' (42:6,12; 43:5).[436] These images and the water metaphors observed in 42:1-3, illustrate the poet's desolation and separation, evoking his longing for God's presence.

We find verses in modern poetry similar to these biblical passages. An example of this is the poem 'The Water-Fall' by Henry Vaughan, which was presented in Chapter One. In this poem, the poet shows the combination of imagery with the motif of the fervent searching for God in a human life, and he too uses the imagery of water. In this poem, Vaughan says that God is the source of life; God for him is the 'waterfall' and 'fountains of life' and 'deep streams'. We also find an analogy between the biblical motif of 'the bitter water of tears', observed in Ps 42-43, and George Herbert's modern poem 'The Altar' (in Chapter One). In both poems, the human heart is 'broken' by God's 'cutting'. Both poets experience loneliness and desolation. They both undergo 'the dark night of the soul'. In both poems, we observe that God allows spiritual suffering and the shedding of tears in order to demonstrate the experience of His presence. Both poems show in a characteristic manner, the spiritual (and psychic) growth of the authors. The flow of the poetic verses shows how they progress from one stage (moment) to another. In Ps 42-43 we observe how the mood and disposition of the psalmist gradually undergoes an extensive transformation: from despair and shedding of tears (v.4) into exceeding joy (Ps 43:4), where God is presented as the source of the psalmist's delight and joy. A similar transformation is found in Herbert's 'The Altar'. In the first line, the poet compares his lonely heart to a broken altar, cemented with tears, while in the final verses he speaks of peace, praising God, and the sanctification of his altar (heart) that is sacrificed to God.

It is interesting that both poets use in their poems the term 'altar'. The author of Ps 43:4 says: 'Then I will go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy; and I will praise you with the harp, O God, my God'. In Herbert's poem we read: 'A

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[436] See Craigie, *Psalms 1-50*, 326.

broken Altar, Lord thy servant reares…And sanctifie this Altar to be thine'. Both poets use the word altar with reference to God's altar, however, in different senses: the first refers to the Old Testament's sacrifice in the Temple of Jerusalem, and the latter to a figurative sense, meaning: an old and hard human heart that has to be re-shaped in the form of an altar in order to be able to offer a sacrifice. In the Hebrew Bible, the prophet Ezekiel speaks of 'restoration' of heart in the context of the new covenant promised to the exiles: 'I shall give them a single (new) heart and I shall put a new spirit in them; I shall remove the heart of stone from their bodies and give them a heart of flesh' (Ezek 11:19). The heart here represents the human will. In the poem 'The Altar', the poet refers to an old and hard heart. The prophet Ezekiel (Ezek 11:19) uses the term 'stone hearts', referring this image to Israel's hearts as unconscious, immobile and unresponsive to God. They need tender, yielding and responsive 'hearts of flesh'.[437] What both need (Israelites and the poet) is a transformation of will to replace their unresponsiveness with a new compliance to the will of God.

The above analysis allows us to reach clear conclusions. Firstly, in Ps 42:2-3 we recognize figurative language. Expressions such as 'a hind longs for water brooks', 'my soul longs' and 'my soul thirsts for God' have all the characteristics of figurative language. These phrases, containing water imagery and the motif of desire for God, visualize the quest for God and longing for His presence.

Secondly, Zenger correctly notes that Ps 42-43 is the only psalm in the Psalter, which begins with the Hebrew comparison K (as, like). This poetic simile is used for a purpose in this psalm. The psalmist uses simile in order to compare the thirsty animal – a doe, which runs in the parched land in search of water - to his soul, which seeks and yearns for God. The physical thirst of an animal is compared to the spiritual desire of a human being. The author of this psalm uses this

[437] See Leslie C. Allen, *Ezekiel 1-19* (WBC 28; Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1994), 165.

comparison, in order to enable the reader to better penetrate and grasp the meaning of Ps 42-43.

Thirdly, the poet combines, in a masterly manner, the theme of the desire for God and water imagery. The figurative language, used by the poet in Ps 42-43, plays an important role in this psalm. The imagery used is meant to have an effect and influence on the reader. The metaphorical expressions, especially the water imagery, are an important vehicle for the poet to express his particular predicament and his state of mind and inner self. The poet uses poetic devices such as metaphors and images to show the reader an effect of desolation and human loneliness in the context of searching and longing for God. The images and metaphors used in this psalm enable the reader to reflect and discover the connotation between the theme and imagery, and in this way, to better understand the deep meaning of the poem.

Fourthly, the comparison of expressions used in Ps 42-43 with other parallel biblical and modern poetical verses help and assist in the analysis of figurative language. Terms such as 'waterfall', 'tears', 'altar' and 'soul (heart)', found in Ps 42-43 and other biblical and modern poems, reveal to us that the poet uses imagery for a particular purpose. Firstly, the poet uses figurative language to help the reader identify the theme (or themes) in his/her poem. Secondly, the poet uses metaphorical language to convey the theme, aimed at the reader. Thus figurative language is used, both to identify and convey the theme of the poem.

Finally, it must be stated that an examination of Ps 42:2-3 allows us to make a comparison between this psalm and Ps 63:2. The analysis of Ps 42:2-3 allows us to conclude that there is a similarity of theme and language between Ps 42:2-3 and Ps 63:2. Both poets use figurative language in order to capture and describe their state of mind and to illustrate to the reader the reality that 'literal' language alone cannot properly communicate the deep essence of these psalms. Some expressions such as 'my soul thirsts' and the exclamation 'O, God' appear in both psalms. In both psalms we recognize water imagery, seen in such phrases: 'as a hind longs for

water brooks', 'in a dry and weary land without water', and 'my soul thirsts'. These figurative expressions are used in order to portray the spiritual condition of the human soul in a situation where God appears to be remote and absent. In both psalms we find a similar theme of the desire for God. The motif of quest and pining for God is evident in the leading themes of both of these psalms.

1.2 Psalm 84:3

Psalm 84:3 is found in the Third Book of the Psalter (Psalms 73-89) and it contains a similar language to that which is found in Pss 63:2 and 42:2-3. Psalm 84 begins the second group of Korahite Psalms (Pss 84-85, 87-88) and it contains a similar theology that is, Zion theology, to that found in the first group of Korahite Psalms (Pss 42-49). In his analysis of Ps 84, Zenger states:

> This psalm is indisputably shaped, through and through, by motifs of Temple theology. However, there is thorough disagreement on whether the psalm has a cultic or poetic *Sitz im Leben* in the sanctuary, or whether its spiritual home is quite distant from the sanctuary – whether the sanctuary has here already become a (mythical) metaphor for the God of Zion himself, who works wonders from the sanctuary… Zion is the mountain on which stands the Temple, the residence of YHWH, the king of the world, and from which he orders and blesses his people, and indeed all the world. YHWH has chosen the Temple on Zion and the city of God in order that here he may show himself in an especially intensive way as the giver and protector of life. Therefore the devout in Israel long with all their hearts to experience, literally, this closeness of God on Zion, either through walking/travelling to the Temple or through a 'spiritual' pilgrimage. Our Psalm 84 was suited for either – a really accomplished and/or a spiritually experienced pilgrimage to the God of Zion.[438]

Although the pilgrimage to the sacred place to worship Yahweh in the Temple on Zion is one of the foremost themes and an important concept found in this psalm, an argument will be put forward that it is not the sanctuary on Zion that is at the

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[438] Hossfeld and Zenger, *A Commentary on Psalms 51-100*, 350, 356.

centre of this psalm, but a different theme. The aim of the analysis here is not to elaborate more on Zion theology which was presented in a previous chapter but to interpret the meaning of verse 3 in the context of the theology of Psalm 84.
Let us examine Ps 84:3:[439]

yx-la la WnNry yrfbW yBl hwhy tArcxl yvpn htlK-~gw hpskn

3a. My soul[440] longs and indeed it faints for the courts of the Lord;
b. My heart and my flesh cry out[441] for joy to the living God.

Verse 3 appears in Ps 84 in the context of the journey of the pilgrims to the Temple on Zion (vv.7-8). The term 'Zion' appears only once in Ps 84 in verse 8, where it may reflect a longing for festival worship in Jerusalem (as in Pss 42-43) and the pilgrimage of worshippers to the Temple during the autumn festival of Tabernacles.[442] The language, used by the psalmist in Ps 84:2-6, reveals his love and passion for the Temple and a longing for the presence of God. The Temple is conceptualized as the home of God and those who worship Yahweh in this holy place find their joy and are characterized as yrva - blessed/happy (vv. 5-6).[443] In verses 5-6 the poet expresses a wish for the good fortune of dwelling and being secure in God's house on Zion.[444] In verse 6: 'Happy are those whose strength is in You, whose hearts are set on pilgrimage', the psalmist emphasizes the protective function of the Temple, conveying the idea that Yahweh is the real God who is a strength and protection to all the people of Israel and not only to those who live in

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[439] I follow the MT numeration in Psalm 84.
[440] NJB reads: 'My whole being'. Such a rendition of the Hebrew vpn seems to be plausible in this verse.
[441] Zenger notes that the Hebrew verb !nr which denotes 'cry out, shout for joy' (BDB, 943) can also mean 'rejoice'. However, the meaning 'cry out' (with longing, pain) is preferable in this verse as it better corresponds to the context in the Psalm 84; see Hossfeld and Zenger, *A Commentary on Psalms 51-100*, 349.
[442] See Tate, *Psalms 51-100*, 355.
[443] See ibid, 357-358.
[444] See Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 169.

Jerusalem.[445] The author's soul finds in God's house a deep satisfaction, visualized in the image of the swallow that nests happily in the peace of sanctuary (v.4). This metaphor reflects the concept and the ideal of security,[446] cf. Is 11:9: 'No hurt, no harm will be done on all My holy mountain, for the country will be full of knowledge of Yahweh as the waters cover the sea'. The author of Ps 43:3 associates light and truth with the holy mountain, which is God's dwelling-place: 'Send out your light and your truth; let them lead me; let them bring me to your holy mountain and to your dwelling'.

In Ps 84, in verses 9-10 an additional element is introduced – the ardent intercession and prayer for the reigning king: 'Yahweh, God of hosts, hear my prayer, listen, God of Jacob! Behold our shield, O God; look on the face of your anointed!' The petition is addressed to the 'God of Jacob' as the anointed leader of Israel, who 'is a representative of God's sovereign and salvific activity'[447]. Similar intercessory prayers for a monarch are found in other psalms, especially in those associated with the king and Zion, for example, in Ps 20:3.10: 'May he send you help from the sanctuary, and give you support from Zion…Yahweh, save the king, answer us when we call!'[448] The term 'shield' in Ps 84:10, indicates that the monarch mediates the royal work and protection of God. In verse 12, the poet uses metaphor, comparing God to the sun and shield: 'For Yahweh God is a sun and shield; He gives grace and glory'. The metaphor visualizes God as the source of the light of life and protection, and the giver of grace and glory, thus the source of all blessings. The light of life and grace and salvation come from God as a blessing, and God has made his anointed to be the channel of this blessing.[449] Thus the psalmist's petition for the Lord's anointed (v.10) is placed in the context of the journey of the pilgrims to God's House to praise Him (v.5) and thank Him for all the blessings

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[445] See Goldingay, *Psalms*, II, 593.
[446] See Eaton, *The Psalms*, 303.
[447] Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 169.
[448] The translation follows the Hebrew MT numeration.
[449] See Eaton, *The Psalms*, 304.

that God gives to those whose lives are blameless and who put their trust in Him (v.12-13).

The above considerations raise a question: How do we interpret verse 3 in the context of Psalm 84 and what role does this verse play in the theology of this psalm? As in the examination of Pss 63:2 and 42:2-3, and also in 84:3a we find again the expression 'my soul longs'. However, the Hebrew verb, used in Ps 84:3a to describe the soul's longing, is different from the terms used in Pss 63:2 and 42:2. In Ps 84:3a the psalmist uses the Hebrew word @sK which means 'to long (for)'[450]. This verb is also found in the Psalter in Ps 17:12, where the author uses this term in reference to a hungry animal, – the lion that is preparing to pounce: 'Like a lion that is eager (@sK) to tear, and like a young lion lurking in hiding places'. In this poetic verse, the term @sK represents a covetous desire.[451] The similarity of using this verb in both these psalms is striking. Although the context of these psalms is different, the Hebrew term @sK is used for a purpose in both texts. The author of Ps 84:3a uses this term in a figurative sense, expressing that his soul longs and faints for God. In Ps 17:12 the poet portrays the physical hunger and appetite of an animal for prey. Thus Ps 84:3 could also be interpreted in a figurative sense: 'My soul hungers…for the court of the Lord' expressing the idea of longing for God.

The Hebrew verb hlK which denotes 'to accomplish, to be completed, to be spent, to waste away, to be exhausted'[452] is another verb in Ps 84:3a, which is used to portray a condition of the psalmist. In Ps 84:3a this verb assumes the latter meaning. The Hebrew term hlK as used in connection with the term 'soul' identifies the languish and tension in longing for 'the courts of Yahweh'[453] (cf. Ps 119:81: 'My soul faints (languishes) for Your salvation'. In Ps 84:3 the term hlK is

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[450] BDB, 493.
[451] See Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 168.
[452] BDB, 477-478.
[453] See Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 168.

used in a figurative sense to describe that the poet's soul faints and is exhausted because of his desire to abide with God in His Temple.

We recognize figurative language also in verse 3b in Psalm 84. In the expression: 'My heart and my flesh cry out (sing) for joy' we recognize the poetic device of merismus.[454] The word: 'heart' (bl) which represents the immaterial part of a human being and the term 'flesh' (rfB) meaning the human body, are used by the author in v.3b to express totality, that is, to describe a whole human being. Kraus expresses this as follows: 'The human being in its totality, waits for life from Yahweh and yearns for his nearness (cf. Pss 27:4; 42; 63)'[455]. Thus the poet of Ps 84 uses this poetic device in order to illustrate that his whole being is filled with joy directed towards God, whom he calls 'the living God'. The Hebrew expression containing the divine epithet yx la 'the living God' (Ps 84:3b) also occurs in Ps 42:3.

Kraus argues that this Hebrew expression can be understood in Ps 84:3 in the sense of Ps 36:9 [in the MT Ps 36:10] in which God is referred to, as the 'fountain of life'.[456] The author of Psalm 36 expresses this concept in verses 8-9 as follows: 'They are abundantly satisfied with the fullness of Your house, and You give them drink from the river of your delights, for with you is the fountain of life; in your light we see light'.[457] These two verses appear in the context of Psalm 36 where God, through the images of 'the fountain of life' and 'light', is portrayed as the sustainer of His creatures giving them not only food and drink but also His protection.[458] Goldingay comments: 'Since there is no river on the temple mount, so there is no running spring, but there and elsewhere people refresh themselves

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[454] 'Merismus is a combination of parts of the whole to express totality'; Willem A. VanGemeren, 'Psalms' in Frank E. Gaebelein (ed.), *Expositor's Bible Commentary,* V (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), 26.

[455] Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 168.

[456] See ibid, 168.

[457] The numeration of these verses follows the NRSV translation.

[458] See Ryken, et al. (eds.), *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, 307.

with what YHWH provides'.[459] Ps 36:8-9 conveys that God-Yahweh, who is the fountain of life, provides refreshment, provision and blessing. Similar references to God as 'the fountain of life' we find, for example, in Ps 87:7 and Jer 2:13. The author of Psalm 87:7 refers to Zion as the place where the people meet Yahweh as their source of life: 'All my springs are in you'. The prophet Jeremiah portrays God as 'the fountain of living water' (Jer 2:13) contrasting Yahweh with false gods that are broken and leaking cisterns.[460]

The comparison of the phrase)yx la 'the living God' appearing in Ps 84:3 and Ps 42:3 with Ps 36:9 is remarkable. In Ps 84 the psalmist indicates the sanctuary as an object of his love and he desires good fortune. This is not an expression indicating a joyful pilgrimage or dwelling on the mount of Zion, but it is an expression indicating a longing and desire for God; this is at the centre of this psalm. At the heart of this psalm is in fact, a desire for 'the living God' (v.3). As in Ps 36:9, where God is portrayed as the 'fountain of life' so in Ps 84:3 'the living God' is the source of life and joy. In the presence of the living God, the poet finds protection, expressed in the images of 'shield' (vv. 10,11) and the 'sun' (v.11), which illuminates, warms and fertilizes[461], cf. Ps 36:9: 'In your light we see light'. Verses 11-13 in Psalm 84 contain words of appreciation of God's grace in the Temple and in life and express trust in God. These serve in the poem to support the preceding verses of praise and prayer directed towards Yahweh.[462] Thus in the context of Psalm 84, verse 3 is important because it contains figurative language visualizing a motif of longing for God, and the expression 'the living God', appears here to be at 'the heart' of this psalm. Human 'activities' such as prayers and pilgrimage to the Mount of Zion have as their aim to experience 'the living God'. It is not clear however, as Zenger notes in the above quotation, what 'kind' of

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[459] Goldingay, *Psalms* , I, 511.
[460] See Rogerson and McKay, *Psalms 1-50*, 169.
[461] See Terrien, *The Psalms*, 602.
[462] See Eaton, *The Psalms*, 304.

pilgrimage the poet is referring to in order to experience the closeness of God on Zion. Does he refer to an actual pilgrimage – walking to the Temple or to a 'spiritual' pilgrimage? Zenger concludes that both concepts can be considered in an analysis of this psalm. It seems, indeed, that Psalm 84 actually reflects the excitement and importance of the annual gathering of the pilgrims on the Mount of Zion. The pilgrimage could be interpreted as a spiritual journey by the poet. In his commentary, Eaton expresses the conceptualization of this spiritual dimension as follows:

> The pilgrim's journey is still a parable of the way to God: the first aspiration, already nurtured by his grace; the long, hard way where the fruits of faithfulness will only be seen in his good time; the coming at last into his courts as to the true home, to be made new in the light of his face.

We can conclude that the author of Ps 84 uses in verse 3 a figurative language similar to that which is found in Ps 63:2-3. The desire for God is the foremost theme in both of these poems. In Psalm 84, however, this desire for God is shown in the context of a pilgrimage to Zion. The poet depicts the pilgrimage to Zion, as a longing for God and the concept of 'the living God'. The amalgamation of these poetic themes is a unique feature of this psalm. The poet conveys the idea that Yahweh is the object of human desire, longing, searching, and the source of life, giving meaning and purpose to every journey, which the human being makes towards God. In the context of Psalm 84, this human journey can be understood both literally, as an actual pilgrimage to the Mount of Zion, and figuratively, in the sense of a 'spiritual' journey, having as its aim the achievement of union with God (cf. the treatise 'The Dark Night of the Soul' of St. John of the Cross and Ps 42-43 in which the author visualises different stages of his spiritual experience).

1.3 Psalm 143:6

The author of Psalm 143 uses a similar form of language in verse 6 to that which is found in Psalm 63:2-3. How does the language of Ps 143:6 resemble the figurative language of Ps 63:2-3? In order to see this resemblance, let us consider Psalm 143:6:

hls ^l hpy[-#raK yvpn ^yla ydy yTfrP

6a. I stretch out my hands to You,
b. My soul for You like a parched (weary) land. Selah.

In verse 6 of Ps 143, the psalmist who in his distress makes his supplication to Yahweh pleading for an answer (v.1). The petitioner professes persecution, which he experiences at the hands of his enemies (vv.3-4) and expresses hope for God's salvation. The poet identifies Yahweh as the creator of the universe: 'I remember the days of old; I ponder all your deeds, I meditate on the works of your hands' (v.5), and he expresses desire and longing for his creator (v.6). In verses 7-12, the psalmist makes an appeal to God for deliverance from his enemies and for guidance, calling on God as his refuge.

What language and poetic figures does the poet employ in Ps 143:6? In verse 6b, the psalmist compares his vpn to hpy[-#ra 'a parched land'. In order to make such a comparison, he uses the Hebrew particle of comparison K 'as, like'[463], hence hpy[-#raK 'like a parched land'. Thus we again recognize in this verse the use of simile.

In verse 6a the psalmist uses the phrase: ^yla ydy yTfrP 'I stretch out my hands to You'. In the Psalter, the gesture of the outstretched hands or arms symbolizes dependence on God, observed, for example, in Psalms 44:21-22 and 88:10. The image of the 'outstretched hands' is used in reference to God's power in

[463] BDB, 453.

creation, in deliverance of his people. We see this, for instance, in Ps 89:14: 'You have a mighty arm; strong is your hand, high your right hand'.[464] Apart from the Psalter, we observe such imagery - showing the theme of God as creator, for example, in Jer 32:17, where Yahweh is shown as the one who creates the heavens and the earth: 'Ah Lord God! It is you who made the heavens and the earth by your great power and by your outstretched arm!'

The image of 'the outstretched hands', found in Ps 143:6a, is better understood in the context of the preceding verse – verse 5. In Ps 143:5, the author portrays God as the creator of the universe who gives and maintains life on the earth. The psalmist speaks of God's deeds and the works of His hands (v.5). He refers to the process of creating the Universe, and portrays Yahweh as its creator. The psalmist, who is a small part of this creation, depends on God. Therefore, in verse 6b, the poet, using figurative language, portrays his soul as pining with thirst for God and his salvation.[465] This is an image of the parched, longing and thirsting interior of a human being.[466] The psalmist's soul - this interior of a human being, is like a parched land, which needs provision and protection from his creator. The image of the outstretched hands towards God illustrates the psalmist's dependence on God. As the desolate and parched land desires water, so the psalmist longs for God's help.[467] In the context of Psalm 143, the figurative expression: 'My soul for you like a parched land' sounds like a cry of desolation, conveying the psalmist's despair and separation from God. This water image evokes the concept of the poet that God is like the fountain of life. Weiser notes: 'He [the psalmist] longs for God, not in order to make use of him for the achievement of some purpose or other, but in order to have him for his own sake as the sole fountain of life'.[468]

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[464] The numeration of these psalms follows the MT.
[465] See Eaton, *The Psalms*, 469.
[466] See Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 537.
[467] See ibid, 537.
[468] Artur Weiser, *The Psalms* (London: SCM Press, 1962), 821.

On the basis of the above considerations, we can conclude that in Ps 143:6 we recognize figurative language. The author of this psalm makes a comparison of his soul to a parched land, expressing the idea that he longs for God like a desolate land that needs water. The vpn 'soul' in this verse stands for the needy human being who desires the presence of God. The image of 'the outstretched hands' portrays the psalmist's dependence on God's provision and protection. Allen interprets this image as follows: 'His own hands are stretched empty in a yearning gesture of need and dependence, from a situation of personal resourcelessness toward one who is the fountain of life' (cf. Pss 36:10; 63:2).[469] Thus the theological message, which the author of Ps 143 communicates to the reader in verses 5-6, is that the human being longs for God, who is the creator of all peoples and the whole universe. Human beings pine after God because He is the fountain of life, and only God can satisfy human spiritual hunger and thirst. Ps 143:6 recalls the language of Ps 63:2.[470] Both authors use a similar type of language to portray a similar reality: their feelings of desolation and an intense longing for God.

2. Conclusion

The analysis of Psalms: 42:2-3; 84:3 and 143:6 in this chapter, provides us with evidence that these psalms contain a similar form, style and structure of figurative language. The authors use images, metaphors, simile and other tropes of figurative language such as merismus (Ps 84:3b) to portray the motif of longing for the presence of God. All three psalms articulate this longing with the image of vpn The term vpn in these psalms represents the spiritual element of a human being. In Psalms 42:2-3 and 84:3, the longing for God is portrayed as a real or spiritual pilgrimage to Zion. In his comparison of these psalms, Zenger notes: 'Both psalms

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[469] Leslie C. Allen, *Psalms 101-150*, Revised (WBC 21; Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2002), 356.

[470] See Goldingay, *Psalms 90-150*, 675.

know the mystery that the God of Zion is light and shelter, and that he secretly regards human beings from Zion, even though both psalms express the suffering the petitioner experiences by not yet being 'at home' with his/her God'.[471] In the context of 'walking' on pilgrimage, the psalmists in these two psalms use the expression: ˙yx Ia 'living God', referring to God as the source of all life. Thus the God of Zion is not only light and shelter but, in the first instance, He is the fountain of life and the creator of the universe (Ps 143:5). In order to show the separation of the psalmist from God, who is the source of life, the poet uses water imagery in Psalm 42:2-3. He employs images of water in order to intensify the desire for a living God, which he compares to a thirst that a hind experiences seeking water brooks. This figurative language illustrates a reality, which literal language cannot properly express or communicate.

We find a striking similarity between the language used in these three psalms, with the language used in Ps 63:2. This is observed in the thematic parallels of longing for the presence of the living God and the same Zion theology. References to 'the sanctuary' (Ps 63:3), 'procession to the house of God' (Ps 42:5) and 'God in Zion' (Ps 84:8) in these psalms point to the fact that Yahweh and the Mount Zion Temple are objects of the psalmists' environment and interest. These psalms also contain testimonies of personal piety in the context of Temple theology. Although the theology of Zion plays an important role in these psalms, it is not, however, Zion theology but the motif of the desire for God that is their main and leading theme. This motif is illustrated by the use of similar metaphors and water imagery: 'My soul thirsts' (Pss 63:2b and 42:3a); 'My soul longs' (Pss 42:2b and 84:3a); 'My flesh faints' (Ps 63:2b) and 'My soul…faints…My heart and flesh cry out' (Ps 84:3b); 'A dry and weary land without water' (Ps 63:2c) and 'A parched (weary) land' (Ps 143:6b); 'The living God' (Pss 42:3a and 84:3b), and 'Water brooks' (Ps 42:2a).

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[471] See Hossfeld and Zenger, *A Commentary on Psalms 51-100*, 357.

The above comparative examination and analysis of Psalms: Pss 42:2-3; 84:3 and 143:6, supports the observation that these psalms have thematic parallels, and contain figurative language similar to that found in Ps 63:2. This confirms the opinion of Zenger, quoted at the beginning of the chapter, and provides us with evidence that allows us to answer the question proposed earlier: 'Does interpretation of figurative language and the main motif, which is observed in Psalms 42:2-3; 84:3 and 143:6, have an effect on the interpretation of Psalm 63?' We conclude that it does and we make two further observations.

Firstly, the authors of Pss 42:2-3; 63:2, 84:3 and 143:6 use images and metaphors in order to demonstrate to the reader the motif of longing for God. This theme could only be best expressed using figurative language to achieve optimum effect. Literal language alone could not convey the same depth or ambience of meaning in these psalms. Although the language of Ps 63:2 resembles the language of the other three psalms, we recognize some differences. In Ps 63:2a the poet uses the term &rxva 'I seek you early'. We do not find this term in the other three psalms. In Pss 42:2-3; 84:3 and 143:6 the concept of searching for God is not explicitly emphasised. The authors of Psalms 42:2-3; 84:3 and 143:6 speak about longing for God. They use, however, different Hebrew expressions such as ~yhla^yla grt yvpn 'My soul longs for you, O God' (Ps 42:2b), yvpn htlK-~gw hpskn 'My soul longs and indeed it faints' (Ps 84:3a), and in Psalm 143:6b we find the phrase ^l hpy[-#raK yvpn 'My soul for You like a parched land'. The psalmist of Ps 63:2b uses metaphorical expressions such as yvpn ^l hamc 'My soul thirsts for You' and yrfb ^l HmK 'My flesh faints for You' to express desire for God. The expression yx la 'the living God' which appears in Pss 42:3a and 84:3b is not found in Psalm 63. The author of the latter psalm emphasizes intimacy between him and his God, calling Him yla 'My God' (Ps 63:2a). The psalmists of Pss 63:2, 42:2-3 and 143:6 use similar water images: yvpn ^l hamc 'My soul thirsts for You' (Ps 63:2b) and ~ym-ylB @y[w hyc-#raB 'In a dry and weary land without water' (Ps 63:2c); ~ym-yqypa-l['for water brooks' (Ps

42:2a) and yvpn hamc 'My soul thirsts' (Ps 42:3a) and hpy[-#raK yvpn 'a parched (weary) land' (Ps 143:6b) to portray a spiritual condition of their souls. Thus in spite of some linguistic subtleties, we can state that the descriptive language used in these four psalms is remarkably similar in form, style, structure and content, portraying a profound desire and longing of the authors for God.

Secondly, the theology of Zion is evident in Psalms 42 and 84. Psalm 84 is shaped, throughout, by the motifs of Temple theology.[472] An interpretation of Zion theology in these psalms enables us to better understand Psalm 63, in which Temple theology is also present. Although the motif of longing for God and communion with Him is the main motif in Psalm 63, nevertheless, as we have clearly observed in Chapter Four, Zion theology plays an important role. In his comment, Zenger captures this importance:

> The petitioner experiences the personal relationship granted him by his God with reference to all that the Temple theology says about the Temple as the place of God's action and of God's nearness to the cosmos and the people. The liturgy celebrated in the Temple is, after all, not a private function. Temple and liturgy are the dwelling place of the God who binds chaos and renews life. Our petitioner seeks this experience of God not through a real visit to the Temple or participation in a Temple liturgy, but in the form of personal piety. This does not substitute for the reality of the Temple, but participates in it…outside the Temple. From that point of view, Psalm 63 is an important theological-historical witness to a 'mixing' of official (Temple) religion and private/personal piety.

In the light of the above quotation, we can assert that, apart from the main theme of longing for God, the Temple theology also plays a significant role in the interpretation of Psalm 63. The author of this psalm, using metaphorical language, portrays his personal relationship with God and a longing for him with reference to the Temple, which plays an important role in his personal piety.

In the Psalter, Psalm 46, in which the central theme is the city of God - Zion, contains a reference, which may explain the link between the water imagery and

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[472] See Hossfeld and Zenger, *A Commentary on Psalms 51-100*, 350.

the sanctuary as found in Psalm 63. The author of Ps 46:5 says: 'There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High'. This verse may refer to a stream which brought water from the spring of Gihon into the city of Jerusalem, and thus it became an image for God who is a source of life in Zion for His people.[473] Anderson comments:

> The Hebrew *n¹h¹r* is a perennial stream (cf. 74:15; 107:33) but there was no such river in Jerusalem, unless the writer had in mind the tunnel of Hezekiah, or the spring of Gihon; the latter played an important role in the cult of Jerusalem and it may have had some mythical significance. It is possible that the 'river' was used as a symbol of God's presence (cf. Isa 8:6f; 33:21). The word-picture itself may have been borrowed from the 'Garden of Paradise' concept. It is likely that the presence of Yahweh was associated with this primeval garden just as it was also linked with Zion, and consequently the descriptions of the one place could be applied to the other. As a river flowed out of Eden (Gen 2:10), so a similar river would give joy and blessing to the city of God.[474]

Anderson explains that the word 'river' may be understood as a symbol of God's presence in the city of Jerusalem. God's presence associated with the sanctuary would give, therefore, life, joy and blessing to the people of this city.

By comparison of Ps 46:5 with Ps 63:2 we may observe that like a 'river' which is the source of life and joy for the people of Zion (46:5), Yahweh's presence in the sanctuary is a source of life and joy to the author of Ps 63. Therefore, the sanctuary and associated with it Yahweh's presence, play an important role in the psalmist's life, revealing his deep desire to experience God's nearness. It must be stated that in Ps 63, Zion theology is not as strongly emphasised as it is in other (Zion) psalms e.g. Pss 46; 48; 76; 84; 87; 122, and 132[475], nevertheless, in the context of Ps 63, the theology of Zion is significant, and the author's concept of association of this theme with the water imagery is quite evident.

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[473] See Freedman (ed.), *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, VI, 1100.
[474] Anderson, *The Book of Psalms*, 357.
[475] Kraus classified these psalms as the 'Songs of Zion'; see Kraus, *Psalms 1-59*, 58.

We conclude that in the interpretation of the figurative language, the theme of longing for God and the theology of Zion in Psalms 42:2-3; 84:3; 143:6 and 46:5, provides us with a deeper insight and understanding of the figurative language and theology contained in Psalm 63. We observe a clear link of theological themes and a similarity of language between Psalm 63 and comparable psalms presented in this chapter. The examination also provides evidence of a similarity in language and themes between these biblical psalms and poems from modern poetry. The poems of 'The Water-Fall' by Henry Vaughan and George Herbert's 'The Altar' contain water imagery and similar figurative language to that which we find in the examined psalms. In both biblical and modern poems, the authors express their longing and desire for the presence of God portraying a spiritual condition of their souls. They express the concept that only God is the source of spiritual life and human transformation, and God only can fully satisfy spiritual thirst and hunger of human beings.

CHAPTER 6 – PARALLEL TEXTS OUTSIDE THE PSALTER

> The prophet not only conveys; he reveals God. The thought he has to convey is more than language can contain.[476]

In the previous chapter, we examined the metaphorical language in specific psalms of the Psalter and we analyzed imagery which is closely associated with the motif of longing for God. The theme of longing and thirsting for God is also found in other biblical books, and in this chapter we shall examine texts outside the Psalter, in which we find similar language and imagery.

Chapter Six will contain two main sections. In the first section, we shall consider biblical passages such as in Jer 2:13, Isa 58:11, Jer 31:12-14 and Isa 26:8-9, which contain poetic language similar to that which we find in Ps 63:2. The second section will draw conclusions. In this chapter, answers will be sought to the following questions: 'How do the authors of these biblical passages interpret the concept of longing for God outside the Psalter?' and 'Do we find similarities and/or differences between these passages and the way of expressing the desire for God, which we discovered in the psalms?

1. Imagery of Water and the Desire for God in the Prophetic Books.

1.1 Jer 2:13 , Isa 58:11 and Jer 31:12-14

In the Hebrew Bible, water, springs, wells, fountains, rivers are commonly shown as resources which provide and sustain the life of people and animals, and give growth to all vegetation (e.g. Gen 16:7; 26:15-32; Exod 15:27; Num 33:9). It was natural for the biblical writers to portray their God Yahweh as the one who

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[476] Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Prophets* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007), 22.

not only sustains and provides life but the one who is 'the fountain of life' (Ps 36:10, Prov 10:11; 13:14; 14:27; 16:22) and 'the fountain of living water' (Jer 2:13; 17:13),

The water image, which portrays God as 'the fountain of living water', is also found apart from the Psalter in the Book of Jeremiah 2:13 and 17:13. In both of these passages, the author illustrates Yahweh as the source of water that provides life to the people of Israel. In Jer 2:13, the prophet Jeremiah, using figurative language, reproaches Israel for rejecting the best and fresh water spring (Yahweh) in favour of the absent water of broken cisterns (idols).[477] The author of Jer 2:13 illustrates this:

> For my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living water, and dug out cisterns for themselves, cracked cisterns that can hold no water.

This passage appears in the context of Jeremiah's discourse on the infidelity of Israel and the breaking of the covenant (Jer 2:1-37) where the relationship between Yahweh and Israel in the desert period is portrayed by the marital metaphor: 'Thus says the Lord, I remember (concerning you) the faithfulness of your youth, the love of your bridal days, when you followed me in the wilderness, in a land not sown. Israel was sacred to Yahweh, the first fruits of his harvest; all who ate this incurred guilt, disaster came upon them, says the Lord' (2:2-3). Here, the term dsx is used to show this relationship between Yahweh and Israel and their mutual faithful love in the wilderness. This was where Yahweh provided water and food for the Israelites, and vdq meaning 'sacredness', 'apartness'[478] emphasizes Israel's holiness derived from being a nation 'set apart' to Yahweh

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[477] See Ryken, et al. (eds.), *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, 865.
[478] BDB, 871.

(Deut 14:2), and an agricultural metaphor (the first fruits of his harvest) refers to Israel's settlement in the land.[479]

In such a context, Yahweh is portrayed in Jer 2:13 as the 'living water' given as a gift to the Israelites. Israel does not have to generate its own water to preserve life. The gift of water is freely given by God, who acts as the husband of Israel but Israel rejects this free gift of God and wants to be its own source of life.[480] The prophet states that 'Israel has forsaken an initial commitment to Yahweh'.[481] The term 'forsaken' in this verse, is better understood in the context of metaphor of marriage seen in 2:2. Israel abandoned a true and faithful husband for other lovers. We observe here the metaphor of a broken marriage.[482] In his commentary, Carroll commenting on 2:13, states: 'The honeymoon was wonderful but the marriage – a complete failure!'[483] The expression 'two evils' which refers to the abandoning of Yahweh and the adhering to a deity of fertility, implies actually only one evil (crime) – the exchange of Yahweh for other gods.[484] Holladay remarks: 'It is ironic: in the honeymoon time of Israel's life with Yahweh other nations set one disaster going against themselves (v.3), but now Israel has set two disasters going against herself'.[485] De Roche argues that the expression: 'two evils' in this verse, is to be interpreted as a marital metaphor, where Israel committed two evils (crimes): rejecting the spouse that is Yahweh, and then consorting with other lovers that are Baalim.[486] However, such an interpretation, as Craigie notes, seems to be dubious and even far-fetched.[487] It seems that the conventional imagery, which portrays

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[479] See Jack R. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1-20* (AB 21A; New York: Doubleday, 1999), 253.

[480] See Walter Brueggemann, *To Pluck up, to Tear Down. A Commentary on the Book of Jeremiah 1-25* (International Theological Commentary; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, and Edinburgh: The Handsel Press, 1988), 35.

[481] Ibid, 35.

[482] See ibid, 35.

[483] Robert P. Carroll, *Jeremiah* (Old Testament Library; London: SCM Press, 1986), 119.

[484] See Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 92.

[485] Ibid, 92.

[486] See Michael de Roche, "Israel's 'Two Evils' in Jeremiah II 13", *VT* 31(1981), 369-372.

[487] See Peter C. Craigie, Page H. Kelly, and Joel F. Drinkard, *Jeremiah 1-25* (WBC 26; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1991), 30.

God as a husband and Israel as His wife, finds better application in the context of Jeremiah 2-3:1, particularly in Jer 2:2, where Israel is portrayed as a bride by the usage of Hebrew feminine suffix %l .[488]

The central metaphor in this passage however, is again the image of water. The metaphor of water is conceptualized in the context of the metaphor of marriage. Yahweh is depicted in a metaphorical manner as 'the source of living water.' The Hebrew expression ~yYx ~ym 'living water', appears in this verse with the sense: 'running water' cf. Gen 26:19 and Lev 15:5. Holladay suggests that behind the metaphor, found in Jer 2:13, could be the passage of Isa 8:6-8, where the prophet Isaiah depicts the people of Israel who rejected the softly flowing waters of Shiloah that supplied Jerusalem:

> 6. Because this people has refused the waters of Shiloah that flow gently, and melt in fear before Rezin and the son of Remaliah;
> 7. therefore, the Lord is bringing up against it the mighty flood waters of the River, the king of Assyria and all his glory; it will rise above all its channels and overflow all its banks.
> 8. It will sweep on into Judah as a flood, and, pouring over, it will reach up to the neck; and its outspread wings will fill the breadth of your land, O Immanuel.

Therefore, Yahweh will bring them the mighty waters of the Great River (in the Old Testament this often refers to the Euphrates).[489] The Shiloah was an aqueduct, which supplied water from the spring at Gihon, which was the only flowing spring in the area around Jerusalem, and the city depended upon it.[490] Gihon played an important role in the royal rituals (cf. 1 Kgs 1:33), and it is even used symbolically for the river of paradise (cf. Ps 46:5).[491] In this context, the waters of Shiloah are associated with the Gihon spring that Isaiah uses as a metaphor for Yahweh's word

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[488] See ibid, 30.
[489] See Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 92.
[490] See ibid, 92.
[491] See Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12*, 343.

or for Yahweh himself.[492] Isaiah probably refers to the mighty waters of the river as a symbol for a powerful army of their enemies (the king of Assyria and his army). In this manner, the passage of Isa 8:6-8 would suggest that because the people of Israel rejected Yahweh (Yahweh's word), who was like a gently flowing spring of water (the waters of Shiloah – Gihon), Yahweh will hand over Jerusalem and the land of Israel into the hands of the enemy. We find a similarity here between Jer 2:13 and Isa 8:6-8. In both texts, the authors depict Israel as rejecting Yahweh, who is 'the source of living (running) water'. Although the meaning of Isa 8:6 is uncertain and an interpretation is difficult, it seems that Holladay's suggestion is valid and plausible.

Thus at the heart of Jer 2:13 is the imagery of water. Yahweh is portrayed as the only true God, who is the spring that provides fresh and living water. Craigie comments: 'The central metaphor is that of water, which is one of the staples of life. Israel had rejected God, from whom 'water' always flowed, and sought to replace God with cracked and leaky cisterns, which would always be empty'.[493] In Jer 2:13 the prophet conveys that Yahweh, who is the real source of the existence of human beings, cannot be substituted with any other entity.

The image of water is also found, in the Book of Isaiah 58:11.

> The Lord will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in parched places, and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters never fail.

The passage appears in the context of Trito-Isaiah's speech on true and false fasting (58:1-14). In verses 7-11, he focuses on performing works of justice and mercy[494], conveying that 'when fasting makes the wealthy poor in spirit and when the poor impart to the wealthy their attitude of humble waiting upon God, then God will

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[492] See Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 92.
[493] Craigie, et al., *Jeremiah 1-25*, 30.
[494] See Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 56-66* (AB 19B; New York: Doubleday, 2003), 181.

answer with ''glory'', ''light'', and ''springs of water''.'[495] Trito-Isaiah uses the water imagery in v.11 to illustrate Yahweh as the one who cares for the people of Israel and who satisfies their needs and desires and sustains them. We observe, however, a new element in this passage. The prophet applies the imagery of the transformation of wilderness to the people of Israel.[496] Yahweh provided guidance to His people and sustained them through their journey in the wilderness. Now, they will be transformed, renewed and strengthened.[497] The prophet predicts their prosperity: they will become like a well 'watered garden' (hwr !gK)[498] whose withered blooms are restored to freshness, with a permanent 'spring of water' that never fails.[499] Thus we observe here two ideas: the people of Israel will be as 'watered', and they themselves will become as an eternal source of life-giving water. The contrast with Isa 1:30 can be observed where the garden of the worship of other gods will be dried up and lifeless: 'For you will be like a terebinth whose leaf withers, and like a garden without water'.[500] Trito-Isaiah concludes his speech in 58:13-14 by expressing the idea that if the people of Israel act in obedience and devotion to God then they will find true happiness in Yahweh, and God himself will feed them again in the possession of their land.

The expression a 'watered garden' and the water imagery are also found in a similar context in Jer 31:12-14:

> 12. They shall come and sing aloud on the height of Zion, and they shall be radiant over the goodness of the Lord, over the grain, the wine, and the oil, and over the young of the flock and the herd; their life shall become like a watered garden, and they shall never languish again.

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[495] Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Roland E. Murphy (eds.), *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1991), 345.

[496] See Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 480.

[497] See ibid, 480.

[498] The adjective hwr meaning 'watered', 'saturated' derived from the verb hwr which denotes 'be saturated', 'be satiated', 'drink one's fill'; BDB, 924.

[499] See John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 34-66*, Revised (WBC 25; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 844.

[500] See John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66* (NICOT; Grand Rapids and Cambridge: W. B. Eerdmans, 1998), 507.

> 13. Then the young women will rejoice in the dance, and the young men and the old will be merry. I will turn their mourning into joy; I will comfort them, and give them gladness for sorrow.
> 14. I will saturate[501] the soul of the priests with fatness, and my people will be satisfied with my goodness, says the Lord.

These verses appear in the 'Book of Consolation' (Jer 30:1-31:40) in which the author speaks about the restoration of the nation and the rebuilding of cities.[502] In verse 12, the author predicts the prosperity and transformation of the people of Israel: they will return to Zion and they will experience the goodness of Yahweh in the abundance of the agricultural products and animals and the life of the people will be like a 'watered garden' (hwr !gK).[503] Holladay remarks: 'It is the vpn of returning Israel, their ''life'' as spirit and appetite, which will be like a watered garden, so that they will never ''languish'' again – the verb (bad) means ''become faint (from hunger)''.'[504] The author foretells that Yahweh will transform their mourning and sorrow into joy and happiness (v.13),[505] and He will saturate (water abundantly) the vpn of the priests with fatness (rich food) cf. Ps 63:6a. The people of Israel will be satisfied with God's goodness (v.14). In v.14, Holladay observes the parallel between 'the priests' and 'my people' (Yahweh's people) and between the assuaging of thirst and the assuaging of hunger,[506] hence he translates: 'I will slake the thirst of the priests with fatness, and my people shall eat their fill of my bounty, oracle of Yahweh'.[507]

In the passages of Jer 2:13, Is 58:11 and Jer 31:12-14, we observe that the metaphor of water is present in biblical poetry outside the Psalter. The imagery of water assumes a special meaning in these passages and it is used by the biblical

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[501] Here, the Hebrew verb hwr is used in the Piel ytyWr meaning 'I will saturate', 'I will water abundantly'; see Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 186; BDB, 924.
[502] See Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 568.
[503] See ibid, 594.
[504] Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 186.
[505] See Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 594.
[506] See Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 186.
[507] Ibid, 153.

writers in order to evoke an effect and influence on the reader. The authors use the image of water for a double purpose. Firstly, they employ this metaphor to portray God as the source of human life (the fountain of living water) that sustains and cares for His people. It is God only who is the real source of sustenance and salvation for people, therefore He cannot be substituted by other gods. Secondly, the authors of Isa 58:11 and Jer 31:12-14 visualize the transformation of the Israelites by applying the metaphor of water. Through God's guidance, provision and sustenance, the people of Israel are to be transformed and renewed (Isa 58:11). They will experience prosperity and all the scarcities of the past will disappear in a great transformation of restoration (Jer 31:12-14).[508] The images of 'a watered garden' and 'a spring of water' are employed to portray this human transformation.

1.2 Isa 26:8-9

Isa 26:8-9 is a biblical passage outside the Psalter, in which the author expresses a yearning for God. The prophet Isaiah writes:

> 8a. In the path of your judgments, O Lord, we wait eagerly for you (we set
> our hopes in you);
> b. Your name and your renown are the soul's desire.
> 9a. My soul yearns for you in the night; my spirit within me earnestly
> seeks you.
> b. For when your judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the
> world learn righteousness.

This poetic passage appears in the context of Isaiah's section, referred to by scholars as the 'Little Apocalypse' (chapters 24-27). This is because of its literary style and thematic emphases which resemble the Book of Apocalypse of the New Testament.[509] In the 'Little Apocalypse', the prophet depicts Yahweh's devastating

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[508] See Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 595.
[509] See Robert B. Chisholm, *Handbook on the Prophets* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 65.

worldwide judgment. The judgment refers to everyone, including the prominent and the lowliest in society.[510] Although Yahweh's judgment concerning the peoples does not mention any specific people (with the exception of 'Israel/Jacob' in Isa 27:6, and 'the people of Israel' in 27:12), the prophecy in Isaiah Chapters 24-27, is directed 'toward a particular historical situation, but the events about which the authors speak are apparently to be understood as focusing on the time when a universal, eschatological-apocalyptic turn of events would take place'[511]. Thus in a historical context, the 'Little Apocalypse' was addressed to the Israelites. Pleins comments:

> The 'Little Apocalypse' presents a frightening portrait of exilic destruction at the hands of invading Babylonian troops. Yet even this grim picture has not toppled the hope that yearns to break free from this devastation to arise like a Phoenix from the ashes of destruction. This hope is at work in the 'Little Apocalypse' bringing light to a darkened landscape (24:14-16). The prophet anticipates this as a time when YHWH will reign on Mount Zion after the exile. [512]

Chapters 25-26 of Isaiah display hope and confidence in Yahweh's judgment. These chapters, which at first glance appear to be filled only with gloomy prophecy, announce an unmitigated triumph, expressed, for example, in the beautiful metaphor of the divine banquet on God's mountain (25:6). The people of Israel, who had experienced difficult trials in the past, will endure; it is Yahweh who 'will wipe away the tears from all faces' (25:8). The passage of Isa 26:1-19 (which includes verses 8-9) is a poem, in which we can distinguish three sections: 26:1-6 (a hymn of thanksgiving), 26:7-14 (a form of psalm), and 26:15-19 (a song of

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[510] See Chisholm, *Handbook on the Prophets*, 65.

[511] Wildberger, *Isaiah 13-27*, 446.

[512] J. David Pleins, *The Social Visions of the Hebrew Bible: A Theological Introduction* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 249.

communal lament).[513] Duhm comments: '[This is] a very artfully contrived poem, crammed full of assonance, plays on words, and the like'.[514]

This context provides us with a basis for interpretation of Isa 26:8-9. This passage, which exceptionally assumes the form of a psalm, reminds us particularly of the language of Ps 63:2. In Isa 26:8-9, we find similar language to that used in Ps 63:2 and other psalms examined in this study: Pss 42:2-3; 84:3 and 143:6. The expressions in Isa 26:8-9 such as ^ytywa yvpn 'my soul yearns' (v.9a), yxwr 'my spirit' (v.9a), &rxva 'earnestly seeks you' (v.9a) and vpn-twaT 'the soul's desire' (v.8b) are a vocabulary of terms, which have so much in common with the language used in Psalms 42:2-3; 63:2; 84:3 and 143:6. The Hebrew expression: vpn-twaT 'the soul's desire' (v.8b) is particularly interesting because it occurs only once more in the Hebrew Bible, in Ps 10:3 in a slightly different form Avpn twaT-l['of his soul's desire'. The term vpn is used in Isa 26:8b to identify the intensity of deep emotions.[515]

The author of Isa 26:8-9 states that 'the path of God's judgment' requires patient hope.[516] The people of Israel can trust their God because of experiences in which Israel recognized the judging hand of their God. Though their past experiences were harsh and difficult, they could not abandon God. Even in the context of God's judgments, the people of Israel stretched out their hands in hope towards God[517] (cf. Ps 143:6a: 'I stretch out my hands to You'). Therefore, Yahweh's name and His renown, symbolizing His mighty deeds in history, are the objects of the Israelites and the author's soul's desire. The author uses 'a cluster' of poetic terms such as: 'wait eagerly' (v.8a), 'yearns' (v.9a) and 'earnestly seeks' (v.9a) for the purpose of intensifying what is being said. These terms appear here to be synonymous. It is interesting to note that the term: 'to wait eagerly' (v.8a) is used

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[513] See Wildberger, *Isaiah 13-27*, 455-456.
[514] Duhm's quotation provided by Wildberger; see Wildberger, *Isaiah 13-27*, 455.
[515] See Wildberger, *Isaiah 13-27*, 559.
[516] See Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, Revised, 400.
[517] See Wildberger, *Isaiah 13-27*, 559.

in the first person plural: 'we wait eagerly'; whereas the two other verbs 'to yearn' and 'to earnestly seek' in v. 9a are used in the first person singular: 'I yearn for you… I earnestly seek you'.[518] This indicates that the author of this poem in v. 8, identifies and associates himself with the Israelites, using the plural form: 'we', and then in verse 9 he speaks for himself, using the singular form: 'I'.[519]

The language in the expression: 'My soul yearns for you in the night' (v.9a) reminds us of the language, which we find in Pss 42:2a and 84:3a: 'My soul longs', 'My soul thirsts' (Pss 42:3a, 63:2b), and in Ps 63:7: 'When I remember you on my bed, in the night watches, I meditate on you'. In Isa 26:9, the poet expresses the idea that a deep longing for God is most insistent in the wakeful night, when his spirit earnestly seeks God[520] (cf. Ps 63:2a: 'O God, you are my God, early I seek you'). This longing for God during the loneliness of the night, brings intense emotions to the poet.[521] The poet earnestly waits (seeks) the morning. In the Bible, 'dawn' is a symbol of hope.[522] The author expresses hope that when the dawn breaks, it will bring him a change, a light for his soul (cf. Isa 58:8,11). But as Wildberger comments: 'even still in the morning, when fear is taken away from human beings, even then longing for God is very much alive'[523]. In verse 9b, the poet takes up again the theme from verse 8a, in order to strengthen and emphasize his thought that hope remains.

Although in Isa 26:8-9 we do not find any water imagery, an examination of this passage demonstrates that the motif of longing and desire for God is observed outside of the Psalter. The terminology and expressions which the poet uses such as 'wait eagerly' (v.8a), 'my soul yearns' (v.9a), 'my spirit' (v.9a), and 'earnestly seeks (v.9a) are similar to those, which we saw in the Psalms 42:2-3; 63:2; 84:3 and

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[518] See ibid, 560.
[519] See ibid, 560.
[520] See David Stacey, *Isaiah 1-39* (Epworth Commentaries; London: Epworth Press, 1993), 158.
[521] See Wildberger, *Isaiah 13-27*, 560.
[522] See Stacey, *Isaiah 1-39*, 158.
[523] Wildberger, *Isaiah 13-27*, 560.

143:6. The prophet, in order to illustrate his emotions and to communicate his message, uses this poetic language. By use of these expressions, he expresses much more than is possible, by the use of literal language alone. The passage of Isa 26:8-9 is a remarkable personal (and communal) testimony and statement, expressing human desire and longing for the presence of God.

As we have seen, the passage of Isa 26:8-9 appears in the context of chapters 24-27, where the author(s) depict the people of Israel as having experienced harsh trials. It is interesting that the authors of Psalms 63; 42-43 and 143 visualize their desire and longing for God too, in a similar context as we observe in Isa 26:8-9. They all experienced hardships and difficult trials. We observe these experiences, for example, in verses: 'no food but tears' (Ps 42:4), 'those who seek to destroy my life' (Ps 63:10), and 'For the enemy has pursued me, crushing my life to the ground, making me sit in darkness like those long dead' (Ps 143:3).

The passage in Isa 26:8-9, interpreted in the context of chapters 24-27, expresses a longing for God's presence and reveals hope. The desire for God and longing for His presence can be interpreted with reference to the individual (the author) and the people of Israel who, in the time of the exile, longed for God's presence again on Mount Zion and for a restoration of Israel's past glory. The author(s) convey that the hope (of the author and the Israelites) remains on the path of God's judgment. The hope is offered by God to all peoples. This is portrayed, for example, in the metaphor of the divine banquet prepared by God, which is found in Isa 25:6: 'On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of fat things, a feast of wine on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wine on the lees well refined'. The author of Isa 26:8-9 conveys the message that those who trust in God, and put their confidence in Him, and long for God's presence, will triumph. A song of thanksgiving and confidence to sing about the hope of victory (26:1-6) will be theirs.

2. Conclusion

Chapter Six aimed to show that biblical texts outside the Psalter contain language and themes similar to that found in Ps 63:2. Not only is there a consistency in language and themes but there is also a consistency in the theology of all of these texts. The exploration and examination pursued in this chapter provide us with the pertinent evidence to arrive at the following conclusions.

Firstly, the scrutiny of the poetic verses of Jer 2:13, Isa 58:11 and Jer 31:12-14 demonstrated that these passages contain the imagery of water which too, portrays God as the source and sustainer of human life.

Jeremiah in 2:13 shows the metaphor of water in the context of the metaphor of marriage. Yahweh, as husband and the 'spring of living water' is the sustainer of Israel, and Israel is portrayed as an unfaithful bride who has rejected Yahweh and followed her lovers (illustrated by the image of the cracked cisterns). The Israelites 'who had available the full resources of Yahweh, the spring of living water, turned aside to worthless substitutes, to trust their deities, which in the end, could not meet their deep spiritual needs'.[524] Thus the passage conveys the message that it is only Yahweh who can satisfy the thirst and desire of the Israelites. Indeed, behind the water metaphor found in Jer 2:13, we may see Isa 8:6-8 which illustrates that the people of Israel rejected Yahweh - the real source of life who for them is like the flowing waters of Shiloah. Here, we note that another image showing the Temple as a source of life is also found in Ezek 47:1-12, where the author describes a river flowing from the Temple mount in Jerusalem. The miraculous effect of this river brings life to everything, transforming even the salt water in the Dead Sea (v.8) into fresh water. The author refers to the place of divine presence as the source of abundant water, pointing to an element of eschatological expectation.[525]

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[524] John A. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1980), 171.

[525] See Zimmerli, *Ezekiel,* II, 514-515.

This metaphorical image of the Temple resembles the metaphorical language found in Isaiah 55:1-2, in which the author offers, without cost, water that will transform and satisfy all those who are thirsty. In this and in the above three passages: Jer 2:13; Ezek 47:1-12, and Isa 8:6-8, the water imagery is used emphatically by the authors to illustrate God's life-giving presence.

Similar images are observed in Isa 58:11 and Jer 31:12-14. The poets use the metaphor of water, and apply this metaphor to the people of Israel. By God's provision and sustenance, the people of Israel will be transformed and renewed. They will come back and sing joyfully on Zion's height and their mourning and sorrow will turn into joy and gladness.[526] They will be 'refreshed' and will become like a 'watered garden' and like a 'spring water' whose waters will never run dry. In the passages of Isa 58:11 and Jer 31:12-14, God is portrayed as the source of life who offers to the people of Israel a future redemption and restoration; the Israelites, however, must undergo a transformation in order to be God's people.

Secondly, the passage of Isa 26:8-9, examined in the second section is yet another example of the poetic language which portrays longing for God in the context of God's judgment. This passage portrays not only the desire for God that the author and the Israelites experience but it also underlines the importance of hope to the Israelites. In the time of trials during the period of the exile, Israel must trust their God. The author communicates that the only hope for the people of Israel is Yahweh. He is the God of the author and of Israel: 'O Lord, you are my God' Isa 25:1. It is interesting to note too, that a similar phrase, assuming a form of an invocation, is found in Ps 63:2: 'O God, you are my God', and the author of Ps 63 also refers to God as his help (v.8a) who longs to experience His presence.

Thirdly, we observe that the motif of water, the metaphor of water and the theme of the desire and longing for God are widely present outside the Psalter. An examination of Jer 2:13, Isa 58:11, Jer 31:12-14 and Isa 26:8-9, demonstrates

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[526] See Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21-36*, 433.

language and imagery similar to that which is found in Ps 63:2. The similarities between Ps 63:2 and these passages are both, evident and significant. The psalmist uses the water imagery for a similar purpose to that observed in the passages from the prophetic books of the Old Testament. The above passages show that the motif of yearning for God played an important role for Hebrew writers both, for their individual and personal spiritual needs, and collectively for all of Israel in its continual relationship to God.

Fourthly, the Hebrew biblical writers, both prophets and psalmists by the use of this poetic language show this active relationship between Yahweh and Israel. Yahweh is the God of Israel and He has a special relationship with His people[527] (cf. e.g. Jer 11:4; 30:22). Anderson notes: 'Basic to Israelite faith was the conviction that Yahweh had chosen Israel to be his own people and that with them he entered into a close, personal relationship'.[528] Psalm 63 and the prophetic books show both, individual and collective aspects of this relationship, and they contain references to Zion and the Temple as symbols of Yahweh's divine presence. To live in the presence of Yahweh was for the Israelites, to experience Yahweh's inescapable judgment which searches the innermost heart.[529] The prophetic passages show the consequences of Israel's unfaithfulness, God's judgment and His promise for restoration and transformation of the people of Israel. In spite of the sinful nature of the Israelites, they looked forward to a future when they would enter into an intimate communion with God. But they also understood that if they wanted to become a renewed and transformed people, they had to address the message of the prophets.[530] In the prophetic conception, Yahweh's dsx was directing them to a completely new world order.[531] The prophets' concern was to show the people of

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[527] See Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 178.
[528] Bernhard W. Anderson, *The Eight Century Prophets* (London: SPCK, 1979), 9.
[529] See ibid, 9-10.
[530] See Donald E. Gowan, *Theology of the Prophetic Books: The Death and Resurrection of Israel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 10.
[531] See Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, I, 256.

Israel how they could and should live in the presence of God.[532] In this context, Ps 63:4 introduced a new understanding of human existence in relation to Yahweh's dSX in the context of the relationship between Yahweh and Israel. To experience God's nearness and His self-giving presence, the Israelites must first commit to Yahweh's will, revealed by the biblical prophets and poets. This was the only way that the Israelites could possibly dwell again in the presence of God.

A comparative analysis of selected prophetic passages with Ps 63, allows us to reach a conclusion. The task of prophetic teaching was to articulate God's divine presence and will[533], as Heschel noted:

> The prophet not only conveys; he reveals…In speaking, the prophets reveals God. This is the marvel of a prophet's work: in his words, the invisible God becomes audible. He does not prove or argue. The thought he has to convey is more than language can contain.[534]

The above prophetic passages demonstrate that the figurative language used by the prophets, not only communicates or conveys a message but it also reveals more fully God's relationship with ancient Israel. The author of Ps 63, by the use of figurative language and vivid water imagery, sought to express much more than ordinary language could convey. The poetic language of Ps 63 reveals much about the relationship between an individual Jew and Yahweh. It communicates the involvement that Yahweh's dSX played in the life and religion of ancient Israel. The people of Israel in order to experience God's presence must revaluate their lives and their understanding of the relationship with their God. In this sense, Ps 63 contains an unequivocal message and represents a 'prophetic voice', and it, no doubt, contributed to the theology of the Jewish people.

The comparative study of figurative language in Ps 63 and in the prophetic passages, shows a positive relationship between the prophetic books and the

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[532] Anderson, *The Eight Century Prophets*, 9.
[533] See ibid, 10.
[534] Heschel, *The Prophets*, 22.

Psalter,[535] pointing to the fact that there is a clear theological harmony and continuum between these sections of the Hebrew Bible, and themes found in one may be interpreted and better understood in the light of the other.

[535] In his study, Mowinckel examines the relationship between the prophets and the psalms; see Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, II, 53-78; see also David L. Peterson, *The Prophetic Literature: An Introduction* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 234-236.

CHAPTER 7 – IMAGERY AND THEOLOGY IN PSALM 63

> The poem [Ps 63] is one of the pearls of the Psalter.[536]

The main purpose of this analysis has been to examine in depth both the imagery and its associated theology in Psalm 63. This examination has provided us with many insights into the theological aspects of the psalm that have been demonstrated by the use of a rich literary expression, exemplified in metaphorical and figurative language. The familiarity of the imagery allows one to probe and discover the deeper theological concepts of the psalm.

Psalm 63 is explicitly grounded in the theme of the innate human desire for God and longing for His presence. The examination revealed not only the beauty of imagery but also the theological depth of this psalm. Gunkel's opinion, therefore, as presented in the Introduction, that this poem is one of the pearls of the Psalter is well-grounded and can be fully justified by virtue of its rich language. However, there are elements both literary and theological which present difficulties in interpretation; these were addressed and discussed in the analysis.

This final chapter is a synthesis of material already presented, and it reaches important conclusions.

1. The Psalms and Poetic Language.

In the Introduction to this study, we glanced, if only briefly at the role and significance of the Psalter in the Jewish and Christian traditions. The Psalter as a collection of sacred poems has been in constant use down through the centuries and has played an important and unique role, both in Judaism and Christianity.

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[536] 'Ist das Gedicht eine der Perlen des Psalters'; Gunkel, *Die Psalmen*, 267.

The psalms, as inspired poems, reflect the whole gamut of human experiences, showing the covenantal relationship between Yahweh and His people and they relate closely to the history of the people of God, the history of its leaders, and the history of individuals.[537] In the psalms the people of Israel spoke to Yahweh not only in prayer and praise but also in a character of response.[538]

In his commentary, Goldingay notes: 'We do not know why (humanly speaking) the Psalter as a collection came to exist or why it came to appear within the Scriptures, thought we may make one or two guesses'[539]. Goldingay correctly observes that the psalms conceal their origin; therefore it is difficult to be certain about the exact origin, development and purpose of the Psalter. We can suppose, however, that the psalms could have been specifically written for particular reasons and occasions. The different authors of the psalms, in writing their individual poems in different periods of Israel's history, might have had particular intentions and purposes in mind. The psalms served as models, both for personal reflection, piety and for public worship. It would be cogent to assume that the authors wrote the psalms for liturgical purposes, that is, to be recited, to be sung and to be widely used in the ancient Jewish communities. Thus the psalms were created for a specific purpose: they were written to be used.[540] Seybold remarks that the psalm 'was composed as a work of art, and it is as a work of art that it is to be read and heard'[541]. Therefore, the poems in the Psalter are works of poetic art; they were written for particular purposes i.e. to serve individuals and collective communities, and to be poetic art.

Throughout the centuries in both Jewish and Christian traditions, there have been two fundamental ways of appropriating the psalms: one for liturgical use, and

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[537] See Goldingay, *Psalms*, I, 24.
[538] See Kraus, *Theology of the Psalms*, 12.
[539] Goldingay, *Psalms*, I, 21.
[540] See Klaus Seybold, *Introducing the Psalms* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1990), 80.
[541] Ibid, 46.

the other, for a literary and theological understanding.[542] In their comprehensive studies, Holladay[543] and Gillingham[544] show that in the entire period of Christian history and in different Christian traditions, all Christians have been using the psalms as an expression of worship, and have applied to them a Christian interpretation. The New Testament writers demonstrated a different approach and brought a new understanding of the psalms from the Jewish tradition, and this has been developed by the Fathers of the Church, and then by other Christian interpreters. In the Christian interpretation of the psalms, we observe, on the one hand, continuity with the Jewish tradition; on the other hand, discontinuity, which has been clearly emphasized in the interpretation of some psalms such as e.g. Pss 2; 22; 110. The Christian interpretation of these psalms is 'inclined Christwards', in the sense, that 'David, the royal figure whose life encompassed both suffering and victory, both defeat and success, is but a type, prefiguring Christ'[545]. These and other psalms are quoted as key points in the New Testament e.g. in Lk 3:22; Acts 13:33; Heb 1:5; Mt 22:44; and 27:46, where they seem to have had a prophetic force.[546] Hunter notes: 'This has led to a much more extensive use of the Psalter as a rich source of 'prophecies' about the messianic character of Jesus, and has given the psalms a theological significance in Christianity which they simply do not possess in Judaism'[547]. It must be noted, however, that in the Christian approach to the Psalter, the psalms should not be read with only a christocentric interpretation. Murphy remarks:

> Hebrew Bible, as literature, cannot be flattened out and reduced to only a Christian dimension. Jesus Christ is the focus of the New Testament, not the Old. In Christian terms, it is the Father of Jesus Christ who is the focus of the Old Testament. Hence a merely christocentric reading is

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[542] See Gillingham, *The Poems and Psalms of the Hebrew Bible*, 269.
[543] See Holladay, *The Psalms Through Three Thousand Years*.
[544] See Gillingham, *Psalms Through the Centuries*, vol. I.
[545] Gillingham, *The Poems and Psalms of the Hebrew Bible*, 265.
[546] See Alastair G. Hunter, *Psalms* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 11.
[547] Ibid, 11.

> incomplete; it does not grasp the psalms at the level on which they were written.[548]

Therefore, in Christian interpretation, it is important for a modern reader to take into account both the Jewish historical background and the theological context of the psalms. It must be also observed that for many people, including modern readers, the psalms have served not only their individual needs but also have had a perennial value and lasting importance as a source of divine guidance and personal inspiration.[549] Psalm 63 is a song of confidence and no doubt, belongs to this group of psalms which support, guide and inspire spiritual growth in both individual and communal worship and piety.

We have observed that the psalms are works of poetic art. We can, therefore, pose the question: 'To what extent, does Psalm 63, which belongs to biblical Hebrew poetry, exemplify this literary art?'

In his *The Philosophy of Religious Language: Sign, Symbol and Story*, Stiver notes: 'Language is one of the frames, perhaps the central one, through which we encounter and understand our world'.[550] Stiver's quotation conveys the importance and power of language. This refers both to spoken and written language. The language of poetry and prose is particularly important to readers because through it, they encounter and understand the world, culture and mentality of the writers.

The language of poetry explores the deeper meanings in language. Poetic language allows us to interpret thoughts, concepts, feelings and emotions better than plain literal language. The 'tools' employed by the poet (e.g. figurative imagery, metaphor) permit a wider range of expression than is allowed in normal language prose. Good poetry has a characteristic that reaches the inner self of a human being which non-poetic language cannot. It is succinct in its revelations

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[548] Murphy, *The Gift of the Psalms*, 66.

[549] See Hunter, *Psalms*, 12; also Murphy, *The Gift of the Psalms*, 62-65.

[550] Dan R. Stiver, *The Philosophy of Religious Language: Sign, Symbol, and Story* (Oxford-Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), 204.

and reflective in its interpretation. The psalms, and in particular Psalm 63, have stood the test of time and they meet all the requirements of good poetry in terms of language and content. Good poetry is the highest level of communication and sophistication in human relations.

The purpose of poetry is to communicate an idea, concept, thought or emotion in a mode of heightened language or expression which evokes an awareness and recognition in the reader. Poetry especially is an expression of (personal) thoughts, feelings, emotions and sentiments, which the poet wishes to convey to the reader. The poet's intention is to evoke the same or similar emotions in the reader. Poetry requires the poet and reader to use their imaginations. A poem is like a painting on a canvas but without the restriction of colours. The poet, using his/her own imagination, 'paints' his/her painting to inspire the reader towards a deeper search and an acquiring of understanding and knowledge that leads to a profounder meaning. The reader is invited by the poet to reach a deeper level of understanding within his/her own imagination. The poet does this, in order to stimulate the reader's response. The power of poetry is to invite the reader to look through and beyond text.[551] In biblical poetry, the poet makes the familiar strange and the strange familiar.[552] Poetry can be aspirational and inspirational, simple and complex, emotional and intellectual. In the art of poetry, we observe a mutual process and relationship which is established between the poet and his/her audience. In this creative and artistic process, both players i.e. the poet and the reader have a role to play. The purpose of the poet is to communicate and transmit, and the purpose of the reader is to discover meaning. In this regard poetry is a unique artistic phenomenon. The beauty of poetry is seen in its unique characteristics.

This relationship between the poet and the reader is clearly seen in Psalm 63. In order to discover and reveal meaning, which the poet hides in the language, we

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[551] See Brown, *Seeing the Psalms*, 9.
[552] See Gillingham, *The Poems and Psalms of the Hebrew Bible,* 16.

examined the nature of metaphorical language. In an examination of poetry, we observed that the metaphor is a necessary and vital component of poetry and is an intrinsic part of the art of good poetry. In an examination of metaphor it was observed that the nature of metaphor is much more complex than it first appears. The analysis of the metaphorical language in Psalm 63 demonstrated that Leech's formula of metaphor could not be fully applied to all metaphorical expressions found in this psalm. However, the typology of metaphor was quite helpful in the identification of some unclear images and figurative expressions and it was especially useful in the matter of interpretation. A deeper level of text comprehension was achieved by the use of analytical and inferential skills. This approach permitted a greater understanding of the text, beyond the literal level.

On this issue, we can conclude that the analysis of Psalm 63, which contains so much figurative language, demonstrates that this psalm is an important part of a biblical literary heritage that was used for liturgical purpose and to express theological concepts. Gillingham notes: 'The language of theology needs the poetic medium for much of its expression, for poetry, with its power of allusion, reminds us of the more hidden and mysterious truths which theology seeks to express'[553]. The attractiveness of Psalm 63 lies in the fact that the language used by the author of this psalm, communicates important theological truths and concepts. Psalm 63 testifies and exemplifies that we are dealing here with a part of the tradition of biblical poetry.

2. Interpretation of Metaphor.

An important aspect in the understanding and interpretation of metaphor is that the metaphor should not be interpreted out of context; metaphors are always better understood in context. Therefore, in the interpretation of Hebrew

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[553] Gillingham, *The Poems and Psalms of the Hebrew Bible,* 278.

metaphor, it is important to take into account the context of a passage or a poem in which it is used. That is why our examination of the images and metaphors in Psalm 63 and in the other psalms and biblical passages was focused on the context in which these metaphors and figurative expressions were used.

In order to better comprehend the images and metaphors found in Psalm 63, we analysed them by progressing through different stages of investigation. First, we examined the images of Ps 63 in the context of the psalm itself; then we explored similar images in other psalms: 42:2-3; 84:3, and 143:6 which contain a similar language, and finally, the examination focused on the analysis of parallel texts found outside the Psalter in Jer 2:13; 31:12-14; Isa 26:8-9, and 58:11. These analogies based on comparisons with other texts are important.

Firstly, it allowed us to see the language and concepts of Psalm 63 in relation to other biblical writers who certainly wrote in different circumstances and at different periods in Israel's history, but who nevertheless were within the Jewish religious tradition.

Secondly and probably more significantly, the comparative study enabled us to see similar metaphors and images demonstrating theological concepts, and then relate them to those in Ps 63. Thus, for example, we saw that a similar (or the same) metaphor, used in different contexts, can convey a similar meaning, e.g. the metaphor: 'the shadow of your wings' which is found in Pss 17:8; 36:8; 57:1, and 63:8a, refers to the protective character of God's care; whereas in the context of Ps 63, this metaphor serves as a way of extending the sheltering function of the sanctuary.[554] In this context, the metaphor is associated with God's protective presence on Zion, and as Brown remarks: 'In the broadening of God's ''sanctuary presence'', Zion achieves metaphorical status'[555] (cf. Ps 125:1-2).

We also considered the analogy of the water imagery found both in Ps 63:2 and in Pss 42:2-3; 84:3, and 143:6, and Jer 2:13; 31:12-14, and Isa 58:11. The

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[554] See Brown, *Seeing the Psalms*, 20.
[555] Ibid, 25.

figurative language which the authors of the other psalms and biblical passages use, is similar to that which is found in Ps 63:2. The comparative analysis demonstrated that in the images and metaphors of water, all the authors illustrate the motif of the longing for God (which is also seen in Isa 26:8-9 where the poet does not use water imagery). These passages portray a longing for God in different contexts.

Another important aspect which we must address here is that in an examination of biblical metaphors, exegesis plays a crucial role. An exegesis based on the original biblical languages is an important key to an understanding of the Hebrew metaphor. An exegesis of a biblical passage explains what the psalm meant to its original audience and in its original historical setting. Therefore, in analysing biblical imagery, it is important, as Alonso Schökel noted, to take into account the historical context and the 'oriental imaginative style'.[556] We observed that a knowledge of the cultural and the traditional background of ancient people is vital for the proper interpretation and understanding of texts within a period of history. Biblical Hebrew poets wrote their poems in a specific imaginative style, and biblical poetic language is part of the framework, through which we encounter and understand Hebrew writers, their poetry and the ancient Near Eastern world. In interpreting biblical metaphor today by modern readers, there is the danger that Hebrew images can be misunderstood as Alonso Schökel explains:

> The supposition is that first of all comes the idea or concept, which the normal person will enunciate with its corresponding vocabulary. The poet on the other hand, in the interests of decency or fashion, searches around in his imaginative wardrobe, gets out a set of clothes and dresses up his concept or idea. It is the task of the intelligent reader to remove the clothes and understand the idea. If the reader cannot do this alone, the exegete will help him.[557]

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[556] See Alonso Schökel, *A Manual of Hebrew Poetics*, 99.
[557] Ibid, 100.

Alonso Schökel argues that when we can translate a biblical passage into a modern language it becomes less expressive; we will not discover its original meaning. He observes that in interpreting ancient poetry we are dealing with the thinking, style, tradition and outlook of Hebrew poets, and what comes before the image is not the concept, but the formless experience.[558] He further notes: 'The image gave a certain form to the experience; it was the first vision or spiritual reflection, the first formulation which could be communicated. By means of the image the author understood what he had experienced and expressed it and it is the image which he intends to put across'[559]. We observe this in: 'In the shadow of your wings' (Ps 63:8b), where the biblical image is understood as God's protection and therefore, it can be translated: 'In the protection of God', and in the expression 'My soul thirst for you, my flesh faints for you, in a dry weary land without water' (63:2b). This exemplifies a human's deep desire for God and it is experienced as a thirst. It could be rendered by a modern reader as 'an intense and total desire for God'.[560] We see that the expressions: 'the shadow of your wings', 'my soul thirst for you', and 'my flesh faints for you' may be less precise than modern language but these expressions are more demonstrative and alive.[561]

Biblical metaphors have been used repeatedly in other languages and literatures throughout the centuries but mostly in the language and literature of western cultures. It can be stated that on the one hand, there is a link between ancient metaphors and modern reality. However, on the other hand, some of the biblical metaphors are meaningless in modern society context. The expression: 'as marrow and fat' (Ps 63:6a) which stands for the rich and best food exemplifies this problem. For ancient people, fat was considered to be delicious, whereas in contemporary society, fat has a negative connotation and is no longer desirable.

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[558] See ibid, 100.
[559] Ibid, 100-101.
[560] See ibid, 101.
[561] See ibid, 101.

Similarly, the ancient image: 'the depths of the earth' (v.10b) conveyed the idea of death without return; this again may not be properly understood by the modern reader. This demonstrates that the modern reader of Psalm 63 will certainly understand most of the metaphors in this psalm, but there will be some which will present a problem.

Therefore in interpretation of the ancient biblical metaphors by modern readers, it is important to take into account the ancient context, culture, and 'oriental style'. The original language of the Bible requires exegetical analysis of the biblical metaphors. Hebrew metaphors and images can only be understood through linguistic analysis of the original Hebrew vocabulary in a text. The method of analysing the metaphorical language in this study, demonstrated that exegesis must play an important role in not only identifying metaphors but also in their contextual explanation. An analysis of the biblical metaphor without exegesis can only lead to misinterpretation at least and incomprehension at worst.

In interpreting biblical metaphors, there is also an issue relating to intentionality in the use of metaphors. It is difficult to judge whether an author uses metaphor intentionally or unintentionally. Many metaphors, found in the Hebrew Bible, express the reality of the time and environmental setting in which they were used, e.g., the metaphors representing war, army and fear. It is sometimes difficult to identify this borderline. However, an analysis of the metaphorical language in Psalm 63 has revealed that a conscious use of metaphor is evident in this psalm. The author applies intentional metaphor. He is conscious that the literal language is not able to express his longing and desire for God's presence. The author intentionally uses the metaphors of 'thirst' and 'hunger' (v.2b) because he is aware that only metaphorical language can properly communicate to the reader his deepest feelings and emotions.

3. Metaphor of God's Presence and Absence.

The Psalter portrays God metaphorically, at times as the one who is immanent and at other times as the one who is transcendent. Thus the God of Israel is portrayed as present and on the other hand, hidden. The psalmists who testify to the presence of Yahweh often illustrate His divine presence in the sanctuary and in the assemblies of God's people.[562] God's presence is portrayed by the use of terms such as the hnWmT 'form', 'likeness'[563] (of Yahweh), found in Ps 17:15; the ~ynP 'face'[564], in e.g. Pss 24:6; 27:8; 31:17; 42:3,6; 44:4; 67:2; and the dAbK 'glory', 'splendour'[565] in Pss 29:3 and 26:8: 'O Lord, I love the habitation of your house, and the place where your glory abides', which refers to the revelation of the presence of Israel's God.[566] The term dAbK is used also in Ps 63:3a with a reference to God's presence but the author of Ps 63 also uses other images to illustrate God's presence such as water images (vv.2-3) and the image of the shadow/shelter of God's wings (v.8b). In the Psalter, on the other hand, we find passages which speak of the 'hiddenness' of Yahweh, seen in e.g. Pss 10:11; 13:2; 27:9; 102:3; 143:7. Kraus argues:

> The psalms speak of the hiddenness of Yahweh only in relation to the certainty of his revelation and his presence. It is only the God who reveals himself and is present with his people who can hide himself. Hiddenness is an aspect of his revelation…Above all the psalms make known the fact that Yahweh the God of Israel, is not accessible in a permanent state of having revealed himself and being present, but that his self-disclosure is the result of his free and sovereign self-determination, and thus of his coming to his people. His presence is promise and assurance to the poor and helpless (Ps 34:18; 145:18), but it is not constantly accessible through the cult.[567]

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[562] See Kraus, *Theology of the Psalms*, 38.
[563] BDB, 568.
[564] Ibid, 815.
[565] Ibid, 458.
[566] See Kraus, *Theology of the Psalms*, 39.
[567] Ibid, 39.

In Psalm 63, we find strong acclamations of God's presence and absence. In this psalm, the psalmist experiences God's absence and His presence. God's presence is shown in a metaphorical way in verse 3, where God's presence is limited to God's presence 'in the sanctuary' (v.3a). God's absence and longing for God's presence are seen in the figurative language in verse 2. In the context of God's presence and absence, we can pose a question: Does Psalm 63 present a concrete reality or a metaphorical reality? God is always present. The name of the God of Israel: 'I Am Who I Am' (Ex 3:14) underlines not only the oneness of God but it expresses also His unlimited presence, in time and space.[568] In the Hebrew Bible, God is present because God acted in the history of Israel: He was present in the time of slavery in Egypt, in the time of the exile, and in the time of different conflicts and wars. In the Old Testament, the God of Israel is shown as God, whose presence is experienced. Though the people of Israel did not see Yahweh - their God, they experienced His presence. God's absence, on the other hand, is more abstract, and more often shown in a metaphorical way. We observe the metaphor of God's absence in Psalm 63. The author of Psalm 63, experiences the longing for God: he seeks God early in the morning (v.2a), and his soul 'thirsts' and his body 'faints' for God (v.2b). The psalmist uses the metaphor to portray his experiences of the absence of God at that particular moment in his life.

God's absence is also seen in Ps 42-43, and it contains language similar to that which is found in Ps 63. The poem portrays the desolation of the poet because God who is the sole object of desire seems to be absent. The psalmist must quench his thirst with tears shed over God's absence (42:4).[569] God who was for him like 'the water' to satisfy his thirst, has become for him like the stormy 'waves' and 'billows' which are rolling over him (42:8) bringing destruction.[570] On the other hand, it is

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[568] See Durham, *Exodus*, 38-39.
[569] See Brown, *Seeing the Psalms*, 133.
[570] Alonso Schökel, *A Manual of Hebrew Poetics*, 178.

striking that the psalmist's claim is that the overpowering billows are of God, and not of chaos.[571] The psalmist exhorts himself to be patient in the hope that he will experience God's presence, identifying God's waves and billows with His dsx (42:9).[572] In examining the poetic language of this psalm, Alonso Schökel points out the poet's experiences of God's absence and presence:

> His desolation is expressed in an aside in which the psalmist no longer addresses God, but addresses himself. The poetic device of 'doubling' [interior dialog] expresses magnificently the internal tension which is brought about by his experience of God's absence and presence. This aside is the refrain of the poem:[573]
>
> > Why are you cast down, O my soul,
> > and why are you disquieted within me?
> > Hope in God; for I shall again praise him,
> > my help and my God.
> >
> > (42:6,12; 43:5)

Thus God's presence and God's absence are observed in both, Pss 63 and in 42-43. By comparison of these two psalms, we observe that the poetic language and water imagery in Ps 42-43, more clearly and more emphatically emphasise God's absence than we see in Ps 63. The poetic expressions such as 'My tears have been my food day and night' (42:4); 'Why have you forgotten me' (v.10); 'All your waves and your billows have rolled over me' (v.8), and the refrain which appears throughout Ps 42-43, clearly demonstrates this idea. The author of Ps 42-43 expresses the hope that 'light and truth' would bring him out of 'darkness' into the divine presence in the temple, symbolized by the 'holy mountain' and God's 'dwelling place' (43:3).[574]

The function of metaphor of God's presence in Psalm 63 is to inform the reader that the psalmist is in a relationship with God. This relationship with God is for the poet a source of happiness and joy (vv.5-6).[575] God's presence ensures that

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[571] See Brown, *Seeing the Psalms*, 133.
[572] See ibid, 133.
[573] Alonso Schökel, *A Manual of Hebrew Poetics*, 178.
[574] See Craigie, *Psalms 1-50*, 328.
[575] See Mark S. Smith, *Psalms: The Divine Journey* (New York – Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1987), 61.

psalmist's 'soul' will be satisfied like with the best and rich food. The metaphor of God's presence in this psalm is to illustrate the intimate communion and close bond between God and the psalmist. On the other hand, the metaphor of God's absence in Ps 63 is to inform the reader that the poet experiences desolation and loneliness. The water imagery is used to communicate the message that the poet is separated from God; he 'thirsts' for God and earnestly seeks Him (v.2a); he gazes to 'see' God's strength and glory in the sanctuary (v.3), and he longs for God and desires His intimate presence (v.2bc) because he knows that God's lovingkindness surpasses human life (v.4a).

Thus the core metaphor of God's presence and God's absence in the life of the psalmist and in the psalmist's relationship with God is evident throughout Psalm 63. It must be stated, however, that the language used in this poem to illustrate these two metaphors is pure poetic biblical language. This means that a modern reader, in order to understand the poet's concept, must 'discover' the images which the poet has concealed in his poem. Thus the poet's purpose was to 'conceal' his concept of God's presence and God's absence in poetic language, and the aim of the modern reader is to discover this 'hidden' meaning.

4. Metaphor and the Longing for God.

In the Hebrew Bible, figurative language conceptualizes the ideas of the biblical writers more vividly than is possible using only literal language. Biblical writers employ figures of speech to emphasize an idea or a point, and to attract attention and make a vivid and immediate impression on the reader. The author of Psalm 63 had a similar purpose in using figurative language. As we already observed, the function of the metaphor of water in Ps 63:2 is to communicate to the reader that the psalmist is separated from God. He longs to experience God's presence in the Temple, and the desire for the divine life is based on a close relationship with God. The metaphor of water is used to emphasize this separation

and it serves in the text to portray the theme of longing for God. The author experiences 'thirst' for God and he compares this to a parched land that needs water. The poet uses the strong image of water to communicate that he yearns after God. The metaphor of water visualizes vividly and intensively a longing for God. In his analysis of biblical metaphor in *The Art of Poetry*, Alter noted that an image by its sheer forcefulness strongly colours our perception.[576] The metaphorical language, used by the author in Psalm 63, adds 'colour' and vividness to illustrate the desire for God. The use of such 'colourful' figures of speech has as its purpose to attract the instant attention and interest of the reader and thereby cause a response.

The theme of longing for God is at the heart of Psalm 63. The poet uses metaphorical language to portray, in a unique way, the desire for God's presence, and to express a special relationship of human beings to God, which gives to human existence its value and worth. In Psalm 63, this relationship is portrayed as a mutual and continuing relationship. The psalmist declares that God is 'his' God whom he seeks and longs for (v.2). The psalmist acknowledges that 'his' God is the one who accompanies him so as to help, to care and support him, that is expressed in the metaphor of God's wings (v.8). In the context of this mutual relationship of the psalmist with 'his' God, we observe a similarity between a portrayal of God in Psalm 63 and a depiction of God in the other books of the Hebrew Bible. The writers of the Hebrew Bible depict Yahweh as the one who acted on behalf of the people of Israel, forming them to be God's chosen and holy people (cf. Deut 14:2). God's gracious and redeeming activity was based on His love and His covenant relationship with Israel. The author of the Book of Isaiah portrays God's concern for the covenant people by the image of water: 'For I give water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert, to give drink to my chosen people, the people whom I formed for myself so that they might declare my praise' (Isa 43:20-21). A similar mutual

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[576] See Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry*, 192.

relationship between God and the author is observed in Psalm 63. The psalmist portrays 'his' God as the one who acted on behalf of the individual i.e. the psalmist. Similarly as in other biblical books, so in Psalm 63, God's concern is based on God's dsx i.e. lovingkindness and goodness (v. 4a) towards the psalmist. As was argued in this study, it would be problematic to maintain that in Psalm 63 we find the concept of a factual and individual covenant. Nevertheless, this psalm reveals a personal relationship and a special bond between the psalmist and 'his' God, portrayed by the use of metaphorical language.

The theme of the desire for God is one of these captivating and frequent themes in the Hebrew Bible, which is the object of interest and attention to many authors. A close examination of imagery in other Psalms: 42:2-3; 84:3, and 143:6, and in other biblical passages: Jer 2:13; 31:12-14; Isa 26:8-9, and 58:11 provide us with evidence that the motif of longing and desire for God is found both, within and outside the Psalter. This theme is also found in other passages in the Hebrew Bible, for example, in Ps 73:24-25 where the author says: 'Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire other than you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever'. The author of Ps 119:10 says: 'With my whole heart I seek you; do not let me stray from your commandments', and in v.20: 'My soul is crushed with longing after Your ordinances at all times'. These passages exemplify the motif of desire for God; other passages found elsewhere in the Old Testament support this same concept.

In this study, we made a brief reference to the writings of St. Augustine who acknowledges that he could be not satisfied with anything other than God: 'You stir man to take pleasure in praising you, because you have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you'[577]. Augustine, like the author of Ps 63, acknowledges that praise of God is the deepest joy of the human soul. In his quest for the meaning of life, Augustine recognizes God as the only source of happiness,

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[577] *Saint Augustine Confessions*, Chadwick (ed.), I, I.

and the only object worthy of pursuit in this world. He writes about the natural desire for happiness which can only be fulfilled in God:

> If they [people] are asked whether they would like to be happy, each would at once say without the least hesitation that he would choose to be so…all agree that they want to be happy…Even if one person pursues it in one way, and another in a different way, yet there is one goal which all are striving to attain, namely to experience joy…This is joy grounded in you, O God.'[578]

The psalms for Augustine functioned as a source of theological illumination and inspiration.[579] In his commentary on Psalm 63, contained in the *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, Augustine provides us with an interpretation of the expression 'thirsting for God' in the context of eternal happiness, asserting that human happiness cannot be found in earthly and corruptible things but lies in being in a relationship with God and sharing life with Him.[580] The similarities which we observe between writings of St. Augustine and Psalm 63 are evident. Both authors speak of the desire for God and the longing for God's presence, and they express the concept that the fullness of human happiness can only be found in God.

The comparative analysis of modern poems and Ps 63, made in this study, have shown us that the theme of longing for God, expressed in figurative language, is also observed in modern poetry. The poems of 'Water-Fall' by Vaughan and Herbert's 'The Altar' illustrate yearning after God and contain a desire for conversion to God. Both poets employ the metaphor of water to visualize their concepts.

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[578] Ibid, X, XXI-XXII.

[579] See J. Clinton McCann, 'Psalms' in Kevin J. Vanhoozer (ed.) *Theological Interpretation of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic and London: SPCK, 2008), 158.

[580] See *Sancti Aurelii Augustini Enarrationes in Psalmos 51-100,* E. Dekkers and J. Fraipont (eds.) (Corpus Christianorum: Series Latina 39; Turnhout: Brepols, 1956), 797-798; and also Joseph Rickaby, *Readings from St. Augustine on the Psalms* (London: Burns Oates and Washbourne Ltd., 1925), 90-91.

The motif of water and desire for God is also seen in other modern English poems,[581] for example, in Thomas S. Eliot's 'The Waste Land'. In his complex poem, Eliot employs the motif of a 'spiritual draught', which becomes a thirst for the waters of faith and healing:[582]

> If there were water
> And no rock
> If there were rock
> And also water
> And water
> A spring
> A pool among the rock
> If there were the sound of water only
> Not the cicada
> And dry grass singing
> But sound of water over a rock
> Where the hermit-thrush sings in the pine trees
> Drip drop drip drop drop drop drop
> But there is no water.[583]
>
> (5.346-358)

In his poem, Eliot portrays the desire for 'water' and the 'rock', and the images are implicitly drawn from Ex 17:6 where the Israelites, parched with thirst and wandering in their own 'waste land', quenched their thirst from the rock at Horeb, where Yahweh manifested His presence and protection.[584] In the Psalter, we find reference to this event in e.g. Ps 78:16: 'He made streams come out of the rock, and caused waters to flow down like rivers' (cf. also 78:20; 105:41; 114:8). In his poem, Eliot, however, uses the image of the 'rock' that provides no water; this may refer to his quest for God. The reference to the biblical passage suggests that as the

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[581] See David Lyle Jeffrey (ed.), *A Dictionary of Biblical Tradition in English Literature* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1992), 765.

[582] See F. R. Leavis, 'T. S. Eliot' in Graham Clarke (ed.), *T. S. Eliot: Critical Assessments*, II (Bromley: Helm, 1990), 170.

[583] Wain (ed.), *The Oxford Anthology of Great English Poetry*, II, 629.

[584] See John Durham, *Exodus* (WBC 3; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1987), 231, and also Jewel Spears Brooker and Joseph Bentley, *Reading the Waste Land: Modernism and the Limits of Interpretation* (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts, 1990), 178

Israelites experienced thirst in the wilderness and Yahweh provided them with water, so the poet experiences God's absence hoping to experience God's 'water'. Brooker explains:

> The passage portrays a movement from a desire for water to a desire for the sound of water to a desire for the suggestion of the sound of water. If water is not to be found, if the sound of water is not to be heard, then the sound of the hermit thrush will suffice.[585]

The images of 'water' and 'rock' are used in this poem to signify the poet's spiritual quest and longing for God.

The presentation of the theme of the desire for God in biblical and modern poetry provides us with evidence that the authors of both, biblical and modern poems use metaphorical language in order to portray the motif of longing. These authors express their personal feelings and emotions, which are conceptualized in the themes of searching, longing and desire for God. In these themes by the use of figurative language, the poets underline and emphasize the depth of their feelings. The authors portray these motifs in order to stimulate the reader's thoughts and emotions. They communicate to the reader that they are in a relationship with God. Their poems have a purpose to influence and induce the reader to reflect on the relationship between God and human beings. The authors challenge the readers to search for the implications which this relationship poses. The themes of searching, longing and desire for God's presence, invite the reader to ponder on the existence of the human being in his relationship to God, his creator. These themes inspire and provoke the reader to search and delve deeper, to find answers to questions about the purpose and meaning of human life.

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[585] Brooker and Bentley, *Reading the Waste Land*, 177.

5. Conclusion

Psalm 63 is a part of the art and heritage of poetry. It is a remarkable poem, which portrays the theme of the human longing for God. The motif of desire and longing for God is the thread that permeates all of this psalm. The author wrote this poem for a purpose that it should be read and heard. It was written not only for a liturgical purpose or purposes, but it should also be a piece of inspirational and spiritual art. Psalm 63 has a definite artistic quality because it contains the language of metaphors and images, which are 'the glory, perhaps the essence of poetry…ever alive and ever changing'[586] as Alonso Schökel noted. The analysis of the imagery and theology of Psalm 63 substantiates the fact that images and metaphors are indeed 'the glory and the essence of poetry'. Metaphors and images are vital to all good poetry. They are rich, vivid and engaging; indeed they are the very essence and the core of poetry.

Some of metaphors found in the Psalter and Psalm 63 are based in the historical and cultural environment of ancient Israel; they do not always seem to have relevance in the historical and cultural environment and context of the 21st century. This study will help to illuminate their relevance for the 21st century reader.

Psalm 63 contains many theological concepts within its text. The psalmist uses a rich figurative language to communicate these concepts. Indeed, the use of metaphorical and figurative language and imagery serves to enhance these concepts. Many theological principles are encapsulated in the imagery; some could be overlooked in the subtleties of the rich text. In summary, Psalm 63 in essence is both an assertion and affirmation that God is the source of all life; God has a loving relationship with man; God has a special relationship with his Israelite people; God is a personal God; God is worthy of worship, thanksgiving and prayer, and God

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[586] Alonso Schökel, *A Manual of Hebrew Poetics*, 95.

responds to his people in distress and cares for them. Psalm 63 is a beautiful inspirational and mystical psalm which is, indeed, the pearl in the Psalter. It incorporates a deep mystical tone portraying the longing for God and a deep desire for communion with God which is the highest aspiration for human beings; indeed it is even better than human life itself. We conclude that the figurative language, which the author employs in Psalm 63, conveys the concept that God is worthy of human searching and pursuit.

APPENDIX - THE TEXT OF PSALM 63

The Hebrew text and its translation play an important role in the textual analysis of Psalm 63, and this appendix aims to provide a philological foundation for the analysis of Psalm 63. It comprises three sections. In the first section, is presented a formal-equivalent translation of the Hebrew text, based on BHS.[587] In some places where a word-for-word translation would be misleading or obscure, a more functional equivalent translation is adopted.[588] Verses are numbered according to the Hebrew text. In the second section, some more important philological observations are presented on problematic words and expressions, which can be useful as a reference in the textual analysis of the psalm. The third section contains some notes on structure, setting and form.

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[587] By this term, I understand the similarity in the linguistic forms, such as vocabulary and grammatical structures between Hebrew and English language.

[588] Functional equivalence translation stresses the similarity in linguistic function (meaning) between the two languages.

1. Translation

1 *A Psalm of David when he was in the wilderness of Judah.*

2a. O God, you are my God, early I seek[589] you;

b. My soul thirsts for you, my flesh faints for you,

c. In a dry and weary land without water.

3a. So I gaze on you in the sanctuary,

b. To see your strength and your glory.

4a. Because your lovingkindness is better than life,

b. My lips will praise you.

5a. Thus I will bless you in my life,

b. In your name I will lift up my hands.

6a. As marrow and fat, my soul shall be satisfied,

b. And with joyful lips, my mouth shall praise you.

7a. When I remember you on my bed,

b. In the night watches, I meditate[590] on you.

8a. Because you have been my help,

b. And in the shadow of your wings, I shout for joy.

9a. My soul clings to you,

b. Your right hand upholds me.

10a. But those who seek to destroy[591] my life,

b. Shall go down into the depths of the earth.

11a. They will be poured out to the hands of the sword,

b. They shall be a portion for jackals.

12a. But the king shall rejoice in God;

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[589] In the context of the verse 2a, the imperf. (&rxva) is used in the domain of the present, expressing durative action.

[590] Following MT, hÛha (Qal impf. 1st sg) can be also rendered in the future tense - 'I will meditate'.

[591] The noun haAv (devastation, ruin) with the particle preposition l is used in the Masoretic Text, so literally 'look for the devastation of my life'.

b. Everyone who swears by him will glory,

c. Because the mouth of those who speak lies will be stopped.

2. Important Philological Notes

Verse 2a

The phrase hTa yla ~yhla can be construed as a nominal clause: 'O God, you are my God, early I seek you'[592] (cf. Ps 140:7), but the personal pronoun 'you' can also be taken to reinforce the 2nd person masculine singular suffix on the verb 'I seek': 'O God, my God, you (alone) early I seek'[593] (cf. Ps 22:2). In the translation provided by the author of this study, the first option has been chosen. If the expression were &rxva hTa ~yhla the personal pronoun 'you' would more naturally be read with the verb following after it, and the verse could be rendered: 'O God, it is you I seek (even you)'. Introducing the word yla , however, changes the construction of the verse unless it is to be read parenthetically. The fact that in Psalm 140:7 we find a similar expression, which is usually read as a nominal clause lends weight to the reading proposed here.

The verb rxv is generally regarded as a denominative form from the noun rxv 'dawn'; hence it denotes: 'to look for dawn' and 'to seek early.' The root is used

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[592] See scholars who support this option: Delitzsch, *Biblischer Kommentar über die Psalmen*, 421; Kirkpatrick, *The Book of Psalms*, 353; Artur Weiser, *Die Psalmen* (ATD 14/15; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1959), 308; Maillot, and Lelièvre, *Les Psaumes,* II, 80; Reiner Friedeman Edel, *Hebräisch-Deutsche Präparation zu den Psalmen* (Marburg: Oekumenischer Verlag Dr. R. F. Edel, 1966), 87; Alonso Schökel, and Carniti, *Salmos*, I, 829; Klaus Seybold, *Die Psalmen* (HAT 1/15; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1996), 247; Gerstenberger, *Psalms Part 1*, 13; Hossfeld, and Zenger, *Psalmen 51-100*, 189; Beat Weber, *Werkbuch Psalmen I* (Stuttgart, Berlin, Köln: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 2001), 280.

[593] Other scholars propose the latter interpretation; see Franz Wutz, *Die Psalmen. Textkritisch untersucht* (München: Kösel & Pustet, 1925), 157; Gunkel, *Die Psalmen*, 265; Kittel, *Die Psalmen übersetzt und erklärt*, 213; Edmund Ralt, *Die Psalmen* (HBK VI; Freiburg: Herder & Co. G.m.b.h. Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1937), 225; William Oscar E. Oesterley, *The Psalms*, I (London: SPCK, and New York: The Macmillan Company, 1939), 305; Podechard, *Le Psautier. Psaumes 1-75. Traduction littérale et explication historique*, I, 270; Kissane, *The Book of Psalms*, I, 268; Kraus, *Psalmen,* I, 440; Mannati, *Les Psaumes*, II, 235; Dahood, *Psalms 51-100*, II, 95.

in Wisdom literature (Job 7:21, 8:5; 24:5; Prov 1:28; 7:15; 8:17) of turning to God in times of trouble. Another verb vqB 'to seek' is used much more in cultic expressions (cf. 2 Chr 11:16, Jer 50:4, Hos 3:5, Zech 8:22). The Septuagint reads: proj se orqrizw 'For you I awake at dawn' which attempts to derive a literal sense from the noun. In Ps 63:2 and in Isa 26:9, however, the word &rxva probably means 'seek with longing, long for'[594]; hence, for example, Dahood translates: 'O God, my God, for you I long.'[595]

Verse 2b

The words amc and hmK in Ps 63:2b have been significant in our study of figurative language. amc denotes 'to thirst, to be thirsty'[596] (cf. Judg 4:19; 15:18; Isa 48:21; 49:10; 65:13; Job 24:11; and Ruth 2:9). Words with a similar root are to be found in other ancient languages (e.g. Ugaritic *ġma*, 'to be thirsty'[597]; likewise Akkadian *ṣamū* [598], and Arabic *ẓami'a* [599]). The literal sense is not in doubt, but in Ps 42:3 and Ps 63:2b, amc must obviously be interpreted in a figurative sense, i.e. as a thirst for God.

The word hmK denotes 'to faint', and 'to faint (with longing)'[600] is less well-attested, and is *hapax legomenon* in the Hebrew Bible. In Syriac, we find a possible cognate *kamiha* which signifies 'to be blind'[601], and in Arabic 'be pale of face'[602]. So some physical reaction is probably implied, and the context suggests that it is induced by thirst.

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[594] BDB, 1007.
[595] See Dahood, *Psalms 51-100*, II, 95.
[596] BDB, 854.
[597] Cyrus. H. Gordon, *Ugaritic Textbook* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1973), §19.
[598] Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *Hebräisches und Aramäisches Lexikon zum Alten Testament*, III (Leiden: Brill, 1983), 966
[599] Ibid, 966.
[600] BDB, 484.
[601] Koehler and Baumgartner, *Hebräisches und Aramäisches Lexikon*, II, 458.
[602] BDB, 484.

Verse 2c

In M^L we read #raB but some Hebrew manuscripts have #raK . That reading is supported by Syr and by Symmachus: wj en gh - 'as in land', and #raK occurs also in Ps 143:6 in a similar context: 'My soul longs for you like a parched land'.

In Ps 63:2c, some scholars[603] retain the B but take it to have a meaning equivalent to K , which enables them to translate 'as a dry and weary land' or 'as in dry and weary land', but this sense would be unusual and cannot readily be justified by reference to *Beth essentiae*[604]. Since K is clearly the *lectio facilior*[605], it may be understood as a facilitation, possibly influenced by Ps 143:6, and B should be retained. We should also, however, retain the usual sense, and so I translate 'In a dry and weary land'.

MT @y[W is masculine singular form of the adjective and means 'faint, weary'[606], although it is supposed to modify the noun #ra which is feminine (cf. hYc). In some manuscripts we find hpy[W , but this is probably a secondary correction to the expected form. It is possible that @y[actually refers to the psalmist, but this sort of disagreement is not unusual.

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[603] See Sigmund Mowinckel, *Psalmenstudien*, I (Oslo: Kristiana, 1921), 140; Wutz, *Die Psalmen*, 157; Gunkel, *Die Psalmen*, 265; Schmidt, *Die Psalmen*, 118; Ruperto M. de Manresa, *El libro de los salmos*, II (Libros Sapienciales 1; Barcelona: Librería Bastinos de José Bosch, 1935), 28; Podechard, *Le Psautier. Psaumes 1-75. Traducion,* 270; Kraus, *Psalmen,* I, 440; Alphonse Maillot, and André Lelièvre, *Les Psaumes,* II (Geneve: Labor et fides, 1966), 80; Dahood, *Psalms 51-100*, II, 95; Beaucamp, *Le Psautier*, I, 261; Luis Jacquet, *Les Psaumes et le cœur de l'Homme. Etude textuelle, littéraire et doctrinale*, II (Gembloux: J. Duculot, 1977), 288; Ravasi, *Il Libro dei Salmi*, II, 261; Stanisław Łach, and Jan Łach, *Księga Psalmów. Wstęp, przekład z oryginału, komentarz, ekskursy* (Pismo Swięte Starego Testamentu 7/2; Poznań: Pallottinum, 1990), 303; Tate, *Psalms 51-100*, 123.

[604] Gesenius explains that B *essentiae* is used in the sense of 'as' and of 'among'. See Friedrich Heinrich Wilhelm Gesenius, *Hebrew Grammar*, rev. Emil Kautzsch, edn. and tr. Arthur Ernest Cowley (2nd English edn. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910), 379, (§119i).

[605] According to the classic rule: 'Lectio difficilior praestat facili'.

[606] BDB, 746.

Verse 6a

The term bl;x; means: 'fat of human body', 'fat of beasts' and 'choicest, best part of products of land'[607]. In poetic language it denotes: 'rich food'[608]. The word !v;D; has a similar meaning: 'fatness, fat ashes'[609]. Both terms together form a hendiadys with the meaning 'the best part of rich food' (cf. Ps 36:9; Job 36:16).

Verse 10a

In MT we read ha;v;l; , 'devastation', 'ruin'[610], and the literal translation of the Hebrew would be: 'and they who will seek my life for destruction'. In some manuscripts, however, we find aw;v;l; , 'in vain', cf. LXX: autoi de eij mathn ezhthsan thn yuchn mou 'but those who in vain seek my life'. aw;v;l; is quite common (e.g. Pss 24:4; 139:20; Jer 2:30; 4:30; 6:29; 18:15; and 46:11), and would make good sense here, but there is no compelling reason to emend the text, and I have retained the MT reading in my translation.

Verse 10b

In M^{L} we read #rah , and although some manuscripts omit the definite article (cf. Ps 139:15), the Septuagint: thj ghj supports the reading. In Psalm 63:10b, the expression #rah tAYTxtB , which can be rendered as 'into the lower parts of the earth' (cf. Ps 139:15) must be understood as the place, abode of the dead. We find a similar expression in Akkadian *ša-ap-la-tú ersetu* which means 'the lower earth'.[611] In Akkadian literature, the netherworld is described as a place deep in the earth to which people go after death. It is a cheerless place, full of torments and hardships. In the Hebrew Bible we do not find such detailed

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[607] Ibid, 316-317.
[608] Ibid, 316.
[609] Ibid, 206.
[610] Ibid, 996.
[611] Koehler and Baumgartner, *Hebräisches und Aramäisches Lexikon*, IV, 1588. See also Manfried Dietrich and Oswald Lorentz, 'Die inschrift der statue des Königs idrimi von Alalah', *UF* 13 (1981), 227.

descriptions. However, it seems that the Hebrew expressions: #rah tAYTxtB (Pss 63:10; 139:15), tAYTxT #ra (Ezek 26:20; 32:18.24), tyTxT #ra (Ezek 31:14.16.18), hYTxT lAaV (Ps 86:13), tyTxT lAav (Deut 32:22), and tAYTxT rAbB (Ps 88:7; Lam 3:55) are synonymous, and all denote the netherworld, the abode of the dead. In Psalm 63:10b, the expression #rah tAYTxtB perhaps serves as a merismus.

Verse 11a

In MT we read WhryGy . This Hebrew word, a hiphil form from rgn , denotes 'pour out'[612], but the hiphil here in connection with brx-ydy-l[might carry the more general idea of 'handing over to'[613], 'deliver over to'[614]. Syriac apparently reflects WrGy , as does the Septuagint: paradoqhsontai 'they will be given over'. BHS offers other possible emendations: ~WryGy , and AmyryGy 'They shall pour them out', but a passive form seems likely here: 'They will be poured out', and this interpretation fits better and is more understandable in the context of verses 10-11. If we follow MT, the suffix 'him' must refer to the king (v.12a). However, the context of verse 11, suggests that it is not the king who will be delivered over to the hands of the sword but his enemies. The usage of the passive construction: 'to be poured out' rather than the active form: 'to pour out' gives verse 11a a better sense. Taking into account the context of verse 11 and an emendation to the passive form, the verse 11a can be construed as follows: 'They will be poured out (given over) to the hands (power) of the sword'. In the context of v.11a, the Hebrew word WhryGy appears as an ancient military technical term denoting 'killing',[615] cf. Jer 18:21, and Ezek 35:5.

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[612] Ibid, 620.
[613] See Tate, *Psalms 51-100*, 124.
[614] BDB, 620.
[615] See Seybold, *Die Psalmen*, 247.

Verse 11b

The word לְשֻׁעָל means 'fox', and perhaps also 'jackal.'[616] The word 'jackals' makes better sense in the context of verse 11b. Probably this verse refers to the situation of ancient people after a battle in military conflict. In such cases many wounded Israelites or their adversaries were seeking refuge in the woods. Often they or their corpses were prey for jackals.[617] The comment in 2 Sam 18:8 refers probably to such an event: 'For the battle there was spread over the whole countryside, and the forest devoured more people that day than the sword devoured.' Hence in my translation: 'they shall be a portion for jackals.' Another interpretation of this word, which is 'eating offal'[618], in the context of v.11b seems to be plausible, and verse would be translated 'They shall be a portion for eating offal'.

Verse 12a

This verse unexpectedly contains a note referring to 'the king' (הַמֶּלֶךְ), and some scholars[619] argue that it is an addition made by a later hand. For example, Briggs maintains that verses 10-12 were a part of another royal psalm, and were attached to this psalm only secondarily. According to him, both psalms may have been from a common author.[620] In his commentary, Boylan argues: 'It would be an easy view to maintain that this verse is not a part of the original poem. It is difficult to think of David thus speaking of himself. If the verse is original the

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[616] BDB, 1043.

[617] See Michael D. Goulder, *The Prayers of David (Psalms 51-72). Studies in the Psalter*, II (JSOT.SS 102; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 165; Charles Augustus Briggs, and Emilie Grace Briggs, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, II (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1907), 75.

[618] BDB, 1043.

[619] Among them, for example: C. Briggs, and E. Briggs, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, II, 72; Boylan, *The Psalms*, I, 231; Gunkel, *Die Psalmen*, 266-269; Schmidt, *Die Psalmen*, 119; Moses Buttenwieser, *The Psalms: Chronologically treated with a New Testament* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1938); Podechard, *Le Psautier. Psaumes 1-75. Traduction,* 274; McCullough and Taylor, *The Book of Psalms*, 328.

[620] See C. Briggs, and E. Briggs, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, 72.

dangers which threaten must be thought of as the same for the king and his adherents. Those who swear by the king, are those who adhere to him.'[621] However, many commentators do not share this view, and there are obvious reasons to delete the verses on linguistic or text-critical grounds. It seems also that verse 12 harmonizes with vv.10 and 11 to create the last strophe of the psalm. In my opinion, there are no sufficiently cogent arguments to support the standpoint that verse 12 or verses 10-12 are a later addition.

Verse 12b

It is not clear whether AB in the context of 'who swears by him', refers to God (cf. Jer 12:16; Deut 6:13) or to the king, although the former is more likely. The text presumably conveys an idea that God would declare blameless those who swore by him (cf. Dan 12:7).[622]

3. Some Notes on the Structure, Setting and Form

3.1 Structure

There is no consensus among scholars as regards the structure of Psalm 63, and differences of opinion on this matter lead to different interpretations of the psalm. The discussion involves, furthermore, not only the delimitation of sections or strophes in the psalm but also their original arrangement and order. Therefore, it is important in this study to outline the structure.

Amongst the various proposals are the following, placed in chronological order:

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[621] Boylan, *The Psalms*, 231

[622] See Leopold Sabourin, *The Psalms, Their Origin and Meaning* (Staten Island, N. Y: Alba House, 1969), 63.

Gunkel (1926)[623]	vv.2,3,7-9,5,6,4,10,11,12c,12a,12b				
Kittel (1929)[624]	vv.2-4		vv.5-9	vv.10-12	
Schmidt (1934)[625]	vv.2,3,7,8,9,5,6,4,10,11,12				

In their analysis, Gunkel and Schmidt reconstructed the structure and proposed different arrangements.

Maillot and Lelièvre (1966)[626]	v.2	vv.3-6	vv.7-9	vv.10-12	
Kraus (1966)[627]	vv.2-3	vv.4-6	vv.7-9	vv.10-11	v.12
Mannati (1967)[628]	vv.2-3	vv.4-6	vv.7-9	vv.10-12	
Beaucamp (1976)[629]	vv.2-3	vv.4-6	vv.7-10	vv.11-12	
Jacquet (1977)[630]	vv.2-3	vv.7-9	vv.4-6	vv.10-12ac	v.12b

In his theory, Jacquet (like Gunkel and Schmidt) points to an original physiognomy of the text; he reverses the traditional order of strophes, reconstructing its original arrangement.

Ceresko (1980)[631]	vv.2-5	vv.6-9	vv.10-12	
Ravasi (1985)[632]	vv.2-4	vv.5-9	vv.10-12	

In his commentary, Ravasi divided this psalm into three songs: 'The song of the thirst for God' (2-4), 'The song of the hunger of God' (5-9) and 'The song

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[623] See Gunkel, *Die Psalmen*, 267

[624] See Kittel, *Die Psalmen*, 214-215.

[625] See Schmidt, *Die Psalmen*, 119

[626] See Maillot, and Lelièvre, *Les Psaumes,* II, 80.

[627] See Kraus, *Psalmen*, I, 442-444.

[628] See Mannati, *Les Psaumes*, II, 235.

[629] See Beaucamp, *Le Psautier*, 262-264.

[630] L. Jacquet argues: 'Pour remédier à cet inconvénient et rendre au Ps. sa physionomie originale, il suffit de substituer à l'ordonnance traditionnelle de son texte un ordre nouveau, en intervertissant les strophes 2 et 3. La régle commune aux Ps. de ce genre veut, en effet, que le couplet d'Action de graces, avec ses verbes au futur (4-6) n'intervienne qu'après l'expose des sentiments du psalmiste (7-9), à titre de conclusion'; Jacquet, *Les Psaumes et le cœur de l'Homme*, II, 289.

[631] See Ceresko, 'A Note on Psalm 63: A Psalm of Vigil', 435-436.

[632] See Ravasi, *Il Libro dei Salmi (51-100)*, II, 272.

of the judgment of God' (10-12). Ravasi's interpretation is interesting because it conveys the figurative characteristics of this psalm. In an analysis of the first song, Ravasi gives attention to verse 2 and examines words such as: 'soul', 'thirst', 'dry and thirsty land' in the context of verses 2-4. He argues that the vocabulary used by the poet in these verses express as well the motif of a human thirsting for God. Ravasi also suggests that verse 6 constitutes the beginning of a new part in Psalm 63, speaking about the hunger of the author, which is of a different nature from physical human hunger. The next verses (7-9), no doubt, continue the motif of longing for God. It seems, however, that these verses do not depict in the clearest manner, the motif of the hunger for God. We do not find vocabulary in verses 7-9, which would give us a strong basis for such an interpretation. Therefore Ravasi's division of Psalm 63 into three songs, although interesting, seems to be a little problematic.

Gerstenberger (1988)[633]	v.2	vv.3-5	vv.6-9	vv.10-12		
Auffret (1989)[634]	v.2	vv.3-5	v.6	vv.7-9	vv.10-11	v.12abc

Auffret has advanced an interesting theory, suggesting that v.12abc has links to two previous divisions: v.12ab corresponds to vv.2-9, and v.12c corresponds to vv.10-11.

Tate (1990)[635]	vv.2-5	vv.6-9		vv.10-12	
Hossfeld and Zenger (2000)[636]	vv.2-5	vv.6-8		vv.9-12	
Fokkelman (2002)[637]	vv.2-3	vv.4-5	vv.6-7 vv.8-9	vv.10-11	v.12

[633] See Gerstenberger, *Psalms Part 1,* 12-13.

[634] See Pierre Auffret, ' "Ma bouche s'adonnera à la louange." Etude structurelle du psaume 63', *EgT* 20 (1989), 359-383; cf. also: *La Sagesse à Bati sa Maison; Etudes de structure littéraires dans l'Ancien Testament et spécialement dans les Psaumes* (OBO 49; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982), 267-283.

[635] See Tate, *Psalms 51-100,* 125.

[636] See Hossfeld, and Zenger, *Psalmen 51-100*, 194-195.

Terrien (2003)[638] vv.2-4 vv.4-6 vv.7-9 vv.10-12

In Terrien's division, he names strophes as follows: 'The thirst for God' (2-4), 'Heavenly love and earthly life (4-6), 'Insomnia and meditative watch' (7-9), and 'The fate of the foes and the joy of the living' (10-12).

Goldingay (2007)[639] vv.2-5 vv. 6-9 vv. 10-12

In his recent publication, Goldingay provides a careful and fresh translation of Psalm 63. He remarks: 'The Psalm does not divide into sharply defined sections, but for convenience we may distinguish vv. 1-4, 5-8, and 9-11 as three sections of deepening urgency'[640]. Goldingay's numeration of verses in Psalm 63 does not include the superscription; therefore, according to the numeration of Psalm 63 provided in this study, Goldingay's division into three parts can be presented as follows: vv. 2-5; vv. 6-9, and vv. 10-12.

Taking into consideration the above interpretations on the division of Psalm 63, the following explanation is proposed regarding the structure of this psalm. Verse 2 is an invocation, which begins with the vocative: 'O God, you are my God'. Here, the psalmist turns to God and expresses his spiritual feelings and experiences, in terms of a personal relationship. In order to describe this intimate relation and longing for God, the author uses figurative language, and the motif of the longing for the presence of God, which is introduced here, will go on to be the main theme of the whole psalm. The Hebrew particle !K (so) which stands at the beginning of verse 3, begins the next strophes, which show the consequences of longing for the presence of God: gazing on God in the sanctuary (v.3), praising and blessing God

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[637] See Jan P. Fokkelman, *The Psalms in Form. The Hebrew Psalter in its Poetic Shape* (Leiden: Deo Publishing, 2002), 71.
[638] See Terrien, *The Psalms*, 462-464.
[639] See Goldingay, *Psalms (42-89)*, II, 255.
[640] Ibid, II, 255.

(v.4-6), meditating God (v. 7), shouting with joy because of God's presence (v.8) and the 'clinging' of the soul of the poet to God (v.9). Thus verse 2, which gives a foundation for all of the other verses in Psalm 63, can be treated as a separate first strophe. It is difficult, however, to demarcate the next two parts. In the first part vv. 3-5(6) we see an element of praise and confidence towards God. The second part vv. (6)7-9 appears as a thanksgiving part.

There is a difficulty about v.6, noted by Auffret who points out its distinct character. In Ceresko's opinion, v.6 is to be incorporated into the second strophe (vv.6-9). He argues that in each part of the psalm (2-5), (6-9), (10-12), the psalmist begins with a different nuance of the term ypn v.2 (my soul-body), v.6 (my soul-desire) and v.10 ypn in the sense of 'life' – (my life). Although Ceresko's suggestion is interesting, it seems, however, that the distribution of pn cannot be the only and sufficient argument to support such an interpretation on the division of Psalm 63. There are other elements in this psalm which may indicate a different division than that proposed by Ceresko. Thus in verse 6, taking into account its whole meaning, we find elements of praise (llh), confidence and thanksgiving. If we assume that the second strophe (vv.3-5) utters the praise and laud (bv v.4) and confidence of the psalmist, and the third strophe (vv.7-9) constitutes its thanksgiving part (!nr 'shout for joy' v.8), verse 6 may be incorporated into both parts of the psalm. It seems, however, that verse 6 expresses more an attitude of praise (llh) than thanksgiving. In the opinion of the author of this study, verse 6 finds a better interpretation and meaning in the context of the second strophe (vv. 3-6).

In verses 7-9, we find elements of thanksgiving (^ytrkz 'I remember you' v. 7a; %b-hgha 'I meditate on you' v.7b, and !nra 'I shout for joy' v.8b); therefore this strophe forms the third, thanksgiving section. The final verses 10-12, begin with a malediction against those who seek the life of the psalmist in v.10, a continuation of which is to be seen in next verse (v.11), while verse 12 offers intercession. The

first part of this, the intercession for the royal lord of the temple, is easily comprehended,[641] while in verse 12bc the psalmist expresses trust that those who swear by God will gain recognition and the mouths of liars will be silenced. Verses 10-12 thus, form the fourth strophe in this psalm. Accordingly, the following strophic structure in Psalm 63 can be recognized:

I strophe (v. 2) – Invocation (Personal spiritual experience)
II strophe (vv.3-6) – Praise and confidence
III strophe (vv.7-9) – Thanksgiving
IV strophe (vv.10-12) – Malediction with an Intercession element

In this manner, my interpretation in the order of strophes coincides with Gerstenberger's concept. We find interesting images, figurative expressions and symbols in all the strophes; however, the first strophe plays a special and perhaps crucial role in this psalm. This strophe sets the tone, to some extent, for the poetic character and message of the psalm, giving the basis and the reason for the following verses. All the other strophes, (II-IV) are thus set against the dominant motif of longing for the presence of God. That is why, in the main analysis, such close attention is paid to the examination of this particular strophe.

The suggestions by scholars such as Gunkel, Schmidt, and Jacquet that the order of strophes must be altered, is backed by no specific evidence. Any such alteration must be rejected as speculative since it seems that the psalm itself preserves a reasonable uniformity and cohesion without such a rearrangement of strophes.

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[641] See Kraus, *Psalmen*, II, 601.

3.2 The Setting and Form.

According both to the text as it stands dwdl rAmzm (v.1), and to Jewish tradition[642], Psalm 63 is attributed to King David, and in the expression: hdWhy rBdmB (v.1), we see an allusion to the events described in 1 Sam 22:5; 23:14.[643] David's authorship could also be implied at the beginning of v.12 where a brief prayer is invoked for the king.[644] Some commentators[645] like Delitzsch, Mowinckel, Kirkpatrick and Dahood identify the author of psalm with a monarch, at least. Others[646], for example, Gunkel and Kraus identify the psalmist more generally as a worshipper, a refugee, or even a Levite finding himself in the desert. Of course, verse 1, may represent simply a reinterpretation of the psalm by a later redactor.

Kraus suggests that the psalm is probably to be dated to the pre-exilic period. The intercession for the king in verse 12a would thus point to the Jerusalem temple tradition, and would indicate that the psalm is indeed early. As we have already seen, however, some commentators[647] suggest that verse 12 is an addition to the psalm. The usage of the term %lMh (12a) is common in pre-exilic royal psalms (e.g. Pss 2; 21; 72; 110; 132), and so mention of the king might allow us to

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[642] The *Zohar* states that when David wrote this hymn of praise he was in extreme danger in the wilderness of Judah. *Alshich* adds that David while he was in a desolate land he praised God that he was in Holy land and not in foreign land. Also *Radak* identifies wilderness of Judah hdWhy rbdmb with the wilderness of Ziph, where David escaped from Saul; see Avrohom Chaim Feuer, Nosson Scherman, and Meir Zlotowitz (eds.), *Tehillim. Psalms 1-72. A New Translation with a Commentary Anthologized from Talmudic, Midrashic and Rabbinic Sources* (6th edn., ArtScroll Tanach Series. A Traditional Commentary on the Books of the Bible; New York: Mesorah Publications, Ltd. 1999), 776.

[643] See Dahood, *Psalms*, II, 96.

[644] See Anderson, *The Book of Psalms*, I, 459.

[645] See Delitzsch, *Biblischer Kommentar über die Psalmen*, 422; Mowinckel, *Psalmenstudien*, III, 92; Kirkpatrick, *The Book of Psalms*, 352; Dahood, *Psalms*, II, 96.

[646] See Gunkel, *Die Psalmen*, 266; Kraus, *Psalmen*, I, 441.

[647] For example H. Gunkel and P. Boylan; see Gunkel, *Die Psalmen*, 266-269; Boylan, *The Psalms*, 231.

suppose that verse 12 reflects the pre-exilic Yahweh cult.[648] Even if we accept its authenticity, however, we cannot be certain about this point. As Zenger remarks: 'The mention of the king in verse 12 is not an adequate argument for a (late) pre-exilic dating, since ''the king'' could also mean the Persian king, as highest ''legal authority'', ''to pray for whom was an obligation, even in the second Jerusalem Temple (Ezra 6:10; 7:23)''.[649] Psalm 63 (or verse 12) might even be a much later composition, in which the term 'king' was understood messianically by the author, as a figure of the anticipated 'New Kingdom'.[650] In the end, it is difficult to judge whether the author is supposed to be a monarch or not. It seems more certain to suggest that the setting of the psalm was in the Temple. There, in the feeling of security of God's nearness (like being in 'the shelter of God's wings' cf. Pss 17:8; 36:7; 57:1; 61:4; 63:7; Isa 34:15) the psalmist claims to experience an extraordinary spiritual presence and intimate communion with God, expressed in figurative language. The psalm may also have been written in a time of conflict, although it is difficult to discern how far the references to persecution are merely conventional. If loyalty towards the king[651] prompted him to compose the short prayer for his monarch contained in verse 12, then that would fit a pre-exilic setting for the psalm.[652]

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[648] See Weiser, *Die Psalmen*, 309.

[649] Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalmen 51-100*, 194.

[650] See ibid, 194.

[651] In his commentary, W. R. Taylor presents the opposite argument: 'The previous reference to the poet's salute to the king (vs.11) needs little enlargement. It cannot be explained as inspired by any genuine love for him. If the king means Jehoiachin, concern for him would hardly be more than perfunctory. If the reference is to the king of Babylon, it has no meaning; if it means the puppet left in Jerusalem to do the dirty work of Nabuchadrezzar, there is something dishonest in his pious claim; if it refers to an idealized symbol, it is pointless in the present context. If the whole psalm is from one author, we may perhaps conclude that literary amenities demanded that he avert to the king in some way. At this distance, however, we are sure that to have said nothing about him would have better served the purpose of piety'; McCullough and Taylor, *The Book of Psalms*, 332.

[652] A. Weiser argues for similar interpretation; see Weiser, *Die Psalmen,* 309.

It is possible that Psalms 61-63 originally formed one unit used to meet the needs of worship.[653] In his analysis, Asensio combines these three psalms, finding inner connections between them, and interpreting them theologically.[654] Some common themes are indeed to be found in all three psalms,[655] and if Psalms 61-62 could be considered a sort of sermon, Psalm 63 could have the function of a prayer-response by the audience.[656] If so, the psalm might have been used by Israelites in times of spiritual distress and need.[657]

There are also different opinions among scholars about the genre of Psalm 63, and various commentators have classified this psalm as an individual lament[658]; a thanksgiving psalm[659]; a royal psalm[660]; a prayer song[661]; or a song of confidence or assurance.[662] Some recognize in the psalm more than one genre: Lack[663], for example, takes it to be of an individual lament and a song of confidence, and Lorenzin[664] describes the psalm as an individual lamentation, which contains

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[653] In Qumran manuscript 4QPs a, Psalms 62 and 63 are joined together; see Gerard H. Wilson, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter* (SBLDS 76; Chico: Scholars Press, 1985), 116; cf. also Abraham Cohen, *The Psalms. Hebrew Text, English Translation and Commentary* (Hindhead: The Soncino Press, 1945), 197.

[654] See F. Asensio, 'Teologia biblica de un triptico – Salmos 61, 62 y 63,' *EstBib* 21(1962), 111-125.

[655] See Goulder, *The Prayers of David*, 163; cf. also Weber, *Werkbuch Psalmen I*, 283.

[656] Some commentators suggest such possibility as well; e.g. Gerstenberger, *Psalms*, 15-16.

[657] See McKay, 'Psalms of Vigil', 245.

[658] See Gunkel, *Die Psalmen*, 267; Westermann, *The Psalms*, 69; Anderson, *The Book of Psalms*, I, 455; S. Łach, and J. Łach, *Księga Psalmów*, 303.

[659] See Schmidt, *Die Psalmen*, 119; Weiser, *Die Psalmen*, 309; Walter Beyerlin, *Die Rettung der Bedrängten in dem Feindpsalmen der Einzelnen* (FRLANT 99; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970), 138;

[660] See Mowinckel, *Psalmenstudien*, II, 220; Beaucamp, *Le Psautier*, I, 262; Dahood, *Psalms*, II, 96; Eaton, *Kingship and the Psalms*, 50.

[661] See Kraus, *Psalmen*, I, 441.

[662] See Alonso Schökel, and Carniti, *Salmos*, I, 831; Steven J. Croft, *The Identity of the Individual in the Psalms* (JSOTSS 44; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1987), 130; Gerstenberger, *Psalms*, 15.

[663] R. Lack writes: 'Il Salmo 63 appartiene a due generi differenti. I vv. 2-3 sono una supplica individuale. I vv. 4-9, invece, esprimono fiducia e azioni di grazie'; R. Lack, *Mia forza e mio canto é il Signore* (Rome: Edizioni Paoline, 1981), 29.

[664] 'Potremmo ascrivere questo salmo alle supliche individuali in cui le espressioni di ringraziamento, di fiducia e di confidenza rapprezentano il tema principale'; Tiziano Lorenzin, *I salmi. Nuova versione, introduzione e commento* (I Libri Biblici. Primo Testamento 14; Milano: Edizioni Paoline, 2000), 253.

expressions of thanksgiving, of trust and of confidence. These differing opinions concerning the genre of the psalm entail various interpretations of verses, strophes, and of the whole psalm. In the opinion of the author of this study, Psalm 63 could be classed as a song of confidence. The element of confidence in the sheltering presence of God and longing for His presence are emphasized in this psalm. It is a confidence grounded in the lovingkindness of God that is better than life itself (v.4a).[665] Psalm 63 is one of the most impressive poems in the Psalter, in that it contains elements of trust, thanksgiving and praise. It is interesting, in this respect, to note that some commentators, for example Kissane[666], emphasize such a quality of confidence especially in the last strophe of the psalm (vv.10-12).

4. Conclusion

The above textual notes on Psalm 63 provide a basis for a semantic analysis of the psalm. The Hebrew text of Psalm 63 contains some unclear words and expressions, which makes an interpretation of this psalm in some parts more problematic and uncertain. It is difficult to outline the structural division of this psalm in a transparent manner; lack of connection is observed between some verses. However, the structure of the psalm can be recognized in four strophes: v.2; vv.3-6; vv.7-9 and vv.10-12. In the first strophe, verse 2 plays a unique role in the whole of the poem. The psalmist visualises the longing for God by the liberal infusion of metaphorical language. The motif of craving for God is the central theme in this psalm. In spite of some problems in the demarcation of divisions in Psalm 63, it seems that the psalm as a whole, maintains a cohesion and uniformity. The author of this study classified this psalm as a category of song of confidence with elements of trust and thanksgiving. The elements of confidence and trust in God's help and protection are obvious throughout this psalm. In regard to the date

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[665] See Eaton, *The Psalms*, 236.
[666] See Kissane, *The Book of Psalms*, I, 268.

of origin of Psalm 63, we may presume that the psalm might have been composed in the pre-exilic period, but the exact date of composition is uncertain.

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