

**A BIBLICAL-THEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION OF THE  
PHENOMENON OF WONDERS SURROUNDING MOSES, ELIJAH  
AND JESUS**

**By**

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## DECLARATION

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I declare that the thesis hereby submitted by me for the PhD degree in Biblical Theology at the University of the Free State is my own independent work and has not previously been submitted by me at another university/faculty. I furthermore cede copyright of the thesis in favour of the University of the Free State.

J.S. VAN DER WALT.....

Date.....

## **DEDICATION**

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I would like to dedicate this thesis to my wife and best friend, Susan, who stood beside me for so many years. She has been my inspiration and my pillar. Without her support I would never have finished this study.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

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BDB	Brown, Driver, Briggs - Hebrew-Aramaic and English Lexicon of the Old Testament <sup>1</sup>
BGT	BibleWorks Greek LXX/BNT
c.f	confer (compare)
e.g	exempli gratia (for example)
Gr	Greek
Heb	Hebrew
HOL	Holladay - Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament <sup>2</sup>
ISBE	International Standard Bible Encyclopedia
KJV	King James Version
LXX	Septuaginta (Old Greek Jewish Scriptures)
NAS	New American Standard Bible
NIV	New International Version
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament
TWOT	Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament
WTT	Leningrad Codex Hebrew Old Testament

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<sup>1</sup> cf. Bibliography

<sup>2</sup> cf. Bibliography



# **A BIBLICAL-THEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION OF THE PHENOMENON OF WONDERS SURROUNDING MOSES, ELIJAH AND JESUS**

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY**

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#### **1. INTRODUCTION**

##### **1.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE INVESTIGATION**

The subject of this dissertation is to stimulate a debate on the question: Do miracles in both the Old and the New Testament constitute a theological relationship? And, if so, what kind of relationship?

The aim of this study is not to explain the miracles in the Bible or to prove them right, for, in the words of Schweitzer (1910:111), "it is impossible [...] since we are not able to reconstruct the process by which a series of miracle stories arose..." We were not there. The only gateway to the phenomenon of miracles in the Canon of Scriptures is the text in front of us.

It is evident that decisive turning-points in the Scriptures marked their course with the intensification of miracles (Allen 1979:201-202). Sabourin (1971:240) calls them "landmarks". Merrill's suggestion is to call them Epochs (Douglas & Merrill 1989:385). Noticeable is that there are three Epochs surrounding specific figures (Sabourin 1971:240).

The first Epoch surrounds the figure Moses. It opens the period of Israel's salvation history. Probably the greatest wonder during this period is the deliverance of Israel from Egypt itself, even though many different miracles accompanied this event. Exodus 14:31 describes it in the following words: "And Israel saw the great work which the Lord did against the Egyptians, and the people feared the Lord; *and they believed in the Lord* (own highlight) and in his servant Moses". During the first Epoch God "created" for him a "nation". For this "nation" to believe in him, he did marvelous deeds.

The second Epoch marks the ministry of two prophets: Elijah and Elisha. They ministered in a time when Israel had forgotten their God and followed the servants of Baal. The miracles of Elijah and Elisha functioned as a polemic against Baal worship (Waltke 2007:746). A significant miracle during this time is described in 1 Kings 18:17-46, on Mount Carmel. A "restoration" of faith (re-affirmation of Israel as YHWH's people) happened when Israel saw God's act and they replied: "The Lord-he is God! - The Lord-he is God!".

A third Epoch is found in the New Testament in the miracles Jesus did. There are certain similarities between the miracles in the third and first Epoch, and between the third and second Epoch. The similarities are not confined only to the miracles themselves. In all three Epochs similarities are found in clusters or patterns. Furthermore similarities are found in motifs, refrains and themes. The motifs, refrains and themes are not equally strong or consistent in all of the clusters, but they are there. For instance, the miracles of Elijah and Elisha in the first half of the clusters are more numerous than in the second half. They demonstrate patterns similar to those in the narratives of miracles done by Moses. An example of such a pattern is "*need-intervention-resolution*" (Brueggemann 1997:66).

Remarkably, there are similar patterns in the New Testament gospels. In the gospel of Mark miracles are concentrated in the first part of the narratives and grouped together in cycles or clusters, to disappear in the second half of the gospel (Sunderwirth 1975:81).

Furthermore, in all three Epochs there is some kind of oppression. In the first Epoch it is the Egyptians' oppressing the Jews; in the second it is a spiritual oppression – the Israelites are indecisive in following YHWH. They follow Jezebel's prophets and pray to Baal; the third Epoch falls under Roman oppression – the start of the New Testament.

## **1.2 REASON FOR THE INVESTIGATION**

Could it be that the author/s of the New Testament made use of the Old Testament stories when they told the story of Jesus? Are the New Testament miracles recorded in the Gospels dependent on the Old Testament miracles? Brodie (1983:457) calls miracles in the New Testament which denote similarities to miracles in the Old Testament "rhetorical practice of *imitatio*".

In a single question then: Do miracles in both the Old and New Testament constitute a theological relationship? And, if so, what kind of relationship?

This is a debate that needs to be stimulated. The following four reasons motivate the suggestion:

- i. From a Biblical Theological point of view, not much has been written on the subject of miracles in the Old Testament. And from an Old Testament perspective the possibility of a link between miracles in the Old Testament and the New Testament has also not been thought of, as this study will show.
- ii. The miracles tell a story for a reason (Birch, Brueggemann, Fretheim, Petersen 1999:271). The reason was important for the first readers, but is of importance for modern readers as well. In the words of House (2005:237): "The story continues to be told; it continues to be written; it continues to be applied to new audiences". And, "Christian theologians have long believed that the Old Testament can exist as a discrete witness, but also that it can be read as literature that leads naturally to the New Testament" (House 2005:243).
- iii. Mark 9:1-8 describes the transfiguration of Jesus where Moses and Elijah appear with Him on a high mountain. Here the three main figures of the three different Epochs appear together in one instance. Why these three? What theological significance, or link, may there possibly be, especially in the light of the performance of miracles by all three these figures?
- iv. Scobie (1992:4-8) is of opinion that "a major concern of Biblical Theology" relates to "the understanding of the relationship between the Old and New Testament [...]". In other words: A bridge discipline, which "presupposes and builds on historical (and literary) study of individual books and authors". More than ever, Biblical Theology has a rightful place as an independent subject that can be integrated with Old-and-New Testament studies.

### **1.3 METHODOLOGY**

#### **1.3.1 Narratological approach**

For this study, a narratological<sup>1</sup> approach is preferred, as the material discussed in Exodus, Kings and the Gospels consists of narratives (Tolmie 1999:1; Waltke 2007:93).

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<sup>1</sup> Another word for narratology is 'narrative criticism'. This thesis will use the word narratology, suggested by Tolmie (1999:10)

In the words of Brueggemann (1997:69) the Old Testament consists of a “large plot” of “Old Testament” faith. The plot “determines the boundaries of the story as a meaningful whole” (Fokkelman 1999:77). The *large plot* consists of “overarching themes as promise and fulfillment, or deliverance and covenant, or exile and homecoming, or order and freedom [...]”. Brueggemann (1997:69) further states that the “large plot” is constituted by subplots, each of which bears its own weight as theological datum. The same principle will pertain to the New Testament.

Parts of the “overarching themes” are the unexploited miracle stories, integrated in smaller plots found in the three important Epochs mentioned above. The miracle stories are important, because storytelling is “one of the most important cultural expressions” (Crites 1971:291). One such cultural expression is the expression of faith, which, in the case of Israel, was born in approximately 587 BCE, during the Babylonian exile (Kratz 2008:471). Many of these expressions are told as stories. Narratology could therefore be a helpful analytical tool with which to examine the miracle stories recorded in the three mentioned Epochs.

Narratology can be defined “as the systematic study of the typical features of narrative texts” (Tolmie 1999:1); It “observes, analyzes, and systematically classifies how narratives represent their object, how they tell their stories in order to communicate their meaning” (Waltke 2007:93); Narrative criticism’s (narratology’s) goal is to read the text as the implied reader, the knowledgeable reader whom the author imagines as being addressed by the text, would (Powell 1990:19-21).

### **1.3.2 Narratological lens**

Brueggemann (1997:74) says that “The Old Testament in its final form is a product of and a response to the Babylonian exile”. More specifically: “The Deuteronomistic history (Deuteronomy through Kings, excluding Ruth) continues the Primary History initiated in the Pentateuch to Israel’s exile in Babylon” (Waltke 2007:93). During this time of crisis Israel did what many people do in times of difficulty: Introspection. One way of doing introspection is to ask questions: What went wrong? Or, what happened? Or, what is the reason for our being in this crisis situation? For Israel, the crisis of the Babylonian exile brought remembrance of things past. Crites (1971:298) uses the term “Chronicles of memory”: The memory of YHWH’s creational power, great redemptive acts and promises comforted Israel in times of distress.

Kratz (2008:471) distinguishes three main literary works of this time [Babylonian exile], “each of which in its way offers a legend of origin of Israel and at the same time indicates the relation to Judah: they are the legend about the beginning of the kingship and the kingdom of David in 1 Samuel – 1 Kings 2, the Yahwistic primal history and history of the Patriarchs in Genesis 2-35, and the story of the Exodus in Exodus 2 – Joshua 12”.

With this distinction, Kratz touches on the miracles surrounding Moses in Exodus 2-15 and miracles surrounding Elijah and Elisha in 1 Kings 17 – 2 Kings 13. This external history (Babylonian exile) provides the *narratological lens* for the Old Testament part of this dissertation. In other words: The narrative, as told by the narrator/s of the Deuteronomistic history – a crisis-time for Israel in Babylonia, a time of “acute dislocation when appeal could no longer be made to city, king, or temple [...]” (Brueggemann 1997:75) - will be followed. In the New Testament the same principle will apply, with the narratological lens being from the authors of the Synoptic Gospels and John’s point of view.

### **1.3.3 Narratological tools**

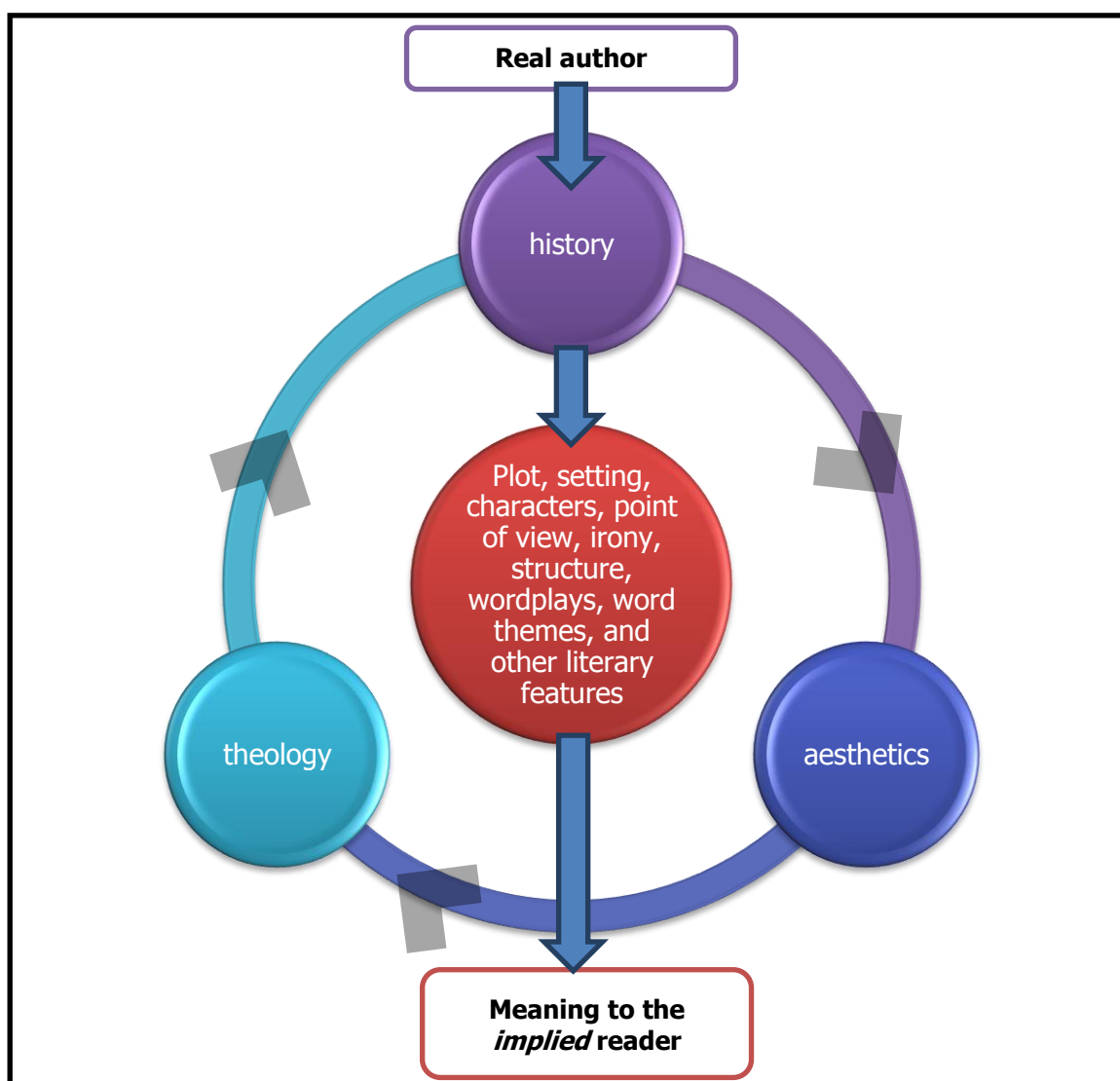
In the last three decades many suggestions for the use of narratology in Biblical studies have been made (Alter 1981; Fokkelman 1999; Goldberg 1982; Hays 2009; Kort 1988; Powell 1990; Tolmie 1999; Vorster 1989). In Biblical narratology a triad-patterned approach has become typical. Sternberg (1985:41-48) says that biblical scholars were concerned with three central elements in their narratives, namely aesthetics, history and ideology. Hays (2009:7) modifies Sternberg’s term of *ideology* to *theology*. In so doing, Hays acknowledges “that the biblical authors are concerned with these three interrelated aspects: aesthetics, history, and theology”.

Aesthetics, according to Hays (2009:7-8), refers to how the “Old Testament narratives are wonderfully complex and skillfully crafted”. The narratives consist of “plot, setting, characters, point of view, irony, structure, wordplays, word themes, and other literary features”. All these elements are used by the author to convey meaning.

History makes the Old Testament miracles real: “The Exodus from Egypt is not a myth in the mind of the biblical author; it is a critically important historical event. However, the biblical authors selected their historical data and crafted that data into complex and

fascinating aesthetic works in order to communicate theology” (Hays 2009:11). Hays (2009:11) continues: “The Old Testament narratives are theological history but are also *narrative*<sup>2</sup> theological history. The authors (both human and divine) are primarily conveying theology”. Therefore, “historicity is inseparably intertwined into this theology”.

To get to the theological heart (what the author wants his audience to hear or see) of the narrative, the implied reader should be aware of the detail of the narrative (plot, setting, characters etc.). These narratives are influenced by the three elements of history, aesthetics and theology. Together they create the plot which enables the implied reader to understand the theological meaning of the narrative. A diagram could give a clearer picture of what Hays’ model intends to do:

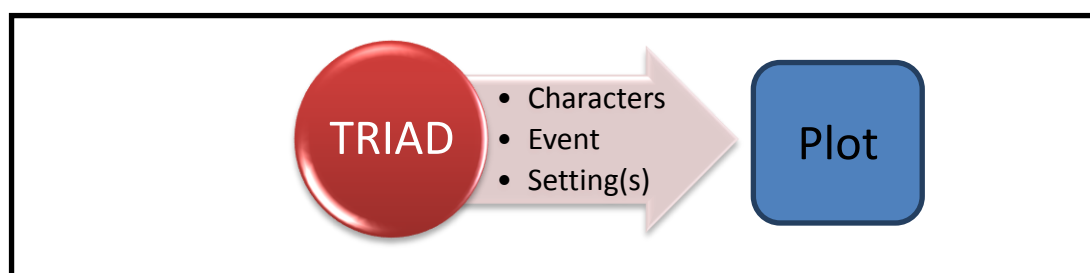


**FIGURE 1.1: A DIAGRAMMATIC OVERVIEW OF THE HAYS’ MODEL**

<sup>2</sup> Own highlight

Fokkelman (1999:192) uses three question-words which can also be regarded as a triad formula. The three question-words, *who*, *what* and *how*, are used to find out *who* the hero of the narrative is; *what* his quest is (the quest consists of action); and *how* the action has been shaped to give the outcome (exit) of the quest. The *how* can also be defined as the plot.

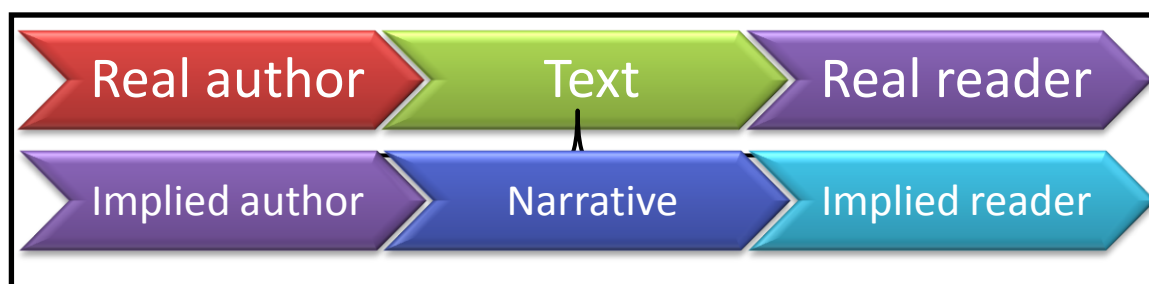
Waltke (2007:93) proposes a triad consisting of characters, events and setting(s), “whose developing interactions create tensions that constitute the *plot*”:



**FIGURE 1.2: INTERACTIONS THAT CONSTITUTE THE *PLOT***

Waltke (2007:94) says that every narrative consists of two components, namely *story* and *plot*. *Story* refers to the content of the narrative (what is outside the text): “the people, things, or events”. *Plot* refers to “the contour of its representation [...]” and it “discerns how the narrator represents the events, characters, settings, and interactions of these elements in his plot”.

Powell (1990:19) gives a three dimensional model consisting of *Author*, *Text* and *Reader*. Powell points out that it is important to know who the author is and for whom (the reader) the text is written. Therefore narrative critics generally speak of an *implied author* and an *implied reader*. Both the implied author and implied reader form part of the text. In other words they are part of the narrative, while the real author and real reader are outside the text or narrative. Powell (1990:19) demonstrates his model with the following diagram:



**FIGURE 1.3: POWELL'S THREE DIMENSIONAL MODEL**

Tolmie (1999:6-9) elaborates on Powell's model. He points out that the real author and real reader are easily identified. The concept *real author* "is used to refer to the person(s) who actually wrote the narrative text". Furthermore "The concept *real reader* is used to indicate the actual person who is reading the narrative text – in this case, it will be you and I". Tolmie warns that the concept *implied author* and *implied reader* is "open to misunderstanding as a result of the different and even contradictory ways in which it is used [...]" (Tolmie 1999:6).

Tolmie is of opinion that it is better to use the concepts of *implied author* and *implied reader* in "a depersonified sense". In this sense it is not "defined primarily in terms of its relationship to the real author [and real reader], but in terms of the narrative text itself" (Tolmie 1999:7). Vorster (1989:27) gives a definition which helps to better understand the concept of *implied reader*: "The reader in the text is a literary construct, an image of a reader which is selected by the text. It is implied by the text, and in this sense it is encoded in the text by way of linguistic, literary, cultural, and other codes. It is not identical to any outside flesh-and-blood reader. It is an image that is created by the author which has to be constructed by the real reader through the reading process in order to attribute meaning to the text, which is to actualize the text. The construction of the reader in the text is central to the establishment of the meaning of a narrative according to this view".

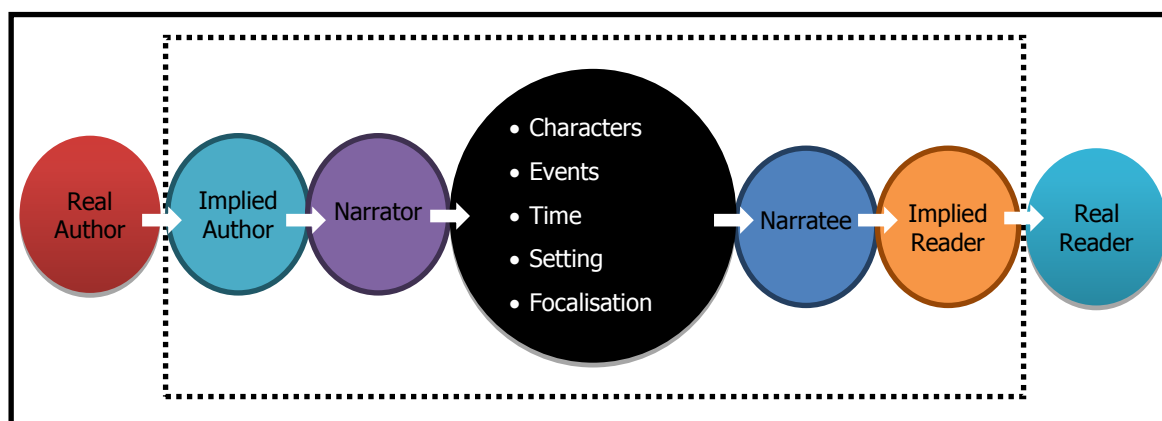
The *implied author*, on the other hand, "should be seen as the overall textual strategy in the sense of a static overarching view of the narrative text [...]" (Tolmie 1999:9). For instance, the *implied author* can see what is ahead, in the future, what was in the past and what is happening at present. In other words: S/he knows the text forward and backward. The implied reader can only follow (know) what s/he has read. In other words the implied reader only has knowledge of what has been read up to the given moment.

Between the *implied author* and the *implied reader*, lies what can be described as the plot. The plot consists of characters, events, time, setting, and focalization and is embraced by the narrator and the narratee. Vorster (1989:23) puts it this way: "It is common knowledge that every story has a storyteller (narrator) and somebody to whom the story is told (narratee), no matter whether it is an oral or a written story. But the real author is not identical with the narrator. Even in the case where the author tells the story (author = narrator) it is necessary to pay attention to the voice of



the narrator as a narrative instance. Distinct from the real author, the narrator also differs from the implied author”.

Tolmie (1999:6) gives the following diagram to clarify the discussion on real author/real reader; implied author/implied reader; narrator/narratee; and plot, mentioned above:



**FIGURE 1.4: TOLMIE'S DIAGRAM**

## 1.4 STRUCTURAL OUTLINE

Chapter 2 gives a Brief overview of Biblical Theology from an Old Testament perspective. Beginning at the “Aufklärung” and ending in “this contemporary situation”. This could only be done briefly, as the focus of this dissertation does not lean on the history of Biblical Theology. Some scholars, like Enns (1989:19) believe that the expression, “Biblical Theology movement” ended with von Rad’s second volume of Old Testament theology in 1960. However, the debate is far from over. This study will show that Biblical Theology is still alive.

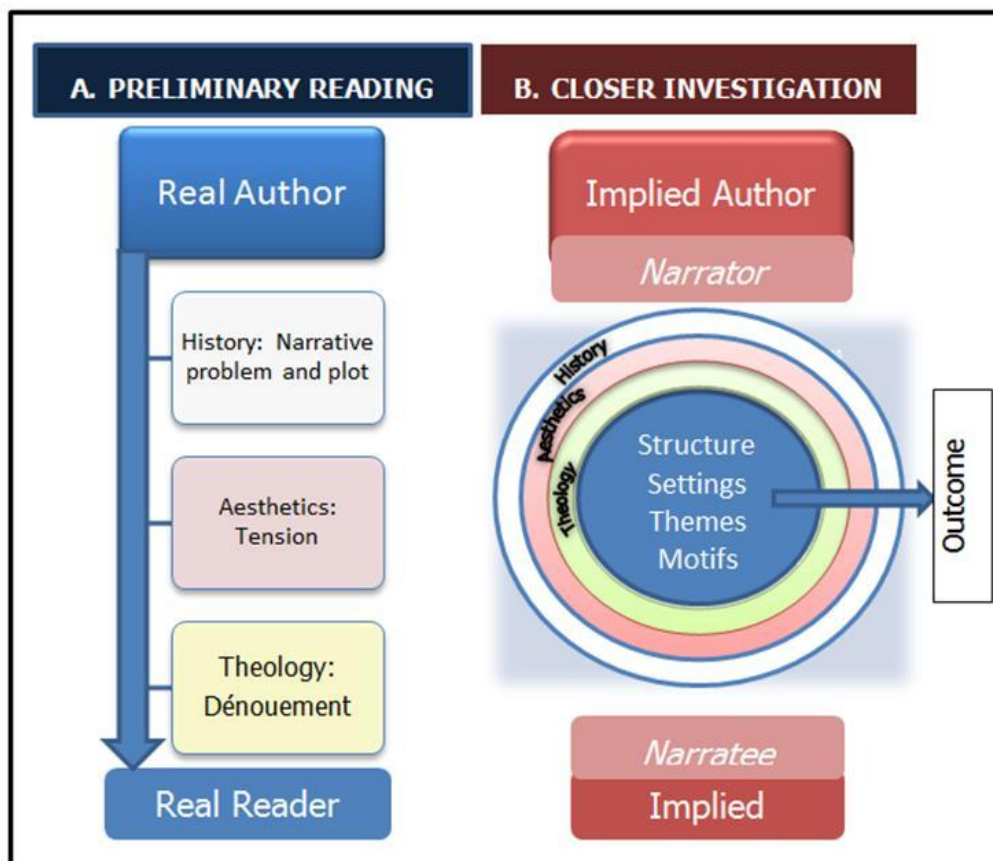
By following the path of Biblical Theology, the reader will be able to make a contribution towards stimulating the current debate. Also, it will help in defining and writing on the subject of Miracles in the Old and New Testament.

Chapter 2 follows a chronological order; therefore it is an inevitability that in some instances ‘Old Testament Theologies’ and in other instances ‘Biblical Theologies’ would be looked at. Chapter Two therefore begins by defining both Biblical Theology and Old Testament Theology.

Another important aspect of chapter two is to see if any notice of miracles in the Old Testament has been taken by (Old Testament) Theologians. In order to partake in the Theological debate regarding miracles in the three Epochs mentioned, it is necessary to get a grip on historical and contemporary thoughts regarding Biblical Theology, as this thesis will be written within a Biblical Theological framework.

Chapter 3 is the actual beginning of the investigation regarding miracles. Words or concepts denoting miracles will be looked at. This will enable a definition to be written regarding miracles in the Old Testament, as well as miracles in the New Testament. This will also help the "real reader" to be extra aware of the miracle stories imbedded in the three Epochs to be investigated.

Bearing in mind the diagram constructed on Powell's model and the diagram of Tolmie, the following diagram will illustrate the methodological tools which will be used in chapters four to six of this dissertation:



**FIGURE 1.5: STRUCTURAL OUTLINE**

Chapters 4 to 6 investigate the three Epochs surrounding the figures of Moses, Elijah and Jesus<sup>3</sup>. Each of these chapters will consist of two divisions. The first division (A) is *preliminary reading* of the narrative, written by the real author/s. During the *preliminary reading* the *real reader* will become aware of the historical background of the narrative and the aesthetical “tools” which the *implied author* used to “mould” the theological message the narrator had to present.

The second division (B) will be a *closer investigation* regarding the aesthetical tools which were identified during the *preliminary reading* in division A. The specific use of *structure, settings, themes* and *motifs* within the narrative plot will show how the miracle stories have been used to strengthen the theological outcome (exit) of the narrative. *Structure, settings, themes* and *motifs* are intertwined with *History, Aesthetics* and *Theology* (Dénouement), therefore the concentric circles (colour coded in white, pink and green) surrounding these aspects. In chapters 4 to 6, the NIV translation of Scripture texts will mainly be used, if not, it will be indicated what translation/s was/were used.

The last chapter attempts to point out that the similarities, found in miracle stories within the three different epochs, are visible within the cadre of *Structure, Settings, Themes*, and especially, *Motifs*<sup>4</sup> (). The question of why the similarities between miracle stories in the different epochs, their theological relationship, and the kind of theological relationship, will be addressed. Finally, to conclude the thesis, some suggestions for further study will be given.

---

<sup>3</sup> In order to narrow down the scope of investigation the Elisha narratives will not be looked at in detail.

<sup>4</sup> A motif could be understood as a dominant or distinctive, or even unifying idea within literary work.

## CHAPTER 2

### A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FROM AN OLD TESTAMENT PERSPECTIVE

---

#### 2. HISTORY OF RESEARCH

##### 2.1 BRIEF OVERVIEW OF BIBLICAL THEOLOGY (AN OLD TESTAMENT PERSPECTIVE)

###### 2.1.1 Defining Biblical Theology

There are two ways in which to understand 'Biblical Theology': They can "either denote a theology contained within the Bible or a theology which accords with the Bible" (Childs 1993:3). In the first definition the task of Biblical Theology is to be a "descriptive, historical one which seeks to determine what the theology of the biblical authors themselves was". The second definition understands the task of Biblical Theology "to be a constructive, theological one which attempts to formulate a modern theology compatible in some sense with the Bible" (Childs 1993:3).

The history of Biblical Theology shows an interesting journey. In his book, *The Ways of Our God*, Scobie (1992:4) rightfully recognizes three trends throughout history when discussing the definition of Biblical Theology. Firstly, he calls work pursued prior to 1787 *integrated* Biblical Theology. This means that there has been no clear distinction between the teaching of the Bible and that of the church, until J.P. Gabler distinguished between biblical and dogmatic theology in 1787. Secondly, Scobie (1992:4) labels efforts after 1787 as *independent* Biblical Theology. The reason is that the original theology of the Bible, investigated by historical methods, was distinct from later dogmatic theology. Thirdly, he advocates an *intermediate* Biblical Theology that stands between *integrated* and *independent* theologies (Scobie 1992:4).

Biblical Theology differs from systematic theology, as it has a narrower focus. Information is drawn from the Bible, "using historical information that expands or clarifies the historical events of the Bible" (Enns 1989:21). Biblical Theology is also exegetical in nature. It examines doctrines, or words and statements of particular writers in various periods of history.

### 2.1.2 Defining Old Testament Theology

To define Old Testament Theology one has to start with the word 'theology' first. Theology is a Greek word which means "the study of God". It implies that "those who undertake to study God will learn a great deal about God's nature, actions and attitudes". They will in turn "discover how God relates to the created world, including the human race" (House 1998:53). House further mentions that "all analyses begin with God and flow to other vital subjects". Old Testament theology then can be defined "as the task of presenting what the Old Testament says about God as a coherent whole" (House 1998:53). House (1998:53) says that one can only "compose a viable and balanced theological work" by keeping God at the forefront of the research.

Bullock (2003:99) says that Old Testament theology is "the *explanation of the writings of the Old Testament in their biblical settings*. In those writings God has revealed his will for Israel and the world". This means that the reader "seeks to know God's will as revealed in the Old Testament".

The purpose of Old Testament theology then, according to Westermann (1991:16) is contained in the question: "What does the Old Testament have to say about God?" Waltke (2007:49) is of opinion that Old Testament theology should seek the answer to the questions: "What are major religious concerns and ideas (i.e., what is the message) of the Old Testament, and how did that message develop?" Waltke's definition of Old Testament Theology however, sounds nothing different from the task of Biblical Theology. On this remark it is interesting to note Hasel's remark when he says that "Old Testament Theology is part of Biblical Theology, the former cannot be studied in isolation from the latter" (Hasel 1989:15) and "for every Christian theologian OT theology is and must remain a part of Biblical theology" (Hasel 1989:145).

According to Brueggemann (1997:1) "Old Testament study receives its shapening, governing questions from two sources". Firstly, the discipline has a long history in both church and academy. That history still has a strong influence in current discussions. Secondly, there are contemporary scholars who ask new questions, arising out of their current contexts. In another book he says that a crucial issue for Old Testament theology is the cultural-liturgical reality in which Israel finds itself,

because it “concerns what is definitive in Old Testament faith, that is, what are the core claims that characterize the God of Israel and Israel as the people of that God” (Brueggemann 2008:7).

## 2.2 FROM MODERN TO POST-MODERN

Modern epistemology has its origin in the 16<sup>th</sup> century; therefore scholars like Brueggemann (1997:2) make the Reformation the beginning point of Old Testament Theology. Within church and theological circles the Reformation can be seen as the starting point of the modern era.

**Martin Luther**, to begin with, was a “Biblical interpreter”. He realized that one of the major shortcomings in the church of his time was the “comparative lack of a thorough knowledge of Scripture, on the part of both clergy and laity” (Lehmann 1960a:151). Therefore, in 1519, he worked on a series of sermons which were to explain the Gospels and Epistles for each Sunday of the church year.

His intellectual and interpretive courage set the work of Biblical Theology in a whole new direction. Worthy of mention, is that Luther emphasized that the Scripture has its own voice. God revealed Himself through His Word (voice) to all people and not only to the administration of the Roman Catholic Church. Luther quotes from the Bible in John 5:39 to make his statement clear: “Search the Scriptures, for it is they that bear witness to me”. Luther furthermore reminds us that someone like Paul, teaches us in Romans 1:2 and 1 Corinthians 15 “that the Scriptures of the Old Testament are not to be despised, but diligently read” (Lehmann 1960b:235-236).

Another person who had an immense influence in the *Reformational* reading of the Bible was **John Calvin**. His institutes though, were not seen as a systematic theology, but rather as a guide to reading the Bible with an evangelical scope: “[...] it will be a kind of key opening up to all the children of God a right and ready access to the understanding of the sacred volume” (Calvin 1989:23). In this sense, like Luther, Calvin regarded the Bible as having its own voice, for every person to read and understand.

Still, the Reformation has set the foundation for students who followed and who insisted with great passion that their evangelical modes of Bible reading arose from

“the substance of the biblical text itself”. The Reformation indeed started a new way of thinking about the Bible and did not leave Biblical studies without any problems. It seems that a “difficult relation between the Bible and the church theology” appeared (Brueggemann 1997:5). In other words: In relation to one another, text and the reading community differed from each other. It can be seen clearly in the way that three groups of bible readers differed in their understanding of the bible text: The Orthodox sought to enlist the Bible in defense of Reformation doctrine. The Rationalists adhered to newer modes of autonomous learning that eventuated in Deism, and the Pietisms resisted both hardened orthodoxy and autonomous rationalism.

Philosophical advances are said to have begun with Descartes and his program of rationalism. Some other names to mention, that followed in the footsteps of Descartes are those of Immanuel Kant and George Hegel. In their epistemology they focused on the human agent as the “doubter and knower who could by objective reason come to know what is true and reliable” (Brueggemann 1997:8). Hegel applied his well-known triadic theory “to the historical evolution of religion and divided the field into three sections: (1) nature religions, (2) religions of spiritual individuality, (3) absolute or universal religion” (Harrington 1973:21).

### **2.2.1 An important turning point**

In 1787, at the University of Altdorf, Gabler urged that a clear distinction should be drawn between “biblical and dogmatic theology, and after we separate those things which in the sacred books refer most immediately to their own times and to the men [...] let us then construct the foundation of our philosophy upon religion and let us designate with some care the objectives of divine and human wisdom” (Gabler 1992:496). He proposed a definition to distinguish between Biblical and dogmatic theology, saying that Biblical Theology is historical in character and sets forth what the sacred writers thought about divine matters; while dogmatic theology, on the contrary, is didactic in character, and teaches what a particular theologian philosophically and rationally decides about divine matters, in accordance with his character, time, age, place, sect or school, and other similar influences (Gabler 1992:495-496). By this definition a sound line between Biblical Theology and dogmatism was drawn (Bright 1975:114).

Although Gabler never wrote or intended to write a Biblical Theology, “he made a most decisive and far-reaching contribution to the development of the new discipline” (Hasel 1977:21). He clearly defined the boundaries between Biblical Theology and dogmatic theology. He was also the first to show that Biblical Theology and dogmatic theology are, although distinct disciplines, complementary to each other. Still, Gabler wasn’t able to write a satisfactory Biblical Theology.

Hence, without knowing it, Gabler’s “programmatically declarations gave direction to the future of Biblical (OT and NT) theology despite the fact that his program for Biblical Theology was conditioned by his time and contains significant limitations” (Hasel 1977:22).

### **2.2.2 The first Biblical Theology of the Old Testament and the birth of historical criticism**

“The first person to make use of Gabler’s principles was G.L. Bauer, when he wrote his *Theologie des Alten Testaments* (Harrington 1973:20). Bauer’s aim was to give an outline of the religious ideas of the ancient Hebrews. To do so he divided his subject into two main divisions: Theology and Anthropology. The main criticism against his work was the lack of history. Bauer is also known “for having separated Biblical Theology into OT and NT theology” (Hasel 1977:23). His *Theologie des Alten Testaments* has the threefold structure of (i) Theology, (ii) Anthropology, and (iii) Christology.

In the seventeenth century the human capacity to reason, to think through and to make judgments emerged as the trustworthy and reliable arbiter. Within one generation the church could not rely on tradition as a trustworthy source for proclaiming the “gospel truth” any more. A new trend in theological thinking emerged, called **historical criticism**. The outcome of this new thinking was to “relativize the revelatory claims of the text and treat it like any other book” (Brueggemann 1997:10). A scholarly tradition developed with growing consensus among critical scholars: *Which texts were older? How had they been transmitted and changed in transmission? Which texts were more reliable?* In this context it is not the Bible that gives answers to moral questions, but the Bible is under questioning itself.



### 2.2.3 The rise of history

In the nineteenth century, especially under the influence of **Hegel**, the rise of history is witnessed. This stands in tension with the older reigning rationalism of the eighteenth century. History became a dominant mode of knowing. In other words: Everything was understood to have a history; everything developed in some or other way. Events were investigated and put in chronological order.

The new theological development wasn't without tension though. Brueggemann puts it this way: "[...] in the nineteenth century new issues were posed in terms of historical development, which moved away from a settled reality to a developing reality" (Brueggemann 1997:11). The tension in other words, was between eighteenth-century *absolutism* and nineteenth-century *developmentalism*<sup>1</sup>.

Again a new period opens with the publication of **J. Wellhausen's** book "*Prolegomena to the History of Israel*" in 1878 (Harrington 1973:23). A new generation emerged at the influence of Hegel and Darwin. Indeed there came a turning point in the way the Old Testament had been studied. According to Wellhausen, you can't speak "of a theology of the Old Testament"; you can only explain Israel's religion. In other words: How their history has been presented. For the next forty years Wellhausen's methodology was followed by scholars such as **A. Kayser** and **R. Smend**.

After the 1920's, **Albrecht Alt** and **Martin Noth** also saw themselves as historians (Brueggemann 1997:21). Alt studied two hypotheses that became crucial for scholars in the next period. On form-critical grounds, Alt distinguished between case law (casuistic law) and apodictic law. Casuistic law was older than Israel and was also found in other cultures. Apodictic law voiced absolute commandments and prohibitions like we find for instance in the Ten Commandments given by God to Moses on Mount Sinai (Brueggemann 1997:21).

Furthermore, Alt studied the religion of Israel in Genesis 12-36 and found that - besides the God of the fathers - other gods (El-Roi and El-Elyon) were mentioned. They were linked with places. But the God of Israel (God of the fathers) was attached to His people and it was He who took His people to the Promised Land. Alt believed

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<sup>1</sup> Brueggemann (1997:11) rightfully states that this tension still operates in the church today, under the unhappy labels of so-called liberals (developmentalists) and conservatives (absolutists).

that the people who became Israel, entered the land of Canaan as scattered groups of nomads, gradually settled down and formed tribal alliances, and eventually gained control of the land (Nicholson 2004:2).

Alt's imputes on the apodictic law and the God of the fathers led Noth to focus on the twelve tribes of Israel. Noth (1971:86) speaks about the re-presentation of the Old Testament and defines it as something that "deals with the acts of God in history, his saving acts, and his demands". The way in which the *re-presentation* takes place is to proclaim "the saving acts of God, by *telling* them" over and over. Over a period of time then, this *telling* has been put together in a book (the Old Testament), and Noth argues that the only way for us to understand the "re-presentation", which was presented in an ancient language, different culture and traditions, is through exegesis: "historical exegesis appropriate to the matter, yes, even 'historico-critical' exegesis, that is, exegesis which knows how to test and to 'discriminate'" (Noth 1971:88).

#### **2.2.4 Towards a new debate**

After World War 1 (1914-1918) a new debate emerged between **Eissfeldt** and **König**. König's method was "to give a survey of the history of Israel's religion and then discuss, systematically, the ideas and factors which were a part of that history" (Harrington 1973:25). Eissfeldt said that there should be a place for Biblical Theology. In his words: "The tension between absolute and relative, between transcendence and imminence, is the current problem of theology. For biblical scholarship, this general problem is reduced to a particular one: history and revelation. It is with this problem that the "study of both Testaments [...] has to grapple", and "[...] a new solution must be found that applies fundamentally to both" (Eissfeldt 1992:20).

This made scholars think and put them to the pen, but it was **Walter Eichrodt** who wrote an important model in 1933. He saw the Old Testament as a "self-contained entity" exhibiting a constant basic tendency and character (Eichrodt 1961:11). He worked on one idea, namely the covenant of God. More specifically: *covenant relationships*. He argued that Old Testament theology is a "great systematic task which consists in making a cross-section through the historical process and laying bare the inner structures of the religion in its classic forms" (Hasel 1989:49).

Although Eichrodt acknowledged the historical dynamics and change in text that preoccupied the 19<sup>th</sup> century critical scholarship, he took aim against the "entire

descriptive enterprise of historical criticism" (Brueggemann 1997:27). Eichrodt's complete *Theology of the Old Testament* was indeed a very important contribution in the field of Biblical Theology.

**Theodore Vriezen's** "Outline of Old Testament Theology" differs somewhat from other theologies of the Old Testament as it is directly related to the work and faith of the Christian theologian (Vriezen 1970:147). His study is divided into two parts: in the first part he deals with the place and interpretation of the Old Testament in Christianity and in the second part he deals with the message of the Old Testament itself as it is understood by modern scholars and the value that it has in the church (Harrington 1973:50,54).

In his work there is a golden thread that he describes as "the kingdom of God". It is through faith then, he says, that people discovered the universalism of God's sovereignty and "because God holds history in the 'hollow of his hand', he will bring that history to end in his advent as king in perfect communion between himself and mankind". In this fundamental point of faith, he says, "the New Testament is in complete agreement with the Old. And for that reason the communion between God and man is the best starting point for a Biblical Theology of the Old Testament [...]" (Vriezen 1970:175).

### **2.2.5 New directions: From history to text**

And so we come to **Gerhard Von Rad**, who was a student of Alt and Noth. He worked with the second great model for Old Testament theology. Twenty years after Eichrodt's book, Von Rad's book "Theologie des Alten Testaments" appeared in two volumes. The year was 1957. Like Alt and Noth, Von Rad regards the pre-monarchal, tribal Israel, as a theologically normative period. But as early as 1938 he had already written an enormously influential essay on Deuteronomy 26:5-9, 6:20-24, and Joshua 24:1-13. He made use of a *form critical* analysis when he studied Israel's theology as a narrative rendering of what had happened in Israel's past. It unfolds in three phases: The "Vorbau" (Gen. 1-11); The "Ausbau" (Gen. 12-50); and the "Einbau" (inclusion of Sinai material). In other words, according to Von Rad, Israel's Theology is an ongoing process, a narrative which is carried over from one generation to another, also known as their *credo* (Von Rad 2001:xiii-xiv).

It is clear by now that a new direction in Old Testament Theology had been followed: "the move from history to text". It is also important to note that "this direction in biblical study is concerned, not with the history of events residing behind the text or with developing traditions that eventuated in the present canon; rather it is concerned with the character, structure, composition, content and theological status of the text itself" (Perdue 1994:153). Two methods were followed: One method was to regard the Old Testament as Scripture. The other path was where scholars interpreted the Bible as literature by using a great variety of literary methods.

### **2.2.6 More new directions: Incorporating the New Testament**

**Brevard Childs** followed the first path, also known as a Canonical approach. His method, in his own words, was to offer suggestions "for a new approach in doing Biblical Theology which takes the canon of the Christian church more seriously" (Childs 1974a:10).

What he suggests is a new model, which works with the Old and New Testament as a unity. In his book, "Biblical Theology in Crisis", Childs says that the "New Testament consistently makes a claim to be in continuity with the Old Testament's understanding of God". To see if this statement is true, he suggests that one "determine how the Old Testament's understandings of God functioned in their original, historical contexts, and then to compare them with the New Testament's usage". Then the goal would be to "see if one can determine the particular role of a witness within its setting, and then sketch its inner movement within the whole range of Old Testament usage". Finally one would "seek to relate the inner movement and the outer structure of the Old Testament witness to its function within the New Testament" (Childs 1974a:211).

In essence (as Perdue puts it) Childs "makes two fundamental assertions that reside at the basis of his approach. First, the canon, not history, is the proper and primary context for interpretation. This means... that the interpretation of a single text occurs within the entire canon". Secondly the "Old Testament is a normative, authoritative collection of texts that is intrinsically theological", meaning that the texts were "intentionally shaped by communities of faith to address a Word of God to future generations" (Perdue 1994:157). In other words: Both the historical and theological dimensions must be taken into account for a proper understanding of the canon.

Eventually Childs puts his suggested method for a new approach to Biblical Theology to the pen in his work "Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context". He does not write as if this is the final answer: "There is no one hermeneutical key for unlocking the biblical message, but the canon provides the arena in which the struggle for understanding takes place" (Childs 1989:15). Four years later he produced a monumental work in that he wrote the "first comprehensive Biblical Theology to appear in many years [...]" It was the "culmination of Brevard Child's lifelong commitment to constructing a Biblical Theology that surmounts objections to the discipline raised over the past generation" (Childs 1993:*back cover*).

### 2.3 THE POST-MODERN ERA

The 21<sup>st</sup> century is recognised as the post-modern era: The era of *non-foundationalism*. It argues that the quest for foundations, "in the sense of unassailably certain beliefs, is misguided" (Collins 2005:4).

**Walter Brueggemann** made an impressive new approach to the subject of Biblical Theology to formulate a *non-foundational* approach. Brueggemann argues that "in every period of the discipline, the questions, methods, and possibilities in which study is cast, arise from the socio-intellectual climate in which the work must be done [...]" Therefore, in the current, post-modern situation "the great new fact is that we live in a pluralistic context, in which many different interpreters in many different specific contexts representing many different interests are at work on textual interpretation [...]" and "[...] the great interpretive reality is that there is no court of appeal behind these many different readings [...]" (Brueggemann 1997:11). Earlier he mentioned: "[...] we are in a quite new interpretive situation that constitutes something of an emergency. That emergency in interpretation is the result of a radical shift of categories of culture [...]" It is inevitable that our categories of interpretation are deeply influenced by and in large part informed by the modes of culture in which they are practiced, as in every generation" (Brueggemann 1993:1).

Brueggemann argues, that, as there is no foundation outside the text, "speech constitutes reality, Yahweh lives in, with, and under this speech, and in the end depends on Israel's testimony for an access point to the world" (Brueggemann 1997:65). In his *Theology of the Old Testament* then, to explain what he means by "speech constitutes reality", he uses the method of a metaphor: That of a courtroom.

In the courtroom there is "testimony", but also "counter-testimony". In other words: Different perspectives. Brueggemann argues that both the testimony and the counter-testimony must be held in tension, because "Lived faith in this tradition consists in the capacity to move back and forth between these two postures of faith" (Brueggemann 1997:400).

Although not against historical criticism, Brueggemann takes a new step in Biblical Theology. He works with what he has in front of him, namely, the text. In the text we find Israel's speech about God. In his words: "Israel's testimonies and counter testimonies". Barr summarises it correctly: "Thus Israel's speech about God is imagined as testimony before 'the court', and as such it falls into four great sections: Israel's 'core testimony', her 'counter testimony', her 'unsolicited testimony', and her 'embodied testimony'" (Barr 1999:543).

Furthermore Barr is correct when he states about Brueggemann's Theology: "The outstanding characteristic of this work, however, is its being centered upon *rhetoric*, to an extent nowhere near approached, so far as I know, by any other major Old Testament Theology" (Barr 1999:544). In Brueggemann's own words: "Our post-modern situation, which refuses to acknowledge a settled essence behind our pluralistic claims, must make a major and intentional investment in the practice of rhetoric, for the shape of reality finally depends on the power of speech" (Brueggemann 1997:71).

To conclude this section, it is clear that in over two centuries, there was "no consensus concerning the methodology of Old Testament theology" (Enns 1989:30). However, there had been considerable diversity in the development of an Old Testament theology, as this dissertation thus far has shown.

Some other proposals were made by Hasel (canonical approach); Kaiser ("promise" as theme); Martens (God's design). But it is not in the interest of this study to go into further detail about methods of Old Testament theology. This is only a brief overview. Can we still say then, in the words of Brevard Childs, that Biblical Theology is in a *crisis*? It seems not so, as shall be seen in the next section. In the space of less than ten years, a flood of Biblical Theologies came to be written by numerous scholars. Truly, a period of "theology writing" has arrived again, but "much more nuanced and less pretentious" (Wessels 2006:1032).

We will now give a brief overview of the contemporary situation within the development of Biblical Theology. One thing is clear though: we have moved, in the space of two centuries, from a modern world of thinking to a post-modern world of thinking...

## 2.4 THE CONTEMPORARY SITUATION

In this section the aim is to find out what was written in the field of Biblical Theology from 2000 till 2010. Interestingly, it is clear that during a period of almost 30 years (1970-1997), there has been a "drought" regarding the writing of Biblical Theologies. But then, from 2000 onwards, in the space of 10 years, there seems to have been a "flood" of Biblical Theologies.

In 1991 John Reumann wrote in the introduction to a book of which he had been the editor: "For the last decade or so Biblical Theology, especially in the forms in which it had been known in the past, has been in eclipse. Yet harbingers of revival or metamorphosis again exist" (Reumann 1991:1). Then, in 2006, Meadowcroft noticed that there had been, over the past fifteen or so years, a recovery of confidence in the possibilities of Old Testament theology, partly as a result of Brevard Childs' influence and partly because his work had coincided with the emergence of post-modern contextualised epistemologies (Meadowcroft 2006:38).

Though Childs had been concerned about the future of Biblical Theology, he had had a remarkable influence on the outcome of future works. Meadowcroft (2006:38) says that "Goldingay and Brueggemann have each benefited from Childs' renewal of respect for the received text and from the possibilities of contextualized interpretation opened up by post-modern epistemologies".

There are surely new challenges, as new scholars with "new" ideas point out. It seems that the contemporary situation (2000 onwards) struggles with two words though: Foundationalism and non-foundationalism. For the *non-foundationalists* (post-modernists) nothing is certain: "the quest for foundations, in the sense of unassailably certain beliefs, is misguided... There is no neutral ground from which to evaluate competing claims" (Collins 2005:4).

Foundationalism relies on historical facts. Every story has a beginning, or history. Since Brueggemann wrote a Biblical Theology based on rhetoric, some scholars followed in his footsteps, while others tried a method of combining rhetoric and historical facts. Perdue believes that a combination works best: “while there are major tensions between various approaches to Old-Testament theology, there are significant points of contact that should allow for fruitful discourse” (Perdue 2005:23). A few scholars in *this contemporary situation*<sup>2</sup> are worth mentioning.

Although he did not write a Theology of the Old Testament, we begin with **James Barr**. His name is worth mentioning, as he had for many years been an “exacting critic both of the task of Old Testament theology and of most of its practitioners” (Meadowcroft 2006:39).

#### **2.4.1 Keeping the debate warm**

Barr kept the debate on Biblical Theology warm. His book: “the concept of Biblical Theology”, was published in 1999. He elucidates the key methodological issues surrounding Old Testament theology. This is of crucial importance to the practice of Biblical Theology and systematic theology. Barr also insists on a distinction between what the text of scripture meant and what it means (Barr 1999:197).

He admits that most people and strands of tradition function effectively with a canon within a canon (Barr 1999:380-387). According to him, this is part of the process. He places the rhetorical claims of particular points of view against the actual practices of the claimants. “He challenges those who believe that all scripture is equally revelatory by pointing out ways in which that belief is routinely denied in practice” (Meadowcroft 2006:42).

#### **2.4.2 The reader’s perspective**

During 2001, two years after Barr’s book, *The Concept of Biblical Theology*, a Theology of the Old Testament appeared from the pen of **Erhard Gerstenberger**. It was translated into English in 2002 by John Bowden.

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<sup>2</sup> I speak of *this contemporary situation* as I know that for now it is contemporary, but in a few years’ time it will also be history...



Significantly, the title of Gerstenberger's book, *Theologies in the Old Testament*, says much of what he is aiming at. In his own words: "The title of this work [...] emphasizes the plural: 'Theologies in the Old Testament'. Usually a self-confident singular is used". The reason for his choice, according to him, is relatively simple: "The Old Testament, a collection of many testimonies of faith from around a thousand years of history of ancient Israel, has no unitary theology, nor can it..." Gerstenberger says that the unity of belief in God does not lie in the texts themselves, but solely in **the reader's perspective**. "We use what the Bible says as guidance for our faith and action" (Gerstenberger 2002:1). This is a typical *post-modern* assumption.

Gerstenberger emphasizes the plurality and the "clearly recognizable syncretism of the Old Testament tradition" as an "extraordinary stroke of good fortune". He feels that the diversity of theologies opens up for us a "view of other peoples, times and ideas of God" (Gerstenberger 2002:1). He also "bridges the gap in previous debates by taking the social contexts very seriously" (Wessels 2006:1040).

Unlike Brueggemann, Gerstenberger does not give an overview of the history of Biblical Theology. He gets right to the point. His book is comprised of ten chapters. Chapter One is a short chapter explaining his title. In Chapter Two he contextualizes himself, spelling out some "crucial hermeneutical principles as prerequisites for exegetical work" (Wessels 2006:1040). Wessels (2006:1040) confirms that these principles "take into account the fact that we live in worlds which differ from those people who formulated these theologies of the Old Testament".

Chapter Three forms the structure for the discussion to follow. He gives a sketch of the social history of Israel. First (Chapter Four) is the Deity in the circle of family and clan; then (Chapter Five) the deities of the village community and small town; the tribal alliance (Chapter Six) follows; then kingdom Theologies in Israel (Chapter Seven); and, lastly, the confessional and parochial communities. Chapter Eight discusses the faith communities after the deportation, followed by discussions in Chapter Nine of polytheism, syncretism and the one God. Chapter Ten addresses the contemporary situation in which he focuses on fifteen different issues.

Wessels is right when he acknowledges Gerstenberger's real contribution in his last chapter, when he looks at different periods in the history of Israel and opens up the thoughts and ideas which emanate from them (Wessels 2006:1041).

### 2.4.3 Back to the narrative

In the first volume of a proposed three-volume Old Testament Theology, **John Goldingay** focuses on narrative. He examines the biblical order of God's creation of and interactions with the world and Israel. Then he tells the story of Israel's gospel as a series of divine acts. In each major Chapter he has "God" as the subject, followed by an active verb: "God Began (Goldingay 2003:42); God Started Over (p.131); God Promised (p.193); God Delivered (p.288); God Sealed (p.369); God Gave (p.451); God Accommodated (p.529); God Wrestled (p.613); God Preserved (p.696); and God Sent (p.789)". Goldingay follows in the footsteps of Childs, in that he incorporated the story of Jesus in his theology. This makes Goldingay's Theology a true Biblical Theology.

The second volume is about the discursive thinking that expresses Israel's belief and story of their lifestyle, worship and ethics (Goldingay 2006:16). In other words: The first volume begins with the historical material, while the second focuses on the prophet's writings and the third on the Writings (Psalm and wisdom material). "The division of Goldingay's three volumes therefore roughly coincides with the traditional threefold division of the Hebrew Bible into Torah, Prophets and Writings" (Meadowcroft 2006:47).

It is noticeable that Goldingay, to some extent, walks in the footsteps of Brueggemann: Goldingay, too, has respect for the final form of the Old Testament text. Furthermore he has a willingness to engage with the text in its nature as a "many-voiced narrative with all of the awkwardness and ambiguity that that implies" (Meadowcroft 2006:48). It is noticeable that Goldingay and Brueggemann are both inheritors of the legacy of Childs' affirmation of the final form of the text and both have proved to be sensitive to the exegetical possibilities of the contextual epistemologies of post modernity.

An important aspect of Goldingay's methodology is that he treats the Old Testament in the Christian canonical context and so admits the New Testament into his reading (Goldingay 2003:23). He gives some reflection on the story of Jesus and the church in the light of his reading of the Old Testament. Therefore, in the final chapter of volume one he tells that God sent, and recounts the story of, Jesus as the culmination of the preceding chapters.

Another important aspect of Goldingay's methodology is that he offers a highly nuanced discussion of the nature of history under the categories of narrative and history (Goldingay 2003:859); then history and criticism (p.865); followed by creation and history (p.876). Goldingay tries to solve Perdue's problem about the collapse of history, unlike Brueggemann who proposes a shift from history to story (rhetoric), with the following comment: "...this seemingly innocent word-change from 'history' to 'story' is in fact a major decision to forgo the 'happenedness' of biblical recital and to allow for a dimension of fictive imagination in the account in the text" (Goldingay 2003:46). For Goldingay, both history and story are important. The text holds both together. It calls on the reader to do the same.

Goldingay's Theology is truly remarkable, as it is an Old Testament theology like no other. Quoting from the cover preface in volume one: "Whether applying magnifying or wide-angle lenses, Goldingay is closely attentive to the First Testament's narrative, plot, motifs, tensions and subtleties. Brimming with insight and energy and post-modern in its ethos... this book will repeatedly reward readers with fresh and challenging perspectives on God and God's ways with Israel and the world as well as Israel's ways with God".

#### **2.4.4 Following the Hebrew Canon**

Thus far in the contemporary situation we have not only seen a "flood" of Biblical Theologies, but also no one of them used the same method in writing. This is typical in a *post-modern* age. No method is cast in iron, though, there is cross "pollination", as can be seen in the Theology of **Rolf Rendtorff**, *The Canonical Hebrew Bible: A Theology of the Old Testament*. Unlike Goldingay, he doesn't use narrative writing, but rather *follows* the narrative in the Canonical Hebrew bible.

In his own words: "[...] my idea was to read the Hebrew Bible in its canonical form assuming that it is a theological book. Therefore the first sentence in the book: 'The Old Testament is a theological book'" (Rendtorff 2006:51). He took up the idea of "canonical interpretation" from Childs. This means that he reads the Bible in its given form, "because it was and still is in this form that the Bible served as Holy Scripture of the Jewish community of faith". But Rendtorff states further that Childs "traced the theological lines into the New Testament and then even further into Christian dogmatics" (Rendtorff 2006:53). According to Rendtorff, in so doing, Childs changed

the meaning of the word "canonical", which now refers to the "canon" of Christian theology in general.

On the contrary, Rendtorff's canonical reading of the Hebrew Bible concentrates strictly on the given text of the Bible. He rejects "both thinly-veiled Christian dogmatic approaches to Old Testament theology as well as *Religionsgeschichte* approaches that isolate and describe the theology of every postulated stage of Israel's religion" (Egger 2007:1).

Rendtorff prefers a theology of which the horizon is canonical theology of the text as it stands. Furthermore, Rendtorff views the canonical texts as theological compositions in their own right and he dates their composition as just after the Babylonian exile (587 BC) without offering any theological rationale. He simply notes that this is the text which Jews and Christians have used. It is noticeable that he combines the historical methodology of Gerhard von Rad and the canonical perspective of Brevard Childs. He consequently follows the historical "outline of the text itself (in von Rad's words 'from Adam to the Son of Man') while paying close attention to biblical books in their final form" (Dempster 2006:1).

Rendtorff's theology is divided into three parts. Therefore, in the Hebrew Bible, the arrangement is: Law, Prophets and Writings. Part one reveals interesting insights as a result of retelling the biblical story. To name just a few: Abraham is approached directly by God in Genesis 18 in a way that has not happened since the Garden of Eden; the expression *ha'elohim* is used only once in the patriarchal narratives (Genesis 22); Israel is first described as a people by the Egyptian Pharaoh; Samuel's call to prophecy is the first time that God has entered into conversation with anyone since Moses... Many of Rendtorff's insights are as a result of reading the Bible as a book, with a beginning, middle, and an end.

Part two is comprised of themes as they emerge in their canonical order: Creation; Covenant and Election; the Fathers of Israel; The promised and Entrusted Land etc. The last two themes are in question form: How does Israel View its past? What does Israel expect in its future? Not all the themes are equally distributed. For instance, Israel's worship and wisdom are allocated four pages in total, but the Torah has thirty pages. This however, is noticeable in the whole book, as the three parts of Rendtorff's

book are very uneven in length, but also the retelling of different stories and themes differs in length.

The last section of his book then, is very short in relation to the other two parts. In this section Rendtorff sets out his method and how it contrasts with others. He also deals with the topic of a Jewish versus a Christian theology. It would have made sense if Rendtorff placed this section at the beginning of the book, but on the other hand, he follows the structure of the Hebrew Bible, which reads from (in our terms) back to front.

According to Rendtorff, this provides a natural interpretive framework for Israel to understand God's action (Law), God's speech (Prophets), and Israel's response (Writings). In part one of his book he uses this structure to provide the outline for the retelling of the Biblical story, as well as with the presentation of major themes in part two and finally in the content for many methodological reflections in part three.

Although Rendtorff doesn't treat the New Testament in his theology, he does emphasize both continuity and discontinuity. Continuity in a Christian's point of view is reflected in the long and variegated revelation reaching its climax in Christ. It seems though, as if Rendtorff stresses the discontinuity (the long and variegated process itself) more, specifically distancing himself from Childs. Rendtorff says: "[...] there appeared many scholarly studies about the developments in the first two or three centuries of Christian history, written by both Jews and Christians, that show that there was not at all a sudden new beginning of Christianity as its own community separated from Judaism, but that in the beginning the Christian belief was rather a special kind of Judaism". Then, again in Rendtorff's own words: "I think it is important for Christians to become conscious of these beginnings and to reclaim their Jewish roots" (Rendtorff 2005:55).

Rendtorff even criticizes Childs. He (Rendtorff) believes that Christians have frequently hijacked Israel's Bible and imposed upon it their own alien categories (Rendtorff 2005:755). Nevertheless, Rendtorff's theology remains a fascinating study. In the words of Dempster (2006:3): "[...] this is one of the best Old Testament theologies ever written. It attempts to give more of an 'inside' view of the Hebrew Bible, presenting themes in the context of the story of ancient Israel".

### 2.4.5 One of many ways

"[...] the stories of the Old Testament communicate at a level beyond cognitive propositions. They challenge us to identify with Abraham as our father, to share his faith that rejoices to see the day of Jesus Christ and to look forward to a heavenly city whose builder and maker is God. They engender a transformed self-perception and an altered worldview. This is one of the most powerful functions of the Old Testament; unfortunately, it is also one of the least understood among the community of faith". These are the words of Bruce Waltke (2007:14) in his book: *An Old Testament Theology*.

Waltke (2007:14) defines Biblical Theology as "that learning by which a human being is made whole". Waltke presents his Theology as *a* Theology. In the title of his book it is clear that he does not give a *final* answer to the method in doing Biblical Theology. It's more a journey of self-discovering. He says: "a large part of spiritual strength, of being rooted and grounded in faith, is to know our history, knowing who we are" (Waltke 2007:14). By reading the many stories of our forefathers in the Old Testament, Waltke says that we discover a whole lot of ourselves... the ultimate aim of Biblical Theology "is to bring us to our knees in worship and prayer" (Waltke 2007:11).

From the back cover of his book it says that Waltke uses, through careful study, the "in-breaking of the kingdom of God", as unifying theme of the Old Testament. The argument is that this theme is helping the reader to better understand not only the Old Testament, but also the New Testament. Also, "the continuity between the Testaments, and ultimately, God himself and one's own self". From this it is clear that Waltke believes in an absolute continuity from the Old Testament to the New Testament.

According to Waltke (2007:15) there are two things we need to understand: "The Father of Jesus Christ is the God of Israel, and to Jesus Christ the Old Testament is a valid testimony to his identity, his nature, and his being"; And "[...] when God composed the Old Testament in all its glory and complexity, he also fashioned a people who ate, drank, and breathed its very words. The exile in Babylon and its aftermath caused the remnant, the people of God, to turn to the study of their Scriptures, what we call the Old Testament".

Waltke's book comprises of three parts. Part one is his introduction where he defines his methodology. He uses a combination of exegetical, canonical, and thematic methods in his approach. He also defines his theme (Waltke 2007:143-169).

By discovering the old stories, God within the stories, and eventually one's self, Waltke's theology is being presented with an ongoing theme of "The Gift", in part two and three of his book. Part two is about "primary history" and part three consists of "other writings", such as the Prophets, the prophetic books, Ruth, Psalms and so forth. Every Chapter begins with the theme of a gift: "The Gift of the Cosmos (Chapter 7); The Gift of Adam (Chapter 8); The Gift of the bride (Chapter 9)" and so forth (part two). In part three: "The gift of Prophecy (Chapter 29 and 30)"; "The gift of Love (Chapter 31)"; "The Gifts [plural] of Hymns and the Messiah (Chapter 32)"; and "The Gift of Wisdom [three parts] (Chapter 33-35)".

To conclude this overview: Waltke makes use of rhetoric in his methodology. He is creative in the sense that he has an exegetical, canonical, and thematic approach. His approach is one of many ways to do Biblical Theology. In his own words: "This book is *a* theology, not *the* theology, of the Old Testament. There is more than one way of writing any Biblical Theology, depending in part on an author's understanding of the nature of the Old Testament and of the people to whom it is addressed" (Waltke 2007:9).

## **2.5 CONCLUSION**

Just when one thinks that everything, more or less, has been said, this flood of new Theologies sways this writer to a different perspective. The contemporary situation shows us that there are many different ways to interpret the Bible. There are many different methodological paths down which a student of Biblical Theology can wander. Some scholars, like Trible (1992:451), experience these various approaches in a negative way: "Biblical Theologians... have never agreed on the definition, method, organization, subject matter, point of view, or purpose of their enterprise".

This however, need not be experienced negatively at all. Will we ever, in this lifetime, be able to say everything about what was written in the Word of God? Rather listen to the Psalmist: "Many, O Lord my God, are the wonders you have done. The things you

planned for us no one can account to you; were I to speak and tell of them, they would be too many to declare" (Ps. 40:5).

Though a few Biblical Theologies which have been written during the past eight years have been commented on, not all of the written Theologies could be commented on in this dissertation<sup>3</sup>.

**To conclude then:** The Contemporary situation is typical of a *post-modern* era. Not one writer uses exactly the same methodology; however, there are definite similarities. Furthermore, it is noticeable that methods, as used by scholars like Von Rad and Childs, have not been put aside. During the 1970's there was this urge to find a *Centrum*, or a *golden line* that flows through the Old Testament. That was after a "Biblical Theological silence" since the "collapse of history" (Perdue) that followed the Second World War. When it seemed that there was nothing more to be written, Brueggemann broke the silence with a new method called *rhetoric* or a *narrative approach*.

Brueggemann actually opened up a new world in Biblical Theology. It is as if the "urge" to find that "Centrum"; "golden line"; or "ongoing theme" in the Scriptures arose again. Scholars like Gerstenberger, Goldingay, Rendtorff and Waltke have shown us that there is a place for history; there is a place for Narrative stories; there is a place for "golden threads" or themes; and so on. Our forefathers have shown us the importance of historical criticism and now we realize that historical criticism can also help us towards a better understanding of the story or narrative. In fact, a noticeable aspect of Biblical Theology in this contemporary situation is the new appreciation of historical criticism.

A further noticeable difference in theologies in this contemporary situation is the concept of Biblical Theology, as used by different scholars. Rendtorff, for instance, uses only the Old Testament (or Hebrew Bible, as he calls it). He does not believe in continuity that goes through to the New Testament. He believes that the Old Testament is not a witness to Jesus Christ. Goldingay, on the other hand uses a Biblical Theology that comprises the whole Bible (Old and New Testament).

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<sup>3</sup> For further reading, also see:

Bright, J. 2001. *A History of Israel*. John Knox Press: Westminster.

Pate, Duvall, Hays, Richards, Tucker, Vang, 2004. *The Story of Israel*. USA: Intervarsity Press.

Smith-Christopher, D.L. 2002. *A Biblical Theology of Exile*. Fortress Press.



In my opinion, when doing Biblical Theology, this is the way to go. I am busy with a Biblical study, studying the phenomenon of miracles in *both Testaments*, though from an *Old Testament perspective*. All of these miracles are embedded in rich narratives. Snyman is correct when he says that it is, especially, the new way of reading all the small narratives and pericopes in the Old Testament, which will give the Old Testament a newness and freshness to speak to *post-modern* people, which will grip them and fill them with amazement (Snyman 2000:91). These narratives are written in the Canon for specific reasons. These reasons need to be looked at.

## CHAPTER 3

### DEFINING MIRACLES IN THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT

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#### 3. SCOPE OF INVESTIGATION

In the Old Testament there were "a wide spectrum and continuum of divine actions", which happened in "both ordinary and extraordinary ways, sometimes with human or other agency and sometimes without" (Walter & Moberly 2011:57). As previously said, the aim of this investigation is around three figures in three different Epochs. It is therefore important to narrow down the field of investigation. In other words: Only miracles where human agency, by name Moses, Elijah/Elisha (Old Testament) and Jesus (New Testament), was at hand, will be looked at.

For the outcome of the study, it is necessary to define the word 'miracle' to accomplish a narrower focus. In order to formulate a definition of miracle, words or concepts denoting miracle in the Old Testament, will be looked at. This thesis is a Biblical study, therefore words denoting miracle in the New Testament will also be looked at

#### 3.1 WORDS OR CONCEPTS DENOTING *MIRACLE* IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

In the Hebrew language there is no strict equivalent of the English term "miracle". Some translators therefore avoid the term "miracle" even where the context obviously points to God's intervention (Sabourin 1971:234; Walter & Moberly 2011:57).

Two words most commonly used to imply what corresponds to "miracle" are the words *sign* and *wonder*. "If a prophet arises among you, or a dreamer of dreams, and gives you a *sign* or *wonder*, and the *sign* or *wonder*, which he tells you comes to pass [...]" (Deut. 13:1-2).

The word *sign* in Hebrew is **אוֹת** [*owth /oth/*] and *wonder* is **מוֹפֵת** [*mowpheth, מופֵת /mo·faith/*]. *ô*t (q.v.), which also means "symbol," "portent," "wonder," or "miracle"), is often parallel to **מוֹפֵת**, as can be seen in Exodus 7:3; Deuteronomy 4:34; 6:22; 7:19; 13:1ff; 26:8; 28:46; 29:2; 34:11; Nehemiah 9:10; Psalm 135:9; Isaiah 8:18;

20:3; Jeremiah 32:20 (TWOT Lexicon<sup>1</sup>, in BibleWorks 2009). “The nature of this combination suggests that the words have a common reference which they reflect differently. Analysis of the material shows that in fact they both relate to an event or factor which falls outside the realm of the ordinary [...]”(Rengstorf 1972:117-118).

## **אות**

The ISBE Bible Dictionary describes ‘oth’ as “a mark by which persons or things are distinguished and made known. In Scripture it is used generally of an address to the senses to attest the existence of supersensible and therefore divine power. Thus the plagues of Egypt were ‘signs’ of divine displeasure against the Egyptians (Ex. 4:8 ff)” (Bible Works 2008 el. Ed.).

Although it does not of itself designate a miraculous occurrence, **אות** does suggest in the proper contexts what, essentially, a miracle is: a sign to confirm the faith: Exodus 4:5 “[...] that they may believe that the Lord, the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you”; or as signs and wonders it points the way to the power of YHWH: “Then I will lay my hand on Egypt and with mighty acts of judgment I will bring out my divisions, my people the Israelites” (Bailey 1994:14; Ex. 7:4b); or to corroborate God’s intervention in favor of his people: “The Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I stretch out My hand on Egypt and bring out the sons of Israel from their midst” (Ex. 7:5; Sabourin 1971:235), and Exodus 12:13: “And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye *are*: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy *you*, when I smite the land of Egypt”.

**אות** can be a *sign* eventually showing the truth of a statement: “And he said, Certainly I will be with thee; and this *shall be* a token unto thee, that I have sent thee: When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain” (Ex. 3:12 [KJV]; Strong 2001:311). Strong also mentions that “several passages use **אות** of omens and/or indications of future events: ‘But if they say thus, Come up unto us; then we will go up: for the LORD hath delivered them into our hand: and this *shall be* a sign unto us” (1 Sam. 14:10 [KJV]).

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<sup>1</sup> TWOT - *The Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, by R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., Bruce K. Waltke, originally published by Moody Press of Chicago, Illinois. Copyright © 1980.

But **אות** may also have a neutral meaning. In Genesis 1:14, for example, sun and moon are "signs" of day and night; in Genesis 17:10 the circumcision is a "sign" of the covenant; and in Exodus 12:13 blood is a "sign" of the Passover; even memorial stones are referred to as a *sign* when the crossing of the Jordan is recalled (Jos. 4:6). **אות** can also refer to the Immanuel, as in Isaiah 7:11,14.

### **מוֹפֵת**

*מוֹפֵת*, translated as the verb "wonder", occurs only a few times in the Old Testament; "wonder" as noun is much more frequent, "and is chiefly the translation of the word Heb: a splendid or conspicuous work, a 'miracle'" (Ex. 4:21; 11:9, etc.; TWOT Lexicon, 2009). The TWOT Lexicon (2009) says further that "this masculine noun is of no certain etymology. No verb or other noun uses the same root letters. However, the meaning of **מוֹפֵת** is not questioned. 'Judgments' and 'works' are parallel to **מוֹפֵת** in 1 Chronicles 16:12 and Psalm 105:5. The LXX renders **מוֹפֵת** as *terata* 'prodigies', 'marvels'.

Strong (2001:592) says that the word *מוֹפֵת* first signifies a divine act or a "special display of divine power". The first appearance of this word is in Exodus 4:21: "When you return to Egypt, see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders I have given you the power to do. But I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go". Here it refers to Moses' rod's changing into a snake (Ex. 7:9), as well as to the ten major plagues on the Egyptians. Strong (2001:592) also says that "most of the usages in the Deuteronomy passages refer both to the miraculous punishments and the wonderful provisions God made for his people in the wilderness (e.g. water, manna, quails, and the pillar of fire)". Furthermore, acts which affect the divine curses are called *wonders*. Thus the "word does not necessarily refer to a miraculous act, if *miracle* means something outside the realm of ordinary providence" (Strong 2001:592). Therefore the word can represent a *sign* from God or *a token* of a *future event*: "That same day the man of God gave a sign: This is the sign the LORD has declared: The altar will be split apart and the ashes on it will be poured out" (1 Kgs. 13:3).

In Deuteronomy 13:1ff and Deuteronomy 28:46 **מוֹפֵת** refers to a "portent" or perhaps a prediction that a questionable prophet or dreamer gives. Depending on whether the **אות** (sign) or the **מוֹפֵת** (wonder) comes to pass, the would-be prophet is authenticated or condemned. The passage in Deuteronomy 28:46 is in the curse

section. Israel as a nation will become a "sign" or "wonder," i.e. a spectacle or demonstration of the rewards of disobedience. Psalm 71:7; Isaiah 8:18; 20:3; Ezekiel 12:6, 11; 24:24, 27; and Zachariah 3:8 use the word similarly. The psalmists or the prophets are themselves the object lesson (TWOT Lexicon, 2009).

Walter and Moberly (2011:58) mention that "a recurrent idiom, especially in Deuteronomy and texts influenced by Deuteronomy, is that *מוֹפֵת* is conjoined in the plural (often with other terms also) as a formulaic depiction of YHWH's acts of delivering Israel from Egypt (Deut. 4:34; 6:22; 7:19; 26:8; 29:2; 34:11; Ps. 135:9)". These acts of deliverance can also be characterized as *niphla'oth* (**יִנְפְּלֹאוֹת**), 'wonders' (Ex. 3:20; Judg. 6:13; Mic. 7:15), meaning: to be marvelous, be wonderful, be surpassing, and be extraordinary, separate by distinguishing action.

Furthermore, **מוֹפֵת** "is furnished with a theological reference; for its **ultimate author is always God** and it denotes things which are not just of significance for the future but which also **display God's historical power**" (Walter & Moberly 2011:118). In other words: **מוֹפֵת** has a "revelatory character" to a degree that it "helps to set forth the fact that God makes concrete **decisions** in the **present** that are determinative for the **future**" (Walter & Moberly 2011:118).

## **פלא**

As a verb it means "to be marvelous, be extraordinary, be beyond one's power to do, do wonderful acts" (Strong 2001:744). The verb is found for the first time in Genesis 18:14: "Is anything too hard for the LORD? I will return to you at the appointed time next year and Sarah will have a son". As a denominative verb, "it is based on the noun for 'wonder', or 'marvel', so it expresses the idea of doing or making a wondrous thing" (Strong 2001:744).

Exodus 3:20 shows the word **פלא** as *deliverance* (from Egypt) being the result of God's wondrous acts: "So I will stretch out my hand and strike the Egyptians with all the wonders that I will perform among them. After that, he will let you go".

## **פלא**

Another word being used for miracle is **פֶּלֶא** [*pele/peh·leh/*], meaning "wonderful, wonder or marvelous things" (Newman, sa:3). This noun usually expresses the *wonder*, the extraordinary aspect, of God's dealings with His people: "Who among the

gods is like you, O LORD? Who is like you-- majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders?" (Ex. 15:11). In Isaiah 9:6 the Messianic title, "wonderful counsellor", points "toward God's Anointed continuing the marvellous acts of God" (Strong 2001:744).

תִּמָּה (timah)

תִּמָּה (timah) *denotes* wonder or miracle. In TWOT-3060 this word is described as having "a cognate verb in Hebrew, *t<sup>1</sup>mah*, *to be astounded*". But in the three times the noun is used in Daniel (Dn. 4:2,3 and Dn. 6:27), it is used in the expression "miraculous signs and wonders, very similar to the Hebrew *ôth* and *mophet*". The references in Daniel are to the "miraculous deliverances from the fiery furnace and the lions' den".

In Psalm 145:1-8 there is a rich and nuanced vocabulary for miracles. The Psalm shows that Israel trusted a great deal in miracles: "One generation shall laud thy works **מַעֲשֵׂה** [*ma`aseh/mah`as`eh/*] to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts **גְּבוּרָה** [*gâbuwrah/gheb`oo`raw/*]. On the glorious splendor of thy majesty, and on thy wondrous **פְּלֵא** [*pala`/paw`law/*] works **דְּבַר** [*dabar/daw`baw/*]" (vs. 4-5: RSV).

In other words: God's deeds are successively mighty (v.4), and wondrous (v.5). According to the New Bible Commentary (Guthrie *et al.* 1972:544) the first word stresses their (deeds) power, the second their supernatural quality, marking them as arising from God and being beyond the scope of man. The rest of the Psalm heralds the same, as can be seen in v. 17: "The Lord is 'just' **צַדִּיק** [*tsaddiyq/tsad`deek/*] in all his ways and 'holy' **חַסִּיד** [*chaciyd/khaw`seed/*] in all his 'works' **מַעֲשֵׂה** [*ma`aseh/mah`as`eh/*]".

These Hebrew words have something in common: They designate a common feature of miracles, in that they are extra-ordinary events. "As *signs* they reveal what is God or authenticate a mission; as *wonders* and *marvels* they manifest a transcendent intervention of the hidden God; as *mighty* and *awesome* deeds they make known God's power and holiness" (Sabourin 1971:237).

## 3.2 THE AIM OF MIRACLES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

### 3.2.1 To generate awe and admiration

Waltke (2007:536) stresses, that although God normally uses the natural order as a secondary cause to sustain the earth, "he is not restricted in his power over this natural order. His awesome acts that overrule that order... function as signs and wonders, causing people to fear him and trust him...". In accomplishing this there are various forms of the miraculous: Those performed in *nature*, in *human life* and in *history*.

Sabourin (1971:242) says that *nature* itself was for the ancient people a "book of revelation, as testify the Hebrew narratives of the origin of the world and so many poetical passages of the Bible<sup>2</sup>". In the case of *human life*, "a divine breath or spirit (Job. 34:14) is at the origin of the life of man (Gen. 2:7) and the divine miraculous intervention explains the origin of woman (Gen. 2:22). Therefore human life has, like the world of nature a miraculous origin "generating awe and admiration: 'You have made man little less than angels and crowned him with glory and honor'" (Ps. 8:6).

There is no doubt, that the presence of the Lord was felt among many a people in the Old Testament. To name but few: The visions of Moses; the prophets – also their communion with God in prayer. This highlighted personal religious experiences which were miraculous in character and revealed God's active presence in the world He created, as will be seen in the chapters to come. These experiences of the presence of the Lord made themselves "felt above all in *history*" (Sabourin 1971:243).

According to McCasland (1957:150) Israel's escape from Egypt and their conquest of Canaan are presented in the Bible as notable examples of the miraculous control of history. Even so would be the rest of Israel's history, like the division of the kingdom (1 Kgs. 11:11); the Assyrian conquest (2 Kgs. 17:18); the fall of Jerusalem (2 Kgs. 24:2-4).

Sabourin makes an important point when he writes that "such intuitions of faith, with nationalistic overtones, stamping the course of history as miraculous, are

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<sup>2</sup> See Psalm 8, 9 and 65; Job 38; Isaiah 40:26

interpretations which cannot be subjected to scientific inquiring, even less than specific miracles. Yet they do help to understand the mentality which surrounded the clearer cases of Old Testament miraculous occurrences" (Sabourin 1971:243).

If the first aim of miracles is to generate awe and admiration of God's presence in nature, human life and in history, the next aim will be to establish faith.

### 3.2.2 Establishing faith

The establishment of faith happened through miracles directly connected with *salvation history*, through authenticating or *legitimizing miracles* and the *private miracles* of Elijah and Elisha (Sabourin 1971:246).

An interesting fact is that the majority of OT miracles were worked by God in favor of Israel, and the reason being to strengthen "her faith and guide her destiny". An important text in the oldest traditions is Exodus 15:1-18. Here miracles are directly attributed to Yahweh. Even when Moses and Aaron are instruments in the hands of the Lord by doing miracles, it is emphasized that God is behind the acting of miracles, it is his might and power being demonstrated, as can be seen in Deuteronomy 4:34: "Has any god ever tried to take for himself one nation out of another nation, by testings, by miraculous signs and wonders, by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm<sup>3</sup>, or by great and awesome deeds, like all the things the Lord your God did for you in Egypt before your very eyes?"

The next verse gives the reason for these testings<sup>4</sup>, miraculous signs and wonders and awesome deeds: "You were shown these things so that you might know that the Lord is God [...]". This might also be the reason why most of the miracles took place in the early period of Israel, during the Exodus and the conquest.

It is noticeable then that a major part of the miracles took place during the formation of Israel as the covenant people, while later on in the salvation history of Israel, the miraculous, as direct and divine intervention, subsided. The reason might be that Israel had to learn to live in faith, "remembering the glorious deeds of the past": "I remember the deeds of the Lord; yes, I remember your wonders of old" (Ps. 77:12).

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<sup>3</sup> Also see Jer. 32:17,21

<sup>4</sup> Also see Isa. 7:12



*Legitimizing* or *authenticating* miracles means that a person does miracle works to confirm or authenticate his mission. For instance: Moses was acknowledged as covenant mediator because, through wonders, both before the people and before Pharaoh, he authenticated his mission. Examples can be found in Exodus 4:1-9, where the Lord told Moses to throw his staff on the ground, and it became a snake, and to put his hand inside his cloak, and it became leprous. In Exodus 7:8ff Moses and Aaron went to the Pharaoh to perform these legitimating miracles. Exodus 4:5 says why these wonders are legitimate: "This," said the LORD, "is so that they may believe that the LORD, the God of their fathers—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob—has appeared to you".

With reference to Deuteronomy 8:2, in terms of which "a miracle is not significant unless it prompts faith in the God whom Israel has known in her historical experience", Sabourin (1971:248) rightfully concludes that the *private miracles of Elijah and Elisha* do not seem to have any adequate theological significance.

There are exceptions though, which would be Elijah's sacrificial contest on Mount Carmel (1 Kgs. 18) and where Elisha cures Naaman (2 Kgs. 5:15). On Carmel it was the people of Israel whose faith was restored and in the case of Naaman it was this Syrian commander who acknowledged "that there is no God in all the earth except in Israel".

### **3.3 DEFINING 'MIRACLE' IN THE OLD TESTAMENT**

In the past there have been numerous attempts to define miracles, especially from a philosophical point of view (Collins 2000:51-66; Twelftree 1999:39-53; Twelftree 2011:3-14). It is not the aim of this study to be philosophical though, but rather to write from a Biblical perspective (especially from an Old Testament viewpoint).

In his book, "Old Testament Theology, an introduction", Walter Brueggemann defines miracle this way: "Miracle', or as the Hebrew might better say, 'wonder', is an act of power whereby something is made new, terminated, or transformed in ways that violate normal expectation and is accomplished beyond conventional explanatory capacity". He says that miracles "attested in Israel's life concern the acts of making possible what has characteristically been regarded as impossible; and because they are

regarded as *impossible* they are invested with abiding astonishment” (Brueggemann 2008:157).

Brueggemann further noticed that Israel attested that YHWH is a “God who orders the world, maintains that order, and offers sanctions against those who violate that order”. This is especially seen in the creation narratives of Genesis 1:1-2:4a; 2:4b-24 (Brueggemann 2008:158). Interesting, there is no word for *nature* in the Hebrew Bible (Collins 2000:59). For Israel, God was Lord over nature and history. They (Israel) understood miracles as divine “mighty works” along with creation, preservation, and redemption<sup>5</sup> (Sabourin 1971:230). Sabourin is of opinion that no theory of an autonomous world of nature following its own laws could be found in the Old Testament. Therefore, for Israel, God’s direct intervention in the course of nature raised no metaphysical problem. In other words, *nature* is actually *God at work*.

Thus, when God בָּרָא [*bara’ /baw·raw/*] creates ‘nature’, He does פָּלַא [*pala’ /paw·law/*] ‘marvels’: “[...] before all your people I will perform miracles (תִּנְפְּלֹת) which have not been (*created*) produced (נִבְרָאוּ) in all the earth nor among any of the nations; and all the people” (Ex.34:10). Eichrodt (1967:163) states that “the Israelite rightly sees in God’s sovereign control of Nature, as manifested also in his miracles, proof that the created order is totally dependent on the will of him who called it into being”.

According to McKenzie (1965:578) modern theology “defines miracle as a phenomenon in nature which transcends the capacity of natural causes to such a degree that it must be attributed to the direct intervention of God”.

Lockyer (1961:13) sees miracle as “a work wrought by a divine power for a divine purpose by means beyond the reach of man”.

Newman (s.a.:online) defines a Biblical miracle as “a striking or wonderful event, displaying supernatural power and intended to carry a certain significance”.

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<sup>5</sup> Note the similarity to the outline on p. 5 (creation vs. birth of a nation; preservation vs. re-confirming the nation; redemption vs. re-birth of a nation)

Harold Knight (1952:357) defines (Old Testament) miracle "as the manifestation of the divine glory in mighty acts or phenomena which arouse in man the emotions of awe and amazement, and subdue his heart to adoration and submission".

Having looked at the "building blocks" for a definition of miracle by looking at words or concepts denoting miracles; the aim of miracles; and some definitions regarding miracles from different perspectives, a final definition, focusing on the aim of this investigation, follows:

*Miracles, or rather wonders, are acts by a divine power (God), that are beyond a human's explanatory capacity, which arouse in him/her the emotions of awe and amazement, in such a way that he/she admits: "There is only one God!"*

### 3.4 CONCLUSION

Walter & Moberly (2011:58) recognized that among various words being used to describe miracles in the Old Testament, *אוֹת* and *מוֹפֵת* are used most frequently. Both *אוֹת* and *מוֹפֵת* "depict extraordinary acts or events which accompany a verbal message and are meant to have some existential probative significance, to engender not just intellectual assent to the message but also appropriate attitude and action". This means for example that the astounding actions that Moses is enabled to perform for a possibly disbelieving Israel "are designated each as a sign (*אוֹת*) to engender responsiveness" (Ex. 4:1-9, esp. 8).

*אוֹת* and *מוֹפֵת* are being used in both positive and negative ways, with the same outcome. In a negative sense, when Israel fails on the borders of the promised land, YHWH says to Moses: "How long will this people spurn Me? And how long will they not believe in me, despite all the signs (*תְּהִיאֲתוּ*) which I have performed in their midst?" (Num. 14:11). In a positive sense, in Deuteronomy 4:34-35: "[...] has a god tried to go to take for himself a nation from within another nation by trials, by signs and wonders and by war and by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm and by great terrors, as the Lord your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes? To you it was shown that you might know that the Lord, He is God; there is no other besides Him".

The latter expression, *the Lord, He is God; there is no other besides Him*, is repeated in 1 Kings 18, where the explicit use of *אוֹת* or *מוֹפֵת* does not occur, but the people of

the Lord respond positively when they see the fire from heaven. And this is exactly the goal of *אֱלֹהִים* and *מוֹפֵת*, to make people responsive to what they see, so that they will acknowledge or admit that there is only one God...

Few miracles consist of the actual words *אֱלֹהִים* and/or *מוֹפֵת*, but the context shows that the miracles being looked at are indeed signs and wonders, as indicated by *אֱלֹהִים* and *מוֹפֵת*. A key verse in this regard is Exodus 3:20 "So I will stretch out My hand and strike Egypt with all My miracles (*יִנְפְּלֵאֲתִי*) which I shall do in the midst of it; and after that he will let you go".

To conclude then, it is clear that the *aim* of miracles is to *generate awe and admiration and to establish faith*. The aim of miracles fits perfectly into the definition given above:

**The aim of miracle...**

*Miracles, or rather wonders, are acts by a divine power (God), that are beyond a human's explanatory capacity, ...*

**is to generate awe and admiration...**

*which arouse in him/her the emotions of awe and amazement...*

**and to establish faith...**

*in such a way that he/she admits: "There is only one God!"*

### 3.5 WORDS OR CONCEPTS DENOTING MIRACLE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

In the New Testament we find at least four words which describe signs and wonders:

#### **Εργον**

Εργον simply means an "act, deed or work, especially a good work or an evil work" (McCasland 1957:149). It literally means work, as in labor. But it can also refer to the "creative" work of God (as in Jn. 5:17), and the "Jewish conception of God is decisively influenced by the idea of the divine activity" (Bertram 1964:637). Therefore, in the Old Testament *Εργον* is used innumerable times for the work of creation (Bertram 1964:637), and it also refers not just to work of the past (and this is very important), but it is ongoing, as is the creation (and ongoing presence<sup>6</sup>) of God. Therefore *καλα*

<sup>6</sup> In John 5:17 Jesus refers to his Father's ongoing work, and then says in the same breath: "and I, too, am working".

ἔργα' are a demonstration "of God's working in Jesus and also in believers. They are testimony to the divine work in man" (Bertram 1964:642). With the Christological outlook of John then, miracles can be described "directly as God's works, partly in the sense of God's working in Jesus and partly in the sense of the activity which He laid upon Jesus".

### **Δυναμις**

A second word being used in the New Testament is the word **Ἄδυναμις**, which "occurs often in the sense of a manifestation of divine power" (McCasland 1957:149). In fact, words deriving from the stem ἄδυνα-, "all have the basic meaning of 'being able', of 'capacity' in virtue of an ability" (Grundmann 1964:284). Grundmann (1964:286) gives an extended review of δυνάμις and stresses that "the whole of human life and indeed of the life of the cosmos was conceived dynamically. In Greek and Hellenistic reflection concerning the world and its mystery this led increasingly to the acceptance of δυνάμις as a cosmic principle".

Strong (2001:1052) mentions that δυνάμις "almost always points to new and higher forces that have entered and are working in this lower world of ours. It is (1) 'power, ability,' physical or moral, as residing in a person or thing; (2) 'power in action' as e.g, when put forth in performing miracles. (3) It occurs 118 times in the NT. (4) It is sometimes used of the miracle or sign itself, the effect being put for the cause, e.g. Mark 6:5, frequently in the Gospels and Acts. (5) In 1 Corinthians 14:11 it is rendered 'meaning'".

### **Τερας**

Τερας in the New Testament is always<sup>7</sup> used in combination with σημειον, "which itself occurs either alone or in combination some 70 times" (McCasland 1957:149). Before we look at the Greek word ἄσημειον, ἄτερας' needs attention, as this word has a significant root in the Old Testament of which the meaning is of great value for this dissertation. Τερας occurs in the LXX 46 times. In most cases the Hebrew equivalent of this word is 'mophet'. As we have seen in 3.1 above, ὄτ' and mōphēt' are used in combination many times in the Old Testament<sup>8</sup>. "The nature of the combination suggests that the words have a common reference which they reflect differently.

<sup>7</sup> Except once in Acts 2:19 where it occurs as a translation of Joel 3:2.

<sup>8</sup> Mophet is linked with ôth in 18 of the 36 passages in which it occurs in the Old Testament.

Analysis of the material shows that in fact they both relate to an event or factor which falls outside the realm of the ordinary [...]” (Rengstorf 1972:117-118).

Furthermore, *môphēt* “is furnished with a theological reference; for its **ultimate author is always God** and it denotes things which are not just of significance for the future but which also **display God’s historical power**”. In other words: *môphēt* has a “revelatory character” to a degree that it “helps to set forth the fact that God makes concrete **decisions** in the **present** that are determinative for the **future**”.

### **σημειον**

The word *σημειον* in the New Testament seems to create some kind of tension. The word is used as the object of a whole group of verbs which emphasize human activity... (e.g. Jn. 4:54). Or the word is also used as something which is outside the influence of man. In other words, it comes from heaven (Mk. 8:11); or is in heaven (Rev. 12:1); or in the sun (Lk. 21:25); or God is its author (Mt. 12:39) [...] (Rengstorf 1971:230). Rengstorf makes it clear that “in a specific situation which cannot be repeated, *σημειον* states or indicates a possibility or intention or the indispensability of a definite human reference”. Furthermore, where *σημειον* occurs in the New Testament, there seems to be a kind of *pointer* to the responsibility of the man or men involved in the relevant situation. Because of this, Rengstorf is of opinion that “this offers a wide variety in individual cases, so that one has to say precisely what is concretely at issue in any given instance (Rengstorf [Kittel & Friedrich *ed*]) 1971: 230-231).

In the Synoptic Gospels and in Acts, *σημειον* usually refers to a sign or mark. In the Johannine Writings John uses *σημειον* in the sense of ‘sign’, ‘pointer’, or ‘mark’ in such a way as to do justice to the formal character of the word (Rengstorf 1971: 243). But what sets the Johannine Writings apart from the Synoptics, is that John “refers to the *σημειον* of Jesus in such a way as to leave the impression that they are the decisive thing in establishing faith in Jesus as the Messiah...” (Rengstorf 1971: 250).

### **3.6 DEFINING MIRACLES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT**

According to Twelftree (1999:24) “Different people have different definitions of miracles. Although clear common denominators exist, not even the Gospel writers have exactly the same answer to the question ‘What is a miracle?’ [...]”. In his book, *Jesus*

*the Miracle Worker*, Twelftree (1999:24-37) senses a more intricate field regarding miracles in the New Testament, than with its Old Testament counterpart.

Before Twelftree gives a definition of miracles in the New Testament (and it takes him 350 pages to do so – confirming the point made in the paragraph above) he discusses four objectives: Firstly, he explains how the Gospel writers understood the miracles of Jesus. Then he strives to determine how Jesus understood his miracles. Thirdly he examines to what extent the miracle stories of Jesus in the Gospels reflect “what actually happened”. And then he tries to see where the other three objectives have led in relation to their implications for the quest for the historical Jesus.

Eventually Twelftree comes to the conclusion that the miracles of Jesus are understood not only as a man of God performing wonders, but (and this is important) *as the power of God* being uniquely appropriated *in and by Him*. It brings him to this definition: “[...] for Jesus and the Gospel writers, a miracle performed by Jesus is an astonishing event, exciting wonder in the observers, which carries the signature of God, who, for those with the eye of faith, can be seen to be expressing his powerful eschatological presence” (Twelftree 1999:350). This definition can also link to the definition given at the end of 3.1.2:

**The aim of miracle [...]**

*Miracles, or rather wonders, are acts by a divine power (God), that are beyond a human's explanatory capacity, (an astonishing event... which carries the signature of God – NT) {...}*

**[...] is to generate awe and admiration [...]**

*{...} which arouse in him/her the emotions of awe and amazement [exciting wonder in the observers - NT] {...}*

**[...] and to establish faith...**

*{...} in such a way that he/she admits: "There is only one God!" [who for those with the eye of faith, can be seen to be expressing his powerful eschatological presence - NT]*

It seems then, as this dissertation is from an OT perspective, that the definition given in 3.1.2 fits within the framework of the NT as well.

### 3.7 THE CONTEXT OF MIRACLES IN THE GOSPELS

In the New Testament (third Epoch) miracles surrounding the figure of Jesus are being looked at, keeping in mind that there are four authors (four Gospels) describing these miracles, from different points of view.

Twelftree has, in his book, *Jesus the Miracle Worker*, kept this fact in mind in a brilliant and marvelous way. This is what he discovered: "The first and major objective of his study was to discuss how the Gospel writers understood the miracles – what they understood to be the implication of the miracles for their portrait of Jesus; the place of the miracles in their message about Jesus; and what they understood the miracles to mean for their readers" (Twelftree 1999:333).

When looking at the Gospel of Mark, "Mark was attempting to stress the magnitude and significance of the miracles in Jesus' ministry". Jesus was very powerful in working miracles. Just by touching his clothing some people were healed. By just saying a word, he raised others from the dead, but, on the other hand, Mark shows us that the miracles are no less significant than – and cannot be separated from – "his self-giving weakness evident in his suffering, adumbrated in the miracle tradition" (Twelftree 1999:334). In other words, Mark portrays in the miracle stories "Jesus as the powerful Messiah – indeed, *God himself at work* – who gives himself to death for others" (Twelftree 1999:335).

In Matthew, Twelftree says that Jesus is the miracle worker who *teaches* and must also suffer. Interesting, of all the Gospel writers, Matthew gives the miracles the least significance. Luke, on the other hand "carefully balances Jesus' ministry of *word and deed*. Not so John". In the fourth Gospel Jesus is "in such communion with, and is to be so identified with, God, that he is first and foremost the *author* of the most stupendous wonders, which are *signs* of his *unmistakable identity*, origin and destiny seen preeminently in the *sign of his death and resurrection*" (Twelftree 1999:343).



### 3.7.1 Three types of miracles

Generally speaking there are two types of miracles recorded in the Synoptic gospels and in the Gospel of John. There are *Nature miracles*, of which are recorded nine, and there are *Healing miracles*, of which are recorded 26<sup>9</sup> (House 2009:112-115). The primary distinction between these two categories, says Twelftree (1999:350), "is seen to be that the nature miracles were witnessed or recognized only by the disciples, whereas other miracles were accessible to everyone". This distinction could however not strictly be held, as can be seen in John 6:14 where the crowd "saw the sign".

A third type of miracle that could be added, is that of the resurrection. As Collin Brown argues, ultimately, Jesus' miracles must be read in an eschatological context. They "prove Jesus' identity as the Christ of God who brings the fullness of eschatological salvation, grants resurrection and eternal life" (Brown 1975:632).

The resurrection of Christ is not a nature miracle, nor is it a healing miracle, because if you are dead, you can't be healed. Therefore, to overcome death, is the greatest miracle of all...

## 3.8 CONCLUSION

In the Old Testament there are generally three types of miracles: Those performed in nature, in human life and in history. The same could be said in the New Testament, with a slight difference regarding the third type. In the Old Testament God performs marvelous acts within nature (creation itself is an example, and then within the plagues, as shall be seen later). Christ also performs acts in nature like for instance, calming the sea: "They were terrified and asked each other, 'Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!'" (Mk. 4:41). He performs numerous miracles in human life, healing the sick and raising the dead.

The third type then, God works in history. The whole salvation history of Israel can be taken as an example. God is at work... In the New Testament it is especially Mark who shows us that Christ is *God at work*. And it is in Christ, as shall be seen later, that God's salvation act in history is fulfilled...

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<sup>9</sup> For a comprehensive list of all the miracles recorded in the Gospels see House (2009).

## CHAPTER 4A

### MIRACLES SURROUNDING THE FIGURE OF MOSES: PRELIMINARY READING

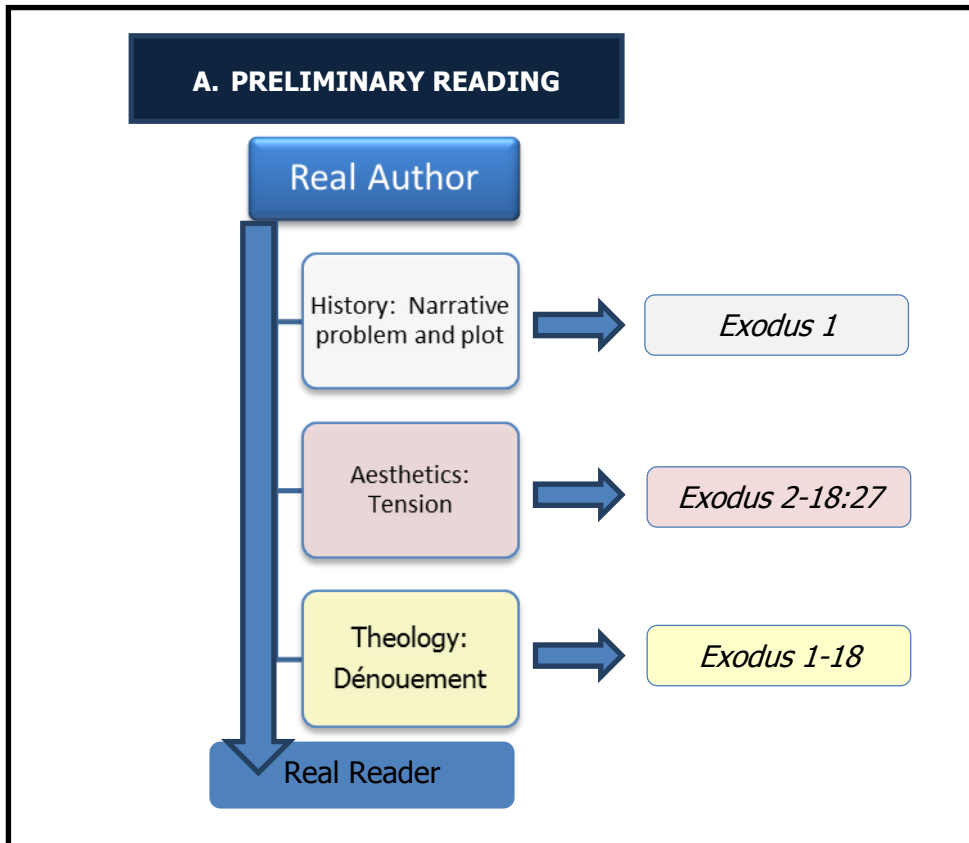


FIGURE 4.1: STRUCTURAL OUTLINE

#### 4.1 NARRATIVE PROBLEM AND PLOT

##### 4.1.1 Problem

The narrative problem of Exodus is defined in Exodus 1. Pharaoh enslaved the Israelites and forced them to build his store cities (Ex. 1:8-14; 5:1-23). In doing so, Israel glorified Pharaoh's reign, "and not the reign of the God whose servants they are as descendants of Abraham" (Leder 2010:95). Pharaoh's act of enslavement (Ex. 1:11) was also intentional. He tried to prevent the Israelites from multiplying. The "future of YHWH's promises and of Israel's ancestors" was to be endangered "by the oppressive power of Pharaoh", who feared the Hebrews and enslaved them (Birch *et al.* 1999:105). Gross (2010:115-118) writes in an article on Exodus 2 that, according to Jewish tradition, "the men of Israel were so demoralized by Pharaoh's genocidal

edict that they withdrew from physical intimacy with their wives, in order to avoid creating a pregnancy, the fruit of which would only be destined for death. The righteous Israelite women solaced and reassured their husbands-by which affirmative act of faith they merited the redemption of their people." Exodus 1:12: "[...] the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread."

The plan of Pharaoh to prevent the Israelites from multiplying by enforcing slavery, did not work. Accordingly, Pharaoh made a new plan, to kill the Israelites' newborn baby boys (Ex. 1:16, 22): Firstly, he (Pharaoh) instructed two Hebrew midwives to kill the baby boys when they were born (Ex. 1:16). The midwives, however, "cooperate with YHWH with bravery and reverence". Within this part of the narrative lies an ironic twist (Davies 1992:85), as the midwives opposed Pharaoh's demand with the following excuse: "Hebrew women are not like Egyptian women; they are vigorous and give birth before the midwives arrive" (Ex. 1:19). Propp (1998:142) calls it "an element of the sneaky." Secondly, the midwives' fear of YHWH is related to Pharaoh's order, not to listen to Pharaoh, but rather to distance them from his proclamation.

Fretheim (1991a:385-386) argues that the Pharaoh's oppressive measures against Israel are viewed as "fundamentally anti-life and anti-creation" [...] "They strike right at the point where the creational promise of fruitfulness is being fulfilled in Israel". YHWH will thus not tolerate someone who threatens to go against his creational plans, as the Pharaoh did. YHWH is on the verge of creating a nation, and the Pharaoh tries to intervene, firstly by enslaving them to hardship, and then by throwing Israel's newborn babies into the Nile River (Ex. 1:11-22).

The problem in a nutshell: Israel was enslaved by Pharaoh. They were forced to build his store cities. Through this, Pharaoh, and not YHWH was glorified. Pharaoh went against YHWH's creational plan with Israel by first enslaving them and then killing their sons.

The problematic question regarding Exodus 1-18 could thus be posed as: Whom will Israel serve, Pharaoh or YHWH (Leder 2010:95)? Or To whom will Israel listen? The reaction of the midwives suggests that Israel should not listen to Pharaoh, but to YHWH, just as they (the midwives) did not listen to Pharaoh. The answer to the question though, will become clear in the dénouement of the plot.

### **4.1.2 Plot**

The book Exodus is a continuation of the narrative that began in Genesis (Gispen 1982:1). Exodus 1:1-7 "forms a transition between the end of Genesis and the return to the fuller narrative style in Exodus 1:8" (Davies 1992:24). Davies continues by saying that Genesis has made a "round conclusion" with Joseph's death and that Exodus 1:1-7 "begins with a summary of previous action and genealogy." Exodus 1:1-7 therefore establishes unity between Genesis and Exodus, but also "marks the passage between them" (Davies 1992:24).

The Exodus narrative "embraces a period of 360 years, extending from the death of Joseph, with which the book of Genesis closes, to the building of the tabernacle, at the commencement of the second year after the departure from Egypt" (Keil & Delitzsch 2011a:269).

In their commentary on the Pentateuch (Keil & Delitzsch 2011a:269) state that Exodus "gives an account of the first stage in the fulfillment of the promises given to the patriarchs, with reference to the growth of the children of Israel into numerous people, their deliverance from Egypt, and their adoption at Sinai as the people of God." Leder (2010:32) states that one third of the "Pentateuch's narrative time is dedicated to Israel's stay at Sinai". Leder (2010:32) continues: "Abraham's descendants arrive at Sinai untutored in the ways of God [...] Moses' instructions at Sinai form the scope of the Pentateuch [...]". Through the instructions at Sinai, Moses addresses the fundamental problem defined in the beginning: "refusal of divine instruction and exile from the presence of God" (Leder 2010:32). In other words: Whom will Israel serve and to whom will they listen? A question to be added is: How will miracles help in unraveling this problem? The unfolding of the plot could assist in the answer.

## **4.2 UNFOLDING OF THE PLOT (TENSION)**

### **4.2.1 YHWH's redemptive plan with a baby (Ex. 2:1-10)**

Exodus 2 heralds the beginning of Moses' story and he is present at nearly every point thereof until the end of the exodus in Exodus 15. In these 14 chapters (2-15), he (Moses) is the one spoken to by YHWH, or he (Moses) speaks to the people on behalf

of YHWH. But still, apart from his role, little is said about the figure, Moses. Probably because the book of Exodus has one main character, YHWH, and one figure, Moses, which He (YHWH) uses as instrument to fulfill His redemptive plan with His people.

The theme of irony, which began in the previous verses, carries on in Exodus 2. The irony this time lies within names. In fact, it already started in Exodus 1:15: "The king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, whose names were Shiphrah and Puah [...]" The two midwives were called by their names, while none of the Egyptians' names were mentioned. Not even the Pharaoh, for Pharaoh is a title, not a name (Gross 2010:115).

It is worth mentioning what significant role women played in the Exodus narrative regarding YHWH's redemptive act. It began with two women: "Shiphrah and Puah" (Ex. 1:15) and ended with a song of praise by Miriam in Ex. 15:21. Gross (2010:115-118) wrote an article on the "significant anonymity in Exodus 2". He mentions that Exodus 2, which consists of 25 verses, "is a prologue of sorts, introducing Moses and describing his early life prior to his summons by God to liberate the Israelites enslaved in Egypt." He says the several "vignettes comprising Exodus 2 feature a rich array of characters that can be ranked like the dramatic personae of a Shakespearean history" (Gross 2010:115).

Within the 25 verses in Exodus 2, there are no less than 18 characters. Only one verse out of the 25 (Ex. 2:14) does not make specific mention of any of them. Within 24 verses various characters are mentioned 55 times. Gross (2010:115) says it is a "startling fact that effectively none of them is identified by name, a particular irony, considering that their story falls at the beginning of a book and weekly portion entitled *Shemot* [Names]." Only the people outside of Egypt, namely Moses and the three patriarchs in Exodus 2:24, have their names mentioned.

Gross is of the opinion that the reason why the people outside of Egypt's names are mentioned, is because they were not affected by the Pharaoh's cruelty. Moses and the patriarchs represented the Israelites, resulting in the Israelites' names not being mentioned, on the one hand, but on the other hand, it is because of the tone, which is already set in the opening verse of chapter 2. Gross (2010:116) says, "The pointedly generic description of Moses' parentage as *a man of the House of Levi who married a*

*daughter of Levi* (Ex. 2:1) introduces a spirit of namelessness expressive of the Israelites' *dehumanization* (own highlight). That significant anonymity in 2:1 represents a deficiency of detail that will be supplied in a later chapter – *Amram took to wife his aunt Jochebed, and she bore him... Moses* (Ex. 6:20) – but such *repersonalization* (own highlight) is going to be possible only in the fullness of time, with the augury of the coming redemption." The fact that no Egyptian or even the Pharaoh is named, is because the "people of Egypt have become diminished, as well, by their endorsement of racist policy of subjugation for the Hebrews in their land" (Gross 2010:115).

YHWH's redemptive plan, within this interesting plot, which follows on the previous verses in Exodus 1, is with a baby. This is in fact, the birth of a baby and his mother's plan to save him, what binds Exodus 2 with Exodus 1:15-22 (Childs 1974b:18). The baby's mother hid him in a basket, which she placed on the Nile River.

The word for basket [תַּבַּת] in Exodus 2:3, is also found in Genesis 6:14 and means 'Ark'. YHWH, through his redemptive plan, delivered Moses from the Nile via the Pharaoh's daughter. She raised him as her own child. In Genesis 6, the 'Ark' saved creation; Moses' ark in the Nile saved Israel (Waltke 2007:352). The firstborns of Israel were thrown into the Nile, but Moses had been saved from the Nile (Ex. 1:22-2:10). Or, as Waltke (2007:346) puts it: "Ironically, Pharaoh's means to destroy Israel (the Nile) becomes a vehicle for Moses' deliverance, Pharaoh's daughter prepares Moses to destroy Egypt, and she pays Moses' mother to take care of him."

The role of women played an important role in saving Moses' life. Moses' mother, making the basket and hiding it on the Nile; Moses' sister (identified as Miriam in Numbers 26:59), who keeps a watchful eye on her brother and then cleverly asks the Pharaoh's daughter if she can call for a wet-nurse when she sees that the Pharaoh's daughter wants to adopt the baby; then Miriam "slyly fetches her mother, the baby's own mother (called Jochebed in Exodus 6:20)" to feed Moses (Yee 2009:181).

This is not a supernatural or awesome act which created awe and stimulated faith at the time, but it is an important part of the narrative. It shows that YHWH's plan of deliverance for his people from Egypt begins with the redemption of a baby. The baby received the name Moses (מֹשֶׁה [mo-sheh]). It was given to him by the person who

took him out of the Nile and raised him in the midst of the persecutor, Pharaoh (Ex. 2:10) and means *drawn out* or *taken out* (Strong 2001- 4872)<sup>1</sup>.

#### **4.2.2 YHWH's redemptive plan continues (Ex. 2:11-25)**

Exodus 2:11 starts a new chapter, with Moses being an adult man. While Moses grew up as "Egyptian", the Israelites were still enslaved. As an adult man, he saw what happened to the Israelites, and when it finally overwhelmed him he killed an Egyptian, and had to flee for his life. Houtman (1993:293) says that the verb 'beat' (נכּה) in Exodus 2:11 "insinuates the atmosphere of violence that had become Israel's environment, an atmosphere which according to the use of 'beat' in 2:13 had also affected Israel itself." The suggestion of the text in this scene is that the stage is set for 'liberation', that Israel would acknowledge what Moses did (killing an Egyptian); even accepting him as their leader. It does not happen. Moses' brethren saw him as a killer, a "meddler who is looking for an opportunity to kill a fellow human being" (Houtman 1993:293).

Moses got frightened (Ex. 2:15) and fled to Median. He was forty, and lived in a foreign land for another forty years. (Ex. 2:11-22). Waltke (2007:352) refers to the historian "Arnold Toynbee" who had identified a pattern in the formation of great men and called it "withdrawal and return". This pattern was true in the life of Abraham (Gen. 12), of Jacob (Gen. 27-32), and of Israel's trial in the wilderness (Waltke 2007:352).

In this section (Exodus 1-2) tension certainly builds up, for YHWH seems absent, even passive. However, House (1998:90) says that Exodus 1-2 should not be read in isolation. It does form part of a bigger plot. Therefore, with Moses having been saved as a baby, hope was foreseen. The narrator maintains the tension though, for now, in adulthood, the "hero" had fled from Egypt. The tension builds to a climax at the end of Exodus 2 as the narrator tells us that YHWH heard the outcry of his people and remembered his covenant with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob (Ex. 2:23-25). Brueggemann (2008:27) puts it this way: "[...] it was only the cry of the silenced that evoked an active divine remembering" and "It is this exchange of 'cry-hear' that evokes the theophany in chapter 3 [...]". In other words, without the cry there would

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<sup>1</sup> When Strong is referenced in this thesis, word numbers are being used throughout.

probably not have been an Exodus. The cry-motive is an important motif and will be looked at again in chapter 4b.

### 4.2.3 The calling of Moses (Ex. 3:1–4:17)

For the first time YHWH himself becomes active in the narrative. The book of Exodus creates a lot of tension between the event where YHWH meets Moses and where Moses finally confronts the Pharaoh. The tension is between YHWH's commissioning Moses to go to the Pharaoh and Moses' unwillingness to obey. The tension never lifts, as time ran out for Moses to decide whether he will "go or refuse. He does the latter" (Childs 1974b:79) as he made a desperate plea to YHWH to choose someone else (Ex. 4:13).

The narrative began where YHWH revealed his name to Moses in a burning bush, as the eternally existing one and promised his presence with his servant who was notably terrified of what YHWH was asking him to do (Ex. 3:11; 4:1; 4:10-13). Most certainly a miracle is to be found here, as the flames did not destroy the bush. This is actually what drew Moses' attention (Ex. 3:3). YHWH's presence in the burning bush made the event "wonderful" or "miraculous" (Sabourin 1971:239).

Davies (2006:439-448) wrote in an article "Reading the burning bush" that there is a play on the root of the verb  $\text{אָרָא}$  (Ex. 3:2 - *to see*). In verse 2 it has the meaning of "Moses was looking around..." In verse 3 the next appearance of the verb is contrasted with that in verse 2: "I will go over [...]" or "I will step aside [...]" (KJV)". Davies (2006:440) says that there are "two depths or intensities of seeing". One is a general meaning, as to have vision in front of you (looking ahead). The other is "determinate seeing". In other words, something (burning bush) is filling the vision. This causes the seer (Moses) to take action: "I will go over [...]"

In a sense verses 2 and 3 bind the narrative with the previous section in Exodus 2:23-25 as they recapitulate the statement that God "looked upon Israel" and "took notice of them" (Davies 2006:440). Davies' point is that the style in Exodus 2:24ff and Exodus 3:2ff is the same, but in reversed order. In Exodus 2 YHWH hears the groaning and crying of the Israelites and sees their hardship in slavery. In Exodus 3 Moses sees the burning bush, walks over and then hears the words of YHWH. Davies



(2006:441) sees an “overlapping or interrelated process of seeing and hearing [...]” and “The sensory movement depicted in Exodus 3:2-4 appears to be one of intensification”.

The intensification of the verb “see” caused action. The action was Moses’ walking across. If he had not gone closer, he would not have heard YHWH’s voice. When Moses had come closer, YHWH called on him to stand still and take off his shoes, for the ground on which he stood, was holy. It wasn’t the ground as such that was holy though, but when YHWH is present, everything surrounding him is holy. When Moses realized that he was in the presence of the Lord, he covered his face<sup>2</sup>, fearing to see the Lord<sup>3</sup>. Ancient belief was that if man sees YHWH he would die (Houtman 1986:334).

YHWH revealed Himself to Moses as the God of Moses’ *father/s* (אֲבוֹתָיִךָ)<sup>4</sup>, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob, “reminding him through that name of the promises made to the patriarchs, which He was about to fulfill to their seed, the children of Israel” (Keil & Delitzsch 2011a:286). In Exodus 3:4 the narrator uses two words for Lord, YHWH and *elohim*. When YHWH addresses Moses in Exodus 3 verse 4 the narrator uses the general Semitic term, *elohim*. Beach-Verhey (2005:181) says that with the term *elohim*, YHWH identified to Moses Who He is: “the same God who was with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob”. *Elohim* assured Moses that the God the Hebrew people had been worshipping for generations – He was not a foreign or strange God, but the one God of Israel - was in fact with Moses at the present moment. “This same God then reassured Moses that God knew the pain and heard the cries of the Hebrew people enslaved in Egypt” (Beach-Verhey 2005:181). The word know (יָדָע [yadhā]) denotes intimacy, that of shared experience. In other words: Moses got the assurance from *elohim* that He knew exactly what the Israelites were going through (Coats 1988:58). Coats (1988:58) put it this way: “For God to ‘know’ the pain of Israel’s suffering means for God to respond to it in his own essential way. The oppression becomes his own [...]”. When Moses realized with whom he was “dealing”, he covered his face, as “the sight of the holy God no sinful man can bear (cf. 1 Kgs. 19:12)” (Keil & Delitzsch 2011a:286).

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<sup>2</sup> Compare 1 Kings 19:13

<sup>3</sup> Compare Ex. 24:11; 33:20

<sup>4</sup> Many translations use the word father, singular, deriving from the root אָב (TWOT 4a). The word could also be translated as ancestors.

From this stage on YHWH plays the main part in this narrative. In fact, the text is less about Moses “than it is about the character and authority of the God who calls Moses and God’s people into covenant service” (Beach-Verhey 2005:180). YHWH gave the command to Moses: Go! Moses was the instrument, but YHWH was the deliverer. “[...] I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt” (Ex. 3:10), and two verses earlier: “[...] I have come down to rescue (save) them from the hand of the Egyptians” (Ex. 3:8). These words are repeated in Exodus 6:6 slightly differently, but with the same meaning: “...I will *free* you from being slaves to them...” Here “free” is the Hebrew word **יְשׁוּעָה** [*yâshuw`ah /yesh·oo·aw/*]<sup>5</sup>. Cohen (2009:4) interprets it as: “therefore tell the Israelites (not to despair). I remain *Hashem*, the God Who can deliver on His promise, and I shall definitely bring them out, deliver them, save them and bring them to the land.”

Moses made his reply to the divine commission of YHWH: “Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?” (Ex. 3:11). Some time ago Moses had lived in a king’s castle. Now he had become a shepherd, “filled with distrust of his own power and fitness [...] the son of a Pharaoh’s daughter [...] felt himself too weak to go to Pharaoh” (Keil & Delitzsch 2011a:286).

#### 4.2.4 Three signs to comfort and assure

YHWH comforted Moses and gave him a sign (Ex. 3:12) which has already been mentioned. YHWH told Moses what to do in any given situation where there might have been doubt. He also gave Moses three legitimate signs (**אוֹת** [*’owth /oth*]): The rod, the leprous hand, and the water turned into blood. The three signs were related, and were given to Moses for three reasons: Firstly, Moses himself had to be sure of YHWH’s powerful presence in him. Secondly, so that the people may believe that YHWH was with Moses. Thirdly, the signs were given to demonstrate to Pharaoh and Egypt YHWH’s power (Childs 1974b:77-78). Through the signs Israel had to be convinced of Moses’ leadership and Pharaoh had to be convinced that Israel must leave Egypt (Lockyer 1961:46).

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<sup>5</sup> n f. Passive participle of 3467; TWOT 929b; GK 3802; 78 occurrences; AV translates as “salvation” 65 times, “help” four times, “deliverance” three times, “health” three times, “save” once, “saving” once, and “welfare” once. 1 salvation, deliverance. 1A welfare, prosperity. 1B deliverance. 1c salvation (by God). 1D victory (Libronix Digital Library System).

#### **4.2.4.1 *The Rod (Ex. 4:2-5)***

"Snake-charming" is depicted as an ancient art. Snakes could be made rigid or stiff as a stick, by hypnotizing them (Houtman 1993:391). Exodus 4:2-4 is different though, as there is no 'charming' involved. The opposite happens. It is not a snake that becomes stiff, but a stick becomes a snake. The proper way to handle a snake would be to grab it behind the neck, but Moses gets the opportunity to do a remarkable sign. It is most dangerous to grab a snake by the tail. By doing this, with the one hand, and turning it into a stick, Moses was given a chance to show that he was in a class of his own. This would convince the Israelites, who must have been familiar with the art of snake charming, that a deity was, indeed, with Moses (Houtman 1993:329). According to Lockyer (1961:46), '*the Rod turned into a serpent*' emphasized that divine power was available to accomplish the divine plan – YHWH can transform a feeble instrument into a power able to chastise and destroy.

#### **4.2.4.2 *The leprous hand (Ex. 4:6-7)***

The second sign is "based on the notion that the deity is the one Who can both send and heal illness" (Houtman 1993:398). This should also have strengthened YHWH's words in Exodus 3:12 to Moses: "I will be with you"; the assurance that YHWH will keep Moses safe, even from sickness. This sign declared Moses as YHWH's messenger. YHWH, through the sign of leprosy "accepted him even as he was in all his filthiness of heart, and was still determined to use him as his instrument to rescue his people of Israel from slavery" (Houtman 1993:398). The '*hand turned leprous*' therefore spoke of divine power which could cleanse illness and even sin (which is more incurable than leprosy).

#### **4.2.4.3 *Water turning into blood (Ex. 4:9)***

There is a subtle shift in the vocabulary of verse 8 which is depicted from verse 1 and 5: "If they do not believe you or pay attention to the first miraculous sign, they may believe the second. But if they do not believe these two signs or listen to you [...]". The subject of the verb has shifted: If they (Egypt) do not believe, "then God has prepared the first plague," ...which will foreshadow the events of the future (Childs 1974b:78). This third sign became the first plague of judgment upon Pharaoh.

In the previous verses YHWH commanded Moses to go to the Pharaoh so that the Israelites could be set free. Moses objected no less than five times (Ex. 3:11, 13; 14:1, 10, 13). Propp (1998:229) explains it as “the periodic doubt experienced by many persons of faith. And, as the biographies of Elijah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel attest, prophets’ lives could be full of conflict, even danger.” But Moses does listen to the last command. By taking/picking up the staff, he accepts the prophetic task which is laid upon him: “take this staff in your hand so you can perform miraculous signs with it”. Keil & Delitzsch (2011a:293) mention that “the plural ‘signs’ points to the penal wonders that followed; for only one of the three signs given to Moses was performed with the rod”.

#### **4.2.5 The endangerment of Moses (Ex. 4:24-26)**

“Nearly every modern commentator treating the pericope of the ‘bloody bridegroom’ in Exodus 4:24-26 introduces it as one of the most curious and perplexing passages in the Hebrew Scriptures” (Embry 2010:117). The usual question would be: “...why should YHWH attack the man he just commissioned to liberate Israel?” (Propp 1998:233). Is Moses endangered for something he did or failed to do? Was he under some sort of blood guilt for killing an Egyptian, or because he was not circumcised or failed to circumcise his son, Gershom?

Embry (2010:179) identifies Exodus 4:24-26 as a *mission-journey narrative*. Embry says that this part of the narrative is a specific “type scène” that functions as a key element in a larger literary convention. The narrative is compared with another *mission-journey narrative* in Numbers 22: The story of Balaam. Both stories have the same key elements: “staff, journey to a foreign leader, word of YHWH, foot” (Embry 2010:191-192). Embry focuses on the pattern and is of the opinion that the two stories should be read comparatively, “in conversation with one another” (Embry 2010:196). According to the scenes compared, he says that Moses and Balaam must be endangered in so far as they are on a mission.

Credit can be given to Embry’s notice of the pattern. It does show an element of intensification of tension in the narrative, but it does not give a clear answer towards the action of Shiporah and why YHWH wanted to kill Moses. Howell (2010:63-76) gives a more satisfying suggestion. He argues that Gershom is the main character in

Exodus 4:24-26. Howell draws a connection “between the firstborn son motif and circumcision” (Howell 2010:68). Because Gershom, Moses’ first born son has not been consecrated to the Lord and not circumcised, both he and Moses would have been disqualified “from participation with Israel as family members” (Howell 2010:67).

Howell (2010:63-76) shows in his article that the passage of Ex. 4:24-26 connects to the Passover in Exodus 12. “Exodus 12:43-49 allows the foreigner to participate in the Passover after he and his family had been circumcised. In addition, Exodus 12:43-49 ties together all three of these broader motifs (the firstborn son, circumcision, and the Passover) in one story” (Howell 2010:69). This is an important moment in the broader narrative of Exodus 1-15 and will be looked at again in Chapter 4B (4.7.1.2).

#### **4.2.6 Two confrontations with the Pharaoh (Ex. 5:1–7:13)**

Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and told him: “This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: ‘Let my people go, so that they may hold a festival to me in the desert’” (Ex. 5:1). Pharaoh refused, for he did not know YHWH. In the previous chapter (Ex. 4:29) when Moses and Aaron went to the elders and told them what YHWH had planned for Israel, they (the elders) “believed” and “worshipped”. Kroeze (1965:148) explains that, for the people, in YHWH’s name there was hope/promise. So when they heard YHWH’s name, they were positive, but when Pharaoh heard the name of YHWH he replied with a question: “Who is the LORD, that I should obey him and let Israel go?” (Ex. 5:2).

Propp (1998:252) says Moses expected that the name YHWH would have had the same effect on Pharaoh as on the elders. It is a speculative assumption though. In a sense, through this question, the narrator creates a conflict-motif between Pharaoh and YHWH, which creates a platform for the narrative to develop further. Cox (2006:311) explains that the “long conflict between the Lord and Pharaoh begins to answer that question [Ex. 5:2] by showing the Lord to be well worth knowing and respecting.”

The *conflict-motive* and even the *hardening-motive* - though it is not directly mentioned here (Beale 1984:135) - is strengthened further by the reaction of Pharaoh when Moses tells him who YHWH is: “[...] why are you taking the people away from

their labor? Get back to your work!” (Ex. 5:4). With these harsh words, Pharaoh made the people work even harder (Ex. 5:6-21).

Tension within the narrative increases further as the people turn against Moses (Ex. 5:21), resulting in Moses’ complaint to the Lord (Ex.5:22-23). Propp (1998:259) gives five reasons why the first meeting with Pharaoh went totally wrong: Firstly, Moses did not bring the elders before Pharaoh as he had been commanded (Ex. 3:18); Secondly, Moses initially demands more than YHWH had commanded, without considering that Pharaoh may never have heard about YHWH before; Thirdly, Moses works no wonders (Ex. 4:21) and misses an opportunity to impress the Pharaoh; Fourthly, he does not deliver the threat against the Pharaoh’s firstborn (Ex. 4:23); and finally, YHWH had forewarned him: “[...] But I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go” (Ex. 4:21c).

#### **4.2.7 YHWH’s Name (Ex. 6:1-12)**

Between the two confrontations with the Pharaoh lies an important function within the plot: YHWH’s revelation of His name. It would not be speculative to say that Moses must have felt some doubt after his first encounter with Pharaoh: “Ever since I went to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has brought trouble upon this people [...]”, and, “you have not rescued your people at all” (Ex. 5:23). Therefore, YHWH gives Moses a re-assurance or in the words of Childs (1974b:108) a “renewed call”: “Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh: Because of my mighty hand he will let them go; because of my mighty hand he will drive them out of his country” (Ex. 6:1). YHWH follows with another response which answers one of the complaints of Exodus 5:23 (Childs 1974b:114): “[...] you have not rescued your people at all”. Childs (1974b:114) says that YHWH answers Moses’ complaint, not with justification of his action, “but by a fresh revelation of the nature of the covenant God”.

The phrase אֲנִי יְהוָה (Ex. 6:2 – I am YHWH) is important, as it emerges from the outset (v. 2) and repeats in vv. 6, 7 and 8. Childs (1974b:114) says that it “is a basic formula by which God identifies himself in an act of self-revelation”. YHWH does not simply inform Moses of his name. Instead, He announces His name in such a way that it “makes known his essential character” (Childs 1974b:114). Childs (1974b:115) continues: “The content of the divine name which is now revealed to Moses is made plain by reference to the history of God’s revelation. Above all, YHWH identifies himself

as the selfsame God who had made himself known to the Fathers. The reference to God's revelation of himself as El Shaddai immediately calls to mind Genesis 17ff. and the covenant between Abraham and God". Exodus 6:4 which follows, gives reference to the covenant containing the promise of the land: "I also established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, where they lived as aliens".

There is a difference between the revelation of YHWH to Moses and the revelation to the Fathers though: "[...] but by my name the LORD I did not make myself known to them" (Ex. 6:3). "The Fathers knew God only as El Shadai. He had promised them a land when they were still sojourns. Now God reveals Himself to Moses as [YHWH] who remembers his covenant, and who moves to bring his promise to completion" (Childs 1974b:115). This means that the Fathers knew El Shaddai who had made a covenant to them, but they never experienced the promise in fulfilment. With the self-revelation of YHWH, a new element thus entered history: Moses complained that YHWH did nothing, but "now God reveals himself through his name [YHWH], as the God who fulfils his promise and redeems Israel from Egypt" (Childs 1974b:115).

YHWH's name also carries the essence of his purpose with Israel. Childs (1974b:114) gives three reasons: the purpose to deliver: "I will redeem you with an outstretched arm [...]" (Ex. 6:6d). Israel's adoption into the covenant as the people of YHWH: "I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God" (Ex. 6:7a). The gift of the land which had been promised to the Fathers: "I will bring you to the land I swore with uplifted hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob" (Ex. 6:8).

But even with YHWH's assurance Moses was still uncertain (Ex. 6:30), so YHWH motivated Moses and gave him three answers to his question "why would Pharaoh listen to me?" (i) YHWH said to Moses that he would be before the Pharaoh like a god (Ex. 7:1-2) and Aaron would be Moses' prophet. (ii) YHWH would continue to harden Pharaoh's heart in spite of his "miraculous signs and wonders" (Ex. 7:3). (iii) YHWH would perform "mighty acts of judgement" (Ex. 7:4) to deliver Israel from Egypt and to make Pharaoh know (Ex. 7:5) that YHWH is the Lord (Waltke 2007:378).

#### 4.2.7.1 "[...] like a god to Pharaoh" (Ex. 7:1-2)

That Moses would be like a god to Pharaoh was undoubtedly meant to contain an ironic twist. In Egyptian thought the Pharaoh was the incarnation of the god Horus, the son of Re (head of the Egyptian pantheon). Therefore, Moses would have had authority over Pharaoh (Elwell 1996)<sup>6</sup>. Houtman (1993:523) points out that the word הָאֵל (Ex 7:1 WTT) is an interjection, which means that YHWH addresses Moses in an encouraging tone. Moses "will stand before Pharaoh arrayed with divine authority [...] he has no reason whatsoever to be afraid to appear before Pharaoh" (Houtman 1993:524).

To prove Moses' authority "as a God" to Pharaoh, YHWH gave him a sign/miracle (legitimate act - מוֹפֵת / *mowpēt*) to perform before the Pharaoh (vs. 9). When he threw his staff on the ground, it became a snake. The magicians duplicated the "trick", but Moses' snake swallowed the magicians' snake. This must have sent a clear message to the Pharaoh regarding YHWH's authority over him.

Cox (2006:303) says that the "shepherd's rod appears throughout Egyptian literature and art as a symbol of the king's authority. The hooded cobra, found often as part of the Pharaoh's headdress [...] is likewise associated with his display of kingship [...]. God used both serpent and rod to show that Pharaoh and his rule were not supreme" (Cox 2006:304; Kroeze 1965:148). Ulmer (2010:186) confirms this point: "The snake [...] could relate to Egyptian gods protecting Pharaoh; [...] the snake may represent the ureus snake on his headdress."

#### 4.2.7.2 *Hardening of Pharaoh's heart* (Ex. 4:21; 7:3)

The problematic issue concerning the hardening of Pharaoh's heart has long been discussed<sup>7</sup>, and even in recent times as well. Shupak (2001:online) mentions that Exodus is a book of patterns. He says that Pharaoh's heart is described in three

<sup>6</sup>Elwell, W. A. (1996, c1989). *Vol. 3: Evangelical commentary on the Bible*. Baker reference library (Ex 7:1). Baker reference library; Logos Library System. (electronic ed.) Baker Book House: Grand Rapids, Mich.

<sup>7</sup>J. I. Durham, *Exodus* (*World Biblical Commentary* 3; Texas, 1987) 99-130; T. E. Frenthim, *Exodus* (Kentucky, 1991) 96-103; D. M. Gunn, "The Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart: Plot, Character and Theology in Exodus 1-14," *Art and Meaning: Rhetoric in Biblical Literature* (ed. D. J. A. Clines *et al.*; *JSOTSup.* 19, Sheffield, 1982) 72-96; W. H. C. Propp, *Exodus 1-18* (*Anchor Bible*, New York - London - Toronto - Sydney, 1998)



different ways (forming a pattern): heavy, strong and hard-hearted. The motif of hardening can be seen in a pattern of “escalation that makes its mark in the tale” (Shupak 2001:online). The hardening of his heart, functions as a motivating force that fuels the plot. The question which he then asks is: Why are three idioms used to describe the same thing? The answer, he says, is resolved by source criticism. כבד לב (Ex 8:11, 28; 9:34; 10:1 in *hiph'il* and 7:14; 9:7 in *qal*) – heavy heart, belongs to J. It appears six times and “The agent of the action is always Pharaoh or his heart” (Shupak 2001:online). לב חזק – strong heart – recurs 12 times, mostly in *pi'el* with God as the agent, but also 4 times *qal*/when the agent is the heart (Ex. 7:13,22; 8:15; 9:35). חזק belongs to E where it appears 4 times (Ex. 4:21; 9:35; 10:20, 27) and P (8 times, Ex. 7:13,22; 8:15; 9:12; 11:10; 14:4, 8, 17). לב קשה - hardening heart – appears only once in the *hiph'il* (Ex. 7:3). Here the subject is YHWH hardening Pharaoh’s heart. It belongs to P (Shupak 2001:online). The first two idioms mentioned “are not common to the language of the Bible [...] this, however, is not the case with the third idiom”, which appears only once in Exodus, “but more often in other books” (Shupak 2001:online). It usually carries a negative connotation and has the meaning of stubbornness and disobedience, and in the case of Exodus, intensified: “he sinned again: He and his officials hardened their hearts”.

Shupak (2001:online) goes further and says that in Egyptian sources the picture that emerges is the opposite. “The quality of stout heartedness and consistency of character attributed to someone who practises restraint, who exercises self-control and who shows courage in the hour of need...” Cox (2006:306) affirms this point. Cox (2006:305) says that the word כבד (heaviness of heart) shows that “Pharaoh’s heart was failing by his own standards and his expectations of judgment also”.

Shupak (2001:online) concludes by saying that the Egyptians had a custom “of burying heart-shaped scarabs made of stone in the tombs of the deceased... the expressions, ‘strong heart’, ‘heavy heart’ and ‘heart of stone’... were most likely borrowed from the language, imagery, and custom of ancient Egypt” (Shupak 2001:online).

While Shupak used a source-critical method to explain the hardening, Cox (2006:292-311) explained it with a twofold method, from a literary and cultural context. For Cox (2006:311) the hardening is a matter of “who is Who? If YHWH “had not hardened Pharaoh’s heart, readers would know less about Pharaoh and less about the Lord”.

Through the question of Pharaoh in Exodus 5:2 “Who is the LORD that I should obey him and let Israel go?”, the reader is prepared for the conflict (hardening) between YHWH and Pharaoh. Eventually the hardening shows that YHWH is the One who is supreme and does what He says.

Mcaffee (2010:331-354) uses a threefold method to explain the hardening: lexical, grammatical, and contextual. Mcaffee (2010:352) says that the three roots for “hardening”, as they appear in the narrative, provide “lexically distinct descriptions of the state of and process within Pharaoh’s heart”. A grammatical investigation of the three roots shows that the “two dominant roots  $\text{קָזַח}$  and  $\text{כָּבַד}$  are statives, as well as the less frequent  $\text{קָשָׁה}$ ” (Mcaffee 2010:352). When in the *Qal* stem, they refer to a status of Pharaoh’s heart and not to an action, which he is performing. However, when they are in the *Piel* and *Hiphil* stems “they describe the process whereby Pharaoh or YHWH makes/causes the heart to become strong/stronger, heavy/heavier, or hard/harder” (Mcaffee 2010:352).

A contextual examination of the narrative development of Pharaoh’s resistance to the will of YHWH leads to the following outline (Mcaffee 2010:352-353):

- YHWH tells Moses that Pharaoh will be unwilling to set the Israelites free. In fact, he will only do so by the strong arm of God.
- YHWH tells Moses that at an unspecified time he will strengthen Pharaoh's heart (Ex. 4:21, 7:3a) and subsequently multiply his signs and wonders in Egypt (Ex. 7:3b).
- As the contest between YHWH and Pharaoh unfolds, the narrative describes the heart of Pharaoh as strong and heavy/ stubborn.
- At an important juncture (Ex. 9:12), the narrative reveals YHWH’s strengthening the heart of Pharaoh directly. YHWH then acknowledges his responsibility (Ex. 10:1) for hardening the heart of Pharaoh (Ex. 9:12).
- In the final stage of hardening, the narrative subsequently describes the exclusive strengthening activity of YHWH. The final stage of YHWH's strengthening activity motivates Pharaoh and his army to pursue the Israelites to the Sea of Reeds, where they are [given the] final blow.

The outline of Mcaffee (2010:352-353) clearly shows the intensification of hardening. The hardening shows the tension building up within the narrative.

#### **4.2.7.3 YHWH would perform "mighty acts of judgement" (Ex. 7:4)**

With "mighty acts of judgment" YHWH is referring to the wonders which He will do to deliver Israel from Egypt. Before the wonders can be looked at though, it is important to clarify the "mighty acts", as they will have an influence on how the rest of the narrative will be viewed in the course of this dissertation.

The narrative in Exodus 7:14-11:10 is commonly known as the ten Plagues (Childs 1974b:162; Honeycutt 1970:318; Keil & Delitzsch 2011a:310; Kaiser 1990:348; Propp 1998:292-354; Stalker 1981). The word 'plague' derives from the root *nāga*, "touch, reach, strike," Its other form, נגַ (nega [stroke, plague]), "is used metaphorically of disease as divine chastisement. In the Exodus narrative it appears only in Exodus 11:1, where it refers to the smiting of the firstborn" (Pfeiffer, Vos & Rea 1975)<sup>8</sup>.

Beale (1984:134) speaks of "the first nine plague signs (ten miracles)", but it would be better to speak of *nine wonders and one plague*. A word that points to the plague [sic] narratives is נִלְפָּא [pala], in Exodus 3:20: "So I will stretch out my hand and strike the Egyptians with all the wonders [נִלְפָּא] that I will perform among them." נִלְפָּא [pala] translates as wonders (Strong 6381; TWOT 1768). This is YHWH's first mention of the wonders which he will bring upon Egypt and he does not speak of plagues.

Keil & Delitzsch (2011a:307) speak of "nine penal miracles" and "that they are arranged in three groups of three plagues each". Cartun (1991:65) calls it a pattern of "three triplets plus one" which organizes the plagues [sic] narrative. The tenth plague falls in a separate literary unit. It is "distinguished from the nine plagues [sic], as the direct judgement of God, by the fact that it was not effected through the medium of any natural occurrence, as was the case with all the others which [...] became signs and wonders [...]" (Keil & Delitzsch 2011a:307).

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<sup>8</sup> *The Wycliffe Bible encyclopedia*. 1975 (C. F. Pfeiffer, H. F. Vos & J. Rea, Ed.). Chicago: Moody Press.

In addition to נגף (plague) in 11:1, mentioned above as falling in a separate unit, Childs' (1974b:139) source-criticism does help though. He mentions "that for the P tradition the killing of the first-born is not seen as the tenth and final plague in a series [...]. The death of the first-born has been incorporated within the Passover tradition and transmitted as a separate tradition".

Regarding the killing of the first-born, with the previous wonders Israel didn't have to do anything to avoid being affected by the wonders. YHWH distinguished between Egypt and Israel. During the tenth plague YHWH does it again, but this time Israel had to do something to avoid death... They were told about the Passover regulations, and they had to carry them out (Ex. 12:1-13).

There is also no mentioning of Pharaoh's heart being made hard during the final plague (Ford 2006:166): "Then he called for Moses and Aaron at night and said, 'Rise up, get out from among my people, both you and the sons of Israel; and go, worship the Lord, as you have said. Both your flocks and your herds, as you have said, and go, and bless me also'" (Ex. 12:31-32).

After the tenth plague though, YHWH hardened Pharaoh's heart once more. Chisholm (1996:426) mentions that YHWH once more was not satisfied that the Egyptians knew Him well enough; therefore He would harden Pharaoh's heart for one last time (Ex. 14:4) so "He might glorify Himself and the Egyptians might fully recognize that He is YHWH, the ever-present helper of His people".

Finally, Durham (1987:99) mentions that "the belief of the people of Israel is never mentioned in the narrative of the first nine of YHWH's mighty acts, and it is only implied in the account of the tenth mighty act [...]". Psalm 78:43 and 105:27 also refer to the plagues [sic] as "signs" and "wonders," or "miracles". It is therefore better to speak of 'nine wonders' or as Durham (1987:93) rightfully says "mighty acts", and one plague, for the concluding reasons mentioned above:

The word 'plague' ( נגף 'nega') is only found in Exodus 11:1; therefore the word 'wonders' ( פלא ['pala']) in Exodus 3:20 refers to the first nine wonders. The first nine wonders are written in a triad pattern, which keeps them united. The tenth plague is a

direct judgment of YHWH upon Pharaoh and Egypt. There is no intervention of Moses or Aaron. The tenth plague is incorporated with the Passover tradition.

In the first nine wonders Israel was not threatened by the wonders. During the tenth plague, they had to do something to avoid the plague from striking them. During the tenth plague there is no mention of the hardening of Pharaoh's heart like in the first nine wonders. The faith of the people of Israel is only implied in the account of the tenth mighty act.

#### **4.2.8 Nine wonders and one plague (Ex. 7:14–11:10)**

##### **4.2.8.1 *The wonder of water transformed into blood (Ex. 7:14-25)***

The first of nine wonders took place in the Nile River, after YHWH commanded Moses to meet the Pharaoh on the banks of the river in the morning. The purpose of Pharaoh's visit to the Nile was to worship the river, "which was honoured by the Egyptians as their supreme deity" (Keil & Delitzsch 2011a:310). Right at this point, Moses declared the will of YHWH to Pharaoh to let Israel go. When Pharaoh refused, YHWH transformed Pharaoh's own (river) deity into blood, thus showing him (Pharaoh) that YHWH had power over his so-called (river) deity (Brueggemann 1997:505); and to Israel that He (YHWH) "is indeed both present and powerful" (Durham 1987:96).

The venue was important considering the fact that for Egyptians, the Nile was the birthplace of Egypt. More important though, YHWH is the one who created the Nile. The Creator and giver of the life-giving waters demonstrated it to Pharaoh in this [first of nine] wonder (Brueggemann 1997:505). What's more, YHWH showed his power over life and death (Ex. 7:17) and so the life-giving waters of the Nile were transformed into a canal of death (Houtman 1989:34): "The fish in the Nile died, and the river smelled so bad that the Egyptians could not drink its water" (Ex. 7:21).

According to Lemmelijn (2007:387), scholars have tried to "explain the events of Exodus 7-11 against the background of various natural phenomena within the Egyptian ecosystem": An example is that a phenomenon took place each year, towards the end of June, when the waters of the Nile began to rise. The water was colored a dark red by the silt carried down from the headwaters. This continued for three months, until

the waters began to abate, but the water was still wholesome and drinkable. The miracle of Exodus 7:17-21 though, involved three elements by which it differed from the accustomed phenomenon:

- The water was changed by the smiting of Moses' rod, symbolizing "the power and authority of YHWH".
- The water became undrinkable, it was really blood, not "a liquid that looked like blood" (Durham 1987:97).
- And, the condition lasted just seven days (Ex. 7:25).

Fretheim (1991a:388) states that it was not just the water in the Nile that was transformed into blood (Ex. 7:19, 21): "Blood will be everywhere in Egypt [...]. Blood was everywhere in Egypt". According to Fretheim this phrase suggests two sign values of blood ( דָּם):

- The comprehensiveness of blood in the land shows that it is "more than" a hyperbole. Fretheim (1991a:388) compares the image of blood with the "oracle against Egypt in Ezekiel 32:6 [...], linking blood in land and water: 'I will drench the land with your flowing blood all the way to the mountains, and the ravines will be filled with your flesh.'" With this remark Fretheim explains that although דָּם is not used in Exodus 14-15, "the *image* is one of the sea becoming red with Egyptian blood".
- "The cry of the Egyptians is as extensive as the blood in this sign [...]" (Ex. 11:6). "Blood, which will be a sign of deliverance for Israel (Ex. 12:13), here becomes a sign of disaster for Egypt." Fretheim comes to this conclusion because of the verb נָכַח (Ex. 7:17 – smite) which "points forward to its use in Exodus 12:12-13, 29."

A final comment on the first wonder is the fact that the magicians duplicated the miracle. They did not duplicate the Nile River's transformation, for YHWH had already done that. It must have been other water sources. There is some humour in this though, as they could not reverse the act, and therefore just worsened the scenario of making water undrinkable (Durham 1987:98; Ford 2006:132).

This first miracle did not amuse the Pharaoh and he went back to his house, unwilling to let the Israelites go (Ex. 7:23).

#### 4.2.8.2 *The wonder of the frogs (Ex. 7:25–8:15)*

Childs (1974b:154-155) mentioned that commentators had “long since sought” to connect the appearance of the frogs with the polluting of the Nile. The text itself, however, makes no link between the polluting of the Nile and the forthcoming of the frogs. Childs noticed further that “there is a slight exegetical basis for seeing some relation” between some of the wonders and the “natural seasonal reddening” of the Nile. Likewise the sending of the frogs is first announced as a “warning in prophetic style,” before being executed by Aaron: “Then the Lord said to Moses...” (Ex. 8:1).

The frogs were not dangerous, but they were extremely annoying and made a lot of noise! (Ulmer 2009:61). Lerner (2010:662-3) is of opinion that the reason why Moses “cried out” to YHWH in Exodus 8:8 was that, because of the absolute loudness of the frogs, he could not hear himself pray.

The Egyptians had a female deity with a frog’s head, known as *Heka* or *Heqt*. She was worshiped as the wife of *Chnum*, god of cataracts or of inundation and she was a symbol of fertility and regeneration for the Egyptians (Wilkinson) 2003:229. More-over she had power over the crocodiles, which were supposed to keep the frog population down. Ironically, with the frog wonder there was an inundation of frogs. They were everywhere: “The Nile will swarm with frogs, which will come up and go into your house and into your bedroom and on your bed, and into the houses of your servants and on your people, and into your ovens and into your kneading bowls” (Ex. 8:4).

Lockyer then rightfully noticed two things about the wonder of the frogs: First of all “it was a severe trial to the religious feelings of the Egyptians and tended to bring their religion into contempt”. Secondly, the “Egyptians worshipped cleanliness and set much value upon it” (Lockyer 1961:50). One could imagine that frogs everywhere, even in beds and in ovens, must have been disgusting to the Egyptians, not to mention the stink that filled the land after they died. Speaking of which: The Pharaoh’s magicians copied the appearance of frogs and to some extent, it’s even humorous<sup>9</sup> (Propp 1998:349), because they added to the annoying effect of the frogs, but they couldn’t make them perish all at once in one single moment. Also, the Pharaoh suffered from

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<sup>9</sup> At this point it begins to look as if humour could be an hidden theme within the Exodus Narrative.

the annoying effect the frogs had, and the stench, after they perished, got to his nose too.

The spirit of the Pharaoh was therefore slightly broken, for in the first wonder his heart was hardened, but with the second wonder he appealed to Moses and Aaron to remove the frogs. Moses responds to the Pharaoh: "...when shall I entreat for you and your servants and your people, that the frogs be destroyed from you and your houses that they may be left only in the Nile (Ex. 8:9)?" When Pharaoh gave Moses only one day to do so, he replied: "May it be according to your word, that you may know that there is no one like the Lord our God" (Ex. 8:10). Moses accepted the "handicap, giving Pharaoh the advantage, to show him how much power is at his disposal" (Childs 1974b:156). That power of course coming from YHWH...

Fretheim (1991a:389) notices the word נָגַף (*nagaf* - smite) in Exodus 7:27. It is a strong word often used as "a fatal blow" and "in context of divine judgment". It is not used again until Exodus 12:23 and 27, where it refers to the smiting of the first-borns. It is uncharacteristic that the narrator, out of all of the first nine wonders, brings frogs in connection with a fatal blow. Therefore this plague points to something more deadly on the horizon. Here, Fretheim has a point, but when he argues that the "stinking land" refers to the forthcoming of so many dead children and animals, it sounds like no less than speculation. Even so, he sees in the "piling up" of frogs, "the image of Egyptians piled dead on the seashore".

Exodus 8:15 tells us that as soon as the frogs were dead, the Pharaoh turned down his promise of letting the Israelites go.

#### **4.2.8.3 *The wonder of the gnats (Ex. 8:16-19)***

The third wonder comes with no warning or consultation. Of note is the fact that dust changes to some kind of insect. It could have been mosquitoes, sand flies, ticks or fleas. It doesn't matter. What matters is that it caused great irritating pain and distress. The fact that dust turns into life makes this event wondrous. For the first time the magicians admit that it is the finger of YHWH and they cannot duplicate the act. The author "settles the question of the true and the false miracle" (Childs 1974b:156).



Fretheim (1991a:389) views the dust turning into gnats solely as a sign that functions in terms of images. "Dust is that from which human beings have come and to which they return upon death", therefore the image suggests "the end of the Egyptians". To say that dust functioned *solely* as a sign in terms of images, is to minimize the real power of "oth" and "mophet".

Lockyer (1961:53) argues that the wonder of dust turning into gnats was directed against Egypt's idolatry. In Egyptian religion the dust of the earth was worshiped as *Seb*, the earth god. Imagine the religious trauma the Egyptians would have experienced if they saw with their own eyes how their so called earth god was transformed into gnats "so small as to be hardly visible to the eye, but with a sting which [...] causes a most painful irritation of the skin" (Keil & Delitzsch 2011a:313). This is probably why the magicians saw within this wonder the real "oth" (sign): "the finger of God!" (Ex. 8:19). Thus strengthening one of the functions of "oth": "And the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD [...]" (Ex. 7:5).

Though the magicians were acknowledging YHWH's mighty work, the Pharaoh was not moved.

#### **4.2.8.4 *The wonder of the flies (Ex. 8:20-32)***

The fourth wonder shows a similar style as the first, which makes some commentators (Childs 1974b:156) believe that the wonders occur in cycles of threes<sup>10</sup>. Moses must meet the Pharaoh at the edge of the Nile again and likewise warn in prophetic style. Pharaoh has one day to decide. If by the following day he does not let the people go, YHWH will send flies, "referring to a terrifying collection of insects" (Durham 1987:114). Lockyer (1961:52) says that these flies were harmful to people (bite) and crop (eat).

Perhaps the gnats in the third wonder did not get to the Pharaoh as much as to the rest of his people. But he did feel the next wonder very much: "I will send swarms of flies on you [...] (Ex. 8:21)", and, "[...] there came great swarms of flies into the house of Pharaoh [...] (Ex. 8:24)". It is as if the writer suggests that the flies started their rage at the house of Pharaoh and from there had gone on to his people.

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<sup>10</sup> The triad cycle in which the wonders fall will be elaborated on in the second division of this chapter.

This sign (אָתְּחִלָּה - Ex. 8:23) differs from the previous one, as a specific time (tomorrow) was given for their appearance, and also borders were drawn as to where they would and would not appear: "I will put a division between My people and your people" (Ex. 8:23a). This was to convince Pharaoh (Huey 1980:46) that YHWH really was in control: "...in order that you may know that I, the Lord, am in the midst of the land (Ex. 8:22)." YHWH not only has the ability to send wonders, but also to exempt his people from them.

In relation to this, Ford (2006:144) mentions that it "was not unusual in the ancient Near East for deities to strike their own lands with wonders or to act to defend their cities. What is unusual here is that a foreign god, a god of a slave race, a god who is not known to Pharaoh (Ex. 5:2) has the ability to inflict any number of different nature plagues [sic] upon Pharaoh's land of Egypt." The magicians do not attempt to duplicate this wonder; they have recognized the "finger of God". Yet Pharaoh does not admit defeat "even when his side is beaten", says Ford (2006:146). Thus something new is required and the wonders therefore appear to move from "irritation to serious hardship".

Exodus 8:24 shows that the "land was laid waste because of the swarms of flies in all the land of Egypt." Not only did the flies sting, "but [they] also killed the plants in which they deposited their eggs, [...]" (Keil & Delitzsch 2011a:315). This alarmed the Pharaoh, so he called for Moses and Aaron and tried to compromise with them: Go and sacrifice "within the land". If YHWH is "in the midst of the land" then Israel need not go far to sacrifice.

Moses turned this offer down, as it would be offensive to the Egyptians if Israel sacrificed animals (especially cattle, as they were holy to the Egyptians) in front of them (Childs 1974b:157). They might stone the Israelites (Davis 1986:116; Keil & Delitzsch 2011a:315). So Pharaoh agreed for them to go into the wilderness, not far though. But as with the previous wonders, he failed to keep his promise as soon as the wonder disappeared.

#### **4.2.8.5 *The wonder of the animal pestilence (Ex. 9:1-7)***

With the previous plague the land of Goshen was set apart from that of Egypt. This note is picked up with the next wonder. However, this time a distinction is made

between the livestock of Israel and that of Egypt (Ex. 9:4). The wonder of disease upon all of the livestock of Egypt which were in the field, struck a day after Moses announced it.

Yet “[...] another part of Egypt’s wide array of gods was hard hit: the Apis, or sacred bull Ptah; the calf god Ra; the cows of Hathor; the jackal-headed god Anubis; and the bull Bakis of the god Mentu” (Kaiser Jr. 1990:358). Lockyer (1961:54) is of opinion that with this wonder it would have been terrible for the Egyptians if, especially, their cattle (which were regarded as holy) were struck. Propp (1998:350) sees this sign as “punishment for Egyptian animal worship”.

Fretheim (1991a:390) strengthens Propp’s view about this sign pointing to punishment. He states that the word דָּבַר (Ex. 9:3) is “an ominous word”, in that it is exclusively used in divine judgement contexts.” There is also a word play on דָּבַר (Ex. 9:5, 6) which means “this thing”, referring to the pestilence.

Although Pharaoh investigated whether it was true that the livestock of Israel remained untouched, his heart remained hard. There is an ironic twist though, as he “sends out those whom he had no need to send out, his fact finders to Goshen, and refuses to send out those whom YHWH had commanded him to send out [...]” (Durham 1987:119). Pharaoh’s fact finders confirm that the animals in Goshen have had no harm done to them. Still Pharaoh remains untouched.

#### **4.2.8.6 The wonder of the boils (Ex. 9:8-12)**

Davis (1986:123) mentions that Egyptians “were constantly aware of the possibility of infectious diseases and sores”. *Sekhmet*, a lion-headed goddess, “was supposed to have had the power of both creating epidemics and bringing them to an end.” Egyptians employed amulets and other objects to ward off evil in their lives. When Moses took ashes and cast it to heaven in front of the Pharaoh, it might have been a symbolic act against the so-called goddess (Lockyer 1961:54). YHWH’s presence would soon show the Egyptians that their amulets could not protect them from boils afflicted upon them by YHWH.

After an absence from the previous two wonders, the magicians are mentioned again with this wonder. It is not clear why the Pharaoh called for them and if he wanted to prove through them that acts performed by Moses and Aaron were nothing out of the ordinary. What is clear though is that they could not even stand before Moses and Aaron because of the severity of the boils which were upon them, as on the rest of Egypt (Ex. 9:11). After this wonder they disappear and we don't hear of them again.

With the magicians now out of sight, Pharaoh's heart remains hard. This time it is YHWH who hardens his heart. Ford (2006:152) says: "Perhaps YHWH is now taking the place of the magicians in strengthening Pharaoh's resolve against the signs." To understand this, he says one must look at the next wonder...

#### **4.2.8.7 *The wonder of hail and fire (Ex. 9:13-35)***

This wonder, in relation to the previous wonders, has one of the longest descriptions in the entire story. It "marks the build-up within the narrative leading to the final judgment" (Childs 1974b:158). This final triad "suggests that there will be some change in the encounters between YHWH and Pharaoh after this point. 'This time' (Ex. 9:14) refers to the final three wonders, and possibly to the slaying of the firstborn as well (Ford 2006:153).

The last three wonders begin with an extended speech of YHWH directed to Pharaoh. It is said to Pharaoh that by now, he and the whole of Egypt could have been wiped from the earth (Ex. 9:15), but for the following two reasons have been spared: To show Pharaoh YHWH's power and to declare His glory throughout the world...

With this wonder an alternative, differing from the previous wonders, is offered. A warning comes: "bring your livestock and whatever you have in the field to safety. Every man and beast that are found in the field and are not brought home, when the hail comes down on them, will die" (Ex. 9:19). This wonder is the "first among the plagues [sic] to attack human life, which it did on a large scale, causing all those exposed to it to perish" (Lockyer 1961:55). Plants and crops were destroyed, livestock and people died. As the "Author of what we call the laws of nature", Lockyer

(1961:55) says "God is able to restrain them, prescribe their proportion, and appoint the place where they should operate."<sup>11</sup>

Pharaoh noticed the severity of the storm and called for Moses and Aaron. This is the first wonder where we are told that Pharaoh repented his deeds (Noegel 1995:534). He made three interesting confessions in verse 27: Firstly he confessed that he had sinned and secondly, that he as well as his people were wicked. In Exodus 5:2 he had refused to acknowledge that YHWH even existed. Thirdly he observed that YHWH was righteous (Davis 1986:127). It is, however, doubtful if Pharaoh meant what he said, as he turned his back on what he had promised... again.

#### **4.2.8.8 *The wonder of the locusts from the East (Ex. 10:1-20)***

YHWH sends Moses and Aaron back to Pharaoh to warn him once again to let His people go. If not, locusts would come, like Egypt had never seen before, and they would devour what had remained after the hail storm. For the first time Pharaoh's servants intervened and pleaded with him to let Israel go: "...do you not realize that Egypt is destroyed?" (Ex. 10:7). The magicians had retired from the scene when they saw the finger of YHWH. Many people feared the Lord because of the hailstorm. "Now the officers of the court, those closest to the king, believed the words of Moses..." (Lockyer 1961:57).

Also, for the first time, Pharaoh tried to negotiate with Moses before the next wonder struck (Huey 1980:48). He granted permission that only the men among the Israelites may go to serve the Lord. For the first time the Egyptian deity, Ra (also referred to as *evil eye*), is mentioned in Exodus (Ulmer 2009:185). It (Ra) is mentioned by Pharaoh as a threat to Moses: "[...] for evil [eye] *is* before you" (Ex. 10:10 [KJV]). He then chased Moses and Aaron away (Ex. 10:11). Thereupon, YHWH ordered Moses to stretch out his "hand over the land of Egypt for the locusts, that they may come up on the land of Egypt and eat every plant of the land, all that the hail has left" (Ex. 10:12). The Egyptian idol, *Serajia*, the so-called "protector of the land" from locusts, could do nothing...

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<sup>11</sup> See Amos 4:7,8; II Chr. 7:13; Ps. 104:10

Houtman (1989:95-96) mentions that curse language is being used to demonstrate that YHWH has power over life and death (Ex. 10:12)<sup>12</sup>. Pharaoh's curse on Moses and the Israelites means nothing, for YHWH can use animals, insects, weather conditions (hail and thunder) and even wind to show His supremacy over the so-called deities of Egypt: "So Moses stretched out his staff over the land of Egypt, and the Lord directed an east wind on the land all that day and all that night; and when it was morning, the east wind brought the locusts" (Ex. 10:13).

Previously it was announced that the wonders took place so that the Egyptians would know that YHWH is Lord (Ex. 7:5). With the locust wonder it is said that the wonders took place so that the *whole of Israel* (Ex. 10:2) would know that YHWH is Lord. Even so, the destruction caused by the locusts again brought the Pharaoh to the point where he admitted to Moses and Aaron that he had sinned before YHWH and against them. It is of interest that, this time, the Pharaoh took all the responsibility upon himself and did not include his people in the blame (Ex. 9:27). He even asked for forgiveness, but this confession and request came out of practical expediency. "It is doubtful that his concern was one of deep spiritual conviction; rather, he was interested in an immediate deliverance from a plague [sic] that was about to destroy his land" (Davis 1986:132).

When Moses prayed to the Lord to make the locusts disappear, the wind from the east changed direction, and came from the west and carried the locusts away, showing that YHWH had power over everything, even the wind. The phrase "not a single locust was left" (Ex. 10:19), according to Fretheim (1991a:391), means that as the locusts had been driven into the Red sea, it "pre-figures the sea crossing (Ex. 14:28)". Durham (1987:137) says that the "locust swarm is blown by this wind into the *Sea of Reeds*, the sea which Israel is later to cross in exodus from Egypt [...]. As it was with locusts and flies so will it be with the Egyptians. They will meet a common end".

#### **4.2.8.9 *The wonder of darkness that could be felt (Ex. 10:21-29)***

The ninth wonder, darkness, almost seems like an anticlimax after the hail and the locusts. There was however, an accentuation of terror, a "cosmic battle between light and darkness" (Childs 1974b:160). Langner (2001:51) describes the darkness of the

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<sup>12</sup> See Deuteronomy 28:38

ninth wonder as a “thick darkness”. So thick that it “could be felt.” It was so intense that there was “something solid or substantial” in it. He says further that “the usual darkness of night would depart, replaced by an extraordinary darkness that the Egyptians could not overcome, even with the help of artificial lighting” (Langner 2001:51).

The last of nine wonders therefore foreshadowed the ultimate judgment, death – “the loss of life in many of the signs-and-wonders as well as the fatalities to come for the firstborns and for the Pharaoh’s army at sea” (Meyers 2005:88). Childs (1974b:160) mentions that there was also “a certain contrast between the deathly silence within a darkness which can be touched and the ‘great cry’ which was soon to break forth”.

The Egyptian god *Ra* was regarded as a powerful sun-god, who was “mainly depicted in human form and worshiped as the one who created and sustained the world” (Ulmer 2009:185). The wonder of darkness thus robbed the Egyptians of their supreme god, who also was regarded “as the maker of everything in the visible world around them, as well as heaven itself [...]” and “[...] day was considered good, and night evil” (Langner 2001:52). This must have had an intense emotional effect on the Egyptians. Especially knowing that they could not even see each other, but in Goshen, the Israelites were not affected. They had light. YHWH, Lord of light and darkness, was on their side.

Pharaoh again negotiated with Moses, for the last time... “Go, serve the Lord; only let your flocks and your herds be detained. Even your little ones may go with you” (Ex. 10:24). Moses was not pleased: “You must also let us have sacrifices and burnt offerings, that we may sacrifice them to the Lord our God. Therefore, our livestock too shall go with us; not a hoof shall be left behind, for we shall take some of them to serve the Lord our God” (Ex. 25-26).

Then the Pharaoh got angry and threatened Moses with death if he saw his face again. Moses accepted the challenge (Ex. 10:29), for he knew what was to come, and he also left in anger (Ex. 11:8). With this, the third triad ends... Ford (2006:163) puts it this way: “[...] at the end of the first triad, the ambiguity of the source of the plagues [sic] was removed; the magicians fail to replicate and confess that this is divine work. At the end of the second triad, the magicians bow out altogether and YHWH steps in and

hardens Pharaoh, reducing any possibility of agreement. Here, at the end of the third triad, the negotiations break down all together. Yet, still, the people of Israel are servants of Pharaoh. Something more is required.”

A last note on the ninth wonder is that of Stackert (2011:674). He says that the three days of darkness served “as a prelude to the Israelites’ exodus from Egypt”, as the author employed “the common Israelite literary motif<sup>13</sup> of three days to signal Israelite preparation, to indicate the completion of the signs and wonders”. During the three days which the Egyptians felt darkness, “all Egyptian activity ceased completely”, thus the Israelites were “afforded a holiday from their labor, after which they were fully compliant when Moses instructed them” about their departure from Egypt (Stackert 2011:670-671).

Waltke (2007:378) stated that the purpose of the multiplying and intensifying of the first nine plagues [sic] was so that Egypt would know that YHWH is Lord: “To display his awesome power, *I Am* hardens Pharaoh’s heart so that YHWH’s might in redeeming his people from Egypt parallels his mighty acts in the creation of the world (Ex. 7:3-5)”.

The פִּלְאֵי (wonders) in Exodus 3:20 refer to the first nine wonders, but Chapter 3 shows that the words ‘sign’ and ‘wonders’ (‘ot’/‘mophet’) function as pointers, pointing towards the future: “[...] that you may tell your children and grandchildren how I dealt harshly with the Egyptians and how I performed my signs among them, and that you may know that I am the LORD” (Ex. 10:2).

Thus *signs* and *wonders* in Exodus 7:4 do more than pointing towards the marvels in the nine wonders, they point further into the future, so that “the generations of Israel to come might know that YHWH is [...]” (Durham 1987:100; Lemmelijn 2007:408) and who He is...

Durham (1987:99) says that the first nine wonders had “the same fundamental point, expressed in much the same way” - to create faith. But who’s faith? Not the Pharaoh’s faith, for he never came to believe in YHWH. Was it Israel’s faith then? Within the first nine wonders it does not look like it, because the faith of the people of

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<sup>13</sup> See 4.7.6



Israel is never mentioned during those wonders. Durham (1987:99-100) therefore rightfully asks for whose faith “has the composite of the mighty-act narrative been assembled? And to whom are these narratives directed?” In chapter 1 it has been stated that the narratological lens from which this dissertation is written, is that of the Babylonian exile. The narrator does not tell the story to Israel while they are in Egypt, but to the narratee. The last chapter will elaborate further on this point.

#### **4.2.8.10 *Nine wonders culminating in one plague: Death of the Firstborn (Ex. 11:1-10)***

Possible shadows have been shown in the previous wonders of what was to come. In this one plague, the death of the first born, it is spelled out: Final judgment, death, is upon Egypt. Chisholm (1996:425) says that YHWH “announced that the time had arrived for the culminating plague, which would cause Pharaoh to relent and release the people (Ex. 11:1)”. He also recognizes verse 10 of chapter 11 as a summary of YHWH’s involvement and that it forms an inclusion with Exodus 7:2-4. Also, it is a “much-anticipated event” (Greenstein 1995:559), for Exodus 4:22-23 aroused an expectation of fulfillment: “Then you shall say to Pharaoh, ‘Thus says the Lord, Israel is My son, My firstborn.’ So I said to you, ‘Let My son go that he may serve Me’; but you have refused to let him go. Behold, I will kill your son, your firstborn.”

Meyers (2005:92) sees the plague as “one more affliction”, therefore the impending disaster is linked to the nine signs-and-wonders. The plague will “transcend all the signs-and-wonders in its devastation and impact”. This can be seen especially in the way that Pharaoh not only let the people go, but forcibly expelled them...

Through a series of nine wonders (and one plague) “YHWH’s sovereignty was made clear, and the genocidal policies of Pharaoh’s tyranny are shown to have cosmic as well as historical consequences” (Birch *et al.* 1999:105).

There are four differences distinguishing the final plague from the previous nine wonders: YHWH did not *send* the last plague. YHWH *Himself* passed through Egypt (Ex. 12:12). Although the previous wonders affected man and animal, and possibly killed *some* of them, the last sought to kill *all* human and animal first born.

In Exodus 7:16-17 and 9:13-19 there was the possibility to avoid the wonders. With this final plague there was no such thing. The plague would come. The final plague was an intentional destruction of innocent life.

Meyers (2005:93) remarked that the "intentional destruction of innocent life in YHWH's slaying of the firstborn has long troubled readers of this narrative." The question could be asked: "What kind of deity was it, whose deeds could benefit one group at the expense of others?" According to Meyers (2005:93), "rabbinic commentators sought ways to rationalize such a horrific act". Langner (2001:48) wrote on the theme of "the Ninth wonder", and started with the question: "Who slaughtered the first-born of Egypt?" He is of opinion that the ninth wonder was most fearsome for the Egyptians; that they thought their deity, Ra, the sun-god, was dead or ill (therefore the darkness); that the Egyptians themselves slaughtered their firstborns as an offering to their 'Ra', to strengthen him. As soon as the darkness subsided then, they thought that 'Ra' was all well again, and that inspired them to go after the Israelites, once more. He uses Exodus 14:5 as reference: "When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, Pharaoh and his officials changed their minds about them and said, 'What have we done? We have let the Israelites go and have lost their services!'" (Ex. 14:5).

The subsequent question: Where then does YHWH fit into the last plague? Langner says that it is still a wonder, because YHWH knew that the Egyptians were going to slaughter their firstborns: "The slaying of the first-born was preordained by God. But it was executed by the Egyptians, following the plague [sic] of darkness" (Langner 2001:55). There is one important aspect though which Langner ignores: The Passover...

Therefore more clarification regarding the placement of the one plague within the greater narrative of Exodus is needed. Childs (1974b:194-195) sees the sacrifice of the first born as "an independent element of tradition [*contra* Pederson, Noth)] with a setting distinct from that of the Passover." Two questions though: Why then the insertion of Exodus 11:10? "Moses and Aaron performed all these wonders before Pharaoh". This certainly forms an inclusion with Exodus 7:2-4 (Chisholm 1996:425). The second question: Why are the regulations for the Passover placed between the mentioning of the slaying of the first born and the actual slaying?

The actual placement of the slaying of the first born within the greater narrative of Exodus could clarify the question: The plague of the slaying of the first born, within the greater narrative of Exodus, forms a hinge, or a culminating point between the first nine wonders and the actual deliverance of Israel. The triad of nine wonders and the placing of the one plague in the narrative tend to strengthen this suggestion. This point is elaborated on in the second part of Chapter 4.

#### **4.2.9 The Passover (Ex. 12:1–13:16)**

Exodus 12:1-13:16 describes the last day and night of Israel in Egypt. It is the story of the Passover. The Passover itself was not a 'wonder'; however, the wonder is within the context. YHWH passed over the homes where the Passover feast and ordinances took place. In this (passing over) lies the wonder. Therefore, this part of the story forms an important part in the meta-narrative regarding the first epoch, and eventually in this thesis as a whole.

The story of the Passover starts as a 'new beginning' for Israel. A time to look forward "and this implies that these people, oppressed as they may be, believe that they have a future beyond oppression" (Bergant 1994:48). So the month in which they are (Abib, or *Nisan* in Babylonian), would be the start of the year from this day on. This is our 'March-April'.

The whole congregation was to be involved in the Passover feast. The *whole congregation* implied "past, present, and future ('throughout your generations [...] as a perpetual ordinance'; vv. 14, 17)" generations to be involved (Meyers 2005:95). In Exodus 10:9 Moses has already foreshadowed the fact that the 'whole congregation' will take part in the feast when he mentioned to the Pharaoh: "We will go with our young and old, with our sons and daughters [...]" (Spero 2010:94).

YHWH gave a detailed description of the meal Israel had to eat before they left Egypt. The question whether there were feasts like this "during full moon; and this time of year" (Wagenaar 2004:250-268) in the history of Israel remains irrelevant for the aim of this thesis. What is of importance is that the Passover story "was a special instance and had a special significance" (Cole 1977:104). Exodus 12:11-14: "[...] it is **the**

**LORD'S**<sup>14</sup> Passover [...] on that same night **I** will pass through Egypt [...] **I** will bring judgment [...] **I** am the LORD [...] when **I** see the blood; **I** will pass over you [...] when **I** strike Egypt [...]. This is a day you are to commemorate; for the generations to come you shall celebrate it as a festival to the **LORD** - a lasting ordinance" (NIV). Verse 11 ends with לַיהוָה הוּא פֶּסַח הַזֶּה (Ex. 12:11 WTT) (Passover of the Lord) and verse 14 ends with הַג לַיהוָה (Ex. 12:14 WTT) (feast to the Lord).

This forms an inclusion, and in between there are no more than six personifications, "I". Everything that the people had to do would have a direct impact on what YHWH was about to do: Slaying the first born of Egypt and 'passing over' Israel.

What was it that they (Israel) had to do? Exodus 12:3-14 explains that on the 10<sup>th</sup> of the month a lamb, "year-old males without defect" (NIV), must be kept aside and on the 14<sup>th</sup> of the month it must be slaughtered. The main focus was on the blood - which was poured in a basin and sprinkled onto the houses with a bunch of hyssop. The inhabitants of the house were to remain in the house for the rest of the night - with the main function of "enabling YHWH to recognize the homes of Israelites and pass over them in his deadly mission" (Prosic 1999:45). This does not make sense though, for if YHWH knows everything He would have known which homes belonged to the Israelites. The blood rather is a symbol of faith. In other words, YHWH would immediately see who believed that He would deliver them.

This focus on the blood differs from later Passover stories<sup>15</sup>; the main reason for this is because of the word תֹּאֲרֹךְ (Ex. 12:13 WTT) (sign), in verse 13. This verse forms a culmination with Exodus 4:24-26, as will be seen later on in the second part of chapter 4.

The slaughtered lamb had to be roasted in a fire, not boiled. It could have been that this method was quicker, or a symbolic act, as with fire a quick and total transformation (of the raw meat) was possible. This viewpoint strengthens the idea of a new beginning, mentioned above (Bergant 1994:52).

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<sup>14</sup> Own accentuations

<sup>15</sup> Sinai (Num. 9:6-11); First Passover in Canaan (Jos. 5:10-12); Conclusion of temple (1 Kings 9:25/2 Chr. 8:12-13); Hezekiah's Passover (2 Cr. 30/2 Kings 21-23; 2 Cr. 35:1-19) and Ezra 6:19-22

Together with the lamb, unleavened bread with bitter herbs was on the menu. The bitter herbs were probably “a primitive condiment, though later Jews saw them as symbolizing the bitterness of Israel’s bondage” (Cole 1977:107). The unleavened bread was, according to Davies (1975:111), probably “small pieces of bread or cake baked without leaven.” This was a speedy process, which was necessary for the last night in Egypt, before the hurried departure.

Some scholars have tried to explain the feast of the unleavened bread “as originating in the settled agricultural life of Canaan, as they have seen Passover originating in the pastoral life of Israel’s nomadic ancestors.” Therefore, they see the “final united festival as an amalgamation of the two, after settlement in Canaan” (Cole 1977:108; Prosic 1999:79).

It is important though, to remember that in Israel, this feast like all others, “commemorate God’s saving acts, and had a historical [and Theological], not an agricultural significance” (Cole 1977:108). The feast had to be kept by future generations: “This is a day you are to commemorate; for the generations to come you shall celebrate it as a festival to the LORD—a lasting ordinance” (Ex. 12:14). In addition: “Obey these instructions as a lasting ordinance for you and your descendants. <sup>25</sup>When you enter the land that the LORD will give you as he promised, observe this ceremony. <sup>26</sup>And when your children ask you, ‘What does this ceremony mean to you?’ <sup>27</sup>then tell them, ‘It is the Passover sacrifice to the LORD, who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt and spared our homes when he struck down the Egyptians’”(Ex. 12:24-27).

The emphasis lies in the fact that generation to generation had to keep the feast. In addition, Israel had to deliver the story of their deliverance to their descendants... Whenever “your children ask what this means”, be ready with an answer, and that answer implies that by mighty acts (מִבְּשִׁפְטֵי מִגְדָּלִי) YHWH has delivered us (Ex. 6:6; 7:4) and with signs and wonders (יִאֲתָה יְתִמוּף) YHWH has saved us (Ex. 7:3).

#### **4.2.10 The wonder of the parting of the red sea**

In Exodus 14:1-4 YHWH is in conversation with Moses again, the previous conversation concerned the Passover feast and the consecration of the first born (which will not be dealt with now). YHWH instructed Moses to move with the people to “Pi Hahiroth,

between Migdol and the sea" (verse 2). He told Moses that He (YHWH) would harden Pharaoh's heart one more (final) time. Pharaoh would think that the Israelites had become confused and lost in the desert and would then pursue after them. The point of pursuit by Pharaoh, says (Durham 1987:193), "is the further and final mighty act of YHWH for Israel and against their Egyptian oppressors". Furthermore, Israel was not only being prepared for deliverance through the Sea of Reeds (which they were about to see and experience), but "by such a testimony, the Israel of generations to come is also prepared for an array of deliverances from an array of oppressors" (Durham 1987:193).

Durham noticed a dramatic arrangement of three scenes: I. Pharaoh's change of mind and his powerful pursuit; II. Israel's frightened reaction and YHWH's response; III. The postponement through the night; followed by the miraculous deliverance through the sea (Durham 1987:193). Meyers (2005:113-114) also noticed three scenes: "Egyptian pursuit (vv. 1-14), the splitting of the sea (vv. 15-25), and the rejoining of the separated waters (vv.26-30). Interestingly these three scenes are each introduced by "Then the Lord said to Moses" (vv. 1, 15, 26).

On the basis of Durham's and Meyers's suggestions, Exodus 14:1-30 could be described within the following three scenes:

#### **4.2.10.1 *Pharaoh's change of mind and his powerful pursuit (Ex. 14:1-14)***

There are a few possibilities which could have let Pharaoh change his mind and pursue the Israelites after letting them go. Practical considerations could have made the Egyptians realize that their 'cheap labor' was gone; grief over the loss of the firstborns could have been replaced by anger. But verse 8 clearly says "The LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh King of Egypt" (NIV). The language used in verse 6-7 is strong language. It shows the bravado-manner in which Pharaoh pursued after Israel. Words like "six hundred of the **best**<sup>16</sup> chariots"; "with **all** the other chariots of Egypt"; "officers over **all of them**". There were chariots as well as foot-soldiers. The emphasis on the bravado puts an even bigger emphasis on the mighty act of YHWH which is about to take place at the Sea of Reeds (Fretheim 1991b:155).

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<sup>16</sup> Own accentuation

#### **4.2.10.2 YHWH's response to Israel's frightened reaction (Ex. 14:15-20)**

As Israel looked up and saw the oncoming army of Egyptian soldiers, their agony arose to a full circle: As they cried out to YHWH in Exodus 2:23, they do so here again: "The intensity of their fears is expressed in a series of urgent and panicky rhetorical questions to Moses", questioning his leadership (Meyers 2005:114). This is ironic, because Moses has already proven his 'qualification' as leader, with the signs YHWH gave him (Ex. 4:29-31) and they accepted his leadership then.

They instantly forgot the mighty acts YHWH did to deliver them from Egypt. For the moment they were certain that they had come all the way, only to die here in an unknown place (verse 12). "This is the first instance of the periodic and perhaps predictable complaints – the murmurings – of the Israelites as they travel in the wilderness" (Meyers 2005:114). Moses answered the Israelites' three rhetorical questions with three successive and reassuring imperatives: "Do not be afraid, stand firm, and experience (NRSV, see) the deliverance" which YHWH is going to perform (Ex. 14:13).

It is of interest that the first of these commands, according to Meyers (2005:115), is one commonly used in military context, "to steady the troops before battle; and it is also a directive from God in theophanies (Gen. 26:24), assuring a person that the power of YHWH's presence will be for good and not for ill".

In contrast with the uneasiness of the Israelites, Exodus 13:20-21 explains that "By day the LORD went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel by day or night.<sup>22</sup> Neither the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night left its place in front of the people" (NIV). With these words the journey YHWH took with the Israelites actually started. By day YHWH lead the people in a pillar of cloud (דָּבַר עָנָן) and by night in a pillar of fire (שֹׁרֵט עָנָן). For a moment it seems as if the same journey that started with these words is going to end at Etham, on the edge of the desert. But it is almost as if the words, 'pillar of cloud' and 'pillar of fire' form an inclusion (Ex. 13:20-14:20).

For Israel, the journey ends... For YHWH, their journey has hardly started... For Israel, tension is mounting up to a climax in Exodus 14:12. The tension is indeed mounting,

for the greatest of the signs is about to take place in front of their eyes: "Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still" (Ex. 14:13-14).

YHWH guided Israel on "an eccentric route to a place precisely located, so also are Pharaoh and his magnificently disciplined fighting force guided to the very same place" (Durham 1987:193). The fighting forces of the Pharaoh were brought to a standstill when the 'pillar of cloud', together with the 'angel' who guided the Israelites in front, moved behind (in-between) Israel and in front of the Egyptians.

There's an interesting contrast in this setting: The cloud, which guided Israel by day, now gave light to the Israelites by night, but kept the Egyptians in the dark: "Throughout the night the cloud brought darkness to the one side and light to the other side; so neither went near the other all night long" (Ex. 14:20). The 'pillar of fire' is suddenly absent. This is a deliberate contrast, says Durham (1987:193). YHWH is creator of night and day. He gave light to Israel, but in the same instance, just as with the wonder of darkness, kept the Egyptians in total darkness. Tension was building up within them: "Let's get away from the Israelites! The LORD is fighting for them against Egypt" (Ex. 14:25).

#### **4.2.10.3 *The splitting and rejoining of the sea (Ex. 14:21-31)***

While the angel of the Lord and the cloud were behind Israel and in the way of the Egyptians, the Lord gave command to Moses to lift his rod (שֵׁבֶט) towards the sea. These words remind of YHWH's words in Exodus 4:17: "And you shall take this rod in your hand, with which you shall do the signs" (NKJV). Meyers (2005:115) puts it this way: "The splitting of the sea takes the Exodus story to a new level. As phenomenal as were all the signs-and-wonders, those calamities reflect known patterns of natural devastation, writ large by their sequential timing and intensity" and "Even the plague of the firstborn, when viewed in terms of its role as a counterpart to the Egyptian decree of infanticide and as vehicle for giving Israelite festivals and rituals a commemorative grounding, is not of the same ilk as the division of the sea".



The language in chapter 14 is indeed very descriptive and sketches the realm of a "cosmic battle". Meyer says that the defeat of the Egyptians is "nothing less than the defeat of chaos, of the universal forces antithetical to life and represented in mythic terms by raging waters. Ironically the means by which the Pharaoh intervened with YHWH's creational plan (Ex. 1:22) by throwing Israelite babies in the river (water), became the means by which his successor went under (water).

It is significant that the first wonder started with water (Nile turning into blood) and the last wonder ended with water. The first wonder started in the morning (Ex. 7:15). The last mighty act against the Pharaoh was in the morning as well (Ex. 14:24).

The powerful outcome of this third scene lies in verse 31: "And when the Israelites saw the great power the LORD displayed against the Egyptians, the people feared the LORD and put their trust in him and in Moses his servant" (Ex. 14:31). All the wonders YHWH did in Exodus prior to this event, have pointed to "this decisive event at the Red Sea" (Burden 1994:20). This final blow to Pharaoh and his army was so that Israel would believe in YHWH and acknowledge His supremacy over all of creation, and accept Moses as their leader. Now they saw that YHWH truly ruled over life and death (Houtman 1989:210).

#### **4.2.11 From the sea of reeds to Rephidim (Ex. 15:22–17:16)**

Israel's liberation was not "directly into the promised land but into the wilderness" (Birch *et al.* 1999:106). The narrative describing Israel's "sojourn in the wilderness is concentrated in Exodus 15:22-18:27" (Gooder 2000:103). Israel's trust in YHWH was on the verge of being lost because of the "hardships of a landscape without food and water and of encounters with new enemies" (Birch *et al.* 1999:106).

The journey from the sea of Reeds to Rephidim took approximately three months. During this time, the Israelites had to deal with at least four crises: "the bitter waters at Marah (Ex. 15:22-27); the need for sufficient quantities of food (Ex. 16:1-36); a lack of drinking water at Rephidim (Ex. 17:1-7); the invasion of the Amalekites (Ex. 17:8-16)" (Hamilton 2005:179). The story of Jethro visiting the camp at the mountain of God is depicted in Exodus 18:5, and seems out of place, as the arrival of Israel at Sinai is only described in Exodus 19:2. Gooder (2000:104) says that although the scenes

mentioned above are out of place chronologically, it doesn't matter, because they fit together well thematically, in that they represent important concerns for the people of Israel: "[...] divine intervention to provide food, defence against attack from enemies and the need for internal organisation would have been of prime significance" (Goeder 2000:104).

Hamilton (2005:178) noticed that a key word throughout this period is the verb 'nasa' (נָסָה [Ex. 15:25]; אָנַסְנוּ [Ex. 16:4]): "to prove, put to the test". The testing-motif of YHWH provides "the occasion for a demand for decision and obedience from the community" (Burden 1994:48).

A companion to testing is murmuring (Ex. 15:24; 16:2). This verb (*lun* (לון - [*luwn*, *liyn* /loon/])<sup>17</sup> is not found in the chapters before chapter 15. Gowan (1994:172) sees in this the possibility that the verb could "hold together the wilderness traditions in Exodus and Numbers as a discrete group". It is noticeable that YHWH is not piqued: "He responds, not because of the Israelites' murmurings, but in spite of their murmurings" (Hamilton 2005:179).

Waltke (2007:386) sees three stages in Israel's itinerary pertaining "to events involving Israel's murmurings and YHWH's provision: water at Marah and Elim in the Desert of Shur (Ex. 15:22-27); manna and quail in the Desert of Sin (16:1-36); and water from the rock at Rephidim (Ex. 17:1-7)." On this journey, Waltke says, "Israel tests God and finds their covenant-keeping God to be a faithful provider, but he does not find similar faith in them..." In this, Waltke differs from Hamilton, as Hamilton is of opinion that YHWH tested Israel.

In a way, both of them, Waltke and Hamilton, are correct, although the scale shifts more to YHWH who tests Israel. There is only one occasion during the three stages (Ex. 15-17) where it is mentioned that Israel tested YHWH, namely in Exodus 17:2 "wherefore do ye tempt (nasa) the LORD?"

It seemed as if Israel was continuously complaining about their fate. Murmuring is thus another motif in the Wilderness (Burden 1994:47). Israel wished to return to Egypt on numerous occasions (Ex. 15:24; 16:2-3; 17:2-3). Birch *et al.* (1999:106) says that this

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<sup>17</sup> Strong (2001 – 3885)

theme of Israel's fate and their wishing to return to Egypt "was anticipated by the people's complaints at the sea (Ex. 14:10-12)".

The conflict between YHWH and Pharaoh in the previous stages (Ex. 7-14) now shifts to a conflict between YHWH and Israel: A conflict of submission. Leder (2010:98) puts it this way: "Israel's complaints occur in the context of the Lord's expectation that Israel submit to his law." Israel has to learn that the only way to survive outside of Egypt, is to submit to the Lord's commands and decrees (Ex. 15:25-26; cf. Lev. 18:5; Deut. 8:3). This asks for a relationship between Israel and YHWH, described by a consistent pattern in the wilderness, that of obedience and faith (Burden 1994:49).

Gowan (1994:170) mentions that YHWH's care also forms a strong motif: "From God's perspective, the theme of these stories is not *murmuring in the wilderness*, but *care in the wilderness*. In Exodus, Gowan continues, "God's activity is all positive. He hears, gives, instructs, commands, and promises healing." There are also no "sin words in chapters 15-18". On the contrary, "there is a very prominent emphasis on God's deliverance of Israel from Egypt (natsal [נָצַל]: 18:4, 8, 9, 10; 'yatsa' [יָצָא]: 18:1; 'asah' [עָשָׂה]: 18:1,8,9)."

Israel needed to understand that the same YHWH, who delivered them from Egypt and did wondrous deeds, would continue to care for them in all their needs and even cure (another motif) them from illness and diseases (Burden 1994:47; Ex. 15:27). House (1998:107) affirms this point positively: "God has not redeemed them to destroy them but to love them and build their faith in the incomparable YHWH." Or as Brueggemann (2008:168) puts it: "In *Exodus* 16-18... YHWH is featured as *leader and sustainer*..." and even as "*nourisher and sustainer*".

#### **4.2.11.1 The wonder-curing of the waters of Marah (Ex. 15:22-27)**

Three days after the Israelites left the Red Sea, they found themselves without water in the wilderness of Shur. 'Shur' literally means 'wall' and might refer to a "barrier fortification that the Egyptians apparently constructed at times to protect their eastern border from incursions of marauders from the Sinai Peninsula<sup>18</sup>" (Meyers 2005:128).

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<sup>18</sup> Cf. Genesis 25:18

Eventually they found water at a place called 'Marah', but the water was undrinkable (bitter), as the meaning of the name 'Marah' stated (Ex. 15:23). Israel was in a crisis, as the fundamental need for human life, namely water, left them in dismay. They could see the water, feel the water, but could not drink the water. Klopper (2005:254) sees in water a strong motif. She says that the reason for the implementation of the water motif in the text is so that the audience/readers of the text "can identify with the sensations experienced by the original participants in the situation in order to evoke a certain response" (Klopper 2005:255). For the Israelites the wilderness was a fearsome place, the unknown, full of "fiery serpents and scorpions" (Dt. 8:15) and 'a land of terror' (Is. 21:1) inhabited by desert creatures like owls, ravens, hyenas and jackals (Is. 34:11-15) where the dancing demons of the desert made their home (Is. 13:21-22)" (Klopper 2005:255) – and a place with not much water.

It is of interest that the name 'Marah' is repeated three times, "providing some convergence with the three days required to reach the site" (Meyers 2005:129). Three-day periods were a standard stage for a long journey in Ancient Near Eastern literature<sup>19</sup>. Meyers (2005:129) then rightly states that "these features of the arrival at Marah" have chronological and geographical meaning and are of "symbolic and literary significance". They remind, for instance, of "the three-day trek that Moses mentions so often in his negotiations with the pharaoh."

Being without drinkable water, the people cried out to their leader, and he in turn to YHWH. Remembering the wonders in Egypt, when Moses and his brother used the staff to turn the Nile bloody and undrinkable, Moses now uses wood (tree: יָצַד [ets /ates/]) to achieve the opposite. Water in this case was made potable, showing Israel that even the Wilderness could be tamed by YHWH; the gift of life is in His hands (Klopper 2005:263).

YHWH used this occasion to give a message to the people. He gave them "a statute and an ordinance" (also called commandments): "If you listen carefully to the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in his eyes, if you pay attention to his commands and keep all his decrees, I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the LORD, who heals you." Two motifs in this verse are important: Ordinance and healer. The ordinance followed after the act of throwing

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<sup>19</sup> e.g. Genesis 22:4

the wood/tree into the water. The tree that Moses threw in the water was shown (יָרָה) [*yarah, Chr., yara' /yaw·raw/*] to him by YHWH.

The verb 'showed' (or 'teach') is from the same root which the verb 'Torah' (to instruct) derives from (Cole 1977:128). It is therefore not by accident that water and commandments were given on the same occasion. Both "water and regulations are essential for survival" (Meyers 2005:129). Just as important is the healing aspect. In a dangerous environment like the wilderness the Israelites were dependant on YHWH's healing power. YHWH assures them that if they keep to His ordinances, He will also heal them, as He healed the undrinkable water (Gowan 1994:172).

Meyers (2005:128) mentions that there is a link between the bitterness of the water at Marah and "the work imposed on the Israelites in Egypt (Ex. 1:14)". The bitterness also "commemorated in the bitter herbs of the Passover ritual (Ex. 12:8)". The event at Marah thus set the stage for the entire journey of the Israelites. Basic human needs and the struggle to obey YHWH's ordinances will characterize their wilderness sojourn...

#### **4.2.11.2 *The wonder of the food from heaven (Ex. 16:1-35)***

Waltke (2007:539) mentions that "Israel expected to arrive without delay in the Sworn Land of rest". But to "their surprise they found themselves as wanderers being tested by God in the wilderness" (Deut. 8:2). Brueggemann (2002:27) expressed it as a place of "having nothing yet lacking nothing". In another book Brueggemann (2008:168) states that the "wilderness is found to be a place without a viable life-support system" and that it is the reason why Israel wishes to return to slavery and why they have a "general disgruntlement with Moses' leadership."

This can, especially, be seen in the second crisis Israel encountered when they were in desperate need for sufficient quantities of food. When the Israelites came into the wilderness of Sin, situated between Elim and Sinai, they murmured against Moses and Aaron. This time because they did not have bread or meat. Again they longed back to Egypt: "on the fifteenth day of the second month after they had come out of Egypt. In the desert the whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron [...]. If only we had died by the LORD's hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all

the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death" (Ex. 16:1-3).

YHWH's response to the complaint of Israel was to nourish them with "bread" and "meat" in the form of manna and quails: "That evening quail came and covered the camp, and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. When the dew was gone, thin flakes like frost on the ground appeared on the desert floor. When the Israelites saw it, they said to each other, 'What is it?' For they did not know what it was. Moses said to them, 'It is the bread the LORD has given you to eat'" (Ex. 16:13-16).

Brueggemann (2003:76-89) says that Pharaoh has disrupted the fruitfulness of creation, but the "gift of bread, meat, and water" has restored that disruption. Even in the wilderness creation can function with abundance, because YHWH is the sustainer. A second narrative reiterating the theme of complaint, followed by "divine response of nourishment" is found in Numbers 11:1-15: "The manna was like coriander seed and looked like resin. <sup>8</sup>The people went around gathering it, and then ground it in a hand mill or crushed it in a mortar. They cooked it in a pot or made it into cakes. And it tasted like something made with olive oil. <sup>9</sup>When the dew settled on the camp at night, the manna also came down [...]. Now a wind went out from the LORD and drove quail in from the sea. It brought them down all around the camp to about three feet above the ground, as far as a day's walk in any direction. <sup>32</sup>All that day and night and all the next day the people went out and gathered quail. No one gathered less than ten homers. Then they spread them out all around the camp"

Brueggemann (2008:169-170) shows the difference between Numbers 11 and Exodus 16. In Numbers 11:11-15 there is a dispute between YHWH and Moses. What is remarkable in Numbers 11 is the fact that Moses challenged YHWH. By means of a rhetorical question, Moses commented that YHWH had conceived and birthed Israel: "Why have you brought this trouble on your servant? What have I done to displease you that you put the burden of all these people on me? <sup>12</sup>Did I conceive all these people? Did I give them birth? Why do you tell me to carry them in my arms, as a nurse carries an infant, to the land you promised on oath to their forefathers?"

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<sup>d</sup> That is, probably about 60 bushels (about 2.2 kiloliters)

Here Moses used verbs which were connected with maternal functions. In this way, he appointed a mothering image to YHWH. This was daring language towards YHWH, as it implied that a "mothering God is responsible from the outset for Israel, and so is obligated to provide sustenance. It is characteristically a deep concrete crisis that pushes Israel's theological rhetoric in daring new directions. In the end, YHWH accepts the responsibility that Moses assigns" (Brueggemann 2008:170).

Then again, the larger conflict was not only between YHWH and Moses, but also between YHWH and Israel. YHWH also posed a rhetorical question to Moses: "Is the LORD's arm too short? You will now see whether or not what I say will come true for you." The same hand that delivered Israel from Egypt<sup>20</sup> would give the gift of food and sustenance. These two narratives show YHWH as a creator God who manages creation no matter what the circumstances are.

With the *wonder of food from heaven*, the motif of YHWH being the one who nourishes Israel, is pointed out. When YHWH nourished Israel, He made it clear that they should listen to His commands: "Then said the LORD unto Moses, Behold (הִנְנִי), I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them (אֶנְסֶנּוּ), whether they will walk in my law (בְּתוֹרָתִי), or no (Ex. 16:4 [KJV])". But Israel did not listen: "[...] in the morning you will see the glory of the LORD, because he has heard your grumbling against him [...]" and "[...] some of them paid no attention to Moses; they kept part of it until morning, but it was full of maggots and began to smell. So Moses was angry with them". Further on: "[...] Six days you are to gather it, but on the seventh day, the Sabbath, there will not be any". "Nevertheless, some of the people went out on the seventh day to gather it, but they found none". "Then the LORD said to Moses, 'How long will you refuse to keep my commands and my instructions?'" (Ex. 16:20-28).

Leder (2010:100) is right when saying, "Miraculous sustenance in the desert does not resolve the conflict between the Lord and Israel. The reference to the law in the frame and the divine question in Exodus 16:28 suggest that Israel's survival in the desert does not so much depend on food and water, but on conformity to God's instructions." Egypt was something of the past and in no means to sustain Israel. Israel was confronted with a new kind of existence, an existence depending on their ability to

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<sup>20</sup> See Deut. 26:8

submit to YHWH's Word. Only obedience to YHWH would keep Israel alive. Obedience also meant that Israel should be in a relationship with YHWH. The establishment of this relationship was "accomplished through miraculous acts of provision used to teach them [Israel] the fundamental principles in that relationship" (Burden 1994:54). Those principles, says Burden (1994:54), consisted of the fact that:

- YHWH is the God of Israel;
- YHWH is Israel's Provider who delivered them from Egypt;
- Israel is not alone in the wilderness, YHWH is with them;
- Obedience to YHWH includes the observance of YHWH's statutes and commandments.

#### **4.2.11.3 *The wonder of water from the rock (Ex. 17:1-7)***

The story of Exodus 17:1-7 follows the same pattern that appeared in Exodus 15 and 16: The people were in need; they murmured against Moses; he interceded with YHWH and the need was met (Childs 1974b:306).

Israel was on the move from the wilderness of Sin to Mount Sinai. When they reached a place called Rephidim, they could find no water and quarreled with Moses. It appears that there is duplication between vv.1b-2 and 3. In both these verses the people were thirsty, and reproached Moses. Childs sees this as no problem, as "the effect of the present expanded narrative is that of creating out of stereotyped complaints, a form which resembles a genuine controversy" (Childs 1974b:308). Childs (1974b:308) is of opinion that the dispute against Moses seldom reflects "such a real give-and-take".

Moses was really concerned about the seriousness of the murmurings: "What am I to do with these people? They are almost ready to stone me" (Ex. 17:4). Moses also accused the Israelites of testing [נָסָה, *nacah*] YHWH. The same word appears in Exodus 16:4, when YHWH tested Israel. By this time Israel "should have seen abundant evidence that he was caring for them" (Gowan 1994:173). However, this did not happen, as the names Massah and Meribah indicate. Massah derives from the verb (to test [נָסָה, *nacah*]) and Meribah from the verb (רִיב [riḅh]) - "scold," or "sharply censure," and is applied either to mutinous protests and reproaches of inferiors to a



superior, or, as in the last of these passages, to rebukes administered by a superior to inferiors (Orr 1939:2007).

In spite of Israel's murmurings, YHWH once again provided water by giving Moses the task of hitting a rock with his staff. YHWH provided water to people who challenged his presence among them. The question Israel raised in Exodus 17:7: "Is the LORD among us, or not?" anticipates what is coming, for, eventually, "the priestly writer will give the resounding answer in Exodus 29:45: 'I will dwell among the Israelites, and I will be their God'" (Gowan 1994:173).

Israel needed to know if YHWH was present. This need reflected "attitudes about God's two-fold role as protector and provider". Deities were generally "understood to be the source of sustenance and also of power to ward off enemies, believing that YHWH is present is tantamount to trusting that YHWH will provide material needs and protection" (Meyers 2005:134).

#### **4.2.11.4 *The wonder of the defeating of the Amalekites (Ex. 17:8-16)***

The protective aspect of YHWH's divine presence becomes immediately apparent in the next episode. While they (the Israelites) were still at Rephidim, their first enemies, the Amalekites, suddenly confronted them. Moses stood on the mountain (Horeb) and held the staff high. The staff, for the first time since its appearance in Exodus 4:20, is called the "staff of God" (Meyers 2005:134). As long as Moses held the staff high, the Israelites overwhelmed their enemies, and vice versa (Ex. 17:11).

The Israelites commemorated this victory in two ways: Recite – The written down victory had to be memorized by Joshua "as a guide to God's mind and Israel's future attitude to Amalek". The double transmission emphasized the importance of the subject matter (Davies 1975:145).

Altar – An erected Altar was given the name: 'The Lord is my Banner'. An alternative meaning is 'a hand upon the banner of the Lord'. This would be like saying: "I swear on God's banner" – that is, in God's name. This statement portends what was to come in the near future, an ongoing struggle with the Amalekites (Meyers 2005:135).

#### **4.2.11.5 *Jethro's visit to the camp (Ex. 18:1-27)***

Though there is no miraculous event within this part of the narrative, it is an important part of the narrative. Moses gives an account to Jethro of the miraculous acts that YHWH did: "Moses told his father-in-law about everything the LORD had done to Pharaoh and the Egyptians for Israel's sake and about all the hardships they had met along the way and how the LORD had saved them" (Ex. 18:8). It does not seem as if Moses spoke on behalf of the Israelites though, because the narrative story between the sea of Reeds and Rephidim consists of a lot of murmuring and the Israelites even wanted to go back to Egypt. Moses' account therefore functions as a witness or testimony "to the great acts of YHWH in Egypt and the wilderness" (Ex. 18:10-11; (Burden 1994:87). The question remains: Why does Moses give a positive confession while the Israelites did not seem to be positive at all? This must be because the author is aiming at an audience other than the Israelites who are wandering in the wilderness, the audience of the Babylonian exile (Burden 1994:85). Within the critical situation they (exile community) experienced, they had to become aware of the fulfilment of YHWH's promises, how He executed those fulfilments by means of miracle acts, consisting of acts contributing to deliverance, but also miracle acts showing YHWH as the One who heals, sustains and nourishes (Brueggemann 2008:168; Burden 1994:85).

Jethro, an outsider, only has to hear (not even see) of YHWH's mighty acts to praise YHWH with joy. He is the first in a long line that hears of these signs and wonders and responds with joy (Ex. 18:9). In this the message to the exile community is that "Awe, joy, trust and knowledge should come from hearing and not just from seeing" (Miscall 1992:47). Jethro noticed and then told Moses that it was YHWH "[...] who rescued you from the hand of the Egyptians and of Pharaoh, and who rescued the people from the hand of the Egyptians. Now I know that the LORD is greater than all other gods, for he did this to those who had treated Israel arrogantly" (Ex. 18:10-11).

Ironically the Israelites saw, but were not overwhelmed by joy, whereas Jethro did not see, but heard, and by hearing of the miraculous acts done by YHWH he became overjoyed in such a way that he brought an offering: "Then Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, brought a burnt offering and other sacrifices to God, and Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law in the presence of God" (Ex.

18:12). Jethro clearly sees that which Israel could only “glimpse in fleeting moments punctuated by hunger, thirst, and complaint. Thus, as an outsider, a Midianite, Jethro stands in contrast with that other outsider, the Pharaoh, in acknowledging God” (Leveen 2010:408).

Exodus 2:20 and 4:18 (Moses’ contact with Jethro and the Midianites) and Exodus 18 appear to form an inclusion. Some prominent motifs are featured in both Exodus 2-4 and 18 (Ber 2008:153). In Exodus 2:20 Moses is an outsider, invited by Jethro to eat (break bread) with them (Leveen 2010:399). In Exodus 18:12 Jethro is the outsider breaking bread with Moses and the elders. In Exodus 2:22 Moses calls his firstborn son Gershom (because Moses was an outsider). In Exodus 18:3 Moses’ son Gershom, with reference to his name is mentioned again (Leveen 2010:400). The word *peace* (salôm שָׁלוֹם) as a key term appears in Exodus 4:18, 18:7 and 18:23 (Ber 2008:152). Ber (2008:158) sees in the reappearance of Jethro, Zipporah (Moses’ wife) and her and Moses’ sons a motif which he calls the *Medianite* motif. The previous mention of Moses’ wife and sons was in Exodus 4.

What is interesting is that in Exodus 2-4 the *Medianite* motif serves as a *safe place* for Moses to be. When he fled from Egypt, he found refuge in the *safe* environment of Jethro’s tent (Ex. 2:21). In Exodus 4:25-26 Zipporah saved Moses’ life, again being a safe place for him. The Medianite motif could thus be seen as a motif describing safety and peace (Ber 2008:158).

Between Exodus 2-4 and 18 the Exodus narrative unfolds: All the miracle acts used to deliver Israel, the trek through the sea of Reeds and the miracle acts in the wilderness are narrated. An outsider (Moses) is commanded to deliver Israel (Ex. 3:10) from Egypt, and an outsider (Jethro) acknowledges that the mission was completed, giving YHWH all the glory (Ex. 18:10). As an outsider, Jethro’s “favourable evaluation of YHWH has greater weight. As an outsider he possesses a clarity that allows him to offer useful advice to Moses, advice that will greatly benefit the people of Israel. In fact, Jethro's advice gives the Israelite community a structure in which to implement God's laws after Mt Sinai” (Leveen 2010:405). The placement of Jethro's advice to Moses in Exodus 18 is not by accident. Jethro’s advice is prior to YHWH’s revelation in Exodus 19 and “suggests that the building of a nation requires both human and divine wisdom” (Leveen 2010:410).

To conclude: At first glance, Exodus 18 seems out of place within the context of the Exodus and Wilderness narrative. With closer reading it becomes clear though that the author knew what he was doing. In Exodus 2 Moses fled from Egypt for his life, he found a safe haven in the tent of Jethro as an outsider. The outsider motif was created prior to this event in Exodus 2:14 when Moses was reprimanded by his fellow brethren: "The man said, 'Who made you ruler and judge over us?'" In Exodus 4:18 Moses receives a blessing from his father in law: "Go, and I wish you well". Between this event and Exodus 18 the unsafe expedition of the Exodus and the wilderness journey unfolds. Exodus 18 concludes with Jethro being the outsider, still giving the assurance of peace (haven of safety) to Moses and the Israelites, which will accompany them for the rest of their journey. Exodus 2-4 and Exodus 18 thus cleverly embrace the Exodus and Wilderness narrative.

### **4.3 THEOLOGY (DéNOUEMENT) (Ex. 1-18)**

#### **4.3.1 Need, intervention, resolution**

After anticipating freedom directly into the Promised Land Israel rather found themselves wandering in the wilderness. During the three stages in Exodus 15:22-17:16 described above, two words and one notion seem to stand out. The two words are *test* (*nasa*) and *murmur* (*lun*). These two words seem to be the "glue" which holds the wilderness narrative together (Gowan 1994:172). They also lead to the one notion: Israel's ability, or lack thereof, to submit to YHWH. Burden (1994:83) says that the purpose of the wilderness traditions in the book of Exodus must be understood in association "with the miraculous acts of God beginning in Egypt and continuing until Sinai".

The miraculous events of the Exodus start with "hearing" and "remembering". YHWH heard the cry (*need*) of the Israelites (Ex. 3:7) and remembered His promise to the Patriarchs (Ex. 3:8) regarding the land (Land promise [Ex. 6:3-5]) (Rendtorff 2005:37). Hearing and remembering led to action (*intervention*): YHWH chose Moses to lead His people out of Egypt to the Promised Land (Ex. 3:10). Moses is the "tool" YHWH uses to lead Israel to the Promised Land (*resolution*). The setting for Moses' first encounter with YHWH is Horeb, a mountain in the wilderness. The Exodus narrative thus starts in the wilderness and ends in the wilderness (Rendtorff 2005:39). This would be the first

sign to Moses concerning YHWH's deliverance plan for Israel (Ex. 3:12). With the first appearance on the mountain YHWH summoned Moses for his task. With the second appearance on the mountain YHWH would summon his people (Ex. 19).

With the first encounter between YHWH and Moses, YHWH gave Moses three legitimate signs to authenticate Moses as leader of Israel (Ex. 3:4-8). YHWH would also give Moses the power to perform miracle acts (signs and wonders) in Egypt.

#### **4.3.2 There is no one like YHWH**

Exodus 3:20 serves as an important starting point regarding the miraculous acts in Egypt: "So I will stretch out my hand and strike the Egyptians with all the wonders that I will perform among them. After that, he will let you go". In this verse the theological intention of the miracles is made clear: so that Pharaoh will let YHWH's people go. It takes nine wonders and one plague to persuade Pharaoh to let Israel go. Exodus 7-15 describes a "power game" between YHWH, Pharaoh and the gods of Egypt. The outcome of the "power game" is that no one is greater than YHWH. The miracle acts will convince Moses of this fact (Ex. 6:1); it will convince Israel of this fact (Ex. 6:6); it will convince Egypt of this fact (Ex. 7:5; 14:4,18); and important, it will convince generations to come that there is no one like YHWH: "[...] that you may tell your children and grandchildren how I dealt harshly with the Egyptians and how I performed my signs among them, and that you may know that I am the LORD" (Ex. 10:2).

Exodus 10:2 is an important verse. It becomes clear when Israel comes through the sea of Reeds and into the wilderness. While YHWH *tested* (*nasa*) them to see if they would accept Him as their Sustainer, Leader and Nurturer, they *murmured* (*lun*). It is as if the miraculous events went over their heads. This is why Exodus 10:2 is important. The Author of the Exodus and Wilderness does not aim at the people within the narrative. His aim is at the generations to come. His aim is for generations captured in a crisis situation, like exile (Lemmelijn 2007:412), to comfort them and assure them that YHWH hears and remembers.

### 4.3.3 Affirmation and Appeal

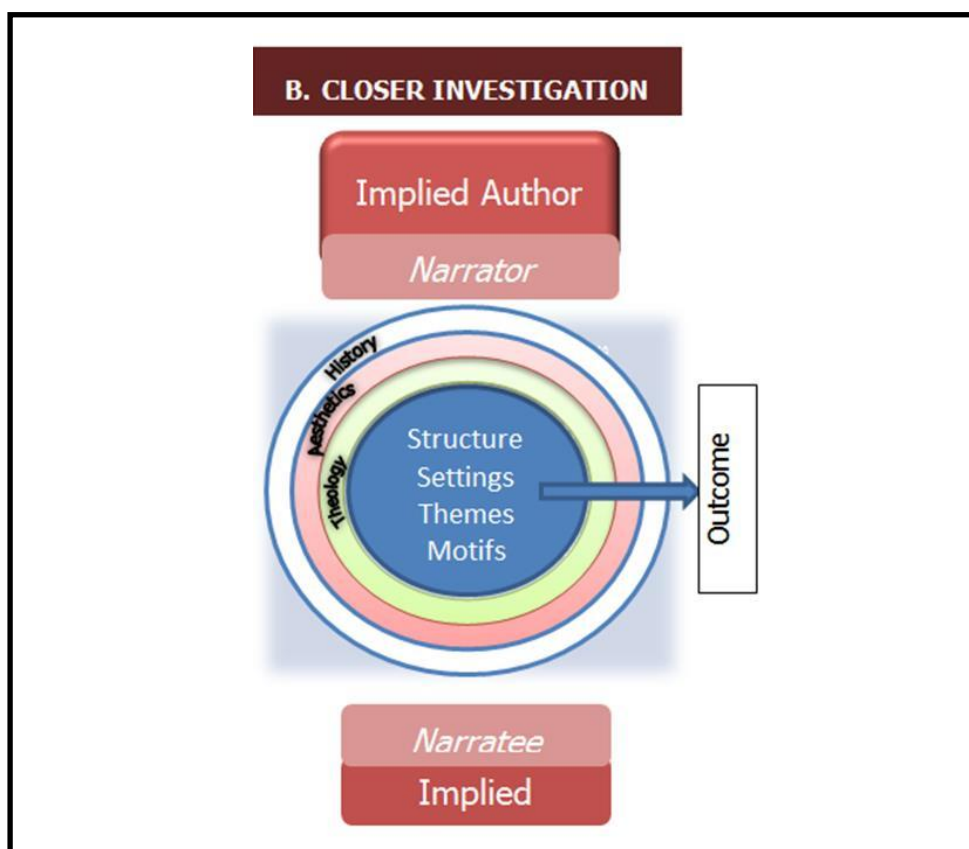
With the preliminary reading in division A of Chapter 4, Exodus 1-18 has been looked at as a whole. The main denouement of this section could be summarised by two words: *affirmation* and *appeal*. Burden (1994:48-54) is of opinion that the scope of the Pentateuch "implies the recitation of God's actions", or the "announcement of God's salvation" and that the Pentateuch furthermore is a "recitation of God's acts of salvation". YHWH's *acts of salvation* include acts of wonders, which form part of His salvation plan. Burden goes further by saying that *kerugma* [or rather scope] has a dual function: On the one hand it reveals the message of God's actions with the purpose of reviving and affirming faith in God among the people. This reminds of Exodus 14:31: "And Israel saw that great work which the LORD did upon the Egyptians: and the people feared the LORD, and believed the LORD, and his servant Moses". On the other hand, Burden says that *kerygma* [sic] is an appeal to obedient actions on the part of the community.

The second function corresponds to Leder's scope of "hearing YHWH's voice, implying they should obey Him". The point regarding the connection between Exodus 1-14 and 15-18 is: In Exodus 1-14 wonders are being used to confirm faith, in Exodus 15-18 wonders are used in part to *test* (to see if Israel would be able to listen to YHWH's voice) Israel, but also as an *appeal* (so that Israel should know to live by YHWH's ordinances).

The rest of the Wilderness, which is not part of this study, shows how Israel is being taught how to live by YHWH's ordinances. The message is loud and clear: Live by YHWH's ordinances and He will look after you; forget about YHWH's ordinances and the Land (promise) will turn against you, because "[...] home is not defined by a particular physical geography, but a spiritual presence and a teaching voice" (Leder 2010:41).

## CHAPTER 4B

### MIRACLES SURROUNDING THE FIGURE OF MOSES: A CLOSER INVESTIGATION



**FIGURE 4.2: STRUCTURAL OUTLINE**

As was explained in Chapter 1, this thesis follows a narrative approach and uses narrative tools, such as structure, settings, themes and motifs (see diagram above). The diagram, as explained in chapter 1, shows that these features can be intertwined. Therefore, a chronological order, as was the case in the preliminary reading, will not necessarily fit to this section (4B). Overlapping is unavoidable. The structural outlines of some scholars, as shown below, point to the fact that there is indeed more than one way to structure the book of Exodus and the outlines do help to show where the narrative is going to.

#### 4.4 STRUCTURE

There is more than one way to structure a book (Longman 2009:34). Durham (1987:1,181,255) structures his book on Exodus in three parts, based on *location*:

- Israel in Egypt (Ex. 1:1-13:16);
- Israel in the Wilderness (Ex. 13:17-18:27);
- Israel at Sinai (Ex. 19:1- 40:38).

Of note is that Durham does not treat Exodus 1-15:21 (Exodus tradition) as a whole and Exodus 15:22-18:27 (Wilderness sojourn) as a next division as is often the case<sup>21</sup>. He treats Exodus 13:17 and onwards as part of the so-called Wilderness sojourn. He gives several reasons for his structural outline (Durham 1987:183):

- Between Exodus 13:17-19, 20-22 and 14:1- 4, there has been a "shift in the use of the term "elohim" and the name "Yahweh";
- "[...] the reference to Joseph's desire to have his bones returned to the Promised Land (v. 19; cf. Gen. 50:24-25)";
- "[...] the difference in the reasons given for the route to be followed (Ex. 13:17-18 vis-à-vis 14:1-3)";
- And "the introduction of the guiding columns of cloud and fire (Ex. 13:20-22)".

Stuart (2006:19) is of opinion that Exodus is presented to the reader in two main parts, surrounding the theme of *deliverance*. The first part (Ex. 1-19) tells the story of YHWH's bringing his people out of Egypt (rescue from human bondage) and leading them to his mountain (Sinai). The second part (Ex. 20-40) describes his covenant with them (rescue from sin's bondage). Stuart (2006:19) does state that the two parts have many sub-divisions.

Dozeman (2009:55,347) also uses two main parts in his outline on Exodus (The *Power* of YHWH: Ex. 1-15:21 and the *Presence* of YHWH: Ex. 15:22-40). The two main parts consist of "several large units (Ex. 1:1-2:25; 3:1-7:7; 7:8-15:21; 15:22-18:27 [...])<sup>22</sup>" (Hamilton 2010:290-292).

Gowan (1994:xvii) writes his commentary on Exodus "with the question of the role of God in mind", and the answer to the question helps him in defining the plot of the Exodus narrative, which then serves as the structural outline:

- Israel's bondage (The absence of God, Ex. 1-2);

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<sup>21</sup> Compare Childs (1974b:254); Fretheim (1991b:171); Houtman (1997:16); Propp (1998:355).

<sup>22</sup> For the purpose of this thesis only part one is shown.



- Israel's deliverance (Ex. 3-4) [four chapters devoted to Ex. 3-4: Numinous; *I will be with you*; The Name; Promise];
- The Divine Destroyer (Ex. 5:1-15:21);
- God of grace and God of glory (Ex. 15:22 – Ex. 31:18; 35-40);
- The Distancing of God (Ex. 32-34).

With his outline Gowan (1994:xviii) wants to put the emphasis on the characteristics of YHWH which show "compassion and grace (Ex. 34:6-7)" and that "enables the rest of Israel's story to happen".

House (1998:89ff)<sup>23</sup> also focuses on YHWH as the subject in his structural outline, with the emphasis on main verbs:

- The God Who *Sees* and *remembers* (Ex. 1-2);
- The God Who *Reveals*, *Calls* and *Promises* (Ex. 3-4);
- The God Who *Sets Israel free* (Ex. 5:1-15:21);
- The God Who *Sustains* the *Redeemed* (Ex. 15:22-18:27).

Fretheim (1991b:7) mentions that "the movement of the book of Exodus is marked by a number of structural characteristics". He says one can "cite the rhythm of lament, deliverance, and praise and the interconnections between liturgy and narrative as well as law and narrative". Fretheim (1991b:7) noticed important aspects regarding the structural outline of Exodus which are of great importance for the outcome of this thesis, therefore the following quotation from his commentary on Exodus will serve as an important fundamental aspect regarding the investigation of wonders in the Exodus narrative:

"[...] through verbal and thematic links, certain narrative aspects are made to prefigure later ones. For example, the actions of Pharaoh's daughter on behalf of Moses prefigure later divine activities on behalf of Israel. The various activities of Moses in 2:11-22 foreshadow later activities by both God and Israel. The deadly encounter of Moses with God in 4:24-25 anticipates the Passover. Each of the plagues [sic] prefigures disastrous aspects of the Passover and sea crossing. Each of the events in

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<sup>23</sup> House structures his outline in two parts (Ex. 1-18 and Ex. 19-40). For the aim of this thesis only part one is shown.

the Wilderness has aspects that foreshadow Sinai realities. These internal linkages give to the overall narrative a certain mirroring effect; each story reflects aspects of another, which binds them together more closely and provides an internal hermeneutic. Key transitional sections also serve to interlock the major portions of the book (1:1-7; 2:23-25; 6:28-7:7; 11:1-10; 15:19-26; 19:1-8; 24:12-18). Each section looks both backward and forward, catching the reader up on what has preceded, while anticipating future developments”.

For the purpose of this dissertation, which uses a *narratological* approach, a structural outline of Exodus 1-18 could be:

- Ex. 1-2                      YHWH sees and remembers
- Ex. 3:1-4:23              Calling of Moses
- Ex.4:24-26                Endangerment of Moses
- Ex. 5:1-19                 Confrontation with Pharaoh
- Ex. 6:1-12                 YHWH’s name
- Ex. 7:14-10:27            Nine wonders
- Ex. 12:1-28                Instructions regarding Passover feast
- Ex. 12:29-30              Plague of the first born
- Ex. 13:1-16                Consecration of the first born
- Ex. 13:17-15:21          Deliverance from Egypt
- Ex. 15:22-18:27          Wilderness sojourn

## 4.5 SETTINGS

### 4.5.1 “The mountain of YHWH” הַר הָאֱלֹהִים

There are two revelations on a mountain in Exodus. The first is in Exodus 3 (Horeb) and the other in Exodus 19-34 (Sinai). In the first episode the mountain where Moses was tending the flock of Jethro, his father in law, is called Horeb. Here YHWH revealed Himself to Moses in a burning bush. The Hebrew word for *bush* סִנְהָ [cânah /sen·eh/]<sup>24</sup>, in Exodus 3:2 is wordplay on Sinai (Collins 2004:111; Robinson 1997:112). Are these two settings in Exodus 3 and 19 the same place? The answer to this

<sup>24</sup> n m. From an unused root meaning to prick; TWOT 1520; GK 6174; Six occurrences; AV translates as “bush” six times. 1 a bush, thorny bush. 1A the burning bush of Moses. 1B perhaps blackberries bush (BibleWorks 2009 electronic ed.)

question is not that simple. Childs (1974b:52) brings into account “the problem of Sources”. The J source speaks of Sinai and the bush, while the E source speaks of Horeb (Childs 1974b:52; Propp 1998:190). For Knight (1976:16) the place is not of importance. “God can step out of his holiness anywhere and speak with man wherever he may be.”

This argument does not satisfy though, for Knight does not bring Exodus 3:12 into account: “[...] this will be the sign [אות (*’owth /oth/*)] to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain (Ex. 3:12)”. The sign “was to be a pledge to Moses of the success of his mission,” ... it required faith... but at the same time “it was a sign adapted to inspire both courage and confidence” (Keil & Delitzsch 2011a:286). The word “sign” pointed out to Moses “the success of his mission, the certain result of his leading the people out” is that they (Israel) will serve YHWH at the very same mountain where YHWH appeared to Moses (Keil & Delitzsch 2011a:286).

The debate however should not be whether Horeb and Sinai are the same place or not, but rather: What is the Theological significance of Horeb being mentioned? Is Horeb of any significance at all, or is the emphasis rather on the word *mountain*? The word Horeb **הַרְב** [*Choreb /kho·rabe/*] means desert (Strong 2001 - 2722), or wasteland, a place of “desolation” (Knight 1976:16). Houtman (1993:20) says that the phrase הַר הָאֱלֹהִים (Ex. 3:1 WTT – the mountain of God) could be compared with expressions such as מִטֵּה הָאֱלֹהִים (the rod of God [Ex. 4:20; 17:9]), בַּיַּת־הָאֱלֹהִים (house of God [Judg. 18:31]), אֲרוֹן הָאֱלֹהִים (the ark of God [1 Sam. 5:1]).

Houtman (1993:20) says that הָאֱלֹהִים (the divinity) signifies Israel’s God, YHWH. The mountain of YHWH therefore implies a “place where humans encounter the divine” (Beard 2005:251). A mountain portrays a place denoting nearness to YHWH and therefore gives security (Tolmie 1999:110). More specifically, in one sentence: The emphasis is on the manifestation of YHWH, meeting someone (Moses) on a mountain, also called a theophany (Beach-Verhey 2005:181).

## 4.5.2 The Nile, sea of Reeds, Mara and Rephidim

The Nile, sea of Reeds, Mara and Rephidim all have one thing in common: Water. All of the mentioned functions of water as motive become visible in Exodus 1-18 as the author describes the different settings mentioned above:

- *New beginning* – Moses, being rescued from the Nile, is YHWH's instrument for a new beginning for Israel. The deliverance of Israel through (parting of) the Sea of Reeds heralds a new beginning for Israel as they start their journey to the Promised Land;
- *Chaos/dry ground* – The Nile being transformed into blood shows YHWH's power over creation. Israel's suffering under the yoke of Pharaoh is nothing less than chaos. Therefore it takes nothing less than the Creator, who has the power to create out of chaos, to take Israel out of chaos onto dry ground (deliverance through the sea of Reeds);
- *Lord of creation* – Only the Lord of creation can supply water in a barren place (Wilderness) so that life could be possible for Israel, even when it seems impossible.

### 4.5.2.1 The Nile

In 4.2.1 it was shown that YHWH's redemptive plan began with Moses, who was hidden by his mother in a basket. The basket was placed on the river Nile. This act by Moses' mother was the dawn of a new beginning for Israel, for the life of the future deliverer was saved. During this part of the narrative the author starts to imbue a subtle ironic twist:

At first the Nile is depicted as a medium which Pharaoh uses to intervene with YHWH's creational plan by killing the Hebrew baby boys: "Every boy that is born you must throw into the Nile" (Ex. 1:22). The ironic twist is that the same Nile is used to save the coming deliverer of Israel (Ex. 2:3-10). Later on in the narrative, in Exodus 7:15, Moses is summoned by YHWH to meet Pharaoh at the Nile in the morning. If Pharaoh went to the Nile in the morning to worship the Nile river god, Hapi (Kaiser Jr. 1990:349), Moses and Aaron would show Pharaoh that YHWH is more supreme than Egypt's so-called river god.

According to the Egyptians the Nile was the birth-place of Egypt; therefore another ironic twist would lie in the fact that it is YHWH who created the Nile. It is YHWH, not the Nile or any other deity, who creates life. Therefore YHWH, Creator, can transform the Nile (which He created) to whatever He wants, even blood, thus foreseeing "disaster for Egypt" (Fretheim 1991a:388). In one sentence: In the Nile setting the author shows his readers that YHWH (Creator) is the only supreme Deity, capable of transforming chaos to order and vice versa.

#### **4.5.2.2 *The sea of Reeds***

In the preliminary reading of Chapter 4, regarding the sea of Reeds, the plot has been described in some detail. With a sharper focus on the sea of Reeds, the setting will be looked at from the "other side" of the sea. In other words, after the Israelites walked through the sea on dry ground and came to the other side. The Israelites were not captured in Egypt (crises) any more. A new crisis (which they did not know at this stage) however awaited them, the crisis of surviving in the Wilderness. Exodus 15:1-21 serves as a hinge/pivot or extension between the Exodus narrative and the Wilderness (Ex. 15-18), as will be described in the following paragraphs (Patterson 2004:44).

Exodus 15:1-21 is a beautiful constructed poem<sup>25</sup>, which has been put in its final form during the "late pre-exilic or exilic period" (Butler 1971:256). It has also been sighted as "one of the oldest texts in the Hebrew Bible" (Butts 2010:170; Halpern 2003:53). Butler (1971:258) says that two different elements were joined together by the final author to form a new setting<sup>26</sup>. One element was "a festival ceremony celebrating the election of Jerusalem", and the other "developed in the communal laments recalling the glory of past days under leadership of Yahweh". The new setting, says Butler (1971:258), was "a festival celebrating the kingship of Yahweh".

After the sea of Reeds closed behind the Israelites, they celebrated YHWH's kingship. They have "experienced their redemption from the hands of the Egyptians at the sea" [...] and the "narrative account had closed with the remark that people 'feared YHWH'

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<sup>25</sup> For an in depth study of the history and construction of the poem, see Butler (1971:61-247)

<sup>26</sup> Also see Baruch (2003:56)

and 'believed in him' [Ex. 14:31]" (Childs 1974b:248). Exodus 15:1-21 elaborates on this belief of Israel (Childs 1974b:249).

The song (poem) of Moses and Miriam is used as a celebration song during this setting next to the sea of Reeds (Fretheim 1991b:161). Durham (1987:203) says that this poem is "stimulated by an exceptional moment in Israel's history, propelled forward by a continuation of the benefit of that moment viewed with believers' faith, and expanded, in time, to conclude the testimony of additional events seen as continuous by Israel".

Within the poem there are certain words which testify in favour of YHWH's supremacy. These words testify *who He is, what He did, what He will do*. YHWH is praised as "the sole agent of salvation. Israel did not co-operate or even play a minor role" (Childs 1974b:249).

The poem in Exodus 15:1-21 would give comfort to people in times of crises, like the crises of the Exile in 587 B.C., when this poem was written. The words below, taken from the poem, confirm the feeling of comforting. They are marked with different bullets. The poem begins and ends with YHWH being the exalted one. Words denoting *YHWH as being exalted* are marked with *round, filled bullets*. In the middle of the poem (vs. 11) YHWH is described as *majestic in holiness*. This is also marked as a *filled, round bullet*, as it links to YHWH's being exalted.

The round, filled bullets thus show *who YHWH is*, as do the *round, clear, bullets*. He is a Lord of war who needs to be feared, especially by those who oppose Him. Therefore words denoting *what He did* are also marked with round, clear bullets, as they refer to what He did to Israel's enemies.

Finally, words describing *who YHWH is* to the individual are marked with a *filled square*, as are words denoting what He will do for those who accept Him as their *strength, salvation, God, and father's God*. They will be lead, guided, planted (on Sion / in the presence of YHWH) and ruled by an everlasting King:

*Who He is:*

- יהוה (YHWH) – Lord (Ex. 15:1 *the existing one* [Strong 3068; Hol 3193]), exalted (Ex. 15:1,21) [גָּאָה / *ga'ah*]; Strong 1342; TWOT 299; BDB 144b, 1085d);
- (my) Strength (Ex. 15:2 [זַעַז / *'oz*]; Strong 5797; Hol 6175);
- (my) Salvation (Ex. 15:2 [יְשׁוּעָה / *yəšū'ah*]; Strong 3444; Hol 3596);
- (my) God (Ex. 15:2 [אֱלֹ / *'ēl*]; Strong 410; Hol 436);
- (my) father's God (אֱלֹהֵי אָבִי) (Ex. 15:2 [בָּא / *'ab*]; Strong 1; Hol 1);
- יהוה (YHWH) – Lord, *man of war* (Ex. 15:3 [אִישׁ מִלְחָמָה]; Hol 398 and 4658);
- יהוה (YHWH) – Lord, *Majestic in holiness* (Ex. 15:11 [וַיִּבְרַח בְּקִדְשׁ]; Hol 148 and 7423);
- יהוה (YHWH) – Lord, *To be feared* [or] *fearsome one* (Ex. 15:11 [וַיִּנְרָא]; Hol 3509).

*What He did:*

- רָמָה {ramah} (Ex. 15:1,4 [thrown, or cast]; Strong 7411) horse and rider into the sea;
- רָעַץ {raats} (Ex. 15:6 [shattered]; Strong 07492) the enemy;
- הָרַס {harac} (Ex. 15:7 [broke down]; Strong 2040) those who opposed Him;
- אָכַל {akal} (Ex. 15:7 [consumed]; Strong 0398) those who opposed Him.

*What He will do:*

- נָחָה {nachah} (Ex. 15:13 [lead]; Strong 05148) those He has redeemed;
- נָהַל {nahal} (Ex. 15:13 [guide]; Strong 05095) them to His dwelling;
- נָטַע {nata} (Ex. 15:17 [plant/establish]; Strong 05193) plant<sup>27</sup> them (His people) on the mountain of His inheritance;
- מָלַךְ {malak} (Ex. 15:18 [reign/become king]; Strong 04427a) forever and ever.

The insight of Durham (1987:203) that this poem is “stimulated by an exceptional moment in Israel’s history”, which was the celebration of YHWH’s supremacy over Egypt after the passing through the sea of Reeds, could be elaborated on.

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<sup>27</sup> “When YHWH *plants* individuals, He rewards them with fertility and security” (Propp 1998:569).

Throughout the poem in Exodus 15 Pharaoh and his army's final fate in the sea of Reeds (water)<sup>28</sup> is depicted. His arrogance and hard heartedness are described one more time in Exodus 15:9: "I will pursue, I will overtake them. I will divide the spoils; I will gorge myself on them. I will draw my sword and my hand will destroy them". Pharaoh's arrogance was short lived though, as YHWH had but to blow with His breath, "and the sea covered them. They sank like lead in the mighty waters" (Ex. 15:10).

YHWH, creator God, does not oppose Pharaoh by another sword; nor does He meet Pharaoh on another chariot; "the army that he [YHWH] leads (v.4) clashes with no human fighting force" (Fretheim 1991b:169). The defeat, however, is total. With a "right hand" (Ex. 15:6) and His "breath" (Ex. 15:10) YHWH commanded water to cover the Egyptians and ordered the earth to "swallow" (Ex. 15:12) them.

Instead of Pharaoh's possessing the Israelites once more, he is swallowed/possessed (בלע bala) by the earth (Rylaarsdam 1990:944). The same word (בלע bala) is found in Exodus 8:6 "So Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt, and the frogs came up and covered [בלע] the land". Pharaoh, who turned against YHWH's creational plan, is now turned against by creation.

Of note is the mention of water in Exodus 15:10. In the very next verse the question is asked: "Who among the gods is like you, O LORD?" (Ex. 15:11). The same phrase is found in two previous verses as statements: "It will be as you say, so that you may know there is no one like the LORD our God" (Ex. 8:10); "[...]so you may know that there is no one like me in all the earth" (Ex. 9:14). In these two verses the phrase; *there is none like YHWH*, is also in a sense connected to water: In Exodus 8:10 the phrase comes after the *wonder of frogs*, when it is said that they will remain in the Nile (water), so Pharaoh *may know YHWH is Lord*. In Exodus 9:14 the phrase comes before the *wonder of hail* (water), so Pharaoh *may know...* The phrase, "*Who among the gods is like you...*" implies that only YHWH has power over creation (Fretheim 1991b:169). He can order frogs in and out of water; He can summon hail and thunder to destroy; only YHWH, the creator, can "work wonders" in creation (Ex. 15:11).

A final comment on Exodus 15:1-21 would be on the word נָטַח (*natah*), stretch, in Exodus 15:12. Strong (2001:662) describes the word as follows:

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<sup>28</sup> Exodus 15:1,4-8,10,12,19,21



הִצַּדְתִּי connotes “extending something outward and toward something or someone”. An example is found in Exodus 6:6 “I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment”. Strong says that “this is a figure of God’s active, sovereign, and mighty involvement in the affairs of men”. In Exodus 6 *stretch* will thus have the meaning of *stretching out* something “until it reaches a goal”, like: ... *now you will see...* The word הִצַּדְתִּי can also mean to stretch toward something without touching it. An example is found in Exodus 9:23: “When Moses stretched out his staff toward the sky, the LORD sent thunder and hail”. This act says Strong (2001:662), was done as a sign: “The pointed staff was a visible sign that God’s power was directly related to God’s messengers”: “Take your staff and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt—over the streams and canals, over the ponds and all the reservoirs—and they will turn to blood. Blood will be everywhere in Egypt, even in the wooden buckets and stone jars” (Ex. 7:19).

With הִצַּדְתִּי in Exodus 15:12, Pharaoh was swallowed by the earth (Underworld [Propp 1998:526]). The same verb (הִצַּדְתִּי) is found in Exodus 6:6, denoting judgment, therefore foreseeing (pointing towards) Pharaoh’s fate. The verb is found again in Exodus 7:19, where water is turned into blood, and yet again in Exodus 9:23, with the wonder of hail (frozen water) and thunder. These were signs of judgment over Pharaoh and Egypt and it was finally fulfilled in the sea of Reeds.

Two verses in Exodus 15 highlight the fact of judgment even further: “[...] they sank to the depths like a stone” and “They sank like lead in the mighty waters” (Ex. 15:5, 10). Boyle (2004:26) says that in Hebrew “Weights for measurement were called ‘stones’”. Therefore “an intriguing comparison is the Egyptian judgment of the dead, in which mythology the heart (*ib, h·ty*) is divinely weighed in the goddess Maat’s scales against an ostrich feather. If the human’s pan sinks below the level of balance, the heart is punished in the afterlife” (Boyle 2004:26). In verse 10 the word *stone* is replaced with *lead*. This merely shows a parallelism, as lead is more heavy than stone. Thus the “hard-hearted Egyptians fail the test, sinking overweighed “in the heart of the sea,” in its collective motion of judgment (Boyle 2004:27).

The song Moses and Miriam sang at the setting, Sea of Reeds, therefore links perfectly to the wonders in Egypt. As a song of hope it also links to that which lies ahead, the wandering in the Wilderness and onwards (Childs 1974b:252).

Exodus 15:1 shows that the poem is about YHWH and to YHWH (Durham 1987:205). Following Durham's assumption that the poem also concludes "the testimony of additional events seen as continuous by Israel", Exodus 15:1-21 serves as a perfect *hinge*, or "natural extension" (Fretheim 1991b:162) linking Exodus 1-15 to the Wilderness tradition in Exodus 15-18.

In one sentence: The author of Exodus 15:1-21 shows his readers that only YHWH can be present to his people and do for them (deliver) what no other god can do. In the words of Durham (1987:210) the Song of Moses and Miriam "is a kind of summary of the theological base of the whole of the Book of Exodus".

#### **4.5.2.3 *Marah and Rephidim***

The next setting after the crossing through the sea of Reeds also features water as the main subject. The setting is in sharp contrast with the sea of Reeds though. At the sea of Reeds Israel celebrated and sang joyfully. At Marah, and later on at Rephidim the atmosphere was sombre, full of murmurings (Ex. 15:24; 17:2).

There was water at Marah, but it was bitter, and at Rephidim there was no water at all. Water is a matter of life and death. The sea of Reeds showed it clearly, as life (Israel) and death (Egyptians) were separated. But in the desert Israel faced the danger of dehydrating heat, which could most certainly lead to death if there is no water (Durham 1987:213).

Another aspect which sets the setting of Marah and Rephidim apart from the sea of Reeds is that the celebration at the sea of Reeds appeared spontaneously. At Marah YHWH gave Israel an "option authenticated by what he has done with the water, as by what had happened to the Egyptians from the fifth of the mighty acts forward" (Durham 1987:213). The option offered by YHWH is "obedience and judgment" (Durham 1987:213). Israel needs to understand that YHWH will sustain them, even in the harshest of conditions, but they must obey him and "take his requirement and his guidance seriously, pay close and committed attention to his voice, adopt his standard as the measure of what is right, obey his commands and meet his requirements" (Durham 1987:213). Only then "I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the LORD, who heals you" (Ex. 15:26).

In one sentence: The author shows his readers that only YHWH can sustain life, even in the harshest of conditions, but He asks for obedience.

### 4.5.3 Wilderness (מִדְבָּר)

According to Pfeiffer *et al.* (1975:s.p.) the most common word for *Wilderness* in the Old Testament is מִדְבָּר (midbār). It has approximately 280 occurrences and “derives from a root meaning ‘to drive’, *i.e.*<sup>29</sup>, drive herds to the fields”<sup>30</sup>. It can have the literal meaning of a place which is “arid” or bone-dry, but wilderness can also have “the physical sign of the idea of desolation [...]” (Knight 1976:16). On the other hand, there is a relation between the wilderness and the mountain of YHWH. As previously mentioned, the mountain of YHWH (Horeb **חֲרֵב**) has the meaning of desolation (Strong 2001 - 2722), but also implies an awareness of YHWH, *i.e.* his presence. In the same way *wilderness* can be a place of desolation, but also a place where YHWH is met (Knight 1976:16).

Of interest, another word deriving from the word Horeb is חֲרָבָה (*charabah*), which means *dry land* (TWOT 731c): “Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and all that night the LORD drove the sea back with a strong east wind and turned it into dry land (Ex. 14:21)”. In this sense, it is a place of “safeness” for Israel, but the downside is “chaos” for YHWH’s enemies: “The water flowed back and covered the chariots and horsemen—the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed the Israelites into the sea. Not one of them survived” (Ex. 14:28). In other words, *wilderness* as setting can have a dual meaning, which shows contrasts.

Knight (1976:16) mentions that מִדְבָּר, “theologically speaking”, is a place of “non-being” and that the “Hebrews were actually aware that it lay just *behind* [west] the ordered life of God’s creation”. Yet, the author describes מִדְבָּר (Midbār) and derivatives thereof no less than 22 times in Exodus 1-18<sup>31</sup>, but not primarily as a place of desolation, or as a place *behind the ordered life of God’s creation*. Rather, it is a

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<sup>29</sup> *i.e. id est* (that is)

<sup>30</sup> Logos Library System. (Electronic Ed.) Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Book House

<sup>31</sup> Ex. 3:1,18; 4:27; 5:1,3; 7:16; 8:27,28; 13:18,20; 14:3,11,12; 15:22; 16:1,2,3,10,14,32; 17:1; 18:5

place where YHWH is being met, but also a place of contrasts, like conflict and submission:

#### **4.5.3.1 *Place where YHWH is being met***

If a place is desolated, it fits to be a perfect hiding place. מִדְבָּר is first indirectly mentioned when Moses fled for his life as “a fugitive from justice” (Gowan 1994:4). He went to stay in Midian (Ex. 2:15), which was “located principally in the desert north of the Arabian Peninsula” (Strong 2001 - 4080; Easton’s Bible Dictionary 2537<sup>32</sup>). The narrator tells us that one day Moses “led the flock to the far side of the desert and came to Horeb, the mountain of God (Ex. 3:1). One can only speculate on the *far side*; was Moses trying to get as far from his past as possible? Moses’ encounter with YHWH in Exodus 3 has been described in some detail in chapter 4A. It could however be mentioned further that when Moses objected to YHWH’s call that he should go and deliver his people from Egypt, each of Moses’ “subsequent objections” arose “from the perspective of past experience (3:11, 13; 4:1, 10) and each of God’s replies [pointed] him forward to the new reality of faith which has been promised (3:12, 14; 4:5, 11ff)” (Childs 1974b:72). Meeting YHWH involves a new reality; a reality consisting of YHWH’s “presence” (Knight 1976:17). This reality means “a radical break with the past [...]” (Childs 1974b:73).

The author shows that “neither previous faith nor any other personal endowment had the slightest part to play in preparing a man who was called to stand before Yahweh for his vocation” (Von Rad 1965:57). Gowan (1994:27) compares Exodus 3-4 and Exodus 19-20 and shows that not just Moses, but also “ordinary people, the Israelites, may be given access to a reality beyond anything we know in the everyday world”. Also, Moses was an ordinary man, not a prophet or a priest, like the owner of the sheep he was looking after (Fretheim 1991b:54), when YHWH summoned him to free the Israelites. It has been shown in 4A though that YHWH gave Moses signs to legitimate him as prophet.

Meeting YHWH and receiving signs do not take away human fear or sluggishness though. Moses is commanded to take on Pharaoh, “[...] before such an enormous task, it is not surprising that he trembles” (Holmgren 2002:75). That is the point. The author

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<sup>32</sup> Information found in BibleWorks 8 (electronic Ed.)

shows that the story is not about Moses, but YHWH. YHWH is present in the wilderness. He leads (attracts) Moses to the burning bush (Ex. 3:2; Davies 2006:441). Moses will not be the hero, he is uncertain of his own ability (Holmgren 2002:75). Moses is given the assurance though: "I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you<sup>a</sup> will worship God on this mountain" (Ex. 3:12). So when Moses came in the presence of YHWH, he was assured that YHWH's presence would not depart from him.

This same message would apply to the Israelites when they came into the Wilderness in Exodus 15-18. Klopper (2005:254) mentions that for the ancient Israelites the *מדִבְרָ* was that "vast and dreadful" place "with its fiery serpents and scorpions (Dt. 8:15)". Therefore "they feared and loathed the *מדִבְרָ*" (Klopper 2005:254). Practically Israel "had no affinity for the desert landscape" because it was an unknown place to them, says Klopper (2005:254). In this unknown place they had to learn how to rely on YHWH's presence. At first YHWH made His presence clear by supplying water and food to Israel (Ex. 15:24-25; 16:4ff; 17:6). At Sinai (Ex. 20:20), which falls outside the framework of this thesis, YHWH gave Israel "an experience of his Presence at first hand, so they might have reverence for him" (Durham 1987:213).

#### **4.5.3.2 *Place of conflict and submission***

Exodus 3-4 can be seen as a conflict situation in the sense that Moses did not want to go back to Egypt. He had counter-questions to YHWH (Ex. 3:11, 13; 4:1, 10). In Exodus 4:13 Moses abruptly cried out that he did not want to go: "O Lord, please send someone else to do it". The narrator tells us: "Then the LORD's anger burned against Moses [...]" (Ex. 4:14). In a sense, Moses' conflict is also with himself. YHWH's presence makes him aware of his own weaknesses and fears: Moses is afraid to approach Pharaoh (Ex. 4:11ff); he fears that the people will not believe that YHWH spoke to him and that he knows YHWH's name (Ex. 3:13ff); he fears that the people will not listen to him (Ex. 4:1ff); and he fears that "he is not a man of words" (Honeycutt Jr. 1970:334). In other words, Moses' conflict within himself is a conflict of self-doubt, as to submit in his role of a called prophet.

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<sup>a</sup> The Hebrew is plural.

YHWH's rebuke in Exodus 4:14 reflects two considerations according to Honeycutt Jr.(1970:335): "[...] creative power necessary for man's function in a prophetic role is present in Yahweh, and it is implied, although not specifically stated, that it is available to those whom Yahweh calls". In Exodus 14:11 YHWH said to Moses: "Who gave man his mouth? Who makes him deaf or mute? Who gives him sight or makes him blind?" Honeycutt Jr. (1970:335) says this is "both an answer to Moses' objection and the foundation for the promise later made to Moses in verse 12": "Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say".

The subjects of the verbs go (לך) and *help* [be with] (אֶהְיֶה) are both emphasized in the Hebrew, as to say: "And as for you, *you* go, and I, *I* will be with your mouth" (Honeycutt Jr. 1970:335). Of note is that YHWH's "claim that he will 'be with your mouth' uses a verb identical with the one used in giving the name of Yahweh; *ehyeh* [אֶהְיֶה] 'I will be' (v. 12) being identical with 'I am' (Ex. 3:14)" (Honeycutt 1970:335). Honeycutt (1970:335) noticed, further, the assurance YHWH gives Moses that he ("I will be") will *with your mouth*. This means that there is "indirectly" a "continuing emphasis upon the presence of God in the life of the believer (cf. 3:12, 14)" (Honeycutt Jr. 1970:335).

It is not narrated directly, but YHWH's presence is the factor which moves Moses forward! YHWH's words: "I will be with you", are repeated in Exodus 4:15, but this time a double assurance is given, in that the word אֶהְיֶה accounts for Aaron as well. With this word Moses submits to YHWH. Moses is then commanded by YHWH to take (לקח)<sup>33</sup> "this staff in your hand so you can perform miraculous signs with it" (Ex. 4:17). The staff serves as "an extension of the hand (cf. 9:22-23; 10:12-13)" and "is a symbol of Moses' authority and surrogate for the divine hand (7:5; 'staff of God,' v. 20), that is, an instrument in and through which God works" (Fretheim 1991b:75).

In Exodus 15-18 the conflict appears three times, each being because of Israel's fear of perishing in the Wilderness (Ex. 15:24; 16:3; 17:3). Durham (1987:212) mentions that Israel's complaint/murmurings were anticipated in Exodus 5:20-23, and also in Exodus 14:10-18. The focus of the narrative is not on Israel's murmurings (conflict) though, but through the conflict situations the narrator presents "the narrative of the

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<sup>33</sup> The same verb is used in 2 Kings 4:14 when Elisha took Elijah's mantle.

continuation of Israel's journey toward Yahweh's goal [...] and Yahweh's continuing and fuller provision" (Durham 1987:212).

There is a sharp contrast between Israel's murmurings and YHWH's provision in the *wilderness*. Israel had to learn to submit fully to YHWH in order to survive. Submission, however, did not mean that they could sit back and order and receive. Submission meant obedience: "If you listen carefully to the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in his eyes, if you pay attention to his commands and keep all his decrees, I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the LORD, who heals you (Ex. 15:26)". Durham (1987:213) puts it this way: "They are to take his requirement and his guidance seriously, pay close and committed attention to his voice, adopt his standard as the measure of what is right, obey his commands and meet his requirements".

In one sentence: For the reader in exile, the assurance is there that YHWH is present, even in the Wilderness, and His presence will never depart from those who dare to come into His presence.

## 4.6 THEMES

### 4.6.1 Need-Intervention-Resolution

Within the Deuteronomistic history, as chapter 5 will indicate, triad-themes have been noticed by some scholars. Durham (1987:xxiii) for instance, speaks of Deliverance/Salvation/Rescue. "Need-intervention-resolution" is sighted by Brueggemann (1997:66). These themes are also depicted in Exodus 1-15, as a large unit, and furthermore in smaller sub-plots in the Wilderness sojourn:

- Large unit (Exodus 1-15)
  - *Need* – Israel was oppressed by the Pharaoh (Ex. 1:8-22).
  - *Intervention* – YHWH saw their need (Ex. 3:7); Moses was saved as a baby by Pharaoh's daughter. As a young adult he had to flee for his life though. In Midian (in the Wilderness at Horeb) YHWH called Moses as prophet to free YHWH's people from Egypt. Through nine miracle signs and one miracle plague Israel was free to go (Ex. 2-12:33).

- *Resolution* – One last miraculous event, the parting of the sea, took them into the Wilderness on a new journey (Ex. 12:33-15:21).
- Sub plots (Ex. 15-18)
  - Marah
  - *Need* – Water was bitter (Ex. 15:23).
  - *Intervention* – YHWH instructed/taught (יָרָה) Moses to throw a tree (יָצַע) in the water (Ex. 15:25).
  - *Resolution* - The water became sweet (Ex. 15:25c).
  - Wilderness of Sin
  - *Need* – No food (Ex. 16:2).
  - *Intervention* – YHWH supplies Quails and Manna (Ex. 16:13,14).
  - *Resolution* – Israel gather “meat” and “bread (לֶחֶם)” (Ex. 16:17).
  - Rephidim
  - *Need* – No water to drink (Ex. 17:1, 2).
  - *Intervention* – YHWH told Moses to hit the rock (which YHWH stood on) with his staff (Ex. 17:5-6).
  - *Resolution* – Water came out of the rock (Ex. 17:6d).
  - War against the Amalekites
  - *Need* – The Amalekites came to make war against Israel (Ex. 17:8).
  - *Intervention* – As long as Moses held up his hand (with staff), “the Israelites were winning” (Ex. 17:11).
  - *Resolution* – Moses’ “hands were lifted up to the throne of the LORD” (Ex. 17:16), so Israel overcame the Amalekites.
  - Jethro’s visit to the camp
  - *Need* – Moses served as judge to the people all by himself (Ex. 18:13).
  - *Intervention* – Jethro told Moses that it was not good to work all by himself (Ex. 18:17-23).
  - *Resolution* – Moses listened to his father in law and “chose capable men from all Israel and made them leaders of the people [...]” (Ex. 18:25).



In one sentence: YHWH is the one Who notices his people's needs and intervenes in such a way so that they (Israel) should know that YHWH is the resolution for their needs.

#### 4.6.2 Promise of the land

In his book, *the Theme of the Pentateuch*, Clines promotes the Promise of the land as the main theme of the Pentateuch. He mentions that the "promise of the land" is given to Moses in Exodus 3:17: "[...] I have promised to bring you up out of your misery in Egypt into the land of the Canaanites [...] - a land flowing with milk and honey"; and to the patriarchs (Ex. 6:4,6) the promise is expressed "in terms of the gift of the land of Canaan". Then, at "crucial moments in the narrative of Exodus the land is held out [...] as the goal of YHWH's activity: at the institution of the Passover (13:5,11), at the crossing of the Sea (Ex. 15:13,17), at the giving of the manna (Ex. 16:35) [...]" (Clines 1982:52).

Clines does not say why the three mentioned texts are regarded as "crucial moments in the narrative of Exodus" though. There are in fact eight verses where the promise of the land is mentioned in Exodus 1-18. Texts which Clines did not mention are Exodus 3:8, 17; 6:2, 8; 12:25 (also during the Passover) and 13:11. This study, in relation to Clines' mentioning of the promise in Exodus 13:5, has shown (4.2.9) that the institution of the Passover is an important moment, as it foreshadowed *new beginning*, a *future beyond* oppression. It had to be an annual institution to commemorate YHWH's saving acts (Cole 1977:108).

The Passover in Exodus 12-13, in other words, reminded Israel of YHWH's promise (the new Land), thus pointing forward. In future it would have the function of remembrance, thus pointing backwards: "When you enter the land that the LORD will give you as he promised, observe this ceremony. And when your children ask you, 'What does this ceremony mean to you?' then tell them, 'It is the Passover sacrifice to the LORD, who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt and spared our homes when he struck down the Egyptians'" (Ex.12:25-27).

The theme of the promise fades in Exodus 15-18 though. Israel does not enter the Promised Land, but finds itself in a landscape without food and water and with other hardships such as encounters with new enemies, which "threaten the people's trust in

YHWH" (Birch *et al.* 1999:106). Israel is depicted "to be unfaithful covenant keepers [...]" and "they do not trust him [YHWH] to bring them to the Sworn Land [...]" (Waltke 2007:386).

In one sentence: Within the *promise of the land a new beginning* and a *future beyond* oppression are foreshadowed for YHWH's people.

### 4.6.3 Presence of YHWH

A strong theme, in contrast to the People not putting their trust in Moses and YHWH (Ex. 6:8; 14:11; 16:2; 17:2,3), is the theme of Presence (Durham 1987:xxii). Leder (2010:115) says the land [promise] itself as theme "is not crucial, God's presence is". Fretheim (1991b:20) identifies YHWH's *presence* in Exodus as one of the "important theological issues" in his commentary on Exodus. Longman (2009:39) highlights the theme of *presence* as the most important theme in Exodus. Durham (1987:xxi) says that the *presence* of YHWH is the "centerpiece" of the main theological unity in Exodus and serves as a "theological anchor" or "compass". Durham (1987:xxi) identifies presence as a "point of departure" in Exodus 3 and 4 with reference to YHWH's presence. Moses experiences the *presence* personally, and this experience interlocks to the whole of Israel's experiencing YHWH's presence when "the plagues [sic] are the radical confirmation of YHWH's powerful presence among the people" (Lemmelijn 2007:408), as well as later-on in the Wilderness.

Terminology which denotes presence (of YHWH) "includes nouns such as *face* (Fausset)<sup>34</sup>, *glory*, *name*, [and] *tabernacle*; prepositions such as 'before/in the face of'; and 'in the midst of' or 'with'; and *fear*<sup>35</sup> (Bosman 2004:2). Bosman (2004:3) captured a list of verbs which "express divine presence or appearance" in Exodus. Those occurring in Exodus 1-18 are as follow:

- הָלַךְ *halak* (to do away/depart); used frequently in the Wilderness narrative (Ex. 13:21; 14:19; 23:23; 32:1);
- יָצָא *yatsa'* (go out from); Deliverance from Egypt is described with this verb (Ex. 11:4);

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<sup>34</sup> Information found in BibleWorks 8 (electronic Ed.)

<sup>35</sup> Fear is a strong motif in Exodus 1-18. See 4.7.5

- יָרַד *yarad* (come down/descend); used in connection with divine judgment or deliverance (Ex. 3:8);
- נָחָה *nachah* (lead); refers to divine protection and guidance (Ex. 13:17, 21; 15:13);
- עָבַר *abar* (passing over); (Ex. 12:13).

YHWH can be *present* in different ways: “nourishing and leading presence” during the *wanderings*; “abiding presence” during the monarchy; “hidden presence” during exile (Bosman 2004:3; Brueggemann 1976:683).

Regarding the *nourishing* and *leading* presence, a few pointers are of note. YHWH’s role as *Nourisher* during the Wilderness started at Marah. There YHWH showed Moses a tree (עֵץ `ets), which he had to throw into the water. Longman (2009:102) says that “trees and objects related to trees [...] are often found in places made sacred by God’s presence<sup>36</sup>”. He says that “trees represent life and God is the author of life”. Thus the bitter undrinkable (dead) water was transformed into life giving (nourishing) water by the *nourishing, present* YHWH.

*Presence* was also first noticed by Moses in the burning bush (tree) in Exodus 3. Here, YHWH’s presence was implied by fire (Ex. 3:2). “Fire, often accompanied by smoke”, represents YHWH’s presence (Gowan 1994:26; Longman 2009:102). At the burning bush YHWH promised Moses that He would be with him (Ex. 3:12), and in the end YHWH was with Moses and Israel and His *leading* presence was implied by a “pillar of cloud” by day and a “pillar of fire” by night (Ex. 13:22). Johnstone (2003:75) sees a fuller symbolism in the burning bush narrative: “the tree stands for Israel, the fire for persecution in Egypt, and the burning without being consumed for the fact that, despite persecution, Israel is not destroyed”. Because of YHWH’s presence, Johnstone says further that YHWH “is able to deliver them and lead them to the Promised Land (Ex. 3:7-9)”.

The *pillar of cloud* and *pillar of fire* resembled YHWH’s presence, but YHWH self could not be seen. Brueggemann (1976:681) says that “visual elements are minimized so that the meeting [with YHWH] involves essentially speaking or hearing”. *Presence* is not *appearance*, so to speak.

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<sup>36</sup> cf. Genesis 12:6; 13:18

Israel experienced YHWH's presence by hearing him (Brueggemann 1976:681); "Sight is submitted to hearing" (Terrien 1983:112). Israel could hear YHWH's commands/ordinances<sup>37</sup>, but also his assurance (Brueggemann 1976:681): "I will be with you" (Ex. 3:12). Carroll (1994:45) says that the word אֶהְיֶה (*ehyeh* – I will be...) "is a promise of presence *in the future*". In the Wilderness Israel would experience YHWH's presence as "the reality to which [they] must attune [themselves]" if they want to live, "for there is no solitary life" without YHWH (Terrien 1983:124). Brueggemann (1976:681) states further that YHWH's assurance [presence] could also be a warning: "He [YHWH] will be present to Israel, but he will not put himself at her disposal. God would be known by Israel, but he would not be seen, for to be seen limits his freedom and subdues the mystery which must be preserved (cf. Ex. 6:3)".

Regarding YHWH's freedom of movement it could be stated further that the entire Canon of Scriptures portrays YHWH "as coming to man, not man as commanding the appearance of the Deity" (Terrien 1983:28). This *coming to man* is usually "sudden, unexpected, unwanted, unsettling, and often devastating" [and] "typical of all literary genres in all periods of biblical history" (Terrien 1983:28). Exodus 3:1ff serves as a good example.

The opposite of presence is absence, so to speak. However in biblical terms absence does not mean that YHWH is absent. When YHWH did not speak "an awareness of absence" was at hand (Terrien 1983:28), but it "is when presence escapes man's grasp[ing] that it surges, survives, or returns" (Terrien 1983:476). This is evident in the cries of *the people* and of *Moses* (Ex. 2:23; 3:7,9; 14:10,15; 15:25; 17:4). It is also evident in the cries of Pharaoh, though he does not cry (עָתַר *pray*) directly to YHWH, but asks Moses to pray for him.

In one sentence: Israel experienced YHWH's presence by hearing him; when they did not hear him, they considered him absent, but absence is in fact his presence *surging and returning* [to them].

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<sup>37</sup> Cf. Exodus 15:26

## 4.7 MOTIFS

### 4.7.1 Signs (*oth*) and wonders (*mophet*)

The most important motif<sup>38</sup> regarding the Exodus and Wilderness narrative for this thesis is the motif of signs (*oth*) and wonders (*mophet*). It has already been mentioned in chapter 3 that 'oth' and 'mophet' designate to signs and wonders as to confirm faith. In many instances the signs also point to events that are going to happen in the future, as will be seen in this section. A sign in any given situation may therefore culminate with an event in the distant future. Sometimes the answer to the 'why' question of a given appearance of a specific 'oth' and/or 'mophet' could only be answered in another 'similar' event in future. The answer to the 'Who' question will always be YHWH, but He can also use mediators, like in the person of Moses and Aaron.

The following outline gives an indication of how the author uses 'oth' and 'mophet' in Exodus 4-14:31:

- 'oth' and 'mophet' as signs to convince Israel of Moses' leadership (Ex. 4:1-9; 29-31);
- 'oth' in the circumcision of Moses (Ex. 4:24-26);
- 'oth' and 'mophet' as signs to convince Pharaoh to let Israel go (Ex. 7:14-10:27);
- 'oth' in the Passover to consecrate Israel (Ex.12:1-13:16);
- 'oth' in the splitting of the sea as final judgment on Pharaoh and a new beginning for Israel (Ex. 14:21-31).

#### 4.7.1.1 '*oth*' and '*mophet*' as signs to convince Israel of Moses' leadership (Ex. 4:1-9; 29-31)

##### *i. The sign of the serpent, leprous hand and blood*

*Exodus 4:1-9.* In ancient times YHWH's prophets were accredited by "signs and wonders"<sup>39</sup>, "with the sole purpose of validating the messenger and the message – that both were truly from God" (Kaiser Jr. 1990:325). The signs *of the serpent*,

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<sup>38</sup> cf. Footnote 4 (p. 11).

<sup>39</sup> Deuteronomy 13:1-3

*leprous hand and blood* which Moses received from YHWH, pointed to YHWH, not to Moses. It was YHWH who gave Moses authority to lead His people. But Moses was afraid that the people would not believe that he was sent by YHWH, because of his questionable status: "A fugitive with a clouded reputation, he had left Egypt under sentence of death, and he had been away for a long time. How could they trust him?" (Durham 1987:44).

The word for 'trust' (אָמַן, אָמַן [ʿaman /aw·man/]), which Moses uses (in its 'hiphil' form) "involves more than mere acceptance of fact and includes overtones of confidence built on relationship." Moses had experienced YHWH, the elders and the people hadn't. Why would they believe Moses? He had a strong point in Exodus 4:1: "What if they do not believe me or listen to me and say, 'The LORD did not appear to you'?" Again, the signs are there to point to YHWH. It is not about Moses. When he shows the signs, the people will believe YHWH<sup>40</sup>.

The word **אוֹת** [ʾowth /oth/] in Exodus 4 involves the three signs: Serpent, leprous hand and blood. The meanings of these three signs have already been looked at in 4.1.3. What can be added here is that the first two signs, serpent and leprous hand, "lead to the third, not performed here, and not specifically called a 'sign' in Exodus 4. That sign, like the two that precede it here and the nine that are to follow it in Egypt, is to a single end: the proof of the powerful Presence of God" (Durham 1987:46). In other words, the first two signs, the *serpent staff* and *leprous hand*, pointed out that Moses had been sent by YHWH (legitimate signs).

The third sign (water turning into blood) could also have been used as a legitimate sign, but the elders believed Moses as being YHWH's agent without Moses' doing the third sign. The third sign did, however, manifest as part of the first nine wonders, pointing to YHWH's power over Pharaoh and Egypt.

*Exodus 4:29-31.* Moses and his brother Aaron met 'at the mountain of God', just as YHWH had indicated in Exodus 4:14. This site was situated between Midian and Egypt (Childs 1977:104). From here the narrative moves quickly. The elders are being met and the signs are being performed, not by Moses, but by Aaron. The fear that Moses had, does not come true, instead, "...they believed. And when they heard that the

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<sup>40</sup> That the people will believe YHWH is also a motif: See 4.7.13

LORD was concerned about them and had seen their misery, they bowed down and worshiped.”

In one sentence: Three signs (oth) were given to Moses to legitimate him as YHWH's prophet, but the third sign also pointed to YHWH's power over Pharaoh and Egypt.

*ii. The sign of the circumcision (Ex. 4:24-26)*

At first glimpse, Exodus 4:21-26 seems out of place (Embry 2010:178). Especially verse 21-23: “The LORD said to Moses, ‘When you return to Egypt, see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders I have given you the power to do. But I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go. Then say to Pharaoh, This is what the LORD says: Israel is my firstborn son, and I told you, Let my son go, so he may worship me. But you refused to let him go; so I will kill your firstborn son’”. One would argue that this part should be placed after verse 31, after the elders had been convinced that Moses had been sent by YHWH to set Israel free. But with a closer reading it makes sense as it is. Especially if one read verse 21 to 26 together as a whole. The word for son (בן) in Exodus 4:23 is the same as in verse 25 (Moses' son). In this regard Houtman (1993:449) reminds of Gen. 17 which “deals specifically with the meaning of circumcision, making it clear that through the rite one is incorporated into the community of the covenant; circumcision is a sign which recalls the covenant.

By the blood of the circumcision Israel is reminded of YHWH's covenant with Abraham: “Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you” (Gen. 12:1-3).

Houtman (1993:449) reminds further that in “connection with Ex. 4:24-26 it is important to note that “[...] circumcision was associated with the notions of dedication, sanctification, and purification” (Gen. 17; Ex. 12; Josh. 5). Therefore, in some way Exodus 4:24-26 can be compared with Isaiah 6:7: “With it he touched my mouth and said, “See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for”. Houtman (1993:449) makes this comparison, since the circumcision qualified Moses to be YHWH's ambassador.

Also noteworthy is the insight of Fretheim (1991b:79-82) in this passage. He noticed a few parallels that could be drawn from verse 24-26. He says that "the opening chapters of Exodus often foreshadow [point to] later passages". The same happens here in Ex. 4:24-26. When Zipporah touched (נָגַח [naga' /naw'gah/]) Moses' feet with the foreskin of Moses' son, it was "an action that protected him from the ominous activity of God". Fretheim sees a parallel to Exodus 12:13 and verse 22-23. "The application (נָגַח [naga' /naw'gah/]) of Passover blood to the doorposts saves the Israelite firstborn from the judgment of God." In other words: "There is life in the blood."<sup>41</sup>

A second parallel can be seen in the "throwing of blood upon the people to seal the covenant [...]" in Exodus 24:8. In view here may be the "sealing of the relationship between God and Moses" (Fretheim 1991b:79-82).

A third parallel can be seen in the "immediately preceding context." Exodus 4:22-23 highlighted the issue between YHWH and Pharaoh regarding the first born sons. The final judgment on Pharaoh, and therefore the redeeming of Israel as YHWH's firstborn son, would be the killing of Pharaoh's (Egypt's) firstborn.

Immediately after Egypt's firstborn were killed, the "just-saved firstborn of Israel" were consecrated to YHWH (Ex. 13:1-2; 11-16). Fretheim sees here that the "firstborn sons of Israel, too, must be redeemed through blood, the blood of circumcision. Or, just as Moses was saved by the blood of his firstborn, so Israel would be saved by the blood of the Egyptian firstborn."

A fourth and interesting parallel can be seen in the role of the "mediator", Zipporah. In what she did, by acting quickly when she saw that Moses' life was at risk... She played the role "of mediator between God and Moses, anticipating the very role that Moses will later play on Israel's behalf (especially in Numbers 11:11-15 and Exodus 32-34)". As Zipporah saved Moses from the "wrath of God", so "Moses will save Israel" (Fretheim 1991b:79-80).

The narrative of the consecration of Moses' son is thus not just for the sake of creating tension within the narrative as Embry (2010:196) describes it, but, in one sentence:

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<sup>41</sup> See Leviticus 17:11



The *consecration of Moses' son* forms an integral part of the greater narrative of Exodus 1-15, pointing forward to what is to come, namely the tenth plague (death of the first born) and the "blood of the paschal lamb" during the Passover [Ex. 12:43-49] (Howell 2010:69; Johnstone 2003:78).

#### **4.7.1.2 'oth' and 'mophet' as signs to convince Pharaoh to let Israel go**

With Exodus 4:24 being placed into context, we can now return to verse 21-23. This is YHWH's command to Moses. He must do all the wonders פלא [pala' /paw·law/] in front of the Pharaoh and then tell him: "This is what the LORD says: Israel is my firstborn son, and I told you, Let my son go, so he may worship me. But you refused to let him go; so I will kill your firstborn son".

The following three passages from the wonder narrative need attention to describe 'oth' in the wonders:

Exodus 7:3-5: "But I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and though I multiply my miraculous *signs and wonders*<sup>42</sup> in Egypt, he will not listen to you. Then I will lay my hand on Egypt and with mighty acts of judgment I will bring out my divisions, my people the Israelites. And the Egyptians *will know that I am the LORD* when I stretch out my hand against Egypt and bring the Israelites out of it".

Exodus 8:23: "And I will put a division between my people and thy people: Tomorrow shall this *sign*<sup>43</sup> be".

Exodus: 10:1-2: "Then the LORD said to Moses, Go to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the hearts of his officials so that I may perform these *miraculous signs*<sup>44</sup> of mine among them that you may tell your children and grandchildren how I dealt harshly with the Egyptians and how I performed my *signs* among them, and that you may know that I am the LORD".

Scholars like Ford (2006:134) have observed that the wonder narratives consist of three triads. In each triad there is an intensification of the wonders. It is interesting to

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<sup>42</sup> Own highlight

<sup>43</sup> Own highlight

<sup>44</sup> Own highlight

note, with reference to the three texts above containing the word 'oth' that each one falls in one of the three triads. It seems that with the first triad (first three wonders) the Israelites are also affected by the 'water turning into blood'; the frogs; and the gnats, because there is no mentioning that they weren't affected.

With the second triad though (flies, pestilence and boils), a clear distinction is made between Egypt and Chosen ('division between My people and yours...'). The second triad of wonders is harsher, as it affects the human body, whereas the first triad was more of an irritation. The third triad is even more fearsome, as it affects all life: Grain, livestock and human life.

In other words: All of creation, as depicted in Genesis 1, was affected: Water and its inhabitants (triad 1); land animals (triad 2); land animals, vegetation and air (triad 3). And of course, in all three triads human life was affected, with intensification of severity and danger towards the end...

'oth' in each of the passages shown above, points to what was to come and that 'what' intensified with every following wonder. The "oth" and "mophet" were certainly meant to get people's attention, or as Fretheim (1991a:387) states: "[...] they point beyond themselves toward a disastrous future, while carrying a certain force in their own terms". In the end the worst was to come with the last triad: There was nothing left to eat; there was no sun (life is not possible without light); and the ultimate – death of the firstborn.

#### **4.7.2 'oth' in the Passover (Ex.12:1 - 13:16)**

The Passover narrative is set between the Ninth and the Tenth wonder. It is as if the wonder narrative is interrupted by the instructions regarding the Passover feast (Ex. 12:1-28). The Passover section has a clear introduction in Exodus 12:1, however, "most commentators see a new introduction in Exodus 13:17 which would define the conclusion of the previous section at 13:16" (Childs 1977:196). The following outline reveals the basic elements of the formal structure<sup>45</sup>:

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<sup>45</sup> This outline is a reconstruction of an outline given by Childs (1977:196)

Ex. 12:1-20	Speech: YHWH's instruction to Moses and Aaron on conveying His requirements to the people regarding the Passover
Ex. 12:21-25	Speech: Moses gives instructions to the people for the Passover meal
Ex. 12:26-27a	Children's question and answer to them
Ex. 12:27b-28	Response of people
Ex. 12:29-42	Narrative section.
Ex. 12:40-42	Summary
Ex. 12:43-49	Another set of instructions from YHWH to Moses
Ex. 12:50	People's obedient reaction
Ex. 12:51	Another narrative summary
Ex. 13:1-2	Speech: YHWH to Moses
Ex. 13:3-13	Speech: Moses' instructions to the people
Ex. 13:14-16	Children's question and answer to them

The parallels make it possible to see Exodus 12:1-13:16 as a whole. There are three signs that need to be looked at: (I) Blood on the lintel; (II) Unleavened bread; (III) Consecration of the firstborn:

#### **4.7.2.1 'oth' in the blood (Ex.12:1-13; 21-27)**

The meaning of דָּמָה (blood) as אֶלֶּת (sign) needs more clarification at this stage. What has been foreshadowed in Exodus 4:24-26 is coming in fulfillment.

We now turn to Exodus 12:13: "The blood will be a sign (אֶלֶּת) for you on the houses where you are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive wonder will touch you when I strike Egypt".

It is significant that there is "no further reference to such a ritual anywhere in the OT, and only one other ritual even resembling this one is mentioned in the OT: in the ceremony of atonement for the Temple, described in Ezekiel 45:18-20" (Durham 1987:155). In Ezekiel the priest puts the blood of a bull-calf on the doorpost of the temple and on the doorpost of the inner court gate. Durham explains that the blood is an indication of a "protective sign: YHWH, upon seeing it, will 'pass over' the Israelites and so spare them from the fatal blow He is about to strike against Egypt."

The verb פסח (pesah), deriving from יִפְסַח in verse 13 means 'pass over', and it is from this verb that the purpose of the blood "gives the ritual of commemorating its name", פָּסַח [*pacach* /paw·sakh/] (Strong 1996). More literally translated the verb can also mean 'to protect' (Meyers 2005:97).

'Oth' in the blood thus points to two aspects:

- YHWH passed over the first born of Israel when He saw the blood on the door frames and lintels. In other words, Israel was protected by the blood;
- Commemorating the deliverance from Egypt (Ex. 12:14). "This is a day you are to commemorate..." A feast was to be held every year to commemorate what YHWH had done, how He delivered His people from Egypt.

The way in which Israel transmitted its faith to the next generation is posed by the author in a child's query (Ex. 12:26). Childs (2004:200) says that the answer to this question is not "simply a report, but above all a confession to the ongoing participation of Israel in the decisive act of redemption from Egypt".

#### **4.7.2.2 'oth' in the unleavened bread (Ex.12:8c; 13:7-10)**

The feast of the unleavened bread follows directly on the Passover meal. Collins (2004:114) says that the "Hebrew verb *pacach*, translated as 'passed over', has the same consonants as the name of the festival". Therefore *pacach* strengthens the idea of commemorating the deliverance from Egypt (Cole 1977:108): "Celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread, because it was on this very day that I brought your divisions out of Egypt" (Ex. 12:17).

The time of the year in which the commemorative feast took place needs to be looked at as well. The month was *Abib*, "the month in which the corn is in the ear" (Hort 1958:48-59). In ancient times cereal crops were the basic foodstuffs in the land. Indeed they were central to life. "Thus the new life of grain in the spring, celebrated as a renewal of life, is an appropriate vehicle for celebrating in the *matzah* festival, the Israelites' new life in freedom" (Meyers 2005:101). In this sense the "oth" in the *unleavened bread* could point to a new beginning.

#### 4.7.2.3 'oth' in the consecration of the first born (Exodus 13:1-3; 5c; 8-9)

"The LORD said to Moses, Consecrate to me every firstborn male. The first offspring of every womb among the Israelites belongs to me, whether man or animal". Then Moses said to the people, "Commemorate this day, the day you came out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery, because the LORD brought you out of it with a mighty hand. Eat nothing containing yeast [...] you are to observe this ceremony in this month [...] on that day tell your son, 'I do this because of what the LORD did for me when I came out of Egypt.' This observance will be for you *like a sign* [תֹּאמַר] on your hand and a reminder on your forehead that the law of the LORD is to be on your lips".

The sanctification of the firstborn was probably commanded by YHWH at a place called Succoth. This was the first stopping place after the Exodus (12:37). It also fell within the seven days that had been set aside for the Feast of the Unleavened Bread (Ex. 12:15). 'oth' in the consecration of the firstborn points to the fact that Israel's 'consecration rests on the fact that YHWH adopted them as His 'firstborn' (Ex. 4:22), rather than their deliverance from the tenth wonder" (Kaiser Jr. 1990:382).

#### 4.7.3 'bth' in the splitting of the sea (Exodus 14:21-31)

In an article on the *Plagues and Sea of Reeds: Exodus 5-14*, McCarthy (1966:153) says that Exodus 14 "seems to be of pièce" with Exodus 7:8 – 10:27. Exodus 14 uses vocabulary and themes that correspond with the wonder narratives. "It represents the same concept of Israel's escape from Egypt; it is a blow which causes suffering to Egyptians and salvation to Israel; and it does not confuse the issue with variant traditions, for instance, of the favor which Israel enjoyed in Egypt". Furthermore it uses the same "structural sequence: command, execution, result, and effect [...]."

Vocabulary (motifs) which anticipate or strengthen the theme of "oth" and "mophet" in Exodus 14, that correspond with the wonder narratives are קָזַח, *chazaq* (harden); חֹשֶׁךְ, *choshek* (darkness) and יָדַע, *yada* (know):

i. קָזַח, *chazaq* (harden)

"Countless pages", according to Mcaffee (2010:331) have been written, often with "less satisfactory results" to answer theological questions regarding the hardening of

Pharaoh's heart. The *hardening* has been discussed to some extent in 4.7.1.2. Regarding hardening as motif and with reference to "oth" some further remarks are worth mentioning:

Remembering that 'oth' points to something to come, it is noticeable that the verb [חָזַק, *chazaq*], which is used in Exodus 4:21, and in 7:13, is being used in Exodus 14:4, 8 and 17 again. *Chazaq* (hardened) is not an "oth" or "mophet", but Pharaoh's heart is hardened in order for "oth" and "mophet" to take place, or as Deist (1989:45) describes it: "The magic that was once intended to convince the people of Moses' divine mission (Ex. 4:1-9, 29-32) is now to be performed before the pharaoh (Ex. 7:8-9) with the clear intention of convincing him just like the people were convinced by it". Pharaoh however was not likewise convinced immediately: "Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Go to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the hearts of his officials so that I may perform these miraculous signs of mine among them'" (Ex. 10:1).

The verb חָזַק anticipates, or in the words of Mcaffee (2010:348) "predicates" of what is to come, an *increase* in "oth" and "mophet": "And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he will pursue them. But I will gain glory for myself through Pharaoh and all his army, and the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD" (Ex. 14:4). And: "I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they will go in after them. And I will gain glory through Pharaoh and all his army, through his chariots and his horsemen. The Egyptians will know that I am the LORD when I gain glory through Pharaoh, his chariots and his horsemen" (Ex. 14:17).

Beale (1984:149) says that there is "a thematic progression" in the Exodus narrative "with respect to the purpose of the hardening":

That the uniqueness of Yahweh's omnipotence would be demonstrated to the Egyptians (Ex. 7:17; 8:6[10],18[22]; 9:16; 10:1-2; 14:4,17-18);

That Yahweh's acts would become a memorial in Israel and its later generations (Ex. 10:1-2; 13:14-16);

Then Exodus 14:4, 17, 18 summarize the whole purpose of the *Heilsgeschichte* program: it is for Yahweh's *glory*.

Beale (1984:149) then states the “overarching theme of Exodus 1-14” as follow: “Yahweh hardens Pharaoh's heart primarily to create an Israelite *Heilsgeschichte*, necessarily involving an Egyptian *Unheilsgeschichte* - all of which culminates in Yahweh's glory”. Cox (2006:311) mentions that the *hardening motif* shows YHWH to be “so powerful that every corner of Egypt is subject to His sovereignty, including Pharaoh’s own decision-making processes”. Thus, in the wonder narratives hardening took place in order for YHWH’s “oth” and “mophet” to take place, and they did. In Exodus 14 hardening took place again, anticipating the final mighty act of YHWH at the Sea of Reeds.

ii. חֹשֶׁךְ *choshek* (darkness)

The last of nine wonders is חֹשֶׁךְ, *choshek* (darkness): “And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand toward heaven, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, even darkness *which* may be felt” (KJV). With darkness YHWH’s creational power is made clear as his “final assault on Pharaoh is a return of the earth to the *heavy darkness* of the first day” of creation (Brueggemann 1997:539; Fretheim 1991a:393). YHWH created light, but also has the ability to turn his own creation around. Darkness can be transformed into light, and light can be transformed into darkness.

Darkness had the effect of sightlessness. The motif of sight (רָאוּת, רָאָה [ra’ah /raw·aw/]) “from the wonder of darkness” (Ex. 10:23, 28-29) also appears in the wonders of frogs (Ex. 8:11), hail (Ex. 9:16, 24), and locusts (Ex. 10:5,6,10)” (Dozeman 1996:30). The darkness in the ninth wonder anticipated fear (Childs 1974b:160) and indeed provoked a lot of fear in the hearts of the Egyptians, because of the so called loss of their supreme god *Ra*, as previously described in 4.2.8.9.

The darkness also foreshadowed (pointed to) the ultimate judgement, death. See Meyers’s note on this in 4.3.9 paragraph 2. Meyers (2005:88) also noticed the link (pointer) between the death of the firstborns and the final fate of the Pharaoh and the Egyptians at the Sea of Reeds.

It is noteworthy then that חֹשֶׁךְ, which precedes the tenth wonder and serves as pointer thereof, precedes the ultimate judgement at the Sea of Reeds: “And the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and

the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them: And it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness [חֹשֶׁךְ] *to them*, but it gave light by night *to these*: so that the one came not near the other all the night" (Ex. 14:19-20).

Just as noteworthy is that in the case of the Ninth wonder, there was darkness in Egypt, but not in Chosen. Here, at the Sea of Reeds, the same situation repeats itself. The cloud of darkness causes the Egyptians not to see. On the other hand, the Israelites have light. The same contrast then is described here as in the ninth wonder.

The assumption can thus be made, that as the ninth wonder foreshadowed the death of the firstborn, it also foreshadowed the fate of Pharaoh and the Egyptians at the Sea of Reeds (Ex. 14:19-20), as the theme of darkness repeated itself in the latter context.

*iii. יָדָע, yada (know).*

The "oth" of darkness pointed to the ultimate sign, (Pharaoh's and Egypt's fate), and with this, YHWH's ultimate intention with "oth" and "mophet" came to light: "The Egyptians will know (יָדָע) that I am the LORD when I gain glory through Pharaoh, his chariots and his horsemen" (Ex. 14:18).

Essentially יָדָע means "to know by observing and reflecting (thinking) and to know by experiencing" (Strong 2001:507).

The theme of 'knowing' is present throughout the Wonder narratives<sup>46</sup>. As was seen in the triad of wonders, intensification took place from one wonder to the other. There was a definite build-up in tension and YHWH's intention with the "oth" and "mophet" was made clear: "Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Go to Pharaoh... so that I may perform these miraculous signs of mine among them that you may tell your children and grandchildren [...] how I performed my signs among them, and that you may know (יָדָע) that I am the LORD'" (Ex. 10:1).

It is important to note then that יָדָע was also (or especially) meant for Israel. Pharaoh's fate meant death, it had an end, but for Israel: "Do not be afraid. Stand firm

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<sup>46</sup> Exodus 1:8; 2:4, 14, 25; 3:7, 19; 4:14; 5:2; 6:3, 7; 7:5, 17; 8:6, 10, 18, 22; 9:14, 29, 30; 10:2, 7, 26; 11:7; 14:4, 18 (Ford 2006:219).

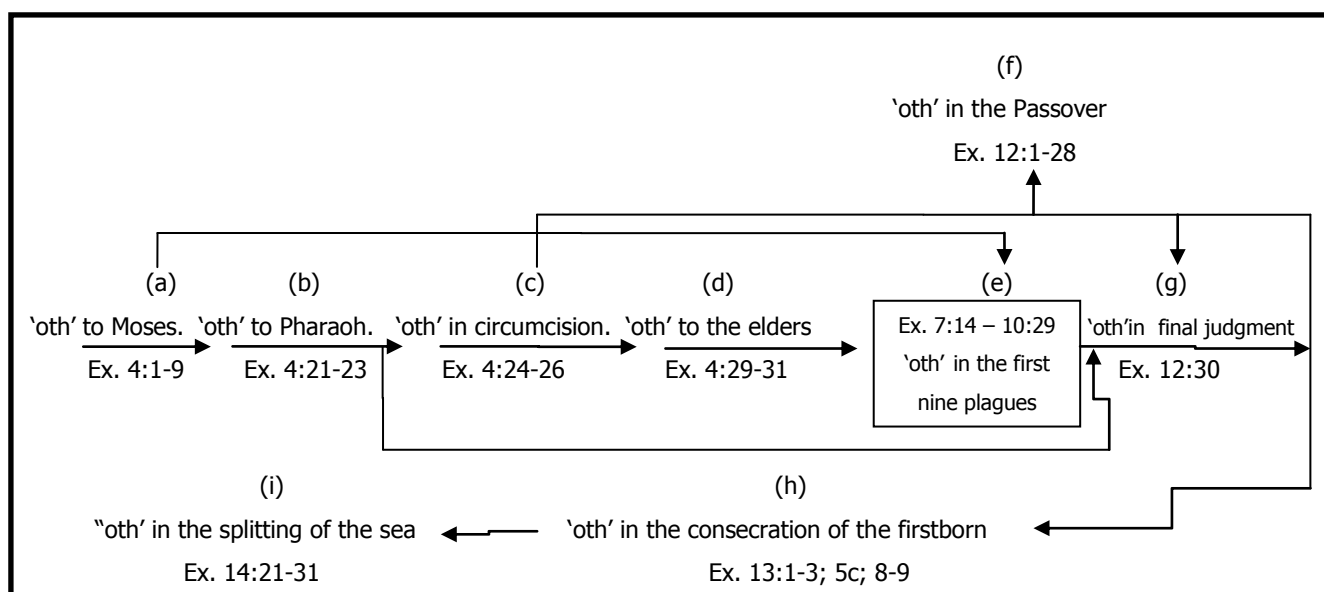


and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again" (Ex. 14:13). Israel's fate on the contrary, was to live as a people for the Lord.

By observing, reflecting (thinking), and experiencing what YHWH had done through "oth" and "mophet" in the Wonders, and here at the sea of Reeds, Israel got to know YHWH as their Lord and Deliverer: "And when the Israelites saw the great power the LORD displayed against the Egyptians, the people feared the LORD and put their trust in him and in Moses his servant" (Ex. 14:31).

This is what "oth" does, it points to events, helping Israel to observe, reflect and experience; it generates awe and admiration; it establishes faith,<sup>47</sup> so they may know (ׁוּת!)... In the song of the Sea (Ex. 15:1-19) "the faith of the redeemed people is portrayed" (Childs 1974b:238). However, it was not their faith, which saved them. Not long before, they had failed to believe. "Yet a faithful response was called forth". This is another outcome of "oth": "Burst into songs of joy together, you ruins of Jerusalem, for the LORD has comforted his people, he has redeemed Jerusalem". Indeed, "The sign of the redeemed is the joyful response of those who have been given a 'new song'" (Childs 1974b:238).

The path of 'oth' in Exodus 4:1-13:16 is made clear in Figure 4.3:



**FIGURE 4.3: DIAGRAMATIC OVERVIEW OF THE PATH OF "OTH" IN EXODUS**

<sup>47</sup> See 3.1.1

The arrows show what 'oth' does. They point in a direction, towards something to come. They can point to what is coming next, or further into the future, for instance, (b) points to (g), and (c) points to (f), (g) and (h). The blood of the circumcision made YHWH 'pass over' Moses. In the same way the blood of the Passover made YHWH pass over the Israelites. We will come back to this. The aim of the 'pointers' however, was so that the onlookers who saw the 'oth' and 'mophet' would realize that the 'architect' of the 'oth' was YHWH and that there is none like Him.

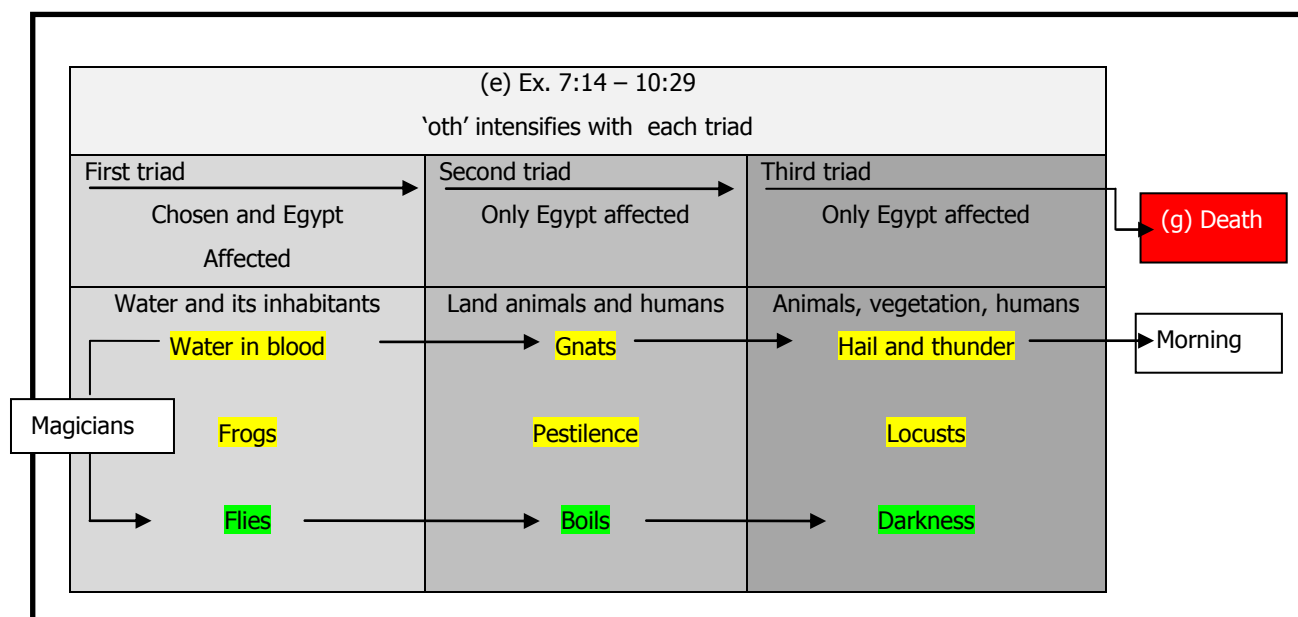
Explaining (a) to (i):

- a) YHWH convinced Moses with 'oth' that he must go to Pharaoh as YHWH's messenger to set Israel free.
- b) Moses received the command from YHWH to do 'oth' and 'mophet' before Pharaoh so he (Pharaoh) may let Israel go (Ex. 4:21-23); (b) also points to (g), as Pharaoh's firstborn's death is foreshadowed in Exodus 4:23.
- c) Through the 'oth' of circumcision Moses was 'purified' and 'sanctified' to be YHWH's ambassador (4:24-26); the blood of redemption also foreshadowed what was to come in (f), (g) and (h);
- d) Moses went to the elders to convince them with 'oth' that he was indeed YHWH's ambassador; with the 'oth' he received their blessing to be Israel's ambassador;
- e) The 'oth' of wonders followed as Pharaoh did not let Israel go; (e) is **magnified below**;
- f) YHWH's order to Moses and Aaron on instructing the people regarding the Passover<sup>48</sup>.
- g) Nine 'oth' of wonders culminate in the last final judgmental 'oth', with the slaying of the firstborns;
- h) Immediately after Egypt's firstborn were killed, the "just-saved firstborn of Israel" were consecrated to God<sup>49</sup>
- i) Egypt's final blow is at the splitting of the sea when they were buried under the water.

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<sup>48</sup> See 4.7.1.2

<sup>49</sup> See 4.7.1.2



**FIGURE 4.4: DIAGRAMATIC OVERVIEW OF THE INTENSIFIED “OTH”**

Keil & Delitzsch (2011a:307) notice a distinguished pattern in the first nine wonders. The yellow words (wonders 1, 2, 4, 5, 7 and 8) mark wonders which “were announced beforehand by Moses to the Pharaoh (Ex. 7:15; 8:1, 20; 9:1, 13; 10:1), whilst the third, sixth, and ninth [marked green] were sent without any such announcement (Ex. 8:16; 9:8; 10:21).” Wonders one, four and seven were announced in the morning, with one and four next to the Nile River bank. Seven was not announced next to the river, as hail descends from heaven. All three though has to do with water (Keil & Delitzsch 2011a:307).

Worth mentioning is that the magicians, “who had imitated the first two plagues, were put to shame with their arts by the third, and were compelled to see in it the finger of God (Ex. 8:19), [...] were smitten themselves by the sixth, and unable to stand before Moses (Ex. 9:11) [...] and after the ninth, Pharaoh broke off all further negotiation with Moses and Aaron (Ex. 10:28, 29)” (Keil & Delitzsch 2011a:307). The tenth plague differs from the nine wonders, intentionally. It was a plague as the Hebrew word  $\text{מַדְבָּה}$  (Ex. 11:1) indicates. The reason being that it was the “first beginning of the judgment that was coming upon the hardened king, and was inflicted directly by God Himself [...]” (Keil & Delitzsch 2011a:307): “About midnight I will go throughout Egypt. Every firstborn son in Egypt will die, from the firstborn son of Pharaoh, who sits on the throne, to the firstborn son of the slave girl, who is at her hand mill, and all the firstborn of the cattle as well” (Ex. 11:4; 12:29).

Meyers (2005:79) makes it clear that the cleverly outlined structure of the wonders “does not mean that these disasters are pure invention of a storyteller”. Various attempts have been made by scholars to explain the wonders “in the light of geographical, microbiological, climatic, and medical data [...]” (Meyers 2005:79)<sup>50</sup>. Lemmelijn (2007:413) says that these “natural explanations” are an indication “that the so-called ‘plagues of Egypt’ may possibly have happened”. The focus of the narrative though, and so also this dissertation, is on the “fundamental theological message of the narrative” (Lemmelijn 2007:413): YHWH is “Lord of Creation” (Fretheim 1991a:385, 392-396; Lemmelijn 2007:409), thus YHWH can use his power over creation to bring “liberation” and to demonstrate the “highest divine power” (Lemmelijn 2007:413) so that Egypt and Israel may know that He is Lord.

The narrative shows us that the wonders were “over the top in terms of severity, as indicated by the frequent use of ‘all.’” It indicates how widespread they were and also the recurrence of phrases such as *had never been seen before* denotes how utterly extreme they were. It can be said that ‘oth’ and ‘mophet’ in the wonders were “meant to bring about universal knowledge of God and God’s power (Ex. 7:17; 8:10, 19, 22; 9:14)” (Meyers 2005:79).

#### 4.7.4 Fear

The word *fear* אַרָּ (yare) has two principal meanings:

“that apprehension of evil that normally leads one either to flee or to fight” and  
 “That awe and reverence felt in the presence of a higher authority” (Douglas & Merrill 1989:201).

In Biblical terms “fear of God or of his manifestations appears [...] either in the abstract, in which just the idea of God alone generates this response, or in particular situations such as theophany or miracle, the occurrence or performance of which produces fear” (Elwell 1997:online).

Pfeiffer (1975:s.p.)<sup>51</sup> says that *fear* is used in both the OT and NT “in several very significant ways”:

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<sup>50</sup> Also see Forman (2008:201); Cartun (1991:81); Hort (1958:84-103)

<sup>51</sup> *The Wycliffe Bible encyclopedia*. 1975 (Pfeiffer, C.F. et al.). Chicago: Moody Press.

- A holy fear (Heb. *yir'â*; Gr. *phobos*) which amounts to awe or respect for the majesty and holiness of God, a godly reverence (Gen. 20:11; Ps. 34:11; Acts 9:31; Rom. 3:18). This fear is God-given and enables man to respect God's authority, obey His commands, turn from evil (I Sam. 12:14, 20–25; Ps. 2:11; Prov. 8:13; 16:6), and to pursue holiness (II Cor. 7:1; Phil 2:12).
- A filial fear (Lev. 19:3) which is based upon the proper reverence of the child of God for his heavenly Father (Ps. 33:18; 34:6–11; Prov. 14:26–27; II Cor. 6:17–7:1).
- A fear for un-forgiven sin which is caused by the work of the law written in the heart (Rom. 2:15) and the knowledge of God's Word; *e.g.*, Adam's fear when he sinned (Gen. 3:10; *cf.* Prov. 28:14).
- A fear, dread or terror (Heb. *paḥad*) of God's holiness on the part of the wicked at the Lord's coming (Ps. 14:5; Isa 2:10, 19). Along with this we may consider a fear of His people that God places in other men's hearts to protect His own (Deut. 11:25; II Chr 20:29–30).
- A fear of man is also mentioned in Scripture. This may either be a proper respect for those in authority (Rom. 13:7; I Pet 2:18), or a senseless dread (Num. 14:9; Isa. 8:12).
- A fear for others and the danger in which they stand (Ex.14:10).

In the TWOT lexicon (TWOT 907b) *fear* is also divided into five general categories: i) the emotion of fear; ii) the intellectual anticipation of evil without emphasis upon the emotional reaction; iii) reverence or awe; iv) righteous behavior or piety; and v) formal religious worship.

In the Exodus and Wilderness narrative *fear* as *motif* is used on numerous occasions:

- Exodus 1:17, 21 [יָרֵא (yare)]

The term "God-fearer" is used in verse 17 and 21 and "implies awe before God's revelation of himself and unconditional obedience to his commandments" (Johnstone 2003:74). In the case of Exodus 1:17 and 21 the commandments refer to the "law on

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sanctity of human life made binding to Noah [...] in Genesis 9:5-7", and it is related to the terms "be fruitful, teem, multiply", as is used in Exodus 1:7 (Johnstone 2003:74). On this point Eslinger (1991:53) says that the narrator implies an ultimate explanation for the enslavement of the Hebrews by "placing the key allusive words and the state they represent immediately before the Egyptian king's use of the same words to explain the need to subdue the Israelites". Thus the "Egyptian king and his reasoning are only cogs in the machine engineered and run by God" (Eslinger 1991:53). Childs (1965:121) senses a form of wisdom literature and parallels Exodus 1:17 and 21 to the story of Joseph in Genesis 42:18. As Joseph had the ability of self-control and repulsed the "advances of Potiphar's wife", so the midwives repulsed Pharaoh. This could only be done because of their fear for YHWH<sup>52</sup>. Bosman (2004:9) notes that the midwives' "non-action (disobedience)" allowed for YHWH's "action (the saving of the babies) to take place".

- *Exodus 2:14* [בַּהֲלִי (bahal /baw'hal)]

The term used here is בַּהֲלִי [*bahal* /baw'hal/], "usually expresses an emotion of one who is confronted with something unexpected, threatening or disastrous" (TWOT 207). In the context of Exodus 2:14 the *fear* motif anticipates the fear which Moses will experience later on (Ex. 4:1) that his people will reject him as leader (Fensham 1970:20).

- *Exodus 3:6* [יָרֵא (yare)]

The same word is used as in Exodus 1:17. In Exodus 3 Moses' fear was "reverence", as he recognized whom spoke to him, so he rendered YHWH "proper respect" (Strong 2001:530). It has previously been said that YHWH became active in the Exodus narrative from this stage (Ex. 3) on. יָרֵא (yare) in Exodus 3:6 thus serves as a strong motive in the sense that the reader (587 B.C) would not have had difficulty to understand that Moses must have felt the "numinous presence of God", therefore covering his face (Robinson 1997:113). The *fear motive* at the burning bush portrayed "YHWH as an attractive but formidable deity who was in control of the forces of nature [...]" (Robinson 1997:121). Moses realized this fact, so would the "early readers of the Pentateuch" (Robinson 1997:121).

- *Exodus 9:20, 30* [יָרֵא (yare)]

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<sup>52</sup> Also see Prov. 14:26.

It has been mentioned that Moses' encounter with YHWH in Exodus 3 is also called a theophany. In the situation Moses covered his eyes because he was afraid that he would die if he saw YHWH (Ex.3:6). In Exodus 9:13-35 the extensive use of *בָּכָל־אָרֶץ* (Ex. 9:24 WTT), according to Fretheim (1991a:391), was to "vivify" the frightful experience of the weather (hail and thunder) while "weather-related phenomena often function as images in theophany (Ps. 18:12-13; 77:16-20) and divine judgment contexts (Isa. 28:2, 17; 30:30-31; Ezek. 13:11-13; 38:22-23; Hag. 2:17) [...]. Experienced in such an intense form, it should function as a sign for any who listen". Some of Pharaoh's officials listened, but ironically they feared the judgmental *word* of YHWH (Ex. 9:20), but they did not fear YHWH. Moses confirmed this point in verse 30.

- Exodus 14:10, 13, 31 [*יָרֵא* (yare)]

The same word for fear is used in Exodus 14:10, 13 and 31. In verse 10 they experience an emotional fear as they are in distress, because "they know more of Pharaoh's intent than of God's", therefore their "response is described in words reminiscent of their time in bondage – they cry to the Lord" (Fretheim 1991b:155).

In Moses' answer to the people the same word for *fear* is used: "Do not be afraid" (Ex. 14:13). However, here it is used as commonly used by YHWH "in theophanies (Gen. 26:24) or to those lamenting (Lam. 3:55-60)" (Fretheim 1991b:156).

Fretheim (1991b:156) mentions further that "it is a word of assurance that one's worst fears will not be realized<sup>53</sup> [...]" and that YHWH "is present and at work on their behalf" [...] thus "for the people of God in one suffering situation after another this is a word of assurance", YHWH is on their side and "works on their behalf". This they (the people of YHWH) came to realize only in Exodus 14:31, as they "believed in Moses" (Propp 1998:502), when they were saved. Their faith, however, was not the reason for their being saved, they believed (*feared*) because they were saved (Childs 1974b:238). In this sentence (verse 31) *יָרֵא* "was the signal of a responsive attitude of submission and love equivalent to putting one's whole trust in him [YHWH]" (Kaiser Jr. 1990:390), although just "briefly" (Propp 1998:502).

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<sup>53</sup> See Deuteronomy 20:3-4

- Exodus 15:11 [אֵי יָרֵא]

Matthew Henry's notes on Exodus 15:1-22<sup>54</sup> stress the emotion captured in verse 11: "praise him with a humble holy awe, and *serve the Lord with fear*". The reason being "YHWH's incomparability [...]; he alone performs miracles<sup>55</sup>" (Propp 1998:528). Patterson (2004:48-49) sees verse 11 as a "hinge refrain", praising YHWH's "incomparability as a holy God and worker of miracles", not only for what He has done in the Plague Narratives [sic] and the victory at the sea, but also for their (Israel's) journey to come. Israel had "confidence in His future guidance in leading [them] through the Wilderness into the land of their inheritance and the Lord's dwelling (vv. 12-17)" (Patterson 2004:49).

- Exodus 18:21 [אֵי יָרֵא]

The last appearance of the fear motif in Exodus 1-18 is found when Moses' father in law tells him that he shouldn't govern (teach) the people by his own (Ex. 18:17-18) after Moses replied that the people came to him to "seek God's will" (Ex. 18:15b). It is clear in Jethro's suggestion to Moses that he should seek (with YHWH's help [v. 19: "and may God be with you"]) "capable, God-fearing, honest and incorruptible" men to help him teach the people YHWH's ordinances (Robinson 1988:142).

As in Exodus 1:17 and 21 wisdom literature is sighted in Jethro's suggestions to Moses (Childs 1974b:332): YHWH "often makes use of the wisdom, insight, imagination and common sense of the Jethros of this world to make the divine will known [...]" (Fretheim 1991b:200). The fear-motif in this regard remains important though: "In the fear of the LORD *is* strong confidence: and his children shall have a place of refuge" (Prov. 14:26 [KJV]).

In one sentence: For the first reader ("most probably in the context of the Babylonian exile") the narrative of the Exodus 1-18 and especially the *fear motive* within it "was comforting and encouraging [...]", therefore it "functioned as a story of relief and gave the people a breathing space in their [own] fear" (Lemmelijn 2007:412).

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<sup>54</sup> In: Bible-Works 2008 (Electronic Ed.)

<sup>55</sup> See Isa. 25:1; Ps. 72:18; 77:15; 78:12; 86:10; 88:11; 106:21-22; 136:4; Job 5:9; 9:10



#### 4.7.5 Murmuring

The downside of the *fear-motif* (or praise) is complaint (murmuring), “even with the memory of salvation” (Fretheim 2011b:25). The focus point of the *murmuring motif*, however, is not on Israel’s complaints, but rather on YHWH as the One who *hears* and *remembers*: “The fact that God hears means that God will act” (House 1998:91).

- Exodus 2:6 [בָּכָה *bakah*]

בָּכָה (to weep) “is the natural and spontaneous expression of strong emotion” and it “is especially prominent in the narrative literature although it also occurs frequently in the poetic and prophetic books” (TWOT 243). In the context of Exodus 2:6 בָּכָה is used to describe a baby “crying in distress [...] thus the baby Moses began to cry in the Pharaoh’s daughter’s presence [Ex. 2:6]” (TWOT 243). If Fretheim (1991b:7) is correct regarding the mirroring effect (of word-play) in the structural outline of Exodus 1-15, Moses’ crying and Pharaoh’s daughter’s having compassion over him, mirror the outcry of the people and YHWH hearing them (Ex. 2:23). In the words of Childs (1965:116): “The role of the princess climaxes the theme which runs throughout the story [...]. The real action still lies in the future. These events are only preparation”.

- Exodus 2:23 [זָעַק *zaaq*]

The first appearance of the word זָעַק in the Canon of Scriptures is in Exodus 2:23. The word indicates “*crying out* for aid in time of emergency, especially for divine help (Strong 2001:445). In Exodus 2:25 the narrator says “God looked on the Israelites and was concerned about them”. Literary it means that “God looked on the Israelites and knew” (Waltke 2007:357). The narrator furthermore creates the anticipation of “an exclusive relationship in which God pledges to treat the elect as his ‘treasured possession’” Waltke (2007:357).

- Exodus 3:7, 9 [צָעַקָה *tseaqah*]

TWOT 1947a indicates that “the original meaning of צָעַקָה in Arabic was “sound as thunder”, thus stressing the *cry* as “to call out for help under great distress or to utter an exclamation in great excitement” or “anguish”. As is the case in Exodus 2:23, the

*cry* is not unnoticed. YHWH “sees”, YHWH “hears”, and YHWH is “concerned” (Kaiser Jr. 1990:316; BDB 1947a<sup>56</sup>). Verse 9 repeats the fact that YHWH has *heard* and *seen* “Israel’s present need” and offers the solution: “[...] the formal commissioning of Moses as God’s emissary to lead Israel out of Egypt” (Kaiser 1990:316).

- Exodus 5:8 [קָעָץ (tsaaq)]

קָעָץ is synonym to זָעַק [Ex. 2:23] (Strong 2001:445, 770)<sup>57</sup>. In Exodus 2 and 3 YHWH heard the *cry* of the people. In Exodus 5 Pharaoh also hears the *cry* (via Moses); the difference however is that Pharaoh’s solution to the *cry* is to let the people suffer more. The tension in the narrative therefore intensifies as there is not a quick solution to the people’s cries. In fact, Fretheim (1991b:83) says that the cries are suddenly “deafening silent” in Exodus 5. Everyone (Moses, Pharaoh, the slave drivers, Israelite foremen, YHWH) has a say, except the people. The *cry-motif* in Exodus 5 is therefore hidden subtly by the author, providing “a picture of the depths of Israel’s situation and the ruthlessness of oppressive systems” (Fretheim 1991b:83). The tension building up helps to set the stage for YHWH’s redemptive plan further on in the narrative.

- Exodus 14:10, 15 [קָעָץ (tsaaq)]

The Israelite’s *thunderous cry* (TWOT 1947a) is heard for the last time in the Exodus narrative when their “cry is channeled through Moses, and it takes the form of a complaint” (Fretheim 1991b:155). The *cry-motif* is starting to transform into a *murmuring-motif*, hence, Exodus 14:10 is the “first of many such *murmurings*” which Israel will voice during the Wilderness sojourn (Fretheim 1991b:156). Ford (2006:177) mentions the obvious parallelism between Exodus 14:5 and 14:11, 12:

“מֵה־זֹאת עָשִׂינוּ כִּי־שָׁלַחְנוּ אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל מִעַבְדֵּנוּ” [Ex. 14:5] /

“מֵה־זֹאת עָשִׂיתָ לָנוּ... חָדַל מִמֶּנּוּ וּנְעַבְדֶּה אֶת־מִצְרַיִם” [Ex. 14:11, 12].

Israel’s focus is on Pharaoh and it is the Pharaoh they choose to serve; in the parallelism Israel does not reckon with YHWH’s plan (Ford 2006:177; Childs 2004:226). In response Moses challenges Israel to respond to YHWH’s plan (Childs 2004:226). His challenge points to the opposite of crying, it is *silence* (שָׁרַשׁ [charash]): “The LORD will

<sup>56</sup> BibleWorks 2008 (electronic ed.)

<sup>57</sup> Strong 2001 (2199 - Ex. 2:23) and Strong 2001 (6817 - Ex. 5:8)

fight for you while you keep silent” (Ex. 14:14 NAS). The author outlines the fact that nothing which the people would say can “add to what God is affecting on their behalf” (Fretheim 1991b:157).

- Exodus 15:24; 16:2; 17:3 [לון (lun)]; 16:7, 8,9,12 [תלונה (telunnah)]

The word לון (*lun*) appears for the first time with the meaning of *murmuring* in Exodus 15:24<sup>58</sup>. It is “confined to the wilderness wanderings in Exodus and Numbers”, with the exception of Joshua 9:18 and Psalm 59:16 (Childs 2004:266). לון (*lun*) “denotes a grumbling and muttered complaint” (Childs 2004:266).

In TWOT 1097a תלונה is described as “verbal assaults”, usually against Moses and Aaron (Ex. 16:2; Num 14:2); “occasionally, Moses is singled out (Ex. 15:24; Ex. 17:3; Num 14:36) or Aaron (Num 16:11); at other times the Lord himself is the object of their abuse (Ex. 16:7-8; Num 14:27, 29)”. In the final analysis, however, Israel’s “murmuring was always against God who commissioned the leaders of the people” (TWOT 1097a).

Of note is the set of traditional “stereotyped language of the complaints” which denotes “close similarity in both form and content within these protests” (Childs 2004:257). Childs (2004:258) has detected “two distinct patterns” regarding the *murmuring motif* within the wilderness stories. The first pattern is found in Exodus 15:22f; 17:1f; and Numbers 20:2. The pattern starts with a need (Ex. 15:22,23; 17:1), followed by a complaint (Ex. 15:24; 17:2), which is then followed by “an intercession on the part of Moses” (Ex. 15:25; 17:4) issuing the need. It is then met by YHWH’s “miraculous intervention” (Ex. 15:25; 17:6f.).

Pattern two falls outside the field of investigation of this study. It can be briefly mentioned though that pattern two has striking similarities to pattern one, with two major differences being that Israel’s “initial complaint (Num. 11:1; 17:6; 21:5)” is “followed by God’s anger and punishment (Num. 11:1; 17:10; 21:6)”. Moses’ intercession then followed by “a reprieve of the punishment (Num. 11:2; 17:50; 21:9)” (Childs 2004:258). Thus pattern one focuses on Israel’s genuine need in the wilderness, with YHWH acting “with the miraculous gift of food and water” to sustain

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<sup>58</sup> It can also have the meaning of “lodging” or “staying over”, as in Gen. 19:2 (Strong 2001:574)

them in the harsh environment of the wilderness, while pattern two focuses on Israel's "disobedience in the desert and the subsequent punishment and eventual forgiveness which their unbelief called forth" (Childs 2004:259).

In one sentence: The author of the wilderness stories uses "the elements of rebellion" [murmurings] as an "overarching category by which to interpret the exile and other disasters" (Childs 2004:263). Within the exile then, the message is clear: YHWH will meet the need and sustain his people.

#### 4.7.6 Water

The *water motif* is not as explicit as the *cry-motif*, in that the word *water* does not appear in every instance of the motif. More than once the *water motif* is assumed by means of the setting<sup>59</sup>. Within the different settings the *water-motif* denotes different meanings:

##### 4.7.6.1 *New beginning*

Water as a motif could be seen as a symbol of *new beginning* (Tolmie 1999:112). Propp (1998:562) further mentions that water symbolizes "both death and birth". As already mentioned (4.2.1 par. 7) the Nile River was an object of death for the Hebrew babies, but also served as a place where Moses was saved. With the birth of Moses and his redemption from the Nile by Pharaoh's daughter, a new beginning for the Hebrews emerged. Israel's "emergence" from the sea of Reeds can also be "regarded as a rebirth or resurrection" (Childs 2004:237; Propp 1998:562). Therefore, for Israel the passing through the sea would be like becoming a new people, moving towards a new beginning (Houtman 1988:129).

A new beginning means a new life, away from Egypt and oppression. The contrast between life and death (death/resurrection) is visible in almost every pericope where the *water motif* is used:

Ex. 1:22	} Hebrew babies to be killed in the Nile
Ex. 2:3	

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<sup>59</sup> See 4.5.2

Ex. 7:15	}	Moses must meet Pharaoh at the (life-giving) <sup>60</sup> water [מַיִם (mayim)]
Ex. 7:18		The life-giving water of the Nile is transformed into a channel of death (the fish died and the water was undrinkable).
Ex. 8:6	}	Frogs came from the waters of Egypt and covered the land.
Ex. 8:13,14		The frogs died instantaneously and the land stank.
Ex. 9:22		
Ex. 9:19	}	Moses warns that hail (water transformed into ice) will destroy all life that does not seek shelter under roof.
Ex. 9:25		Hail struck "everything in the fields—both men and animals; it beat down everything growing in the fields and stripped every tree."
Ex. 14:16	}	The water of the sea of Reeds was divided so that the Hebrews could walk through the sea on dry ground and live.
Ex. 14:27		The water of the sea of Reeds flowed back and the Egyptians and their horses perished.
Ex. 17:3	}	The people cried out because there was no water and they feared death because of the lack of water.
Ex. 17:6		Moses struck a rock and water came out for the people to drink.

#### 4.7.6.2 *Creational power*

Water, as part of YHWH's creation, was used as motif on various occasions to show YHWH's creational power: Water turned into blood (Ex. 7:20); Frogs, by the thousands, emerged from the water (Ex. 8:5, 6); Water, in the form of hail, destroyed the crops and everything that lived which did not find shelter (Ex. 9:23); Locusts were carried by a strong west-wind and cast into the sea (Ex. 10:19); A strong wind divided the sea of Reeds so that the Hebrews could pass through it (Ex. 14:21f.); Bitter water was made sweet (Ex. 15:23f.); Water came from a rock (Ex. 17:6).

Fretheim (1991a:396) mentions that the *water-motif* can refer to *chaos* (before creation) and that the opposite thereof is *dry ground* (after creation). In this sense the *water motif* points towards YHWH's creational power. Klopper (2005:255) says that "[...] life on earth becomes possible when there is neither too much, nor too little water". Creation (life) comes forth out of the chaos and YHWH "is Lord of Creation" (Lemmelijn 2007:409). Israel bore testimony of how YHWH "wrought the impossible [...] by a combination of the wonderful and the ordinary [...]: The waters were split by

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<sup>60</sup> See TWOT 1188: YHWH is creator and owner of life-giving water.

the rod of Moses, but a strong wind blew all night and laid bare the sea bed" (Childs 2004:238).

At Massa and Meribah the purpose of the *water-motif* was "to assure the people that Yahweh has both the [creational] power and the compassion to provide drinking water and sustenance to people in desperate situations" (Klopper 2005:255).

#### **4.7.6.3 Purifying and healing**

Propp (1998:561) says that throughout the Canon of Scriptures, water has the meaning of purifying "physically" and "spiritually". He sees, for example, the "passage through the sea" (Ex. 14-15) as "a cleansing" process. Propp (1998:562) explains that the Hebrews symbolically rinsed "off their slavery. Left floating in the bathwater are their erstwhile oppressors".

In the ancient world water was also associated with healing (Propp 1998:580). The healing process started for Israel as soon as they came through the sea of Reeds into the wilderness. They needed to be healed from their longing to go back to Egypt to serve Pharaoh (Leder 2010:95). They also needed to be healed from their fear of the lack of water and food, as YHWH "alone is their provider and healer" (Burden 1994:47). Furthermore Berge (2008:5-6) says that "The Israelites could not drink the water because it was [מְרִימִים (Ex. 15:23)] *bitter*." מְרִימִים "not only refers to the taste but also includes sickness and death" (Berge 2008:5).

Berge (2008:5) also mentions "the similarity between the event in Exodus 15:22 f. and Exodus 7:18, 21, 24, which states that the Egyptians could not drink the water of the Nile". Thus there is a similarity between the experience of the Israelites at Marah and the experience of the Egyptians and the Nile turning into blood. The difference however is a reversed order: The fresh water of the Nile turned into blood which could cause sickness if you drink it. The bitter water of Marah was made sweet by YHWH, and with it Israel received ordinances which would protect them from the diseases which came upon the Egyptians (Ex. 15:26).

To conclude the *water motif*, Klopper (2005:263) confines the motif in the following way: "Concealed in the chaos there is cosmos and order; in meaninglessness there is

meaning; in exile there is hope and restoration – which is what the motif [of water] is ultimately all about” (Klopper 2005:263).

In one sentence: For the person in exile the *water-motif* reminds the reader of YHWH’s promise of a new beginning, made possible by the Creator Who can change circumstances as he is able to change nature; he can clean and purify you from your past as he is able to manipulate water; and he can keep you from diseases when you submit to his ordinances.

#### 4.7.7 Fire

It has already been mentioned in 4.6.3 that fire resembles YHWH’s presence. Gowan (1994:26) says that fire “is regularly associated with God”. Fire is associated with “holiness” on the one hand, and a “warning” on the other hand: “Come no closer” (Ex. 3:5)! Therefore Moses protects himself of it (covered his face), but “the one Who speaks to him at that dangerous place is a God Who is about to save his people” (Gowan 1994:26). Thus Houtman (1986:321) says that Exodus 3:2 (burning bush) should be understood as that *within* the fire there was a messenger [YHWH] and that Moses probably recognised “a human shape” in the fire.

The *fire-motif* in Exodus 3 (burning bush), Exodus 13 and 14 (pillar of cloud) symbolises YHWH as a deity [YHWH]<sup>61</sup> (Robinson 1997:114). Robinson furthermore says that fire could also be seen as a symbol of persecution (Robinson 1997:116). He explains that the burning bush (Ex. 3) which was not consumed by the fire pointed to the persecution of the Hebrews by the Egyptians. But just as the fire did not consume the bush, the Egyptians wouldn’t be able to consume the Hebrews<sup>62</sup>: “In the new Exodus, from Babylon, the God who once rescued Moses from the Nile and the Hebrews from the Reed Sea, the God who did not allow his people to be consumed by the fires of persecution [...] will save them again<sup>63</sup>”; and “the miracle of the bush that burns but is not consumed is of piéce with the marvels soon to be worked in Egypt (the miracles with Moses’ rod and the Plagues [sic]) and at the Reed sea – all serve to mark YHWH out as totally in control of natural forces” (Robinson 1997:116).

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<sup>61</sup> See Gen. 15:17 (flaming torch)

<sup>62</sup> Also see Houtman (1986:324-325)

<sup>63</sup> See Isa. 43:2

In Exodus 13:21 “The nocturnal pillar of fire preceding and following the people of God in the wilderness guarantees the faithful that they are led and followed by the divine presence” (Honeycutt Jr. 1970:381; TWOT 172). In Exodus 14:19 it is not the pillar of fire which is described to have moved behind the Israelites to guard them from the Egyptians, but the angel (מַלְאֲכַי mal'ak) of the Lord. The same word (מַלְאֲכַי mal'ak) is used in Exodus 3:2 though, where it is said that the angel was in the burning bush. The angel (pillar of fire) behind the Israelites gave light to them so that they could pass through the sea (Ex. 14:20). Kaiser Jr. (1990:389) clarifies the identity of the angel of YHWH as “the pillar of cloud and fire”, thus the pillar of fire gives light to the Israelites and the pillar of cloud gives darkness to the Egyptians.

This reminds of the three days of darkness which the Egyptians received through the ninth wonder (wonder of darkness) whereas “all the Israelites had light in the places where they lived” (Ex. 10:23; Fretheim 1991a:391). Thus here in Exodus 14:19-20 the contrast between *light and darkness* also reminds of YHWH’s creational power and it serves “as a symbol of divine judgment” against the Egyptians, as was the case in Exodus 10 during the ninth wonder (Fretheim 1991a:391). In Fretheim’s (1991b:160) commentary on Exodus he says that “as the morning breaks for Israel, the night falls on Egypt”. Egypt was literally left in the dark while Israel could pass through the sea with light.

In one sentence: With the fire motif Israel is reminded of YHWH’s presence. He is the one who instructs; guides; and protects. At the same time his fiery presence serves as judgment to those who oppose His people.

#### **4.7.8 Motif of ‘three days’** (שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים)

Stackert (2011:674) says that the *motif of three days* is “well attested in the Hebrew Bible” and that a three-day time period signalled “the period necessary for the completion of a task”. The third day “often indicates the climax of an event and/or the initiation of a new action” or an important event (Houtman 1986:75; Stackert 2011:675). A good example of this motif is found in Exodus 10:21-24, with the ninth wonder (three days of darkness). During the three days of darkness in Egypt, the Israelites, on the contrary, had light (as previously mentioned), the effect being that



they were able to listen to Moses' words and prepare to "depart from Egypt" (Stackert 2011:675).

More examples of a *three day motif* are found in Exodus 3:18; 5:3; 8:27, regarding the request of Moses to the Pharaoh: "Let us take a three-day journey into the desert to offer sacrifices to the LORD our God". In Exodus 5:3 the request is linked with a "prophetic oracle" (common in the prophetic books, but rare in the Pentateuch): "Thus says the Lord" (Childs 2004:105). Childs (2004:105) sees "a parallel between Moses' confrontation with Pharaoh and the later ongoing battle between prophet and king. This important gesture will be looked at again in chapters 5 and 6.

Houtman (1986:75) says that three can have the meaning of *maximum*. Three months were for example the *maximum* time Moses' mother could hide him at home (Ex. 2:2); three signs were more than enough to legitimate Moses for his task (Ex. 4:9); three days of darkness were the *maximum* amount of days through which people could withstand the ninth wonder (Ex. 10:22-23); three days were the *maximum* time the Israelites could go without water (Ex. 15:22).

In an article on the *three day-motifs* in the Old Testament, Swanepoel (1991:541-641) came to the conclusion that the theological interest of the three day-motif has a wide scope:

- YHWH brings new life after three days. The third day of creation is the first day where life is created. During the sixth day (second 'third day') of creation man (the crown of YHWH'S creation) is created (Swanepoel 1991:549).
- YHWH provides for a turning point of events after three days. After three days of darkness the table is set for the final and turning plague; after three days without water YHWH turns bitter water sweet (Ex. 15:22ff).

In one sentence: The *three day motif* serves as a symbol of hope, for YHWH has the ability to turn a situation of the weary around, within "three days!" (Swanepoel 1991:550).

#### 4.7.9 Healer motif (רָפָא [rapha])

Exodus 15:26 has been the focus in a number of monographs and essays regarding the image of YHWH as *healer* (רָפָא [rapha]) in the Old Testament (Chalmers 2011:16; Propp 1998:579). Propp (1998:579) says that this is a common biblical attitude<sup>64</sup> and that no one, “human or divine, may practice medicine unless as Yahweh’s representative”. Monroe & Schwab (2009:122) says “God identifies himself as Israel’s physician in Exodus 15:26 when he claims, ‘I will put none of the diseases upon you which I put upon the Egyptians; for I am the LORD, your healer.’”

The phrase יְהוָה רִפְּאֶךָ (YHWH your healer) in Exodus 15:26 has a strong ancient connection with the “healing of the water” in Exodus 15:25 (Childs 2004:267, 270; Propp 1998:580). What happened to the water (became sweet/ was healed) points to YHWH’s ability to heal and protect Israel from diseases (Childs 2004:270): “I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians” (Ex. 15:26c).

Water and healing are also associated with “miraculous springs in the desert [...] in all genres of the Hebrew Bible” (Klopper 2005:253). Thus medicinal springs “might be either drunk from or bathed in<sup>65</sup>” (Propp 1998:580). Regarding the healing of the water, it is notable that the author shows his reader that YHWH uses Moses (as an agent) and wood (natural object), thus pointing to the fact that YHWH leads “Moses to help that is already available in nature for the health of the wilderness community” (Fretheim 2011:22). Fretheim (2011b:22) makes it clear that the natural elements used by YHWH do not distance Him from miraculous acts, rather, YHWH always “works in and through the natural to work out the divine purpose”.

A final note on the *healer-motif* is to point at the opposite of healing, that is, to smite/strike. Chalmers (2011:17) rightly notes that the “numerous biblical references” to YHWH as one who both heals-and-strikes have largely been neglected by scholars. In his article on the formula “YHWH strikes and heals” Chalmers (2011:16-33) points out no less than thirteen occurrences of the formula in the Canon of Scriptures. Furthermore the formula of strike-and-heal (opposites) is “interpreted as a merism, it is the use of opposites to denote total or complete power” (Chalmers 2011:22).

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<sup>64</sup> See 2 Kings 1:2-4

<sup>65</sup> See 2 Kings 5

Although Chalmers (2011:16) admits that Exodus 15:26 is often the “point of departure” in discussing YHWH as healer, he misses the fact that in this “departure text” YHWH is subtly being described as the one who not only heals, but also *strikes*: “I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians [...]” (Ex. 15:26). The diseases in Exodus 15:26 refer to the plagues [sic] which YHWH brought upon the Egyptians. In other texts in Exodus it is put abruptly that YHWH smites (הִכָּה) [*nakah*] <sup>66</sup>. Thus for Israel there is an important warning: If they follow YHWH’s ordinances (Ex. 15:26a) He will be their Healer, but if they disobey him the same plagues which were afflicted upon Egypt will be afflicted on them (Burden 1994:48).

In one sentence: By His power YHWH has shown that he not only has the ability to afflict plagues upon man and beast by miraculous acts in nature, but he can also do the opposite, that is, to heal.

#### 4.7.10 Sustain-motif

A last motif<sup>67</sup> in this dissertation is the *sustain-motif*. This motif is a close companion to the *healing-motif*. For both of these motifs to become real, Israel has to submit/surrender completely to YHWH and believe in Him as the one who will care for them in the wilderness. As previously mentioned, in Exodus 16-18, YHWH is not only featured as Israel’s leader, but also as their *sustainer* (Brueggemann 2008:168). Brueggemann (2008:170) says that “the wilderness tradition, with YHWH as leader and sustainer, is connected directly [to the] experience of dislocation”. In other words, for the real reader of the narrative, who also lived in a time “said to be without a viable life support system”, the wilderness narrative served as “a theological reflection” regarding their circumstances, thus giving them hope (Brueggemann 2008:170).

It is, however, not just the fact that YHWH is Israel’s *sustainer* that gives them hope, but also the way in which YHWH enters into their circumstances. YHWH sustained Israel not because of what they did, but because he wanted to, and because he entered into a relationship with them (Fretheim 2011:20-21). Being in a relationship, furthermore, means that YHWH communicates with his people through Moses and is “leading Moses to help that is already available in the world” YHWH created (Fretheim

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<sup>66</sup> Ex. 3:20; 5:3; 7:17; 8:16; 12:12, 13, 23

<sup>67</sup> There are many more motifs to be found in the Exodus and Wilderness narrative, but for the aim of this dissertation the mentioned motifs would be enough.

2011:22), even though sometimes “from an unexpected source” [bread from heaven] (Honeycutt Jr. 1970:396).

Honeycutt Jr. (1970:396) notes that although “the provision of food took the form of both quail and manna, the narrative [of Ex. 16] is primarily concerned with the manna”. Quails utilize only 10 words in Exodus 16, says Honeycutt, while “the manna narrative extends over the entire 22 verses remaining in the chapter” (Honeycutt 1970:397). Honeycutt’s (1970:398) remark to the “over-emphasizing” of the quail narrative is that “the narrative is to be taken as a signal and beautiful illustration of the great truth of God’s *ever-sustaining providence*: He supplies His people with food, cares for them in their needs, and He makes the food which He gives them the vehicle of spiritual lessons”. This remark of Honeycutt could also serve to explain the *sustain-motif* in one sentence.

#### **4.8 OUTCOME**

With a sharper focus on specific “tools” which the author of Exodus 1-18 used, it is clear that the author skilfully crafted the narrative with the aim of giving hope to the reader. The structure, settings, themes and motifs ensure those who are oppressed of YHWH’s presence. He sees and remembers; no matter the circumstances or setting where one lives, YHWH is the creator of nature and He can make the most unliveable place, like the wilderness, liveable; He is not only present, He also leads, sustains, nurtures and heals those who submit to Him and live by His ordinances.

As was explained at the beginning of this section (4B) the narrative tools of structure, settings, themes and motifs do not necessarily have a chronological flow. They can overlap and sometimes be intertwined together, as the following grid will demonstrate<sup>68</sup>:

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<sup>68</sup> The italic script in the first column gives the main structure while the other references in the first column show where the settings, themes and motifs fit in the narrative.

**TABLE 4.1: THEME OF NEED-INTERVENTION-RESOLUTION (N-I-R)**  
*(table continues on the next page)*

STRUCTURE	SETTINGS	THEMES <sup>69</sup>	MOTIFS
Ex. 1-2 YHWH sees and remembers Ex. 1:17, 21 Ex. 1:8-22 Ex. 1:22 Ex. 2:2 Ex. 2:3-10 Ex. 2:6, 23 Ex. 2:14	Nile  Nile	Need	Fear  Water Three Water Murmuring Fear
Ex. 3:1-4:23 Calling of Moses Ex. 3:2, 5 Ex. 3:6 Ex. 3:7 Ex. 3:9 Ex. 3:12 Ex. 3:8, 17 Ex. 3:18	Wilderness/Mountain     Mountain	Intervention  Promise of the land	Fire Fear Murmuring Murmuring  Three days
Ex. 4:24-26 Endangerment of Moses Ex. 4:1-9, 29-31 Ex. 4:9			<i>Oth</i> in circumcision Legitimizing <i>oth</i> Three days
Ex. 5:1-19 Confrontation with Pharaoh Ex. 5:3 Ex. 5:8			Three days Murmuring
Ex. 6:1-12 YHWH's name Ex. 6:2, 4, 6, 8		Promise of the land	
Ex. 7:14-10:27 Nine wonders Ex. 7:15-8:6 Ex. 8:6, 13, 14 Ex. 8:27 Ex. 9:19, 22, 25, Ex. 9:20, 30 Ex. 10:21-24	Nile		<i>Oth</i> in the wonders Water Water Three days Water Fear Three days
Ex. 12:1-28 Passover feast instructions			<i>Oth</i> in the Passover
Ex. 12:29-30 Plague of the firstborn Ex. 12:25 Ex. 12:33-15:21		Promise of the land Resolution	<i>Oth</i> in the plague
Ex. 13:1-1 Consecration of the firstborn Ex. 13:5, 11		Promise of the land	<i>Oth</i> in the consecration of the firstborn
Ex. 13:17-15:21 Deliverance from Egypt Ex. 13-14 Ex. 14:10, 13, 31 Ex. 14:10, 15			Fire Fear Murmuring Water

<sup>69</sup> An important theme which is not shown in the grid is *presence*, the reason being that it is a *hidden motif* basically "written" all over the Exodus and Wilderness narrative.

Ex. 14:16, 27 Ex. 14:21-31 Ex. 14:1-15:21 Ex. 15:11 Ex. 15:13, 17		Sea of Reeds		<i>Oth</i> in the parting of the sea Fear
Ex. 15:22-18:27 sojourn Ex. 15:22 Ex.15:22-26 Ex. 15:24 Ex. 15:23,25,25c Ex. 15:26 Ex. 16:2 Ex. 16:35 Ex. 17:2 Ex. 17:3 Ex. 17:1,5,6d Ex. 17:8,11,16 Ex. 18:13, 17-23, 25 Ex. 18:21	Wilderness	Wilderness  Marah    Rephidim	   N-I-R <sup>70</sup>  Promise of the land   N-I-R N-I-R N-I-R	Sustain Three days Water Murmuring  Healer Murmuring  Murmuring/water Water  Fear

About the grid:

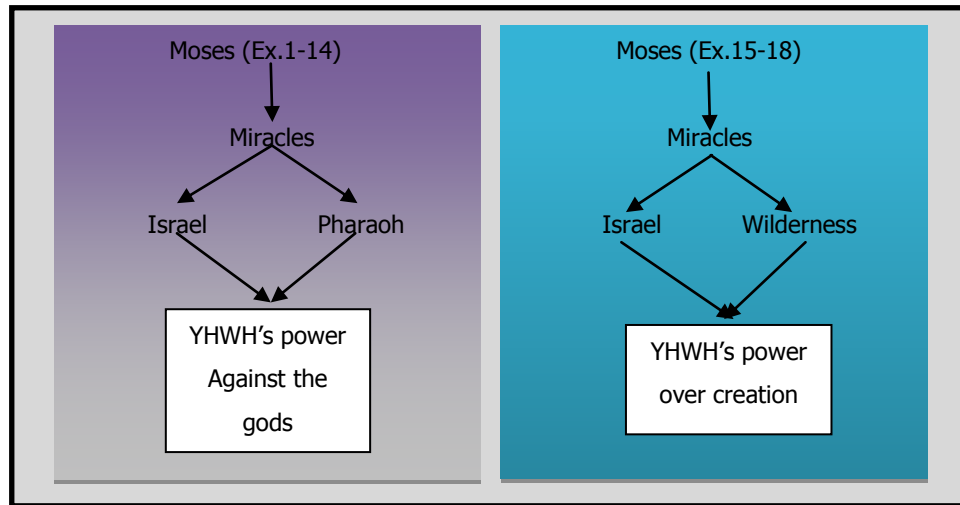
The grid shows that the theme of *Need-Intervention-Resolution* (N-I-R) in the first half of the whole narrative (Ex. 1-14) was stretched over a wide scope: Need (Ex. 1-2); Intervention (Ex. 3-12); Resolution (Ex. 13-15). YHWH was the main character. He saw the need (oppression) of Israel and acted on their behalf. During the Wilderness sojourn (Ex. 15-18) the N-I-R theme is visible in every chapter. YHWH is still the main character. Israel depends on YHWH completely for survival in a hostile setting (Wilderness) without knowing or realising it. They murmur and wish to go back to Egypt and rather die there. The grid shows motifs of sustainment, water and healing through which YHWH ensures that Israel should know that He is their only source of survival.

With a sharper focus on specific “tools” which the author of Exodus 1-18 used it is clear that the author skilfully crafted the narrative with the aim of giving hope to the reader. The *structure, settings, themes* and *motifs* denote hope to those who are oppressed. The hope lies in the assurance of YHWH’s presence. He sees and remembers; no matter the circumstances or setting where one lives, YHWH is the creator of nature and He can make the most unliveable place, like the wilderness, liveable; He is not only present, He also leads, sustains, nurtures and heals those who submit to Him and live by His ordinances.

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<sup>70</sup> Need-Intervention-Resolution

The outcome of miracles in Exodus 1-18 could be illustrated in the following diagram:



**FIGURE 4.5: THE OUTCOME OF MIRACLES**

The narrative of Exodus 1-18 shows how YHWH remembers his promises. He chose a people and saved them from enslavement in Egypt. Through Moses YHWH did miraculous deeds (Ex. 1-14) to show his people that he is Lord and that he is capable of delivering his people from slavery. Through Moses YHWH also did miraculous deeds to show the Pharaoh and the people of Egypt that YHWH alone is Lord. Neither the Pharaoh (YHWH's opponent), nor the so-called gods of Egypt could withstand YHWH's creative power.

If Pharaoh and the so-called Egyptian gods were YHWH's and Israel's opponents in Ex. 1-14, the Wilderness in all its "harshness" is Israel's opponent in Ex. 15-18. The Wilderness is not YHWH's opponent though, because he is the creator of all things, also the Wilderness. Through Moses YHWH did miraculous deeds to show his people that he, YHWH, is the Lord of creation and that he could make even the Wilderness a haven to live in.

## CHAPTER 5A

### MIRACLES SURROUNDING THE FIGURE OF ELIJAH: PRELIMINARY READING

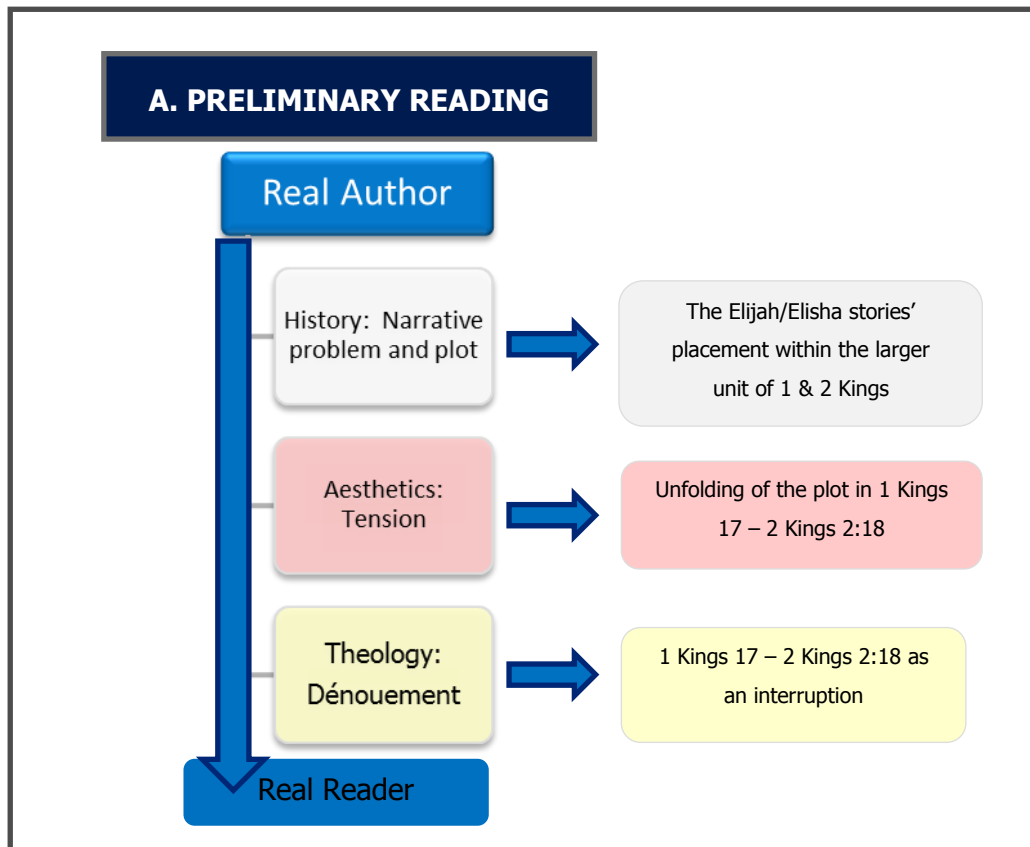


FIGURE 5.1: STRUCTURAL OUTLINE

## 5.1 NARRATIVE PROBLEM AND PLOT

### 5.1.1 Problem

There are at least four main problems regarding the narratives of the Elijah/Elisha cycles: Firstly the problem of its composition; Secondly its placement within the larger plot of 1 And 2 Kings; Thirdly, there seems to be a definite modulation of the Elijah/Elisha narratives on the Narrative of the Exodus; And, fourthly, the miracle stories which appear within the Elijah/Elisha cycles, but nowhere else in the larger plot of 1 And 2 Kings.



### 5.1.1.1 *Composition*

DeVries (1985:208) says that there are “three distinct literary complexes” in which the material of the Elijah and Elisha cycles operates:

- Firstly, the Elijah cycle “grew out of an early collection of prophet-authorization narratives” (the drought stories in 1 Kings 17-18; the fire on the altar story in 18:21-39; Elijah on mount Horeb in 1 Kings 19; and the story of Ahaziah in 2 Kgs. 1:2-17);
- The second literary complex “contains only a single fragment from the Elisha cycle”, namely his “call in 1 Kings 19:19-21”. The “editor who combined all three cycles” brought Elisha’s call in 1 Kings 19:17 “to a forward position because of the mention” of his name;
- The third literary complex refers to the Omride war cycle, containing “the three anonymous narratives of 20:1-21, 20:26-29 and 20:30-43 [...]”. The “early Micaiah story in 22:2-9, 15-18, and 26-37”, says DeVries (1985:208), could be added as well.

Otto (2003:487) on the other hand, argues that the development of 1 Kings 16:29 to 2 Kings 10:36 could “be described in four major stages”:

- Firstly, there is the *Deuteronomistic History* (562 BCE), which “only contained the narratives about Naboth’s vineyard, Ahaziah’s death and the story of Jehu’s coup”. The Deuteronomist demonstrated with the narrative from Ahab to Jehu “the reliability of the word of God throughout history, and furthermore the Deuteronomist “embodied the theme of Baal worship [and] cultic reform in the history of the Northern Kingdom”.
- Secondly, a theme of the king’s attitude “towards the words of the prophets”, which determined the fate of Israel, had been introduced “shortly after the narratives about the Omride wars”.
- Thirdly, “in early post-exilic times” 1 Kings 17-18 had been added “to demonstrate the possibility of a new life in community with God after the time of judgment”.
- Fourthly, “1 Kings 19:1-18” as well as the remaining Elisha stories had been inserted in the fifth century “to give prophecy a legitimate foundation in the history of Israel” (Otto 2003:487).

With the observations of Otto and DeVries<sup>1</sup> it is clear that the narratives mentioned consist of layers, which developed over some time. The focus of this dissertation will, however, be on the final form of the Masoretic Text.

### **5.1.1.2 Placement**

The problem with the Elijah/Elisha narratives, however, still remains... that is, regarding the placement of the narratives within the larger scope of 1 and 2 Kings. The Elijah and Elisha narratives are found in the latter part of 1 Kings and "flow" into the first part of 2 Kings; they "occupy about one-third of the books of Kings" (Brueggemann 2001:34). Birch *et al.* (1999:266) describes them by saying that the "stylized notices of the kings in 1 Kings 15-16 are *interrupted* by a return to narratives. The change in style signals a change in content; Elijah is an interruption!" The *stranger* (Elijah) interrupts, or rather *disrupts* and calls "into question the significance of the royal account of reality" (Brueggemann 2001:34).

The *interruption* and *disruption* are there for a reason, for this is also what YHWH does. He *interrupts* and *disrupts* as he did in the Exodus narratives and it will also become clear with the unfolding of the plot in 1 Kings 17 to 2 Kings 2:17

### **5.1.1.3 Narratives modulated on Moses**

The life of Elijah is modulated on the life of Moses (Hamilton 2001:433). DeVries (1985:209) rightfully notes "how very much these Elijah narratives depend on the model of Moses". DeVries (1985:209) says further that the "similarity of Elijah to Moses is not only seen in the narrative of Elijah's travelling to the Mountain of God (chap. 19), but also in a heretofore undetected similarity between the Yahwist's story of Moses in the Pentateuch and this entire collection of Elijah narratives, which, together with 2 Kings 1:2-17, all fall into the subgenre 'prophet-authorization narrative'<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Also see Gray (1970:371-377); Hens-Piazza (2006:x-xii)

<sup>2</sup> DeVries (1985:207) gives a useful list consisting of 11 subgenres of prophet stories "on the basis of their respective functions".

#### **5.1.1.4 Miracles only during the Elijah/Elisha cycles**

It is noticeable that there is a concentration of miracles in the middle section of 1 and 2 Kings, surrounding the figures of Elijah and Elisha, and nowhere else in the larger narrative plot of 1 and 2 Kings. Not even in the rest of Israel's story told by the Deuteronomists (Joshua, Judges, Samuel) is a concentration of miracles as described in the narrative plot of 1 Kings 16:29 to 2 Kings 2, found. It is said to have been a time of one of the greatest spiritual downfalls in the history of Israel, during the Omride dynasty, a time when Israel was indecisive as to whom they should serve (Waltke 2007:715).

#### **5.1.2 Plot**

The historical setting of the narratives of Elijah/Elisha can be regarded as "a time of great apostasy against Yahweh, when the people had turned to the Canaanite gods in their worship" (Condon 2006:3), during the Omride dynasty, round about 876-869 B.C. (Maré 2009:73).

By the time "Elijah the Tishbite" enters the narrative in 1 Kings 17:1, a lot of history had taken place since Israel's wandering in the Wilderness. This history is depicted in the Deuteronomistic view of Israel's story, which includes Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Kings. The Deuteronomist revealed that "the nation has been 'stiff-necked', rebellious and disobedient during its entire existence"<sup>3</sup> (Pate, Duvall, Hays, Richards, Tucker, Vang *ed.* 2004:18). Pate *et al.* (2004:18) uses the resources of the later Jewish scriptures, such as Baruch 1:18-19, to emphasize the sad history of Israel: "...we have disobeyed him [God], and have not heeded the voice of the Lord our God, to walk in the statutes of the Lord that he set before us. From the time when the Lord brought our ancestors out of the land of Egypt until today, we have been disobedient to the Lord our God, and we have been negligent in not heeding his voice" (TIB 2007:548)<sup>4</sup>. This seems to be the unfortunate witness of Israel's story throughout history.

The book of Kings narrates the "tragic decline of Israel's truly golden age under Solomon (ca. 960 BC) to its tragic exile four centuries later under Jehoiachin and

<sup>3</sup> (see Ex. 33:3, 5; Num. 14:22; Deut. 29:4; 31:27)

<sup>4</sup> The inclusive Bible: The first Egalitarian translation

Zedekiah" (Waltke 2007:702). Over forty kings ruled during this period. Most of them failed to live by the Mosaic covenant of the Deuteronomy. In the end it was a direct lead to the fall of Israel and Judah. A few kings (Asa, Hezekiah and Josiah) tried to keep the covenant, but the majority abandoned Yahweh and his *mishpat*.

#### **5.1.2.1 *Solomon's reign***

1 Kings 1-11 describes Solomon's reign. The story begins with the death of David, with the succession of his son, Solomon. The middle of the story depicts Solomon's wealth and wisdom. Israel flourished and Solomon was able to build a spectacular temple for Yahweh. The story ends with Yahweh saying to Jeroboam that He is going to divide the kingdom, the reason being that "[...] they have forsaken me and worshiped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, Chemosh the god of the Moabites, and Molech the god of the Ammonites, and have not walked in my ways, nor done what is right in my eyes, nor kept my statutes and laws as David, Solomon's father, did" (1 Kgs. 11:33).

Deuteronomic warnings were given frequently to Solomon throughout the Solomon narratives, "bidding him to follow the laws and decrees of Yahweh" (Pate *et al.* 2004:64). In Deuteronomy 17:14-20, for instance, three things are strictly forbidden: One: Solomon should not accumulate large numbers of horses, especially from Egypt; two: he should not accumulate a large number of wives (and here he even marries the Pharaoh's daughter); three: he should not accumulate a large quantity of silver and gold. Solomon did not take notice of any of these warnings.

Frequent tension builds up in the narrative of Solomon's kingdom. His disobedience, as described in 1 Kings 11 was "extremely serious by Deuteronomistic standards. Indeed he has fallen into the most serious apostasy, worshipping even most detestable gods" (Pate *et al.* 2004:65). Because of this Ahijah announced judgment on Solomon's kingdom (1 Kgs. 11:29-39).

#### **5.1.2.2 *The Omride dynasty and its fall***

In the next major section of Kings the tension continues: After Solomon's death the nation erupts into civil war and divides into two countries: Judah (Southern kingdom) and Israel (Northern kingdom). It is only Judah which is ruled by David's descendants.

The tension continued as only a few rulers (as mentioned above) tried to get the people to worship Yahweh. The majority of rulers unfortunately lead the people into apostasy.

In the Northern kingdom none of David's descendants sat on the throne, and none of them was approved by Yahweh. One of the first acts of the rebellious Northern kingdom was to "establish calf worship sanctuaries at Dan and at Bethel (1 Kgs. 12:25-33). In a clear connection to the horrendous golden calf episode of the Exodus (Ex. 32), the new king declares, 'Here are your gods, o Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt'" (1 Kgs. 12:28) (Pate *et al.* 2004:66). This was indeed extremely blasphemous, especially when considering that one of the most central descriptive phrases that Yahweh uses to define Himself to Israel is: "I am Yahweh, who brought you up out of Egypt."

Maré (2009:73) mentions that the Omride kings were the first kings of the Northern Kingdom to establish a dynasty with success after the "relative instability that followed the division of the Davidic Kingdom after the death of Solomon." Little is known of Omri, after whom this dynasty is named, from Biblical narratives. Maré (2009:73) is of opinion that the reason for "this scant information about Omri has to be found in the fact that in the Hebrew division of the Bible, the book of Kings forms part of the *Nevi'im*". The authors of Kings were more interested in providing their readers "with theological history of ancient Israel than a political history".

### **5.1.2.3 Elijah's appearance**

Elijah appeared when Ahab was on the throne: "No sooner has Ahab introduced Baal worship into Israel than Elijah makes his striking entry into the narrative (1 Kgs. 17:1)" (Satterthwaite & McConville 2007:161). His name means *YHWH is God* and embodied his whole mission and message. In the words of Lockyer (1961:109): "The significance of his name was not only the motto of his life, but expresses the one grand object of his miraculous ministry, namely, to awaken Israel to the conviction that Jehovah alone is God".

Five out of the six appearances of Elijah are directly related to Ahab and his family. Elijah's career covered twenty-four years during the "reign of King Ahab of Israel [874-853 B.C (22 years)] and the two-year reign of his son and successor, Ahaziah [853-852

B.C]” (Hamilton 2001:425; Smit 1988:12). He is seen for the last time during the reign of Ahaziah (2 Kgs. 2:11).

During the first years of Elijah’s appearance, Ahab, the son of Omri, opened the door for Israel to Baalism. This happened through “his marriage with Jezebel, the daughter of the king of the Sidonians (1 Kgs. 16:31)” (Maré 2009:74). Ahab’s wife had one intention, and that was to replace Yahweh’s ordinances with Baal (1 Kgs. 18:18). She even tried to exterminate all Yahweh’s prophets (1 Kgs. 18:13). The prophets of Baal “were given official status (1 Kgs. 18:19) and the remaining prophets of Yahweh had to seek refuge in caves (1 Kgs. 18:13).

Within this background Elijah is being used by Yahweh in 1 Kings 18 to give clear evidence that Yahweh alone is God and that the Canaanite deity Baal is nothing. Waltke (2007:716) puts it this way: “Against the atrocities of the house of Omri, the prophet-historian slows down the pace and focuses narrowly on Elijah and Elisha, the successively faithful prophets of *I AM*, in two cycles (1 Kgs. 17:1-19:18; 2 Kgs. 2:1-8:15).”

But on the other hand, Yahweh also demonstrated through Elijah that the power of life is available to those of faith, those who kept aloof from the monarchy and its corrupted central temple complex (1 Kgs. 17). Therefore 1 Kings 19 introduces the concept of “remnant”. Even though it seems that the entire nation has fallen into apostasy, it is revealed to Elijah by Yahweh that seven thousand people have remained faithful to him (1 Kgs. 19:18).

Here there seems to be a shift from national focus to an individual focus: “In the midst of national calamity and national judgment due to sin and rebellion, there is individual salvation. Some will survive; some will be saved. There will always be a remnant” (Pate *et al.* 2004:67).

#### **5.1.2.4 Elisha**

Not much is said of Elisha’s background when he is being introduced within the narrative (1 Kgs. 19:16). Several of the miracles Elisha did, mirror those of Elijah, probably to enhance his “reputation as a mediator of divine word and deed” (Birch *et al.* 1999:267). The name, *man of God*, is reserved for Elisha and accentuates his

magnificent abilities, as well as the special relationship he had with YHWH (Smit 1988:245).

What is known about him is that he came from a "prosperous background where twelve teams of oxen were used for ploughing" (Wiseman 1993:174). He became active during the reigns of Jehoram, Jehu, Jehoahaz and Jehoash (Birch *et al.* 1999:267). Elisha followed Elijah everywhere and persisted so until Elijah was carried up to heaven (Douglas & Merrill 1989:175).

Although Elisha was Elijah's successor, he presented a striking contrast to his teacher. He wore Elijah's mantle only metaphorically, and only once. After the first display (1 Kgs. 2:13) it appeared no more (Bronner 1964:42). He was not a "solitary figure as Elijah". While Elijah preferred the company of "the bleak hills and lonely mountains and appeared in cities only when the necessity arose", Elisha preferred human companionship, he "had a closer connection with the sons of the prophets" (Bnei Neviim)<sup>5</sup> and he was "more involved with politics than Elijah" (Bronner 1964:43).

Elisha "was afforded a highly respectful treatment by royalty" (Bakon 2001:s.p.): "[...] so the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat and the king of Edom went down to him". This verse seems to show an "important ingredient in Elisha's personality. Not only does he meet royalty, but also they come down to him" (Bakon 2001:s.p.). Even people from beyond the borders of Israel came down to Elisha. This was because a young girl (captured by roving Aramean bands and brought into the household of Naaman) "was responsible for spreading the fame of Elisha... (2 Kgs. 5:3)" (Bakon 2001:s.p.).

An expression which is characteristic of both the prophets Elijah and Elisha is this: "Before whom I stood", "i.e. the God whom they served" (Bronner 1964:43). This sums up the main character of both of the prophets Elijah and Elisha: They "stood erect and haughty before kings but in the presence of their Creator they couched and bent their heads in recognition of His Greatness and Majesty."

To conclude, Elisha is depicted as "a remarkable man who dedicated his whole life to one goal: the total elimination of Baal-worship in Israel" (Bakon 2001:s.p.). It has been mentioned that the Elisha stories mirror those of Elijah. The Elisha narratives fall

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<sup>5</sup> Bakon (2001:s.p.) gives a full description of who these prophets were and where they descended from.

beyond the scope of this thesis, thus from 5.2 onwards in this chapter the focus will be primarily on Elijah.

#### **5.1.2.5 *Destruction of Jerusalem and the exile***

As 1 – 2 Kings move toward the end of the story, the Elijah/Elisha narratives fade. “The main event – indeed, the climax and focus of the Deuteronomistic story – is the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile of the rebellious, unrepentant Hebrews out of the promised land.” It is not in the interest of this dissertation, though, to elaborate on this last section, as the main focus will be on the middle unit. Pate’s *et al.* (2004:67) words however, are worth mentioning, as they pretty much sum up the third unit: “Sin has its consequences, and God’s judgment on sin is a part of the reality of the great mega story played out in human history.” The last unit shows, as Pate mentions, the consequences of not living according to Yahweh’s ordinances.

### **5.2 UNFOLDING (TENSION) OF THE PLOT (1 Kgs. 17:1 – 2 Kgs. 2:18)**

“In the thirty-eighth year of Asa king of Judah, Ahab son of Omri became king of Israel, and he reigned in Samaria over Israel twenty-two years. <sup>30</sup> Ahab son of Omri did more evil in the eyes of the LORD than any of those before him. <sup>31</sup> He not only considered it trivial to commit the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, but he also married Jezebel, daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and began to serve Baal and worship him. <sup>32</sup> He set up an altar for Baal in the temple of Baal that he built in Samaria. <sup>33</sup> Ahab also made an Asherah pole and **did more to provoke the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger than did all the kings of Israel before him<sup>6</sup>**” (1 Kgs. 16:29-33).

#### **5.2.1 The Elijah narratives**

Within the backdrop described in 1 Kings 16:29-33 it is clear that the author wants to emphasize the spiritual downfall, away from YHWH, in which Israel found themselves. With a king “doing more evil in the eyes of the Lord than any of those before him” and who “did more to provoke” YHWH than “all the kings of Israel before him”, the tension

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<sup>6</sup> Own highlight



reaches boiling point. Hauser (1990:12) says that 1 Kings 16:29-33 "lays the groundwork for chapters 17-19 by tersely listing Ahab's sins".

### **5.2.1.1 A prophet out of nowhere**

"Now Elijah the Tishbite, from Tishbea in Gilead, said to Ahab [...]".

Elijah made his appearance out of nowhere. There is no announcement or calling which gives a hint of his coming. This is in striking contrast compared to Moses and many other prophets. In the case of Moses the reader of the text had information of his birth and how he grew up. There is no mention of Elijah's parentage, only an insinuation: He was a "Tishbite, from Gilead" (Bronner 1968:18).

Bronner (1968:18) continues by saying that the short reference to Elijah in 1 Kings 17:1 is not without ambiguity though. The words in the Masoretic Text (תִּשְׁבִּי גִלְעָד) suggest "that while he resided in Gilead his birthplace was elsewhere." Furthermore "his native town or district or clan" might be Tishbi. There is no other reference to Tishbi in the Old Testament besides in Kings. "The word rendered *inhabitants* is in the original the same as that rendered *Tishbite*, hence that verse may be read as in the LXX, 'Elijah the Tishbite of Tishbi in Gilead'. Some interpret this word as meaning stranger, and read the verse, "Elijah the stranger from among the strangers in Gilead". This designation is probably given to the prophet as denoting that his birthplace was Tishbi, "a place in Upper Galilee (mentioned in the apocryphal book of Tobit)" (Easton's Bible dictionary:3679)<sup>7</sup>.

The word stranger does fit the appearance of Elijah, and Bronner's remark on *ambiguity* need not point to a problem. As mentioned above, the middle section of the book Kings is an interruption. Birch *et al.* (1999:267) makes it clear: "Elijah is a towering figure, a new Moses, who bursts upon the scene from outside normal channels (Gilead is east of Jordan, away from the centres of power) and confronts the power structures in uncompromising terms". Burnham (1904:180) puts it this way: "He was a man of whirlwind and fire. He came, no one knows whence; he lived for almost all his life no one knows where; and he went at last no one knows whither".

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<sup>7</sup> In: BybleWorks 2008 (electronic ed.)

According to tradition he wore “a garment of hair girt” and a “girdle of leather about his loins<sup>8</sup>” (Bronner 1964:31). Furthermore tradition says he “was a man of short stature and rugged countenance with the long flowing hair of a Nazarite” (Lockyer 1961:109).

### **5.2.1.2 *Neither dew nor rain***

“As the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, whom I serve, there will be neither dew nor rain in the next few years except at my word.”

Though not specifically mentioned by name, Elijah challenges Baal, the *storm god* in Canaanite religion (House 1995:213), when he announces to Ahab that “there will be neither dew nor rain except by his word” (Hauser 1990:13). Elijah’s words, *YHWH the God of Israel lives* (חַי־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל) constitute “not only a claim that Yahweh, and not Baal, is the true God of Israel, but also emphasizes Yahweh’s status as the god who *lives*” (Hauser 1990:13); this in contrast to Baal, which is dead (House 1995:213) and by no means able to be the so-called deity who brings “rain to the land in order to ensure its fertility and productivity” (Gray 1970:377; Sweeney 2007:209).

DeVries (1985:215) observes that the stories to follow (1 Kgs. 17:2-6 and 1 Kgs. 17:7-16) “conform to classic standards for ‘word fulfilment’ narratives, in that they begin with the reception of a word from God which contains a command and a promise”. This is followed by a recount to obedience to that command “followed by fulfilment of the promise”. The closing of the narrative will then be a notion that all this “occurred according to the will of God” (DeVries 1985:216).

Sweeney (2007:209) points out that the narrative not only “asserts YHWH’s control over the rain, nature [...] and life itself [...]”, but it also “emphasizes the power of YHWH’s word as the means by which YHWH’s power will be realized”. Such an emphasis, Sweeney (2007:209) continues, “[...] points to the role of Elijah as the representative of YHWH and the agent by which YHWH’s words and power are manifested”. Glover (2006:453) puts it another way: “The words of Elijah and YHWH share a common authority and ability to shape the future”.

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<sup>8</sup> See 2 Kings 1:8

### 5.2.1.3 *The ravens*

“Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah: “Leave here, turn eastward and hide in the Kerith Ravine, east of the Jordan. You will drink from the brook, and I have ordered the ravens to feed you there.”

The *prophetic word transmission formula* וַיְהִי דְבַר־יְהוָה אֵלָיו לֵאמֹר emphasizes the importance of YHWH’s words as well as Elijah’s role to communicate it (Sweeney 2007:209). Although the prophet’s proclamation of no rain or dew could create a crisis for himself, he is commanded by YHWH to hide in the Kerith Ravine, where ravens, ordered by YHWH, will feed him (Hens-Piazza 2006:163). Here the author gives a first illustration of YHWH’s authority over nature; something Baal cannot do (House 1995:213; Sweeney 2007:209). The ravens brought Elijah bread and meat in the morning and in the evening. Brongers (1979:168) says that 1 Kgs. 17:6 reminds of Exodus 16:8 and 12, where it is said that Israel received manna in the morning and quails in the evening, thus showing here in 1 Kings 17 the first sign of *Elijah’s being a second Moses*.

### 5.2.1.4 *Helping a Widow at Zarephath*

“Some time later the brook dried up because there had been no rain in the land. Then the word of the LORD came to him: ‘Go at once to Zarephath of Sidon and stay there. I have commanded a widow in that place to supply you with food’”.

House (1995:214) notes that the next three stories chart “the rise of Elijah’s prophetic powers”, which establish “his status as ‘a man of God’”. Each episode sketched by the author shows how Elijah “confronts an increasingly more difficult problem which must be solved” (Cohn 1982:335). When Elijah’s water source dried up because of the drought, the *prophetic word transmission formula* is used again, and again he obeyed by acting in accordance with YHWH’s command. Cohn (1982:335) observes the “repetition of several key words” linking this “second episode to the first”: *command* (צִוִּיתִי [verse 4, 9]);  *dwell* (וַיֵּשֶׁב [verse 5, 9]);  *feed* (לְכַלְכֵּלָךְ [verse 4, 9]);  *bread* (לֶחֶם [verse 6, 11]); and  *rain* (גֶּשֶׁם [verse 7, 14]).

The theme of drought “dominates the narrative” (Nelson 1987:107) and has an interlocking function in these three stories. Nelson (1987:107) observes that the

“threat of drought points to Elijah’s need to hide, first in the desert and then in a foreign land”. Drought “also points to a shortage of food, the theme of verses 2-6 and 7-16”. This was the same scenario in the Wilderness in chapter 4 of this dissertation. Drought implies the shortage or lack of water, as was the case in the Wilderness.

As with the *prophetic word transmission formula* in 1 Kings 17:2, the power of YHWH’s word underlines the fact that by YHWH’s word his power will be realized (Sweeney 2007:209). The difference between the narratives of the widow at Zarephath and the ravens though, is that, whereas the ravens (nature itself) nurtured Elijah, he now has to do something himself. Although YHWH has already commanded a widow to supply Elijah with food, Elijah himself gives the command again: “Would you bring me a little water in a jar so I may have a drink? [...] And bring me, please, a piece of bread (1 Kgs. 17:10-11)”. Cohn (1982:335) mentions that Elijah moves from being a “passive recipient” to an “active participant”.

Although the widow assured Elijah with an oath by YHWH that she had nothing (bread) that was baked but “only a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug”, she “trusted the word of the Lord” and “gave up the certain for the uncertain” (Keil 2011:167). Elijah comforted her with the words *fear not* ( אַל-תִּירָאִי ). *Fear not* is a motif which has been prominent in the Exodus narrative; especially in conjunction with the idea of YHWH’s being present (*I’ll be with you*). The widow is being comforted by the fact that it is YHWH – not the Phoenician god Baal- who “will provide her with meal and oil” (Sweeney 2007:209). Patterson & Austel (1988:140) mention the fact that the widow is a “godly non-Jewish woman” and YHWH’s full provision to her would stand as a “lasting memorial [...] to all who believe, whether Jew or Gentile”.

#### **5.2.1.5 The resurrection of the widow’s son**

“Some time later the son of the woman who owned the house became ill. He grew worse and worse, and finally stopped breathing”.

With the narrative of the widow’s son’s falling ill and finally dying, Brueggemann (2001:35) argues that Elijah is being sketched as “the source of life in a world where death is taken to be final”. The widow cries in despair, faulting herself: “Did you come to remind me of my sin and kill my son?” and reproaches the prophet: “What do you have against me, man of God?” By calling Elijah *man of God*, the widow indirectly

reproaches YHWH. With the death of her son her "security and the continuation of the family name" were shattered (Rice 1990:143).

Elijah does not defend himself. He himself wants to know what is going on and prays: "O LORD my God, have you brought tragedy also upon this widow I am staying with, by causing her son to die?" Because of the widow's faithfulness (regardless of whether or not sin was the cause of the boy's death) in what she did in verses 7-16, Elijah appealed to YHWH to "let this boy's life return to him" (Brown 1995:107; 1 Kgs. 17:21). Then "the LORD heard Elijah's cry, and the boy's life returned to him, and he lived" (1 Kgs. 17:22). This led the woman to confess: "Now I know that you are a man of God and that the word of the LORD from your mouth is the truth".

Of note is that the first two narratives in 1 Kings 17 are introduced with דְּבַר־יְהוָה [the word of YHWH] (1 Kgs. 17:2,8). Keil (2011:167) suggested that, because of the woman's obedience towards the prophet in doing what he asked in the second narrative, she trusted the word of YHWH. In the third narrative she verbally confessed her trust in the דְּבַר־יְהוָה [the word of YHWH].

House (1998:260) says that with the three stories in 1 Kings 17 the author indicates that YHWH "is the living God who feeds the hungry, cares for the helpless and has the power to give or take life". In other words: YHWH "has the power over things in which Baal has failed [...]" and "in the absence of Baal who lies impotent in the Netherworld, [YHWH] steps in to assist the widow and the orphan, and this is done even in the heartland of Baal, Phoenicia" (House 1995:260).

#### **5.2.1.6 *Elijah on Mount Carmel***

"So Ahab sent word throughout all Israel and assembled the prophets on Mount Carmel. Elijah went before the people and said, 'How long will you waver between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him'".

The battle on Mount Carmel is considered to be one of the most dramatic narratives in the Canon of Scriptures (Brongers 1979:179; Nelson 1987:114). Childs (1980:130) says that the main issue at stake within this narrative is made clear in verse 21, with Israel "limping between two opinions, hopping back and forth between faith in Yahweh

and faith in Baal". Elijah would help Israel in an *either-or* decision. They should serve either YHWH or Baal, they cannot do both (syncretism).

But who was Baal exactly? Within Canaanite mythology several gods have been known by the title Baal. The one "brought to Israel in Jezebel's trousseau, however, was not one of them" (Berlyn 2012:55). Berlyn (2012:55) says that Biblical writers did not "bother to distinguish among them or which among them Jezebel patronized". When reading 1 Kings 18, two of the ba'alim to consider, that might have special meaning to the princess of Tyre, are: Ba'al-Hadad and Ba'al-Melqart. Ba'al-Hadad was also named Ba'al Zevul (Baal is prince). The word "*zevul*" appears to be a theophoric element in Jezebel's own name" (Berlyn 2012:55). According to Berlyn (2012:55) this ba'al was a rain god, and according to "Canaanite mythology is killed by rival god Mot [Death]". This causes the rains to cease until ba'al is "restored to life again" (Berlyn 2012:55). To the Canaanites this was the explanation for dry seasons; these were annual "events".

Childs (1980:131) says that thanks to "discoveries at Ugarit [...] it is highly likely that the Baal whom Jezebel introduced was Baal Melqart, god of Tyre, who belonged within the same larger mythological framework known from Ugarit. This mythological cycle recounts the story of the mythical struggle between **life** and **death, day and night, creation** and **chaos**<sup>9</sup>. When Baal dies, the land dies; and when he revives with the autumn rains, he restores fertility to the earth". Berlyn (2012:55) says that "Ba'al-Melqart was also known as 'King-of-the-City'". The "underworld was sometimes called 'the city'; this is where Ba'al-Melqart periodically descended to and then had to be recalled or resuscitated". Bar (2011:18) says that "death and the underworld were believed to be the end of man's life. Therefore, against this background, the Biblical narrator included stories which exhibit the power of God over death".

The two Baal deities described above shed some light on the motifs used in the previous three narratives in 1 Kings 17 as well as in 1 Kings 18. Baal cannot sustain, nurture, heal or revive. Only he (YHWH) who created nature can control nature, life and death. Denying this fact, is to deal with apostasy, and that is what Ahab and Israel are accused of (1 Kgs. 18:18, 21; Nelson 1987:116).

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<sup>9</sup> Own highlight

In 1 Kings 18 a battle is described, even though the author knows that there is no real battle to speak of, as you cannot battle something which does not exist (Childs 1980:132). The emphasis lies in the fact that Elijah is the *underdog*, the odds of 450 against one. On the contrary, being the underdog emphasizes the fact that this contest is not between Elijah and Baal, but to point out that YHWH alone is Lord.

Elijah gives the prophets of Baal a chance to prepare an altar for their deity, before he does. The outcome of the contest would be that the first deity to send fire upon the altar would be worshipped as the only living God. It is said that in "Canaanite mythology Baal, as part of his role as the god of rain and fertility", also controls "fire and lightning" (Hauser 1990:40; Lewis 2011:363). The Baal prophets' incompetence is shown to the full by the author and Elijah even mocks them: "Perhaps he is deep in thought, or busy, or traveling. Maybe he is sleeping and must be awakened" (1 Kgs. 18:27).

By giving the Baal prophets a head-start, the author points out their inability to "move" their so-called "creator deity".

Cohn (1982:340) notes the *symmetry* in which the narrative is crafted:

- Elijah speaks twice to the people of Israel (vv 21, 22-24) and twice to the prophets of Baal (vv 25, 27);
- At the beginning Elijah "came near" (שָׁלַח, v. 21) to "all the people," whereas after Baal's defeat they (the people) "came near" (וַיִּשְׁלַח, v. 30) to him (Elijah);
- Elijah offers the people two seemingly equal choices: "If the Lord is God, go after him, but if Baal, then go after him" (v. 21);
- Elijah orders that the two bulls be prepared identically.

According to Cohn (1982:340) the "formal symmetries function as a backdrop against which the victory of Yahweh breaks forth with radical clarity. They highlight the contrast in substance of the two sides' preparations. Whereas the prophets of Baal are depicted ludicrously—crying, gnashing, and limping [...] to no avail—Elijah prepares calmly and methodically and speaks but one prayer which immediately elicits YHWH's response".

Before Elijah's "one prayer" the author "goes into great detail to describe the altar of Yahweh which had been thrown down, to Israel's shame" (Childs 1980:132). Childs (1980:132) points out how Elijah does not throw an altar together hastily, but carefully rebuilds it, "as if to recover Israel's memory of the past". Elijah uses twelve stones<sup>10</sup>, symbolizing the twelve tribes and then specifically builds an "altar in the name of the true God of Israel", thus recovering Israel's past (Childs 1980:132).

Then, says Childs (1980:132) "the prophet goes beyond recovering the past. He has a deep trench dug around the carefully lain offering". The trench probably marked "the sacred boundaries of the holy altar" and conveyed "blood into the ground"<sup>11</sup> (Sweeney 2007:229). Elijah then drenched the offering with water, three times. The repetition was employed for emphasis reasons (Childs 1980:132), and not as "a characteristic part of temple worship and sacrifice" to "symbolize the onset of the rains", as was the case at Sukkot (Sweeney 2007:229). If this soggy offering is ignited, says Childs (1980:132) "it really will be a sign". The sign will, and does point to the fact that "The Lord—he is God!" (1 Kgs. 18:39). Water will not stop the *fire of YHWH*. It should be remembered though, as was mentioned in Chapter 4, that water also symbolizes new beginning. With the sign at the altar Israel would thus be reminded of a new beginning their ancestors once had, when they left Egypt.

After Elijah drenched the offering he prayed. House (1995:220) says that Elijah's prayer incorporates three things: "Concern" for YHWH's "reputation"; "the validity of the prophet's work"; and "for the people's well-being". Keil (2011:175) says that there is even more to the prayer of Elijah: "you are turning their hearts back again" (1 Kgs. 18:37c) actually means to 'turn them back from idols towards YHWH'. Keil (2011:175) says that "the perfects" *עָשִׂיתִי* (to be done, verse 36) and *הִסְבֵּיתִי* (to turn around, verse 37) "are used to denote not only what has already occurred, but what will still take place and are as certain as if they had taken place already". These two words thus point to the drought which was predicted in 1 Kings 17:1, but also to the miracle Elijah is about to perform, as well as the "the conversion of the people" to YHWH (Keil 2011:175). Furthermore, Elijah's prayer was "a feature of the tradition of the authentication of the divine authority of a prophet by a 'sign', or 'token' of God's immediate activity" (Gray 1970:402).

<sup>10</sup> Parallel to Moses in Exodus 24:4 (Reiss 2004:175)

<sup>11</sup> See Deut. 12:16; 23-24; 15:23; Lev. 17:12-13



Immediately after Elijah's prayer "fire of the LORD fell and burned up the sacrifice<sup>12</sup>, the wood, the stones and the soil, and also licked up the water in the trench" (1 Kgs. 18:38). It is important to note that it was fire, and not lightning which consumed the offering on the altar. Although lightning is seen "as the prelude to rain", the *fire of YHWH* (אֵשׁ־יְהוָה) in this case "was associated with the conception of fire as the medium of the theophany" (Gray 1970:402). In other words, here fire has a strong reference to YHWH's presence (Buttrick 1991:158).

In Elijah's prayer he prays to YHWH, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel<sup>13</sup> (the transformed Jacob), clearly symbolizing that "the people must once again become Israel now that Baal has been dismissed" (Cohn 1982:341). Cohn (1982:341) continues by saying that the "transformation of the people" was completed as "they fell on their faces [...] to express their allegiance to YHWH".

A question could be posed as to whether it was the fire which caused the people to repent towards YHWH, or was it because of His mighty *presence* (Glover 2006:451)? The latter seems more likely, especially with reference to fire's being regarded as a symbol of YHWH's presence. The author, according to Cohn (1982:341), clearly "patterned the Carmel narrative upon the Sinai covenant story" and by so doing claimed "that at Carmel, Elijah, a prophet like Moses, remade the covenant with the people of Israel who 'put away' the baalim". Previously (verse 21) Elijah had posed the question to the people whom they would serve. They did not answer then, but when YHWH showed his mighty *presence* with fire, they could do nothing other than to fall on their faces and admit<sup>14</sup> that "The Lord —he is God! The Lord —he is God" (verse 39)!

Finally Cohn (1982:341) notes that with the rebirth of Israel, "the author returns to the story of Ahab and the drought": "And Elijah said to Ahab, 'Go, eat and drink, for there is the sound of a heavy rain'" (1 Kgs. 18:41). With this announcement YHWH's promise in 1 Kings 18:1 forms an *inclusion* "around the story of the contest with Baal. The drought was thus only the occasion for and the symptom of the real crisis of apostasy" (Cohn 1982:341).

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<sup>12</sup> See Lev. 9:22-24

<sup>13</sup> This is the first time in the Canon of Scriptures that *Israel* is used instead of the name *Jacob*.

<sup>14</sup> See Ex. 14:13; 30-31

### 5.2.1.7 *Rain and the Transportation of Elijah*

"Meanwhile, the sky grew black with clouds, the wind rose, a heavy rain came on and Ahab rode off to Jezreel. The power of the LORD came upon Elijah and, tucking his cloak into his belt, he ran ahead of Ahab all the way to Jezreel."

YHWH, who answered Elijah's prayer with fire, answered again, this time with rain, "proving thereby His sovereignty in the realm of nature" (Lockyer 1961:113). Rice (1990:153) says that the contest on Mount Carmel between YHWH and the Baal priests has been described as "the most dramatic part of" 1 Kings 18, but the "real climax is the coming of the rain and the ending of the drought" which had been announced in 1 Kings 17:1. The coming of the rain could be seen as the pinnacle of events that started with a prophet that had to flee for his life and faced the consequences of starving because of the lack of food and water; who then had to live with a widow with few resources; had to beg YHWH to restore a single life; and then had to face 450 Baal prophets. In all of these events YHWH has shown his guiding, nurturing, healing and creational *presence*.

With the coming of the rain, YHWH returns the most crucial source of life, water, to all the land, says Hauser (1990:55) so that everyone in Palestine "could benefit from his power as the God of life". The author describes the coming of the rain, first by an insinuation: "[...] there is the sound of a heavy rain" (1 Kgs. 18:41c). Patterson & Austel (1988:147) say that *sound* (קוֹל) "is an onomatopoeic word"<sup>15</sup>, thus heightening "the onset of the coming storm". Elijah commands Ahab to go and "eat and drink" (verse 41b), probably to suggest that Ahab does not have to fast any more (Patterson & Austel 1988:145). Fasting was a custom during intercession in drought-stricken times (Gray 1970:403).

Elijah then "climbed to the top of Carmel, bent down to the ground and put his face between his knees" (1 Kgs. 18:42b). Going to a higher place probably further indicates, to elaborate on Rice's (1990:153) comment, that the climax of the narrative is not the battle against Baal, but the coming of the rain. Elijah goes to a higher place to pray. As was mentioned in chapter four, a higher place or mountain top, symbolizes closeness or nearness to YHWH. The author also focuses the reader's attention upwards, towards

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<sup>15</sup> An onomatopoeic word, is a word that "imitates or suggests the source of the [natural] sound that it describes (<http://websters.yourdictionary.com/onomatopoeic>: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Onomatopoeia>)

the skies. The word *הָלַךְ* (to go up) is used seven times in verse 41-44 and seven times Elijah's servant had to go further up the mountain to "Go and look toward the sea" to see if the rain is coming (Hauser 1990:57). When the rain finally does come in verse 45, "the victory over both Baal and death" is complete. YHWH "has shown that death cannot prevent him from sending the life-giving waters onto the land" (Hauser 1990:59). In fact, as Glover (2006:451) puts it: "The tale of Elijah is scattered with the symptoms of life: dew, rain, bread, meat, oil and water".

*Transportation of Elijah:* When the rain finally came, the author wrote that the "power of the LORD came upon Elijah" (1 Kgs. 18:46). Elijah then tucked his cloak into his belt and "ran ahead of Ahab all the way to Jezreel". Some scholars ignore verses 40-46, for in their words: "[...] these verses are identified as from another source" (DeVries 1985:229). It is thus noteworthy that not much has been written on the theme of "the transportation of Elijah" in 1 Kgs. 18:46. This dissertation does work with the final form of the Massoretic Text; therefore verse 46 could not be ignored.

Strelan (2001:31) says that "running is a characteristic of an inspired and commissioned prophet" and that those "runners (*רָצִיף*) often accompanied the chariots of war-leaders, kings [...]". Berlyn (2012:60) is of opinion that Elijah managed to run before the royal chariot because Ahab told the charioteer to hold the horses back. Ahab was apparently in no hurry to get back to his house, "where Jezebel was waiting to hear of a victory by her ba'al-men" (Berlyn 2012:60). An important verse is left out though: "The power of the LORD came upon Elijah" and that is why he "ran ahead of Ahab all the way to Jezreel" (1 Kgs. 18:46).

If Strelan (2001:31) is right about the prophet being inspired, then Elijah was not only inspired by YHWH to run in front of Ahab, but also received the strength to do so, for the power (more correctly translated in the KJV<sup>16</sup> as *hand*) *יְדֵי יְהוָה* of YHWH was upon him<sup>17</sup>. The same hand which had the creational power (Fretheim 1991b:75) to sustain and nourish Israel in the Wilderness; to feed Elijah and the widow and to raise her child from the dead; and the same hand that had defeated death (given rain), gave Elijah the power to outrun Ahab's chariot.

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<sup>16</sup> King James Version

<sup>17</sup> Ref. Point III of 4.7.1.4 "mighty hand"; point ii of 4.7.1.8 "stretch out thine hand..." ; par. 3 of 4.7.1.3; Ex. 17:11, while Moses' hands had been held up, the Israelites had the power to win the Amalekites in battle.

### 5.2.1.8 *Angelic meal*

"The angel of the Lord came back a second time and touched him and said, 'Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you'. So he got up and ate and drank. Strengthened by that food, he traveled forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God" (1 Kgs. 19:8-9).

After Jezebel heard what Elijah had done on Mount Carmel and that he had also killed 450 Baal prophets, she sent a messenger to Elijah to tell him that she would kill him "by this time tomorrow" (1 Kgs. 19:2c). Elijah then fled to Beersheba, not because he was afraid<sup>18</sup>, but because he *saw* (רָאָה) that Jezebel was serious about what she said (Allen 1979:199). So Elijah went on a day's journey into the desert. He came to a broom tree, lay down underneath it and wished to die: "I have had enough, LORD," he said. "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors" (1 Kgs. 19:4c).

Allen (1979:200) says that it wasn't because of fear that Elijah wished to die, but because of his broken spirit. He was just so disappointed by the fact that the king's house had not repented after "the display of divine power" at Carmel (Tonstad 2005:256). Hauser (1990:62) says that the battle between life and death continued, and that Elijah fled to the wilderness so that death could not prevail. With Elijah's wishing to die, the author creates tension in the narrative - life is under threat.

At this point an angel woke him up and ordered him to eat and drink (1 Kgs. 19:5). The same word for angel (מַלְאָךְ) is used for the messenger sent by Jezebel to Elijah with the news that she sought his life. Tension is thus momentarily increased, but relieved by the words: "get up and eat" (Hens-Piazza 2006:187). Elijah did not see the angel, but saw the bread and water; He ate and drank, and went back to sleep again. Rice (1990:156) noticed the sharp characteristic contrast between the Elijah of 1 Kings 18 (Elijah larger than life) and the Elijah described in 1 Kings 19 (Elijah wanting to die). The angel woke Elijah a second time and again ordered him to eat and drink, "for the journey is too much for" him. "Strengthened by that food, he traveled forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God (1 Kgs. 19:8).

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<sup>18</sup> Some translations (cf. BGT; NAV; NIV) use the word afraid, but רָאָה is translated correctly in the KJV as "saw"

Hens-Piazza (2006:188) noticed the remarkable parallels between the story of 1 Kings 19:1-8 and other “fleeing and feeding” stories: “Images of the past intermingle with a replay of snippets from the present”. The story lurks back into history, but also stretches towards the future, indicating whereto the narrative is heading. Hens-Piazza (2006:188) puts it this way: “The feeding story before a journey reaches back to previous events. A miraculous feeding prefaced Elijah’s journey to Sidon. There, a widow miraculously fed the prophet before his encounter with Ahab at Samaria (1 Kgs. 17:7-16). In addition, parallels with an even earlier tradition begin to resonate here [...] Once, Moses killed an enemy and fled to the wilderness in order to escape those who sought his life (Ex. 2:11-15). On another occasion [Moses] came to a bush and encountered a divine messenger (Ex. 3:1-6). In another story, Moses wished for his own death in the wilderness when he was overcome with the burden of his commission (Num. 11:15). And again, God fed Moses and the people in that desert setting” (Ex. 16-18; Num. 11:31-32).

Hauser (1990:66) specifically sees in 1 Kings 19:4-9 “allusions to Israel’s years of wandering after the exodus of Egypt”: Like Israel, Elijah “journeys into the wilderness (v.4)”; Elijah was nurtured with food from YHWH (vv. 5-8), so, too, was Israel sustained “in the wilderness with food sent from God”; Elijah’s journey to Horeb takes forty days, which parallels Israel’s wandering of forty years; YHWH appeared to Israel at mount Horeb, and does so to Elijah also (v. 9). Hauser (1990:66-67) says that “these parallels between Israel’s years in the wilderness and Elijah’s journey to Horeb, could suggest that Elijah” went to Horeb “to receive strength by visiting the site of Israel’s first covenant with YHWH”.

#### **5.2.1.9 *Divine manifestation***

“[...] after the fire came a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave” (1 Kgs. 19:11-13).

As soon as Elijah arrived at Horeb, he found a cave and went inside it (1 Kgs. 19:9). During this point of the narrative the word of YHWH ( דְּבַר־יְהוָה ) came to Elijah: “What are you doing here, Elijah?” This is the fourth time the *word of the Lord-motif* is used<sup>19</sup>. As previously, the motif “suggests an upcoming prophetic commission for

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<sup>19</sup> See 1 Kings 17:2,8; 18:1

Elijah” (Hens-Piazza 2006:189). The prophetic commission does not come immediately after the motif but later on in verse 15-16. A question follows immediately after the *דַּבֵּר יְהוָה* motif: “what are you doing here?” The meaning of the question could evoke speculation, such as: “why are you not doing what you’re supposed to do, being a prophet”?

Again there is strong reference in the narrative to the story of Moses (DeVries 1985:236; Gray 1970:409; Hens-Piazza 2006:189; House 1995:223; Tonstad 2005:257-258). Hamilton (2001:433) shows how remarkably closely Elijah’s story in 1 Kings 18-19 parallels that of Moses in Exodus:

- Moses kills an Egyptian (Ex. 2:12); Elijah kills 450 prophets of Baal (1 Kgs. 18:40);
- Pharaoh seeks to kill Moses (Ex. 2:15a); Jezebel seeks to kill Elijah (1 Kgs. 19:2);
- Moses flees for his life to Midian (Ex. 2:15b); Elijah flees for his life to Beer-Sheba and Horeb (1 Kgs. 19:3, 8);
- Moses comes to a bush (Ex. 3:2); Elijah comes to a broom tree (1 Kgs. 19:4);
- An angel appears out of nowhere (Ex. 3:1; 1 Kgs. 19:5);
- Moses and God dialogue by debate (Ex. 3:7-4:17); Elijah and God dialogue by debate (1 Kgs. 19:9-18);
- God provides Moses with Aaron as an assistant (Ex. 4:14-16); God provides Elijah with Elisha as a successor and assistant (1 Kgs. 19:16, 19-21);
- God says to Moses, “Go, return” to Egypt (Ex. 4:19); God says to Elijah, “Go, return” to Damascus (1 Kgs. 19:15);

The main difference between Moses and Elijah though, is that Moses was concerned about the people, while Elijah was concerned about his own life (Hens-Piazza 2006:190; Reiss 2004:179): “I am the only one [prophet] left, and now they are trying to kill me too” (1 Kgs. 19:10c). In the view of the author, however, there still remains the “theophany given to Israel at the time of the Exodus (Ex. 19, 16-18)” (Tonstad 2005:257). Like Moses, Elijah enters a cave<sup>20</sup>. Elijah is then “faced with a convulsion in nature”, thunder (described as a very strong wind), “splitting mountains and breaking rocks”; an earthquake; and fire (1 Kgs. 19:11-12)<sup>21</sup>.

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<sup>20</sup> See Exodus 33:22

<sup>21</sup> See Exodus 19:18; Deut. 5:22

DeVries (1985:236) says that the three elements of nature found in this theophany, wind, earthquake and fire symbolize "theophanic presence" and denote "potential manifestations of YHWH's power". There is a difference between the theophany described in Exodus and Deuteronomy and the one described in 1 Kings, though. In 1 Kings the author tells the reader that YHWH was neither in the wind, nor in the earthquake, and neither in the fire, but in "a still small voice" (Tonstad 2005:258). When Elijah realized that YHWH was actually present within the silence, he covered his face.

The question is, what is the point that the author wishes to make regarding the theophany and the *silent voice*? Several suggestions by various scholars have been offered: DeVries (1985:237) sees in the theophany and its aftermath that YHWH "still has work for Elijah" and "reimpowers him"; House (1995:223) implies that the theophany teaches Elijah that he shouldn't always expect the deliverance from problems with the "miraculous and wondrous"; Hauser (1990:80) on the other hand writes that Elijah opted for "ongoing demonstrations of YHWH's power" in support of his "role as a prophet". With the *silent voice* YHWH declined "such demonstrations"; Hauser's co-author, Gregory (1990:146) is of opinion that Elijah was so "narrow-minded" that YHWH simply dismissed him from his prophetic duties; Hens-Piazza (2006:190) elaborates on the difference between Moses and Elijah regarding the theophany. Moses was covered by YHWH to protect him when YHWH passed by, while Elijah covered *himself* with his mantle. To Hens-Piazza, this means that Elijah tried to "preserve himself from death", more concerned about his own life. Elijah was not prepared for what he actually heard, a *silent voice*.

Tonstad (2005:261) gives a clear description of the event in 1 Kings 19:10-13. He says that the theophany "revises" the old framework of the Mosaic theophany in Exodus. Elijah is shown that he should not rely on a "display of divine majesty and power" to have confidence in YHWH. His confidence should "lie elsewhere, demanding of him a new perception and outlook". The wind, earthquake and fire repudiate "precisely the features on which Elijah's prior confidence was built" (Tonstad 2005:261). Furthermore, Tonstad (2005:261) says that the "Horeb narrative suggests that ultimately YHWH's way is not the way of power. The fact that Jezebel was not moved by the miraculous event at Carmel, confirms it. Add to this YHWH's remark to Elijah regarding his concern that he was the only prophet still alive (1 Kgs. 19:14c): "Yet I

reserve seven thousand in Israel—all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and all whose mouths have not kissed him” (1 Kgs. 19:18).

It is clear that the seven thousand to which YHWH refers, did not, as Tonstad (2005:262) remarks, “repudiate Baal because of what happened at Mount Carmel; they have internalized their conviction *before* the confrontation and on the basis of finer points of distinction between YHWH and Baal than the fire that comes down from heaven”. The question thus arises: What was it that made the people fall on their knees and cry “the Lord – He is God”? Was it the display of fire? Or was it the tangible *Presence* of YHWH that forced them down on their knees? The latter seems more likely. It was seen in chapter four that YHWH’s *presence* was shown by various motifs: fire, water, miracles, nurturing, etc., and now, even in silence.

It is within the silence then, that Elijah finds strength to complete his journey back from where he had come from: “Go back the way you came [...]” (1 Kgs. 19:15). Elijah also received three commands: “to anoint Hazael to be King over Syria, Jehu over Israel, and Elisha to be his own successor.” With faith restored, Elijah returned to his life’s task. Of the three commands, he only committed to one, anointing his successor: “It was left to Elisha to complete the first two mandates” (Bronner 1964:40).

#### **5.2.1.10 *Fire from heaven***

“Elijah answered the captain, “If I am a man of God, may fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty men!” “Then fire fell from heaven and consumed the captain and his men” (2 Kgs. 1:10).

Second Kings starts with a rapid tempo, following on the short introduction of Ahaziah’s reign at the end of 1 Kings (1 Kgs. 22:52-53). It is as if the introductory verse in 2 Kings 1:1 completes the last verse of 1 Kings 22. Hobbs (1985:4) says that 2 Kings 1:1 “serves the wider purpose of closing off one era in the history of Israel, and opening up another”, the “age of Ahab is either over or fast drawing to a close”. After Ahab’s death, his son Ahaziah succeeded him as king; the narrator mentions swiftly that “Ahaziah had fallen through the lattice of his upper room in Samaria and injured himself” (2 Kgs. 1:2). The injury must have been serious, because Ahazia sent messengers to “Go and consult Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron”, to ask him if he (Ahaziah) would recover from his injury. This also links to the latter part of first Kings:



"He did evil in the eyes of the LORD, because he walked in the ways of his father and mother [...] He served and worshipped Baal and provoked the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger, just as his father had done" (1 Kgs. 22:52-53).

Within the narrative of 2 Kings the battle between YHWH and Baal continues, as was the case in 1 Kings 18. Calkins (1991:189) says that Baal-Zebub was "a localized form of the great Baal of Syria, the weather-god, identified with Hadad and [...] Baal-Kelkart, tutelary god of Tyra". He was also known as "the life-god of Syria". No wonder that Ahaziah wanted to consult this deity about his future life. This is precisely why Elijah then confronted Ahaziah, through his messengers: "Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are going off to consult Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron? Therefore this is what the Lord says: 'You will not leave the bed you are lying on. You will certainly die!'" (2 Kgs. 1:3-4).

As in 1 Kings 17 Elijah is introduced as "Elijah the Tishbite" (2 Kgs. 1:3). In verse 8 the king also recognizes Elijah because of the description his messengers gave him as אֱלִיָּהוּ הַתִּשְׁבִּי. The fact that the king immediately sent fifty men<sup>22</sup> to fetch the prophet implies that "Elijah's place of abode was known" to him (Keil 2011:202). This seems ironic, as the king still chose to seek advice from a non-existing deity about his health (verse 2).

At first glance verses 10-12 are disturbing, with Elijah calling for fire from heaven upon two captains and their men, to consume them after they had demanded that Elijah come down from the mountain. The context should be read within its time frame though (Brongers 1979:15); some call it a "barbaric age" where "deeds of savagery did not offend the moral sense of even the noblest among God's people" (Calkins 1991:191).

Elijah was either defending himself against a possible onslaught by the king's soldiers (Hens-Piazza 2006:228), or he calls for fire from heaven to mark him "as a man of God" (House 1995:244). The latter seems more likely, especially considering the riddle: "[...] 'man of God' [...] 'if I am a man of God' [...]" (2 Kgs. 1:9, 10). DeVries (1985:11) says that this word play signifies both "a riddle and a challenge" and that the fire from heaven indeed authenticates Elijah as *a man of God* "over against the royal authority".

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<sup>22</sup> "The rank 'captain of fifty' indicates the organization of a professional standing army, a feature of the Hebrew monarchy" (Gray 1970:464).

This time Elijah does not flee from potential danger as was the case with Jezebel in 1 Kings 19, but stands his ground and refuses to run (House 1995:243).

Olley (1998:44) notes that 2 Kings 1 "shares several parallels" with 1 Kings 18-19:

- In both narratives there is a use of words by YHWH to Elijah, relating to a king;
- Elijah's status is questioned in both narratives;
- Fire is called down; and
- Fire consumes in accordance with Elijah's demand.

The confrontation in 2 Kings 1 is thus "narrated in a way that recalls the earlier" (Olley 1998:45). In other words, the miracle of fire in 2 Kings 1 points backwards to what happened on Carmel. Olley (1998:45) also notes that Elijah only "goes to the king on YHWH's orders"<sup>23</sup>. YHWH is superior to any earthly king, therefore the prophet does what YHWH commands him to do, and not what the king demands.

The king then sent a third captain with fifty men to capture Elijah (2 Kgs. 1:13), exposing his heartlessness (Brongers 1979:15). The attitude of the third captain however, stands in sharp contrast to those of the previous two captains and the king. The first two captains demanded that Elijah come down. No one dares to demand or "manipulate" a prophet of YHWH without consequences (House 1995:244). The third captain begged for his own life and those of his soldiers (2 Kgs. 1:13). Thus, "because of the captain's humility" and the instruction of YHWH's angel, Elijah went to see the king (House 1995:244; 2 Kgs. 1:15).

#### **5.2.1.11 *Splitting of the Jordan***

"Elijah took his cloak, rolled it up and struck the water with it. The water divided to the right and to the left, and the two of them crossed over on dry ground" (2 Kgs. 2:8).

2 Kings 2 describes Elijah's "last journey on earth" (Patterson & Austel 1988:174). He was on his way to Gilgal (2 Kgs. 2:1). Accompanying him was Elisha, whom he had anointed as his successor in 1 Kings 19:19. During this journey Elijah advised Elisha three times to stay behind. First, from Gilgal on their way to Bethel; then from Bethel

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<sup>23</sup> See 1 Kings 18:1; 2 Kings 2:3, 15

on their way to Jericho and from Jericho to the Jordan<sup>24</sup> (2 Kgs. 2:2, 4, 6). Three times Elisha replied: "As surely as the LORD lives and as you live, I will not leave you" (2 Kgs. 2:2b, 4b, 6b). Condon (2006:2) says that Elijah's suggestion to Elisha to stay behind could also be posed in a question: "How far are you willing to follow me?" Elisha has a resounding answer: "As far as you go, I will go" (Condon 2006:2).

Condon (2006:4) notes that in the Canon of Scriptures "it appears that testing often occurs in a trio". Patterson & Austel (1988:175) says that the test to Elisha was to strengthen his faith. Olley (1998:46) on the other hand, feels that Elijah appeared "reluctant to pass on his authority and his 'spirit'", therefore he repeatedly sent Elisha away. In 1 Kings 19:19 Elijah threw his mantle over Elisha, but in 2 Kings 2:13 Elisha had to pick it up after Elijah had gone.

It should be borne in mind though, what the author had in mind with the narrative. The reader is skilfully reminded time and time again of what happened in the past: On Carmel Elijah experienced great triumph, only to fall into a depressed state in 1 Kings 19. Elijah, and ultimately the reader, is reminded that the journey **is not about Elijah, but to point out YHWH's presence.**

In 2 Kings 2 the *mantle pass* episode also does not point to Elisha. Again, neither he nor Elijah are the focussing point. YHWH is! For that reason, when Elisha picked up the mantle, he invoked "YHWH, the God of Elijah" (2 Kgs. 2:14-15). The author thus shows that even though Elijah was reluctant, YHWH was not (Olley 1998:46). This point will be elaborated on in 5.2.1.12.

When Elijah and Elisha arrived at the Jordan Elijah "took his cloak, rolled it up and struck the water with it. The water divided to the right and to the left" (2 Kgs. 2:8). The cloak symbolized Elijah's authority as a prophet under YHWH (Condon 2006:7) and reminds the reader of Moses' staff (Rice 2006/7:5), which he used during several wonders described in chapter four. Thus, when Elijah struck the water, with the result that the water divided in two, the reader is, furthermore, reminded of the splitting of the Sea of Reeds, when Israel passed through it in Exodus 14, and even of the splitting of the Jordan when Israel passed through it under the leadership of Joshua in Joshua 3:15-16 (Burnett 2010:286-287; Condon 2006:7; Keil 2011:207).

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<sup>24</sup> This was the same route which Israel followed when they "entered and began the conquest of the Promised Land under [the leadership of] Josua" (Condon 2006:3).

Could the fifty onlookers (2 Kgs. 2:15) have had the same thought when Elisha had done the same with the cloak, on his way back? This is not said within the narrative, and is therefore only a suggested thought. The reader though, is “invited to recall similar acts by Moses and Joshua [...]” as Elijah *and* Elisha, “with Moses-like authority and power,” smote “the water of the Jordan [...]” (Rice 2006/7:5).

#### **5.2.1.12 *Elijah’s Ascension***

“As they were walking along and talking together, suddenly a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared and separated the two of them, and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind” (2 Kgs. 2:11).

The narrator tells the reader that after Elijah and Elisha walked through the Jordan, Elijah asked Elisha what he could do for him before he is taken away from Elisha (2 Kgs. 2:9). Elisha then asked for a double portion of Elijah’s spirit. This was not meant literally, as some scholars like Levine (1999:25) suggest. It means, rather, that Elisha should stand first in line to succeed Elijah as head prophet of Israel, as was the custom in ancient Israel that the firstborn had the right to a double portion of his father’s inheritance (Condon 2006:2; Rice 2006/7:5). Hamilton (2001:443) says that “a double portion” actually means “two thirds”, which is “the portion that the chief heir gets in contrast to his brother(s), WHO get a single share”, thus Elisha was asking Elijah “to make him *the* successor to Elijah, not merely *a* successor” (Hamilton 2001:444). The fifty onlookers acknowledged Elisha’s request after Elijah left (2 Kgs. 2:15).

The focus-point of 2 Kings 2, for the aim of this dissertation, however, is not on the “double portion” of Elijah’s spirit onto Elisha, but rather the *miraculous ascension* of Elijah into heaven. The narrator says that while Elijah and Elisha walked and talked, “a chariot of fire and horses of fire [...] snatched Elijah [...] and Elijah ascended in a whirlwind into heaven” (Rice 2006/7:6). Rice (2006/7:6) mentions that the whirlwind is used by YHWH “as a medium”, to show his divine presence<sup>25</sup>. The *chariot of fire* and *horses of fire* (divine vehicle) also signify the “manifestation of divine presence”<sup>26</sup> (Rice 2006/7:6).

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<sup>25</sup> See Job 38:1; 40:6

<sup>26</sup> Compare Exodus 3:2; 13:21

Elisha saw Elijah *departing from this world* and cried out “my father, my father!” (2 Kgs. 2:12), and then “Elisha saw him no more”. Hamilton (2001:443) says that “the scene has a parallel before it and after it in Scripture”. Earlier Moses had to *depart* before the spirit came “on his successor, Joshua (Num. 27:18-23); and especially Deuteronomy 34:9”. Moses could not be found after his departure, “and the same is true with Elijah” (Hamilton 2001:443; 2 Kgs. 2:16-18). The later parallel will be dealt with in chapter six.

Brodie (2000:17) notices more parallels between 2 Kings 1 and 2. The parallels consist between the king, Ahaziah’s, *fall* and Elijah’s *assumption*. Both Ahaziah and Elijah departed from this life, but “their ways of departing were very diverse” (Brodie 2000:17). The king fell from his upper room and injured himself in such a way that he eventually died “without ever rising from his bed” (Brodie 2000:17; 2 Kgs. 1). Elijah, on the contrary, crossed the Jordan to be taken up to heaven.

The contrast between fall and ascent is thus described by the author and further amplified by making use of various groups of fifty. In 2 Kings 1:9, 11 and 13 it is the king’s soldiers. Here they demand and tend to do harm (except for the last captain), while in 2 Kings 2:7, 16 and 17 “Elijah’s ascent” is accompanied by prophets and men, also grouped in fifty’s. The parallel shows that Ahaziah’s (who served Baal) fate is death. Elijah (who served YHWH), on the other hand, is taken up in heaven. Furthermore, as was the case in the Exodus narrative, the author shows that YHWH is ruler over life and death. The fact that Elijah does not die, heightens this insinuation (Bronner 1968:127).

### **5.3 THEOLOGY (DÉNOUEMENT) (1 Kgs. 17 – 2 Kgs. 2:18)**

#### **5.3.1 1 Kgs. 17 – 2 Kgs. 2:18 as an interruption**

The Theological history of 1-2 Kings can be placed in three basic units (Hamilton 2001:379): Unit one heralds the reign of Solomon (1 Kgs. 1-11). Unit two consists of the “story of the northern kingdom of Israel and its twenty kings and the story of the southern kingdom of Judah and its kings, ending with the demise of the northern kingdom of Israel (1 Kgs. 12 – 2 Kgs. 17)”. The third unit consists of “the account of the surviving southern kingdom of Judah from the time of Hezekiah toward the end of the eighth century B.C. until the time of Josiah and his sons in the seventh and sixth

centuries B.C., ending with the abduction of the exiles to Babylon in 587/86 B.C. (2 Kgs. 18-25)".

Within the second unit (1 Kgs. 17 – 2 Kgs. 13) lies the so-called Elijah/Elisha narratives, of which, for the purpose of this study, only the Elijah narratives (1 Kgs. 17 – 2 Kgs. 2:18) are focussed upon. Birch *et al.* (1999:266) noticed a change in style between the narratives prior to 1 Kings 17 and the narratives of Elijah and Elisha. The change in style, says Birch *et al.* (1999:266), signals a change in content, creating the feel of an *interruption*. The *stranger* (Elijah) interrupts, or rather *disrupts* and calls into question "the significance of the royal account of reality" (Brueggemann 2001:34).

In a theological sense this is also what YHWH does. He *interrupts* and *disrupts*. He did so in the Exodus narratives and it also becomes clear with the unfolding of the plot in 1 Kings 17 to 2 Kings 2:18. Not only did YHWH come as an interruption in the life of the royal houses, but even in the life of Elijah. After Elijah brought the word of YHWH in 1 Kings 17:1, he had to "hide in the Kerith Ravine" (1 Kgs. 17:2). Later on, following his ordeal on Mount Carmel (1 Kgs. 18) Elijah had to flee again, this time from Jezebel. So unpleasant was this disruption that Elijah wanted to live no more (1 Kgs. 19:4). Yet again Elijah experienced a disruption when soldiers demanded that he come down from his mountain (2 Kgs. 1:9). Finally, the ultimate disruption is when Elijah departs from this world (2 Kgs. 2:11). Thus the focus shifts (as was suggested in 1 Kgs. 19) from Elijah to YHWH (Olley 1998:46-51), WHO ultimately reigns over life and death.

### **5.3.2 YHWH alone is Lord (over life and death)**

Gray (1970:37) notes that within the Deuteronomists' presentation of Israel's history, "Israel was given the opportunity of good or evil, peace or suffering, life or death [...]". Within the Elijah narrative this gesture reaches its peak in 1 Kings 18:21 when Elijah asked the people: "How long will you waver between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him". Then, after "the fire of the LORD fell and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones and the soil, and also licked up the water in the trench [...]" and "[...] all the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried, 'The Lord—he is God! The Lord—he is God!'"

The theme of life-and-death is interwoven right from the start of the Elijah narrative (1 Kgs. 17), up until the end (2 Kgs. 2:18). In 1 Kings 17 it starts with the announcement

that there will be no rain for the next few years (1 Kgs. 17:1). Lack of water signifies death. So does the lack of food: "I am gathering a few sticks to take home and make a meal for myself and my son, that we may eat it—and die" (1 Kings 17:12)". The reader is then reminded that YHWH can provide food even in most difficult circumstances, thus keeping the widow, Elijah and her son alive.

In the next story the unthinkable happens. The widow's son dies (1 Kgs. 17:17). Again YHWH is shown to be master over life and death when Elijah prays and revives the widow's son.

In one of the most dramatic narratives (1 Kgs. 18) in the Canon of Scriptures YHWH shows his supremacy over Baal, the so called rain deity, whom the people believed was the giver of life (Brongers 1979:179; Nelson 1987:114). Beck (2003:296) says that "the prophets of Baal had a theological explanation" for the drought and that Baal was temporarily dead. Through magical spells they could, however, revive Baal from death so that he could give rain to the land again. On Carmel however, the people acknowledged YHWH as their supreme Lord (1 Kgs. 18:39), and not Baal.

With the narrative reaching a climax, there is a downfall in the next chapter, as Elijah fled from Jezebel, who did not acknowledge YHWH. Elijah's world seemed to fall apart because of his disappointment that the king's house did not repent from Baalism (Tonstad 2005:254). Elijah was broken because of unrepentant paganism (Allen 1979:202). The great prophet wanted to live no more, giving the impression to the reader that death is going to prevail.

With reference to the *silent voice*, Elijah, and the reader, are shown that YHWH works as He wants to and not necessarily with mighty displays. Tonstad (2005:256) puts it this way: "Fear starts Elijah's journey to wilderness, but it is the 'silent voice' that motivates him to carry on".

The Elijah narrative reaches its end with a more obvious parallel between life and death in 2 Kings 1 and 2, that of Ahaziah's *fall* and Elijah's *assumption* (Brodie 2000:17). Elijah's taking up to heaven by a chariot of fire is described dramatically by the author (Brodie 2000:17), thus ultimately showing that YHWH triumphs over death.

### 5.3.3 A narrative moulded on the Exodus story

Brodie (2000:1) rightfully mentions that the Elijah narrative does not start at 1 Kings 17, but “with the preceding description of a great crisis – the introduction to the evil of Ahab and Jezebel (1 Kgs. 16:29-34)”. This marks the beginning of the Omride dynasty, described as “the worst dynasty in Israel’s history (Waltke 2007:715). Brodie (2000:1) says that 1 Kings 16:29-34 “sets the scènè for what follows” and that “the basic content of this scènè-setting is stark: idolatry and death”.

The Exodus narrative also begins with a king (Pharaoh) who did not believe in YHWH (did not know YHWH) and who imposed death by killing the firstborn sons of Israel (Ex. 1:22). YHWH, WHO first seemed absent from the narrative in Exodus, used Moses as his agent to oppose the Pharaoh and his so-called deities.

Poirier (2003:233) says that “Moses became the paradigm for the eschatological prophet”, who is Elijah. The Elijah narrative, however, is much more condensed than the Exodus narrative; it comes directly to the point: The word of YHWH came to the prophet; it is delivered by the prophet. As was the case in Exodus, YHWH’s creational powers are at hand: Drought (1 Kgs. 17); fire and rain (1 Kgs. 18); destructive wind, earthquake and fire (1 Kgs. 19); fire (2 Kgs. 1); splitting of water (2 Kgs. 2); fire of clouds and whirl wind (2 Kgs. 2) (Waltke 2007:719).

Parallels can also be drawn to the Wilderness tradition. YHWH provided Elijah with water, meat and bread while he hid at the “Kerith Ravine” (1 Kgs. 17:5) as he did to Israel in Exodus 15-17, YHWH provided the widow with flour and oil (1 Kgs. 17:14) - nurtured her as he did to Israel in the Wilderness; YHWH acted as healer (1 Kgs. 17:22) as he did to Israel (Ex. 15:26).

DeVries (1985:210) observed that the “story of the plagues and of Israel’s deliverance in Exodus 5-14 has a schema, or pattern”, strikingly like those of the prophet stories in 1 Kings 17 – 2 Kings 1:17. He says that this schema consists of “five points of tension and resolution: (1) the prophetic challenge, (2) a threat or rebuke to the prophet, (3) a definition of the terms for the decisive struggle, (4) a description of the divine intervention, and (5) confirmation of the prophet’s authority”. The following chart, placing Exodus 5-14 and four Elijah stories in parallel, is borrowed from DeVries (1985:210). Table 5.1 shows where each of the five elements manifests.



**TABLE 5.1: MANIFESTED ELEMENTS**

	<b>Exodus</b>	<b>1 Kings</b>	<b>1 Kings</b>	<b>1 Kings</b>	<b>2 Kings</b>
<b>Challenge</b>	5:1	17:1	18:21a	19:1	1:3-4
<b>Rebuke</b>	5:20-21	18:17-18	18:21b	19:2	1:9, 11
<b>Terms</b>	6:1	18:41	18:22-24	19:9b-10, 13b-14	1:10a, 12a
<b>Intervention</b>	7:14-14:30	18:43-45	18:38	19:11-12	1:10b, 12b
<b>Confirmation</b>	14:31	18:46	18:39	19:15-18	1:13-17

DeVries (1985:210) then explains that “like Moses, Elijah saw himself in great contest with the forces of apostasy. Like Moses, he did not refrain from leveling monumental challenges, confident that YHWH would fulfill his expectations [...]” and his “confidence lay in the fact that, like Moses, he was a man of prevailing, powerful prayer”.

The focus should, however, not stay on Elijah. Through each miracle described by the narrator in 1 Kings 17- 2 Kings 2, YHWH is authenticated as Israel’s true King (Waltke 2007:724). The most striking resemblance to the Exodus narrative is the motive of fire, which symbolizes YHWH’s *presence*. As in Exodus, YHWH’s *presence* is not visible at first (absent presence), but it becomes more clear and intense until it reaches its climax with Elijah’s departing to heaven in the chariot of fire. This fact will become more affirmative in the second part of chapter 5.

## CHAPTER 5B

### MIRACLES SURROUNDING THE FIGURE OF ELIJAH: A CLOSER INVESTIGATION

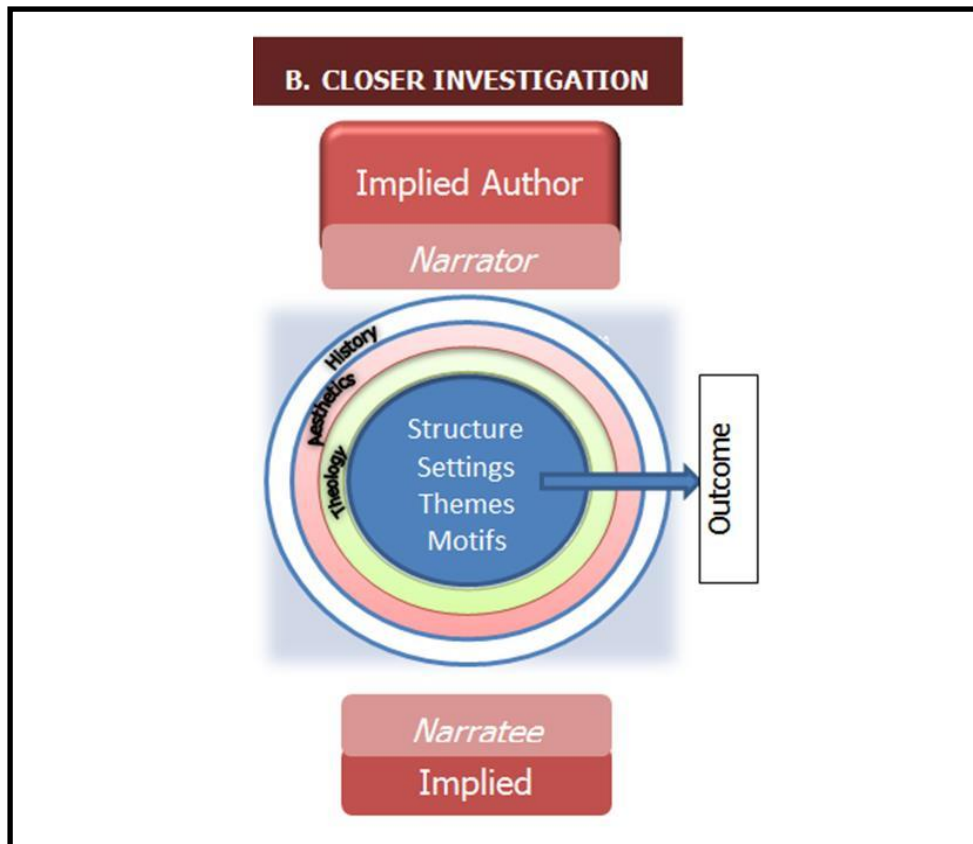


FIGURE 5.2: STRUCTURAL OUTLINE

#### 5.4 STRUCTURE

House (1995:i) structures 1 and 2 Kings in seven main units, with a clear distinction between the work of Elijah and that of Elisha:

- (1) The rise of Solomon (1 Kgs. 1:1-2:46);
- (2) Solomon's Reign (1 Kgs. 3:1-11:43);
- (3) The Divided Kingdom (1 Kgs. 12:1-16:34);
- (4) Elijah's Opposition to Idolatry and Oppression (1 Kgs. 17:1 - 2 Kgs. 1:18);
- (5) Elisha's work as Prophet, Miracle Worker, and Kingmaker (2 Kgs. 2:1-13:25);
- (6) Israel Disintegrates (2 Kgs. 14:1-17:41);
- (7) Judah Disintegrates (2 Kgs. 18:1-25:30).

Gray (1970: vii-x) structures 1 and 2 Kings in three main units:

- (1) The Hebrew Empire: 1 Kings 1-11 (194 pages);
- (2) The Divided Kingdom: 1 Kings 12 – 2 Kings 17 (339 pages);
- (3) Judah alone: 2 Kings 18 – 25 (94 pages).

In Gray's outline the *divided kingdom* (1 Kgs. 12 – 2 Kgs. 17) makes out the larger part of 1 and 2 Kings by far (339 pages). It consists of six sub-divisions of which the fifth (The reign of Ahab and the fall of the house of Omri: 1 Kings 17:1 – 2 Kings 10:31) makes up almost half of this middle section of 1 and 2 Kings (166 pages). It is, thus, noticeable that the author of 1 and 2 Kings devoted a fair amount of detail to the house of Omri, with the prophet Elijah playing an important role within this part of the narrative.

Waltke's chiasical structure of 1 and 2 Kings highlights a pivot on the Omrid dynasty, confirming the importance of the Elijah narratives within the larger narrative of 1 and 2 Kings (Waltke 2007:704):

- A. Solomon and the united monarchy (1 Kgs. 1-11)
- B. Separation of the northern kingdom (1 Kgs. 12)
- C. Kings of Israel and Judah (1 Kgs. 13-16)
- X. The Omrid dynasty (1 Kgs. 17 – 2 Kgs. 11)
- C. Kings of Israel and Judah (2 Kgs. 12 – 16)
- B. Fall of the northern kingdom (2 Kgs. 17)
- A. Kingdom of Judah alone (2 Kgs. 18-25)

Waltke (2007) then explains:

A/A' Solomon's divided heart leads to the division of his kingdom. After the fall of the northern kingdom, Judah experiences both the best and the worst of kings. Hezekiah trusts God more than any other king, and Josiah obeys the law more perfectly than any other, but Manasseh is so bad that his reign guarantees Judah's exile, and the sins of Josiah's sons, the last kings of Judah, effect the Babylonian exile.

B/B' No king of the northern kingdom does what is right. At best the kings follow the false cult of Jeroboam, son of Nebat, their first king. Even Jehu's reform of purging the

realm of Baal worship and of the house of Omri, only effects the reinstatement of Jeroboam's idolatry.

X. The house of Omri does more evil than any king before or after them, for they institute as the state religion, the depraved Canaanite fertility cults of Baal and his consort Asherah. In this crisis, through his comet like prophets Elijah and Elisha, *I AM's* power triumphs over the temporal power.

Waltke (2007:716-717) puts the Elijah cycles in four acts and a janus to the Elisha cycle: (1) Elijah and the drought (Ex. 17:1-24); (2) Elijah and the prophets of Baal (Ex. 18:1-40); (3) Elijah and I AM at Horeb (Ex. 19:1-21); (4) Elijah calls Elisha as his attendant (Ex. 19:19-21).

Hamilton (2001:427) refines it further and says that the story of Elijah is spread over eight chapters. Elijah appears in six of them (1 Kgs. 17; 18; 19; 21; 2 Kgs. 1; 2). "Four of the six events in which Elijah is prominent relate directly to King Ahab: (1) 1 Kings 17:1-24; (2) 1 Kings 18:1-46; (3) 1 Kings 19:1-21; (4) 1 Kings 21:1-29. The fifth involves Elijah and Ahab's son and successor, Ahaziah (2 Kgs. 1:1-18), and the sixth Elijah and Elisha, as Elijah is taken up by God and succeeded by Elisha" (2 Kgs. 2:1-25).

The structure used for this dissertation in the first part of chapter five, focuses on the pivot as described by Waltke, but only focuses on wonders surrounding the figure of Elijah (1 Kgs. 17 – 2 Kgs. 2:18). 1 Kgs. 20 – 22 has been left out, mainly because of the focus on wonders within the narrative. The latter part of 1 Kings does not describe any wonders:

- A prophet out of nowhere (1 Kgs. 17:1);
- Neither dew nor rain (1 Kgs. 17:1b);
- The ravens (1 Kgs. 17:2-6);
- Helping a Widow at Zarephath (1 Kgs. 17:7-15);
- The resurrection of the widow's son (1 Kgs. 17:24);
- Elijah on Mount Carmel (1 Kgs. 18:16-41);
- Rain and the Transportation of Elijah (1 Kgs. 18:1,2; 1 Kgs. 18:42-46);
- Angelic meal (1 Kgs. 19:1-8);
- Divine manifestation (1 Kgs. 19:9-18);

- Fire from heaven (2 Kgs. 1:9-15);
- Splitting of the Jordan (2 Kgs. 2:1-8);
- Elijah's Ascension (2 Kgs. 2:6-12a).

## 5.5 SETTINGS

### 5.5.1 Three mountains (Carmel; Horeb; unidentified mountain)

#### 5.5.1.1 *Carmel*

"Now summon the people from all over Israel to meet me on Mount Carmel [...] So Ahab sent word throughout all Israel and assembled the prophets on Mount Carmel" (1 Kgs. 18:19-20).

In 1 Kings 18, where the narrator describes the contest between Elijah and the Baal prophets, the specific setting is made clear, Carmel. Beck (2003:291-292) makes use of what is called "narrative geography" to analyze the "literary function of geographical references within a story". He says that the author of a narrative "may strategically use, reuse and nuance geography in order to impact the reading experience" [and] "to shape the plot of their stories", as is the case with the contest on Carmel, which turns out to have an ironic<sup>27</sup> twist. Why is it Carmel, and not any other mountain?

Carmel is described as a "promontory", which for the visitor to Israel, could not be missed. It is further described as having a "striking, lush appearance", which is a result of favorable rainfall, caused by its ideal location next to the seashore. Carmel, furthermore, has the role of a "boundary marker" and functioned as a "sacred site" (Beck 2003:298). Especially for "Jezebel and her Phoenician family", Mount Carmel was an "important worship site" and "Baal sanctuary" (Beck 2003:299).

The Baal prophets thus favored Elijah's challenge on Mount Carmel as they presumed that they had an advantage, for, in their eyes, this was territory of Baal<sup>28</sup>, "rider of the clouds" (Collins 2004:264). Furthermore, an altar of YHWH that stood here in previous

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<sup>27</sup> Irony is "an incongruity of knowledge, value, or point of view where characters think they know what they are doing when in fact they don't" (Beck 2003:292)

<sup>28</sup> Ref. 5.2.1.10, par. 2 (Baal was considered to be the weather-god and giver of life.)

times, had been ruined (1 Kgs. 18:30), thus showing that Baal “was king of this hill” (Beck 2003:299).

The author then uses this irony to show that a defeat on this “sacred ground” is more powerful than what it would have been on neutral soil. Elijah started to rebuild the ruined altar of YHWH after he gathered the people closer. Reiss (2004:175) says that this incident reminds the reader of Moses who also gathered the people, but at Mount Sinai (Ex. 19:17). After Elijah rebuilt the altar he prayed and fire came from heaven and devoured the offering which was laid on the altar. On Mount Sinai there was fire as well. The shared motif of Mount Carmel and Mount Sinai therefore links these two mountains in a striking way: “In the same way that Mount Sinai belonged to the God of Israel, so the heights of Mount Carmel are his as well” (Beck 2003:299).

In one sentence: On Mount Carmel the author shows that there is only one YHWH, by making use of an “ironic reversal”, eroding “the credibility of the Baal prophets while deconstructing the integrity of their god” (Beck 2003:292).

#### **5.5.1.2 Horeb, mountain of YHWH**

“[...] Strengthened by that food, he traveled forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God” (1 Kgs. 19:8b).

In 4.5.1 the *mountain of YHWH* was described to some extent, when Moses also experienced a theophany, as Elijah did in 1 Kings 19. In 1 Kings 19 though, there is an ironic twist when comparing Elijah’s experience to that of Moses. In Exodus 3, Moses received a sign which would mark victory of the Israelites over Egypt: “And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain” (Ex. 3:12). In 1 Kings 19 Elijah hid in a cave because Jezebel wanted to kill him. Elijah’s hiding in a cave does not give the impression of a victory. On the contrary, the author gives the impression that in spite of the victory on Mount Carmel, Elijah is now defeated.

In Exodus 19 the people came to the mountain, as was said to Moses in Exodus 3. There YHWH’s presence is described with words such as “dense cloud” ( בָּעֵבֶב הָעָנָן Ex. 19:9); “lightning” ( וּבִרְקִים Ex.19:16,19); “smoke” ( עָשָׁן Ex. 19:18); “fire” ( בָּאֵשׁ Ex. 19:18); “tremble/shake” ( וַיִּתְרַדּוּ Ex.19:18). In 1 Kings 19 similar words are used:

"strong wind" ( וַיִּזְרַח גְּדוּלָהּ 1 Kgs. 19:11); "shatter" ( וַיִּשְׁבֵּר 1 Kgs. 19:11); "quake" ( וַיִּרְעַשׁ 1 Kgs. 19:11); "fire" ( וַיִּשַׁע 1 Kgs. 19:12). Irony is then further implied by the author in the fact that YHWH was not in the wind, the quake, or the fire, as was described in Exodus 19, but in a "silent voice".

Another parallel with which to compare Elijah's experience in 1 Kings 19 is that of Exodus 32-34 (Olley 1998:410). Britt (2002:38) says that "Exodus 32-34 and 1 Kings 19 both come from variable-type scenes in which the prophet is concealed or restrained at a moment of danger and theophany". There are four elements noticeable in these type scenes, says Britt (2002:38):

- The prophet faces crises, usually because the people broke YHWH's covenant;
- A theophany comes next;
- After the theophany comes the "commissioning or recommissioning" of the prophet;
- A new divine plan is then given with immediate effect.

There are differences between the theophany in Exodus 32-34 and 1 Kings 19 though. Reiss (2004:178-179) points them out:

Moses -While Moses experiences a theophany with YHWH on the mountain, the people sin with a Golden calf. Moses pleads that YHWH "must change His intent if this people is to survive", after YHWH threatens to destroy them and start a new people with Moses.

Elijah - While Elijah experiences a theophany, he complains to YHWH that the people have broken YHWH's covenant, "as they did with the Golden Calf". Elijah, in contrast to Moses, "does not plead with [YHWH] to change, but instead implicitly expects the people to change".

Moses - After the theophany, Moses' "face was radiant because he had spoken with the Lord" (Ex. 34:29). He was changed for the better.

Elijah - "Elijah is a zealot and a fundamentalist. He does not hear still small voices", nor does he change (Olley 1998:40). YHWH asked Elijah the same question after the theophany as He had before the theophany: "what are you doing here Elijah?" (1 Kgs. 19:9, 13). Elijah gave the same answer before and after: "I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, broken down your

altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too" (1 Kgs. 19:10, 14).

Regarding the last difference described by Reiss, it can be added that Moses covered his face because of the radiance that scared the people. Elijah on the other hand covered his face when he heard the silent voice. Britt (2002:51) says that when a prophet wears his veil, "there is no prophecy, no divine revelation" because the "covered prophet is a silent prophet".

Reiss (2004:178) says that Elijah "heard nothing, learned nothing and did not change!" Olley (1998:41) says that "Elijah's relationship with the people is controlled by 'zeal', [and] not compassionate identification" like Moses. Considering the theophany in 1 Kings 19, the question remains, why the parallels to Moses. There are obvious similarities, but also differences, why?

As has already been mentioned, the focus should not be on Moses, nor on Elijah, but on YHWH. What is the author trying to say to his first readers? What was their situation and what did they need to hear? These questions will be answered in 5.9.

In one sentence: Carmel and Horeb show that there is only YHWH. The focus is on His presence and what He commissions the prophet to do, not what the prophet wants to do.

### **5.5.1.3 Unidentified Mountain**

"The captain went up to Elijah, who was sitting on the top of a hill, and said to him: 'Man of God, the king says, Come down!'" (2 Kgs. 1:9b).

It has already been said in 5.2.1.10 (par. 6) that 2 Kings 1 shares "several parallels with 1 Kings 18-19". The specific mountain where Elijah spent his time in 2 Kings 1 however, has not yet been discussed. The text itself does not say what the name of the mountain (hill) was, but it is "called simply הַהָר (the mountain, v.9)" (Burnett 2010:289). Burnett (2010:288-289) sees a *narrative symmetry* between the description of Elisha's journey in 2 Kings 2:23-25 and the narrative in 2 Kings 1:9-15. By following Elisha's actions in "reverse direction", Burnett (2010:290) is quite convinced that the mountain on which Elijah sat in 1 Kings 1:9 could be Carmel.



Hobbs (1985:10) confirms Burnett's suggestion that the mountain is probably Carmel and that the "similarity of motifs and themes between" 1 Kings 18 and 2 Kings 1 "cannot be overlooked", that is, the theme of "conflict between the prophet and the royal representatives, and the agent of divine judgment", fire. The mountain incident of 2 Kings 1:9 could therefore easily be linked to the Carmel incident in 1 Kings 18 (Hens-Piazza 2006:228). With the clarifying of the "unidentified mountain" as probably being Carmel, similarities of what happened there, to other narratives, will be elaborated on in 5.7.5.

In one sentence: With the setting of the "unidentified mountain" and what happened there, the author creates the insinuation that there is more to the story than one expects. Therefore comparison with other similar stories is needed for clarity.

## **5.5.2 Wilderness**

### **5.5.2.1 *Kerith Ravine***

"Then the word of the Lord came to Elijah: 'Leave here, turn eastward and hide in the Kerith Ravine, east of the Jordan'" (1 Kgs. 17:2-3).

Although the *Kerith Ravine* is not described as a wilderness, the setting reflects more than one resemblance to other wilderness stories (Hens-Piazza 2006:165; Olley 1998:29).

Flee – Both Elijah (1 Kgs. 17:2) and Moses (Ex. 2:15) "flee eastward to escape a king's wrath" (Olley 1998:29).

Nurture - Elijah is nurtured with water (streams that fill the wadi<sup>29</sup>), bread and meat (by ravens), thus "the image yokes itself with the feeding stories from Israel's sacred past" (Hens-Piazza 2006:165). As YHWH nurtured His people in the Wilderness (Ex. 16-18) He does so also to Elijah. Hauser (1990:14) notes that "Elijah receives life from sources that have nothing to do with the agricultural cycle of civilized society, with which Baal was commonly associated". YHWH shows, as He did in Exodus, that He "not only controls the rains (v. 1), but also creatures within the natural order"

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<sup>29</sup> "A wadi is a gully depression that fills in the wet season" (Hens-Piazza 2006:165)

(Hauser 1990:14): "I have ordered the ravens to feed you there" (1 Kgs. 17:4). Hauser also notes the use of the verb כּוּל (sustain), rather than feed (verse 4, 9), which emphasize YHWH's power.

Return - After some time Elijah had to, by YHWH's word, go to Zarephath of Sidon (1 Kgs. 17:9); and again, after a long time, by YHWH's word, Elijah was ready "to return to Israel and Ahab, so that YHWH can bring deliverance (rain)" (Olley 1998:35). Moses too, by YHWH's word, was ready to return to "Israel" and Pharaoh (Egypt) to bring deliverance, and like Elijah, he did not go directly to Pharaoh. He first stopped in Midian (as Elijah stopped in Zarephath of Sidon) and then, on YHWH's command, went to Pharaoh (Ex. 4:19).

### **5.5.2.2 *Beersheba***

"When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there, while he himself went a day's journey into the desert" (1 Kgs. 19:3b-4a).

In 5.2.1.8 (par. 5) noteworthy parallels to earlier "fleeing and feeding" stories have been pointed out. The setting of the wilderness in 1 Kings 19 thus lurks back to previous wilderness stories, helping the reader to understand that YHWH is in control. In spite of the fact that Elijah wishes to die ("Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors") in verse 4, the author uses terms like "angel", "arise", "bread and water", and "forty days", reminding the reader that YHWH cares, nurtures, sustains and commands, as He has done on previous occasions:

- Angel (מַלְאָךְ) - When Elijah wishes to die, he has an encounter with an angel (messenger). Gregory (1990:133) notes the remarkable resemblance between the actions taken by the angel, and Elijah's actions on Mount Carmel. When Elijah fell asleep (verse 5) an angel touched him. Elijah "looked around" (1 Kgs. 18:43), "toward his head's resting place (1 Kgs. 18:42) and there lies cake baked on hot stones (1 Kgs. 18:38) beside a container of water (1 Kgs. 18:34)". Gregory (1990:133) continues: "Immediately, the water and the hot stones recall the water which Elijah poured on the stone altar only to be lapped up by the fire of YHWH." The next time the angel touched Elijah "time for reflection is past" and Elijah's wish for death "is swept away" by "the messenger who possesses the power to turn Elijah's word of resignation into a word of motivation": "Arise!" [אֲרִיז]. The

same word is used in 1 Kings 17:9 when YHWH commands Elijah to go to the widow of Zarephath. YHWH takes the initiative to sustain Elijah and to keep him alive (Gregory 1990:133; Hauser 1990:16).

- Bread (עוגה) and water (מים) - Elijah's reflection is, however, not only restricted to YHWH's power on Carmel. The bread-and-water reminds of events further back, where YHWH also supplied supplements for sustainment. With his visit to the Widow of Zarephath (1 Kgs. 17:9ff), he proclaims YHWH's word that the jar (דָּבַר) of flour will not be used up (לֹא תִכְלֶה) and the jug (צִפְחָת)<sup>30</sup> of oil will not run dry (לֹא תִחְסַר) until the day the LORD gives rain on the land (1 Kgs. 17:14); and when he hid in the Kerith Ravine (1 Kgs. 17:3ff) YHWH supplied him with bread, meat and water; and even further back, YHWH supplied Israel with water, meat (quails) and bread (manna) [Gray 1970:408; Gregory 1990:133; Hauser 1990:66].
- Forty days (אַרְבָּעִים יוֹם) - Gray (1970:408) mentions that "Elijah's journey of forty days and forty nights may be influenced by the tradition of Moses' sojourn of the same period on the Mount of God". And as previously said, Horeb, where Elijah was heading to, simply means *desert*. Moses received his call at Horeb (Ex. 3:1ff), and later on Moses experienced a theophany and was recommissioned as prophet after he spent forty days on Mount Sinai. It is, therefore, clear that the "tradition of Elijah at Horeb is strongly coloured by that of the theophany to Moses at Sinai<sup>31</sup>" (Gray 1970:409; Roi 2012:38).

The encounter with the angel makes it clear that the author wants to show the importance of life to YHWH. DeVries (1985:236) says that the "reader should not overlook how often this narrative [1 Kgs. 19] mentions Elijah's life": verse 2, 3, 4, 10, and 14.

Elijah, so to speak, "cut himself off from the fountain of his strength, the God of Israel" (DeVries 1985:236). When Elijah dismissed his servant at *Beersheba*, he left "his ministry, but departing Beersheba and travelling for a day further into the desert signifies abandoning the covenant people, who live in YHWH's land" (DeVries 1985:237). Elijah did not care about his own life, prophetic office or YHWH's people any more. He no longer wanted to live, but the final say was not his. YHWH, who is always present, no matter the circumstances, always has the last word. He "acts to preserve Elijah's life" (Yates 2008:online).

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<sup>30</sup> See 1 Kings 19:6

<sup>31</sup> Exodus 33:19

Nelson (1987:123) is of opinion that this narrative is not about YHWH's presence or absence. He says that "Elijah and his mission", and his "attempt to relinquish his prophetic office" are the main focus. When comparing the narrative with other "flee stories" like that of Moses though, the focus does shift to YHWH. Moses had an encounter with "a messenger" (Ex. 3-4), but did not want to go to the Pharaoh – eventually he did go; Elijah does not want to live (be prophet) any more. He had an encounter with "a messenger" – and eventually he did go... All is, therefore, not said-and-done by Elijah's wish to die. Gregory (1990:133) puts it this way: "What the audience eventually discovers is a future which holds promise, maybe not as much for Elijah [...] as for those who endure faithfully until the plan of YHWH is worked out completely".

Therefore, in one sentence: Life does not always turn out as one anticipates. Our lives are sometimes interrupted, and YHWH is likely to be that interruption.

### 5.5.3 Jordan

"Elijah took his cloak, rolled it up and struck the water with it. The water divided to the right and to the left, and the two of them crossed over on dry ground" (2 Kgs. 2:8).

Scholars agree that the setting of the Jordan in 2 Kings 2 reminds of two previous occasions where water was split<sup>32</sup> (Burnett 2010:286-287; Brongers 1979:21; Condon 2006:7; Keil 2011:207). Condon (2006:3) sees a significant parallel between the route which Elijah followed from Gilgal (2 Kgs. 2:1) to the Jordan (2 Kgs. 2:7), and "major places of worship"<sup>33</sup>, as well as the route which Israel followed "from Gilgal to Jericho and eventually across the Jordan River" into the Promised Land.

With the setting of the Jordan, and the route which Elijah and Elisha took to get there, the author lurks back to events as far back as Abraham (Gen. 12:7-8), where YHWH promised the land Canaan to Abraham; to Jacob (Gen. 35:7), where Jacob built an altar after YHWH comforted him when he fled from his brother Esau; and to Moses, with the parting of the sea of Reeds (Ex. 14). Hence, "marking the departure from captivity in Egypt" (Condon 2006:5), to Joshua (Jos. 3:15-16), when Israel passed

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<sup>32</sup> Exodus 14; Joshua 3

<sup>33</sup> See Gen. 12:7-8; Gen. 35:7; Jos. 4:20

through the Jordan into the Promised Land with the Ark of the Covenant (House 1995:257; Hobbs 1985:19).

Condon (2006:5) refers to these historical landmarks as a “literary device” which “acts as a reminder to both Elisha and the readers of the text that the same God [YHWH] with the same power was still alive and active in Israel”. In one sentence: YHWH was, and is always present and keeps His promises, as He did from Abraham onwards.

## 5.6 THEMES

### 5.6.1 Need-intervention-resolution

1 and 2 Kings form part of the Deuteronomistic history; therefore, as was the case in Exodus and the Wilderness, triad-themes are noticeable in some of the Elijah narratives<sup>34</sup>. The difference between 1 and 2 Kings and Exodus though, is that the theme of *Need-intervention-resolution* is not visible in the large plot of 1 Kings 17 – 2 Kings 2, but within the smaller sub-plots (Cohn 1982:345):

Kerith Ravine

*Need* – Elijah hides in the ravine and is in need of food and water.

*Intervention* – YHWH commands (צוה) the ravens to feed (כול) Elijah with meat (בֶּשֶׂר) and bread (לֶחֶם).

*Resolution* - Ravens bring Elijah bread and meat in the morning and in the evening and Elijah drinks water out of the brook.

Widow of Zarephath

*Need* - “[...] the brook dried up because there had been no rain in the land” (1 Kgs. 17:7).

*Intervention* - YHWH told Elijah to arise (קום) and to go to “Zarephath of Sidon and stay there”, for He has “commanded a widow in that place to supply [Elijah] with food [כול] (1 Kgs. 17:9).

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<sup>34</sup> Compare 4.6.1

*Resolution* - The widow's "jar [כַּד] of flour [חֲמֵץ] was not used up and the jug [צִפְחָת] of oil did not run dry, in keeping with the word of [YHWH] spoken by Elijah" (1 Kgs. 17:16).

*Need* - "[...] the son of the woman who owned the house became ill. He grew worse and worse, and finally stopped breathing" (1 Kgs. 17:17).

*Intervention* - Elijah took the child to the upper room and prayed to YHWH to let the boy's life return to him (1 Kgs. 17:19-21).

*Resolution* - "The Lord heard Elijah's cry, and the boy's life returned to him, and he lived" (1 Kgs. 17:22).

## Carmel

*Need* - There had been no rain in the land for a long time (about three years).

*Intervention* - The word of YHWH came to Elijah: "Go and present yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the land" (1 Kgs. 18:1).

*Resolution* - After Elijah had set up a challenge to the Baal prophets, he built an altar and prayed to YHWH: "O Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things at your command" (1 Kgs. 18:36). YHWH then struck the altar which Elijah had erected, with fire and the people cried out: "The Lord --he is God! The Lord --he is God" (1 Kgs. 18:39)! YHWH subsequently sent rain upon the land (1 Kgs. 18:45).

## Wilderness

*Need* - Elijah ran for his life as he feared Jezebel who wanted to kill him (1 Kgs. 19:3).

*Intervention* - As Elijah fell asleep underneath a Broom tree, an angel touched him, commanding him to arise (קוּם) and eat (1 Kgs. 19:5). Elijah then saw bread (לֶחֶם) and a jar (צִפְחָת) of water.

*Resolution* - When Elijah fell asleep for a second time the angel touched him again, giving the same command. Elijah ate the bread and drank the water and had enough strength for the journey ahead (1 Kgs. 19:7ff).

In one sentence: YHWH not only notices his people's needs<sup>35</sup>, but also the need of the individual.

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<sup>35</sup> Ref. 4.6.1 (last par.)

### 5.6.2 Promise of the land

There is no obvious mention of the Promise of the Land in 1 Kings 17- 2 Kings 2. Indirectly, though, traces can be found in specifically selected words by the author in 1 Kings 18:21 [Elijah's question to the people about whom they want to serve] (Cohn 1982:341); 1 Kings 18:31 [twelve stones] (Childs 1980:132) and 36 [Elijah's specific mention of his *forebears' names* in his prayer to YHWH] (Vogel 2002:5); and in the words *Gilgal* and *Bethel* [2 Kgs. 2:1,2] (Snyman 2005:534).

Cohn (1982:341) says that, through Elijah's question to the people in 1 Kings 18:21 and his prayer in verse 36, it is clear that the author wants to emphasize the rebirth of Israel. They (Israel) have forgotten their forebears (Vogel 2002:1-7) and they have forgotten YHWH's promises (Cohn 1982:341). Cohn (1982:341) says that at Carmel "the people must once again become Israel [when] Baal has been dismissed". Their transformation (re-birth) as children (Israel) of YHWH was complete as soon as they fell on their faces and admitted that YHWH alone is Lord.

Concerning the twelve stones in 1 Kings 18:31, with which Elijah carefully rebuilt the altar, Childs (1980:132) suggests that the author points to Israel's past<sup>36</sup> "as if to recover Israel's memory of the past".

Regarding *Gilgal* and *Bethel* in 2 Kings 2:2 Snyman (2005:534) notes that "Bethel is unmistakably linked to the promise of the land". It is first mentioned in Genesis 28:13 when the Land was promised to Jacob in a dream. Snyman (2005:534) says that "Gilgal is also linked to the possession of the land", not only was it an important cultic centre, but "also the very first stop after the people entered the land". Here Joshua "set up twelve stones as a remembrance to the event where Israel crossed the river Jordan on dry ground and entered the land of promise" (Snyman 2005:534). The author thus mentions *Bethel* and *Gilgal* to bring back memories of the promise of the land as well as memories of "the taking of the land".

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<sup>36</sup> Ref. 5.2.1.6 (par. 9)

In one sentence: With subtle, suggested words like *twelve stones*, *Bethel* and *Gilgal*, the author shows that, although the people forgot YHWH's promises of the land, YHWH never forgot.

### 5.6.3 Presence of YHWH

Glover (2006:450) says that the narrative of Elijah only dares "to locate the presence of YHWH, namely in the quiet voice of Horeb" (1 Kgs. 19:11-13). He (Glover) does, however, state that "prior to this [event] there are strong hints as to where YHWH may or may not be lurking" (Glover 2006:450). The "strong hints" of YHWH's presence lie within the speech which the author of the narrative uses. Words like fire and water suggest presence and so too does YHWH's nourishment. These words and suggestions were pondered on in chapter four. They are also strong motives in the Elijah narrative, and will be further elaborated on in 5.7.

If Leder (2010:115) regards the theme of YHWH's presence in the Pentateuch "crucial", and if Fretheim (1991b:20) identifies YHWH's presence in Exodus as one of the "important theological issues", it is fair to assume that, in the Deuteronomist's mind, the golden thread of YHWH's presence will continue throughout the **whole narrative** of 1 Kings 17 to 2 Kings 2, and not only in 1 Kings 19 as Glover (2006:450) suggests<sup>37</sup>.

Glover (2006:450) is correct if he says that "where Elijah, life or speech are [sic], YHWH is never far away". דִּבָּר (speech/word [Strong 2001 - 1697]) in particular, is "associated with Elijah (1 Kgs. 17:1, 15; 18:24) and YHWH (17:2, 5, 8, 16, 24; 18:1, 31, 36; 19:9) (Glover 2006:450). Bosman (2004:30) pointed out a list of verbs which denote presence in Exodus<sup>38</sup>. These verbs are used in the Elijah narrative as well and indeed show that presence is a very important theme in the Elijah narratives:

- בּוֹא (bw)<sup>39</sup> come (Strong 2001 - 935) 1 Kings 19:3, 9, 15; 2 Kings 1:13; 2 Kings 2:4;
- הָלַךְ (halak) to do away/depart (Strong 2001 - 1980) 1 Kings 19:4, 20, 21; 2 Kings 2:1, 6, 7, 11;

<sup>37</sup> Ref. Diagram under 5.9

<sup>38</sup> Ref. to Chapter 4, 4.6.3 (par. 2) of this thesis.

<sup>39</sup> In Exodus it is clustered in the description of the Sinai theophany, which does not fit the scope of this thesis (Ex. 19:9; 20:20,24).



- יָצָא (*yatsa*) go out from<sup>40</sup> (Strong 2001 - 3318) 1 Kings 19:11,13; 2 Kings 2:3;
- יָלַךְ (*yalak*) to go (Strong 2001 - 3212 [prim root of הָיָה]) 1 Kings 17:3, 5, 9, 10, 15; 18:1, 2, 5, 8, 16; 19:8, 15, 19;
- יָרַד (*yarad*)<sup>41</sup> come down, descend (Strong 2001 - 3381) 2 Kings 1:9,10,11,12, 14, 15, 16; 2 Kings 2:2;
- עָבַר (*abar*) passing over (Strong 2001 - 5674) 2 Kings 2:8,9,14.

Two other words are:

- פָּנִים (*paniyim*) face, presence (Strong 2001 - 6440) 1 Kings 18:42; 19:13;
- הָיָה (*hayah*) to exist (Strong 2001 - 1961; TWOT 491) 1 Kings 17:2,7,8,17; 18:1, 4,12,27,29,36,44; 1 Kings 19:13,17; 2 Kings 2:1.

Of the above verbs בּוֹא is used in Exodus 1-18 only once (Ex. 14:23), with reference to the Egyptians who went into the sea altogether with their horses and chariots. Bosman (2004:3) says that "This verb is rarely used in the Pentateuch and in Exodus it is clustered in the description of the Sinai theophany (Ex. 19:9; 20:20, 24); also in Exodus 14:24 [sic]".

In 1 Kings 19 בּוֹא is used in verse 3, where Elijah *came* to Beersheba and left his servant behind. The next usage of the verb is in 19:9 (when he arrived at a cave in Horeb) and 15 (when he would have arrived at Damascus to anoint Hazael king over Aram). Here, in 1 Kings 19, the verb is used in a definite pattern: Elijah *leaves* his office; Elijah *faces* YHWH; Elijah is *restored* (re-commissioned [Nelson 1987:122-124]) in his office. It can be speculative, but it is as if the author uses בּוֹא to show the movement from failure (judgement) to restoration (forgiveness), or maybe it is not, considering the next usage of the verb in 2 Kings 1:13...

Here, in 2 Kings 1:13, the third officer *came* (בּוֹא) to Elijah and fell on his knees and begged for forgiveness. The previous two officers had demanded that Elijah *come* (יָרַד) down, and they and their fifty men had been consumed by fire. It has already been said that יָרַד is commonly used in connection with divine judgement. Two officers came to Elijah and demanded (come!) Elijah. The third officer came (בּוֹא) to Elijah, fell

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<sup>40</sup> Ex. 11:4

<sup>41</sup> In Exodus 3:8 the verb is used in connection with divine judgement, as is the case in 2 Kings 1:16.

on his knees and begged (not demand), thus showing the movement from judgement to forgiveness.

The important fact remains, in one sentence: That YHWH's presence remains in it all, in judgement and forgiveness, but especially in forgiveness. In 1 Kings 19 the dénouement is Elijah, restored in his office; in 2 Kings 1 the dénouement is an officer who realizes Elijah's and YHWH's authority to be higher than that of his own king and he begs for forgiveness and receives it.

A last, but important remark regarding the *theme of presence* in the Elijah narrative, has to do with the spirit (רוּחַ *ruwach* [1 Kgs. 18:12; 2 Kgs. 2:9, 15, 16]). Von Rad (1968:36) says that "for the ninth-century prophets [...] the presence of 'the spirit of YHWH' was absolutely constitutive". Elisha asked Elijah for possession of his (Elijah's) spirit (2 Kgs. 2:9). Only when Elisha received the spirit, was he reckoned (legitimated) as a prophet in the eyes of "his associates". Von Rad (1968:36) says it was believed "the spirit could suddenly take a prophet where he was and carry him off elsewhere" as is described in 1 Kings 18:12 and 2 Kings 2:16. Von Rad (1968:36) makes another striking remark regarding the spirit. After Elisha, this well-known concept of the spirit being upon the prophet of YHWH, disappears instantaneously. Theologically it is important<sup>42</sup>, "for when this objective reality, the spirit, whose presence had to be attested by a prophet's associates, ceased to operate, then the prophet of the word had to rely much more on himself and on the fact that he had received a call".

## 5.7 MOTIFS

### 5.7.1 Wonders-motif

#### 5.7.1.1 *Wonders to show that YHWH alone is Lord*

Allen (1979:195) asks the important question, namely: Why the specific miracles in the Elijah narratives? Allen (1979:195) is of opinion that "none of the miracles of Elijah is a silly feat" [or] "magic trick". Rightfully, Allen remarks that "to rationalize the miracles as was done by Gray<sup>43</sup> is to lose the basic theology of the pericope."

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<sup>42</sup> Receiving the spirit is something which would happen again in the New Testament.

<sup>43</sup> Gray (1970:379)

Furthermore, Allen (1979:195) points to Elijah's name, which means "My God is YHWH". Elijah's name derives from YHWH's name (Bronner 1968:20). YHWH's name, on the other hand, means "to be"; He is "the self-existent One" (Laney 2001:42). Laney (2001:42) says that when YHWH said, "I AM," he (YHWH) was referring to His active, life-giving existence. This description of YHWH's name perfectly fits the over-all theological theme of the Elijah narratives and the reason for the miracles within the narratives.

Bronner (1968:139-140) puts it this way: "The miracles discharged by Elijah as increasing the oil and meal, withholding or releasing the forces of rain, restoring the dead to life, ascending heaven, were designed to underline the belief prevalent in Canaanite circles that Baal was the dispenser of all these blessings". In other words, each miracle in the Elijah narrative demonstrates "that Baal is a fake" and that YHWH alone is Lord (Allen 1979:195). Allen (1979:199) says that the miracles Elijah performed are designed to attack the so-called theology of Baal. Each miracle shows that YHWH lives and that Baal is dead. DeVries (1985:216) confirms this point: "Baal claims to be god of storm and fertility, present in dew and rain, but YHWH directly challenges him".

1 Kings 17:1 therefore opens up the Elijah narratives, after the author has sketched the spiritual decline and apostasy in which Israel found themselves to be in 1 Kings 16:30-34. DeVries (1985:218) says that 1 Kings 17:1 is "a motto verse", as it epitomizes the "central theme of this digressive story":

Elijah – He served as one of YHWH's "intimate counselors and obedient ministers".

YHWH - He is the "God of Israel (a point on which Ahab vacillates).

He (YHWH) lives"

DeVries (1985:218) says that YHWH "differs from all the other gods in that he actually lives, acts, and responds to his people's need". Elijah delivers YHWH's word that there will be no rain or dew for the next few years. YHWH alone "can withhold the water on which all growing things depend" and YHWH alone can bring it back again "only when he tells his prophet to say so" (DeVries 1985:218).

*i) Elijah being fed by ravens*

It is important to note that the narrative begins and ends with *the word of YHWH* דְּבַר־יְהוָה (1 Kgs. 17:2, 9). Thus, the author creates an inclusion. Therefore the main focus is on YHWH. He is the one WHO commands and orchestrates what will happen between verses 2 and 9.

YHWH commanded Elijah: Go (הֲלֹךְ [halak]) away and “hide in the Kerith Ravine” (1 Kgs. 17:3). Elijah did not have to hide, in the first instance, to “escape Ahab’s vengefulness as to demonstrate the immediate effects of YHWH’s threat” (DeVries 1985:216). While Elijah stayed “in the Kerith Ravine” (1 Kgs. 17:3) YHWH then commanded (צִוָּה [tsavah]) ravens to feed Elijah there (1 Kgs. 17:4), thus showing YHWH’s supremacy over man and over nature (Sweeney 2007:212). Sweeney (2007:212) noticed the expression לְכַלְכֵּלָהּ (*lekalkeleka* – “to support/sustain you”)<sup>44</sup> in verses four and nine and that it establishes “a relationship between this narrative and the following material concerning the widow of Zarepath”.

When YHWH supports Elijah in the Kerith Ravine, the author shows that YHWH cares for the individual, even when the normal life support (rain) is cut short. YHWH provides a brook, bread and meat (through the ravens) as he provided water, manna and quails in the Wilderness (Ex. 16:1-17:7; Sweeney 2007:212).

*ii) The flour and oil*

In 1 Kings 17: 2 YHWH sends Elijah east (outside the land), but in the second narrative YHWH sends Elijah west, “to Jezebel’s home territory”, which is also Baal territory (Olley 1998:29). The author makes it clear that YHWH is ready to take on Baal in his own territory. The narrative shows a widow in need. She is picking up sticks to make a fire on which she intends preparing her and her son’s last meal. Baal is incapable of helping the widow in her desperate need (Nelson 1987:109; Olley 1998:29).

The drought had its stranglehold also on a presumably, wealthy widow, says Nelson (1987:110), as she lived in a house with an “upper room”. Nevertheless, not her home, or the king’s house<sup>45</sup> could provide, what was essentially needed to stay alive, namely,

<sup>44</sup> The sustain-motif will be dealt with in 5.7.8

<sup>45</sup> Ref. 1 Kings 18:5

food and water. The author then shows that that is precisely what Elijah asks the widow to bring him (1 Kgs. 17:10-11). Nelson (1987:110) notes the “sharp contrast” between the “rich meals brought by the ravens” to Elijah (1 Kgs. 17:6) and the scarcity the widow experiences. The author emphasizes the contrast by using “language of minimalism – a little water, a morsel of bread, a handful of meal, a little oil, two sticks, [and] a little cake”. Furthermore, the author predicts “the inevitable course of her [the widow and her son’s] fate [...] in a brusque chain of Hebrew narrative verbs: I will go, I will prepare it, we will eat it and then we will die” (Nelson 1987:110).

Hope is restored when YHWH provides, as the “jar of flour was not used up and the jug of oil did not run dry” (1 Kgs. 17:16). Baal cannot do what YHWH did. Just as YHWH provided Elijah with food in the previous narrative (and His people in the Wilderness) He now does so for this woman and for Elijah, in such a way that they experience “the limitless provisions according to the word of the Lord” (Hens-Piazza 2006:167).

In one sentence: Only YHWH has the power to sustain people in harsh conditions and to multiply food miraculously.

### *iii) Reviving the widow’s son*

In “a world where death is taken to be final” the “amazing act of revitalization” takes place (Brueggemann 2001:35). In the third narrative of 1 Kings 17 the author makes it clear that only YHWH has power over death: “The LORD heard Elijah’s cry, and the boy’s life returned to him, and he lived” (1 Kgs. 17:22). The narrative in 1 Kings 17:17-24 shows that “YHWH, not Baal, is the one who is sovereign over life and death” (Sweeney 2007:214; Yates 2008:online).

Yates (2008:online) notes the irony in the narrative regarding the widow’s son and the “upper room” when compared “to the other Sidonian in the Elijah cycle: Jezebel”:

- Jezebel trusted Baal, but the widow trusted YHWH;
- Jezebel fed the prophets of Baal (1 Kgs. 18:19); murders the prophets of YHWH (1 Kgs. 18:4, 13);
- The widow fed YHWH’s prophet, Elijah, and kept him alive.

Then Yates (2008:online) notes the contrast in what happened to the sons of the two women as a result of their choices:

- After the widow's boy died, Elijah "brought him up" (עָלֶה) to the "upper room" (עֲלִיָּה), placed him on a "bed" (מִטָּה), and prayed for YHWH to restore the boy to life (1 Kgs. 17:19-21). When the boy was restored to life, the prophet "brought him down" (יָרַד) to his mother (1 Kgs. 17:23);
- Jezebel's son, Ahaziah, fell through an "upper room" (עֲלִיָּה) and became mortally ill (2 Kgs. 1:2), Elijah announced the king's fate, that he would die and not "come down" (יָרַד) from "the bed" (מִטָּה) to which he had "gone up" (עָלָה) (2 Kgs. 1:4).

More irony within these two events relates to the widow's remark in 1 Kings 17:18: "What do you have against me, man of God? Did you come to remind me of my sin and kill my son?" Brown (1995:105) says that the miracle of healing and resuscitation in 1 Kings 17:17-24<sup>46</sup> is unique in the Old Testament, the reason being that it does not "contain the motif of the Lord's first smiting a person because of disobedience and then healing because of repentance". Although the widow thinks of her sin as a possible cause of her son's death, death was not the result thereof. On the other hand, Jezebel's son would die because of her sins (Yates 2008:online). In both instances prophetic intervention applies, a word of prayer and a word of judgement.

In the case of the widow's son it could be said in one sentence: The healing is a gracious act of YHWH, "revealing his power" (Brown 1995:106) over Baal, over life and death.

#### *iv) The contest on Carmel and the returning of rain*

In 1 Kings 18:16-39 the author is aiming at Israel, that they shall know (יָדַע) that YHWH alone is Lord (1 Kgs. 18:36; Olley 1998:35). In verse 21 Elijah asks the question: "How long will you waver between two opinions?" He then lurks back to an old credo (Von Rad 1962: xv), reminding the people of Joshua's demand to Israel not to waver on two thoughts (either/or)<sup>47</sup>: "If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him" (Brueggemann 2008:132; 1 Kgs. 18:21b).

<sup>46</sup> Brown also refers to 2 Kings 4:8-36, 2 Kings 5, 2 Kings 20:1-11, 2 Chronicles 32:24-26 and Isaiah 38:1-8.

<sup>47</sup> Joshua 24:14-15

Although Elijah's aim is to convince Israel that YHWH alone is Lord, his battle is against the Baal prophets (Fensham 1980:232). Beck (2003:293) says that the author carefully and strategically makes use of words, such as "drought, Mount Carmel and water", to point out the Baal prophets' helplessness, on the one hand, and Baal's absence/nothingness. With words like "drought, Mount Carmel and water" the author "creates an expectation in the minds of the Baal prophets that is subsequently defeated". "Mount Carmel" has already been described under *settings*; "water" will be elaborated on further down under *water-motif*.

*Drought:* The narrative in 1 Kings 18 begins with a notification that the drought is affecting the land (verse 2). This notification "signals the resumption of a story" that began in 1 Kings 17:1 (Beck 2003:294; Siebert-Hommes 1996:234). Elijah left the land when the rain stopped falling. Elijah's absence signals YHWH's absence. It is YHWH alone who controls the rain. When YHWH tells Elijah to go and present himself to Ahab in 1 Kings 18:1, "the drought becomes the key element of the plot line for chapter 18" (Beck 2003:294; Walsh 1996:260).

As previously mentioned, ancient belief was that Baal controlled the rain (and therefore life). When Elijah announced in 1 Kings 17:1 that there would be no rain unless YHWH said so, he blasphemed Baal, by claiming for himself (Elijah) "and implicitly for YHWH his master, territory that has traditionally been Baal's dominion" (Walsh 1996:261). In this light, Walsh (1996:262) says that "everything related to the drought is seen to be part of the rivalry of the gods, and the contest on Carmel is simply the climactic moment in a lengthy narrative of struggle".

Several characters, which are "thrown against each other" and affected by the drought, also link these two narratives together (Glover 2006:458; Walsh 1996:262-263):

*a. The Phoenician widow and Jezebel*

In 1 Kings 17:9 Elijah goes and stays at a widow in Zarephath. Zarephath is outside of Israel's territory, in Phoenicia. The author shows that YHWH's power is not restricted to Israel (Fensham 1980:234). More specifically, Elijah's traveling to Phoenicia is "to demonstrate on Phoenician soil, where Baal is worshipped, that YHWH has power over things in which Baal has failed" (Fensham 1980:234).

In Phoenicia there is a widow (אַלְמָנָה *husbandless*) in need. She has an orphan (*fatherless*) to feed and the drought has had its strangling effect on them as well. She is to prepare their last meal (1 Kgs. 17:12; Wyatt 2012:450). In Israel there is a Phoenician queen, Jezebel. The only thing these two women have in common is their homeland, Phoenicia. For the rest, they stand in sharp contrast to each other (Walsh 1996:263):

<i>Widow :</i>	<i>Queen:</i>
Husbandless;	Married (to Ahab)
Poverty stricken;	royally wealthy
Outside Israel;	in Israel
Respects YHWH;	combats YHWH
Provides food to YHWH's prophet;	provides food to prophets of Baal and Ashera

Through this illustration it is noticeable that YHWH is not bound to one place, Israel. He works where and when He wants, with whom He wants and against whom He wants. YHWH, and not Baal, is the giver of rain and therefore life in every part of the world (Siebert-Hommes 1996:236). Baal, on the other hand, has no power over death. Baal is "as powerless as the orphan son [...] Only YHWH has the power to restore life" (Fensham 1980:234).

Israel needed to understand that "worship to Baal" was not "necessary for the growth of the crops" (Bronner 1968:85), and that Baal had never been the sustainer of life. Through the narrative of the widow and her orphan son "the weakness of Baal is demonstrated, but more important, YHWH's power over Phoenician soil is stressed" (Fensham 1980:234). On Carmel, also Phoenician territory, YHWH's power is shown spectacularly so that Israel could acknowledge what the widow already had: "YHWH alone is Lord!"

In one sentence: Acknowledge YHWH like the widow, and YHWH will sustain (Cohn 1982:337); combat YHWH like the queen, and suffer the consequences (Drought).

#### *b. Obadiah and Ahab*

Ahab is introduced in 1 Kings 16:30 as a king who "did more evil in the eyes of the LORD than any of those before him". He "further aggravated the situation by marrying



a woman from outside Israel" (Wyatt 2012:442). Wyatt (2012:442) says that the writers of the Deuteronomistic history "understood foreign women to represent all that was wrong with Israelite kings [...]" and that they "polluted Israel's faith and served as a catalyst for Israel's ultimate collapse". It is thus understandable that the judgemental curse of "no rain" is given in the first place to Ahab, king of Israel (1 Kgs. 17:1).

The next time Ahab's name is mentioned is in 1 Kings 18:1, when YHWH commanded Elijah to go and present himself to Ahab. A short narrative then follows presenting two opposite characters, Obadiah and Ahab (1 Kgs. 18:3-6). Cohn (1982:338) says that this short narrative "not only depicts the severity of the drought but also reveals, indirectly, the religious crisis that Elijah will face upon his return". The short narrative with two contrasting characters, Obadiah and Ahab, "functions as a transition between the tale of the drought and the tale of the contest on Carmel (Cohn 1982:338).

Obadiah:		Ahab:
Fears YHWH greatly (verse 3)	;	is an apostate
Feeds prophets;		looks for feed for his animals

The author cleverly links the "theme of apostasy to that of famine" (Cohn 1982:338) by the double use of the word *כָּרַת* (cutting off). Ahab was looking for feed so that he wouldn't have to "cut off" his animals, but he could not prevent Jezebel from cutting off YHWH's prophets (verse 4). Obadiah, on the other hand, saved a hundred prophets by hiding them and providing them with "food and water" (verse 4). Obadiah's and Ahab's heading (*הִלְךְ*) in different directions also "underline their opposite allegiances". Obadiah fears YHWH, while Ahab is an apostate. These paths too, says Cohn (1982:338) "foreshadow the paths that Elijah will offer the people, that they *go* (*הִלְךְ* verse 21) after either Baal or YHWH".

### *c. The people of Israel and the prophets of Baal*

Beck (2003:295) says that it is "no exaggeration to say that drought is one of the most catastrophic events faced by residents of ancient Israel". With drought came disease (1 Kgs. 8:37), pestilence (Deut. 32:24) and death (1 Kgs. 17:12). When Elijah confronts the people of Israel to choose between YHWH and Baal, they say nothing. The drought has struck them dumb. The Baal prophets on the other hand saw "silver lining in the

cloudless skies” (Beck 2003:295). They took Elijah’s challenge eagerly and saw it as an opportunity “to give testimony to their god”.

The Baal prophets performed rituals (shouting, dancing and cutting themselves) to try and impress Baal, but in vain (Yates 2008:online). If Baal can bring fire from heaven upon the altar, surely he will bring rain as well, to make an end to the drought. Beck (2003:297) says that the author uses a special word for rain (גִּטָּר). This word is used six times in the Torah, of which four<sup>48</sup> appearances acknowledge “the rainfall dependence of the Promised Land” on YHWH. YHWH will “provide or withhold the precious rain”. These texts also make it clear that drought will be the consequence of the people’s not worshipping YHWH, but foreign gods.

When Elijah finally prayed for fire from heaven and YHWH struck the altar (1 Kgs. 18:39) the People “fell prostrate and cried, “The Lord—he is God! The Lord—he is God!” After this response rain would come (1 Kgs. 18:45) because “blessings and curses come as a result of Israel’s response to YHWH and his commands (Yates 2008:online).

Walsh (1996:263) sums up the plot around the above mentioned characters this way: “Behind YHWH’s partisans stands Elijah, as surrogate for YHWH. Elijah acts on all these characters to move them from initial ambivalence to unambiguous faith in YHWH. There is no counterpart to Elijah standing behind Baal’s partisans in Baal’s place; the god has no surrogate because the god has no substance: There is no voice, no answer, and no attention”.

#### v) *Second contest on Carmel*

The next miracle story to show YHWH’s supremacy over Baal takes place on Carmel again<sup>49</sup>. The story begins with Ahab’s son, Ahaziah, who fell “through the lattice of his upper room in Samaria and injured himself” (2 Kgs. 1:2). Instead of seeking YHWH for help, Ahaziah sent messengers to “consult Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron, to see if I will recover from this injury”. YHWH’s supremacy over Baal is shown three times in this narrative:

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<sup>48</sup> Deut. 11:11 and 17; 28:12 and 24

<sup>49</sup> Ref. 5.5.1.3

a. *Angel (מַלְאָךְ) of the Lord*

Begg (1985:75-76) mentions two motifs which place two characters in sharp contrast to each other, Ahaziah and YHWH. The motifs of *messenger* (מַלְאָךְ) and *sending* (שָׁלַח) “dominate” the narrative of 2 Kings 1 “in all parts”:

*Sending* – Six times (verses 2,6,9,11,13,16)

*Messenger(s)* – Five times (verses 2,3,5,15,16)

The sharp contrast between the two characters is the result of Ahaziah’s expressing his “contempt for YHWH by turning to another god” (Begg 1985:76). Not only was Ahaziah concerned about his health, but 2 Kings 1:1 says that “After Ahab’s death, Moab rebelled against Israel”. Being bound to his bed, Ahaziah could not handle the situation, but instead of consulting YHWH, he turned against YHWH by *sending* his *messengers* to a foreign (non existing) god for “help” (Nelson 1987:154).

Elijah asked the rhetorical question in 2 Kings 1:3 “Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are going off to consult Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron?” With this question, Patrick (1999:99) says that “YHWH claims to be sufficient to all Israel’s [and the king’s] needs, including the power to heal, so an Israelite who seeks healing from another, ‘foreign’ deity has YHWH’s healing power withheld-a death sentence”.

Nelson (1987:155) says that the “messengers of the king (vv. 2, 5) are a foil to the angel who instructs Elijah (vv. 3, 15)”. Of note is that Ahaziah’s messengers return early to their king with a “mission unaccomplished” (Begg 1985:76). They were overwhelmed by YHWH’s servant (Elijah) who was sent by YHWH as *messenger* with doomful news to the king. By YHWH’s word the king’s messengers “simply abandon [his] commission, making themselves on the spot messengers of Elijah” (Begg 1985:76). YHWH’s supremacy over Baal and the king is thus visible early on in this narrative.

b. *Judgemental fire*

Ahaziah was not satisfied with his messengers’ failing to accomplish their mission, so he dispatched “three further such missions” (Begg 1985:76). Ahaziah sent (שָׁלַח) “to Elijah a captain with his company of fifty men” (2 Kgs. 1:9, 11 and 13). Again send

(חַלְשׁוֹ) points to YHWH's supremacy, for Ahaziah sent (חַלְשׁוֹ) his men (messengers) to Elijah, to bring him (Elijah) down (יָרַד) to him (Ahaziah), but YHWH sent fire down (יָרַד) upon the first and the second group of the men (messengers).

Begg (1985:77) mentions that even with the third group which the king sends, YHWH's supremacy is shown above that of the king, for the third captain "does not even attempt to deliver his message". Begg (1985:77) continues: "[...] we thus find that all his [Ahaziah's] messengers either turn actively disloyal<sup>50</sup> to him, or suffer destruction trying to carry out his instructions".

### c. *Confirmation of Ahaziah's fate*

The goal of the narrative is found in verse 15b-17: "King and prophet meet face to face" (Nelson 1987:155) and the king died soon after he heard his fate. Nelson (1987:156) also notes that Elijah's "oracle is constructed according to the classic prophetic pattern of diatribe ('because'), threat ('therefore you shall not come down'), and concluding characterization ('but you shall die')"<sup>51</sup>.

The narrative ends with the emphasis on כְּדִבְרֵי יְהוָה (*the word of YHWH* 2 Kgs. 1:17). This is the climax of the narrative involving "the proper fulfillment of the prophetic word, אֲשֶׁר־דִּבֶּר אֱלֹהֵי ה' 'So he died, according to the word of the LORD that Elijah had spoken'" (Hobbs 1985:5; 2 Kgs. 1:17). YHWH has the final word over life and death (House 1995:244).

### vi) *The ascension of Elijah*

"As they were walking along and talking together, suddenly a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared and separated the two of them, and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind. Elisha saw this and cried out, 'My father! My father!' The chariots and horsemen of Israel [...]!"

The "fire" in verse 11 has a "literary link with the 'fire from heaven' in the previous chapter" (Hobbs 1985:21) and therefore with 1 Kings 18 as well (Yates 2008:online).

<sup>50</sup> In Exodus 1:17 the midwives were also disloyal to the king (Pharaoh), because they feared YHWH.

<sup>51</sup> Ref. Exodus 4:22 "This is what the LORD says: Israel is my firstborn son, and [because] I told you, "Let my son go, so he may worship me." [But] you refused to let him go; so [therefore] I will kill your firstborn son.

Yates (2008:online) says that “the heavenly fire that destroyed Ahaziah’s messengers serves as an instrument of Elijah’s deliverance from death”. The image of the combination of *chariots and horses* places the emphasis on a military action, even holy war (Hobbs 1985:21). It is clear by now that one of the main themes of the Elijah narrative is the battle between YHWH and Baal (life and death). Baal has been described as “the rider of the clouds”. Reality is that Baal is non-existent. For YHWH and his “fire chariots and horses” (specialized weapons of war) there is no contest. YHWH defeats Baal, and defeats death. Elijah, ascending to heaven alive, proves defeat over death<sup>52</sup> (Yates 2008:online).

In one sentence: There is none like YHWH. Only he has the power over life and death.

### **5.7.1.2 Wonders to Legitimate Elijah as prophet**

#### *i. Know ידע (yada)*

ידע (yada) has been explained in 4.7.1.8. The nine wonders in Exodus were shown to be grouped in triads. With each wonder and each following triad some intensification took place with a definite build-up, so that in the end the climax would be: “... that you may know (ידע) that I am the Lord” (Ex. 10:1).

The three narratives in 1 Kings 17 also form a triad, with a definite intensification. First, Elijah is miraculously fed by ravens; then, miraculously the widow’s “jar of flour was not used up and the jug of oil did not run dry”; and finally the widow’s son was miraculously brought back from the dead. The build-up lead to the widow’s confession: “Now I know [ידע] that you are a man of God and that the word of the LORD from your mouth is the truth” (1 Kgs. 17:24).

Cohn (1982:348) suggests that the fact that the widow “ ידע” that Elijah is a man of YHWH and that the word of YHWH is the truth, means that the woman has been converted. Cohn (1982:348) continues: “The ‘conversion’ of a single foreign woman foreshadows Elijah’s success before his own people”. The key word ידע “reappears twice in Elijah’s prayer on Carmel” (1 Kgs. 18:36,37). Then, twice, the people confess

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<sup>52</sup> There are more images in this narrative that serve as strengthening motifs on YHWH’s victory over life and death. They will be dealt with in 5.7.6

what the woman already knew: "The Lord—he is God! The Lord—he is God!" (1 Kgs. 18:39).

Olley (1998:36) regards the recognition of Elijah's status as YHWH's prophet by the people as "crucial" for Elijah. Elijah has three requests in his prayer (1 Kgs. 18:36-37): First, "that it be known that YHWH is Lord"; second, that Elijah is YHWH's servant; and third, "that you have turned their hearts back". The fact that the people at first said nothing (1 Kgs. 18:21) when Elijah asked them how long they were going to "waver" between two thoughts, but later fell on their faces confessing YHWH to be Lord, means that they (the people) at first doubted Elijah as being YHWH's servant.

Their confession after the miraculous fire from heaven, that YHWH is Lord means that they acknowledge him (Elijah) to be YHWH's servant (DeVries 1985:230). Add to this the people's quick response in "following Elijah's orders to kill the prophets of Baal", and it is clear that the people gave recognition to Elijah's prophetic status (Olley 1998:36).

Thus far a widow (foreigner) has confessed that Elijah is a man of God, the people gave recognition to Elijah's prophetic status, and finally the prophets will  $\text{עֲדִי}$  (2 Kgs. 2:3, 5). Twice the prophets asked Elisha, who accompanied Elijah on his last journey, whether he knew ( $\text{עֲדִי}$ ) that Elijah was going to be taken away by YHWH that day. How they knew that Elijah was going to be taken away, is uncertain. The author doesn't say. He emphasizes that they did know, hence the repetition of the same question to Elisha, twice.

A motif which strengthens this journey narrative is skilfully imbedded by a *downhill-uphill* pattern (Burnett 2010:292) which started in the previous narrative. There is symmetry in the two narratives. In 2 Kings 1 two groups of fifty went up ( $\text{עָלָה}$ ) to Elijah. Then with the third group of fifty YHWH told Elijah to go down ( $\text{יָרַד}$ ) with them to the king. In 2 Kings 2 the downward "action picks up [...] where Elijah is described only as going downward on his route toward his ascension" (Burnett 2010:292). On this journey in 2 Kings 2, two groups of fifty also accompany Elijah, and they know ( $\text{עֲדִי}$ ) that Elijah is going to be taken away (upwards?).

Finally, Elijah is taken up ( $\text{עָלָה}$ ) to heaven (2 Kgs. 2:11). Elisha, who was the only witness, returns to the prophets, who bow down to Elisha. They admit his authority by

saying that the spirit of Elijah rests on him. With this confession they also admit the authority of Elijah (Rice 2006/7:9). To confirm that Elijah has indeed ascended to heaven, the author mentions that a group of fifty strong men were sent to look for Elijah. *Strong men* imply that they would be able to search in rough terrain (Rice 2006/7:9). After searching for *three days*<sup>53</sup> they could not find him (2 Kgs. 2:17).

### 5.7.2 Three as motif

Three as motif is somewhat disguised in 1 Kings 17 to 2 Kings 2, but still serves as an important motif. Swanepoel (1991:549) mentioned that "YHWH brings new life after three days". *Three* as a *direct* motif is used for the first time in the narrative of Elijah in 1 Kings 17:21: "Then he stretched himself out on the boy three times and cried to the LORD, 'O LORD my God, let this boy's life return to him!'" This verse fits Swanepoel's description well. Some scholars tend to ignore this important *motif of three* in 1 Kings 17:21<sup>54</sup>, while other take the wrong turn by suggesting that it was an *old magic trick*, as was used in "Ancient East in Mesopotamia", which Elijah used<sup>55</sup> (Gray 1970:382).

According to Gray (1970:383) the "lad" was not necessarily dead, therefore his life did not return to him, but he was merely "vitalized". With this notion Gray turns against the basic theology of 1 Kings 17- 2 Kings 2 that YHWH reigns over death. By stretching himself three times over the lad, Keil (2011:169) says that Elijah brought "down the vivifying power of God upon the dead body". Patterson & Austel (1988:141) say that with Elijah's action he brought "forth the full power of the thrice holy God (cf. Num. 6:24-26; Isa. 6:3)". DeVries (1985:222) says that Elijah's action was "not magic, but a typical symbolic act familiar to the prophetic movement in Israel".

DeVries's (1985:222) notion is in the right direction, especially considering the larger plot of 1 Kings 17-19 (Nelson 1987:112). 1 Kings 17-19 (three chapters) each consists of three narratives (movements). Nelson (1987:112-113) points out that each of the narratives shares "a similar structure which cuts across the linear flow of the story".

Table 5.2 shows triad patterns (in-direct motif of three) across 1 Kings 17-19:

<sup>53</sup> Refer to 4.7.6 for explanation of *three day* motif

<sup>54</sup> Hens-Piazza (2006:168); House (1995:215)

<sup>55</sup> Buttrick (1991:148); Gray (1970:382); Sweeney (2007:215)

**TABLE 5.2: TRIAD PATTERNS**

	1 Kings 17		1 Kings 18		1 Kings 19	
Announcement	v. 1	Word of YHWH	v. 1	Word of YHWH	v. 2	Jezebel wants to kill Elijah
Crisis	v. 3	No rain / hide	v.2b, 4a	Severe drought / Jezebel's killing prophets	v. 3, 4	Elijah afraid and fled / wanted to live no more
Resolution/ Conversion	v. 4-6	Food by Ravens	v. 4b, 13b	Obadiah gave prophets food and water	v. 5b, 7	Angel touched Elijah, gave him bread and water
Announcement	v. 8	Word of YHWH	v. 20	Ahab assembled prophets on Mount Carmel	v. 9b	Word of YHWH came to Elijah (what are you doing here?)
Crisis	v. 7, 12	Dry brook / Widow's last flour and oil	v. 21	Elijah asked question to people, people said nothing	v. 10b	Israelites rejected covenant
Resolution/ Conversion	v. 16	flour not used up / oil not run dry	v. 39	People converts to YHWH after altar is struck by fire	v.11-13a	Theophany (Elijah converses)
Announcement	v. 17a	Some time later...	v. 41	Elijah commands Ahab to go eat and drink	v.13b	Word of YHWH came to Elijah (what are you doing here?)
Crisis	v. 17b	Boy fell ill and died	v.43,44	Elijah sends his servant 7 times to look if the rain is coming	v.14	Elijah thinks he is only prophet left, still afraid that he will be killed
Resolution/ Conversion	v. 22, 24	Boy's life returned / Mother converses	v. 45	After the 7 <sup>th</sup> time the sky grew black and rain came	v. 15	YHWH commands Elijah to turn back on his root and anoint Elisha as prophet.

Table 5.2 above shows how clear the threefold act<sup>56</sup> in the narrative of 1 Kings 17-19 is. Undoubtedly *three*, as was the case in the Exodus and Wilderness narratives, is reconsidered to be an important motif by the Author of 1 Kings 17-19. Some parallels in the linear lines are also visible. The motif of three, however, moves on into the narrative of 2 Kings 1-2. The second time the motif is used *directly* in the whole Elijah narrative is in 2 Kings 2:17b: "And they sent fifty men, who searched for three days

<sup>56</sup> Also see Nelson (1987:112-113) on explaining the threefold acts in 1 Kings 17-19



but did not find him". As was the case with 1 Kings 17:21, some scholars<sup>57</sup> ignore the motif in 2 Kings 2:17. In fact, not one of the commentaries that have been sighted makes anything of the *motif of three* in the narrative of 2 Kings 2.

This writer argues it to be an important motif. As was explained in 4.7.6, a three-day time period:

- "Signalled the period necessary for the completion of a task";
- "Often indicates the climax of an event";
- "Initiates a new action";
- "Has the meaning of *maximum*";
- "Brings new life";
- "Provides a turning point of events".

All six notions mentioned above, fit in the narrative event of 2 Kings 2:17. The fifty strong men completed their task and were satisfied that Elijah was really gone; The climax of the event is shown in that the prophets accepted Elisha to be Elijah's successor; The new action is Elisha who accepts his commission and the miracle which follows in 2 Kings 2:19-22 emphasizes his prophetic actions; Maximum – three days were enough to confirm that Elijah was gone; The battle against death has been won, new life signals hope, and that hope is carried forward in the ministry of Elisha; The turning point of events lies in the fact that Elisha has been confirmed as Elijah's successor, a new chapter, with a new main character (Elisha) follows on the narrative of Elijah. The importance of this motif (three days) will become clear in chapter six.

Table 5.3 shows the same. The threefold act which was shown in 1 Kings 17-19. 2 Kings 1 and 2 each has six movements, containing an announcement, crisis and a resolution:

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<sup>57</sup> Gray (1970:477); Hens-Piazza (2006:236); Hobbs (1985:23); House (1995:260); Keil (2011:211); Nelson (1987:160); Patterson & Austel (1988:177)

**TABLE 5.3: THREEFOLD ACT**

	2 Kings 1		2 Kings 2	
Announcement	v.1	Moab rebelled against Israel	v.1, 4a, 6a	Journey to Bethel; Jericho; Jordan
Crisis	v. 2	Ahaziah fell through lattice, seeks help from Baal-Zebub	v. 2a, 4b, 6b	Elijah tells Elisha to stay behind
Resolution / Conversion	v. 4	Judgemental word to Ahaziah, he will die	v. 2b, 4c, 6c	Elisha stays with Elijah and goes along to Bethel, Jericho and Jordan
Announcement	v. 9a	King sent captain with 50	v.3a	Company of prophets from Bethel came out to Elisha
Crisis	v. 9b	Captain orders Elijah to come down	v. 3b	Prophets ask Elisha if he knows Elijah is going away.
Resolution / Conversion	v. 10	Fire came down upon captain and 50	v. 3c	Elisha silences the prophets
Announcement	v. 11a	King sent captain with 50	v. 5a	Company of prophets at Jericho went up to Elisha
Crisis	v. 11b	Captain orders Elijah to come down	v. 5b	Prophets ask Elisha if he knows Elijah is going away
Resolution / Conversion	v. 12	Fire came down upon captain and 50	v. 5c	Elisha silences the prophets
Announcement	v. 13a	King sent captain with 50	v. 7, 8	Fifty men of the company of the prophets went and stood at a distance; Elijah and Elisha walk through Jordan
Crisis	v. 13b	Captain pleads for grace	v. 9, 10	Elisha asks for double portion of Elijah's spirit; Elijah says it is difficult to do, but if Elisha sees him go, so it will be.
Resolution / Conversion	v. 14	Captain converses	v. 11, 12	Elijah is taken up to heaven and Elisha sees it happen
Announcement	v. 15	Word of YHWH to Elijah to go down	v. 13	Elisha picked up the cloak that had fallen from Elijah and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan
Crisis	v.16b	Ahaziah seeks help from Baal-Zebub	v. 14b	Elisha asks: Where now is the LORD, the God of Elijah
Resolution / Conversion	v. 16c	Judgemental word to Ahaziah, he will die	v. 14c, 15	Jordan opens up and company of prophets who were watching says the spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha

Some linear parallels were visible in the diagram of 1 Kings 17-19 above. They are even more striking in the diagram of 2 Kings 1 and 2. It is noticeable that the parallels serve as opposites:

- King sent captain with 50 to get Elijah / company of 50 walks with Elijah (2 Kings 1:9, 11 / 2 Kgs. 2: 3, 5);
- Fire silences captain and 50 / Elisha silences company of 50 (2 Kgs. 1:10, 12 / 2 Kgs. 2:3,5);

- Third captain asks for grace / Elisha asks for double portion of spirit (2 Kgs. 1:13 / 2 Kgs. 2:9);
- Ahaziah seeks help from Baal / Elisha seeks help from YHWH (2 Kgs. 1:16 / 2 Kgs. 2:14);
- Judgment on Ahaziah / Spirit on Elisha (2 Kgs. 1:16 / 2 Kgs. 2: 15).

With the triad pattern of announcement, crisis and resolution, the author builds tension and the reader is kept in suspense right up until the end when Elijah finally ascends to heaven. This is Baal's final blow, but the battle against death continues. There is no chance to waver between two thoughts (Baal or YHWH). The parallels end with the spirit's resting on Elijah's successor, Elisha; and they point backwards, showing to the reader that judgment rests on those (Ahaziah) who follow idols.

### 5.7.3 Fear-motif

The principal meanings of fear and its different nuances have been described broadly in 4.7.2. In the Elijah narrative the *fear-motif* is found in 1 Kings 17:13 (אֵלֵי־יָרֵא'), 18:3 (אֵלֵי־יָרֵא'), 19:3 (וַיֵּרֵא); 2 Kings 1:15 (אֵלֵי־תִירֵא').

#### 5.7.3.1 1 Kings 17:13 (אֵלֵי־יָרֵא')

"Elijah said to her, 'Don't be afraid (אֵלֵי־תִירֵא)'".

Rice (1990:143) says that at Zarephath, where the widow lived, "Baal was thought to be supreme, and a widow was the weakest, most vulnerable member of society in the biblical world". It is precisely then, to a vulnerable widow, that Elijah asks: "[...] bring me, please, a piece of bread" (1 Kgs. 17:11). When anxiety tends to overwhelm her, Elijah comforts her with the words, אֵלֵי־תִירֵא. They are the same words YHWH would use further on (2 Kgs. 1:15) to comfort Elijah (Olley 1998:45). It is thus YHWH, and not Baal, WHO is "responsible for the maintenance of life", even in Phoenicia (Nelson 1987:110; Sweeney 2007:213).

#### 5.7.3.2 1 Kings 18:3 (אֵלֵי־יָרֵא')

"Now Obadiah feared the LORD greatly (1 Kgs. 18:3 KJV)".

Although the narrative of Obadiah (1 Kgs. 18:1-15) sketches no miraculous act, it has an interesting link with 1 Kings 17, 19 and 2 Kings 1. Nelson (1987:113) points out that the three narratives in 1 Kings 17 “take the reader to the heart of life’s deepest mystery, death”. When the widow’s son has been given a second chance to life, the reader knows that YHWH has the power of life and death. The reader also knows that rain is on its way (1 Kgs. 18:1).

Ahab and Obadiah on the other hand do not know that rain is on the way. They wander through the land in search of food for their livestock. The narrator tells the reader that they split in two directions, “following the ancient literary convention that only two characters can occupy a scene at one time” (Nelson 1987:115). This gives the author the opportunity to create a “space” where Elijah and Obadiah could meet. Within the narrative of 1 Kings 18:1-15 two sides of *fear* are then shown:

*a. Fear for YHWH*

יָרֵא (yare') in 1 Kings 18:3 shows Obadiah as a *God-fearer*, and has the same meaning which “implies awe before YHWH’s revelation of himself and unconditional obedience to his commandments” (Johnstone 2003:74). This means that Obadiah’s fear of YHWH is greater than his fear of Jezebel: “While Jezebel was killing off the LORD’s prophets, Obadiah had taken a hundred prophets and hidden them in two caves, fifty in each, and had supplied them with food and water” (1 Kgs. 18:4)<sup>58</sup>. Because of Obadiah’s obedience, rather to YHWH than Jezebel, an opportunity was created where 100 prophets of YHWH could be nurtured and kept alive. Olley (1998:36) says that the author shows the reader that “all does not depend on Elijah” for YHWH’s providence to be shown; there are other “patterns of obedience to YHWH” as well, like the “quiet risk-taking faithfulness of Obadiah”.

*b. Fear of death*

There is no specific word which implies this kind of fear, but the dialog between Elijah and Obadiah surely does point to the motif. It is the same kind of dialog which is found in Exodus 3 between YHWH and Moses. YHWH tells Moses to go to Pharaoh and Moses objects, because he is afraid. Obadiah objects to Elijah’s commission to go to Ahab,

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<sup>58</sup> This is the same fear which the midwives had for YHWH when they decided to disobey Pharaoh in Exodus 1.

three times (vv. 9, 12, 14). His objection clearly shows his fear of death (Nelson 1987:115). This kind of fear creates tension towards “one of the most dramatic stories in biblical literature” (Nelson 1987:114) to follow, the challenge to the Baal prophets on Carmel.

### 5.7.3.3 *1 Kings 19:3* (וַיִּירָא)

“Elijah was afraid<sup>a</sup> and ran for his life”.

As was mentioned in 5.2.1.8 (par. 1) not all translators use the word *fear* in 1 Kings 19:3. Some translate verse 3 “And when he saw *that*, he arose and ran for his life (NKJV)”. Either way, Elijah was depressed. Allen (1979:200) is of opinion that Elijah’s depressed mood was because of “his broken spirit”. The Elijah of 1 Kings 18 “who was in control, giving orders to Ahab, prophets and people” (Olley 1998:38) was no more. The Elijah of 1 Kings 19 wanted to die, giving to the reader the impression that all the miracles in 1 Kings 17 and 18 were in vain.

Whether Elijah was afraid, or saw that he did not have the ability to change (convert) the king’s house, YHWH helped him to see what YHWH wanted him to see. Nelson (1987:126-127) says that “depressed persons cannot usually be talked out of their gloom. What does sometimes help is a sense of purpose, and that is exactly what God provides with a new commission”. After Elijah “saw” that YHWH was also working in the “silence” (Torresan 2003:5) he was ready to carry on with his commission as prophet. Parallel to this gesture is Exodus 14:14. Torresan (2003:3) puts it this way: “At the dawn of Israel’s history as a consecrated nation, the people at the edge of the Sea of Reeds prepared for escape from Egyptian bondage. Moses imposed silence on them [because they were afraid]” and comforted them with the fact that YHWH would fight for them.

### 5.7.3.4 *2 Kings 1:15* (אֶל־תִּירָא)

“The angel of the LORD said to Elijah, ‘Go down with him; do not be afraid of him’”.

Olley (1998:44) noted that 2 Kings 1 shares several parallels with 1 Kings 18-19: “in both there is a word of YHWH to Elijah relating to a king, questioning of Elijah’s status,

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<sup>a</sup> Or *Elijah saw*

calling down of fire and 'fire coming down' and 'consuming' according to Elijah's demand." Did Elijah command fire from heaven to consume his enemies because he was afraid (Olley 1998:44)? It is not clear, but if so, the third officer is even more afraid and pleads for mercy. The emphasis then shifts and is not on Elijah's being afraid, or the officer's pleading for mercy, but on YHWH's command: אֶל-תִּירָא. Thus YHWH's reaction to man's emotion of fear usually imposes a command to the opposite: אֶל-תִּירָא (do *not* be afraid).

Elijah is being reminded of his own words to the widow of Zarephath in 1 Kings 17. Do not be afraid, for YHWH is in control, not Baal. In Exodus 14:13 Moses said to the people: "Do not be afraid [אֶל-תִּירָאוּ]. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today". Israel has been delivered from their bondage of slavery and Egyptian idols. They need not fear any more. The officer need not fear any more, for he made the right choice not to worship the king. Elijah made the right choice to only act on YHWH's command. The last person to be left with fear in this narrative is Ahaziah, who made the wrong choice (towards Baal), and therefore had to face the consequences, death.

#### 5.7.4 Murmuring-motif

There are three words in the Elijah narrative which refer to the motif of murmuring: קָרָא (*qara*); קוֹל (*qol*); and צַעַק (*tzaak*).

##### 5.7.4.1 קָרָא (*qara*)

"So he went to Zarephath. When he came to the town gate, a widow was there gathering sticks. He called [קָרָא (*qara*)] to her and asked, 'Would you bring me a little water in a jar so I may have a drink?'" (1 Kgs. 17:10).

"As she was going to get it, he called [קָרָא (*qara*)], 'And bring me, please, a piece of bread'" (1 Kgs. 17:11).

"Then he cried [קָרָא (*qara*)] out to the LORD, 'O LORD my God, have you brought tragedy also upon this widow I am staying with, by causing her son to die?'" (1 Kgs. 17:20).

"Then he stretched himself out on the boy three times and cried [קָרָא (*qara*)] to the LORD, 'O LORD my God, let this boy's life return to him!'" (1 Kgs. 17:21).

"Then you call [קָרָא (*qara*)] on the name of your god, and I will call [קָרָא (*qara*)] on the name of the LORD" (1 Kgs. 18:24).

"[...] and they dressed *it*, and called [קָרָא (*qara*)] on the name of Baal from morning even until noon [...]" (1 Kgs. 18:26).

"[...] so they shouted [קָרָא (*qara*)] louder [קוֹל (*qol*)<sup>59</sup>] and slashed themselves with swords and spears [...]" (1 Kgs. 18:28).

The verb קָרָא (*qara*) is used in a wide range in the Canon of Scriptures (735 occurrences). Its meaning varies and can be used in more than twenty one different ways (Strong 2001:792-793).

- The verb can be used for murmuring purposes, as the basic meaning of קָרָא (*qara*) "means to *call out loudly* in order to get someone's attention so that contact can be initiated" (Strong 2001:792 [8]);
- The verb can be used to indicate "the calling to a specific task" (Strong 2001:792) as is indicated in Exodus 2:7 where "Moses' sister Miriam asked Pharaoh's daughter if she should call (summon) a nurse" (TWOT 2063). In 1 Kings 17:10 above, Elijah uses the verb in the same way, as he summons the widow to a specific task: "bring me bread" (Olley 1998:31);
- To call (קָרָא *qara*) on YHWH's name, as in 1 Kings 17:21 above, is to "summon His aid" (Strong 2001:792 [6]; TWOT 2063). YHWH responded to the קָרָא (*qara*) of Elijah and the boy lived. In 1 Kings 18 the Baal prophets קָרָא (*qara*) onto Baal; they wanted him to do a specific task (fire from heaven); they קָרָא (*qara*) out loudly to catch his attention; they even slashed themselves in order to summon him to their aid, all in vain.

#### 5.7.4.2 קוֹל (*qol*)

"The Lord heard Elijah's cry [קוֹל (*qol*)], and the boy's life returned to him, and he lived" (1 Kgs. 17:22).

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<sup>59</sup> With a loud voice

"[...] and they prophesied until the *time* of the offering of the *evening* sacrifice, that *there was* neither voice [קול (*qol*)], nor any to answer, nor any that regarded" (1 Kgs. 18:29 KJV).

"[...] And after the earthquake a fire; *but* the LORD *was* not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice [קול (*qol*)]" (1 Kgs. 19:12 KJV).

"[...] Then a voice [קול (*qol*)] said to him, 'What are you doing here, Elijah?'" (1 Kgs. 19:13).

קול (*qol*) "primarily signifies a sound produced by the vocal cords (actual or figurative)" (TWOT 1998a). The verb can be used as a phrase "to lift up the voice and weep", and embraces "a wide diversity of emotions and situations, e.g. crying out for help (Gen. 39:14); mourning for real or expected tragedy (Gen 21:16), the sound of disaster (Ex. 16:34) or joy (Gen. 29:11)" (TWOT 1998a). The emotion of "crying out for help", as well as "mourning for real or expected tragedy" is probably what Elijah went through in 1 Kings 17:22.

Theologically, according to Strong (2001:781 [5]) the word קול (*qol*) "is crucial in prophecy [...]; the prophet's voice is YHWH's voice (Ex. 3:18; 7:1) [...]; YHWH's voice is sometimes [5b1] the roar of thunder, demonstrating His tremendous power which evokes fear and submission (Ex. 9:23, 29); or [5b2] a *still small voice*" as in 1 Kings 19:12.

It is most interesting that קול (*qol*) is used in 1Kings 18:29 with reference to the Baal prophets' prophecies, but of their prophecies came nothing; their voices, denoting Baal's voice, turned out to be silent, because Baal was silent. On the other hand, Elijah's voice is YHWH's voice. YHWH's voice can be thunderous, as on Carmel, but it can also be a silent, *still small voice* [קול (*qol*)] (1 Kgs. 19:12 KJV). Baal is non-existent; YHWH is everywhere, even in silence.

#### 5.7.4.3 צעק (*tzaak*)

"Elisha saw this and cried [צעק (*tzaak*)] out, 'My father! My father!'" (2 Kgs. 2:12).



The verb קָלַץ (*tšaaq*) is used in the Elijah narrative only once, by Elisha in 2 Kings 2:12. It has been sighted in Exodus four times<sup>60</sup>. Emotions denoting to this verb are extreme: crying for help in times of emergency, under great distress or anguish (Strong 2001:445). This is what happened to Elisha when Elijah ascended to heaven. By using the verb קָלַץ (*tšaaq*) only here in the Elijah narrative, the author emphasizes the distress in which Elisha was, comparing it to the same kind of distress the Israelites experienced in Egypt. Could it be that an insinuation is left here that the hardship Elijah experienced because of a stubborn kings-house is waiting upon Elisha?

### 5.7.5 Water-motif

The water-motif in the Elijah narrative can be described under the following two subdivisions: *Creational power* and *new beginning*.

#### 5.7.5.1 *Creational power*

*Rain* (רִטְּוּן *matar*)

"[...] there will be neither dew nor rain in the next few years except at my word" (1 Kgs. 17:1).

In Canaan the growth of crops was highly dependent on a sufficient rainfall. Consequently, an absence of rain spelled disaster for "an agricultural society" (Bronner 1968:65). Bronner (1968:66) says that in the Canon of Scriptures it is clear that rain "was a special gift" of YHWH to man. Accordingly famine was "always regarded as a direct punishment from the creator"<sup>61</sup>.

The coming of drought that was announced by Elijah in 1 Kings 17:1 is thus because of Israel's unfaithfulness to YHWH, but also because of the king's-house apostasy. Brodie (2000:12) mentions that 1 Kings 17:1 and 1 Kings 18:1-2 "not only announce the drought's beginning and end respectively [...]" but the beginning of Elijah's narrative (1 Kgs. 16:29-33) and the beginning of 1 Kings 18 also states the "evil of Ahab and Jezebel". In 1 Kings 18:4 and 14 the evilness of the king's-house is described more intensively, for they "are not only evil; they are killers" (Brodie 2000:12).

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<sup>60</sup> See 4.7.3 (par. 3-6)

<sup>61</sup> Ref. Lev. 26:1-3

It has already been mentioned that Ahab's wife, Jezebel, served Baal and that Baal was seen in Canaanite mythology as the giver of rain. With Elijah's announcement that there will be no rain, YHWH's supremacy over the Canaanite mythology is made clear. Bronner (1968:67) says that YHWH, "the Creator possessed and controlled the forces of nature, the seasons in their order and generally the material foundations of man's life on earth". Canaanite belief was that "only with Baal's approval could rain fall, and thus could vegetation take place in the land" (Bronner 1968:67).

Elijah announces that there will be no rain, showing that the approval of rain does not depend on Baal's word, but on YHWH's word. To emphasize this fact even more, it is not only rain, but also dew that will stay away on YHWH's order. Also, as previously mentioned, dew was a very important aspect in a society depending on agriculture for survival. Israel needed to know that they should not rely on Baal to survive, but on YHWH. When the rain (water) vanishes, so does the presence of YHWH (Glover 2006:453).

The narrative of Elijah thus begins with the announcement of the drought, and as the rain stays away, so does Elijah. He moves out of the land, suggesting that YHWH's divine presence also moves out. As soon as Elijah returns, so does the presence of YHWH (Glover 2006:453). Siebert-Hommes (1996:234) sees a chiasmus:

"No rain / disappearance (1 Kgs. 17:1-3)"

"Reappearance / rain again (1 Kgs. 18:1)"

Beck (2003:299-301) notes an interesting feature regarding *water* in 1 Kings 18. He says that from a geographical point of view the setting of Carmel would have suited the prophets of Baal perfectly<sup>62</sup>. What Beck noticed, he calls an "ironic reversal". Mount Carmel was to the Baal prophets a "sacred place", "if Baal is unable to prove himself on this sacred ground, then where could his power be demonstrated?" (Beck 2003:299). Knowing that Baal was the so-called *storm-god*, the giver of rain, especially emphasizes the fact that he was powerless.

In 1 Kings 18 the "formal mention of water" put the emphasis on Baal's powerlessness even further. Beck (2003:299-300) says that the author "behooves the reader to pay

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<sup>62</sup> Ref. 5.7.1.1 iv (c)

careful attention to the mention of water and to see which characters were most closely associated with the idea of water in the text”:

- YHWH makes a promise to Elijah that if he presents himself to Ahab, He (YHWH) will send rain (water) (1 Kgs. 18:1).
- Obadiah, YHWH’s faithful servant, supplies one hundred prophets with food and water (1 Kgs. 18:4,13).
- Elijah pours a large amount of water on the altar he has rebuilt (1 Kgs. 18:33-35).
- When the water on and around the altar is consumed by fire “it is quickly replaced with an even greater amount of water as a cloudburst inundates the land” (1 Kgs. 18:41,44,45).

Beck (2003:300) then rightly observes that if “water was the business of the Baal prophets” they would be linked closely to water, but “in a striking reversal, it is precisely in the verses that discuss the Baal prophets and their adherents that the formal mention of water is absent”. The only liquid to be found when the Baal prophets are on the scene is their own blood when they cut themselves in order to get Baal’s attention (Gray 1970:399). Ironically, when rain finally came, the Baal prophets weren’t there to witness it, they were absent (dead), like Baal (Beck 2003:300).

In one sentence: The *water-motif* thus shows YHWH’s creational power, in that He is the one who controls the coming and absence of rain. On the contrary, the *water-motif* shows that Baal has “no power at all in the realm that is supposed to be his, the sending of annual rains” [...] Baal “is, in fact, quite dead” (Hauser 1990:11).

### **5.7.5.2 New life / beginning**

“He looked around, and there by his head was a cake of bread [...] and a jar of water” (1 Kgs. 19:6); “So he got up and ate and drank. Strengthened by that food, he traveled forty days and forty nights” (1 Kgs. 19:8);

“Elijah took his cloak, rolled it up and struck the water with it. The water divided to the right and to the left, and the two of them crossed over on dry ground” (2 Kgs. 2:8);

“And he took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and struck the waters and said, ‘Where is the LORD, the God of Elijah?’ And when he also had struck the waters, they were divided here and there; and Elisha crossed over” (2 Kgs. 2:14).

The context of 1 Kings 19:6 above is that Elijah wanted to give up. He wished to die. However, when he drank the water and ate the food the angel provided, he had the strength to carry on for forty days. Propp (1998:562) says that water symbolizes “both death and birth”. Elijah wanted to die, but he received new strength (birth) and could carry on to Mount Horeb.

The messenger (מַלְאָךְ) in verse five brings life (Hauser 1990:64). He urges Elijah to rise (קוּם), eat and drink, thus echoing Elijah’s words to Ahab in 1 Kings 18:41. Ahab had to rise, eat and drink, for rain (new beginning) was on its way. The same Elijah, who proclaimed to Ahab that rain/new life/new beginning is on its way, is now told by the messenger not to give up. By the simple act of feeding, and giving Elijah a jar (צִפְרָה) of water, Elijah is offered a new life. Reminiscent of 1 Kings 19:6 is 1 Kings 17:8-16. There, Hauser (1990:64) says that a severe “threat from death” confronted the widow and her son because of the drought, but YHWH sustained her and her son “by means of a jar [צִפְרָה] of meal and the vessel of oil” and they had the opportunity to a new life.

The last reference to water in the Elijah narrative is in 2 Kings 2:8 and 14. Here the author invites the reader “to recall similar acts by Moses and Joshua” when Elijah strikes the Jordan with his cloak (Rice 2006/7:5). Rice (2006/7:5) says that Elijah and Elisha “have entered the place of the mysterious death of Moses”. For Elijah then, something new (ascending) is awaiting him after they passed through the water. For Elisha, something new awaits him as Elijah’s successor, just as Joshua succeeded Moses (Gray 1970:475; Hobbs 1985:20; Maré 2009:76; Rice 2006/7:6).

### **5.7.6 Fire-motif**

“Then the fire of the LORD fell and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones and the soil, and also licked up the water in the trench” (1 Kgs. 18:38);

“After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire” (1 Kgs. 19:12);

“If I am a man of God, may fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty men!” (2 Kgs. 1:10, 12);

“[...] suddenly a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared and separated the two of them [...]” (2 Kgs. 2:11).

As was mentioned in 4.7.5, the fire-motif denotes YHWH's *presence, creational power* and *divine judgment*. All three these elements are present in the Elijah narrative. There are four narratives<sup>63</sup> in the Elijah saga containing the elements mentioned, of which three have clear references to Moses (Carroll 1969:409-410). In the first narrative Elijah proclaimed the word of YHWH to the people, thus "mediating the covenant between YHWH and Israel" (Carroll 1969:410). Israel needed to understand that according to "the original Mosaic faith" they could not serve two gods, for YHWH "was a jealous God who would brook no rivals" (Carroll 1969:410). This fact the people realized when they saw *fire* coming down from heaven, consuming the altar on Mount Carmel. Ancient belief was that Baal controlled fire. On Carmel the people saw that this was not true. YHWH controls fire, one of the elements (forces) of creation (Bronner 1968:62).

In a second narrative which marked Elijah "as a prophet like Moses" (Carroll 1969:410), Elijah was on Mount Horeb (1 Kgs. 19). One of the elements which Elijah saw in the theophany on the mountain was *fire* (1 Kgs. 19:12). Although the phenomena in the theophany which Elijah experienced in 1 Kings 19 were similar to those which Moses saw in Exodus 32-34, the "divine message was different" (Carroll 1969:410). It has already been stated that YHWH is not bound to *water* or *fire*, like Baal. YHWH is everywhere, even in silence. YHWH is also "not part of nature, but above it and controls all elements" (Bronner 1968:63; Fensham 1980:233; Tonstad 2005:260).

In 2 Kings 1, when Elijah is once more on a mountain, *fire* denotes YHWH's divine judgment. If you oppose YHWH's prophet, you oppose YHWH, and that serves to have consequences [judgment] (House 1995:244). As was mentioned in 5.2.1.10, 2 Kings 1 has strong references to 1 Kings 18. It can be added here that, with reference to 1 Kings 18, fire from heaven in 2 Kings 1 serves as "confirmation that Elijah's God is Lord in Israel" (Hens-Piazza 2006:229). The fact that the third captain fell on his knees before Elijah like the people fell on their faces before YHWH (1 Kgs. 18:39) emphasizes this point.

The last mention of *fire* in the Elijah narrative is in 2 Kings 2:11, with clear reference to YHWH's presence (Rice 2006/7:6). Nelson (1987:160) says that the "fiery chariot and

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<sup>63</sup> Mount Carmel (1 Kgs. 18); Horeb (1 Kgs. 19); High hill (2 Kgs. 1); Ascension (2 Kgs. 2)

its team" which came between Elijah and Elisha suggest a theophany. The "whirlwind of [YHWH's] theophany catches Elijah up". Condon (2006:4) mentions that the "fiery horses and chariot were symbols of [YHWH's] power in battle", thus suggesting YHWH's triumph in battle over Baal (Bronner 1968:65). Elijah was, however, not taken up to heaven by the fiery horses and chariot, but by a whirlwind, which also denotes YHWH's presence (Condon 2006:8).

In one sentence: Acknowledging YHWH's creational power and presence, comforts those in desperate need; disrespecting it could place you under his fiery condemnation.

### 5.7.7 Life-and-death motif

"I am gathering a few sticks to take home and make a meal for myself and my son, that we may eat it--and die" (1 Kgs. 17:12);

"He grew worse and worse, and finally stopped breathing" (1 Kgs. 17:17);

"While Jezebel was killing off the LORD's prophets, Obadiah had taken a hundred prophets and hidden them in two caves" (1 Kgs. 18:4);

"He came to a broom tree, sat down under it and prayed that he might die" (1 Kgs. 19:4);

"You will not leave the bed you are lying on. You will certainly die!" (2 Kgs. 1:4);

"[...] and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind" (2 Kgs. 2:11).

The motif of *life-and-death* is written all over the Elijah narrative and is visible in basically every chapter from 1 Kings 17:1 to 2 Kings 2:11 (DeVries 1985:236; Glover 2006:450-451).

The first *indirect* suggestion of death is in the beginning of the narrative in 1 Kings 17 when YHWH tells Elijah to hide in the Kerith Ravine (1 Kgs. 17:3) in order to escape death from Ahab. Here, as well as in the next narrative, Elijah is provided with "food from two highly unexpected sources", ravens and a widow (Yates 2008:online). Yates (2008:online) says that "the raven and the widow are surprising sources of sustenance because both are said elsewhere themselves to be in need of [YHWH's] special kindness for provision"<sup>64</sup>. This clearly emphasizes the fact that YHWH provides food necessary to stay alive and avoid death. YHWH controls even the most unexpected

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<sup>64</sup> Ref. For the widow: Deut. 10:18; Ps. 68:5; 146:9. For the ravens: Job 38:41; Ps. 147:9

sources (ravens and widow), dependant themselves on YHWH for food, to provide to those in need.

The first *direct* suggestion of the *life-and-death* motif in the Elijah narrative is found in 1 Kings 17:12, where the widow of Zarephath is on the verge of preparing her last meal and then waiting for death. In Phoenicia (Baal's territory) where the widow lived, Baal was considered to be dead – the reason for the drought. Baal was thus by no means able to assist the widow in her desperate need (Fensham 1980:234). Fensham (1980:234) says that "YHWH steps in to assist the widow and the orphan". Death does not get the "upper hand". In the next narrative, however, the widow's son dies, suggesting that the widow herself faces a death sentence, for without a son she has no future breadwinner (Fensham 1980:234). Again YHWH steps in and through Elijah's prayer revives the boy (1 Kgs. 17:22).

Ironically, in the ancient world the belief was that during drought-stricken times Baal was dead and needed to be revived, but the narrative shows that Baal remains dead and that only YHWH, who is not dead, can revive the dead, only "YHWH has the power to restore life" (Fensham 1980:234; Yates 2008:online). This fact is emphasized by the words *חַי־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל* (1 Kgs. 17:1, 12) which connect to Elijah's words in 1 Kings 17:23 "your son lives". The "boy lives because YHWH lives" (Yates 2008:online).

The narrative of 1 Kings 18:23 shows how the Baal priests perform their rites in order to revive Baal from death. One way of doing it was to cut flesh open to let the blood out. Elijah made them cut an ox into pieces and lay the pieces on an altar. This could have been a deliberate act to show them that the blood of the ox would not revive Baal (Fensham 1980:235). The Baal priests, however, go one further and slash themselves so that blood poured out of their own bodies. For them, "blood was the vital essence, and the blood-letting was the rite of imitative magic to prompt a liberal release of the vital rain and the life dependent on it" (Gray 1970:399).

1 Kings 19 shows a "reversal in movement from YHWH's victories over death in chapters 17-18" (Yates 2008:online). Lasine (2004:135) says that Elijah's fear and wish to die in 1 Kings 19 point to a growing "awareness of vulnerability", in spite of his victory over the Baal prophets in 1 Kings 18. Yates (2008:online) points out the fact that "up to this point, YHWH has preserved life through the agency of Elijah; now he will preserve life in spite of the prophet". Again death does not have the upper hand,

because the messenger of YHWH provides food and water (1 Kgs. 19:6) and Elijah is cared for as was the case in 1 Kings 17.

Of note is the wonder that the food and water give Elijah the strength to survive for forty days! Most of the commentaries sighted tend to move quickly from 1 Kings 19:8 to the next phase of the narrative, the theophany at Horeb. There are strong references regarding the angel's feeding Elijah and the forty day journey to the Exodus narrative and the wilderness sojourn<sup>65</sup> (Tonstad 2005:257). The role of the angel (messenger) in the narrative will be looked at again in Chapter 6.

The word מַלְאָךְ (messenger) appears again in 2 Kings 1:2, when Ahaziah sends messengers to Baal-Zebub to request information about his (Ahaziah's) fate. Yates (2008:online) notes the contrast between life and death regarding two different kinds of messengers, those of the king and that of Elijah: "Ahaziah's messengers are associated with death [...]", while Elijah's messenger in 2 Kings 19:15 could be associated with life, as the messenger (מַלְאָךְ) urges Elijah to go down with the captain and to not be afraid of him.

Another contrast between life and death is to be found in the fifty men sent with a captain to Elijah (2 Kgs. 1:9, 11) and the fifty prophets who accompanied Elijah on his last journey (2 Kgs. 2:7, 16). The fifty men in 1 Kings 1:9 and 11 died because they did not have respect for Elijah (Yates 2008:online), and for that matter, for YHWH. The fifty prophets in 2 Kings 2:7 "show honor and respect to Elijah", (Yates 2008:online), and for that matter, for YHWH. The final mentioning of fifty men is of the men who went in search of Elijah after his ascension. They bore witness that Elijah did in fact not die, for they could not find him (2 Kgs. 2:17).

A third contrast between life and death is to be found in the word אֵשׁ (fire). In 2 Kings 1:10 and 12 אֵשׁ came from heaven and consumed those who did not have respect for Elijah (death), and in 2 Kings 2:11 אֵשׁ is associated with Elijah's being taken up to heaven (life) (Yates 2008:online).

The reader is thus shown that ultimately YHWH has the power over death and that Baal is no factor in the whole narrative of Elijah (Bar 2011:18). Once, fire from heaven

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<sup>65</sup> Ref. 5.2.1.8 par. 4



proved that YHWH is more powerful than Baal (1 Kgs. 18), and on another occasion fire protected Elijah from the wicked Ahaziah (2 Kgs. 1). In the end, fire was the co-vehicle which removed Elijah from “any further dangers or discouragements”.

In one sentence: Life to the faithful is a gift of YHWH; it overcomes any “severe threats of death facing those who obey and trust in him” (Yates 2008:online).

### 5.7.8 Healer-motif

“The LORD heard Elijah's cry, and the boy's life returned to him, and he lived” (1 Kgs. 17:22);

“[...]. Go and present yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the land” (1 Kgs. 18:1);

“[...]. Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are going off to consult Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron?” (2 Kgs. 1:3)

O’Kennedy (2005:87) says that YHWH as “healer is not a major metaphor in the Hebrew Bible, but it plays a significant part in the prophetic books<sup>66</sup>”. Unfortunately O’Kennedy does not focus on the former prophets (Joshua to 2 Kgs.). He does, however, admit that YHWH “is healer par excellence” and that it is important “to recognize that the healing intended by [YHWH] may be enacted by human agents [like Elijah]”, but YHWH still remains the primary Healer (O’Kennedy 2005:88,96,110).

Furthermore, O’Kennedy (2005:102) notes an important aspect of healing in that it is not only bound to people, but also the land. If YHWH sends rain after a severe drought, it could also be seen as healing of the land (1 Kgs. 18:1). In this sense, a city, a temple (O’Kennedy 2005:102) and even an altar (1 Kgs. 18:30) could be repaired<sup>67</sup> [healed] (Brown 1995:113).

There is also a downside, the opposite of healing is *absence of healing*<sup>68</sup>. This is due to “disobedience” (O’Kennedy 2005:107). King Ahaziah serves to be a perfect example. Instead of searching for healing at YHWH’s prophet, he opts for a deity, Baal-Zebub

<sup>66</sup> For Hebrew terms denoting sickness and healing, see O’Kennedy (2005:88-90)

<sup>67</sup> Repairing the altar has nothing to do with divine healing in 1 Kings 18:30, but Brown (1995:113) mentions that semantically the word *rapa* (רָפָא) shows the importance of the need for the altar, which is a symbol of Israel’s close relationship to YHWH, to be “restored”. Thus their (Israel’s) relationship with YHWH needed to be restored (healed).

<sup>68</sup> Ref. Exodus 15:26

(2 Kgs. 1:2), and that in a foreign country. The reader is shown by Elijah's question in 2 Kings 1:3 that the only true, living God is to be found in Israel (Hobbs 1985:9).

Healing could, however, be a purely graceful act, and even in a foreign country YHWH is shown to be also the only living God. The widow's son did not die because of his sin (Brown 1995:106), although she thought so (Bronner 1968:120). Elijah does not ask YHWH to forgive the son or his mother so that the boy could live. The prophet "engages in a simple act of intercession that bespeaks his intimacy and special standing with [YHWH]" (Brown 1995:106), and the boy's life returns.

In one sentence: In ancient times "sickness and death were viewed in a negative way" but YHWH "was the healer and giver of life" (O'Kennedy 2005:111) for those seeking help from YHWH, in and outside of Israel.

### **5.7.9 Sustain-motif**

"You will drink from the brook, and I have ordered the ravens to feed you there" (1 Kgs. 17:4);

"Go at once to Zarephath of Sidon and stay there. I have commanded a widow in that place to supply you with food" (1 Kgs. 17:9);

"[...] and there by his head was a cake of bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water" (1 Kgs. 19:6).

As was the case in the Wilderness narrative, this motif is a close companion to the *healing motif*. For both of these motifs to become real in the Wilderness narrative, Israel had to submit/surrender completely to YHWH and believe in Him as the one who would care for them. In the Elijah narrative Elijah first had to obey YHWH and hide in the Kerith Ravine and believe the word of YHWH that the ravens would feed him; then the widow of Zarephath (1 Kgs. 17:9) had to obey the word of YHWH and feed Elijah and trust that her food supplies will not run dry. Another parallel to the Wilderness narrative could again be found in the words of Brueggemann (2008:170): "the wilderness tradition, with YHWH as leader and sustainer, is connected directly [to the] experience of dislocation". Elijah was most certainly dislocated, first by living for a long time in the Kerith Ravine and then in a foreign country, Phoenicia. Another example where Elijah is dislocated is found in 1 Kings 19. This time it is not by the word of

YHWH that Elijah finds himself in the wilderness, but by own choice. But even in the moment when Elijah is self-pitied and prefers to die, he is being sustained by an angel.

It has already been mentioned that there are strong references regarding the angel's feeding Elijah and the forty day journey to the Exodus narrative and the wilderness sojourn (Tonstad 2005:257), and therefore it could be concluded in one sentence: YHWH is not bound to one setting (country) to sustain those who are in need of food. He does what Baal was never capable of doing.

## **5.8 OUTCOME**

Cohn (1982:349) notices that the "literary logic of 1 Kings 17-19" reveals the "richness of its structural and thematic texture". Thus, at the "same time the story develops linearly", establishing "three parallel episodic sequences". Cohn (1982:349) then remarks that the "interlocking of these linear and cumulative logics creates a network of patterns and associations through which meaning is communicated".

Significantly, as the diagram in 5.7.2 (par. 3) shows graphically what Cohn describes, the same network of patterns is visible in 2 Kings 1-2 (5.7.2 par. 8). The patterns and associations help the reader to see and to remember exactly what the author wants him/her to see and to know (theological statements).

House (1995:246-248) identifies four theological statements in 1 Kings 17 to 2 Kings 1 which the author/s of the Elijah narrative wants to highlight:

- The anti-idolatry emphasis in this narrative stresses the idea that YHWH is unique – there is none like YHWH because there is no God but YHWH;
- Elijah's ministry demonstrates that YHWH warns and judges the earth's peoples. YHWH speaks to and through the prophets; His speaking comes through fire or a quiet voice. When YHWH's merciful warnings are ignored, He becomes Israel's judge; the king in particular has the responsibility to guarantee the place of the covenant in the nation's everyday life – if he fails to do so, YHWH becomes the judge who protects the oppressed;
- The contrast in the narrative between Ahab's ruling style and YHWH's righteousness declares that YHWH is king over the whole earth;

- YHWH alone deserves to be worshipped. This becomes evident in Elijah's demand to the people to choose between Baal and YHWH. Only one God can be served – it is YHWH.

## 5.9 CONCLUSION

Cohn (1982:350) makes an important point on the outcome of 1 Kings 17-19. He says that the narrative as a whole "points to the central struggle of biblical faith: "the establishment of the reign of the God of Israel". In 2 Kings 1-2 this "struggle" continues. When fire is ordered down from heaven by Elijah in 2 Kings 1, it reminds the reader of what happened on Carmel in 1 Kings 18. The highest authority is neither Baal, nor the king of Israel, but YHWH. Everything and everyone is subordinate to YHWH.

In the Exodus narrative it was Pharaoh and Egypt who had to learn, through the wonders of YHWH, that there is only one God! During the Wilderness sojourn Israel needed to learn that only YHWH should be served and praised, because only He can sustain, heal and nurture. One of the oldest texts in the Canon of Scripture (Ex. 15:1-21) is, and not by accident, a song of praise to YHWH (Butts 2010:170; Halpern 2003:53).

In the Elijah narrative it is no different. Some of the characters have changed though. Pharaoh is replaced with Jezebel. Moses is replaced with Elijah. The gods of Egypt are replaced with Baal. But the contest is the same. The main character remains YHWH and Israel needs to know that YHWH alone is Lord! There is but one Kingdom, the Kingdom of YHWH.

To help Israel remember this important fact, the structure, settings, themes and motifs surrounding Moses and Elijah show similarities. At the end of Chapter 4 a diagram was presented to give a visible outline of the aesthetical tools which the author used to emphasize YHWH's superiority. The same apply to the Elijah narrative:

TABLE 5.4: ELIJAH NARRATIVE (continued on the next page...)

STRUCTURE	SETTINGS	THEMES	MOTIFS
<b>1 KI. 17:1ff</b> <b><i>Announcement of drought</i></b> <b>17:2-6</b> <b>17:2, 7</b> <b>17:3,5</b> <b>17:4-6</b> <b>17:7</b>	Kerith Ravine	N-I-R <sup>69</sup> Presence <i>hayah</i> (exist) Presence <i>Yalak</i> (go)	Water (absence)  Water / Sustain Water (absence)
<b>1 KI. 17:8ff</b> <b><i>Sustaining widow and child</i></b> <b>17:8</b> <b>17:9</b> <b>17:10</b> <b>17:15</b> <b>17:12-16</b>	Zarephath / Phoenicia	Presence <i>hayah</i> (exist) Presence <i>Yalak</i> (go) Presence <i>Yalak</i> (go) Presence <i>Yalak</i> (go) N-I-R	Water  Sustain
<b>1 KI. 17:17ff</b> <b><i>Reviving child from dead</i></b> <b>17:17-24</b> <b>17:17</b> <b>17:18</b> <b>17:20, 21</b> <b>17:23</b>		N-I-R Presence <i>hayah</i> (exist) Presence <i>bw</i> (come)  Presence <i>yarad</i> (come down)	Life-and-death  Murmur / cry Healing
<b>1 KI. 18:1ff</b> <b><i>Announcement of rain</i></b> <b>18:1</b> <b>18:1, 2, 5, 8</b> <b>18:3, 12</b> <b>18:4, 13</b> <b>18:5</b> <b>18:9, 10, 13, 14</b>		Presence <i>hayah</i> (exist) Presence <i>Yalak</i> (go)	Water (rain); Three  Fear Sustain Water Life-and-death
<b>1 KI. 18:16ff</b> <b><i>Battle on Mount Carmel</i></b> <b>18:16</b> <b>18:20</b> <b>18:28</b> <b>18:30</b> <b>18:31, 36</b> <b>18:33, 34</b> <b>18:34</b> <b>18:38</b> <b>18:41</b>	Carmel	Presence <i>Yalak</i> (go)  Promise of the Land	Murmur / cry Healing (altar)  Water Three Fire Water (rain)
<b>1 KI. 18:42</b> <b><i>Rain and transportation</i></b> <b>18:45</b>	Top of Carmel	Presence <i>paniym</i>  Presence <i>hayah</i>	Water (rain)
<b>1 KI. 19:1ff</b> <b><i>Flight and angelic meal</i></b> <b>19:2</b> <b>19:3</b>		Presence <i>bw</i>	Life-and-death Fear

<sup>69</sup> Need – Intervention - Resolution

<b>19:3, 9, 15</b> <b>19:4</b> <b>19:5-8</b>	Wilderness		Life-and-death Sustain
<b>1 KI. 19:9</b> <b><i>Divine manifestation</i></b> <b>19:9</b> <b>19:11, 13</b> <b>19:12</b> <b>19:13</b> <b>19:15</b>	Mountain of God	Presence <i>bw.</i> Presence <i>yatsa</i> Presence <i>qol</i> Presence <i>qol</i> Presence <i>Yalak (go)</i>	Fire
<b>1 KI. 19:15ff</b> <b><i>Restoration of prophet</i></b> <b>19:19</b>		Presence <i>abar</i>	
<b>2 KI. 1:1</b> <b><i>King Ahab's fate</i></b> <b>1:4</b> <b>1:6</b>	Samaria	Presence <i>Yalak (go)</i>	Life-and-death Life-and-death
<b>2 KI. 1:9</b> <b><i>Fire from heaven</i></b> <b>1:10, 12, 13</b> <b>1:13, 14</b> <b>1:15</b>	Mountain (high place)	Presence <i>yarad</i>	Fire Life-and-death Fear
<b>2 KI. 1:16</b> <b><i>Affirming Ahab's fate</i></b>		Presence <i>yarad</i>	Life-and death
<b>2 KI. 2:1</b> <b><i>Journey to nowhere</i></b> <b>2:2</b> <b>2:3</b> <b>2:4</b> <b>2:6</b> <b>2:7</b> <b>2:8</b>	Gilgal  Bethel  Jericho Jordan	Presence <i>Yalak</i>  Presence <i>yarad</i> Presence <i>yatsa</i> Presence <i>bw.</i> Presence <i>Yalak</i> Presence <i>Halak</i>	
<b>2 Kings 2:8</b> <b><i>Elijah's ascension</i></b> <b>2:9</b> <b>2:11</b>	Jordan	Presence <i>Abar</i>  Presence <i>Abar</i> Presence <i>hayah</i>	Water  Fire
<b>2 KI. 2:12ff</b> <b><i>Elijah's successor</i></b> <b>2:13</b> <b>2:14</b> <b>2:15</b>	Jordan	Presence <i>Abar</i> Presence <i>bw</i>	Cry  water

About the diagram:

- The diagram shows that each chapter consists of three narratives, thus the hidden motif of three;
- Note the emphasis on the motifs of water, life-and-death, throughout the Elijah narrative;
- A theme which stands out and is extremely visible from the beginning of the Elijah narrative to the end, is the theme of *Presence*.

The reader should thus remember that YHWH's presence<sup>70</sup> is a reality. YHWH is in command of the life-giving sources of nature and YHWH has the last say regarding life and/or death. Condon (2006:3-4) says that the similarities to be found in the Elijah narrative to that of Exodus, remind the reader that the same YHWH is active in both narratives, "the same power was still alive and active in Israel".

The power of YHWH that was shown through the wonders done by Elijah was not merely magic as some scholars (Gray) try to rationalize wonders away, but specifically orchestrated to remind the reader what YHWH is-and-was able to do. In each episode between 1 Kings 17 to 2 Kings 2 different aspects of Baal's so-called power-abilities were pointed out: "control of nature, location in Phoenicia and the ability to sustain life" (Sweeney 2007:209). The narratives show Baal's inability to sustain and nurture and in effect point out his non-existence.

In contrast, YHWH sustains and nurtures in and out of Israel and has power over life and death (Bar 2011:18; De Vries 1985:236; Glover 2006:450; House 1995:248-249).

In the words of Cohn (1982:350): "1 Kings 17-19 emerges from the analysis as an artful prophetic tale which everywhere points to the central struggle of biblical faith: Namely 'the establishment of the reign of the God of Israel'". The same could be said of 2 Kings 1 and 2. This is a battle which started in Exodus and continued throughout the Deuteronomistic history.

In Exodus 15 there are praises to YHWH for what He did. Exodus 15 serves as pivot between Exodus and wilderness. A journey towards the Promised Land awaits the people. The Elijah narrative, with 1 Kings 18 as climax, serves as a pivot between 1 and 2 Kings. In 1 Kings 18 there are also praises to YHWH for what He did. Ironically the people are in the Promised Land, but a journey towards exile awaits them. In other words, the narrative moves in a reverse order to that of the Wilderness narrative. Pate *et al.* (2004:23) makes the important insinuation that "in obedience there is life<sup>71</sup>; in disobedience, only death and exile".

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<sup>70</sup> A strong motif which was not shown in 5.7 is *The Word of YHWH*. The main reason is because this motif is interwoven to the presence-motif. Olley (1998:50) says that the *Word of YHWH*-motif places the focus on YHWH who keeps to His word and the importance of obeying His word.

<sup>71</sup> Refer to outline 4.2.6

In the Exodus narrative the wonders point forward. In the Elijah narrative the wonders point backwards. The settings, themes and motifs point them out, thus reminding the reader of what YHWH promised and what He did; reminding the reader of YHWH's grace, but also reminding the reader of the consequences if he/she does not live according to YHWH's ordinances.



## CHAPTER 6A

### MIRACLES SURROUNDING THE FIGURE OF JESUS: PRELIMINARY READING

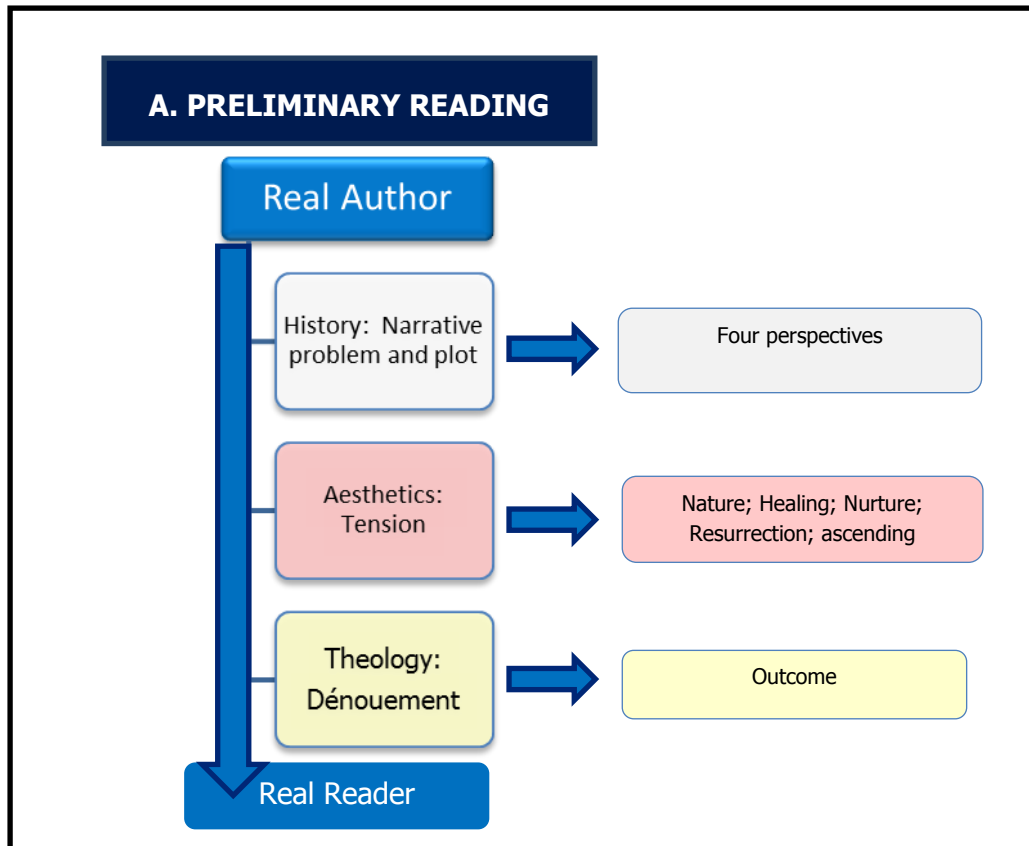


FIGURE 6.1: STRUCTURAL OUTLINE

#### 6.1 NARRATIVE PROBLEM

The main problem regarding the wonder narratives in the New Testament is that there is not one concealed story-line to follow as, for instance, Exodus 1-18 in Chapter 4 and 1 Kings 17 to 2 Kings 2 in Chapter 5 of this thesis. There are four stories (with different perspectives), narrated in the three synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) and the Gospel according to John. It is, therefore, challenging to keep to the methodological approach which was used in Chapters 4 and 5. The "easy" way out would be to make use of only one of the Gospels like, for instance, Luke, as Brodie (2000:80-98) did. This creates further problems though:

- The aim of this thesis is to investigate miracles surrounding the figures of Moses, Elijah and Jesus. The four Gospels do not describe all of the (and the same) miracles done by Jesus<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> See Twelftree (2011:113-116)

- Where the same miracle stories do occur, different emphases on the outcome of the miracle stories are given by the different Gospel authors.
- The methodological approach of the second division of this chapter is to focus on *Structure, Settings, Themes* and *Motifs* which denote similarities to miracles surrounding the figures of Moses and Elijah. The preliminary assumption is that the four *aesthetical tools* mentioned are not equally strong in all four Gospels.
- Finally, elaborating on the socio-political background in which the miracle stories of the New Testament took place would be a daunting task, because there are four (?) authors who wrote from different perspectives. Chapters 4 and 5 were written with the *narratological lens* of the *Deuteronomistic* history. It helped to better understand the *structure, settings, themes* and *motifs* which were used to mould the narrative plots. Chapter 6, though, asks for a different approach, focussing on themes.

In order to have a sharper focus on similarities surrounding the figure of Jesus to those surrounding Moses and Elijah, the narrative plot in Chapter 6 will be described through a selection of miracles divided into the following five themes: *Nature* miracles, *healing* miracles, *nurture* miracles, *raising of the dead* miracles and the *ascension* of Christ.

Working thematically should not hinder the methodological approach of a preliminary reading. In the words of Schreiner (2008:10): “[...] a thematic approach is particularly needed today, with the proviso that it is truly rooted in biblical theology”. In biblical theology it is about *a coherent account in the Bible speaking about God and man*<sup>2</sup> (Spronk 2011:8). The aim of this thesis is nothing less than working within the parameters of Biblical Theology. Spronk (2011:8) mentions two ways to approach biblical theology, namely from the outside inwards, or from within outwards. He chooses the latter, assuming that the writer would be led by key concepts within the bible itself. In other words, the Canon of Scriptures in its final form is the text with which to work and, as was the case in Chapters 4 and 5 of this thesis, and in the words of Spronk (2011:8), no attempts have been made to an *historic reconstruction*<sup>3</sup> of the *growth process*<sup>4</sup>. Concepts, or rather, *themes*, denoting possible relationships within the Canon of Scripture are the aim of this thesis.

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<sup>2</sup> “een samehangende weergave van het spreken in de Bijbel over God en mens”

<sup>3</sup> That does not mean that an historic approach has no value in Biblical Theology though, as every exegetical method has its place and significant contribution to make in order to better understand the text.

<sup>4</sup> “geen pogingen ondernomen worden tot een historische reconstructie van het groeiproces [...]”

It has already been mentioned in Chapter 1 that not all of the miracles could be described. As this thesis is written from an Old Testament perspective, only a selection of miracles in the New Testament will be looked at as representative of miracles described in Chapters 4 and 5. Table 6.1 below shows the magnitude of miracles in the four Gospels.

**TABLE 6.1: MAGNITUDE OF MIRACLES**

<b>A SYNOPSIS OF WONDERS</b>	<b>MATTHEW</b>	<b>MARK</b>	<b>LUKE</b>	<b>JOHN</b>
Announcement of the birth of Jesus			1:26-38	
Birth of Jesus	1:18-25		2:1-7	
Flight to Egypt and the slaughter of the Innocents	2:13-18			
Return from Egypt and the Settlement at Nazareth	2:19-23			
Baptism in the Jordan	3:13-17	1:9-11	3:21-22	1:32-34
Wedding at Canaan				2:1-12
Temptation in Wilderness	4:1-11	1:12-13	4:1-13	
Healing of Peter's mother in law	8:14-15	1:29-31	4:38-39	
Healings in the evening	8:16-17	1:32-34	4:40-41	
General healing in Galilee	4:23-25	1:39	4:44	
Healing of a Leper	8:1-4	1:40-45	5:12-16	
The Centurion at Capernaum	8:5-13		7:1-10	4:46-53
Healing at the pool				5:1-15
Stilling of the storm	8:23-27	4:35-41	8:22-25	
The Gadarene Swine	8:28-34	5:1-20	8:26-39	
Healing of a Paralytic	9:1-8	2:1-12	5:17-26	
A ruler's daughter and a woman with an issue of blood	9:18-26	5:21-43	8:40-56	
Healing of two blind men	9:27-31			
Healing of a Dumb Demoniac	9:32-34; 12:22-24	3:22	11:14-15	
Healing of a man with a withered hand	12:9-14	3:1-6	6:6-11; 14:1-6	
Healings of the Multitude	12:15-21	3:7-12	6:17-19	
The widow's son at Nain			7:11-17	
Feeding of the five thousand	14:13-21	6:30-44	9:10-17	6:1-14
Jesus walks on water	14:22-33	6:45-52		6:15-21
Healings in Gennesaret	14:34-36	6:53-56		
The Syrophenician woman	15:21-28	7:24-30		
Healings by the sea of Galilee	15:29-31	7:31-37		
Feeding of the four thousand	15:32-39	8:1-10		
Healing of a blind man at Bethsaida		8:22-26		
The Transfiguration	17:1-8	9:2-8	9:28-36	
Healing of an Epileptic boy	17:14-20	9:14-29	9:37-43	
Healing of ten Lepers			17:11-19	
Healing of blind men	20:29-34	10:46-52	18:35-43	
Lazarus raised from dead				11:33-44
The empty tomb	28:1-10	16:1-8	24:1-12	20:1-18
Reception into Heaven		16:19-20	24:50-53	

Table 6.1 is created with the help of Sparks (1999:xv-xxv); also see Blackburn 2011:113-114).

## 6.2 PLOT

Within the field of narratology it is important to know through which narratological lens the narrative plot should be looked at. Chapters four and five were read through the lenses of the authors of Exodus 1-18 and the Deuteronomist. The miracle narratives surrounding the figure Jesus will be read through the lens of the three Synoptic Gospels and John. Therefore a cursory review regarding the use of miracles by each of the four Gospel writers seems necessary. However, before a cursory review can be given, some notes on the theme of *intertextuality* seem inevitable.

With regard to the study of the New Testament, *intertextual comparison* forms an important part of *narratology*. Defining *intertextuality*, to begin with, is to ask the question: "From where has this passage adopted its language? With what texts does this text stand in dialogue?" (Robbins 1994:179). Waaijman (2010:1) gives a clear cut definition of how he understands *intertextuality*: "Intertextuality is understood as a literary approach focussing on the relations between texts. It views a text as an intersection of fragments, allusions or echoes of other texts".

Brawley (1993:429) says that intertextuality is the "recasting of meaning", in that literary works mix "the old and the new". In the new text creativity is distinguished, but readers could only recognize the creativity "against the backdrop of the conventional" text (Brawley 1993:429).

Cromhout (2009:588) says that *intertextuality* "has to do with direct quotations, allusions or echoes and fragments of earlier texts (especially the Tanak) used in new ones". It furthermore "concerns, among other things, the issue of availability of texts to both authors and addressees" (Cromhout 2009:588).

The focus of *intertextuality* is "on relations between the texts from which the quotation, allusion, or echo is drawn" (Waaijman 2010:1). The text, from which *quotations, allusions, or echoes* are drawn, is called the *pre-text*, or *archetext*. The new text, in which the *pre-text* is received, is called the *phenotext* (Van Zyl 1994:350; Waaijman 2010:1). The New Testament author (*Phenotext*), could thus have made use of quotations, allusions or echoes and fragments from Old Testament texts (*pre-text*), but New Testament authors could also have made use of New Testament sources.

Matthew (*Phenotext*), for instance, could have drawn quotations, allusions or echoes and fragments from Mark (*pre-text*).

Robbins (1994:179) divides *intertextuality* into five different categories, or rather, *dimensions*:

- *Reference*: Reference is the explicit dialogical indication with people or places in the Israelite tradition. There could, for instance, be reference to an angel, like the angel Gabriel; to a place or city, like Jerusalem; the house of David, or the throne of David, and so forth.
- *Recitation*: Certain events from the past could be rehearsed, usually episodes which recount YHWH's interaction with Israel.
- *Recontextualization*: This happens when an attributed narration of an earlier context is placed within a new context. In the new context, however, there is no announcement of an earlier or previous attribution.
- *Reconfiguration*: Reconfiguration is to make use of stories in other cultures, like for instance, Mediterranean stories, and to incorporate them in a new story.
- *Echo*: Echoing happens when a story from an earlier source is heard within a new story. It is often heard in hymns.

There can be even more dimensions, but it is not the aim of this thesis to elaborate on all the aspects of intertextuality, and, therefore, only a brief review is given. *Intertextuality* in this thesis will be found in the relationship between specific wonder-narratives in the three Synoptic Gospels, John and the wonder-narratives surrounding the figures of Moses and Elijah, in the Old Testament, but it is also possible to spot intertextual links between Mark, Matthew and Luke and to a lesser extent, John.

### **6.2.1 Matthew's use of miracles**

According to Kahl (1994:227), in order for Jesus to perform a miracle, Matthew "emphasizes the faith of the individual as the precondition for help". Beaton (2005:126) says that the notion that Jesus is the son of David, "demonstrates the care and justice that mark the arrival of the kingdom of God within Israel". From Matthew's perspective then, Beaton (2005:126) continues: "[...] the Jewish people were expected to recognize the eschatological days in which they lived and respond with repentance" when they saw the miracles Jesus did.

Matthew sketches Jesus as a man with “sensational authority and power” in Israel (Newman & Stine 1988:2; Twelftree 1999:103,114). This is especially noticeable in the way Jesus calms the storm (Matt.8:23-27) and casts out demons (Matt. 8:28-34). Furthermore Twelftree (1999:107) mentions that to Matthew there is no clear distinction between “teaching[s] (*didaskein*) and proclaiming (*kerussein*)” in Jesus’ working miracles. Reinforcing this impression are the words in Matthew 4:23 and 9:35: “[...] teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people” (Morris 1992:186).

Matthew also uses the miracle stories as preparation for the sending of the twelve disciples (Morris 1992:186; Newman & Stine 1988:2; Twelftree 1999:106).

### **6.2.2 Mark’s use of miracles**

Twelftree (1999:57) mentions that the account of miracle stories recorded in Mark’s gospel is proportionally “greater than in any other Gospel”. Many of the stories are “strung together or set in single days”, thus giving the impression that miracles “occupied a great deal of Jesus’ time”. There is “little agreement” though “as to why and in what ways miracles are important to Mark” (Twelftree 1999:57). Kahl (1994:222) says it is “impossible to determine a feature characteristic of all healing miracle stories in Mark”.

There is, in Mark, however, the so called “messianic secret”. Jesus commands those who have been healed not to tell anybody of it, but His command is in vain, for the more He commanded them not to proclaim, the more they proclaimed His deeds. The healed were not punished for proclaiming what Jesus did though, thus pointing to Mark’s method to emphasize Jesus’ “superhuman competence” (Kahl 1994:223).

Sunderwirth (1975:i) explains in the abstract of his thesis that “Mark used the miracle stories [to] show that Jesus was the Messiah [and to] refute the exaggerations of wonder-working enthusiasts [like] *pseudochristoi* and *pseudoprohetai* [...]”. Sunderwirth (1975:126) also notes an important feature regarding miracles in Mark’s gospel: “[...] miracle stories are concentrated before Peter’s confession [Mark 8:29b] and relatively absent after it”. Before Peter’s confession “the miracles appear in cycles or clusters”. After Peter’s confession “three different features stand out” in the absence of miracles (Sunderwirth 1975:127):

- The title "son of man" makes way for "exalted titles in the first half of Mark and Jesus' suffering" is predicted;
- The "passion of Jesus figures prominently";
- "Jesus' teaching receives major attention".

Sunderwirth (1975:127) says that the above features of Mark's gospel are unique "when compared with the other synoptic gospels", but "significant parallels can be seen" in the narratives surrounding the figures of Moses and Elijah. In the narratives of Moses and Elijah wonders are also "gathered into cycles and placed in a setting of conflict between the miracle worker and authority figures": Moses against Pharaoh and Elijah against Ahab. This point will be elaborated on in the outcome of this chapter.

### **6.2.3 Luke's use of miracles**

In the gospel of Luke, Luke seems to be "concerned with the renewed hope and faith of the collective people in God as a consequence of Jesus' miraculous healings" (Kahl 1994:227). Achtemeier (1975:550-555) suggests five points of important features regarding the way Luke used the miracle stories:

- Luke gave equal weight to Jesus' miraculous activity and his teaching;
- The miracle stories pointed to the "importance of Jesus" – He should "not be disobeyed";
- Miracles had "the capacity to validate Jesus";
- Miracles "were an effective device for turning people to faith";
- Miracles, for Luke, "are the basis for discipleship".

Croatto (2005:465) sees in Jesus' ministry, described by Luke, "a prophet like Elijah", and a "prophet-teacher like Moses". Furthermore Croatto says that "Jesus develops a multiple prophetic function for himself":

- "In the tradition of the great prophets";
- "as Elijah (prophet and healer)";
- "Being killed, just like the prophets"; and as
- "eschatological prophet-teacher, interpreter of the Scriptures".

Luke seems to balance the relation between teaching (Matthew's emphasis) and miracles (Mark's emphasis) of Jesus "in such a way that they are of equal significance" (Twelftree 1999:146). Twelftree (1999:146) also says that Luke "develops the latent idea that the miracles of Jesus are not simply the work of God but the work of God as eschatological salvation (cf. Lk. 11:12)".

#### **6.2.4 John's use of miracles**

John is a book of signs<sup>5</sup> (Barrett 1978:75; Lombard 1995:264). It was pointed out in chapter three that signs (*semeia*) in the New Testament have the equivalent meaning of *oth* in the Old Testament and function as pointers, pointing to something in future or in history. In John then, miracles as signs point to "the presence of the logos and embody revelation [...]" (Lombard 1995:264) and there are strong references to, especially, Elijah and Elisha (Mayer 1988:171-173). Mayer (1988:173) says that according to John "Jesus functions successfully in his mission as the new Elijah" in Galilee.

With reference to Elijah Jesus also experienced "the lot of the prophet" of loneliness and rejection. Mayer (1988:171) also notes that "much is made of the Moses typology of John, particularly in chap. 6, where the Feeding of the Five Thousand is compared to the descent of the manna".

Barrett (1978:75) says with regard to miracles, "John has seized the Christological interpretation which is implicit in the synoptic, clarified it, and stamped it upon the material in such a way that the reader is not allowed to escape it". The miracles of John's gospel are thus "a function of its Christology" (Barrett 1978:75). In John, miracles lead to faith in Christ (Jn. 10:38; 14:11). They (miracles) show the works (*erga*) of Christ, but in the same stance the works of God. Through Jesus the work (activity) of the Father continues. Through the miracles the work of God is glorified. On the one hand, Jesus is the obedient son, doing miraculous deeds, but on the other hand "the miraculous power of God is manifested in him [Jesus] because he shares by nature in the Godhead" (Barrett 1978:75,78).

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<sup>5</sup> Barrett (1978:76-77) gives a full description of the use and meaning of signs in the gospel of John.



In the gospel according to John, Jesus is described as a powerful miracle worker (Blackburn 2011:115). John's presentation is distinctive though, because only seven<sup>6</sup> miracles are narrated and five of the miracles have no parallel to the synoptic Gospels (Blackburn 2011:115). Furthermore it is noticeable that there is no mention of "Jesus' reputation as an exorcist" (Blackburn 2011:115). In the synoptic gospels exorcisms frequently appear together with healing.

John sets the miracles of Jesus in a "context of human need" Barrett (1978:78). These needs vary from the shortage of wine at a wedding feast, to the loss of a beloved because of death. In Jesus' own death he deals with the suffering of sin (as a consequence of the whole world itself) (Barrett 1978:78).

### **6.3 MIRACLE THEMES**

Before commenting on each miracle story, obvious resemblances and differences (if any) between parallel stories in the synoptic Gospels and John will be pointed out in a cursory chart. This is done by placing the stories in parallel columns next to each other. In this way some similarities and differences within the narratives can be noted at a quick glance. Although it would be tempting to follow each miracle-narrative in some detail, as was the case in chapters 4 and 5, it is not in the interest of this thesis to do so. On the one hand, it would stretch the scope of this thesis beyond its capacity. On the other hand it should be remembered that this thesis is from an Old Testament perspective. Investigating the New Testament miracle stories would thus have a sharp focus on words and themes which may denote similarities to the narratives surrounding the figures of Moses and Elijah. For this reason, the cursory chart given before each miracle narrative described, would not necessarily reflect the whole narrative, word by word. Although a synopsis by a master<sup>7</sup> in this academic field is of great help, the cursory charts below are created for the reader for the specific purpose of comparing miraculous acts described by different Gospel writers. At the end of the section (6.3) describing the five miracle themes mentioned below, a short summary of the theological outcome (dénouement) will be given (6.4).

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<sup>6</sup> Seven is debatable, but is not of interest for this thesis.

<sup>7</sup> The work of Kurt (2010) came in handy to stay on track in creating the cursory charts of each of the five miracle narratives being described below.

### 6.3.1 Nature miracles

#### *Miracle stories describing the stilling of a storm:*

**TABLE 6.2: STILLING THE STORM**

<b>MATTHEW 8:23-27</b>	<b>MARK 4:35-41</b>	<b>LUKE 8:22-25</b>
Disciples followed (ἠκολούθησαν) Jesus (v. 23) into the boat (πλοῖω)	They (disciples) took Jesus along (παραλαμβάνουσιν) in the boat (πλοῖω) (v. 36)	"he went into a ship with his disciples" (8:22 KJV) αὐτὸς ἐνέβη εἰς πλοῖον καὶ οἱ μαθηταί
	"let's go over to the other side" διέλθωμεν εἰς τὸ πέραν (4:35)	"Let's go over to the other side" [of the lake] διέλθωμεν εἰς τὸ πέραν τῆς λίμνης (8:22)
"furious storm <sup>8</sup> came up" σεισμὸς μέγας ἐγένετο ἐν τῇ θαλάσῃ (8:24)	"A furious squall <sup>9</sup> came up [arose]" καὶ γίνεται λαίλαψ μεγάλη ἀνέμου καὶ τὰ κύματα (4:37)	"A squall came down on the lake" καὶ κατέβη λαίλαψ ἀνέμου εἰς τὴν λίμνην (8:23)
"Jesus [he] was sleeping" αὐτὸς δὲ ἐκάθευδεν (8:24)	"in the stern, sleeping on a cushion" ἐν τῇ πρύμνῃ ἐπὶ τὸ προσκεφάλαιον καθεύδων (4:38)	"As they sailed, he fell asleep" πλεόντων δὲ αὐτῶν ἀφύπνωσεν (8:23)
"And they came to <i>Him</i> , and awoke Him, saying, 'Save us, Lord; we are perishing!'" (8:25 NAS <sup>10</sup> ) καὶ προσελθόντες ἤγειραν αὐτὸν λέγοντες· κύριε, σῶσον, ἀπολλύμεθα	"and they awoke Him and said to Him, 'Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?'" (4:38 NAS) καὶ ἐγείρουσιν αὐτὸν καὶ λέγουσιν αὐτῷ· διδάσκαλε, οὐ μέλει σοι ὅτι ἀπολλύμεθα	"And they came to Him and woke Him up, saying, 'Master, Master, we are perishing!'" (8:24 NAS) προσελθόντες δὲ διήγειραν αὐτὸν λέγοντες· ἐπιστάτα ἐπιστάτα, ἀπολλύμεθα
"You of little faith, why are you so afraid?" (8:26) καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς· τί δειλοὶ ἐστε, ὀλιγόπιστο	"Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?" (4:40) τί δειλοὶ ἐστε; οὐπῶ ἔχετε πίστιν	"Where is your faith?" he asked his disciples (8:25) εἶπεν δὲ αὐτοῖς· ποῦ ἡ πίστις ὑμῶν
"Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm" (8:26) τότε ἐγεγρθεὶς ἐπετίμησεν τοῖς ἀνέμοις καὶ τῇ θαλάσῃ, καὶ ἐγένετο γαλήνη μεγάλη	"He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, 'Quiet! Be still!' Then the wind died down and it was completely calm" (4:39) καὶ διεγεγρθεὶς ἐπετίμησεν τῷ ἀνέμῳ καὶ εἶπεν τῇ θαλάσῃ· σιώπα, πεφίμωσο. καὶ ἐκόπασεν ὁ ἄνεμος καὶ ἐγένετο γαλήνη μεγάλη	"He got up and rebuked the wind and the raging waters; the storm subsided, and all was calm" (8:24) ὁ δὲ διεγεγρθεὶς ἐπετίμησεν τῷ ἀνέμῳ καὶ τῷ κλύδωνι τοῦ ὕδατος· καὶ ἐπαύσαντο καὶ ἐγένετο γαλήνη.
"The men were amazed and asked, "What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!" (8:27) οἱ δὲ ἄνθρωποι ἐθαύμασαν λέγοντες· ποταπὸς ἐστὶν οὗτος ὅτι καὶ οἱ ἄνεμοι καὶ ἡ θάλασσα αὐτῷ ὑπακούουσιν; (Mat 8:27 BGT)	"They were terrified and asked each other, 'Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!'" (4:41) καὶ ἐφοβήθησαν φόβον μέγαν καὶ ἔλεγον πρὸς ἀλλήλους· τίς ἄρα οὗτός ἐστιν ὅτι καὶ ὁ ἄνεμος καὶ ἡ θάλασσα ὑπακούει αὐτῷ;	"In fear and amazement they asked one another, 'Who is this? He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him'". (8:25) φοβηθέντες δὲ ἐθαύμασαν λέγοντες πρὸς ἀλλήλους· τίς ἄρα οὗτός ἐστιν ὅτι καὶ τοῖς ἀνέμοις ἐπιτάσσει καὶ τῷ ὕδατι, καὶ ὑπακούουσιν αὐτῷ;

*"Let us go over to the other side" (Mark 4:35b).*

Although Luke (8:22b) makes use of *limne* (lake) instead of *thalassa* (sea)<sup>11</sup>, he also uses the phrase "to the other side" (Lk. 8:22b) as Mark does. Robbins (1978:239) says that Luke's usage of these words "corresponds to the Macedonian's call to Paul, 'Come

<sup>8</sup> Literally: "a great earthquake"

<sup>9</sup> Storm wind

<sup>10</sup> New American Standard Bible with codes (In BibleWorks 2008 electronic ed.)

<sup>11</sup> "θάλασσα occurs 18 times in Mark, 17 times in Matthew, and 3 times in Luke". In Luke it is used "as a saying, rather than narration: 17:2, 6; 21:25" (Robbins 1978:215).

over to Macedonia and help us' (Acts 16:9)". To Robbins, "the voyage across the body of water" thus implies that "God's work is spread to a new region". According to Fitzmyer (1983:729) the body of water which has to be crossed over "is given a mysterious setting for the manifestation of Jesus' power".

Although not mentioned, the "Sea of Galilee is the geographical focal point" in fact, for the first half in the narrative of Mark (Malbon 1984:363). Malbon (1984:366, 367, 372, 375 and 376) notes some important aspects regarding the *sea*<sup>12</sup> in Mark's gospel:

- Jesus' power *by the sea* means that his power manifests *on and off* the sea;
- The sea serves as an important setting where Jesus' *ministry of power* is demonstrated with *healing and teaching*;
- *East to west* (Mark 4:35) suggests a crossing from one point to another: the east side of the sea falls outside Jesus' and his disciples' "Galilean homeland" and is therefore beyond their own religious tradition;
- Although the sea (in general and the Sea of Reeds)<sup>13</sup> serves to be a threatening and dangerous place for humanity, God remains Lord *over the sea* ;
- Mark's usage of the term *thalassa* [sea] rather than *limne* [lake] finds reference to Hebrew scriptures;
- To Jesus, the sea is no barrier or hindrance and he treats the sea as if it is solid ground.

Lane (1982:173) says that in Mark's gospel the sea is to be understood "as a manifestation of the realm of death, with overtones of the demonic in its behaviour". In Matthew's account of the narrative, Jesus had earlier given the disciples the command to go to the other side (Matt. 8:18), but eventually they do not go ahead on their own, but they follow him (Jesus) into a boat (Matt. 8:23). The word ἠκολούθησαν in the beginning of Matthews' narrative (Matt. 8:23) suggests an object-lesson from Jesus to the disciples in discipleship (to imitate him). Matthew is the only Gospel writer to describe it this way (Feiler 1988:402; France 2007:335).

Morris (1992:204) suggests that Matthew's version of the narrative puts the emphasis on the "danger and glory of discipleship". Kazen (2006:30) says that all of the synoptic

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<sup>12</sup> θάλασσα: Mark 1:16a,b; 2:13; 3:7; 4:1a,d,e; 4:39; 4:41; 5:1b; 5:13a,b; 5:21d; 6:47b; 6:48b, 49; 7:31

<sup>13</sup> With reference to the Old Testament.

gospels share the thought of the furious waters symbolising “evil forces, mighty enemies, and the powers of chaos”, with the outcome of the story signalling that “Jesus is Lord over evil and chaos”. Matthew’s use of words also recalls certain Old Testament themes of YHWH’s controlling nature, especially wind<sup>14</sup> and waves (France 2007:334).

Malbon (1984:364) sees in Jesus’ crossing the sea that Jesus is crossing “traditional limits” – He (Jesus) “travels on the sea freely and frequently” – and “on the sea the disciples are given opportunity to learn who Jesus is, to understand the nature and source of the power that comes through him”.

Whether the *journey to the other side* implied crossing over a lake (volume of water) or a sea; from the east to the west; and whether the lake or sea symbolized demons or the dangers of discipleship, in all three narratives the lake/sea served to be a “barrier” in a journey from point “A” to “B”. For the aim of this thesis the focus will be on Jesus and how he handled this “barrier”.

*“A furious storm/squall” (Matt. 8:24; Mk. 4:37; Lk. 8:23)*

Of note is that all three gospels emphasise the danger of the “barrier”. The “barrier” threatened the lives of the disciples because of *“a furious storm/squall”*. Matthew’s words for a great storm (σεισμός μέγας) “more commonly refer to an earthquake” (Morris 1992:205). In modern terms the storm would be like a tsunami (Kazen 2006:21). Bryce (2002:4) says that “within Scriptures earthquakes precede and announce the coming of God’s judgment” and “always point to divine epiphany and intervention”. In other words σεισμός “points to the breaking in of the great judgment” and “the coming of the Lord”. In chapter 5 it was shown that in Old Testament context an earthquake also signalled YHWH’s presence in a theophany.

According to Matthew Jesus does not command the storm, as Mark recorded: “Quiet! Be still!” According to Matthew Jesus “rebuked (ἐπιτιμάω) the winds and the waves”, not the storm, and it became still (Twelftree 1999:113). It is astonishing then that a “deep calm” (γαλήνη μεγάλη) immediately came upon the sea. If the wind died down, the waves would still be rolling over for some time, but the waves too were calm

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<sup>14</sup> Ref Job 38:8-11, but also Exodus 10:13, 19 (east and west wind driving locusts); 14:21 (east wind holding up water); Num. 11:31 (quails brought along by wind)

(Hendriksen 1974:412). This is probably why the disciples asked the question: "What kind of man is this" (Matt. 8:27)? "Who is this" (Mk. 4:41; Lk. 8:25)? – "even the *winds and the waves*<sup>15</sup> obey him!"

Later on, in a narrative where the disciples again found themselves on a stormy sea (without Jesus) the answer would come: "It is I" (ἐγώ εἰμι)!<sup>16</sup> In the narratives regarding Jesus' calming the winds and sea, Jesus asked the question: "why are you afraid (Τί δειλοί ἐστε [Mt 8:26])?" But in the narratives of Jesus' walking on water, Jesus commanded his disciples not to be afraid (μὴ φοβεῖσθε), for "it is I" (ἐγώ εἰμι) (Matt. 14:27; Mk 6:50; Jn. 6:20). Strong references are to be found in the Exodus theophany at the burning bush (Ex. 3-4), where "the injunction not to fear is coupled with the divine name revealed to Moses [...]" (Lincoln 2005:218).

Of note then is that the disciples not only asked the question: "who is this?" They  *marvelled* (ἐθαύμασαν) (Matt. 8:27; Lk. 8:25; Hendriksen 1976:180). Sunderwirth (1975:70) points to the fact that "in the Old Testament wonder is everything over which men marvel", with specific reference to "oth" and "mophet" which point to YHWH. This includes the confession, "I am YHWH" (Ex. 4:8).

What commentators seem to miss then, is that the "barrier" did not hinder Jesus, just as the "barrier" in Exodus 14 (sea of Reeds) and in 2 Kings 2 (Jordan) did not hinder YHWH. The difference though, is that Moses used a staff and Elijah a mantle, as symbol of YHWH's power to open the Sea of Reeds and the Jordan respectively. Jesus only spoke a word, and the waters calmed down (Lockyer 1961:183). Also, Jesus needn't have opened up the sea to get to the other side. He walked upon it! Lockyer (1961:183) puts it this way: "He [Jesus] who was Co-Creator of the winds and waves knew how to control them<sup>17</sup>". This caused the disciples to *fear* and to *marvel* at the same time, as must have been the case with Moses (Ex. 3-4) at the burning bush; the Israelites at the Sea of Reeds (Ex. 14-15); and Elisha and the prophets at the Jordan (2 Kgs. 2).

What more significance could there be to the calming of the "winds and sea?" Twelftree (1999:114) adds his voice to Kazen (2006:30) by suggesting that in

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<sup>15</sup> Emphasis mine

<sup>16</sup> cf. to Matthew 14:27; Mark 6:50; John 6:20

<sup>17</sup> "You rule over the surging sea; when its waves mount up, you still them" (Ps. 89:9).

Matthew's gospel the boat in which Jesus and the disciples sailed symbolises the church and that "Matthew is using this story to represent Jesus' calming the spiritual storms that harass the church". Matthew thus also emphasises the pastoral aspect in the way Jesus handles the situation. He first speaks to the disciples before him and then stills the sea (France 2007:336). In other words Jesus reassures his disciples of his presence<sup>18</sup>, thus calming the storms in their minds before calming the sea. Lockyer (1961:183) suggests that according to Mark and Luke, *rebuking* was one of their favourite formulas to describe some of Jesus' miracle performances.

Whether rebuking "fever, the frenzy of the demoniac, and here, the tempest (Lk. 4:39; 8:24; Mk. 9:25), all "were treated as if they were hostile and rebel forces under a dominating power" that had to be restrained. According to Brooks (1991:87) the words "rebuke" and "be still" were "used in Mark 1:25 with reference to an exorcism", thus this consideration "may imply a demonic element in the storm" narrative in Mark 4:39. Hooker (1991:139) says that Jesus "reproved" the wind just like he "reproved an unclean spirit" in Mark 1:25. In ancient mythology, Hooker (1991:139) says that the sea "symbolized the powers of chaos and evil [...]" and "that storms were thought to be caused by rebellious powers".

Hendriksen (1976:179) says that Mark uses a "figurative or poetic manner of speaking", but Hendriksen (1976:179) does affirm "that in a very effective manner Jesus asserted his authority over the elements of nature". Furthermore Hendriksen (1976:180) says that in Luke's account of the storm narrative the disciples were afraid of the storm before Jesus rebuked the winds and waves, and then they were afraid again when the sea calmed down, this time of the presence "of the One who had so suddenly, completely, and dramatically stilled the storm".

Jesus' presence then, like YHWH's presence in the narratives surrounding Moses and Elijah, shows that Jesus, like YHWH, is in control over nature and any so called other powers there might be.

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<sup>18</sup> Also refer to Exodus 14:15 where YHWH assures Moses and his people of His presence before the Sea of Reeds is opened for the Israelites to travel through.

### 6.3.2 Healing miracles

Of all the different kinds of miracle-narratives to be described in this chapter, the healing miracles are probably the most difficult to link to the figures of Moses and Elijah. Brown (1995:208) says that anyone who carefully and systematically studied the subject of divine healing in the Old Testament would agree that “the floodgates of healing have opened in the pages of the New Testament”. In the Old Testament it is not the same though. Israel suffered many times under YHWH’s wrath because of their disobedience. Often sickness was shown to be the result of “individual disobedience”<sup>19</sup> as well (Brown 1995:210). The Deuteronomistic history has shown how YHWH’s people alienated from him. “Plagues and debilitating diseases” were also the result of Israel’s not living according to YHWH’s ordinances<sup>20</sup> (Brown 1995:211).

Brown (1995:211) says the physical results of sin are shown to “be everywhere” in the New Testament. With the coming of Jesus in the New Testament though, many “sick and demon-possessed people” were healed (Mk. 4:32-34). Therefore the issue in the New Testament is not whether people became ill because of their sins or not, for, from a New Testament perspective, “all were sinners”<sup>21</sup> and Jesus offered “unmerited favour” and “liberty from both sin and sickness” Brown (1995:211).

Of note is that sickness and diseases in the New Testament often relate to demons, while in the Old Testament there are only few references to Satan and demons. In the narratives surrounding the figures of Moses and Elijah, there was no mention of demons. The nearest correlation to demons or devils would be the gods of Egypt in the Exodus narrative and Baal in Elijah’s narrative, but they were regarded as being dead, while demons in the New Testament were seen as a reality.

Choosing a healing miracle to elaborate further on this point is not easy. From a narratological Old Testament perspective the narrative of the Syrophenician woman is an appealing option, mainly because of the richness of the text and the striking imaginative language<sup>22</sup>.

#### ***Miracle stories describing a healing act:***

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<sup>19</sup> Ref. Obadiah’s disobedience in 2 Kings 1

<sup>20</sup> Ref. Exodus 15:26

<sup>21</sup> Ref. Luke 13:1-6

<sup>22</sup> It should also be added that it was challenging to find sufficient articles on this narrative.

**TABLE 6.3: THE SYROPHOENICIAN WOMAN**

MATTHEW 15:21-28	MARK 7:24-30
<p>"Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon"            Ἰησοῦς ἀνεχώρησεν εἰς τὰ μέρη Τύρου καὶ Σιδῶνος. (Mat 15:21)</p>	<p>"And from there He arose and went away to the region of Tyre" (Mar 7:24 NAS) Ἐκεῖθεν δὲ ἀναστὰς ἀπῆλθεν εἰς τὰ ὄρια Τύρου.</p>
<p>"And behold, a Canaanite woman came out from that region, and <i>began</i> to cry out, saying, 'Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is cruelly demon-possessed'" (Mat 15:22 NAS). καὶ ἰδοὺ γυνὴ Χανααία ἀπὸ τῶν ὁρίων ἐκείνων ἐξεληθοῦσα ἐκράζει λέγουσα· ἐλέησόν με, κύριε υἱὸς Δαυὶδ· ἡ θυγάτηρ μου κακῶς δαιμονίζεται.</p>	<p>"In fact, as soon as she heard about him, a woman whose little daughter was possessed by an evil spirit came and fell at his feet." ἀλλ' εὐθὺς ἀκούσασα γυνὴ περὶ αὐτοῦ, ἧς εἶχεν τὸ θυγάτριον αὐτῆς πνεῦμα ἀκάθαρτον, ἐλθοῦσα προσέπεσεν πρὸς τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ· (Mar 7:25)            "The woman was a Greek, born in Syrian Phoenicia" (Mar 7:26). ἡ δὲ γυνὴ ἦν Ἑλληνίς, Συροφοινίκισσα τῷ γένει            "She begged Jesus to drive the demon out of her daughter" (Mar 7:26). καὶ ἠρώτα αὐτὸν ἵνα τὸ δαιμόνιον ἐκβάλῃ ἐκ τῆς θυγατρὸς αὐτῆς.</p>
<p>"Jesus did not answer a word. So his disciples came to him and urged him, 'Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us'" (Mat 15:23).            ὁ δὲ οὐκ ἀπεκρίθη αὐτῇ λόγον. καὶ προσελθόντες οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ ἠρώτουν αὐτὸν λέγοντες· ἀπόλυσον αὐτήν, ὅτι κράζει ὀπισθεν ἡμῶν</p>	
<p>"He answered, 'I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.'" (Mat 15:24) ὁ δὲ ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν· οὐκ ἀπεστάλην εἰ μὴ εἰς τὰ πρόβατα τὰ ἀπολωλότα οἴκου Ἰσραὴλ.</p>	
<p>"The woman came and knelt before him. 'Lord, help me!' she said." (Mat 15:25) ἡ δὲ ἐλθοῦσα προσεκύνει αὐτῷ λέγουσα· κύριε, βοήθει μοι.</p>	
<p>"He replied, 'It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to their dogs.'" (Mat 15:26) ὁ δὲ ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν· οὐκ ἔστιν καλὸν λαβεῖν τὸν ἄρτον τῶν τέκνων καὶ βαλεῖν τοῖς κυναρίοις.</p>	<p>"First let the children eat all they want,' he told her, 'for it is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to their dogs.'" (Mar 7:27) καὶ ἔλεγεν αὐτῇ· ἄφες πρῶτον χορτασθῆναι τὰ τέκνα, οὐ γὰρ ἔστιν καλὸν λαβεῖν τὸν ἄρτον τῶν τέκνων καὶ τοῖς κυναρίοις βαλεῖν.</p>
<p>"But she said, 'Yes, Lord; but even the dogs feed on the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.'" (Mat 15:27 NAS) ἡ δὲ εἶπεν· ναὶ κύριε, καὶ γὰρ τὰ κυνάρια ἐσθίει ἀπὸ τῶν ψιχίων τῶν πιπτόντων ἀπὸ τῆς τραπέζης τῶν κυρίων αὐτῶν.</p>	<p>"But she answered and said to Him, 'Yes, Lord, <i>but</i> even the dogs under the table feed on the children's crumbs.'" (Mar 7:28 NAS) ἡ δὲ ἀπεκρίθη καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ· κύριε· καὶ τὰ κυνάρια ὑποκάτω τῆς τραπέζης ἐσθίουσιν ἀπὸ τῶν ψιχίων τῶν παιδίων.</p>
<p>"Then Jesus answered and said to her, 'O woman, your faith is great; be it done for you as you wish.' And her daughter was healed at once." (Mat 15:28 NAS) τότε ἀποκριθεὶς ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν αὐτῇ· ὦ γύναι, μεγάλη σου ἡ πίστις· γενηθήτω σοι ὡς θέλεις. καὶ ἰάθη ἡ θυγάτηρ αὐτῆς ἀπὸ τῆς ὥρας ἐκείνης.</p>	<p>"And He said to her, 'Because of this answer go your way; the demon has gone out of your daughter.'" (Mar 7:29 NAS) καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῇ· διὰ τοῦτον τὸν λόγον ὑπάγε, ἐξελήλυθεν ἐκ τῆς θυγατρὸς σου τὸ δαιμόνιον.</p>
	<p>"She went home and found her child lying on the bed, and the demon gone." (Mar 7:30) καὶ ἀπελθοῦσα εἰς τὸν οἶκον αὐτῆς εὗρεν τὸ παιδίον βεβλημένον ἐπὶ τὴν κλίνην καὶ τὸ δαιμόνιον ἐξεληλυθός.</p>

*"A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him [...]" (Matt. 15:22)*



The woman in the narrative is found to be a foreigner<sup>23</sup>, she was, in other words, “not a Hebrew-speaking Jew” (Cutler 2010:365). The setting could either have been “on the island of Tyre” or on the mainland of “Sidon in the region of Phoenicia”. This means that Jesus and his disciples would also be foreigners (Cutler 2010:365). In this foreign vicinity then, a foreign woman had heard about what Jesus was able to do, and decided to ask Jesus for help regarding her ill (possessed) daughter.

Rhoads (1994:345) makes an important remark when reading the narrative from Mark’s point of view. Within the larger narrative plot the story of the Syrophenician woman fits perfectly. The larger plot explains the “Kingdom of God” and embarks on the “establishment of God’s rule over the world”. The widow is a stranger, that is, someone from outside Israel’s (Jewish) territory. Jesus is not bound to Jewish territory. He works freely where and whenever He wants, for his kingdom covers the world. Jesus is not restricted to Israel’s territory (France 2007:590).

In Matthew’s account of the narrative the widow acknowledges Jesus’ kingship as she calls him “Lord, Son of David” (Matt. 15:22). In so doing, she sees him “as a great warrior like David”, and like David, he (Jesus) would “establish a mighty kingdom” again (Morris 1992:402). Matthew does not put the emphasis primarily on *the kingdom of God* though, but on faith (Harrisville 1966:276). It can be seen in the fact that, when the woman pleaded for help, she was first ignored. It is widely accepted that with Jesus’ silence in Matthew 15:23 (ignoring the woman’s plea for help) he is actually encouraging the woman to believe even more (Brunner 2004b:98; Harrisville 1966:281; Morris 1992:406).

The “open space” (Matt. 15:22)<sup>24</sup> in which the woman pleads for help stands in contrast to the words *οἴκου Ἰσραήλ* (house of Israel – Matt. 15:24). Love (2002:18) is of opinion that Matthew suggests the woman to have no home to go to; she has no support system (husband); possibly a prostitute; she does not belong to the larger household (family) of Israel and struggles with an ill daughter. Jesus’ remark in Matthew 15:26 then seems utterly rude. Not only is the woman, because of her social

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<sup>23</sup> This is the “second of two healings from afar” narrated by Matthew. In Mark’s gospel (Mark 7:24-30) it is the only healing miracle to somebody from afar (Harrisville 1966:274).

<sup>24</sup> In Mark’s account the woman met Jesus in a house (Mark 7:24).

background, marginalized to the lowest state of the community<sup>25</sup>, but Jesus compares her to a little dog (κυναρίοις)<sup>26</sup>.

Placed in context though, the words of Jesus are not meant to be rude. Although gentiles were referred to as *dogs*, Jesus probably used the term κυνάριον in the context of an ordinary household, of which pets were included. The pets were, however, on the lowest hierarchy of a household and were given food only after all of the household's people were fed (Morris 1992:404; Newman & Stine 1988:497). Jesus thus suggested that his first priority is to serve the household of Israel. The Canaanite woman accepted Jesus' explanation by the word *vai* (Yes), which indicates affirmation (Newman & Stine 1988:497). It puts the emphasis on Jesus' Lordship as head of the household. Willingly bowing down to the lowest hierarchy of any given community (household) the ψιχία (crumbs or leftovers) serve to be enough for the Canaanite woman and her daughter. She believes that a good master of any given household would make certain that not even the pets of the household would be neglected (Hendriksen 1974:625).

An alternative insight to the woman's remarks on Jesus' words is that of Brown (2012:21). For Brown (2012:21) Jesus was decisively moved "towards a more positive appreciation of Gentiles". The attitude of the woman had such an impact that Jesus had to "re-think". The woman's words were "seared on Jesus' own consciousness". Brown (2012:21) suggests that this narrative points out that Jesus gave, but also received (words from other people), in order for him "to give more deeply".

Whatever side of the coin then, Jesus was impressed by the woman's faith and she was rewarded. Although she probably still had to go back to a "social world characterized by community solidarity", her life "was made less burdensome" by Jesus (Love 2002:18).

### 6.3.3 Nurture miracles

The first nurture miracle, according to John, is also the first miracle which John describes, namely the wedding in Cana, when Jesus transformed water into wine (Jn. 2:11). From an Old Testament perspective it is tempting to investigate the

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<sup>25</sup> Compare the Phoenician woman in 1 Kings 17

<sup>26</sup> Also see Mark 7:27

transformation of water, but for the aim of this thesis the feeding of the 5000 serves to be the more logical choice to investigate<sup>27</sup>.

***Miracle stories describing a nurturing act:***

**TABLE 6.4: FEEDING OF THE 5000 (table continues on next page...)**

<b>MATTHEW 14:13-21</b>	<b>MARK 6:32-44</b>	<b>LUKE 9:10-17</b>	<b>JOHN 6:1-14</b>
<p>"[...] he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place" [desert] (Matt.14:13b)</p> <p>[...] ἀνεχώρησεν ἐκεῖθεν ἐν πλοίῳ εἰς ἔρημον τόπον κατ' ἰδίαν·</p>	<p>"So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place" (Mk. 6:32)</p> <p>Καὶ ἀπῆλθον ἐν τῷ πλοίῳ εἰς ἔρημον τόπον κατ' ἰδίαν</p>	<p>"Then he took them with him and they withdrew by themselves to a town called Bethsaida" (Lk. 9:10b)</p> <p>Καὶ παραλαβὼν αὐτοὺς ὑπεχώρησεν κατ' ἰδίαν εἰς πόλιν καλουμένην Βηθσαιῶδα.</p>	<p>"Some time after this, Jesus crossed to the far shore of the Sea of Galilee (that is, the Sea of Tiberias)," (Jn. 6:1)</p> <p>Μετὰ ταῦτα ἀπῆλθεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς πέραν τῆς θαλάσσης τῆς Γαλιλαίας τῆς Τιβεριάδος.</p>
<p>"Hearing of this, the crowds followed him on foot from the towns" (Matt.14:13c)</p> <p>καὶ ἀκούσαντες οἱ ὄχλοι ἠκολούθησαν αὐτῷ πεζῶν ἀπὸ τῶν πόλεων.</p>	<p>"But many who saw them leaving recognized them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them" (Mk. 6:33).</p> <p>καὶ εἶδον αὐτοὺς ὑπάγοντας καὶ ἐπέγνωσαν πολλοὶ καὶ πεζῶν ἀπὸ πασῶν τῶν πόλεων συνέδραμον ἐκεῖ καὶ προῆλθον αὐτοῦς</p>	<p>"but the crowds learned about it and followed him" (Lk. 9:11a)</p> <p>οἱ δὲ ὄχλοι γνόντες ἠκολούθησαν αὐτῷ·</p>	<p>"[...] and a great crowd of people followed him because they saw the miraculous signs he had performed on the sick" (Jn. 6:2).</p> <p>ἠκολούθει δὲ αὐτῷ ὄχλος πολὺς, ὅτι ἐθεώρουν τὰ σημεῖα ἃ ἐποίει ἐπὶ τῶν ἀσθενούντων.</p>
<p>"When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick" (Matt. 14:14)</p> <p>Καὶ ἐξελθὼν εἶδεν πολὺν ὄχλον καὶ ἐσπλαγχνίσθη ἐπ' αὐτοῖς καὶ ἐθεράπευσεν τοὺς ἀρρώστους αὐτῶν.</p>	<p>"When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things" (Mk. 6:34)</p> <p>Καὶ ἐξελθὼν εἶδεν πολὺν ὄχλον καὶ ἐσπλαγχνίσθη ἐπ' αὐτούς, ὅτι ἦσαν ὡς πρόβατα μὴ ἔχοντα ποιμένα, καὶ ἤρξατο διδάσκειν αὐτοὺς πολλὰ.</p>	<p>"He welcomed them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who needed healing" (Lk. 9:11b)</p> <p>καὶ ἀποδεξάμενος αὐτοὺς ἐλάλει αὐτοῖς περὶ τῆς βασιλείας τοῦ θεοῦ, καὶ τοὺς χρεῖαν ἔχοντας θεραπείας ἴατο.</p>	<p>"Then Jesus went up on a mountainside and sat down with his disciples. The Jewish Passover Feast was near" (Jn. 6:3, 4)</p> <p>ἀνῆλθεν δὲ εἰς τὸ ὄρος Ἰησοῦς καὶ ἐκεῖ ἐκάθητο μετὰ τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ. ἦν δὲ ἐγγὺς τὸ πάσχα, ἡ ἐορτὴ τῶν Ἰουδαίων.</p>
<p>"As evening approached, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a remote place, and it's already getting late." (Matt. 14:15a)</p> <p>Ὁψίας δὲ γενομένης προσῆλθον αὐτῷ οἱ μαθηταὶ λέγοντες· ἔρημός ἐστιν ὁ τόπος καὶ ἡ ὥρα ἤδη</p>	<p>"By this time it was late in the day, so his disciples came to him. 'This is a remote place,' they said, 'and it's already very late.'" (Mk. 6:35)</p> <p>Καὶ ἤδη ὥρας πολλῆς γενομένης προσελθόντες αὐτῷ οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ ἔλεγον ὅτι ἔρημός ἐστιν ὁ τόπος καὶ ἤδη ὥρα πολλῆ</p>	<p>"Late in the afternoon the Twelve came to him and said," (Lk. 9:12a)</p> <p>Ἦ δὲ ἡμέρα ἤρξατο κλίνειν· προσελθόντες δὲ οἱ δώδεκα εἶπαν αὐτῷ·</p>	

<sup>27</sup> Refer to manna and quails in Exodus 16 and the widow's flour jar in 1 Kings 17

<p>παρήλθεν·</p> <p>"Send the crowds away, so they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food" (Matt. 14:15b)</p> <p>ἀπόλυσον τοὺς ὄχλους, ἵνα ἀπελθόντες εἰς τὰς κώμας ἀγοράσωσιν ἑαυτοῖς βρώματα.</p>	<p>"Send the people away so they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat" (Mk. 6:36)</p> <p>ἀπόλυσον αὐτούς, ἵνα ἀπελθόντες εἰς τοὺς κύκλῳ ἀγρούς καὶ κώμας ἀγοράσωσιν ἑαυτοῖς τί φάγωσιν</p>	<p>"Send the crowd away so they can go to the surrounding villages and countryside and find food and lodging, because we are in a remote place here." (Lk. 9:12b)</p> <p>ἀπόλυσον τὸν ὄχλον, ἵνα πορευθέντες εἰς τὰς κύκλῳ κώμας καὶ ἀγρούς καταλύσωσιν καὶ εὔρωσιν ἐπισπισμόν, ὅτι ὧδε ἐν ἐρήμῳ τόπῳ ἐσμέν.</p>	<p>"When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him, he said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?" (Jn. 6:5)</p> <p>Ἐπάρας οὖν τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς ὁ Ἰησοῦς καὶ θεασάμενος ὅτι πολὺς ὄχλος ἔρχεται πρὸς αὐτὸν λέγει πρὸς Φίλιππον· πόθεν ἀγοράσωμεν ἄρτους ἵνα φάγωσιν οὗτοι;</p>
			<p>"He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do" (Jn. 6:6)</p> <p>τοῦτο δὲ ἔλεγεν πειράζων αὐτόν· αὐτὸς γὰρ ᾔδει τί ἔμελλεν ποιεῖν.</p>
<p>Jesus replied, "They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat" (Matt. 14:16)</p> <p>ὁ δὲ [Ἰησοῦς] εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· οὐ χρειάν ἔχουσιν ἀπελθεῖν, δότε αὐτοῖς ὑμεῖς φαγεῖν.</p>	<p>But he answered, "You give them something to eat." They said to him, "That would take eight months of a man's wages! Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?" (Mk. 6:37)</p> <p>ὁ δὲ ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· δότε αὐτοῖς ὑμεῖς φαγεῖν. καὶ λέγουσιν αὐτῷ· ἀπελθόντες ἀγοράσωμεν δηναρίων διακοσίων ἄρτους καὶ δώσομεν αὐτοῖς φαγεῖν;</p>	<p>He replied, "You give them something to eat" (Lk. 9:13a)</p> <p>εἶπεν δὲ πρὸς αὐτούς· δότε αὐτοῖς ὑμεῖς φαγεῖν.</p>	<p>"Philip answered him, 'Eight months' wages would not buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!'" (Jn. 6:7)</p> <p>ἀπεκρίθη αὐτῷ [ὁ] Φίλιππος· διακοσίων δηναρίων ἄρτοι οὐκ ἄρκοῦσιν αὐτοῖς ἵνα ἕκαστος βραχύ [τι] λάβῃ.</p>
<p>"We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish, they answered" (Matt. 14:17).</p> <p>οἱ δὲ λέγουσιν αὐτῷ· οὐκ ἔχομεν ὧδε εἰ μὴ πέντε ἄρτους καὶ δύο ἰχθύας.</p>	<p>"How many loaves do you have?" he asked. "Go and see." When they found out, they said, "Five--and two fish" (Mk. 6:38)</p> <p>ὁ δὲ λέγει αὐτοῖς· πόσους ἄρτους ἔχετε; ὑπάγετε ἴδετε. καὶ γόντες λέγουσιν· πέντε, καὶ δύο ἰχθύας.</p>	<p>And they said, "We have no more than five loaves and two fish, unless perhaps we go and buy food for all these people." (Lk. 9:13b)</p> <p>οἱ δὲ εἶπαν· οὐκ εἰσὶν ἡμῖν πλεῖον ἢ ἄρτοι πέντε καὶ ἰχθύες δύο, εἰ μὴτι πορευθέντες ἡμεῖς ἀγοράσωμεν εἰς πάντα τὸν λαὸν τοῦτον βρώματα.</p>	<p>"Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up, 'Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?'" (Jn. 6:8, 9)</p> <p>λέγει αὐτῷ εἷς ἐκ τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ, Ἀνδρέας ὁ ἀδελφὸς Σίμωνος Πέτρου· ἔστιν παιδίον ὧδε ὃς ἔχει πέντε ἄρτους κριθίνους καὶ δύο ὀψάρια· ἀλλὰ ταῦτα τί ἔστιν εἰς τοσοῦτους;</p>
<p>"Bring them here to me," he said" (Matt. 14:18)</p> <p>ὁ δὲ εἶπεν· φέρετέ μοι</p>			

<p>ὡδε αὐτούς.</p> <p>"And he directed the people to sit down on the grass." (Matt. 14:19a)</p> <p>καὶ κελεύσας τοὺς ὄχλους ἀνακλιθῆναι ἐπὶ τοῦ χόρτου,</p>	<p>"Then Jesus directed them to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass. So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties" (Mk.6:39, 40).</p> <p>καὶ ἐπέταξεν αὐτοῖς ἀνακλῖναι πάντας συμπόσια συμπόσια ἐπὶ τῷ χλωρῷ χόρτῳ. καὶ ἀνέπεσαν πρᾶσαι πρᾶσαι κατὰ ἑκατὸν καὶ κατὰ πεντήκοντα.</p>	<p>"(About five thousand men were there.) But he said to his disciples, 'Have them sit down in groups of about fifty each'. The disciples did so, and everybody sat down" (Luk 9:14, 15).</p> <p>ἦσαν γὰρ ὡσεὶ ἄνδρες πεντακισχίλιοι. εἶπεν δὲ πρὸς τοὺς μαθητὰς αὐτοῦ· κατακλίνατε αὐτοὺς κλισίας [ὡσεὶ] ἀνὰ πεντήκοντα. καὶ ἐποίησαν οὕτως καὶ κατέκλιναν ἅπαντας.</p>	<p>"Jesus said, 'Have the people sit down'. There was plenty of grass in that place, and the men sat down, about five thousand of them" (Jn. 6:10).</p> <p>εἶπεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς· ποιήσατε τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ἀναπεσεῖν. ἦν δὲ χόρτος πολὺς ἐν τῷ τόπῳ. ἀνέπεσαν οὖν οἱ ἄνδρες τὸν ἀριθμὸν ὡς πεντακισχίλιοι.</p>
<p>"Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people" (Matt. 14:19b)</p> <p>λαβὼν τοὺς πέντε ἄρτους καὶ τοὺς δύο ἰχθύας, ἀναβλέψας εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν εὐλόγησεν καὶ κλάσας ἔδωκεν τοῖς μαθηταῖς τοὺς ἄρτους, οἱ δὲ μαθηταὶ τοῖς ὄχλοις.</p>	<p>"Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to his disciples to set before the people. He also divided the two fish among them all" (Mk. 6:41)</p> <p>καὶ λαβὼν τοὺς πέντε ἄρτους καὶ τοὺς δύο ἰχθύας ἀναβλέψας εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν εὐλόγησεν καὶ κατέκλασεν τοὺς ἄρτους καὶ ἐδίδου τοῖς μαθηταῖς [αὐτοῦ] ἵνα παρατιθῶσιν αὐτοῖς, καὶ τοὺς δύο ἰχθύας ἐμέρισεν πᾶσιν.</p>	<p>"Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke them. Then he gave them to the disciples to set before the people" (Lk.9:16)</p> <p>λαβὼν δὲ τοὺς πέντε ἄρτους καὶ τοὺς δύο ἰχθύας ἀναβλέψας εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν εὐλόγησεν αὐτούς καὶ κατέκλασεν καὶ ἐδίδου τοῖς μαθηταῖς παραθεῖναι τῷ ὄχλῳ.</p>	<p>"Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish" (Jn. 6:11)</p> <p>ἔλαβεν οὖν τοὺς ἄρτους ὁ Ἰησοῦς καὶ εὐχαριστήσας διέδωκεν τοῖς ἀνακειμένοις ὁμοίως καὶ ἐκ τῶν ὀψαρίων ὅσον ἤθελον.</p>
<p>"They all ate and were satisfied and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over" (Mat 14:20)</p> <p>καὶ ἔφαγον πάντες καὶ ἐχορτάσθησαν, καὶ ἦσαν τὸ περισσεῦον τῶν κλασμάτων δώδεκα κοφίνους πλήρεις.</p>	<p>"They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish" (Mk. 6:42, 43)</p> <p>καὶ ἔφαγον πάντες καὶ ἐχορτάσθησαν, καὶ ἦσαν κλάσματα δώδεκα κοφίνων πληρώματα καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν ἰχθύων.</p>	<p>"They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over" (Lk.9:17)</p> <p>καὶ ἔφαγον καὶ ἐχορτάσθησαν πάντες, καὶ ἦρθη τὸ περισσεῦσαν αὐτοῖς κλασμάτων κόφιναι δώδεκα.</p>	<p>"When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, 'Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted'. So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten" (Jn. 6:12, 13)</p> <p>ὡς δὲ ἐνεπλήσθησαν, λέγει τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ· συναγάγετε τὰ περισσεύσαντα κλάσματα, ἵνα μὴ τι ἀπόληται. συνήγαγον οὖν καὶ ἐγέμισαν δώδεκα κοφίνους κλασμάτων ἐκ τῶν πέντε ἄρτων τῶν κριθίνων ἃ ἐπερίσσευσαν τοῖς βεβρωκόσιν.</p>

<p>"The number of those who ate was about five thousand men, besides women and children" (Mat 14:21)</p> <p>οἱ δὲ ἐσθίοντες ἦσαν ἄνδρες ὡσεὶ πεντακισχίλιοι χωρὶς γυναικῶν καὶ παιδίων.</p>	<p>"The number of the men who had eaten was five thousand" (Mk.6:44)</p> <p>καὶ ἦσαν οἱ φαγόντες [τοὺς ἄρτους] πεντακισχίλιοι ἄνδρες.</p>		
			<p>"After the people saw the miraculous sign that Jesus did, they began to say, 'Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world.'" (Jn. 6:14)</p> <p>Οἱ οὖν ἄνθρωποι ἰδόντες ὃ ἐποίησεν σημεῖον ἔλεγον ὅτι οὗτός ἐστιν ἀληθῶς ὁ προφήτης ὁ ἐρχόμενος εἰς τὸν κόσμον.</p>

In the four Gospels (synoptic Gospels and John) there are only two miracles in all four accounts sharing parallels, "the resurrection" and "the feeding of the Five Thousand" (Poon 2003:224). Poon (2003:224) says the Evangelists shared different views on the narrative of the feeding miracle "as they wanted to draw different lessons from the story". Mark and Matthew place some emphasis on the disciples<sup>28</sup> who do not understand, while in John's account of the narrative it is the *crowd* that does not understand Jesus' intention with the multiplying of the loaves as being a sign (*semeion*), for they wanted to make him king by force (Poon 2003:224). Luke places the feeding miracle between two narratives where the question about Jesus' identity is uttered<sup>29</sup>. This leads to Peter's confession about Jesus as being the Christ (Lk. 9:18-20).

In the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand it should be said from the start that the focus of the miracle is not on the bread or fish which multiplied, but on the person<sup>30</sup> (Jesus) who performed the miracle (Shaw 2007:512; Wiarda 2006:502). When Jesus took the loaves and looked up (gave thanks) to heaven (Lk. 9:16; Jn. 6:11; Matt. 14:19; Mk. 6:41) he "recognised God as the source of the meal" (Green 1997:365). In Matthew's Gospel the disciples share in Jesus' wonder-doing as the food multiplies while they hand it out (Shaw 2007:511).

<sup>28</sup> In Mark and Matthew the feeding story leads to Jesus' walking on the water where the writer makes it clear that the disciples did not understand the "loaves" (Mark 6:49-51; Poon 2003:224).

<sup>29</sup> Jesus is wrongly identified "as John the Baptist, Elijah or one of the prophets". Peter correctly identifies Jesus as the Christ (Poon 2003:224).

<sup>30</sup> See in John's account of the miracle Jesus' words: "I am the bread that gives life" (John 6:35).

The synoptic Gospels share substantial similarities, but John's account of the narrative "differs significantly" from that of the three Synoptic writers, of which the most obvious difference is probably the setting "on a mountain by the sea of Galilee" (Little 2009:23), while the setting in the synoptic Gospels is described as a remote (ἔρημον) place. A remote place, from an anthropological point of view (Poon 2003:228) would not be an ideal eating place for various reasons<sup>31</sup>. The remote place does, however, have reference to the feeding story in the *Wilderness*<sup>32</sup> (Green 1997:365).

When John uses a mountain as setting it is possible that he compares Jesus with Moses, who had gone up Mount Sinai (Barrett 1978:273; Little 2009:23-24). Jesus goes up a mountain (Jn. 6:3) just after he claimed the authority of Moses to himself (Jn. 5:46). The mountain is not identified, but this is of lesser importance. The importance of the (unidentified) mountain lies in the fact that a mountain symbolises a place where God is met<sup>33</sup> (Little 2009:24).

Another comparison to the Old Testament and Moses in John 6:3 is the fact that Jesus goes up the mountain and sits with his disciples. Little (2009:24) says that the verb κάθημαι (*sat*) occurs in the LXX "thirty-seven times" of which "the subject is a patriarch, priest, prophet, judge or king, often accompanied by men and companions". John offers the verb in the same form. In Exodus 17:12, for instance, Moses went up to the summit of a hill and sat on a stone, praying for his people during the battle against the Amalekites. Accompanying him was Aaron and Hur (Little 2009:24). In 1 Kings 18:42 Elijah went to the top of Mount Carmel where he sat with his head between his knees to pray for rain. Accompanying him was his slave. Little (2009:24) says that the verb κάθημαι "skilfully enhances" Jesus' identity as a prophet like Moses, and even a king like David.

Little (2009:24) further notes that in John 6:9 a παιδάριον (*lad*)<sup>34</sup> provides the bread and fish which Jesus multiplies. This is another difference in comparison to the synoptic Gospels, where Jesus told the disciples to give the people food. When they complained that the cost would be too great (eight months' worth of wages) Jesus asked them what (food) they had with them. In John's account Jesus asked Phillip where they could buy bread for the people and Andrew pointed to the lad who had

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<sup>31</sup> No proper water for purification rites etc.

<sup>32</sup> See Exodus 16:4-36.

<sup>33</sup> cf. 5.5.1.2

<sup>34</sup> cf. 2 Kings 4:38 where Elisha also gives instructions to a *paidarion*.

bread and fish (Jn. 6:8-9). Philip's response<sup>35</sup> has a strong reference to Numbers 11:22: "Would they have enough if flocks and herds were slaughtered for them? Would they have enough if all the fish in the sea were caught for them?" Little (2009:25) points to the fact that Philip's words have an even "closer affinity with the instructions for eating the Passover lamb": "If any household is too small for a whole lamb, they must share one with their nearest neighbor, having taken into account the number of people there are. You are to determine the amount of lamb needed in accordance with what each person will eat" (Ex. 12:4).

John explains that Jesus multiplied the bread and fish on his own, in other words the disciples had no relevant role in distributing the food as in the Synoptic gospels. Barrett (1978:275) says that John puts the emphasis on "Jesus as the dispenser of life". It should thus be remembered, as was pointed out in Chapter 3, that *semeia* (signs) in the New Testament have the same function as *oth* in the Old Testament. They point to something in the past or future. Little (2009:25) is therefore correct when he notices similarities in the feeding of the 5000 to the feeding of the people in the *Wilderness*, but that the feeding miracle also points forward.

The forward notion becomes especially visible in the important difference between Jesus' feeding of the 5000 and the feeding of the people in the *Wilderness*. During the *Wilderness* the people complained (murmured) about their hunger. In the Synoptic gospels and in John Jesus notices the people's need before they do. They do not complain about hunger. With John's description of the *semeia* (feeding the 5000) the *semeia* points to the fact that Jesus satisfies a "spiritual hunger". The *Wilderness* will give way to the "hope of the new Exodus brought about by Jesus" (Beasley-Murray 1987:87). In John 6:33 Jesus explains that "[...] the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world", and "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry [...]" (Jn. 6:35)<sup>36</sup>. The feeding miracle therefore anticipates the coming Passover and Jesus' own offering (Beasley-Murray 1987:87; Brown 1978:234).

In Luke's account of the narrative the feeding narrative seems to point to "Emmaus road" (Poon 2003:229). In the Emmaus story the disciples recognized Jesus "by the way in which he broke the bread" (Caird 1963:259). Poon (2003:230) explains that in

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<sup>35</sup> "Eight months' wages would not buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!" (Joh 6:7).

<sup>36</sup> Also see John 6:48 and 51.



Luke 9 Jesus “welcomed and fed the crowds” (strangers), while the disciples in the Emmaus story welcomed and fed (Jesus) whom they thought to be a stranger (Lk. 24:16). Luke thus directs his narrative in a direction which shows how Jesus’ example was followed by his disciples, especially regarding “the theme of food and feeding” (Poon 2003:230).

Only John has reference to the people’s reaction to the feeding miracle (Jn. 6:14). They see Jesus as a prophet<sup>37</sup>. In their words “[...] who is to come into the world” (Jn. 6:14), a reference to the prophet Elijah is made (Brown 1978:235). In Chapter 5 of this thesis (1 Kgs. 19) a parallel between Moses and Elijah was drawn. Brown (1978:235) says that “the popular expectation” in John 6:14 would be “an amalgamation” of the figures Moses, Elijah and Jesus. However, in their thoughts about what actually happened in front of them, the crowd misunderstood Jesus and wanted to make him king by force (ἀρπάζειν)<sup>38</sup>. The verb ἀρπάζειν is used in the New Testament “in parables which speak of the conflict between the kingdom of God and that of Satan” (Kittel 1964:472).

Jesus saw the notion of the crowd as a new temptation from Satan and decided to withdraw from the crowd and went further up the mountain by himself (Groenewald 1980:149; Little 2009:28; Smelik 1973:133). Little (2009:29) mentions that the crowd is repeating the same mistake of the elders who “approached Samuel by choosing a king for themselves” (1 Sam. 8:5). As was the case in Exodus 16:8, where the people’s rumbling against Moses was seen as murmuring against YHWH, so too YHWH told Samuel that the people were turning against YHWH by searching for an earthly king. The Deuteronomistic history has shown that “nearly every monarch of Israel and Judah” fell because they “did what was evil in the sight of the Lord” (Little 2009:28, 29). Jesus was not prepared to start another cycle which would cause the “downfall of king and nation”. When Jesus withdrew (ἀναχωρέω)<sup>39</sup> from the crowd, the “Mosaic and royal theme associated with Jesus” continued<sup>40</sup>.

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<sup>37</sup> Also see John 9:17 and Luke 7:16; 24:19.

<sup>38</sup> This is a strong word, meaning to *steal, carry off, drag away, take or snatch away* “and conveys the idea of force suddenly exercised” (Kittel 1964:472; Strong 2001 - 726).

<sup>39</sup> This verb occurs 12 times in the Old Testament, “usually in the context of flight from death or captivity” (Little 2009:28).

<sup>40</sup> Moses fled from the Pharaoh (Ex. 2:15). David fled from Saul (1 Sam. 19:10); Elijah fled from Jezebel (1 Kgs. 19:1).

In the end, parallels of the feeding story in the synoptic Gospels and John, differ considerably regarding one fact, death. Moses and Elijah do not die at the hands of a king or the crowds, though they had both fled at some stage. Jesus, on the contrary, does become a victim, eventually, by the hands of the crowd.

### 6.3.4 Raising of the dead miracles

There are four narratives narrating a scene where somebody is raised from the dead: A widow of Nain's son (Lk. 7:11-17); The daughter of Jairus (Matt. 9:18-26; Mk. 5:21-43; Lk. 8:40-56); Lazarus (Jn. 11:33-44); and of course Jesus' own defeat over death (Matt. 28:1-10; Mk. 16:1-8; Lk. 24:1-12; Jn. 20:1-18). As was the case with the healing miracles, choosing a narrative on which to elaborate, is not easy. Jesus' own defeat over death is important, but will receive ample attention in the B section of this chapter. The narrative of the daughter of Jairus is tempting, but the insertion of another narrative regarding a woman who suffered from bleeding would make the narrative too broad for discussion. The narrative of the widow of Nain's son seems a logical narrative to discuss for the aim of this thesis. The narrative is described by Luke only. A synoptic chart to point out differences is therefore not necessary.

"Soon afterward, Jesus went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd went along with him. As he approached the town gate, a dead person was being carried out—the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the town was with her. When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her and he said, 'Don't cry.' Then he went up and touched the coffin, and those carrying it stood still. He said, 'Young man, I say to you, get up!' The dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him back to his mother. They were all filled with awe and praised God. 'A great prophet has appeared among us,' they said. 'God has come to help his people.' This news about Jesus spread throughout Judea and the surrounding country" (Lk. 7:11-17).

Harris (1986:295) says that the miracle regarding the revivification of the widow of Nain's son "elucidates the distinctive character" of the mission of Christ: *Disease* (Lk. 7:1-10) and even *death* (Lk.7:11-17) are subordinate to the power of Jesus. Through Jesus, "the dead are raised" (Lk. 7:22)<sup>41</sup>. The story begins with *Kai éγένητο ἐν τῷ ἔξῃς*

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<sup>41</sup> cf. Isaiah 26:19

(And it happened next...), thus tying this story to the previous. In the previous story Jesus healed an “almost dead person”, now He raises a person who is really dead (Twelftree 1999:153).

Luke emphasizes the sadness of the event by the mentioning of *μονογενῆς υἱός* (only son)<sup>42</sup> and *καὶ αὐτὴ ἦν χήρα* (and she was a widow). The fact that a widow has lost her only son means that she potentially has no one to look after her in her old age (Greene-McCreight 2007:16; Story 2009:15). The same scenario applied to the widow of Zarephath in 1 Kings 17:17 (Fitzmyer 1983:656; Twelftree 1999:154). Further striking similarities between Luke 7:11-17 and the narrative in 1 Kings 17 are the fact that Jesus met the widow at the gate of the city, as Elijah met a widow at a city’s gate (Lk. 7:12; 1 Kgs. 17:10); Jesus restores the son’s life as did Elijah (Lk. 7:14; 1 Kgs. 17:22); Jesus gave the son back to his mother as did Elijah (Lk. 7:15; 1 Kgs. 17:23); Jesus is recognized as a great prophet, likewise was Elijah (Lk. 7:16; 1 Kgs. 17:24).

Fitzmyer (1983:215, 656) says that Luke is thus using this story to show that a “new phase of salvation-history” is starting to unfold. Jesus is the “bringer of God’s word to mankind” and does it like a prophet. Brodie (1986:247-248) claims that Luke made use of a Hellenistic practice called “imitatio”. This means that Luke *moulded* his narrative on 1 Kings 17:23ff. Brodie (2000:83) builds his theory on similarities in “central themes, basic structures, and specific episodes” between Luke’s gospel and the Elijah/Elisha narratives. Furthermore, according to Brodie (2000:96), Luke internalized the Old Testament narrative to his own situation. Twelftree (1999:307) calls it the “Christianizing” of “Elijah’s raising of the son of the widow of Zarephath”.

Although Brodie’s suggestions regarding the similarities between Luke 7 and 1 Kings 17 could not be denied (Achte-meier 1975:561), there are important differences between the narrative in Luke 7 and 1 Kings 17, of which the most important would be Jesus’ command to the widow’s son: *νεανίσκε, σοὶ λέγω, ἐγέρθητι* (young man I say to you, arise! [Lk. 7:14]). Luke shows that Jesus is more than Elijah. By a command of his powerful word, Jesus raises the widow’s son. Elijah had to stretch himself over the son and pray to YHWH (Fitzmyer 1983:656; 1 Kgs. 17:21) in order to raise the boy from the dead. Jesus is thus not *the new Elijah*; he has authority of his own, even more than Elijah. An outstanding aspect in the Lucan gospel is Jesus’ activities which

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<sup>42</sup> Luke uses this saying three times, in Luke 7:12; 8:42; 9:38 (Twelftree 1999:154)

compare to that of a prophet (like Elijah), but eventually, as Croatto (2005:454) states, the “symbolic, transcendent Messiah replaces the historical prophet”.

Within the narrative of Luke 7:11-17 Jesus’ pity and compassion towards the widow is shown in that he (Jesus) violates the “law of ritual purity” when he touches the coffin in/on which the dead was carried (Greene-McCreight 2007:16; Harris 1986:295; Story 2009:15). There is no need for forgiveness and the widow does not ask Jesus for help. The act is done by Jesus because he wanted to. Story (2009:15) mentions that in Luke’s gospel, stories are “knit together” more than once to express Jesus’ “mission to the *outsider*”; his “rejection of false distinctions between clean and unclean”; and he eliminates the thought of injurious treatment towards the needy, especially women. Jesus thus “nullifies religious and social taboos” when responding compassionately to those in desperate need (Story 2009:15).

By an “escalating demonstration” of Jesus’ power, Luke is giving the impression that the miracles of Jesus are actually preparing the way for an answer to John’s disciples in the next narrative when John wanted to know of Jesus whether he is “the one who was to come” (Lk. 7:18). Furthermore, “by aligning” the narrative of *the widow of Nain’s son* “to that of Elijah” Luke is already portraying Jesus “as the one who will be taken up by God to return again” (Twelftree 1999:153-154).

### **6.3.5 Ascension of Christ**

The ascension of Christ is described in only one of the Gospels, Luke<sup>43</sup>. Luke, in fact, describes the event twice (Lk. 24:50-53; Acts 1:4-11). The scope of this thesis does not permit an investigation of why Matthew and John (or Mark) do not narrate the ascension of Christ in their gospels. The focus will thus be to find references to the narratives of Moses and Elijah within the texts of Luke (including Acts), which are set out in the table below.

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<sup>43</sup> It is widely accepted that Mark 16:9-20 was inserted by another author (middle of the second century) and did not form part of the original Gospel (Lane 1982:605), therefore only Luke’s “double” account of the ascension narrative will be looked at.

**TABLE 6.5: REFERENCES TO THE NARRATIVES OF MOSES AND ELIJAH WITHIN THE TEXTS OF LUKE (INCLUDING ACTS)**

LUKE 24:42, 43, 47, 49, 50-53	ACTS 1:4-8
<p>"They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate it in their presence" (Lk. 24:42-43) [...] οἱ δὲ ἐπέδωκαν αὐτῷ ἰχθύος ὀπτοῦ μέρος· καὶ λαβὼν ἐνώπιον αὐτῶν ἔφαγεν.</p> <p>"He told them" (Lk. 24:46) [...] Εἶπεν δὲ πρὸς αὐτούς· "[...] and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Lk. 24:47) [...] καὶ κηρυχθῆναι ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι αὐτοῦ μετάνοιαν εἰς ἅφεςιν ἁμαρτιῶν εἰς πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, ἀρξάμενοι ἀπὸ Ἱερουσαλήμ "I am going to send you what my Father has promised; [...]" καὶ [ἰδοῦ] ἐγὼ ἀποστέλλω τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν τοῦ πατρός μου ἐφ' ὑμᾶς· "[...] but stay in the city [...]" (Lk. 24:49) ὕμεῖς δὲ καθίσατε ἐν τῇ πόλει</p> <p>[...] until you have been clothed with power from on high." (Lk. 24:49) ἕως οὗ ἐνδύσησθε ἐξ ὕψους δύναμιν.</p>	<p>"And, being assembled together with <i>them</i>," (Act 1:4 KJV) καὶ συναλιζόμενος</p> <p>"[...] he gave them this command": παρήγγειλεν αὐτοῖς 'Do not leave Jerusalem, [...]' (Act 1:4) ἀπὸ Ἱεροσολύμων μὴ χωρίζεσθαι</p> <p>[...] but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about (Act 1:4) [...]" ἀλλὰ περιμένειν τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν τοῦ πατρὸς ἣν ἠκούσατέ μου,</p> <p>"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Act 1:8) ἀλλὰ λήμψεσθε δύναμιν ἐπελθόντος τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος ἐφ' ὑμᾶς καὶ ἔσεσθέ μου μάρτυρες ἐν τε Ἱερουσαλήμ καὶ [ἐν] πάσῃ τῇ Ἰουδαίᾳ καὶ Σαμαρείᾳ καὶ ἕως ἐσχάτου τῆς γῆς.</p>
<p>"When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them" (Lk. 24:50) Ἐξήγαγεν δὲ αὐτούς [ἔξω] ἕως πρὸς Βηθανίαν, καὶ ἐπάρας τὰς χεῖρας αὐτοῦ εὐλόγησεν αὐτούς.</p>	<p>"After he said this, (Act 1:9) [...] Καὶ ταῦτα εἰπὼν</p>
<p>"While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven" (Lk. 24:51) καὶ ἐγένετο ἐν τῷ εὐλογεῖν αὐτὸν αὐτούς διέστη ἀπ' αὐτῶν καὶ ἀνεφέρετο εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν</p>	<p>[...] he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight" (Act 1:9) βλεπόντων αὐτῶν ἐπήρθη καὶ νεφέλη ὑπέλαβεν αὐτὸν ἀπὸ τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν αὐτῶν.</p>
<p>"Then they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy" (Lk. 24:52) Καὶ αὐτοὶ προσκυνήσαντες αὐτὸν ὑπέστρεψαν εἰς Ἱερουσαλήμ μετὰ χαρᾶς μεγάλης</p>	<p>"Then they returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath day's walk from the city" (Act 1:12) Τότε ὑπέστρεψαν εἰς Ἱερουσαλήμ ἀπὸ ὄρους τοῦ καλουμένου Ἐλαιῶνος, ὃ ἐστὶν ἐγγὺς Ἱερουσαλήμ σαββάτου ἔχον ὁδόν.</p>
<p>"And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God" (Lk. 24:53) καὶ ἦσαν διὰ παντός ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ εὐλογοῦντες τὸν θεόν.</p>	

Luke narrates Jesus' ascension in the motion from "earth to heaven". In other words, Luke makes use of a *down-up* movement (Van Zyl 2002:548), which can also be

described as a journey narrative<sup>44</sup> (Scobie 2005:329). The journey motif is a “key theme” which links Luke to Old Testament Scriptures (Scobie 2005:329,332). Knight (1998:65) sees the journey from Galilee to Jerusalem as “the major structural element” in Luke’s Gospel. This section (Lk. 9:51-19:44) also has no parallel in the gospel of Mark (Scobie 2005:332).

The journey, which starts at Galilee, is actually a journey to death, but eventually also a journey to “resurrection and heavenly glory<sup>45</sup>” (Knight 1998:65), which the *down-up* movement points out (Van Zyl 2002:548). Only through death can the “new covenant” be inaugurated (Lk. 22:20), this will “be realized with the full appearance of the kingdom of God” (Knight 1998:65). Jesus will first go *down* (to the netherworld) to defeat Satan, and then *go up* to heaven and then send *down* his Spirit on his disciples/church so that they can proclaim the word of the kingdom of God (Van Zyl 2002:548-549). It could be described in another way: During the downward journey Jesus portrays images of Elijah as He heals the sick and raises the dead along his way. Eventually Jesus moves up (to heaven) like Elijah, sends down his Spirit so that the church can proclaim the word of God, like Moses (Croatto 2005:465).

Croatto (2005:456) notices a second important feature in how Luke describes the ascension narrative of Christ. On the journey which Jesus and his disciples undertook, they travelled south (came from the north). This means that they had to “*ascend* to reach Jerusalem<sup>46</sup>”. Croatto (2005:456) sees an imitation of an episode which took place in the Old Testament (2 Kgs. 2:1-11) before Elijah was taken up (ἐν τῷ ἀνάγειν [2Ki 2:1 BGT])<sup>47</sup> to heaven. In 2 Kings 2 Elijah requested Elisha to stay behind (remain sitting [κάθου (2Ki 2:2 BGT)]), while he (Elijah) went to Gilgal, Jericho and Jordan, respectively (2 Kgs. 2:2, 4, 6). Jesus has the same request to his disciples (to be seated): “[...] ὑμεῖς δὲ καθίσατε ἐν τῇ πόλει [...]” (Lk. 24:49 BGT). They had to wait in Jerusalem for the Spirit to come upon them. The same verb is found in Acts 2:3 when the Spirit came upon (καθίζω *seated upon*) the people. After Elijah was taken up to heaven, his spirit rested upon (ἐπαναπέπαιται) Elisha (2 Kgs. 2:15). Croatto (2005:457) says that the verb ἐπαναπέπαιται is “overcharged with particles that mean *on* and *up* (ἐπι-ανα-παιώ). In the same way the Spirit would rest *upon* the disciples.

<sup>44</sup> Ref. 5.7.1.2 par. 6 & 7

<sup>45</sup> Ref. Acts 2:36

<sup>46</sup> Ref. Luke 19:28 “After Jesus had said this, he went on ahead, going up [ἀναβαίνων] to Jerusalem”

<sup>47</sup> ἀνάγειν is the equivalent of ἀνεφέρετο in Luke 24:51 (Croatto 2005:456)

As Elisha had been appointed with a “concrete function of leadership” (Croatto 2005:458), so the disciples would have a concrete function in taking the lead to spread the word of the Lord to all the nations when the Spirit of the Lord came to rest *upon* them.

A third aspect noticeable in Luke’s report of the ascension of Christ is the blessing (εὐλογέω) of Christ upon his disciples (Lk. 24:50, 51). Kacic (2005:248) mentions that the “idea of blessing” is used extensively in Luke’s Gospel in various forms<sup>48</sup>, which highlight “important Old Testament language and imagery”. The Hebrew root denoting blessing is בָּרַךְ (*barak*) and is generally used to express the thought of *blessing*<sup>49</sup>, “covering everything from creation to patriarchal blessings”. In the Old Testament it was, in particular, YHWH’s appointed agents who had the power “of pronouncing blessings in Israel” (Kacic 2005:248). Kacic (2005:248) notices a “rhythm or movement” with regard to blessing in the gospel of Luke. It starts with Mary who is blessed because of her belief that God will, through her child, fulfill His promises to Israel. Jesus himself is blessed on numerous occasions (Lk. 2:34; 3:21; 9:35; 19:38). The language of blessing, says Kacic (2005:248) can equally be understood “in terms of *presence*”: The Lord is with Mary and with her (His) son.

Throughout the narrative scenes denoting blessing, the Lord’s *redemptive presence* intertwines with the larger narrative plot. Note that YHWH’s presence was also a strong theme in the narratives of Moses and Elijah, described in chapters four and five of this thesis. Of further note is the visible presence described in Luke 9:32 (“they saw his glory and the two men standing with him [...]”), a point further discussed in the B section of this chapter. Also note that the disciples were not sad after Jesus was taken up into heaven. They were joyful, knowing that the parting from Jesus was not a final “farewell”, but “the withdrawal to a greater nearness [presence]” (Maile 1986:57).

For Stempvoort (1959:34) Luke presents Jesus in a priestly fashion. The disciples (and the first readers) must have experienced the benediction “as embodied in the ascending of Christ” as an uplifting experience (Kacic 2005:250). With artful precision Luke begins and ends his Gospel with the same images (Fitzmyer 1985:1591):

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<sup>48</sup> See for instance Luke 1:42, 68-69; 2:28-32 etc.

<sup>49</sup> To speak well of; to praise; “to celebrate with praises of that which is addressed to God” – for His glory (Strong 2001 - 2127)

- In the beginning there was a priest (Zechariah) who went “into the temple of the Lord” to burn incense (Lk. 1:9). The custom was that after the priest made the incense offering in the temple, he would go outside and bless the people waiting outside of the temple<sup>50</sup>. Zechariah could, however, not bless the people, because of his unbelief (Lk. 1:20). This is thus an “unfinished *leitourgia*” (Stempvoort 1959:35).
- At the end (Lk. 24:50) there was a real priestly blessing, a “finished *leitourgia*” (Stempvoort 1959:35). It happened, not outside the temple, but away from the temple<sup>51</sup>, on a mountain and, it should be added: After an offering? Jesus has made the “perfect and final sacrifice” (by his death) and therefore secured forgiveness for the sins of the people (Kapic 2005:252).

Fitzmyer (1985:1590) puts it this way: “What Zechariah [...] could not do [assuring people of forgiveness of their sins after the sacramental rite], that Jesus does to his silent followers”. The narrative thus ends as it began, in/at the temple... (Lk. 1:5; 24:53).

Back to the ascension then: Questions have been raised as to whether Jesus’ ascension could be related to that of Elijah (or even Moses?), contra Croatto (2005). For Wright (2003:655) a direct comparison is not possible, for the one reason only: Jesus *died before* his ascending to heaven<sup>52</sup> and Elijah did not die, but was *taken up* to heaven *directly*<sup>53</sup>. A better parallel, for Wright (2003:655) to the Old Testament Scriptures, would be to Daniel 7:9-27. Here, in Daniel 7, Wright (2003:655) points to the fact that “one like a son of man” [...] was exalted to be seated “beside the ancient of days”<sup>54</sup>. According to Daniel 7 the son of man was exalted after he suffered under, particularly, the fourth beast.

The emphasis of the ascension narrative is thus about the “vindication of Jesus as Israel’s representative” and the fact that he will give divine judgment (compared to Daniel 7) against the “pagan nations who have oppressed Israel” (Wright 2003:655). For Wright (2003:655) the current rulers (within Luke’s gospel) who corrupted Israel

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<sup>50</sup> For a full description on this account see Stempvoort (1959:34-35)

<sup>51</sup> According to Stempvoort (1959:35) this is the dawning of a new age for the Church.

<sup>52</sup> Ascension implies that He also rose from the dead.

<sup>53</sup> It remains significant though, that a cloud is mentioned in both Luke’s account of the ascension narrative in Acts 1:9 and in the narrative of 2 Kings 2:11 where Elijah ascended to heaven. In 2 Kings 2:11 a cloud separated (blocked the vision of Elisha) Elijah and Elisha from each other, while in Acts 1:9 “a cloud hid him [Jesus] from their [disciples] sight”.

<sup>54</sup> Refer to Daniel 7:13, where the son of man came to the throne on a cloud.



will also be judged. It starts with the glorification of the Messiah. Wright has a point when comparing Luke's ascension narrative to the "vindication of Jesus as Israel's representative". But so does Croatto when comparing the ascension narrative to Elijah. Croatto focuses on the role of the Spirit, while Wright focuses on the vindication of Jesus as Israel's representative. The ongoing narrative of Luke in Acts will show both Croatto and Wright to be right. The fact remains, there are definite intertextual motifs pointing to the Old Testament, within the ascension narrative as described by Luke.

For Craig (1989:305), the ascension of Christ in Luke's gospel is not about the glorification of Jesus, but "simply the decisive end of the appearance of Jesus". It could, however, not *simply be* a decisive end "of the appearance of Jesus", for the narrative does not end with the ascension, but continues with the working of the Spirit in those who followed Jesus<sup>55</sup>. For Crüsemann (2002:96) there is never a final conclusion to a narrative, because history goes on, and the Kingdom of God will go on: "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

To conclude: The kingdom of God does not end with the ascension of Christ, as the "ascension is not the final encounter of Jesus with his apostles" [or church] (De Jonge 2013:167). The kingdom of God goes on and Christ's *absent presence* stays with his church.

#### **6.4 THEOLOGY (DENOUEMENT)**

To conclude the first half of Chapter 6 then: Five aspects regarding the miracles of Jesus, described from different Gospel perspectives have been looked at. These five aspects, or rather miracle themes, all point to Jesus as being a "prophet like Elijah, and prophet-teacher like Moses" (Croatto 2005:451). It has to be said though, that the miracles seem to be more than that. Jesus was greater than Moses and Elijah, as his miracles not only point backwards (Moses and Elijah), but also to God and his *Kingdom* (Twelftree 2011:114). The miracles of Jesus show that Jesus had power over and above sickness, nature and even death.

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<sup>55</sup> The story of the Spirit and the growth of the early church falls outside the framework of this thesis, but could be an interesting study, especially regarding the comparison of miracles to the three Epochs investigated in this thesis. Could there possibly be a fourth Epoch?

The three Synoptic gospels and John had different emphases in their narratives to establish an eventual outcome to their stories. Matthew has put some emphasis on the faith of the individual. Matthew also shows Jesus to have sensational power, while he (Jesus) also focused comprehensively on teaching. For Mark the conflict between the Miracle worker and the authorities seems to be in the forefront, while at the same time those who experienced miracles first hand were instructed (by Jesus) not to tell anyone what had happened to them.

In Luke's account of the gospel story there seems to be balance between the teachings and miracles of Jesus. Luke emphasises the importance of discipleship to some extent, with the assurance of Jesus' presence, especially after his ascension. John has only two miracles which parallel to the three Synoptic Gospels. For John, the sign-aspect (*semeion*) of Jesus' miracles is important. *Semeia*, as *oth* in the Old Testament, serve as *pointers*, pointing to Old Testament miracles (especially surrounding Moses and Elijah), mainly to emphasise the fact that Jesus is the Messiah, giver of eternal life (Twelftree 2011:115).

Although there seems to be different emphases in the synoptic gospels and John regarding the miracles of Jesus, they all do portray Jesus as a powerful miracle worker, working wonders in *nature*, *healing*, *nurturing*, *raising* of the dead and *ascending* to heaven.

#### **6.4.1 Nature miracles**

Regarding the miracle of the calming of the sea, Jesus' power over nature has been demonstrated significantly. He is Lord over everything, also the sea. A mass of water is no barrier to him. As for water symbolising evil forces, Jesus thus has power over them as well. His power over the sea and these (evil) forces leads to the question: "Who is he...?" The answer would eventually come: "*Ego eimi*" (it is I...), referring *inter alia* to Exodus 3-4: "Do not be afraid, for it is I..." The miracle account of Jesus' power over nature causes his disciples to become aware of his *presence*. It fills them with awe, but also fills them with fear...

### 6.4.2 Healing miracles

Jesus offered unmerited *favour* (grace) through the healing of sick and possessed people. He was not restricted to work (heal) in Israel (Jewish territory) only, for his *kingdom* covers the world. Through healing, Jesus showed *compassion* even to the least expected (outcast people). Of note regarding the healing miracles of Jesus is the emphasis placed on faith, prior to the performing of miracles, faith in the “ability of the Lord and in the truthfulness of his Word” (Brown 1995:223). More than once people had to believe that when they got back to their homes, their loved ones would have been healed. Healing miracles also authenticated Jesus as a true prophet (Messiah).

### 6.4.3 Nurture miracles

With the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand it is significant that the focus of the narrative was not on the bread or the fish, but on Jesus. Through Jesus the source of the meal (God) was recognised. The breaking of the bread served as *pointer*, backwards with reference to the Passover meal in Egypt (Ex.12:14), the feeding story in the Wilderness (Ex. 16), and the multiplying of the flour in the jar (1 Kgs. 17). It also served as *pointer* forward, in that Jesus satisfied a *spiritual hunger*. He is the *bread of life* (Jn. 6:35, 48, 51). It also points (*anticipates*) to the *coming Passover*, Jesus’ own offering...

### 6.4.4 Raising of the dead

Death and sickness are sub-ordinate to the power of Jesus. With the raising of the widow of Nain’s son from the dead, there is a strong intertextual interplay with 1 Kings 17. This miracle of Jesus opens up a new phase of salvation history. Jesus is not only a prophet like Elijah, he is more than Elijah. With only a word spoken he raises people from the dead. The *transcended* Messiah replaces the historical prophet. *Compassion* to the *outsider* is shown again. Jesus nullifies religious and social taboos while he responds compassionately to those in need.

The narrative points backwards to Elijah’s story in 1 Kings 17, but also forward in that it portrays Jesus as the One who will ascend to heaven and return again. The risen Jesus will “replace both the prophet-teacher Moses and the prophet Elijah”, as he alone remains (Croatto 2005:461).

#### 6.4.5 Ascension

The ascension of Christ begins as a journey narrative which has its starting point already in Luke 9:51. The journey is described with a *down-up* motif. At first it is a journey towards death (*down*), where Satan is defeated. The journey then continues upwards, first with regard to the *resurrection* of Christ, and then his *ascension* to heaven. Important to note is that there is not an end to the ascension narrative, as it “ends” with an *open end*. The open end is suggested by the Holy Spirit who will fall *down* on those who follow Jesus.

During the first (*downward*) journey Jesus portrays images of Elijah, as he heals the sick and raises the dead. Unlike Elijah though, Jesus dies, then rises from death, before he ascends to heaven. Jesus blesses his disciples before his ascension to heaven, assuring them of his *grace* and *presence*. When his Spirit eventually falls on his followers (church), they proclaim his word, as Moses did. The pattern of the Scriptures is thus being kept by the followers of Jesus (the church). They received the *blessing* from Christ (assurance of his *presence*) and “became a blessing to others through the spreading of the good news” (Kapic 2005:252).

### 6.5 CONCLUSION

The miracles of Jesus find their culmination in the *blessing* of Christ before his ascension. It is a priestly benediction from *the* High Priest, “held out as a hope [*presence*] not only for Israel, but for the world” (Kapic 2005:253). In the gospel narratives Jesus has been portrayed as a prophet like Elijah and a prophet-teacher like Moses (Croatto 2005:465). But, as has been said, he was eventually described to be more than Elijah and Moses. Moses and Elijah’s wondrous acts pointed to YHWH. The miracles of Jesus also served as pointers. They pointed toward the answer to the question: “Who is he...” The answer: “*Ego Eimi*”.

The miracle pointers also enhanced memory (Crüsemann 2002:101). With the miracle wonders of Jesus, memory of similar miraculous events in history (Moses and Elijah) was brought to the front. As believers during Deuteronomistic times were reminded of YHWH’s comforting *presence*, so too were Jesus’ followers reminded of *his presence*. Memory, particularly memory of God’s miracles, is a reminder that there is no end to the Lord’s gracious *presence*: “I will be with you [...]” (Ex. 3:12; Matt. 28:20).

## CHAPTER 6B

## MIRACLES SURROUNDING THE FIGURE OF JESUS: A CLOSER INVESTIGATION

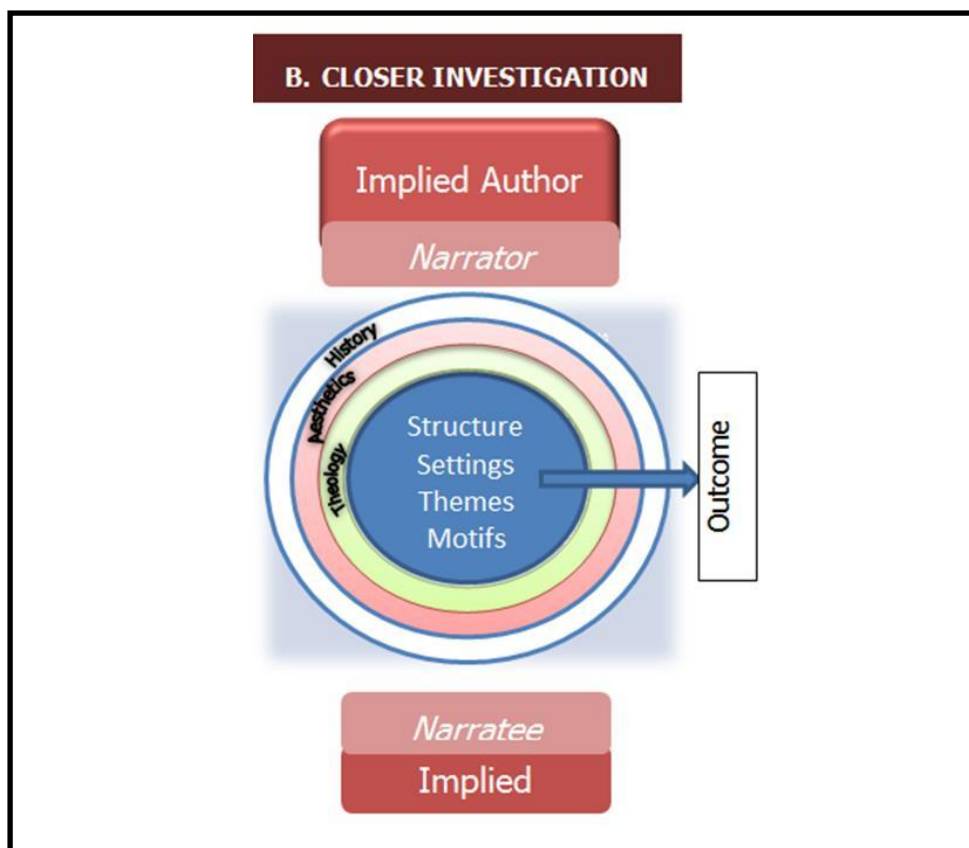


FIGURE 6.2: STRUCTURAL OUTLINE

As was explained in chapter 1 of this thesis, the same structural outline which applied to chapters 4 and 5 will apply to this section of the thesis. Not all of the *settings*, *themes* and *motifs* found in the New Testament could be investigated, as, once again, the space and scope of this investigation do not permit a fuller study. Only (similar) *settings*, *themes* and *motifs* to those described in Chapters 4 and 5 will be investigated. Describing the *structure* of each synoptic Gospel and John is an even more challenging task, for the same reasons (space and scope) mentioned above.

In Chapters 4 and 5 there was only *one* story-line to deal with, now there are four. The emphasis with regard to *structure* in this section of chapter six will thus be to give a brief outline of how the miracle narratives in the gospel of Matthew<sup>56</sup> are structured. A

<sup>56</sup> Ideally all three Synoptic Gospels and John should be looked at, but the scope of investigation for this study does not permit it. The gospel of Matthew will suite as an example to demonstrate how the methodological "tool" which was also used in chapters four and five, can be used to point out similarities between miracles in Epoch 1, 2 and 3. With regard to *Settings*, *Themes* and

lesser focus on the other two Gospels and John will be given on structure, as Dever (2005:41) puts it clearly: "We begin where the New Testament begins, with Matthew, who presents the new with an understanding of its rootedness in the past". This will be followed by commentary on some of the *settings*, *themes* and *motifs* to be found in the three synoptic Gospels and John. The outcome will be to identify intertextual links to miracle narratives surrounding the figures of Moses and Elijah in the Old Testament and to see what theological significance, if any, these intertextual links have with the Gospel narratives.

## 6.6 STRUCTURE

With regard to the structural outline of the gospel of Matthew, Carson & Moo (2005:135) has this to say: "That Matthew was a skilled literary craftsman no one denies. Disagreements over the structure of this gospel arise because there are so many overlapping and competing structural pointers that it appears impossible to establish a consensus on their relative importance". When considering the structure of Mathew as a whole, there are basically three dominant theories (Carson & Moo 2005:135):

First, a geographic framework related to Mark's gospel was detected by some scholars (McNeile 1915:xii). Matthew 1:1–2:23 is then seen as the prologue, which is tied to 3:1–4:11 (Jesus' preparation for ministry). An introduction parallel to Mark 1:1–13 could be visible. Matthew 4:12–13:58 describes Jesus' ministering in Galilee (cf. Mark 1:14–6:13), extending to other locales in the North (Matt. 14:1–16:12; Mark 6:14–8:26). From here Jesus begins to move towards Jerusalem (Matt. 16:13–20:34; Mark 8:27–10:52). The confrontation in Jerusalem (Matt. 21:1–25:46; Mark 11:1–13:37) culminates in his passion and resurrection (Matt. 26:1–28:20; Mark 14:1–16:8). Carson & Moo (2005:135) say that although the above analysis "rightly reflects the broad chronological development of Jesus' ministry and preserves some geographic distinctions", it is based on a selection of thematic considerations and "does not reflect on the literary markers that Matthew has left us [...]", and gives "little of the purposes that are uniquely Matthew's".

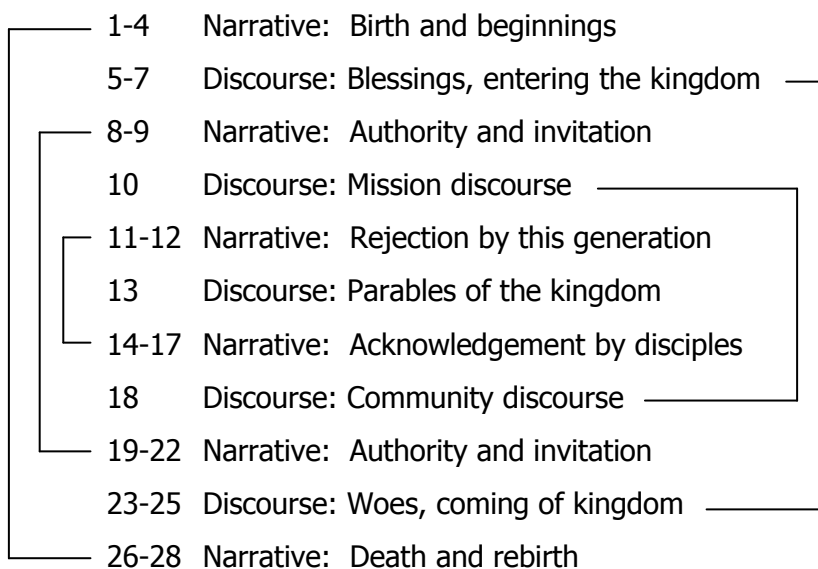
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*Motifs*, the emphasis will fall on whichever of the Synoptic Gospels and John have the strongest or closest intertextual link/s to Epoch 1 and/or 2.

A second attempt to a structural outline of Mathew, say Carson & Moo (2005:136), was made by scholars (see Kingsbury 1978:12-25) when they “argued for three large sections, tightly tied to Christological development”. In the first section “The Person of Jesus Messiah” is titled (Matt. 1:1–4:16); in the second, “The Proclamation of Jesus Messiah” (Matt. 4:17–16:20) is given; and, in the third, “The Suffering, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus Messiah” (Matt. 16:21–28:20) are described. An important weakness of this outline, according to Carson & Moo (2005:136), is the fact that the important passage regarding Peter’s confession in Matthew 16 is broken up in an unacceptable way.

A third proposed structure opts for seven sections, of which the first section (Matt. 1-2) serves as a preamble and the last (Matt. 26-28) as an epilogue. Between the preamble and the epilogue five discourses are presented (Dever 2005:43). Each of these discourses, say Carson & Moo (2005:136), “begins in a specific context and ends with a formula found nowhere else (lit. ‘And it happened, when Jesus had finished saying these things, that . . .’ [Matt. 7:28–29; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1])”. Within these five sections, pairs of narrative-themes with discourses are noticeable: *Discipleship* (narrative, chaps. 3–4; discourse, chaps. 5–7); *Apostleship* (narrative, 8–9; discourse, 10); *Hiding of the revelation* (narrative, 11–12; discourse, 13); *Church administration* (narrative, 14–17; discourse, 18); *Judgment* (narrative, 19–22; discourse, 23–25) (Davies & Allison 2004b:59; Dever 2005:43).

Lohr (1961:427) has broadened the alternation between *narrative* and *discourse* and sees the gospel of Mathew, taken as a whole, “as one great symmetrical structure”:



Lohr (1961:428) says that the above structure supplies a key to the reader towards understanding the “meaning of the Gospel as the Evangelist himself saw it”. The pivot point is shown to be “the parables of the Kingdom” around “which the other sayings and doings of Jesus revolve”. The structure also shows how narratives and discourse interrelate to each other. A narrative does, in other words, not stand on its own, but points forward or backwards in its meaning. This is precisely what has been explained in chapter three with regard to miracles. They point forward and/or backwards. Lohr (1961:430) illustrates this point with the theme of bread, which is central in Mathew 14-17. The bread theme is “foreshadowed by the hunger of the disciples and their picking of the heads of wheat, which occasions Jesus’ comparison of David and his companions eating the Presentation Loaves (Matt. 12:1-4)”. Lohr (1961:434) concludes by saying that the writer of Mathew carefully arranged particular elements of the Meta-narrative in order to serve a single purpose. Important to know is that the community he wrote to, would easily appreciate and understand his chiasmic-symmetrical technique, as such techniques were not unfamiliar to them.

When looking at miracle stories, it is noticeable that in the gospel of Matthew, a concentration of miracles is written down between Matthew 8:14-9:34 (ten miracles)<sup>57</sup>, only to taper down as the Meta-narrative progresses (Matt. 12:9-15:39 – nine miracles; Matt. 17:1-20 – two miracles; Matt. 20:29-34 – one miracle; Matt. 28:1-10 – one miracle). Sunderwirth (1975:64-70) noticed the same characteristic in the gospel of Mark. The author of Mark gathered miracle stories into clusters or cycles, a phenomenon also noticeable in “Biblical stories of Moses and Elijah” (Sunderwirth 1975:70). These cycles have been pointed out in chapters four and five of this thesis and need no further attention at this stage, except that a consistent pattern within the cycles was noticeable. Sunderwirth (1975:73) states that “the presence of this pattern and structure in the miracle stories of Moses reinforces the viability of a similar arrangement of miracle stories in Mark’s gospel”.

The same pattern is found in the miracle stories surrounding Elijah and Elisha. The pattern shows that miracles were more numerous in the first half of the cycles “and appear in clusters with conflict themes, confessional refrains and a retreat motif discernible” (Sunderwirth 1975:75). The miracles diminish in the latter part of the cycles. Whether the author of Mark deliberately followed the patterns and cycles of the

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<sup>57</sup> See synoptic chart under 6.1



miracle stories surrounding Moses and Elijah, is not clear. The fact remains though, the *structural* similarities are clear.

Final remarks on structural outline refer to the gospel of John, though only briefly, bearing in mind that the author of John structures his gospel quite differently from the Synoptic Gospels. Lacomara (1974:65) says that various attempts have been made "to discover a literary pattern in the gospel that would depend on the pattern of OT exodus narratives". They had been accepted less commonly though. In Barrett's (1978:11) words: "The structure of the gospel is simple in outline, complicated in detail". Barrett (1978:11) sees the gospel of John to fall in four clear parts, followed by an appendix:

Prologue (Jn. 1:1-18); Narratives, conversations, and discourses (Jn. 1:19-12:50); Jesus alone with his disciples (Jn. 13:1-17:26); the Passion and Resurrection (Jn. 18:1-20:31); an Appendix (Jn. 21:1-25).

As previously mentioned, when describing (only seven or so)<sup>58</sup> miracle narratives, John uses the term 'semeion' (sign). The signs are (more or less) evenly spread throughout the gospel, except for the last sign, which has six chapters between it and the previous sign. Between the last and fore-last sign the so-called "farewell and passion" narratives are found (Lincoln 2005:4-5). According to Clark (1983:205) an outline considering the signs in the gospel of John will appear to be as follows:

- Changing of water into wine (Jn. 2:1-11);
- Curing the royal official's son (Jn. 4:46-54);
- Curing of the paralytic at the pool (Jn. 5:1-17);
- Multiplication of loaves (including walking on water) (Jn. 6:1- 66);
- Curing of man born blind (Jn. 9:1- 41);
- Raising of Lazarus (Jn. 11:1- 44);
- Lifting up of Jesus in death and resurrection (Jn. 18-20).

Clark (1983:205) links the "walking on water" to the "multiplication of loaves", mainly because the incident "is not referred to in the bread of life discourse which follows and which explicates the multiplication". The "walking on water" is furthermore closely

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<sup>58</sup> There is no consensus whether John describes seven or even eight signs. Lincoln (2005:6) has eight signs in his structural outline of John while Clark (1983:205) names seven, explained below.

linked to the “preceding multiplication account”. In its character, it is paschal, in the same way which the Passover meal in Exodus preceded the “crossing of the Red Sea”. The *bread of life discourse* in John 6:22-66, in addition, specifically mentions the *manna in the desert* after the Israelites crossed the Red Sea. The elements of (Passover) bread-water-manna therefore likely form a unity in John 6, says Clark (1983:205).

Lincoln (2005:4-5) structures the gospel of John with four main divisions: The prologue (Jn. 1:1-18); Jesus’ public mission (*signs and glory*, Jn. 1:19-12:50); Jesus’ farewell, passion and resurrection (*departure as glory*, Jn. 13:1-20:31); and The Epilogue (Jn. 21:1-25). During Jesus’ public career (Jn. 1:19-12:50) the author of John presents him as the incarnated Logos “through his deeds and works”, predominantly depicted as *signs*, of which seven, according to Lincoln (2005:6) are recorded. Seven major discourses are also visible, but they are not evenly distributed as in the gospel of Mathew, rather, in John’s Gospel they are interwoven in the meta-narrative (Lincoln 2005:6).

Lincoln (2005:9) sees the last of the seven signs (the raising of Lazarus) as the “pivot point” in John’s Gospel, as it “precipitates Jesus’ death”. This leaves an ironic twist, as the Jewish religious authorities reject Jesus after this point, which leads to his death. In the third division (Jn. 13:1-20:31), also known as the “Book of glory” (Brown 2003:299), however, the author of John aims to assure the Christian community (and replies to non-Christians) that “Jesus’ rejection at the hands of Jewish religious authorities and execution at the hands of the Roman authorities do not invalidate the Christian belief in Jesus as Israel’s Messiah and God’s son” (Evans 2004:56).

Through Jesus, the point is, “people may gain life in the world to come” (Evans 2004:56). To strengthen this insinuation, the author of John inserts a lengthy “I am” discourse in which Jesus defines himself with Old Testament imagery. Evans (2004:56) says that Jesus uttered seven “I am” statements, just as he performed seven signs. Each sign is strengthened with an “I am” discourse, pointing to Jesus as being “the bread of life” (Jn. 6:35, 48); “the light of the world” (Jn. 8:12, 9:5); “the door of the sheep” (Jn. 10:7, 9); “the good shepherd” (Jn. 10:11); “the resurrection and the life” (Jn. 11:25); “the way, the truth, and the life” (Jn. 14:6); and “the true vine” (Jn. 15:1) (Evans 2004:57).

From this brief discussion on the structural outline of John's gospel, it is not clear, then, whether the author of John intended to build his structural outline on the Exodus narrative, like the gospel of Matthew, which tends to show more structural similarities to Epoch one. Regarding miracle narratives in the Synoptic Gospels and John, similarities to narratives in Epoch one and two will now be sought further in *settings*, *themes* and *motifs*.

## 6.7 SETTINGS

Similar settings<sup>59</sup> which were described in chapters four and five will apply here: *Mountains*, *Wilderness* and *Sea*<sup>60</sup>.

### 6.7.1 Mountains

The most obvious setting with an intertextual link to Moses and Elijah would probably be the transfiguration narrative, because here all three figures whose miraculous acts are investigated in this thesis appear together in one scene, on a mountain. The transfiguration scene has in its content been described as "the Gospel in microcosm" (Williams 2002a:14).

All three synoptic Gospels give the transfiguration a central place within the larger plot (Lee 2004:143). The question is why? And why do the three synoptic Gospels find it necessary to tell the story of the transfiguration? To come to an answer to these questions, the significance of a mountain setting in the ancient Near East should be clarified first<sup>61</sup>.

Mountains had *physical* and *ideological* characteristics. The *ideological* characteristics relate "to the moral and social order of the culture"<sup>62</sup> (Hanson 1994:149). The *physical* aspects of a mountain, however, are more relevant with regard to this study. The *physical* characteristics of mountain settings denote "height and distance from society", but can also be seen as a cosmological symbol of "divine-human meeting, as well as

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<sup>59</sup> There are obviously more than these three settings. Jerusalem and the temple could for instance also be regarded as important settings in the Gospels, but they fall outside the scope of this thesis.

<sup>60</sup> Sea could also imply a water mass, like a river or a lake.

<sup>61</sup> See 4.5.1, par. 3

<sup>62</sup> It is therefore no coincidence that the setting of Jesus' sermon in Matthew 5 is on a mountain, as he indeed discusses moral issues relating to the Law of Moses.

the point of creation" (Hanson 1994:149; Pilch 1999:176). Mountains were, therefore, favourable settings for "temples and altars", as they symbolised nearness to the creator of the cosmos. Therefore, throughout the Ancient Near East, mountains were also seen "as locations of ritual performance" (Hanson 1994:151). In addition, mountains (and the wilderness and temples) were associated with eschatological fulfilments (Volschenk 2003:1307).

In the New Testament, *mountain symbolism* played an important role in describing Jesus' story (Hanson 1994:148). Matthew, for instance, uses the mountain as a *focalizing symbol*, as it draws the reader's attention, but also emphasizes "key aspects" of what he (Matthew) wants to communicate to the reader with regard to Jesus' *Sonship* and *Lordship* (Hanson 1994:149).

### ***The transfiguration (Matt. 17:1-9; Mk. 9:2-8; Lk. 9:28-36)***

"After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves" (Matt. 17:1).

Strong intertextual links to Sinai are visible in Matthew's gospel when it comes to mountain settings<sup>63</sup>, of which the transfiguration narrative (Matt. 17:1-9) probably parallels the strongest to Moses (Lee 2004:145; Luz 2001:395-396; Volschenk 2003:1309):

- Jesus' transfiguration took place on a high mountain (ὄρος ὑψηλόν – Matt. 17:1); Mount Sinai was also described as a high mountain (Ezek. 20:40);
- Both Jesus and Moses were accompanied by three people (Matt. 17:1; Ex. 24:9) and went up the mountain on the seventh day (Matt. 17:1; Ex. 24:16);
- Both Jesus and Moses were covered by a cloud (Matt. 17:5; Ex. 24:15);
- A voice out of the cloud spoke to Jesus and to Moses (Matt. 17:5; Ex. 24:16) ;
- Moses' face shone brightly (Ex. 34:29) and Jesus' face and garment became radiant (Matt. 17:2). In both instances those who accompanied them became scared (Matt. 17:6; Ex. 34:30).

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<sup>63</sup> There are five unnamed mountain settings (imaginary mountains – Pilch 1999:178) in Matthew: Mountain of temptation (Matt. 4:8); mountain of teaching (Matt. 5:1; 8:1); mountain of healing and feeding (Matt. 14:13-16:12); mountain of transfiguration (Matt. 17:1-9); mountain of commission (Matt. 28:16-20). A sixth mountain which is named is the mountain of Olives (Matt. 26:30). For a brief overview of the mountain settings in Matthew see Pilch (1999:178-181; Hanson 1994:157-168).

In the Old Testament, Mount Sinai is seen “as the mountain of Israel’s constitution” (Donaldson 1985:41). At this sacred site YHWH “established and maintained” the covenant relationship with his people (Volschenk 2010:3). The reader of Matthew would thus anticipate that, through Jesus, something in this regard is on the verge of happening. In the transfiguration, Jesus is “enthroned as Son of God and revealed on the *new`Sinai`*” (Luz 2001:397).

The mountain in Matthew 17 is linked to Matthew 4:8 [mountain of temptation] and to Matthew 28:16-20 [mountain of commission] (Donaldson 1985:155-156; Luz 2001:398). In these three mountain settings the path of *obedient Sonship*<sup>64</sup> is shown.

According to Evans (2004:47-48), Matthew portrays Jesus as Israel’s Messiah, “the true son of Abraham and of David”, a new Moses who will teach the way of righteousness – the fulfiller of new Law. This is suggested by the presence of Moses and Elijah, together with Jesus on the mountain. Luz (2001:398), however, suggests that Elijah and Moses “are simply representatives of the heavenly world”. If this is the case, why does the author specifically choose Moses and Elijah, and not, for example, Abraham and Jacob, to appear with Jesus on the mountain? Luz (2001:398) is, however, correct in suggesting that when Moses and Elijah disappear, Jesus is elevated above them (Moses and Elijah). The voice of God (which is placed in the centre of this narrative - Matt. 17:5), emphasizes and confirms this notion (Luz 2001:398).

In Matthew 4 Jesus chose to obey his Father, rather than to accept “Lordship due to him as son”. He (Jesus) then explained to his disciples on the mountain of transfiguration that his obedience as Son would lead to the *Cross*. The setting in Matthew 17 thus served as pointer to the Cross, but the transfiguration also pointed further, to the Mountain of Commissioning (Luz 2001:399). Pilch (1999:179) notices that the words from heaven, “this is my Son; the Beloved [...] listen to him” (Matt. 19:5), are the same as the first part of “Jesus’ final instructions to his disciples”: “[...] obey everything I have commanded you [...]” (Matt. 28:20). The path of obedience was, thus, followed by Jesus right to the end. He then commanded his disciples to do the same. Volschenk (2010:6) sums it up: “Jesus appears as the fully enthroned Lord of heaven and earth”.

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<sup>64</sup> The title, Son of God, is regarded as most important in Matthew’s gospel (Lee 2004:145).

"After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone. There he was transfigured before them" (Mk. 9:2).

Mark's account of the transfiguration does not differ much from Luke's (Williams 2002a:20). Jewish motifs to be found in Mark 9:2-8 are *six days* (Ex. 24:16; Mk. 9:2), the setting on a *mountain top* (Mk. 9:2; Ex. 24:12), the *transformation* of the main character (Mk. 9:2, 3; Ex. 34:29), the *tents* (Ex. 25:9; Mk. 9:5), the *cloud* and *voice* (Ex. 24:16; Mk. 9:7), the presence of *Moses* and *Elijah*.

Moss (2004:72) says that this has led many scholars to argue that fragments of Exodus 24ff and 1 Kings 19 were re-formulated to create the transfiguration narrative in Mark. Moss (2004:72-85) argues that the transfiguration narrative in Mark undoubtedly and deliberately relates Jesus' identity to those of Moses and Elijah, but differences from the Old Testament's text also suggest that Mark could have used motifs from other sources (Hellenistic motifs) as well. Moss (2004:88) is of opinion that Mark adapted to a variety of traditions in order to make his Gospel more accessible "to a diverse audience". Stegner (1997:120) argues that many biblical scholars "tend to regard" the transfiguration narrative as "a conscious literary creation", as if they cut and pasted from ancient editors, but he does believe the narrative of the transfiguration to be the "result of an actual vision". As has been mentioned though, the aim of this thesis is to work with the text at hand, and in the text of Mark at hand, the climax of the text lies in Mark 9:7: "[...] this is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him" (Stegner 1997:111).

The narrative form of Mark 9:2-8 is regarded as an "apocalyptic vision". In this regard Sinai is *re-interpreted* with the words: *listen to Him* (Stegner 1997:118). Stegner (1997:118) is of opinion that the *re-interpretation* of Sinai suggests that Jesus is appointed by his Father to the role of "spokesman for the end-time", the reason being that traditionally, Sinai was seen as a "place where the future is revealed". Furthermore Stegner (1997:120) says that visions were an integral part "of the apocalyptic mindset and milieu of Jewish Christianity.

It makes sense then, that Mark (Mk. 9:1) depicts the transfiguration "as integral to the coming reign of God" (Hendriksen 1976:333; Lee 2004:144). Jesus' garments became "whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them" (Mk. 9:3), thus foreshadowing "the advent of the end time" (Lee 2004:144). Lee (2004:144) says that Elijah's presence on the mountain contributes to this insinuation. Elijah is associated with John

the Baptist, thus portraying him as “the archetypal apocalyptic figure” (Lee 2004:144; Schmidt 1990:99). The cloud separating Jesus from Moses and Elijah points to Jesus’ unique “cosmic identity”.

Within the larger plot then, the transfiguration narrative, for Mark, marks the event as the beginning of Jesus’ journey to Jerusalem. For Mark (likewise Matthew), the glorification of Jesus on the mountain is linked “inextricably to suffering and the way of the cross<sup>65</sup>” and to the empty tomb and Jesus as the risen Lord (Lee 2004:144).

“About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray” (Lk. 9:28).

Luke has more differences in the transfiguration story as compared to Matthew and Mark (Williams 2002a:20). Luke speaks of eight<sup>66</sup> days and not six. Luke also does not speak of transfiguration (μεταμορφώω) but uses the words προσώπου αὐτοῦ ἕτερον (Lk. 9:29 – his face became different), probably to avoid the pagan idea of *metamorphosis*, to change from one form into another (Williams 2002a:20). Luke records that, while Jesus was praying, his appearance changed (Lk. 9:29).

The two men (Moses and Elijah) who talked to Jesus<sup>67</sup>, “appeared in glorious splendor [δόξα]” (Lk. 9:31), and when the disciples awoke, they saw Jesus’ glory (Lk. 9:32). Williams 2002a:22) mention that Luke picks up the usage of this word in reference to Son, Father and angels, previously described in his Gospel. These words have strong Old Testament connotations to *glory* (δόξα). According to Williams (2002a:22) the Hebrew version (דְּבָרָה) of δόξα appears in the Pentateuch, especially Exodus, more than in any other historical book. YHWH’s *glory* was noticeable in his “saving strength” when he led Israel out of Egypt; in the cloud which led them by day; but also in the cloud which eventually settled on Mount Sinai: “and the glory of the LORD settled on Mount Sinai. For six days the cloud covered the mountain, and on the seventh day the LORD called to Moses from within the cloud” (Ex. 24:16).

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<sup>65</sup> The words, “this is my beloved Son”, also point to the centurion’s identification of Jesus as the *Son of God* while Jesus was hanging on the cross: “Truly, this man was the Son of God” (Mk. 15:39; Harrington 2002:271).

<sup>66</sup> If considering the first and last days in a count, eight days do not differ from six days.

<sup>67</sup> The men talked to Jesus about his departure (ἔξοδον – Lk. 9:31). *Exodus* and *Glory* thus emerge as “key themes in the interpretation of the transfiguration” (Williams 2002a:23).

In Luke's account of the narrative the cloud which hides the three "speakers" (Jesus, Moses and Elijah), provides an intertextual link to Sinai, where Moses experienced a *theophany*<sup>68</sup> (Croatto 2005:461). There, also, Moses was covered in a cloud on the mountain (Ex. 34:5).

Williams (2002b:21) interprets Moses as the *informer* (teacher), and Elijah as the *reformer* (reformer) of Israel. Luke emphasizes that like Elijah, Jesus' identity is that of a "mighty prophet who is alienated from Israel", and like Moses, Jesus is a "Spirit-led prophet", mighty in word and deed (Miller 1988:621-622).

Both Elijah and Moses were "great men of prayer", and according to Luke, Jesus' transfiguration took place while he was praying (Williams 2002b:21). When Elijah and Moses disappeared, the words "To him you shall listen"<sup>69</sup>, suggest that Jesus will be the only "mediator, interpreter, and teacher for the Christian community" (Croatto 2005:461). Obedience ("listen to him") echoes what YHWH taught Israel through Moses (his ordinances) whilst creating for Him a people. Obedience also echoes what Israel forgot whilst Elijah tried to reform (restoration of a people) Israel. Now, in Jesus, obedience suggests a mimesis (Pilch 1999:179) of what Jesus taught his disciples regarding the Kingdom of God (creating a new people).

In one sentence: The transfiguration narrative has strong intertextual links to the Old Testament. While previous chapters of this thesis pointed out the *disobedience* of the people, regardless of miraculous acts done by YHWH's agents, Moses and Elijah, the transfiguration of Jesus points to the exact opposite, not the disobedience of the people, but the *obedience* of the *appointed Son*.

### 6.7.2 Wilderness

As was mentioned in 4.5.3 (par. 2), the "*Wilderness* as setting can have a dual meaning", showing contrasts. These contrasts have shown that the Wilderness could be a place where YHWH is being met as well as a place of conflict and submission<sup>70</sup>. This is also true, especially in Mark's gospel. At times, the wilderness has a "hostile and

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<sup>68</sup> Elijah also experienced a theophany at the mountain of God (1 Kgs. 19).

<sup>69</sup> These words are parallel to the baptism of Jesus (Matt. 3:17; Mk. 1:11; Lk. 3:22). The baptism "signifies and initiates the opening phase of Jesus' public ministry", while the transfiguration "inaugurates the next, climactic phase" (Williams 2002a:14).

<sup>70</sup> (4.5.3.1 & 2)



threatening atmosphere”, and on other occasions it can serve as a “place of preparation” (Ellenburg 1995:175-176).

In Chapter 4 of this thesis the Wilderness as literal setting was described as a place which has the function of *assurance*, assuring the people of YHWH’s presence even in, humanly speaking, an *unsustainable* place. Chapter five elaborated on the fact that the Wilderness is a place of *contrasts*, especially the contrast between *life* and *death*. Images which were used to strengthen the idea of *life*<sup>71</sup> were, among others, *angel*, *water*, *bread*, and *forty days*<sup>72</sup>.

In New Testament context the Wilderness as setting is a place beyond. It is “the counterpoint” of human civilization (Moxnes 2010:101). Moxnes (2010:101) describes the New Testament version of the *Wilderness* as a “margin”, where the power of authorities (situated in cities) is contrasted to how the word of God was received by his agents<sup>73</sup>. The Wilderness became a place of “revelation and therefore of true authority”. When Jesus is tempted in the *wilderness* by Satan<sup>74</sup>, Jesus chooses to follow real authority, that of His Father, and not that of the world (Volschenk 2003:1312).

Moxnes (2010:101) says that a reversed order is established and that “moral and divine authority” is not to be found in the cities where empire rulers (and even temple leaders) are situated. The “moral and divine authority” is now to be found in the wilderness. John the Baptist preaches in the wilderness (Mk. 1:4-5) and Jesus teaches in the *wilderness* (Mk. 8:4). Jesus also uses the *wilderness* as a place of retreat (Lk. 5:16). Mountains are, however, also used as settings for the teachings of Jesus and for prayer or retreat.

Parker (2005:59-61) notes an overlap in the words *wilderness* (ἐρημος) and mountain (ὄρος), and that both words denote an *uninhabited* place. In 4.5.1 (par. 3) it was mentioned that “the word Horeb חֲרֵב [Choreb /kho·rabe/] means desert or wasteland, a place of *desolation*”. The wasteland or uninhabited place often serves as the ideal place to experience nearness to God. The same applies in the Gospels. In Luke, the *uninhabited place* served as the perfect setting for undisturbed prayer, while in

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<sup>71</sup> 5.5.2.2

<sup>72</sup> These images are also noticeable in the Temptation narrative.

<sup>73</sup> See how the word of God came to John in Luke 3:3.

<sup>74</sup> Mark 1:12-13; Matthew 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13.

Matthew the *uninhabited place* could be regarded as the perfect setting for undisturbed teaching (Parker 2005:63-64).

Kohls (2011:62) states that Mark's gospel starts in the Wilderness. Kohls (2011:64) refers to Isaiah 40 which makes it clear "that the desert is the region through which the Israelites must pass" when the Lord will lead them back, out of Babylon, to Jerusalem. Isaiah himself, according to Kohls (2011:64), has drawn on earlier traditions to understand the significance of the *Wilderness* regarding the experiences of his people. Israel experienced YHWH's nurturing in times when they had no food or water on the one hand, but on the other hand, two normative elements seem to stand out: The "revelation of God's name and the establishment of the covenant" (Kohls 2011:64). The people had a choice to either "accept or reject" YHWH's offer. One word describes the norm, *repentance*.

Mark's gospel thus not only starts in the Wilderness, but also begins with repentance<sup>75</sup> through the preaching of John the Baptist (Kohls 2011:67). The question could be asked whether repentance shouldn't belong at the temple as *hub*. Mark sketches John the Baptist as someone who is "undermining the system" that was functioning in Jerusalem when he called the people out of the city to the *margins* – a new kind of Exodus (Kohls 2011:69; Miller 2010:498). The Wilderness and not the temple, is described as the place where repentance should take place. Later on the temple would become a place of conflict between Jesus and the Jewish authorities.

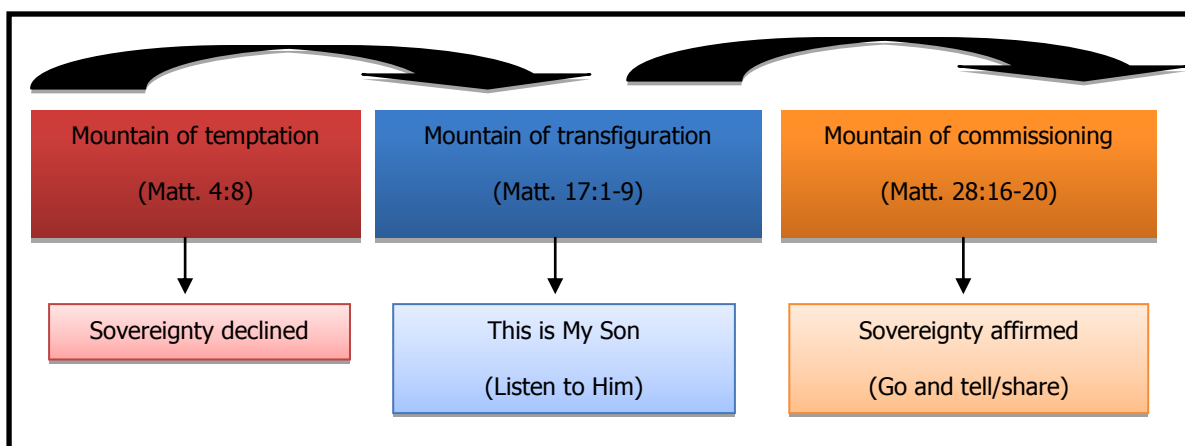
*Repentance* gives the opportunity for a fresh start and the *Wilderness* serves as a setting where the people, in their position as "God's beloved son" get the chance to be re-established in the position they were meant to be (Kohls 2011:68). The *fresh start* is granted through the teachings of Jesus Christ. In Luke 9:35 the imperative αὐτοῦ ἀκούετε (hear Him!) points to the authority of Jesus "which surpasses the authority of Moses and Elijah" (Miller 2010:498). Miller (2010:499) is of opinion that the wilderness as setting *echoes* elements of the Sinai tradition in such a way as to "shape the audience's perception of Jesus as one who must be heard". Miller (2010:513) continues by stating that the imperative *hear Him* is one of Luke's central themes. Jesus' public ministry is thus "characterized by crowds of people who come in order to hear (ἀκούω) him" (Lk. 5:1; 5:15).

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<sup>75</sup> Mark 1:4-8

To hear Jesus also means to follow his example. The words αὐτοῦ ἀκούετε were delivered on the *mountain of transfiguration*. As was explained in 6.7.1.1 (par. 3) the transfiguration narrative is linked with the *temptation narrative*. Immediately after Jesus was baptised by John in the *wilderness*, he (Jesus) was led by the Spirit further (deeper) into the *wilderness* (Mk. 1:12; Matt. 4:1-11; Lk. 4:1-13). There he stayed for forty days while being tempted by Satan. Jesus could have changed stones into bread when he became hungry, but he chose not to. Volschenk (2003:1314) says that the early church was reminded, through this part of the narrative of Israel when they entered the Promised Land, that they should not forget how they received manna while being in the *Wilderness*. In other words, they should not depend on themselves for their own survival in the Promised Land, but still serve the Lord. Secondly, Jesus decided not to make misuse of the power granted to him when the tempter told him to jump from the temple roof. Thirdly, when Jesus was shown the whole world from a mountain top, as Moses was shown the promised land from a mountain top, Jesus decided that the Father alone, he would serve (Volschenk 2003:1317).

The following diagram is borrowed from Volschenk (2003:1317) in his review article on the book of Donaldson (1985). Figure 6.3 shows the link in Matthew's gospel between *temptation*, *transfiguration* and *commissioning*.



**FIGURE 6.3: THE LINK IN MATTHEW'S GOSPEL**

The temptation narrative starts as a journey narrative into the *wilderness*. The overlap in the words *wilderness* (ἔρημος) and mountain (ὄρος) has already been pointed out above. In Matthew's gospel the wilderness as setting is subtly carried through from the temptation narrative to the end. The *temptation narrative* points to the *transfiguration narrative*, which points further to the *commissioning*, as the diagram above shows.

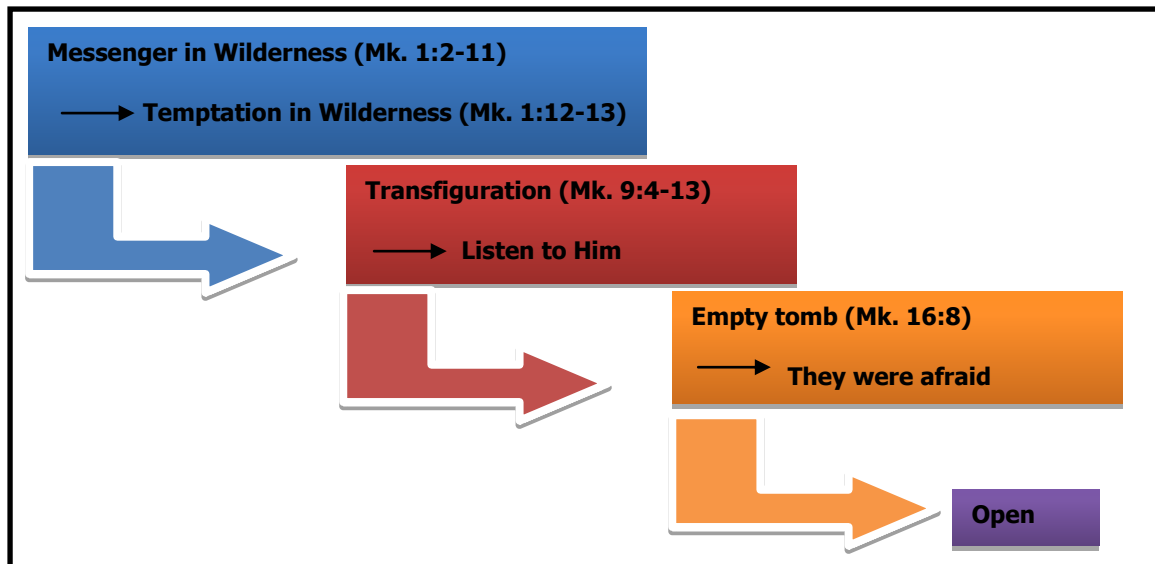
In Mark's gospel there are also three pivotal points. Brodie (2000:90) describes them as the beginning, middle and end of the gospel: Mark 1:2 (The *messenger*), Mark 9:4-13 (the *transfiguration* of Jesus) and Mark 16:8 (the *tomb*). Mark's Gospel starts in the wilderness with the *messenger's* (John the Baptist) call to repentance<sup>76</sup> (Mk. 1:3-4), followed by the baptism of Jesus (Mk. 1:9). In this first section Brodie (2000:90) sees intertextual links to Elijah: "the abrupt beginning, the wilderness, the Jordan, the prophetic speaker's external appearance, the animals/ravens, the angels, and abrupt calling to disciples (1 Kgs. 17:3, 6; 19:4-8, 19-21; 2 Kgs. 1:8)". From Jesus' baptism the narrative stays in the *wilderness* with regard to the *temptation narrative*.

The middle section of Mark consists of the transfiguration narrative. This mountain-top drama, says Brodie (2000:90), has a clear connection with 2 Kings 1 and 2. First, with regard to fire which comes down from heaven and then to fire, which carries Elijah to heaven. Furthermore, Elijah's name is mentioned five times in the transfiguration narrative. But in the entire central section of Mark (Mk. 6:14-9:13) Elijah's name is mentioned seven times. The question to consider is whether Mark wanted to compare Jesus to Elijah, and whether Brodie's (2000:96) view should be supported, namely that Mark used the Elijah narrative as "backbone" for his own gospel? As an answer to both these questions would be speculative, the point to focus on should rather be the miraculous aspects of the three main pivotal points as mentioned above.

In the first section of Mark's Gospel a voice came from heaven to announce Jesus as son of God (Mk. 1:11). Again a voice came from heaven during the transfiguration, confirming Jesus as the Son of God and urging the disciples to listen to him (Mk. 9:7). The third pivotal point (the end) sounds rather odd and ends abruptly: "Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid" (Mk.16:8). Minor (2009:10) suggests that Mark, "like many great spiritual teachers", left the story with an open end, giving the reader the opportunity to provide the story with a good ending themselves. The function of the open end would thus lead the reader to internalise his/her own *wilderness* situation, knowing that the empty tomb does not mean the end. Figure 6.4 illustrates the *wilderness theme* which also features in a subtle way in the Gospel of Mark:

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<sup>76</sup> Intertextual links to Malachi 3:1, 23.



**FIGURE 6.4: THE WILDERNESS THEME OF MARK**

The big question would be: Where do miracles fit in? In Marks' gospel, to start with, there is initially no function for a miracle in the beginning of his narrative (the narrative of John the Baptist in the wilderness). John's words, "After me will come one more powerful than I [...]" (Mk. 1:7), do however anticipate that through Jesus great things will happen. According to Luke 7:18 John asks the question later on: "Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?" Jesus' answer<sup>77</sup> would give the reason (function) for his miracles, namely to *legitimate* (validate) him as a prophet greater than Moses and Elijah (Achte-meier 1975:552).

In one sentence: The *wilderness settings* in the Gospels have definitive intertextual links to *Wilderness traditions* in the Old Testament. It anticipates a new kind of Exodus which will lead to repentance and a fresh start.

### 6.7.3 Sea

As was previously mentioned, regarding the aim of this thesis, sea as setting could also imply a water mass, like a river or a lake. Mark prefers the word *thalassa* (sea) when he speaks of the *water mass* of Galilee, which was a "geographical focal point for the first half of the Gospel of Mark" (Malbon 1984:363-364). Jesus calls his first disciples by the sea (Mk. 1:16, 19, 20); Jesus teaches and heals by the sea (Mk. 2:13; 3:7;

<sup>77</sup> Luke 7:22-23 "Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor. Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me".

4:1); the sea is crossed freely by Jesus (4:35; 5:1; 18, 21; 6:53, 54; 8:10, 13). Ellenburg (1995:174) says that the importance of the sea as setting in Mark's gospel is implicit, for the sea "is referred to or directly brought into" the narrative no less than forty-nine times. There is no other topographical setting which receives so much attention in the Gospel of Mark. The relationship between miracles and the sea as setting is also obvious in Mark, says Ellenburg (1995:175), and it is stressed in two ways: "by the number of miracles that take place on the sea, and by the placement of all references to the sea in the first half of the gospel".

The *sea*, as was the case with the *wilderness*, marks a spatial setting which crosses traditional limits. For instance, the traditional setting to teach would be at the temple, but Jesus also teaches *by the sea* (Malbon 1984:364), and even *on the sea* from a boat (Mk. 4:1). Together with teaching there is healing, through which the disciples could witness the power Jesus possesses over sickness. Thus, *by the sea* they experience Jesus' healing power, and *on the sea* they experience Jesus' power over nature when he silences the storm and even walks on water (Malbon 1984:366).

Malbon (1984:369-372) also notes the specific use of directive language: *East to West* and *West to East*. Apparently the indication is for the disciples to "move out to others, [even] beyond their own religious tradition". Interesting, in Chapter four of this thesis *directive language* has also been noticed. One example is the *east wind* which blew the whole night and opened up the Sea of Reeds, in order for the Israelites to pass through on dry land on their way to new territory (Ex. 14:21). In Chapter five it was explained how YHWH had sent Elijah East, also outside the land, to territory unknown to him (1 Kgs. 17: 2).

Two miracles which stand out in the Gospels with regard to *water* as *setting* are, Jesus, walking on water (Matt. 14:22-33; Mk. 6:45-52; Jn. 6:15-21), and, Jesus, calming the storm (Matt. 8:23-27; Mk. 4:35-41; Lk. 8:22-25). The latter was described in Chapter 6A. The focus will, therefore, now shift to the *sea walking* narrative, which is also described in the Gospel of John<sup>78</sup>:

*Matthew 14:25* "During the fourth watch of the night Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake."

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<sup>78</sup> Notes on John's description of the *sea walking* narrative will be given in 6.8.3.1

*Mark 6:48* "He saw the disciples straining at the oars, because the wind was against them. About the fourth watch of the night he went out to them, walking on the lake."

*John 6:19* "When they had rowed three or three and a half miles, they saw Jesus approaching the boat, walking on the water; and they were terrified."

Space does not permit an investigation of all three *sea-walking* narratives as described by Matthew, Mark and John. In order to demonstrate how the *sea-walking* miracle serves as pointer, *forward* and *backwards*, the focus regarding this narrative will thus be on Matthew.

In Matthew's gospel the sea walking narrative is placed near the centre of the gospel story (Scott 2000:93). Scott (2000:93) says that the narrative serves as a pivot for those narratives that occurred before and after the sea walking scene. The fact that the story begins with "the deliberate separation of Jesus from the disciples" causes tension for the implied reader. In a previous story Jesus also gave the command, as in this case, to his disciples to depart (ἀπέρχομαι) to the other side (Matt. 8:17). During that story a tempest overwhelmed the boat in which they travelled. Now Jesus tells them to go ahead (προάγω) on their own (Matt. 14:22). Scott (2000:94) says the text suggests that Jesus will follow, eventually, but the reader does not know what will happen to them in the meantime.

What *does* happen in the present moment, while the disciples depart, is Jesus' ascent up the mountain (ἀνέβη εἰς τὸ ὄρος [Matt. 14:23]). Scott (2000:94) notes that ἀνέβη εἰς τὸ ὄρος are the same words<sup>79</sup> used in "the LXX version of Exodus 19:3, when Moses went up Mount Sinai to receive the Law". In Matthew's gospel this is the first time when Jesus prays by himself, thus the author suggests where "the source of Jesus' authority is to be found" (Scott 2000:94).

In Matthew 14:25 the reader learns that "During the fourth watch of the night Jesus went out to them [to the disciples who were struggling against the wind], walking on the lake". Luz (2001:319) accentuates the *source* of Jesus' authority when he describes the whole *walking on water* scene: "[...] walking on the water is solely divine ability. Human beings cannot do it". Luz (2001:319) is of opinion that this narrative has no parallel to Old Testament texts, like for instance, Israel walking through the sea of Reeds, or Elijah walking through the Jordan, because Jesus walks *on* the sea, and not

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<sup>79</sup> Other narratives in Matthew where ascending into *mountain-settings* are echoed include: 4:8; 5:1; 15:29; 17:1; 24:16; 26:30; 28:16

*through* the sea. This might be true, but surely, the reader (knowing his/her Old Testament narratives) should sense that Jesus has divine authority over nature, just as YHWH's authority over nature was shown in the Old Testament (Angel 2011:306; Derrett 1981:343-346; France 2007:566-67). Jesus can calm the waters *by his word*, and he (Jesus) can walk on the waters, when he wants to.

The disciples' natural reaction when they see Jesus (as a ghost - φάντασμα) is to be afraid. Jesus calms them with the assuring *self-introduction*, ἐγώ εἰμι. These words are "reminiscent of YHWH's self-introduction in the Bible" (Luz 2001:320). Scott (2000:94-950) refers especially to Exodus 3:14 with regard to Jesus' self-revelation. He is, furthermore, of opinion that the specific time in the morning, when Jesus addresses the disciples, relates to one of many direct quotations which echoes from the Torah. Again, the implied reader, knowing the Scriptures, may hear an allusion, "[...] here to the hour before dawn, when YHWH comes to the rescue of Israel" (Scott 2000:95). Scott (2000:95) notes more intertextual links to *this hour*, which he considers to be "notable references to *divine presence*<sup>80</sup>", especially "at this hour in the Exodus tradition". A good example is Exodus 14:24: "During the last watch of the night the LORD looked down from the pillar of fire and cloud at the Egyptian army and threw it into confusion".

Scott (2000:96) identifies five themes<sup>81</sup> which emerge from the *sea walking* narrative. These themes not only fit within the *micro-narrative* of sea walking, but form part of an ongoing *macro-narrative*. There are other micro narratives standing in relationship to each other and the sea walking narrative. Scott (2000:97) demonstrates the interdependence of these micro-narratives to each other with a diagram.

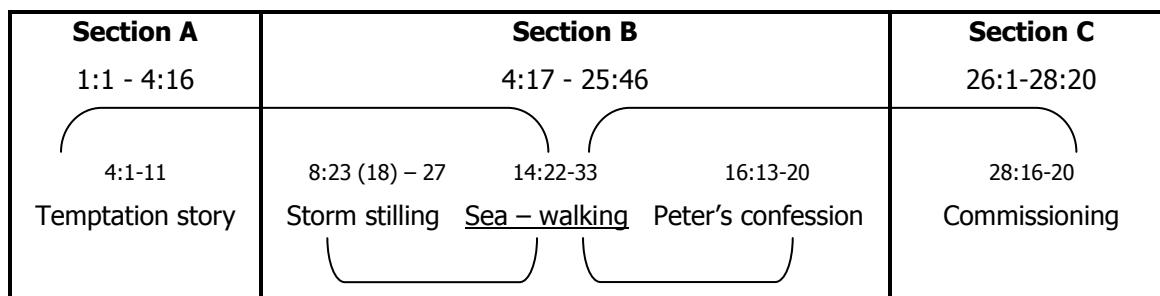
Figure 6.5 shows the macro-narrative of Matthew's gospel to have a beginning (section A), middle (section B) and end (section C):

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<sup>80</sup> Own highlight.

<sup>81</sup> The five themes are: a) tension arising because of separation; b) authority of Jesus over the element; c) nature of discipleship, with doubt and faith as equal partners; d) saving power of Jesus in the face of failure and distress; e) identity of Jesus as Son of God.





**FIGURE 6.5: MACRO-NARRATIVE OF MATTHEW’S GOSPEL**

As was mentioned earlier, the sea-walking narrative serves as pivot to the macro-narrative. It is linked with the temptation story and to the commissioning story. Surrounding the *pivot-narrative* are the storm-stilling and Peter’s confession of Jesus’ being the Son of God. In effect, the diagram shows what miracles do. They point *forward* and *backwards*, as was *defined* in chapter three and *demonstrated* in chapters four and five of this thesis.

Chapter four of this thesis explained the sea-crossing narrative (Ex. 14:1-15:21), especially the poem in Exodus 15:1-21, to be a pivot, or hinge<sup>82</sup>, between the Exodus narrative (Ex. 1-13) and the Wilderness narrative (Ex. 15:22-18:27). In the *sea-walking* narrative, Matthew uses the same verb (Θαρσεῖτε – Matt. 14:27) when Jesus orders his disciples to “take courage”, which Moses used (θαρσεῖτε - Ex. 14:13) to comfort the people when they were “trapped” against the Sea of Reeds with the Egyptians on their heels. The reason why Moses had to comfort the people was that they were terrified (ἐφοβήθησαν - Ex. 14:10) when they saw (ἀναβλέψαντες – Ex. 14:10) the Egyptians chasing after them. The disciples cried out in fear (φόβου – Matt. 14:26) when they saw (ἰδόντες – Matt. 14:26) Jesus walking on the water.

Brunner (2004b:75) and Schnackenburg (2002:145) says that the phrase “θαρσεῖτε, ἐγὼ εἰμι· μὴ φοβεῖσθε” (Matt. 14:27) could be compared with Isaiah 43:1-4. Three aspects which scholars (Brunner 2004b; Davies & Allison 2004b; Schnackenburg 2002) seem to overlook, though, which are present in both the “pivot-narratives” (sea-crossing and sea-walking) are *fear*, *comfort* and *confession*.

The Israelites feared when they saw the Egyptians (Ex. 14:10); the disciples feared when they saw a “ghost” (Matt. 14:26). Moses comforted the Israelites (“take courage”- Ex. 14:13); Jesus comforted the disciples (“take courage”- Matt. 14:27);

<sup>82</sup> cf. 4.5.2.2 (par. 1)

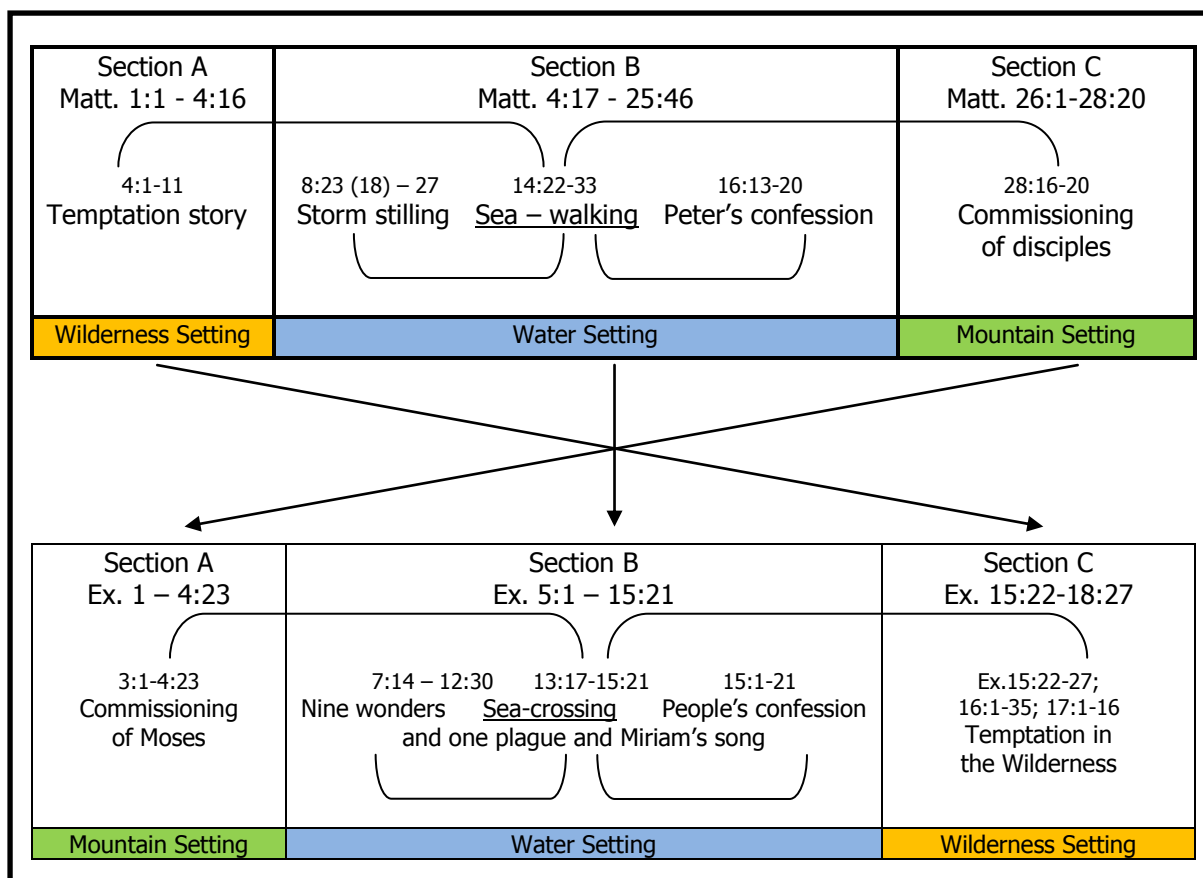
After the Israelites saw what YHWH had done to the waters and the Egyptians, they confessed that YHWH was Lord: “the people feared the LORD and put their trust in him and in Moses his servant” (Ex. 14:31); After the disciples saw that Jesus was able to walk on water and calm the waters, again, they confessed: “Truly you are the Son of God” (Matt. 14:33). It is not clear whether it was Matthew’s intention to mould his narrative directly on the Exodus story, although Hanson (1994:147) does suggest that Matthew “chose a set of five transformations [...] to highlight the Mosaic connection”. Furthermore, the similarities described above do seem very interesting. With regard to early Christianity, Jesus was seen, in particularly Matthew’s Gospel, as the “new Moses” (Blomberg 2007:14; Taylor 2001:36).

Of note, to elaborate further on the similarities mentioned above, are the three kinds of *settings* linked to each other in the diagram of Scott (2000:96) above. These settings are not shown by Scott. However, if Scott’s (2000:96) diagram could be extended, the sea as setting would be placed in the middle (pivot). In the temptation narrative the *wilderness* would serve as *setting*; and the *mountain* as *setting* would be in the commissioning narrative. An extension of Scott’s (2000:96) diagram (below) could, therefore, be of help to show the remarkable resemblance of Matthew’s gospel to settings in the miracle stories surrounding Moses<sup>83</sup>, albeit, in a reversed order. Chapter four of this thesis has shown how miracle events were interlinked with each other, pointing forward and backwards. The resemblance in this forward-backward notion is visible in Matthew’s Gospel as well, as Figure 6.6 below demonstrates.

The extension of Scott’s model below shows that the narrative in Exodus 15-18 (section C of Ex. 1-18) took place in the *Wilderness*. Chapter 4 of this thesis has pointed out the temptations which Israel faced while they wandered in the Wilderness, especially with regard to water and food. Whilst Israel failed their Wilderness test, the temptation story of Jesus as described by Matthew (which also took place in the Wilderness) shows that Jesus succeeded where Israel failed (Blomberg 2007:15). Whereas the commissioning of Moses is described in section A of the Exodus narrative (mountain setting), Matthew ends his gospel with a *mountain setting*, when Jesus commissions his disciples. Volschenk (2003:1308) also notes that Matthew 4:8 is linked with Matthew 28:16-20.

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<sup>83</sup> See 4.4 (par. 8)



**FIGURE 6.6: MATHEW'S GOSPEL**

Sections B of Matthew's gospel and the Exodus narrative have interesting links to their sections A and C respectively, which ought to have significant theological meanings with regard to Matthew's gospel and the Exodus narrative. These theological aspects will be elaborated on in chapter seven of this thesis.

## 6.8 THEMES

There are certainly a number of Theological themes of note in the Synoptic Gospels and John. To name but a few: The Kingdom of God (Ladd 1993:42-52); Salvation (Ladd 1993:68); Coming of the Lamb (Strecker 2000:515); Son of man (Ladd 1993:143); Jesus as martyr (Van Zyl 2002:541); Jerusalem (Van Zyl 2002:547); Temple (Wright 1992:224).

For the sake of continuity from chapters four and five of this thesis, the focus will, however, be on the following three themes: *Need-Intervention-Resolution*; *Promise of the (land) Kingdom*; and *Presence*.

### 6.8.1 Need-Intervention-Resolution

The triad-theme of *need-intervention-resolution* was highly noticeable in the narratives of Exodus 1-18 (Epoch 1) and 1 Kings 1:17 – 2 Kings 2 (Epoch 2) and described in chapters four and five of this thesis. Watson (2012:4) states that “a large portion of miracle discourse in the Synoptic Gospels is inductive narrative”, consisting of *two* aspects, *need* (case) and for example, a healing (*result*). The following few examples will show, however, that the *triad* theme, which was noticed in Epochs 1 and 2 (*Need-Intervention-Resolution*)<sup>84</sup> is also a strong theme in the Synoptic Gospels and John. To mention a few examples:

#### 6.8.1.1 The miracle at Cana

A good example of the theme *Need-Intervention-Resolution*, to begin with, is found in the miracle which took place at Cana (Jn. 2:1-11). This is a “one-of-a-kind” miracle story within the Gospels, because “no other Gospel narrates such a transformation miracle (O’Day 2012:178). O’Day (2012:178) also notes that this is the only “miracle story in one Gospel that does not have a corresponding story or type in at least one other canonical Gospel”. For John, this, the first miracle of Jesus, was an important miracle, considering the sign (*σημείον*) aspect which John introduces with this miracle (O’Day 2012:178). As mentioned earlier (chapter three), *σημείον* is the New Testament equivalent of the Old Testament word **אֵי**, which always points to something beyond itself. It is not easy to find direct *intertextual* links from this story to the Old Testament though.

In a “Commentary on the New Testament use of the Old Testament”, Köstenberger (2007:430) says that the only “explicit OT quotation” in the signs Jesus performed at Cana, of which there were two (Jn. 2:11; 4:54) is found in John 2:17. A likely allusion to the Old Testament is to be found in John 2:5, which could give a link between Jesus and the patriarch Joseph, in Genesis 41:55 (Köstenberger 2007:430). A direct intertextual link between the miracle at Cana and the Old Testament is thus not obvious, but the theme of *Need-Intervention-Resolution* certainly is, even though it

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<sup>84</sup> From a *narratological* point of view, the triad-theme of *need-intervention-resolution* in the New Testament miracle narratives does find common ground to narratives which have been described in chapters four and five of this thesis, that is, if the focus stays on the *triad theme* and not necessarily on specific intertextual links.

might or might not have been intentionally orchestrated by the author of John's Gospel in this manner:

*Need* - There was a shortage of wine at a wedding which Jesus attended (Lockyer 1961:161). The problem was brought to the attention of Jesus by his mother (Jn. 2:3).

*Intervention* - Jesus told the servants to fill the six empty jars with water (Jn. 2:7).

*Resolution* - Jesus told the servants to give some of the "water" to the master of the banquet. When he tasted the wine he was surprised that the good wine hadn't been presented to the guests in the first place (Jn. 2:8-9).

#### Short notes:

The miracle at Cana has a two-fold result (Lockyer 1961:161). Firstly, the miracle manifested the glory of Jesus. The creative power of Jesus was displayed through this, His first miracle. Added to this is his grace, contra Moses, who turned water into blood as a sign of judgement<sup>85</sup> (Lincoln 2005:130). Köstenberger (2007:431) says that wine was a symbol of joy and celebration in ancient times. The running out of the wine may therefore point to the "barrenness [depleted resources] of Judaism". In the words of Clark (1983:206): "The symbolism of Jesus' action, the transformation of the water of Judaism into the wine of Christianity, is well-known". Contrary to Judaism, Jesus brings joy, as the "prophetic expectation cast the messianic age as a time when wine would flow freely (see Isa. 25:6; Jer. 31:12-14; Hos. 14:7; Joel 3:18; Amos 9:13-14)" and as the "abundance of Jesus' messianic provision" (Beasley-Murray 1987:36; Keener 2003a:513; Köstenberger 2007: 431; Lincoln 2005:129).

Secondly, the miracle at Cana was a sign with the intention of making people (the disciples) believe in Jesus (Lockyer 1961:161; Suggit 1993:37). The sign aspect of this first (ἀρχή)<sup>86</sup> miracle (σημεῖον - sign) of Jesus sets the pattern for the rest of the miracles in John's Gospel (Lincoln 2005:130). Lincoln (2005:130) says that σημεῖον in the LXX "conveyed further knowledge or meaning", and is "associated with Moses in Exodus 4:1-17". The three signs in Exodus 4 were meant to confirm Moses as YHWH's chosen prophet to the people and to produce belief.

The signs Elijah performed in 1 Kings 17 also legitimised him as prophet. On this point, Mayer (1988:171) noticed the remarkable resemblance between John 2:1-11 and 1 Kings 17:1-16:

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<sup>85</sup> Ref. 4.2.4.3 and 4.7.4.2

<sup>86</sup> ἀρχή - meaning beginning or foundation (Lincoln 2005:130).

- A woman informed the prophet of a shortage (1 Kgs. 17:12; Jn. 2:3);
- A command was given to use available vessels in which a miracle occurred (1 Kgs. 17:14; Jn. 2:7);
- A position of lack was changed to that of abundance (1 Kgs. 17:15; Jn. 2:8-9).

Brown (1978:102-103) argues that, although there are “echoes” of some miracles in the Elijah-Elisha tradition in that “unexpected physical need” could not be satisfied “by natural means”, it still remains problematic to attempt to reconstruct the miracle narratives with underlying theological themes. Bultmann (1971:119) is of opinion that John could have found support for his narrative from (Hellenistic) traditions other than the Old Testament, for example, Philo. The theme of *Need-Intervention-Resolution* does, however, link to narratives in the Old Testament, as mentioned above.

#### **6.8.1.2 *The miracle of the Nobleman’s son***

With the first miracle of Jesus at Cana, Jesus “added gladness to the feast”; with the second miracle, described by John, Jesus “banished sadness from the hearts of many” (Lockyer 1961:163). This time a *need* is not mentioned to Jesus by someone related to Jesus by any means, but by an outsider (Jn. 4:46-54):

*Need* - A nobleman from Capernaum, whose son was sick to the point of death, came to Jesus and asked Jesus to come to his home and heal his son (Jn. 4:46-49).

*Intervention* - Jesus told the man to go back to his home, and his son would live (Jn. 4:50).

*Resolution* - At the exact time Jesus told the man that his son would live, fever left the child and he became well. Thus the nobleman and his whole house believed in Jesus (Jn. 4:51-53).

#### Short notes:

The narrative of the Nobleman’s son is a parallel to similar stories in the Synoptic Gospels<sup>87</sup> (Boring & Craddock 2004:302; O’Day 2012:179). Boring & Craddock (2004:302) are of opinion that the story was reinterpreted in John’s Gospel so that it could correspond “very closely to the first sign in 2:1-11”. For Koester (1995:85-89), John’s version of this narrative puts the emphasis on *hearing*, and the response thereof. The nobleman heard testimonies about Jesus and responded by asking Jesus

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<sup>87</sup> Matthew 8:5-13; Luke 7:1-10

for help. Furthermore, the nobleman heard Jesus' promise that his son would live and he responded positively by obeying Jesus' order that he should go back to his home and his child would live. While still some distance from his home, the nobleman heard from his house people that his son was well. Hearing and believing Jesus' words, says Koester (1995:87) is rewarded with life.

The downside though, is that *not hearing* or believing is "rewarded" by judgement, as the next sign-narrative, regarding the healing at the pool of Bethesda (Jn. 5:1-47) shows, when the Jews confronted Jesus about healing on the Sabbath (Beasley-Murray 1987:75-79; Koester 1995:89). A hint that not everyone will believe, is given in the words of Jesus in verse 48: "Unless you people see miraculous signs and wonders," Jesus told him, "you will never believe". Wonders (*τέρας*) have their only appearance in John's Gospel in this verse. Brown (1978:191) says that an interesting Old Testament parallel to this verse is to be found in Exodus 7:3-4. Here, YHWH tells Moses that Pharaoh will not believe, in spite of multiple wonders.

Beasley-Murray (1987:73) says, with regard to the healing of the nobleman's son, that the emphasis of this narrative falls on "the power of Jesus to give life", as a sign which will be defined in the following discourse (Jn. 5:24) as "eternal life". Keener (2003a:633) suggests that John gives (points) to Christ's gift of eternal life. Keener (2003a:633) furthermore suggests that for "the more biblical informed among John's audience, 'your son lives' probably [...] alludes to Elijah's pronouncement in 1 Kings 17:23". The fact that Jesus only speaks, and immediately something (like the healing of the nobleman's son) happens, recalls God's creative work<sup>88</sup> (Keener 2003a:633).

### **6.8.1.3 *The healing at the pool***

With the first sign Jesus performed at Cana, his mother mentioned to him (Jesus) a need (lack of wine). With the second sign, a need was mentioned to Jesus by someone outside the Jewish community (nobleman). With this, the third sign, Jesus himself identifies a need (Jn. 5:1-16):

*Need* - A man who was an invalid for more than thirty eight years could not get into the healing waters of a pool at Bethesda (Jn. 5:3-5)

*Intervention* - Jesus asked the man if he wanted to be healed (Jn. 5:6)

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<sup>88</sup> Compare Genesis 1:3-30; John 1:3

*Resolution* - Jesus ordered the man to stand up and pick up his mat and walk, and at once the man was cured, he picked up his mat and he walked (Jn. 5:8).

Short notes:

The word for *pool* (κολυμβήθρα), says Suggit (1993:66), is recorded in the New Testament only in John 5:2 and 7 and John 9:7. In later Christian literature it referred "to the baptismal font". Suggit (1993:66) says that in both instances where John uses the word he (John) uses it in a context where the narrative suggests "the giving of new life". The story here is therefore not about the invalid man, nor his faith. Faith is not mentioned nor the fact that the man did or did not believe in Jesus after the miracle. In fact, the man later on (Jn. 5:12-16) turned against Jesus (Boring & Craddock 2004:304).

Bultmann (1971:246-247) suggests that the miracle story in John 5:1-9 is used by the author to create a discourse of "a symbolic portrayal of the constancy of the Revealers' work". Although YHWH rested on the seventh day after he created, he remained and still remains working as Life-giver and Judge (Koester 1995:89). The emphasis of the narrative then shifts to Jesus' opponents; they planned to kill him (Jn. 5:18). Koester (1995:89) is therefore of opinion that this narrative should be "understood in terms of Jesus' death". As Life-giver and Judge, Jesus is shown to be one (at work with His Father), from beginning, right through to the end. The miracle story of John 5 thus points to the fact that "it is precisely by dying that Jesus will judge and give life to the world" (Koester 1995:89).

**6.8.1.4 *The feeding of the five thousand***

The fourth sign-miracle in John and the first to parallel with the Synoptic Gospels (Aland 1985:136-137) is the feeding of the five thousand (Jn. 6:1-14; Matt. 14:13-21; Mark 6:31-44; Luke 9:11-17).

The previous sign was followed by a discourse to address "certain misconceptions" about Jesus and to convey the truth about His identity as Life-giver and Judge (Koester 1995:90). Likewise, John 6 is followed by a discourse explaining Jesus' identity as the *bread of life*. Again the theme of *Need-Intervention-Resolution* is visible:



*Need* - John 6:5: Jesus saw a great crowd coming toward him and he asked Philip where bread for the people could be bought so that they could eat. Matthew 14:15; Mark 6:35; Luke 9:12: Jesus' disciples came to him and said that it had become late and that he should send the people home so that they could go and buy food.

*Intervention* - John 6:10: Jesus told the disciples to make the people sit down. Luke 9:14c: Jesus told the disciples to make the people sit down in companies of fifty each. Matthew 14:19; Mark 6:39: Jesus ordered the people to sit down on the grass.

*Resolution* - John 6:11: Jesus took the (five) loaves of bread, (two) fish, gave thanks and distributed it to the people, as much as they wanted. Matthew 14:19b-20; Mark 6:41-42; Luke 9:16-17: After Jesus took the five loaves and two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed, and broke and gave the loaves to the disciples. The disciples then gave them to the crowds. They all ate and were satisfied.

#### Short notes:

As can be seen above, the Synoptic Gospels also reported on the *multiplying of food* narrative. John, according to Keener (2003a:663), placed the narrative in the "special context of wilderness and Passover". Twelftree (1999:205) disagrees, and says that John does not "wish his readers to see this miracle of feeding as a repetition of the nourishment of the Israelites in the wilderness". Rather, the "Moses theme" emerges with Jesus' going up the mountain (Jn. 6:3). Jesus and Moses, says Twelftree (1999:205), "are to be contrasted", whereas Jesus is being portrayed as "the Jewish teacher par excellence". Keener (2003:663) says that the discourse in John which follows the feeding narrative highlights the "Christological meaning of the event". Here Twelftree (1999:205) and Keener (2003a:663) agree, in that the Passover setting is significant. Jesus is the bread of life.

During the first Epoch, Israel had to learn that they were totally dependent on YHWH for their physical (food) needs. Jesus, however, is more than just another Moses, reminding the people of this fact, like Moses had to do. The feeding narrative points to the fact that Jesus is "heaven's supply for the greatest need of humanity", which surpasses earthly needs like food (Keener 2003a:663). In the words of Twelftree (1999:205): "If we keep in mind the reference to the Passover (Jn. 6:4) and the sacrificial death of the Lamb of God woven through the explanatory discourse in 6:51-

58, the miracle can be seen as a sign of the movement from Moses to Jesus, from bread to flesh and from the provision of bread to the provision of the body of Jesus in his death”.

The authors of the Gospels thus seem to use the theme of *Need-Intervention-Resolution* to point to the fact that Jesus himself fulfils what prophets like Moses’ and Elijah’s deeds pointed at: There was a certain need, for instance the lack of food; the prophets acted (intervened) on behalf of YHWH; the problem (lack of food) was resolved by a miraculous act of YHWH. Jesus resolves the problem of need directly, whether the need is shown (pointed out) to him by someone close to him, an outsider, or when he notices the need himself. The important fact remains though: the theme of *Need-Intervention-Resolution* which is visible in the miracle narratives<sup>89</sup> described above, points to something beyond the miracle act itself.

Therefore, in one sentence: The readers of the Gospels should note that their need, in the first place, is not a physical need (food or water), but a spiritual need, which can only be fulfilled by the Giver of Life.

### **6.8.2 Promise of the (land) Kingdom**

The theme of “the Kingdom” is well attested and thought through in New Testament studies (Strecker 2000:227-262; Wright 1992:226; Wright 1996:198-432). It is a challenging theme to describe, for, if the Synoptic Gospels *and* John are considered, the Synoptic gospels proclaim the imminence of the kingdom, while in John’s Gospel Jesus teaches human beings about eternal life, already present (Miller 2012:65). There is thus a nuance difference: The Synoptic Gospels point to the *Kingdom of God* as something (promise) to come, while in John the *Kingdom* is already present. Motifs like *water* (Jn. 4:1-26), *bread of life* (Jn. 6:1-14), *light-and-darkness* (Jn. 9:1-41), and *life-and-death* (Jn. 11:33-44) are used to demonstrate that “Jesus brings human beings abundant life which is expressed in the present world” (Miller 2012:68).

The question concerning this thesis, is whether the *theme of the promise of the Land* in the Old Testament, relates to the theme of the *promise of the Kingdom* in the New Testament?

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<sup>89</sup> There are many more, but the scope of this investigation does not permit a detailed explanation of all the miracle narratives in the Synoptic Gospels and John.

Jesus never defined the Kingdom of God directly, but He did use the term as if it would be understood by his audience (Kaiser Jr. 2009:128). In a review article on John Bright's book, "The Kingdom of God", Porteus (1955:265-266) notes that Bright traced the concept of the Kingdom back, "through the Davidic state to Moses". Porteus is of opinion that Bright argues correctly when suggesting that "the idea of God's rule is not just a borrowing from elsewhere or a creation of the monarchy itself or a hope born of frustration but is directly connected with the thought of Israel as the chosen people of God" (Porteus 1955:266).

Bright (1953:17-18) says that every Jew would thus have understood the theme of the *Kingdom of God* when Jesus preached about it, as they desperately longed for the coming thereof. Wright (1992:386) puts it this way: "[...] most Jews of the second-temple period regarded themselves as still in exile, still suffering the results of Israel's age-old sin [...] still in need of rescue". The fact that they (the Jews) understood the theme of the *Kingdom of God* is remarkable, considering the fact that the expression *kingdom of God*, does not appear in the Old Testament<sup>90</sup> even once (Bright 1953:18). Nevertheless, the Jews had the expectation that YHWH would come and restore his Kingdom (land), and that He would take his rightful place as ruler and King of this Kingdom.

Jesus' understanding of the *coming of the Kingdom* was not suggesting a geographical setting though, in the sense that YHWH would be reigning over this *earthly land*. Jesus understood Kingdom in terms of *restored land*, metaphorically pointing to *restored human beings* (Wright 1996:429). Jesus proclaimed (Matt. 5:3, 5, 10) the renewal of "human lives and human communities", and through his miracle deeds he showed how Jews and non-Jews could, through the coming of the Kingdom, be "renewed and restored" (Wright 1996:429).

At one stage John the Baptist, who also preached on the coming of the Kingdom, was confused by what Jesus did and did not do. Jesus' answer to John's messengers was: "Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor. Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me" (Lk. 7:22-23). Wright (1996:429) therefore points to the fact that

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<sup>90</sup> Nine references considering the kingdom over which YHWH rules and forty references to YHWH as King are found in the Old Testament though (Kaiser Jr. 2009:128).

Jesus' intention with his "mighty works of healing" should be understood symbolically "as a fulfilment of this expectation" of abundant life. In other words, "abundant life" is another way to speak of a *restored land*, or even a restored community (Remus 1997:45).

The king of this new, restored community is none other than Jesus himself (Bright 1953:18; Miller 2012:65). In John's Gospel Jesus' miracle signs are associated with "his gift of life" as he transforms the natural world (Miller 2012:68). Miller (2012:65) points out that certain characters, such as the Samaritan woman (Jn. 4:28), blind man (Jn. 9:38), and Martha of Bethany (Jn. 11:27), "recognise Jesus' identity as the Messiah and Son of God". Furthermore, the transformation of water into wine and the feeding of the five thousand, according to Miller (2012:68) "point to the interdependence of Earth and humanity". Miller explains that humanity's nourishment and sustenance comes from the earth; vine produces grapes for wine, while Earth produces grain for the making of bread. A man's situation was transformed from being blind since his birth, to someone who can see (Jn. 9:38). Again Jesus made use of earth (dust) in the transforming process. The symbolic action of making clay out of dust is probably pointing to creation of humanity in Genesis 2:7 (Miller 2012:67).

The point is: The promise of the Kingdom suggests a transformation of circumstances, a new beginning. Not in a new setting, for the Kingdom is not a geographical place. In Matthew's Gospel it is explained in the beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:3, 5). Matthew makes use of the term *βασιλεία* – kingdom (Matt. 5:3), and *γῆ* – earth (Matt. 5:5) within the same context: "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth". Does "earth" refer to "this earth" as a whole, or "the land" of Israel? Or does it refer to the kingdom of God or maybe the "new earth" after Christ's *parousia*? Betz (1995:127) says that exegetes have, at one time or another, argued for all of these possibilities. Davies & Allison (2004a:450) argue that Matthew 5:5 is suggesting an "eschatological reversal". In other words "the world is turned upside down", symbolically signifying that "he who humbles himself will be exalted" (Davies & Allison 2004a:450). To inherit the Land is thus a spiritual way of inheriting the Kingdom, which is already present (Davies & Allison 2004a:450). Jesus thus responds to human need and His signs "point to the fruitfulness of new creation" (Miller 2012:68).

With regard to miracles then, a concluding remark on the *theme of the Kingdom* could be to link with Ladd (1993:42), who points to Scriptures such as Mark 1:14-15: "After

John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. 'The time has come,' he said. 'The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"; and Matthew 4:23:"Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people". Ladd (1993:42) goes on to explain that the message and miracles of Jesus could not be understood "unless they are interpreted in the setting of his view of the world and humanity, and the need for the coming of the Kingdom".

In one sentence: The theme of the *Kingdom of God*, as with the theme of the *promise of the Land*, points to a new (spiritual) setting, which involves the transformation of circumstances. Jesus' miracles show those new circumstances to be imminent as well as present.

### 6.8.3 Presence

Chapters 4 and 5 of this thesis have shown, from a Deuteronomistic point of view, the theme of *Presence* to be strong and even "crucial". To be more specific, the theme of *Presence* pointed to YHWH as being the *present One*. Considering the Synoptic Gospels and John, the *theme of Presence* turns out to be important as well. Just by the mentioning of Jesus' name, presence is put to the forefront. In Matthew's Gospel, for example, the announcement of Jesus' birth is connected with the meaning of his name, "Immanuel", meaning, "God with us" (Matt. 1:23)<sup>91</sup>.

Another feature with regard to *presence* which can be compared, especially, to chapter five of this thesis, is *forgiveness*. In chapter five (5.6.3 par. 7) it was explained that YHWH's presence is present in "judgment and forgiveness, but especially in forgiveness". In Matthew's Gospel it is said: "She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21). The name 'Jesus', is the Greek word for *Yesua*, a Hebrew word which means "to save"<sup>92</sup>. Davies & Allison (2004a:209) say that according to "popular etymology", *Yesua* was related "to the Hebrew verb 'to save' (יָשַׁע)<sup>93</sup> and to the Hebrew noun 'salvation' (*yesua*)". Jesus' name in itself thus evokes a saving character.

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<sup>91</sup> This is also an assuring presence, a promise that God will be present in future as well (compare Brueggemann's [1976:681] note on Exodus 3:12).

<sup>92</sup> See 4.2.3 par. 8

<sup>93</sup> See Exodus 14:30

Viljoen (2011:331) points out that in Matthew's Gospel Jesus, as representation of God's *presence*, is noticeable three times: Matthew 1:23 (already mentioned); "For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them" (Matt. 18:20); and "I am with you always" (Matt. 28:20). Viljoen (2011:331) says that these announcements were meant to "counter Roman claims that the Caesar was the agent of Jupiter and the present deity (*deus praesens*)". Chapter four of this thesis pointed out that Moses, through miracle signs, advocated YHWH as the *supreme deity*, and that Pharaoh (who was considered to be an incarnation of the deity *Horus*, the son of *Re* [head of the Egyptian pantheon]) was considered nothing before YHWH (4.2.7.1 par. 1).

The same notion was pointed out in chapter five with regard to Elijah's challenge to the prophets of Baal (1 Kgs. 18). There, through fire (symbol of presence), YHWH was shown to be supreme above the deity, Baal. In 1 Kings 17 YHWH's nourishing act towards the widow, through his prophet Elijah, was also proof of his (YHWH's) presence and demonstrated that he (YHWH), and not the deity Baal, could sustain life. In the Gospels, God's presence is visible through Jesus Christ (Stanton 1993:378), and his presence is demonstrated in different ways, for example through specific words, through nourishing acts, nature miracles, his Spirit, *et cetera*.

The focus - as has been said many times - of this thesis is on miracles. With regard to the *theme of presence* then, miracles which signify presence and have common ground to miracles in Epoch 1 and 2 are sought. Again, the scope of this thesis does not permit a detail investigation into all the miracle stories which are written in the Synoptic Gospels and John's Gospel. Miracles which most probably denote an obvious *presence theme* would be *nature* miracles and *nourishing* miracles. Two *nature* miracle narratives which certainly signify Presence is, *Calming the sea* (Matt. 8:23-27; Mk. 4:35-41; Lk. 8:22-25) and *Walking on the sea* (Matt. 14:22-33; Mk. 6:45-52; Jn. 6:15-21) (Stanton 1993:379), while the *feeding miracle* (Matt. 14:13-21; Mk. 6:30-44; Lk. 9:10-17; Jn. 6:1-14) could, without doubt, serve as an example of a *nourishing presence*. The *feeding miracle* has been explained 6.3.3.1. To explain the *theme of presence* the two *Nature* miracles mentioned above will be the point of focus.

The calming of the sea narrative in Matthew is part of a miracle triad<sup>94</sup> containing a representation of “diverse types of miracles: a sea rescue (Matt. 8:23-27), an exorcism (8:28-34), [and] a healing (Matt. 9:1-8)” (Davies & Allison 2004b:66). The clear relation between the three stories is emphasized by the reaction of the onlookers: wonder and questioning (WHO is this?); negative response (Jesus is begged to leave); positive response (glorification of God). Davies & Allison (2004b:66) suggest that the three stories point to the fact that the “meaning of the miracles lies in the eye of the beholder”. Some people wonder about Jesus’ (God’s) Presence; some people cannot abide his Presence; and some people fully acknowledge his Presence.

The words “ὥστε τὸ πλοῖον καλύπτεσθαι ὑπὸ τῶν κυμάτων” (“so that the waves swept over the boat” [Mat 8:24]) remind of Exodus 15:10. The reader is thus under the impression that the boat is about to be swept under the water as was the fate of Pharaoh’s chariots. Add to this the fact that Jesus was sleeping, and two thoughts come to mind: A sleeping deity (powerless), or, someone in total control. In chapter five the challenge on Mount Carmel (1 Kgs. 18) was described in some detail. There Elijah mocked the Baal prophets about their so-called deity who was sleeping, thus powerless. He (Elijah) urged them on to shout louder in an effort to wake their so-called deity, but in vain. When Jesus sleeps, his disciples also shout in an attempt to wake him up. For the reader, the insinuation of an “absent presence” could be at hand, for the reader already knows, according to Matthew 1-4, that Jesus is the Son of God and not just a “sleeping deity” (Davies & Allison 2004b:70). The fact that Jesus sleeps is, therefore, an indication of *total control*.

Davies & Allison (2004b:70), furthermore, suggest that Matthew 8:23-27 denotes to the story of Jonah<sup>95</sup>. Matthew’s story, however, shows that Jesus is more than a prophet – he rebukes the storm directly, without praying like Jonah prayed. Jesus thus “exercises the power of YHWH himself”. Compared to Mark’s account of the story (Mk. 4:35-41), McInerney (1996:259) says that Jesus’ action was “unprecedented”. When Jesus orally commanded the wind and water, it was a “God-like action” which none of the great prophets of Israel before Jesus had been able to do. The significance of the miracle thus, does not lie within the miracle act itself, but in the fact that Jesus, the

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<sup>94</sup> This is the second of two miracle triads in Matthew, of which the first triad (Matt. 8:1-22) describes three healing stories (Davies & Allison 2004b:66).

<sup>95</sup> Parallels to other stories do exist, for example Herodotus 7.191; Virgil, *Aeneid* 4.553-83; Plutarch, to mention a few, but fall outside the scope of this investigation.

Son of God, performs it (Achteimer 1962:170). Within this act of Jesus, says Achteimer (1962:175), a *redemptive presence* is visible.

Achteimer (1962:175) says that early [New Testament] tradition understood YHWH's redemption of Israel from Egypt (Ex. 18:8; Isa. 63:12) to parallel His creational act when He defeated all chaos<sup>96</sup>. Jesus, in his God-like presence also defeats the "symbol of chaos, the stormy sea" (Achteimer 1962:175). Achteimer (1962:176) continues: "[...] with the presence of Jesus, the final victory of God over the powers of darkness is, in fact, present; with him the victory of God over evil and his prince, begun with the creation, is about to be consummated". Jesus' presence, says Achteimer (1962:176), gives "the powers of darkness" a death blow. The same words, when Jesus "rebuked" the storm and ordered it to "be still" (Mk.4:39) were used when Jesus cast out a demon in Capernaum (Mk. 1:25). Achteimer thus suggests that Jesus' defeat over the "primeval forces of demonic chaos", the sea, points to the power and victory of God over and against the powers of darkness (death), demonstrated on the cross and resurrection (Achteimer 1962:176).

Another nature miracle which denotes *presence* is the *Walking on the sea* narrative in Matthew 14:22-33, Mark 6:45-52 and John 6:15-21. In Mark's account of the *sea-walking* narrative, McInerny (1996:259) says that this narrative is conspicuously like Mark 4:35-41, echoing it. In Mark, the *sea-walking* narrative gives the impression of an epiphany (Combs 2008:345; McInerny 1996:259). McInerny (1996:259) identifies four characteristics of an epiphany in Hebrew Scriptures relating to this story:

- Jesus meant to "pass by" the disciples (Mk. 6:48). "Pass by" gives the miracle scene the appearance of an epiphany story such as Exodus 33:19, 22; 34:6 and 1 Kings 19. "Passing by", in Hebrew Scriptures, was a way in which YHWH manifested Himself to human beings;
- Jesus "spoke with them" (Mk. 6:50). This is also a way, in Hebrew Scriptures, in which encounters between YHWH and people were shown. An example is Exodus 3:10;
- The disciples' response of "fear" and the way Jesus replies: "take heart", "have no fear" (Mk. 6:50), intertextualates with Hebrew Scriptures such as Exodus 14:13; 20:20;

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<sup>96</sup> In ancient times water was a symbol of chaos.



- The words, "it is I" (Mk. 6:50) are typical of a *revelation formula*.

This is one of the few miracle narratives also recorded in the gospel of John. Ashton (1993:471) is of opinion that there should be no doubt that John was influenced by the "Deuteronomical tradition". He gives two main reasons for his statement, of which the first concerns this thesis, namely, the "numerous references" in John's Gospel to "Moses and to the 'prophet' who was to succeed him". Ashton (1993:471) then states that, for the community in John's Gospel, Jesus was regarded "as somehow supplanting Moses and taking his place". Lacomara (1974:65-66) says that the emphasis, when comparing Jesus to Moses, should not be on what Moses did, but rather, on the *figure* Moses. In other words, Jesus in his person was compared to the figure Moses. As YHWH's presence to his people was noticeable through the figure, Moses, Jesus as figure, resembles the *presence of God*.

A last note on the *walking on water* miracle concerns the disciples' reaction of fear, especially in Mark's account of the story. Combs (2008:358) explains the absurdity aspect which Mark uses to emphasise the fact that the disciples were willing to believe that what they saw was a ghost and not Jesus, as a deity. Ghosts, as was believed in ancient times, could not walk on water, only deities and God could. Ghosts would not even come close to water, as rivers and lakes were seen as boundaries where ghosts were not able to dwell. The disciples' hearts were thus hardened in such a way that they could not see Jesus. In chapter four the Pharaoh's hardened heart was described. He was not able to sight the presence of YHWH. Even YHWH's people, while in the Wilderness, struggled to see YHWH's presence. When, at last they did notice his presence (Ex. 33-34), they begged to rather not see it.

Chapter 5 showed how YHWH's people acknowledged YHWH's presence on Mount Carmel (1 Kgs. 18), but the king's house did not. Then Elijah, by the way he acted in 1 Kings 19, appeared to struggle as well. He was more concerned about his own fate than experiencing YHWH's guiding presence. In the end, it is left to the reader to see in the narrative, that which the characters were unable to see.

To conclude: In Meyer's (2002:159) words: "Jesus allowed his actions to speak for him". If this is true, all of Jesus' miracles, in a sense, should point to *Presence*. Meyer (2002:159) also makes reference to John's (whilst in prison) question to Jesus whether he (Jesus) is the one WHO is to come, and then Jesus' answer to him: blind men see,

cripples walk, lepers are cleansed, deaf persons hear, dead persons are raised, and good news is broken to the poor! (Matt. 11:5; Lk. 7:22-23).

## 6.9 MOTIFS

Chapters 4 and 5 elaborated on eight motifs. Some motifs in the Synoptic Gospels and John share common ground. Motifs such as *healer* and *creation*, and *fear* and *murmur*, can interrelate in the same narratives. There is no miracle which has to do with fire in Epoch 3. In this regard Acts would have to be considered, but it falls outside the cadre of this thesis. This last section will, therefore, concentrate on only six motifs.

### 6.9.1 Wonder (miracle) motif

Matthew Arnold once said: "To pick Scripture miracles one by one to pieces is an odious and repulsive task; it is also an unprofitable one, for whatever we may think of the affirmative demonstrations of them, a negative demonstration of them is, from the circumstances of the case, impossible" (Clarke 2003:95). Therefore, in this final part of chapter six, only a selection of miracles can be looked at, bearing in mind that every miracle done by Jesus is considered to be a *wonder*. The question to be asked under the *wonder-motif* is, why? Why the *wonder-motif* in the Synoptic Gospels and John? According to Van der Loos (1968:241-250), the significance and functionality of Jesus' miracles can be divided in four categories: *Proof of identity*; *a display of mercy*; *a means to arouse faith*; and *Signs* (also compare Achtemeier 1975:550-554).

#### 6.9.1.1 *Miracles*<sup>97</sup> as proof of identity

*"And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. Then those who were in the boat worshipped him, saying, 'Truly you are the Son of God'" (Matt. 14:32-33).*

*"Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God'" (Matt. 16:16).*

It should be clear by now that one of the identifying aspects of a true prophet is the fact that he can do miracles. This considered, each of the miracles Jesus did, could for that matter, identify him as a true prophet. The focus for the moment, however, will be on a (identifying) confession, that in Matthew 14:32 and 16:16. It has already been

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<sup>97</sup> Miracles (plural) are being used in the heading, but only one miracle will be described as a representation of other miracle narratives.

shown in the diagram of Scott (2000:97), that the confession of Peter (Matt. 16:16) is linked to the sea-walking narrative in Matthew 14.

Although the sea-walking narrative differs in various degrees in Matthew, Mark and John, they find common ground in the fact that it happened "after the miraculous feeding", pointing to a "certain form of tradition" (Twelftree 1999:320; Van der Loos 1968:650). Unlike Mark, who ends the narrative on a negative note (confused; hardened hearts [Mk. 6:52]), Matthew has a positive view with a positive outcome: They worshipped him (Jesus) and confessed that he is the Son of God, thus also foreshadowing Peter's positive confession in Matthew 16:16 (Hare 1993:171).

Without claiming a definite intertextual link between Matthew's gospel and certain Old Testament traditions, it is noticeable what the effect was after the people walked through the Red Sea and after Elisha walked through the Jordan: "And when the Israelites saw the great power the LORD displayed against the Egyptians, the people feared the LORD and put their trust in him and in Moses his servant" (Ex. 14:31); "The company of the prophets from Jericho, who were watching, said, 'The spirit of Elijah is resting on Elisha'. And they went to meet him and bowed to the ground before him" (2 Kgs 2:15).

In these older traditions Moses and Elisha were accepted as true prophets of God because of the miraculous events (splitting of water) which had been done through them. Jesus, however, was not being bowed down to because of his status as true prophet, but because he was considered to be the Son of God. With this title he was designated "as the supernaturally empowered king of the last days" (Hare 1993:171). Newman & Stine (1988:472) mention that Matthew 14:33 not only anticipates Peter's confession in 16:16, it is also the first time in Matthew's gospel that "Jesus' divine sonship" is confessed.

Interesting, the Israelites acknowledged Moses as their leader for the first time in Exodus 14:31, after they walked through the Sea of Reeds (Davies & Allison 2004b:510). However, when the disciples affirm that Jesus is "truly" (ἀληθῶς – a strong affirmation of certainty) the *Son of God*, "they are putting him in the highest place" (Morris 1992:384), a position neither Moses, nor Elijah, could ever have had. Significantly then, the confession of the disciples implies that Jesus "has performed

actions which the Old Testament associates with YHWH alone" (Davies & Allison 2004b:509).

In Chapters 4 and 5 of this thesis "proof of identity" was shown to be in two categories: Those miracles which identified YHWH to be Lord, and those miracles which identified Moses and Elijah to be YHWH's true prophets. In the Gospels, it seems as if these two categories fall into one: Jesus is the true (ultimate) prophet, but Jesus is also the true (only) Son of God.

### **6.9.1.2 *Miracles as a display of mercy***

*"As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed him, calling out, "Have mercy on us, Son of David!" (Matt. 9:27).*

Van der Loos (1968:243) says that the "deepest motive that prompted Jesus to perform His miracles", according to many investigators, was because of his compassion towards people, and might we add, especially to those in suffering need. Van der Loos (1968:244) also draws attention to Jesus' answer to John the Baptist (Matt. 11:5 - already sighted) regarding his miracles<sup>98</sup>, as being "acts of mercy". In Jesus' answer to John's disciples, the "blind" is mentioned first in the list of miracles which Jesus spells out.

Considering the miracle in Matthew 9:27, it is interesting that the healing of the two blind men is the ninth miracle of the miracle cycle recorded in Matthew 8-9. Hagner (1993:252) says that this miracle (together with those recorded before it) not only shows Jesus' "unique power and authority", but also involves an important theme in the gospel of Matthew, "that of fulfilment". Jesus is the true Messiah who will set the captive free. An interesting comparison of Matthew 9:27-31 to Exodus 10:21-29, regarding the wonder of darkness (explained in chapter four of this thesis), is that the wonder of darkness was also the ninth wonder. Another interesting fact is that the wonder of darkness in Exodus was a darkness that *could be felt*. In Jesus' act of healing of the two blind men, he touched (felt) their eyes.

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<sup>98</sup> It should also be remembered that an important role of miraculous acts was to validate Jesus as the Messiah. This validation is also captured in Jesus' answer to the disciples of John the Baptist (Pate et. al. 2004:138).

A sharp contrast between the darkness of Egypt and the darkness which the two blind men experienced, though, is a reversed order. Darkness was put upon the Egyptians as a sign of judgement. The blind men were in darkness<sup>99</sup>, so to speak, and they received sight. The outcome of the two miracles in the two different Epochs was the same, though. Both pointed to a merciful outcome: By YHWH's grace he was about to set his captive people free; by grace, Jesus the Messiah, came to set the captive (those living in darkness) free. The literal healing of the blind men, in other words, pointed beyond itself, to the coming Kingdom, when those who walk in the darkness will receive light (Hagner 1993:255).

### **6.9.1.3 *Miracles as a means to arouse faith***

*"Do you believe that I am able to do this?' 'Yes, Lord,' they replied" (Mat 9:28).*

The miracle of the healing of the two blind men was not only a display of mercy, but also a means to evoke faith (Twelftree 1999:120). When they plead for mercy, Jesus asks them if they believe that he could heal them. The question, says Twelftree (1999:120), "provides the means for the blind men to express the required faith in Jesus' healing power". Compared to the Old Testament, Van der Loos (1968:245) explains that the Israelites were frequently moved to believe, or were "strengthened in their belief by miraculous deeds". Examples hereof are Exodus 4:30, 31 and 14:31, where YHWH performed signs of which the outcome would be that the people should believe in him. Other Old Testament examples are found in 1 Kings 17:17 when the widow of Zarephath confirms her faith in the mission of Elijah when her son is restored back to life. On Carmel, in 1 Kings 18:39, the people admit that YHWH alone is Lord after the miraculous fire demonstration on the altar.

### **6.9.1.4 *Miracles as signs***

*"When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come out!'" (Jn. 11:43).*

Meier (1996:361) confirms that there are only three figures in the whole of the Old Testament Scriptures who performed a "whole series of miracles: Moses, Elijah, and Elisha". And, only two of them (Elijah and Elisha) have been noted "to have raised the

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<sup>99</sup> Davies & Allison (2004b:135) mentions that blindness, in Jewish tradition, was "often regarded as a punishment for wrong doing".

dead". Furthermore, of these two, only Elijah was expected to return to deal with the "restoration of Israel and the final judgment" (Meier 1996:361). Therefore, Meier (1996:361) says, Jesus consciously chose to "clothe" himself in the mantle of Elijah (figuratively speaking), presenting himself as the "eschatological prophet" who will bring forth the Kingdom of God.

It has already been explained that the function of *signs* is to point beyond themselves, forward or backwards. In John's description of the raising of Lazarus from the dead, he places the narrative as a *midpoint* and *pivot* in the meta-narrative (Lincoln 2005:9). Twelftree (1999:340) describes this sign as a sign "of the great sign". He says the author of John structures his sign-stories in such a way that they increase in magnitude, only to reach a "crescendo in the raising of Lazarus". This last earthly miracle (in John's Gospel) done by Jesus, not only prefigures Jesus' death and resurrection, it also serves as a lens (pointing backwards) to look back at the signs which Jesus performed previously, showing a "golden thread" from beginning to end which anticipates the "larger and clearer *sign* of the *glory of God* in Jesus" (Twelftree 1999:340). The *sign motif* therefore does not necessarily have direct intertextual links to, say, Epochs 1 and 2 in the Canon of Scriptures. The link between signs in the Old and New Testament should rather be sought in what signs, as *motif*, tend to do. They point to something, or rather *someone*, beyond themselves. That is, to the glory of God.

### **6.9.2 *Three as motif***

From an Old Testament perspective, *three* as motif was explained on two levels in both chapter four and five of this thesis: There was the literal *three day motif*, and then *three* in a *literal structure*, called a *triad motif*. It was pointed out in 4.7.6 that the *motif of three days* often "signalled the period necessary for the completion of a task". The third day also often indicated "the climax of an event and/or the initiation of a new action" (4.7.6 par. 1). When comparing miracle narratives in the Synoptic Gospels and John to those of Epochs 1 and 2, a preliminary finding would be that the same two levels of *three as motif* would apply.

### 6.9.2.1 *Three day motif*

*"Jesus answered them, 'Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days'" (Jn. 2:19)<sup>100</sup>*

Meyer (2002:157) says the *three days motif* "evokes the divine governance of the life and fate of Jesus". Jesus claimed in a riddle that he would restore the temple in three days if it should be broken down (Jn. 2:19). This is not a miracle, but Jesus was pointing to salvation, to the fact that he would conquer death, which would be regarded as a miracle. Meyer (2002:157) explains further: "[...] the sanctuary of the Temple is presented as a type of the messianic community of salvation, transfigured in the reign of God". If three, in Old Testament terms, indicates among other things the completion of a task, Jesus would probably have used the motif typologically to point to eschatological fulfilment - the completion of his task of bringing salvation to humankind (Coloe 2009:380; Meyer 2002:157).

In the Gospel of Mark a three-fold repetition regarding the Passion of Jesus is given (Mk. 8:31; 9:31; 10:33-34). Proctor (2003:419) is of opinion that "three days" in Mark's Gospel only denotes "an indefinite but not peculiar long period", simply meaning "soon". Proctor bases his assumption on the words of Perry (1986:639): "In the Aramaic of Jesus' time it was still customary to employ a traditional Semitic figure of speech which anticipated the conclusion of an uncertain but not too lengthy period of time (involving ambiguity and danger) as coming on the third of three figurative days (e.g., Ex. 19:11; Hos. 6:2)<sup>101</sup>.

Contrary to Proctor's assumption, Robbins (1999:120) gives an outline of Mark's gospel as a whole, and points out how the author of Mark skilfully structures his whole gospel in cycles of three. In so doing, Robbins (1999:120) says that Mark, with his outline, "stands at the interface of Jewish traditions, reflecting impulses both from traditions attached to Israel leaders like Moses and Elijah". If the author of Mark then does not ascribe any significant meaning to three as motif, it is rather significant (even ironic) that he does use a triad outline in his presentation of the Gospel story. This point will be discussed further in 6.9.2.2.

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<sup>100</sup> cf. Mark 15:29; Matthew 27:40; Acts 6:14.

<sup>101</sup> This is contrary to what was explained in chapters four and five of this thesis.

*"Jesus called his disciples to him and said, 'I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. I do not want to send them away hungry, or they may collapse on the way'" (Matt.15:32; Mk. 8:2).*

In the above verse Jesus' compassion towards the crowds is shown. The mention of three days could, to a certain extent, point to urgency (Davies & Allison 2004b:570). Could Matthew perhaps have pointed to the fact that the crowd had been dependant on Jesus for survival as the crowd in Exodus 15 and 16 had been on YHWH? In Exodus 15:22ff the crowd had been without water for three days. To survive in the Wilderness, they had to learn to be totally dependent<sup>102</sup> on YHWH. It can only be speculated whether Matthew's intention was to keep Exodus or Psalm 107 in mind (Allison Jr. 1993:240). The fact remains though, that Jesus had compassion for the crowd (Morris 1992:409) and after three days during which they had been in his presence, he gave them food in an act of grace. Morris (1992:409) says that the people had not been fasting for three days, but their food supplies had become exhausted, as they had not prepared to stay that long<sup>103</sup>.

Schnackenburg (2002:153) says that the focus-point of verse 32 should not be on the three days, but on the fact that Jesus wanted to send the people home in good health. The disciples' reaction in asking where they would find food for so many people further emphasizes the fact that Jesus alone is the provider (of food)<sup>104</sup>. Therefore again, as Israel, after three days in the Wilderness and in despair, had been nurtured by YHWH (Ex. 15:22ff.), so Jesus nurtures the crowd. Hare (1993:182) puts it this way: "Matthew may understand Jesus' compassion as a manifestation of God's loving concern for his people. In this sense also, Jesus is Emmanuel, 'God with us'" (Matt. 1:23).

### **6.9.2.2 Triad motif**

Coming back to Robbins' (Orton ed. 1999:120) outline of Mark's Gospel, Robbins points out a "three-part rhetorical progression" which the author of Mark uses in the outline of his Gospel. This analysis of a series of three in Mark, says Robbins (Orton ed. 1999:119), points to a "three-part literary unit", reaching its peak in a setting in which

<sup>102</sup> It is common knowledge that a human can survive without water for only three days.

<sup>103</sup> The Israelites were also not prepared or geared to stay in the Wilderness, as their lack of water after three days demonstrated this fact (Ex. 15:22ff).

<sup>104</sup> Metaphorically of life



Jesus “summons or commissions” his disciples. A characteristic of these units is that they begin with “explicit reference to the presence of the disciples with Jesus as he travels out (εξέρχομαι, ἐκπορεύομαι) of one place to another”. The second part shows how Jesus interacts, setting the stage for the third part. The third consists of a “narrational comment” whereas “Jesus summons (προσκαλέομαι), calls (καλέω, φωνέω), or sends (ἀποστέλλω) his disciples” (Robbins 1999:119).

Regarding the miracle stories in the gospel of Mark, Sunderwirth (1975:66-67) points out that the author of Mark clusters miracle stories which were narrated before the confession of Peter (commonly seen as the mid-point in Mark’s Gospel), in three cycles. The miracle clusters all appear in the first half of the gospel. Sunderwirth (1975:70) says that the phenomenon mentioned is also visible in the “biblical stories of Moses and Elijah”<sup>105</sup>. Although admittedly similar patterns were well known and used in Ancient-and-Hellenistic literature, it served the author of Mark’s purpose. How it served the author of Mark’s purpose, was by the extensive use of the verb ἔρχομαι (go out; come out; go away; retire), which is used to point to withdrawal (Sunderwirth 1975:82-84). Sunderwirth (1975:95) observes that this withdrawal theme is also noticeable in the miracle stories surrounding Moses and Elijah. In chapters 4.6.3 and 5.6.3 of this thesis the Hebrew equivalent of ἔρχομαι, namely *halak* (depart) and *yatsa* (go out from) denoted *presence*. It was shown that even when YHWH seemed absent, his absence was shown to be a presence *surging and returning*. Could the author of Mark have had the same intention when he narrated a *withdrawal* motif?

Turning to the gospel of Matthew again, it is generally agreed amongst scholars that the miracle narratives in Matthew 8 and 9 “have been collected into three groups of three stories” (Twelftree 1999:105; Van der Weele 2008:669). Each of these three groups is followed by sayings of Jesus. Following Twelftree’s (1999:105) outline of the miracle stories in Matthew 8 and 9, the structure can be set out as follows:

A. Matthew 8:1-22

- A leper healed (8:1-4)
- A centurion’s servant healed (8:5-13)
- Peter’s mother-in-law healed (8:14-15)
  - Summary of Jesus’ ministry (8:16-17)

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<sup>105</sup> There are certainly similar cluster-patterns noticeable in Hellenistic literature, but the aim of this thesis, as has been said in chapter one, is to focus on similarities within the three Epochs found in the Canon of Scriptures.

- Would-be followers of Jesus (8:18-22)
- B. Matthew 8:23-9:17
  - A storm calmed (8:23-27)
  - Two demoniacs healed (8:28-34)
  - A paralytic forgiven and healed (9:1-8)
    - The call of Matthew the tax collector (9:9-13)
    - The issue of fasting (9:14-17)
- C. Matthew 9:18-38
  - A ruler's daughter raised and a woman healed (9:18-26)
  - Two men receive their sight (9:27-31)
  - A mute demoniac healed (9:32-34)
    - Summary of Jesus' ministry (9:35)
    - The call for labourers (9:36-38)

Davies & Allison (2004b:1) observe the scholarly agreement, that the people healed in Matthew 8-9, are "either from the margins of Jewish society or to be without public status or power". In Epoch 1 the Israelites, who benefited from the marvellous acts of YHWH were most certainly described as powerless. In Epoch 2 miracles done by Elijah benefited the marginalized, such as the widow in 1 Kings 17.

Concerning the structure above, Davies & Allison (2004b:1) say that scholars like Klostermann and Schoeps discovered the so-called key to Matthew 8-9 in the number ten, recalling the ten miracles which Moses performed in Egypt. The structure above, on the contrary, shows only nine miracle stories, parcelled into three different groups. Davies & Allison (2004b:1) furthermore state that this does not correspond to the ten miracles in Exodus, and, finally, Davies & Allison (2004b:1) say that, while the ten miracles in Exodus are regarded as plagues, Jesus' miracles are not plagues and they are "deeds of compassion done for the benefit of others".

Chapter 4 of this thesis did, however, argue that there were not ten miracle plagues in the Exodus narrative, but actually *nine wonders* (structured in *three groups of three*) and *one plague* miracle (death of firstborn). Although the nine wonders were not good for the Egyptians, they did benefit the Jewish people, for they were brought upon Egypt (for YHWH had compassion unto his people) so that his people could be delivered. So, also, the one plague miracle, although against Egypt, benefitted the Jewish people, for after this they could depart from Egypt.

It was also pointed out in Chapter 5 of this thesis that the miracle narratives surrounding Elijah are a foil to Moses. In 1 Kings 1-19 and 2 Kings 1-2 the miracle stories were also grouped in triad-patterns. Whether the author of Matthew deliberately structured his gospel as a foil to Moses (and Elijah) could be debatable, but similarities in structure are most certainly clear.

### 6.9.3 Fear motif

*"When they came to Jesus, they saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons, sitting there, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid" (Mk. 5:15).*

In the gospel of Luke, fear is usually connected to the characteristics of faith in miracle stories<sup>106</sup> (Achte-meier 1975:554). Thus, says Achtemeier (1975:554), the reaction that the miracle stories fashion, is "to see God behind the activity of Jesus". In this way Jesus is acknowledged as the One chosen to do God's work. In chapter 4.7.2 fear as motif was shown to have more aspects to it than just to create faith. The scope of this investigation does not permit a description of all those different aspects within the Synoptic gospels and John. Regarding *fear* as *motif* in the Synoptic Gospels, the story of *The Healing of a Demon-possessed Man* (Mk.5:1-20; Matt. 8:28-34; Lu. 8:26-39) does point to more than one aspect of fear<sup>107</sup>, especially in the gospel of Mark, which will be the point of focus for now.

In all three Synoptic accounts of the *Demon-possessed man* story, the narrative follows the *calming of the storm* narrative, which starts with: "let's go over to the other side". It has already been mentioned in 6.3.1.1 (par. 6) that the *crossing to the other side* imposed a barrier which had to be crossed. That "barrier" consisted of dangers (storm). Even if it symbolized the underworld with all of its demons, Jesus had the power to overcome this barrier. Admittedly the "other side" could also imply "alienness", coupled with all kinds of dangers ("otherness") like "demons" and hostile people. Burdon (2004:156) points out "the symbols of non-Israelite uncleanness abound, in tombs; pigs; demons and shackles; and a pagan title for Jesus".

The story of the "storm" has already shown the implied reader that Jesus has power over nature, and, symbolically, over evil forces (Kazen 2006:30). Now the evil forces come to the foreground, not symbolically, but directly in the "demon possessed" man.

<sup>106</sup> Luke 5:26; 7:16; 8:35, 37; 24:5

<sup>107</sup> The implication is that the different aspects of fear, as described in TWOT 907b, would find common ground in both the Old and the New Testament and could make for an interesting study.

The way in which the possessed man comes to Jesus, by worshipping<sup>108</sup> (προσκυνέω Mk. 5:6) Jesus, implies that the evil spirits acknowledged Jesus' authority.

The narrative also has a military tone. When Jesus asks the man his name, the evil spirits identify themselves as Λεγεών (Latin loan-word for "a body of soldiers" – Strong 3003). When Jesus commands the evil spirits to depart from the man (Mk. 5:13), Derrett (1979:4) says that Jesus in fact saves a man "from the world of the dead", making it a revivifying act. This is implied by the words: "This man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him any more, not even with a chain" (Mk. 5:3). Furthermore, Derrett (1979:4) suggests that the man embodied Satan himself. The people tried to bind him with chains<sup>109</sup>, but he broke them and couldn't be bound. Jesus' power, however, rendered the evil spirits harmless.

They (the evil spirits) begged Jesus not to send them to the underworld, but into the pigs (Mk. 5:12). As soon as Jesus gave the command, they went into the pigs and the pigs ran into the sea and drowned. Burdon (2004:158) sees here an antitype of the Sea of Reeds, suggesting that the narrative in Mark points to Caesar as the new Pharaoh and Jesus being the new Moses. Chapter 4 has shown the Pharaoh as a representation of those who oppose YHWH. Those who opposed YHWH always came second best, as was demonstrated in the Sea of Reeds. There, the Pharaoh's soldiers were overwhelmed by fear when they tried to chase down the Israelites. In Mark's narrative, those who looked after the pigs got afraid and ran away. They told the people who lived in the country side what had happened, and when they saw that the man who had been possessed, was normal, they also were afraid and begged Jesus to go away (Mk. 5:14-17). Could Pharaoh's words in Exodus be echoed here when he begged Moses to go away after the death of his first born son?

The narrative ends with the previously possessed man who went out "and began to tell in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed [ἐθαύμαζον]<sup>110</sup>" (Mk. 5:20). They might have been amazed because, in ancient belief, water was seen as a foreign place for spirits (Combs 2008:356). Those familiar with this account would, therefore, have found it difficult to believe that the *spirit haunted* pigs would run into the water. In Mark 6:50 the disciples were terrified for this exact

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<sup>108</sup> The word προσκυνέω indicates submergence, as when a dog licks his master's hand (Strong 2001 - 4352).

<sup>109</sup> The fate of the devil is to be bound and constrained till the end of times.

<sup>110</sup> ἐθαύμαζον can also mean to be *astounded*, as when seeing a wonder.

reason, for they could not believe that a ghost could walk on water (Combs 2008:353). Old Testament imagery portrays the sea as a “chaos that only the Lord can order or reorder, a threat that only divine power can securely control” (Malbon 1984:375). In the same sense, only a divine power can demand *spirit filled* pigs to run into that chaos.

At the end of Exodus 14 the people marvelled at the sight of what YHWH had just done, letting them walk through the water, and letting the enemy drown in the same water. Before, they were trapped against the same water mass and filled with fear as they watched in agony how their enemy came closer. YHWH did, however, control the water mass and opened it for them to walk through. Exodus 14:31 says: “And Israel saw that great work which the LORD did upon the Egyptians: and the people feared the LORD, and believed the LORD, and his servant Moses”. Could it be that the author of Mark intended to show that Jesus’ work on the “other side” caused room for a new kind of revelation, even among a hostile Roman empire, assuming that the *previously possessed* gentile went out (in the country side) and preached what had happened to him (Burdon 2004:163)? – Therefore claiming that, as the people marvelled, they also started to fear and believe in Jesus. Admittedly this could be speculative, but the fear motif does, however, point further forward from this point on, in Mark’s gospel. An unmistakable motif which links Mark 5:1-20 to the end of his gospel, is the fear at the tomb: “Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid” (Mk. 16:8).

In the Gospel of Mark, fear is shown in different ways, especially, it seems, on and around the sea. In every sense the outcome is positive, as it points forward to a promise. Jesus’ deeds are what cause fear, be it positive or negative (within the narrative). For the implied reader the outcome is positive. Malbon (1984:377) sums it up this way: “[...] for him threat becomes promise. In thus mediating the opposition of land and sea, Jesus manifests the power of God. The divine promises of security and threat of human danger meet in Jesus and are transformed”.

#### **6.9.4 Water motif**

As has already been observed thus far in this study, water as spatial or geographical focal point makes up a great deal in all three Synoptic Gospels (Malbon 1984:363). In

John's Gospel water seems to point more to a symbolic aspect, as for instance a sign of life-and-death and a sign of healing (Miller 2012:66-67).

In Chapter 4 of this thesis, water as motif has been described under three subdivisions: *New beginning*, *creational power* and *purifying-and-healing*. Purifying-and-healing was not dealt with in Chapter 5<sup>111</sup>. It was suggested in chapter 1, with regard to the methodological outline which this thesis follows, that overlapping of themes and motifs is possible. The three aspects regarding water as motif, as mentioned above, confirm exactly this point. The next two narratives from the Gospel of John will show how *new beginning*, *creational power* and *purifying-and-healing* can be intertwined.

#### **6.9.4.1 The first sign miracle (Jn. 2:1-12)**

*"This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him" (Jn. 2:11)*

Kim (2010:201) says that the sign-miracles (*σημεία*) in John's gospel serve as purpose to "demonstrate the Evangelist's thesis that Jesus is the promised Messiah of the Old Testament Scriptures and the divine Son of God". This is spelled out in John 20:30-31: "Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name". *New life* signals *new beginning* and vice versa.

The first two sign-miracles in John's gospel are recorded in John 2-4, in what is often referred to as the "Cana Cycle" (Kim 2010:203). Kim (2010:203) explains that these first two sign-miracles "present Jesus as the divine Messiah who offers newness of life to those who believe". Focussing on the first sign-miracle (turning water into wine), Kim (2010:207) further mentions that Jesus not only turned water into wine, but it was done in *super abundance*. The way in which Jesus turned the water into wine is significant. He only spoke a word. In this sense, John 2:7-8 is connected to John 1:3: "Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made".

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<sup>111</sup> The purifying-and-healing aspect could have been dealt with if the Elisha cycles formed part of this thesis.

The term for *first* (ἀρχή) sign, can also mean beginning, or foundation (cf. Jn.1:1-2) (Lincoln 2005:130). Having creational power, Jesus' glory (δόξα), through this sign, was shown at the wedding at Cana (Jn. 2:11). The sign also pointed forward, anticipating the blood on the cross (Koester 1995:83), Jesus' triumph over death, thus delivering those who believe, to a new life in Him: "The divine favor revealed by his gift of wine was a prelude to the gift of his own life" (Koester 1995:82). Lincoln (2005:13) puts it this way: "Through Jesus' death God deals with the world's plight and restores conditions of well-being through establishing the positive verdict of life, symbolized in the blood and water that flow from Jesus' side".

Chapter 4 of this thesis has shown how Moses received three signs (Ex. 4) to legitimise him as prophet. One of the signs, turning water into blood, was also the first of nine wonders. It was performed at the Nile, turning the Nile and all of Egypt's water into blood. The path of the sign of blood in Exodus 4:1-9 has been clearly shown in a diagram under 4.7.1.4. The diagram shows how the sign is connected to all the miracle narratives in Exodus, right through till the splitting of the sea (Ex. 14:21-31). In other words, the sign which started in Exodus 4, pointed forward to deliverance through the Sea of Reeds, after which Israel had the chance to a new beginning with YHWH, their deliverer. Lincoln (2005:130) would, therefore, not be wrong to compare Jesus' first sign-miracle to that of the Exodus story.

#### **6.9.4.2 Healing of a blind man (John 9:1-12)**

*"Having said this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes. 'Go,' he told him, 'wash in the Pool of Siloam' (this word means Sent). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing" (Jn. 9:6).*

In the story of a blind man being healed by Jesus in John 9:1-12, Jesus' creational power is shown again as he makes use of dust (earth) and spittle (water) to heal the man<sup>112</sup> (Miller 2012:67). Jesus made clay with a mixture of his spittle<sup>113</sup> and ground and anointed the blind man's eyes with it. This action is an allusion to the account of the creation of humanity in Genesis 2:7 (Barrett 1978:358). After YHWH created man from clay, he breathed in man's nostrils the breath of life. With the blind man being

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<sup>112</sup> This sign-miracle points to and confirms Jesus' words in John 8:12 and 9:5 where Jesus says that he is the "light of the world" (Miller 2012:67). This point will be elaborated on in 6.9.5.

<sup>113</sup> Spittle is also used in two miracles described in Mark: Mark 7:33; 8:23 (Barrett 1978:358)

healed, he also receives a new life: He never had sight before, but now he can see the work of God (Jn. 9:3) and believe in Jesus, who works God's glory (Jn. 9:37-38).

Of note is the remark of the disciples, who, by their question, show their understanding of the man's blindness as being the cause of sins by someone before him (perhaps his parents). In other words, the disciples thought the man to be impure, therefore blind (Miller 2012:67). Although Jesus does not think of the man as being impure, he does, however, command him to go and wash in Siloam (Jn. 9:7). The word Siloam means "*one who has been sent*", therefore the word suggests a link between Jesus and the pool (Koester 1995:101). The role of earth and water is also emphasised in the healing power of Jesus (Miller 2012:67).

It is interesting what an important role the water-motif played in the Exodus narrative with regard to YHWH's creational power and to emphasise a new beginning for Israel. Moses has been *sent* to the Pharaoh; water has been *transformed*; dust turned into gnats; *et cetera*. All the wonder miracles had to do with nature and YHWH's creational power, including the plague of death, pointing to YHWH's power over life and death. It may or may not have been John's intention to use motifs specifically denoting similarities to motifs in the Old Testament, especially to Moses in Exodus (Clark 1983:201-205), but the fact that there are multiple similarities cannot be denied, as the life-and-death motif will demonstrate further.

### **6.9.5 Life-and-death**

The motif of *life-and-death* has various symbolic dimensions attached to it, of which water (already mentioned as motif) is but one. Imageries resonating life-and-death, which could be added, are *bread of life*, *light*, *blood*, and of course *death and resurrection* (Miller 2012:67). In the gospel of John these symbols are connected to Jesus' self-proclaiming words "I am" (*ego eimi*) (Koester 2003:140). With regard to *water* (already noted), *bread*, *light* and *blood*, it is evident that these elements are essential for life, as without them, life is not possible.



### 6.9.5.1 *Bread of life*

*"Jesus said to them, 'I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world'" (Jn. 6:32-33).*

The miracle of the feeding of the crowd in John 6:1-14 took place during the Jewish Passover (Jn. 6:4). During Passover Israel's deliverance from the bondage of Egypt, under the leadership of Moses, was commemorated. Koester (1995:90) says that this miracle of Jesus reflected a response of the crowd, showing "the common expectation of a prophet like Moses", foretold in the book of Deuteronomy 18:18. They did not, however, understand the true meaning of the multiplication of the bread. Burroughs (2006:86) says that the audience's grumbling in John 6:41, 43 and 61 is a mimic of the Israelite's murmurings in Numbers and even Exodus 16 in the Old Testament.

After Jesus fed 5000 people (Jn. 6:15ff), he described himself as the "bread of life" who must be eaten. Jesus was proclaiming "a new way to God" not to "be found in the synagogue". The way to God is through him (Evans 2004:57). In the Wilderness YHWH sustained his people with Manna (bread). In 1 Kings 17 the widow was also sustained by YHWH through his prophet Elijah. By implication, those who ate manna which was provided in the Wilderness by YHWH, (also the widow in 1 Kgs. 17) would eventually have died anyhow (Hoskins 2009:296). Burroughs (2006:93) explains that there is a subtle warning in John 6, namely that unbelief in Jesus will lead to death. Those who failed to trust in YHWH as the One, who *sustained* them, did not see the Promised Land. Through his miracles Jesus pointed to a new "Land", that of the Kingdom of God, and he proclaimed that he is the only way to it.

### 6.9.5.2 *Light*

*"While I am in the world, I am the light of the world" (Jn. 9:5).*

In some miracles where blind men were healed (cf. Matt. 20:29-34; Mk. 10:46-52; Lu. 18:35-43; Jn. 9:1-12), Jesus has clearly demonstrated that he is the "Son of Man", bringing *grace* and *judgment* (Beasley-Murray 1987:160). In other words, Jesus brings a division, also shown in the dualism of *light* and *darkness*, into the world (Beasley-Murray 1987:161; Koester 2003:141). Those who live in his light receive salvation (grace) and

those who live in the darkness will receive judgement. Darkness is symbolised by blindness, pointing to those who do not want to see (Bultmann 1971:341). Bultmann (1971:342) says that when Jesus explains himself to be *light*, he gives "brightness in which existence itself is illumined", therefore he (Jesus) is the giver of life. Those who choose to live in darkness choose death.

Bultmann (1971:343) says that when Jesus reveals himself as light, it becomes metaphorical: A faithful acceptance of the "Revealer" (Jesus) is an acceptance to "follow after" (ἀκολουθέω [Jn. 8:12]) him (Bultmann 1971:344).

In the Exodus narrative the dualism of light and darkness was also demonstrated. During the ninth wonder (Ex. 10:21-29) darkness came over Egypt (a darkness which could be felt), but in Goshen where the Jews lived, there was light. On the one hand, metaphorically speaking, a cosmic battle between light and darkness took place, and the Egyptians must have thought that their so called "sun god Ra" had been defeated. On the other hand an "anti-creational" event took place in that light and darkness took place all at once (at the same time), thus *disrupting* the creational order (Lemmelijn 2012:563-564). Jesus has already shown his capability to have creational powers by calming the storm. By claiming to be the *light* of the world which will defeat *darkness*, Jesus portrays "the unexpected in-breaking of the revelation into the world" (Bultmann 1971:343). Jesus is thus also *disrupting*<sup>114</sup> the world. A choice between *light* and *darkness* has to be made.

During the Wilderness narrative YHWH's presence was shown in the pillar of cloud (also described as light) by day and pillar of fire (light) by night, which the Israelites had to follow (Ex. 12:37; 13:20-22). Koester (1995:140) mentions that Jesus' announcement "that he was the light of the world is set during the Jewish feast Booths (Jn. 7:2)". This was a weeklong celebration during which the Jews commemorated the 40 years of wandering through the desert by the Israelites, with Moses. During this week of celebration the Jews slept in booths which they made with leafy branches. The Hebrew word for "booths" is *Succoth*. Koester (1995:141) says that the word refers to the first setting where the Israelites set camp after they left Egypt. From there they followed the pillar of cloud and pillar of fire into the Wilderness. As was said, the pillar of cloud and fire signified YHWH's *divine presence*. When he says that he is the light of

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<sup>114</sup> The theme of *disruption* was also noticed in chapter four and five of this thesis (4.2.11.2 [par. 4]; 5.1.1.2 [last par.])

the world, Jesus is thus claiming that he should also be followed as a *divine presence*, just as the Israelites followed the pillar of cloud and fire.

### **6.9.5.3 Blood**

*"[...] one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water. The man who saw it has given testimony, and his testimony is true" [...] "These things happened so that the scripture would be fulfilled: 'Not one of his bones will be broken'" (Jn. 19:34, 36).*

It has already been pointed out in 6.9.4.1 (par. 4) how the sign of blood flows through John's Gospel. Likewise the sign of blood had a connecting path through the Exodus narrative. Of note is that during the Passover in Exodus 12, the people had to participate in the sacrifice ritual in order to stay alive and be redeemed from Egypt. Within New Testament context participation means to accept Jesus as the true Passover Lamb, who gives life and conquers death.

As body/flesh is prominent in the gospel of John, so is the blood of Jesus on the cross (Hoskins 2009:296). Hoskins (2009:296) is sure that the quotation in John 19:36 forms an intertextual link to Exodus 12:10. The blood which flows from Jesus' side, is thus pointing to the fact that Jesus is the true Passover Lamb, "whose blood is poured out" (Hoskins 2009:296). In Matthew 26:28 and Mark 14:24, at the last supper, Jesus associated his blood with the wine on the table: "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins".

There is a connection with the setting on the cross and to John 6, of which the setting for Jesus' teaching is the Passover. Jesus described himself as being the bread of life which is essential to receive eternal life, so too his blood is described to be necessary to receive life (Jn. 6:32-33, 51, 53-55). Jesus was speaking in symbolic terms though, and not referring to the physical aspect of really eating his flesh and drinking his blood. John 6:63 helps in this regard and "points to the way in which the believer will eat the flesh and drink the blood of Jesus": The Spirit will feed the believer with the "life-giving benefits of the sacrificial death of Jesus" (Hoskins 2009:297).

John makes it clear though, that only those who belief in the Passover Lamb and the benefit of his sacrificial death will receive life.

#### 6.9.5.4 *Resurrection*

There are many hints in the miracles of Jesus that point to the fact that he has power over creation<sup>115</sup>, over the forces of darkness/death<sup>116</sup> and that he is the giver of life<sup>117</sup> (Achte-meier 1962:176). Suggit (1993:48) says that the "Eucharistic allusions" were quite visible to those "who have eyes to see", symbolically speaking. At the wedding feast in Cana the Passion of Jesus (and his resurrection) has already been foreshadowed: the third day; marriage-feast; deacons; wine; bridegroom as the supplier of new wine. Suggit (1993:48) explains that the sign of which John 2:11 speaks points to the death and resurrection of Jesus.

The miracle of the stilling of the storm (Matt. 8:23-27; Mk. 4:35-41; Lu. 8:22-25), says Achte-meier (1962:176), "indicates in part what the cross, with the resurrection, indicates supremely: in Jesus, the power of God can and does conquer the powers of darkness arrayed against him".

With regard to Lazarus' being raised from the dead (Jn. 11:38-44), it could be confirmed that Lazarus' resuscitation is prefiguring Jesus' resurrection (Keener 2003b:848; Miller 2012:67). There are definite parallels between the narrative of Lazarus and the resurrection of Jesus: The stone (Jn. 11:39; 20:1); the role of women close to Jesus (Jn. 11:39; 20:1-18); the wrappings (Jn. 11:44; 20:6-7). There are explicit differences too, though: Somebody had to remove the stone from Lazarus' grave and he had to be unwrapped. At Jesus' grave the stone was already removed when the women arrived at the grave and the "grave clothes" were untouched (Jn. 20:5, 7). Lazarus was raised by Jesus, but Jesus rose from the dead by himself. Jesus was thus victorious over death, a fact already proven on the cross with his actual death.

While Jesus was on the cross, a piece of irony was described in Matthew 27:54, Mark 15:39 and Luke 23:47. Angel (2011:317) puts it this way: "[...] in his own death, Jesus the divine warrior is victorious over the forces of chaos; the soldiers who bring about the ostensible defeat of Jesus the divine warrior are the first to recognize that this seeming defeat is actually his victory over chaos and evil". Even at the cross, Jesus'

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<sup>115</sup> Transforming water into wine; Stilling storm; walking on water

<sup>116</sup> Healing of blind man/men; casting out demons

<sup>117</sup> Widow's son at Nain; Raising Lazarus from dead

enemies acknowledge that he defeated evil and brought life (Angel 2011:317). Gentile soldiers were often identified with forces of chaos and evil in "Second Temple divine warrior traditions". In Exodus 14 (4.2.10.3 [par. 2]) the Pharaoh's soldiers were compared to a cosmic battle between YHWH and them. There YHWH also showed his supremacy over the forces of darkness and evil, but it was Israel who could testify about YHWH's Lordship and not the soldiers, as they perished in the Sea of Reeds.

In 2 Kings 1:10-12 soldiers were mentioned again. Two captains were consumed by fire when they commanded Elijah to come down from the mountain. With the fire YHWH's supremacy was shown clearly (5.2.1.10 [par. 5]). A third captain acknowledged YHWH's supremacy by accepting Elijah to be a man of God (5.2.1.10 [par. 8]).

### 6.9.6 Healer

*"Then one of the synagogue rulers, named Jairus, came there. Seeing Jesus, he fell at his feet and pleaded earnestly with him, 'My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live'" (Mk. 5:22-23).*

In Chapter 4 (4.7.7) the only verse which refers to healing as motif is Exodus 15:26. There (Ex. 15) the emphasis was on YHWH who identified himself as Israel's physician (Monroe & Schwab 2009:122). Exodus 15 does not describe a physical healing though, but does utter a promise, as well as a warning: Live by YHWH's ordinances and YHWH will heal; abandon YHWH's ordinances and suffer the consequences of receiving the diseases which were put upon the Egyptians. In the miracle of water being made sweet, though (Ex. 15:25), YHWH's ability to heal was pointed out. YHWH was able to heal physical illness, but was also able to heal the land and what's in it [water] (Childs 2004:270).

Chapter 5 (5.7.8) made reference to three stories: A young boy who was healed (1 Kgs. 17:22); the promise that the land would be healed (rain/water) (1 Kgs. 18:1); and a king who was not healed (2 Kgs. 1:3). In these three narratives the *promise* and *warning* of Exodus 15:26 prove to be evident. An element of grace was visible with regard to the woman's child in 1 Kings 17 when the child was healed. The woman was not a descendant from Israel. The focus therefore was on YHWH and his ability to restore life, even to the heathen (across borders).

The motif of *healing* in the Synoptic Gospels outnumbers other miracles like, for instance, *walking on water*, *feeding the multitudes*, *stilling the storm*, etc. In the first ten chapters of Mark's gospel, for example, healing narratives seem to overshadow other miracles mentioned (Remus 1997:14). There are thus, by far, more accounts of healing narratives in the Synoptic Gospels than in Exodus 1-18 and 1 Kings 17 – 2 Kings 2.

Two words commonly used for healing in New Testament vocabulary are *σώζω* and *θεραπεύω*. In the New Testament the usage of the verbal root of *σώζω* basically means "to rescue, save, deliver, preserve from danger, etc." (Brown 1995:212). Jesus is, therefore, called *σωτήρ* (*Savior*) about 17 times in the New Testament (Brown 1995:212). Brown (1995:213) says that Jesus is *σωτήρ* "who forgives, delivers, heals and resurrects, both temporally and eternally". The verbal use of *θεραπεύω* evolved from its LXX use into the "semantic range of healing" (Brown 1995:214). Brown (1995:214) says that the verb then came to mean "to treat medically, cure, heal, restore to health", and it "came very close in its usage and meaning to *iaoma*". In this sense then, it occurs more than forty times within the context of healing in the New Testament<sup>118</sup>. For this reason it is the most common word for healing in the New Testament (Brown 1995:214).

Remus (1997:16) states that healers, sometimes referred to as magicians, were not uncommon in the ancient world. The question is: What set Jesus apart from other such healers of his time, and even from Moses and Elijah?

Gaiser (2010:7) says that a narrative like *Jairus and his daughter* (Mk. 5:22-23) picks up with known "Old Testament healing accounts" which can relate to Jesus, especially with regard to touch. In ancient healing, touch played an important role (Remus 1997:20). In Mark 5:41 Jesus took the daughter by her hand (touch) and commanded her to rise. The story differs from the story in 1 Kings 17 in that Jesus took the girl by her hand and only commanded once (a spoken word) and the daughter lived. Elijah spread himself over the boy in 1 Kings 17 and had to pray three times before the boy lived. What would set Jesus apart from other healers then, is the fact that he could heal by touch, but also by speaking out a word (even over a distance), as in the narrative of the Canaanite woman's daughter in Matthew 15:22 (Love 2002:11).

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<sup>118</sup> E.g., Matt. 4:23; 10:1; Mk. 3:2; Lk. 8:43; Jn. 5:10; totalling in Matthew-16 times; Mark-5 times; Luke-14 times; John- 1 time.

Another aspect which set Jesus apart from other healers of his time is the fact that he sometimes forgave people their sins as part of the healing process, as in Mark 2:5: "When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, 'Son, your sins are forgiven'". In Exodus 15:26 the warning was prompt: If the people did not live according to YHWH's ordinances, the sickness which was inflicted upon the Egyptians would be inflicted upon them. Not living according YHWH's ordinances would, therefore, be a sin.

When Jesus told the young man that his sins were forgiven, some of "the teachers of the law" sitting there were troubled: "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" (Mk. 2:7). Jesus thus exercised two functions which were only ascribed to God: He (Jesus) only had to speak a word (creational power) to heal someone; and Jesus was able to forgive sins (Remus 1997:32). With regard to Jesus' just speaking a word, it could be stated further that in many cases of healing, he did not pray, for instance, to God in order for the healing to take place, as was commonly the practice of "Jewish holy men of the time" (Twelftree 1999:265).

## **6.10 OUTCOME**

### **6.10.1 Structure**

The main structural similarities between Epoch 3 (Miracles surrounding Jesus) and Epochs 1 and 2 (Miracles surrounding Moses and Elijah) are in the concentration of miracles in the first half of the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, which were also arranged in clusters (of three). As was noticeable in Epochs 1 and 2, miracle narratives in Epoch 3 also seem to taper down in the second half of the Synoptic Gospels. John, however, structured his gospel quite differently from the Synoptic Gospels. In John's gospel seven major discourses are visible, but they are not evenly distributed as, for example, in the Gospel of Matthew. The discourses in John's Gospel are interwoven in the meta-narrative.

From this study it is not clear whether the author of John intended to build his structural outline on the Exodus narrative, as in the gospel of Matthew, which tends to show more structural similarities to Epoch one than Mark, Luke and John.

## 6.10.2 Settings

### 6.10.2.1 Mountains

In Matthew's gospel, mountain as setting is seen as a focalizing symbol, drawing attention especially to Jesus' *Lordship* and *Sonship*. The most obvious mountain setting in this regard is in the narrative of the transfiguration of Jesus. The transfiguration narrative receives a central place within the path of obedient Sonship, as it links<sup>119</sup> the temptation narrative (Matt. 4:8) to the commission narrative (Matt. 28:16-20). The transfiguration narrative also has strong intertextual links to the Old Testament. Whilst previous chapters of this thesis have described the *disobedience* of the people, regardless of miraculous acts done by YHWH's agents, Moses and Elijah, the transfiguration of Jesus points to the exact opposite: Not the disobedience of the people, but the *obedience* of the *appointed Son*.

Jesus is thus portrayed as Israel's Messiah, a new Moses, teaching the way of righteousness. For Mark, the transfiguration of Jesus marks the event as the beginning of Jesus' journey to Jerusalem, where he would suffer on the cross, but also to the empty tomb and to Jesus as risen Lord. In Luke the glory of the Lord stands out to be significant. Whilst YHWH's glory was noticeable in the Pentateuch in his saving strength through Moses (Informator / teacher) and through Elijah (Reformerator / reformer), Jesus stands to be both when Moses and Elijah left the transfiguration scene. For the Christian community, Jesus would stand in as mediator, interpreter and teacher. During the transfiguration scene, the voice, "listen to Him", suggests a mimesis of what Jesus taught his disciples about the Kingdom of God (creating a new people).

### 6.10.2.2 Wilderness

The *wilderness settings* in the Gospels have definitive intertextual links to *Wilderness traditions* in the Old Testament. They anticipate a new kind of Exodus which will lead to repentance and a fresh start. Wilderness as setting puts the emphasis on the authority God. It is the ideal place for people to experience nearness to God. It is also the ideal place for a "fresh start", to be in a position where one was meant to be, in

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<sup>119</sup> Ref. 6.7.2 (par. 10)



the Kingdom of God. The Wilderness is also the perfect place for undisturbed prayer and teaching.

### **6.10.2.3 *Sea***

With regard to miracles, sea as setting is implicit, especially in Mark's gospel. The number of miracles by the sea and their placement in the first half of the gospel are significant. The sea is described as a spatial setting which causes the crossing of traditional limits. Teaching and healing take place by the sea. The disciples get a chance to witness Jesus' power over illness and nature by-and-on the sea. Directive language is noticeable with regard to sea as setting: East to West and West to East. Movement beyond traditional limits is suggested. Jesus even walks on water, showing his divine ability. As a spatial setting, sea also serves as a pivot between what happened before and what is to come (thus a forward-and-backward notion), as the diagram of Scott has demonstrated.

### **6.10.3 Themes**

#### **6.10.3.1 *Need-Intervention-Resolution***

The theme of Need-intervention-resolution (N-I-R) is just as strong in Epoch 3 as was noticed in Epochs 1 and 2, bearing in mind that, with this theme, the focus is not on specific intertextual links as such, but solely on the theme-aspect of N-I-R. Within the examples of narratives consisting of the theme of N-I-R, the sign aspect of miracles was especially noticeable. Again, not necessarily with specific intertextual links to the Old Testament, but clearly with regard to what the significance of signs is: Pointing forward and/or backwards.

Within N-I-R narratives the sign aspect also points to Jesus as miracle worker, legitimating him as true prophet and Messiah. With the theme of N-I-R, the authors of the Gospels seem to use the theme to point to the fact that Jesus himself fulfils what prophets like Moses and Elijah's deeds pointed at: In Epochs 1 and 2 the prophets intervened on behalf of YHWH when a certain need surfaced. The lack or need was then resolved through the prophets by YHWH's doing the miraculous. Jesus on the other hand resolved given needs directly.

Still, as was the case in Epochs 1 and 2, the miracle acts described in the N-I-R narratives always point beyond themselves. Therefore, it is important to remember that the N-I-R narratives, in the first place, point to the fact that the physical need described, is in fact metaphorical of a spiritual need. The spiritual need can, therefore, only be satisfied by Jesus, the giver of true Life.

### **6.10.3.2 *Promise of the (land) Kingdom***

Within the context of the Synoptic Gospels and John, every Jew would have understood the theme of the Kingdom of God when Jesus preached about it. The Jews had the expectation that YHWH would come and restore his Kingdom (land). Jesus, however, understood the Kingdom not as a geographical setting. He understood the Kingdom in terms of a *restored land*, in a metaphorical way, pointing to *restored human beings*.

Through his miraculous deeds, Jesus thus proclaimed the renewal of human lives and communities. This is evident in Jesus' answer to John the Baptist's disciples in Luke 7:22-23. Abundant life is another way to speak of a "restored land" or community. Jesus' miracle signs are a response to human need, which is a spiritual need. The theme of the Promise of the Kingdom, therefore points to a new (spiritual) setting. It involves the transformation of circumstances. Jesus' miracles show the new circumstances to be imminent and present.

### **6.10.3.3 *Presence***

In the Synoptic Gospels and John, *presence* as theme is just as important as was described in Epochs 1 and 2. Just by the mention of Jesus' name, presence is put to the forefront. Jesus' presence is demonstrated in different ways: Through words; nourishing acts; nature miracles; etc. Jesus as figure resembles the presence of God. Because Jesus allowed his miracle actions to speak for him, all his miracles in fact, pointed to his presence.

#### **6.10.4 Motifs**

##### **6.10.4.1 *Wonder motif***

The functionality of the wonder motif is divided into four categories, namely, to prove Jesus' identity; to display mercy; to arouse faith; and to act as signs (pointing forward and backwards). Eventually, the wonder motif identifies Jesus as the ultimate true prophet, but also as the only true Son of God.

##### **6.10.4.2 *Three as motif***

Three as motif has a literal meaning, as for instance "three days", usually signalling the completion of a task; pointing to a climax; or pointing to a new action. Three is also visible in patterns, especially in a triad-pattern. Triad patterns were highly noticeable in all three Epochs.

##### **6.10.4.3 *Fear as motif***

Fear, in miracle stories in the Synoptic Gospels and John is usually connected to faith. This is noticeable especially in the Gospel of Luke. Fear as motif featured regularly in-and-around the sea, especially in Mark's gospel. The fear motif usually had a positive outcome, which pointed forward to a promise.

##### **6.10.4.4 *Water as motif***

As was mentioned under Settings, water serves as spatial or geographical focal point. It does have a symbolic meaning also, though, as in life-and-death, or healing. Water as motif also serves to highlight Jesus' creational power, as he has the power to tame the seas and the wind. He can even walk on water.

##### **6.10.4.5 *Life-and-death as motif***

Elements which are essential for life are water, bread, light and blood. All four of these elements feature in some or other way in the miracles of Jesus. Most significant is Jesus' own resurrection from death, proving his authority over death and thus focussing on Him as giver of Life, everlasting...

#### **6.10.4.6 Healer as motif**

Of all the miracles Jesus did, healing miracles outnumbered the rest by far. It is interesting to notice that touch played an important role in Jesus' healing miracles, maybe to highlight his compassion. He was not bound to touch though, as the custom in ancient healing accounts appeared to be. By merely speaking a word, Jesus could also heal. On occasion, forgiving sins also formed part of the healing process.

### **6.11 CONCLUSION**

In the B-section of chapter six it has become clear that there are a number of allusions (or intertextual links) to the Old Testament in the miracle narratives of Jesus as recorded in the Synoptic Gospels and in John. Luz (2004:134) says that these "allusions demonstrate that the Matthean story of Jesus is deeply rooted in biblical tradition; yet at the same time it is an entirely *new* story that records a *new* action of the biblical God". The same could be said with regard to the gospels of Mark, Luke and John.

The questions are, allusions to what in the Old Testament (traditions), and what is the new story that records new action? With regard to *old traditions*, this thesis has shown that clear allusions could be found in, amongst other, *structure, settings, themes and motifs*. Amongst other, because there could be more, but scope did not permit a more detailed investigation. It seems then that allusions in the Synoptic gospels and John to older traditions, are there to remind the reader that the same YHWH who worked wonders in Epochs 1 and 2, is at work in Epoch 3. The main difference is that YHWH does not work through a prophet like Moses or Elijah, but directly through his Son, Jesus. *Presence*, shown through the miracles in Epochs 1 and 2 is surprisingly clear in Epoch 3 as well.

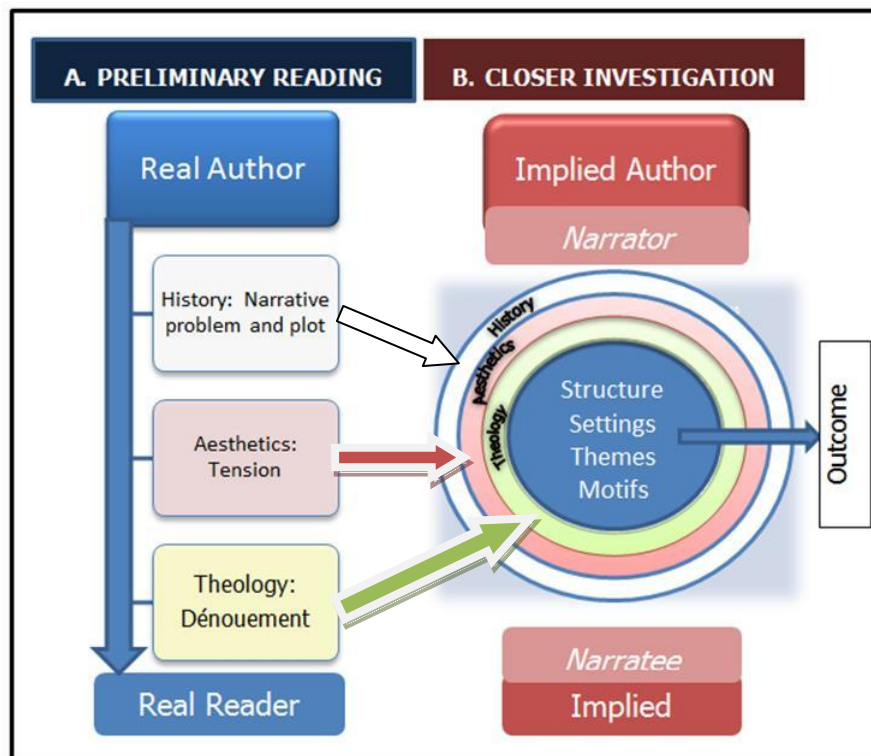
Through Jesus, a new story is built upon the old. This is pointed out by the unmistakable similarities in wonder stories described in all three Epochs. The story is the same, in that it is ultimately about God. It is new, in that the promise of life, in a new Kingdom, is not only for Israel, but to everyone believing in Jesus, the Son of God who conquered evil forces and death.

## CHAPTER 7

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The aim of this dissertation is to investigate wonder miracles surrounding the figures of Moses, Elijah and Jesus. These three figures operated in three different time frames (Epochs). All three of these figures were involved in numerous marvellous activities. The investigation points out that there are numerous similarities between miracle narratives in the three different Epochs. The question as to whether there is a theological relationship between miracles in the three Epochs, and if so, what kind of relationship, is addressed in the final conclusion of this chapter.

For this investigation, a narratological approach is used. The sighted similarities in *miracle narratives*<sup>1</sup> within the three different Epochs are pointed out in the framework<sup>2</sup> (used in chapters 4-6) of *Structure, Settings, Themes and Motifs*:



**Figure 7.1: STRUCTURE OF THE PRELIMINARY READING AND CLOSER INVESTIGATION MODEL**

[Compiled by the Researcher, Van der Walt: 2013]<sup>3</sup>

The model above shows two divisions, a *Preliminary reading* (A) and a *Closer investigation* (B). This means that each of the three chapters (4-6), dealing with the

<sup>1</sup> For a definition of miracles see 3.1.2 (last par. p. 43).

<sup>2</sup> The methodology behind the framework is explained in chapter 1.

<sup>3</sup> See explanation on fig. 1.5 (p. 10)

three different Epochs, consists of two sections (A and B). The model can be explained by using the metaphor of a football match being broadcast:

When watching a football match on a screen (television), one sees, in fact, a narrative playing out in front of oneself. In the background the voice of a commentator can be heard, commenting on the movements of each player involved in the match. Likewise, in division A of Chapters 4 to 6, the real reader (researcher) gave comment on the narrative "playing out" in front of him.

During the halftime break of the football match, there is usually a panel of three to four people commenting on, or debating the tactics, which the two teams used to achieve their goals. Likewise, in division B of Chapters 4 to 6, the real reader (researcher) gave comment on the "tactics" (*Structures, Settings, Themes and Motifs*) which the real author/s used to achieve his/her/their (theological) goals (outcome).

Division A of the model (Preliminary reading) therefore had the function to help the *real reader* (the Researcher), to become aware of the historical background of the narrative and the aesthetical "tools" which the *implied author/s* used to "mould" the theological message presented, or told by the narrator. In other words: Division A of Chapters 4 to 6 had three main functions:

- Firstly, to give a brief description of the historical background in which the narrative took place.
- Secondly, to describe the narrative plot and especially the aesthetics which the author used to give colour to the narrative.
- Thirdly, to give concluding remarks on the theological intention of the author.

Division B (Closer investigation) is a sharper investigation regarding the *aesthetical tools* observed during the *preliminary reading* in division A. *Structure, Settings, Themes and Motifs* within the narrative plot, to show how the miracle stories have been used to strengthen the theological outcome (exit) of the narrative. *Structure, Settings, Themes and Motifs* are intertwined with *History, Aesthetics and Theology* (Dénouement), hence, the concentric circles (colour coded in white, pink and green) which surround these aspects.

## 7.1 STRUCTURES

	Epoch 1 (Ex. 1-18)	Epoch 2 (1 Kgs. 17 – 19)	Epoch 2 (2 Kgs. 1-2)	Epoch 3 (Matthew)
1	Ex. 1-2 Birth and rescue of Moses	1 Kgs. 17:1 Announcement of Elijah (interruption)	2 Kgs. 1:4 Announcement of Elijah (interruption)	Matt. 1:1-2:23 Prologue
2	Ex. 3:1-4:23 Calling of Moses	1 Kgs. 17:2, 8; 18:1; 19:15 Word of YHWH to Elijah	2 Kgs. 1:3, 15 Word of YHWH to Elijah	Matt. 3:1-4:11 Jesus' preparation for ministry
3	Ex. 7:14-10:27 Nine wonders clustered in three triads.	1 Kgs. 17:2-24 Hardship in drought stricken land.		Matt. 4:12-13:58 Ministry in Galilee <sup>4</sup> Matt. 14:1-16:12 Ministry in the North
4	Ex. 13:17-15:21 Deliverance from Egypt <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Final blow against Pharaoh (Ex. 12:29).</li> <li>Moses and Israel fear Pharaoh (Ex. 14:15)</li> <li>Splitting of sea Ex. 14:16</li> </ul>	1 Kgs. 18 Miracle on Mount Carmel <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Final blow against Baal (1 Kgs. 18:38-40)</li> <li>Fire from heaven (1 Kgs 18:38).</li> <li>Elijah fears Jezebel (1 Kgs. 19:1).</li> </ul>	2 Kgs. 1:1-18 Ahaziah's fate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Announcement of Ahaziah's death (2 Kgs. 1:4)</li> <li>Fire from heaven (2 Kgs. 1:10, 12)</li> <li>Elijah fears Ahaziah (2 Kgs. 1:15)</li> <li>Splitting of Jordan (2 Kgs. 2:8).</li> </ul>	Matt. 16:13-20:34 Journey to Jerusalem <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Announcement of Jesus' death (Matt. 16:21).</li> <li>Confrontation in Jerusalem (Matt. 21:1-25:46).</li> <li>Jesus is afraid (Matt. 26:39)</li> </ul>
5	Ex. 15:22-18:27 Wilderness sojourn Ex. 15:22ff Lack of water Ex. 16:2ff Lack of food Ex. 17:2ff Lack of water	1 Kgs. 19:1-21 Elijah in Wilderness 1 Kgs. 19:1-8 Provision of food and water by angel	2 Kgs. 2:1ff Journey to nowhere 2 Kgs. 2:19ff Miracles of provision done by Elisha <sup>5</sup>	Matt. 26:1-28:20 Passion and resurrection
6	Ex. 18:19ff Appointment of leaders	1 Kgs. 19:19ff Appointment of Elisha	2 Kgs. 2:12ff Elisha as Elijah's successor	Matt. 28:19ff The great commission

In Epoch 1 (Ex. 1-18) and Epoch 2 (1 Kgs. 17 – 2 Kgs. 1-2) the structure of the narrative as a whole was given in a diagram<sup>6</sup>. In Epoch 3 (Synoptic Gospels and John) the main focus, *regarding structure* was on Matthew. The diagram above gives a cursory view on the three meta-narratives in Epochs 1-3. The three Epochs are placed alongside each other. Epoch 2 consists of two plots. For that reason, the miracle plot of 1 Kings 17 – 2 Kings 2, is split into two sections within the diagram. Although it has been pointed out that the Elijah cycle is a foil to the Exodus narrative, it should be borne in mind that the narratives surrounding Elijah are much more condensed. Admittedly, therefore, the structure with regard to 1 Kings 17 to 2 Kings 2 is somewhat forced, but this is necessary in order to point out the linear lines within the three Epochs.

<sup>4</sup> Most of Jesus' miracles took place during his ministry in Galilee (10 miracles) and in the North (9 miracles) (p. 288 par. 2).

<sup>5</sup> This part of the narrative falls outside the scope of this investigation, but serves as an interesting note and suggestion for further study.

<sup>6</sup> See 4.8 (p. 157) and 5.9 (p. 245).

The structure of the three Epochs (individually) is mainly based on geographical settings. Therefore, with regard to the third Epoch in the diagram, a slightly changed version of McNeile's (1915:xii) geographic framework on Matthew, which relates to Mark's gospel, is used. Structural similarities (although hints thereof) between Epoch 3 and Epochs 1 and 2 are far fewer, than for instance structural similarities between Epochs 1 and 2. The assumption must, therefore, be made that the authors of the Synoptic gospels and John did not make strict use of structures of the Moses and Elijah cycles. With regard to structure, Matthew's gospel seems to be the closest to the narratives surrounding Moses and Elijah.

The diagram above should be read in a linear (horizontal) way in order to compare the structure of the three meta-narratives surrounding Moses, Elijah and Jesus. Therefore, **horizontal rows** in the diagram above are numbered from 1-6. Some obvious similarities are visible, while other comparisons need further explanation.

### **7.1.1 Row 1**

During the preliminary reading of chapters 4-6, it became noticeable that, in all three Epochs, there had been some kind of *oppression*. In the first Epoch the Egyptians oppressed the Israelites. The second Epoch had more of a *spiritual oppression*, in that the Israelites were indecisive whether to follow YHWH or Baal. Their indecisiveness had led them to follow Jezebel's prophets and to worship Baal. In the third Epoch the Jews are oppressed yet again, this time by the Roman Empire.

In Epoch 1 YHWH acted when he heard the cries of his people, and remembered his promises to their forebears. YHWH's answer to the cries of the Israelites was in the miraculous saving of the baby, Moses, against the odds when Pharaoh gave command that all Jewish baby boys should be thrown into the Nile. Epoch two does not have a similar event to this, as Elijah appears out of nowhere, announcing the miracle of the drought. Epoch three compares well with Epoch one, as here, like in the first Epoch, a baby is saved from the onslaught of a king.



### 7.1.2 Row 2

In Epoch 1 YHWH self becomes involved in the narrative for the first time<sup>7</sup>. Exodus 1-2 gave some historical background to the Meta narrative. Exodus 3 then, is where YHWH's redemptive plan comes into action, with the commissioning of Moses. Epoch 2, as has been said, does not have an introduction. Elijah's name, in fact, sets the table for the narrative outcome<sup>8</sup>. Elijah was not involved in a dialogue with YHWH in the beginning of the narrative like Moses. By the word of YHWH Elijah did what he had to do. Moses had questions and doubt about his commissioning in the *beginning* of the Meta narrative. Elijah doubted his commissioning in the *middle* of the Meta narrative (1 Kgs. 19:10,14). YHWH's command in 1 Kings 19:15 serves as a pivot point to the second plot in the Elijah cycle (2 Kgs. 1-2). Jesus' preparation for his ministry starts with his baptism by John the Baptist and, directly thereafter, the temptation in the wilderness. Unlike Moses and Elijah, Jesus did not doubt and stood his ground against the temptations of Satan.

### 7.1.3 Row 3

With the description of nine wonders, the author of Exodus 7:14-10:27 shows that YHWH, and not the deities of Egypt, is creator of all things. The Nile, where the wonders commenced, is not the birthplace of Egypt, but is part of YHWH's creation. The nine wonders do not affect YHWH's people, for whom he cares for. In 1 Kings 17 a drought is announced. The fact that a widow is helped, shows that YHWH (not Baal) not only controls nature (rain), but also cares for the individual. YHWH also controls life and death. Therefore, he could help the widow's ill fallen son. In Matthew 4 to 13 Jesus does many miracles (especially healing) in Galilee. The fact that he also journeys to the North, shows that he not only works among his own people, but also among the gentiles beyond the border. Elijah did likewise to the widow of Zarephath.

### 7.1.4 Row 4

Exodus 13-15 describes the exodus from Egypt, after the final blow against Pharaoh (death of the first born). After numerous confrontations with Pharaoh, there is one last

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<sup>7</sup> See 4.2.3 (p. 56).

<sup>8</sup> Elijah's name derives from the words "YHWH alone is Lord". Each miracle in the Elijah narrative demonstrates "that Baal is a fake" and that YHWH alone is Lord. The miracles Elijah performed were designed to attack the so-called theology of Baal. Each miracle shows that YHWH lives and that Baal is dead.

confrontation at the Sea of Reeds. Here, again, YHWH's control over nature is demonstrated with the parting of the sea. The fact that the Egyptian soldiers drown in the same sea through which the Israelites journeyed, points to the fact that YHWH overcame the so-called deities of Egypt. In Epoch 1 the confrontations were against Pharaoh and the deities of Egypt. In Epoch 2 the confrontations were between Elijah and Ahab (Jezebel) and the deity Baal. The fire on Mount Carmel points to YHWH's presence and the supernatural display shows that he (YHWH), and not Baal, is the only living God. Matthew 16:13-20:34 shows the exact opposite, at first. Whereas judgement in Epochs 1 and 2 was meant for Pharaoh, the house of Ahab and Ahaziah, it came upon Jesus. Jesus too, had confrontations (Pharisees and scribes), but his confrontations lead to his death. In all three Epochs traces of fear are visible. In all three Epochs the fear does end up in victory though.

### **7.1.5 Row 5**

In the Wilderness sojourn YHWH is on his way to a new Land with Israel. In the process he is creating a new people for him. They (Israel) must learn to trust in YHWH alone to survive in the harsh environment of the Wilderness. They have nothing but YHWH. In 1 Kings 19 Elijah wants to leave his office and give up. YHWH nurtures him with bread and water, and he receives strength to carry on for forty days. The Deuteronomist reminds the people (probably in Babylonian exile) not to give up. YHWH still wants to be with his restored people. The second part of the Elijah cycle focuses on his journey to "nowhere". Elijah is taken up into heaven without dying. The emphasis therefore, is on YHWH who creates life. He alone can give life. This emphasis culminates in Epoch 3, where Jesus triumphs over death. In the new Kingdom Jesus is the giver of life to a nation, reborn.

### **7.1.6 Row 6**

All three Epochs end with commissioning. Moses appoints leaders to help him govern the people. Elijah appoints Elisha to take over his task as leading prophet. Jesus appoints his disciples to convey the message of the new Kingdom throughout the world.

## 7.2 SETTINGS

There are three major settings on which the focus fell in the three Epochs surrounding Moses, Elijah and Jesus: Mountains, water/sea and the wilderness. The main reason why the focus fell on these three settings is that they are the three main areas in the narratives surrounding Moses, Elijah and Jesus, which serve to have something in common. Furthermore, in ancient times, these settings had special meaning with regard to people's experience of a higher power.

### 7.2.1 Mountains

The importance of mountains as setting is to be found in the fact that, in ancient times, mountains were often associated with a place where humans encounter the divine, a place where YHWH was met. Mountains portrayed a feeling of nearness to YHWH and therefore gave a sense of security. In the New Testament, *mountain symbolism* played an important role in describing Jesus' story. Matthew, for instance, uses the mountain as a *focalizing symbol*, as it draws the reader's attention, but also emphasizes "key aspects" of what he (Matthew) wanted to communicate to the reader with regard to Jesus' *Sonship* and *Lordship*. The emphasis, in other words, regarding mountain settings in all three Epochs, is on the manifestation of YHWH, who's meeting someone (Moses, Elijah and/or Jesus) on a mountain. This is also called a theophany:

- Moses encountered YHWH in the miracle of the burning bush on a mountain (Horeb) when he received his calling (Ex.3).
- Elijah and the people of YHWH experienced YHWH's mighty act on Mount Carmel when fire came from heaven and devoured the altar which Elijah had built (1 Kgs. 18).
- Elijah also experienced YHWH in a theophany on a mountain in 1 Kings 19. And, yet again, fire (also a symbol of YHWH's presence) formed part of the narrative in 2 Kings 1 when Elijah called fire from heaven to destroy a captain and his company of fifty (twice).
- During the third Epoch, mountain/s as setting also formed an important spatial setting with regard to the activities of Jesus Christ, of which the most obvious setting with an intertextual link to Moses and Elijah would probably be the transfiguration narrative. Here, all three figures (Moses, Elijah and Jesus) appear together in one scene, on a mountain.

All three synoptic Gospels give the transfiguration scene a central place within the larger plot of the meta-narrative. In Matthew's gospel, the transfiguration narrative (Matt. 17:1-9) probably forms the strongest parallel to that of Moses:

- Jesus' transfiguration took place on a high mountain (ὄρος ὑψηλόν – Matt. 17:1); Mount Sinai was also described as a high mountain (Ezek. 20:40);
- Both Jesus and Moses were accompanied by three people (Ex. 24:9; Matt. 17:1) and went up the mountain on the seventh day (Ex. 24:16; Matt. 17:1);
- Both Jesus and Moses were covered by a cloud (Ex. 24:15; Matt. 17:5);
- A voice out of the cloud spoke to Jesus and to Moses (Ex. 24:16; Matt. 17:5);
- Moses' face shone brightly (Ex. 34:29) and Jesus' face and garment became radiant (Matt. 17:2). In both instances those who accompanied them became scared (Ex. 34:30; Matt. 17:6).

The transfiguration narrative thus has strong intertextual links to the Old Testament. Of note is that the authors of Exodus 1-18 and 1 Kings 17 to 2 Kings 2 emphasized the *disobedience* of the people, regardless of miraculous acts done by YHWH's agents, Moses and Elijah. The transfiguration of Jesus though, points to the exact opposite, not to the disobedience of the people, but to the *obedience* of the *appointed Son*. This suggestion is further emphasized in that the transfiguration narrative is linked to two other mountain settings, the *mountain of temptation* (Matt. 4:8) and to the *mountain of commission* (Matt. 28:16-20). The path of *obedient Sonship* is shown in these three mountain settings. In Exodus 3 Moses was unwilling, at first, to obey YHWH's command to go to Pharaoh. Elijah, likewise, was unwilling to complete his office as prophet (1 Kgs. 19). Jesus' obedience is shown from beginning to end.

### 7.2.2 Water<sup>9</sup>

In Exodus 1-18 water as setting played a significant role in pointing to YHWH's creational power. It is, in this regard, important to remember that water as motif, most of the time, has an underlying meaning when a specific setting is mentioned. For instance, in Exodus 1-18, three meanings of water as motif are visible in specific *water settings*.

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<sup>9</sup> "Water" in this heading is a collective word which includes settings such as sea, river, fountain etc.

- *New beginning* – Moses, who is rescued from the Nile, is YHWH's instrument for a new beginning for Israel. The deliverance of Israel through the sea of Reeds (parting of the sea of reeds) heralds a new beginning for Israel as they start their journey to the Promised Land;
- *Chaos* – When the Nile and all the drinking water in Egypt are turned into chaos (transformed into blood), YHWH's power over creation is emphasized. Israel's suffering under the yoke of Pharaoh is nothing less than chaos. Therefore, it needs nothing less than the Creator, who has the power to create from chaos, to take Israel out of a chaotic situation towards a new beginning (deliverance through the sea of Reeds). YHWH has the power to change chaos to order and vice versa. The sea (also known as a place of chaos/underworld), for Israel, is transformed into a dry path so that they can walk through. The same sea was turned back to its original (chaotic) state when the Egyptian soldiers chased after the Israelites, so they all (Egyptian soldiers) drowned;
- *Lord of creation* – Only the Lord of creation can supply water in a barren place (Wilderness) so that life can be possible for Israel, even when it seems impossible.

The Nile River was a significant setting in the Exodus narrative. Pharaoh used the river to intervene with YHWH's creational plan by killing the Hebrew baby boys (Ex. 1:22). The Nile, however, is used to save the coming deliverer of Israel (Ex. 2:3-10). Later on, Moses is summoned by YHWH to meet Pharaoh at the Nile, where he (Pharaoh) probably went to worship the Nile river god, Hapi (Ex. 7:15). Here, at the Nile, the first of nine wonders was announced. In the end, Moses and Aaron would show Pharaoh that YHWH is supreme over Egypt's so-called river god. In the Nile setting the author shows his readers that YHWH (Creator) is the only supreme Deity, capable of transforming chaos to order and vice versa.

In the narratives about Elijah there are only two water settings to mention. The first is in 1 Kings 17:2-6 where Elijah had to hide at the Kerith Ravine, east of the Jordan. Here the focus was on YHWH's nurturing act through the ravens towards Elijah. The second water setting was at the Jordan itself (2 Kgs. 2:8), where Elijah, after a detailed description of his journey, split the water. It is reminiscent of two previous occasions where water was split<sup>10</sup>, not only paralleling this event to major places of

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<sup>10</sup> Exodus 14; Joshua 3

worship<sup>11</sup>, but also to the route which Israel followed on their journey from Gilgal to Jericho and, eventually, across the Jordan River into the Promised Land.

This literary device therefore acts as a reminder, to the readers of the text, that the same God [YHWH], who was active in all of Israel's history, is still alive and active among his people. YHWH therefore was, and is always present and keeps His promises, as He did from Abraham onwards. This is also noticeable in the directive language which is used: *East* to *West* and vice versa. The suggestion was that the disciples should move out to others, [even] beyond their own religious tradition. *Directive language* has also been noticed in the Exodus narrative. For instance, the *east wind* which blew the whole night and opened up the Sea of Reeds so that the Israelites could pass through on dry land on their way to new, unknown territory (Ex. 14:21). In 1 Kings 17:2 YHWH sent Elijah East, also outside the land, to territory unknown to him.

With regard to the Gospels, *sea* marks a spatial setting which also crosses traditional limits:

- The traditional setting to teach would be at the temple, but Jesus also teaches *by the sea* and even *on the sea* from a boat (Mk. 4:1).
- Together with teaching there is healing, thus, *by the sea* the disciples experience Jesus' healing power.
- *On the sea* they experience Jesus' power over nature when he silences the storm and even walks on water.

The most powerful description of a spatial setting which crosses traditional limits would probably be defined in two narratives which demonstrate Jesus' power over creation:

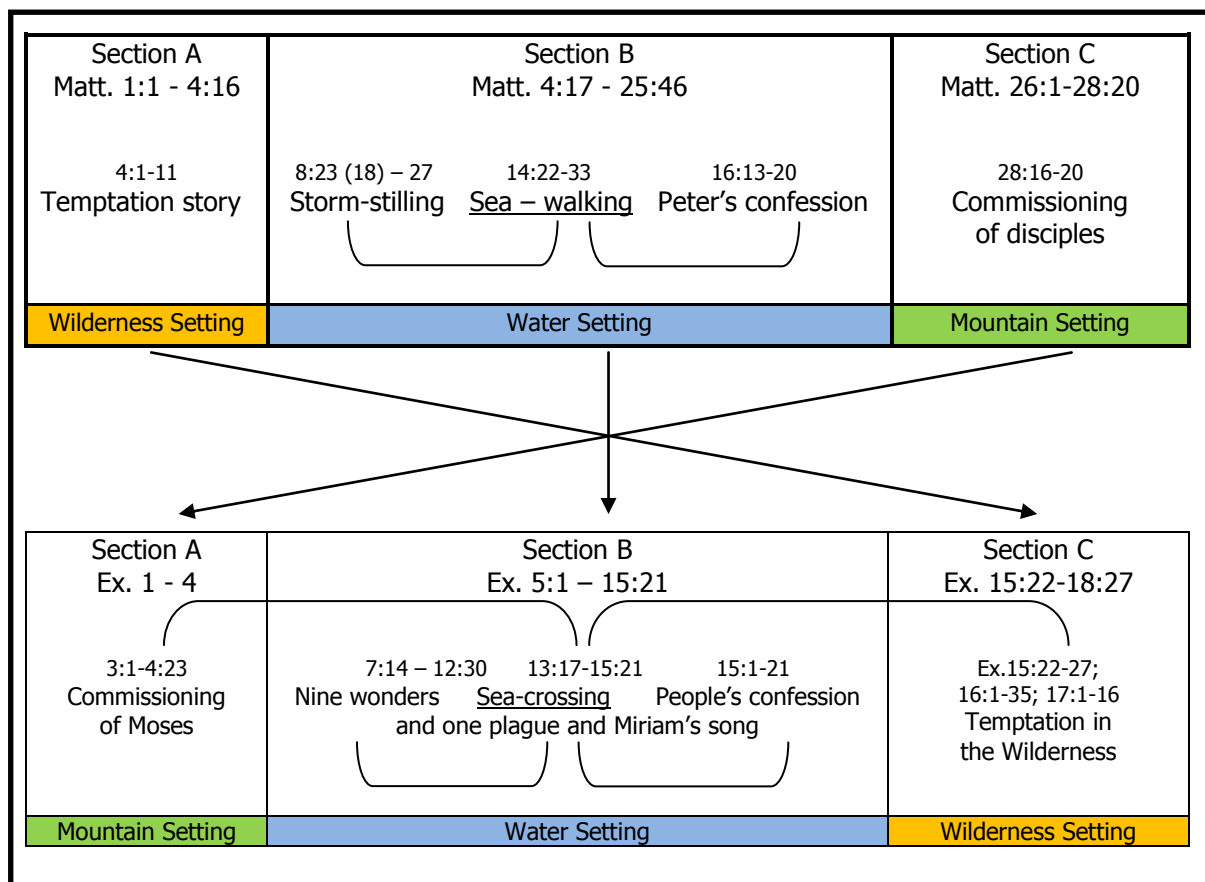
- Stilling the storm (Matt. 8:23-27; Mk. 4:35-41; Lk. 8:22-25)
- Walking on water (Matt. 14:22-33; Mk. 6:45-52; Jn. 6:15-21)

In Matthew's gospel, in particular, Jesus was seen as a new Moses. Through Moses YHWH was able to manipulate nature. He could transform water, but could also split water. Jesus did not use someone, as YHWH used Moses, to do his work. He himself

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<sup>11</sup> See Gen. 12:7-8; Gen. 35:7; Jos. 4:20

manipulated nature. He calmed the sea, but even had the divine ability to walk on the sea. With regard to the *walking on water* narrative, **figure 6.6** on page 307 is worth mentioning:



**Figure 7.2: DIAGRAMATIC OVERVIEW OF MATTHEW'S GOSPEL**

The diagram shows how the sea walking narrative links to the temptation narrative and to the commissioning narrative. In Exodus the sea crossing narrative links to the commissioning of Moses and to the temptations which the people had to endure in the Wilderness. The same pattern is thus to be found in Matthew's gospel as in Exodus 1-18, albeit in a reversed order. In a sense, Matthew's narrative thus starts where Exodus 18 ended, in the Wilderness. And, it ends where Moses' journey started, with his commissioning. It seems then, that with regard to settings, as if Matthew in particular, does not use the Exodus narrative as a foil to his gospel, but rather suggests that the narrative goes on. It has an open end, which includes not only the first readers (implied readers), but also the real readers.

### 7.2.3 Wilderness

In the Old Testament, wilderness can have the literal meaning of a place which is "arid" or bone-dry; also, wilderness can point to a place or idea of desolation. There is also a relation between the wilderness and the mountain of YHWH. The mountain of YHWH (Horeb **חֹרֵב**) has the meaning of desolation, but also implies an awareness of YHWH, *i.e.* his presence. In the same way *wilderness* can be a place of desolation, but also a place where YHWH is met. So too, in the New Testament, wilderness has a dual function: It is a place of hostility, and a place of deliverance and transformation (Dormandy 2003:183).

In the Exodus narrative the author used the dual meaning of wilderness in his favour. As a place of desolation, the wilderness served as the perfect hiding place. Thus Moses hid himself in the wilderness from the Pharaoh. Being a place of desolation though, the wilderness also served as the perfect place where YHWH could be met. While Moses was hiding from Pharaoh, he met YHWH (Ex. 3) at the burning bush. Here Moses received his commissioning. Unwilling to obey, Moses obeyed nevertheless, because of the *presence* of YHWH ("I will be with you"). Later on, in Exodus 15-18, the unwilling people would have to learn to rely on YHWH (his presence) to survive in the hostile setting of the Wilderness. Therefore, the Wilderness could be described as a place of *conflict* and a place of *submission*.

In 1 Kings 17 Elijah hid himself at the Kerith Ravine. There is some resemblance between this story and the story of the Exodus. Like Moses, Elijah had to flee and hide himself; Elijah was nurtured with water (streams that filled the wadi<sup>12</sup>) and bread and meat (by ravens). This resembles images of feeding stories from Israel's sacred past in the Wilderness (Mara, manna and quails). As YHWH nurtured His people in the Wilderness (Ex. 16-18), he did so to Elijah. Furthermore, like Moses, Elijah had to return where he had come from by order of YHWH. In 1 Kings 19 Elijah was fleeing again. This time he was fed by an angel with water and bread, again. In this narrative too, Elijah had to return in his tracks.

Turning to the New Testament context, the wilderness as setting is a place beyond. That is, the counterpoint of human civilization. It can also be seen as a margin, where

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<sup>12</sup> "A wadi is a gully depression that fills in the wet season" (Hens-Piazza 2006:165)



the power of authorities (situated in cities) is contrasted to how the word of God was received by his agents (Lu. 3:3). In this sense the wilderness can be described as a place of *revelation* and *true authority*. When Jesus is tempted in the wilderness by Satan<sup>13</sup>, he chooses to follow *real authority*, that of His Father, and not that of the world.

As was the case with mountain settings, an overlap in the words *wilderness* (ἔρημος) and mountain (ὄρος), is noticeable. Both words denote an *uninhabited* place. This uninhabited place often served as the ideal place where nearness to God could be experienced. In Luke, for instance, the *uninhabited place* served as the perfect setting for undisturbed prayer, while in Matthew, the *uninhabited place* was the perfect setting for undisturbed teaching.

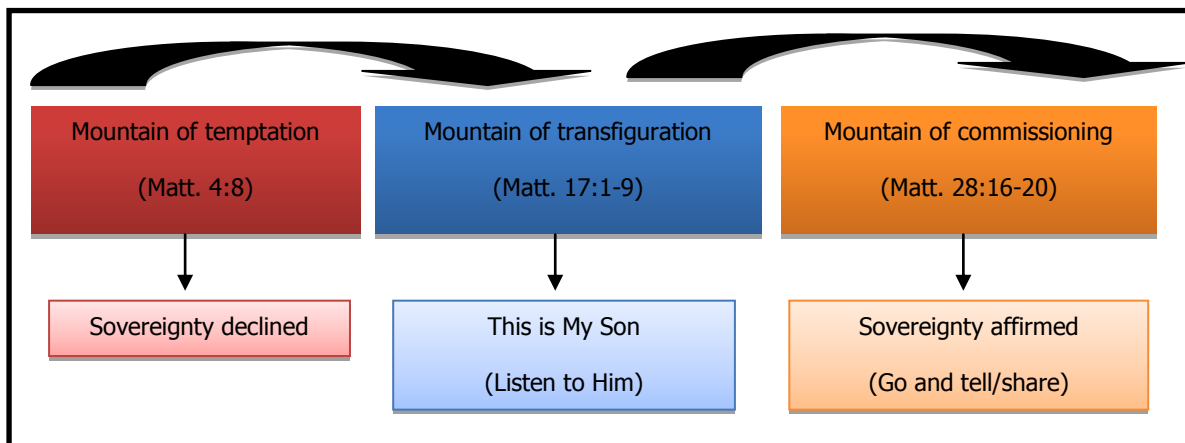
Mark's gospel starts in the Wilderness. In the wilderness, John the Baptist undermines the system which was functioning in Jerusalem. He called the people out of the city to the *margins*. The author thus sketches a new kind of Exodus. The Wilderness and not the temple, is described as the place where repentance should take place. *Repentance*, therefore, gives the opportunity for a fresh start. The *Wilderness* serves as a setting where the people get the chance to be *re-established* in the position they were meant to be. The *fresh start* is granted through the teachings of Jesus Christ. In Luke 9:35 the imperative αὐτοῦ ἀκούετε (hear Him!) points to the authority of Jesus, surpassing the authority of Moses and Elijah.

In the narrative of Exodus 1-18, repentance served in the latter part of the narrative<sup>14</sup>. Thus, a reversed order to that of Mark's gospel is visible. The reversed order, compared to Exodus 1-18, is also noticeable in Matthew's gospel, especially with regard to the link between *temptation*, *transfiguration* and *commissioning* (Figure 6.3, p. 299):

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<sup>13</sup> Mark 1:12-13; Matthew 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13

<sup>14</sup> Exodus 15:26 "If you listen carefully to the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in his eyes, if you pay attention to his commands and keep all his decrees, I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the LORD, who heals you."

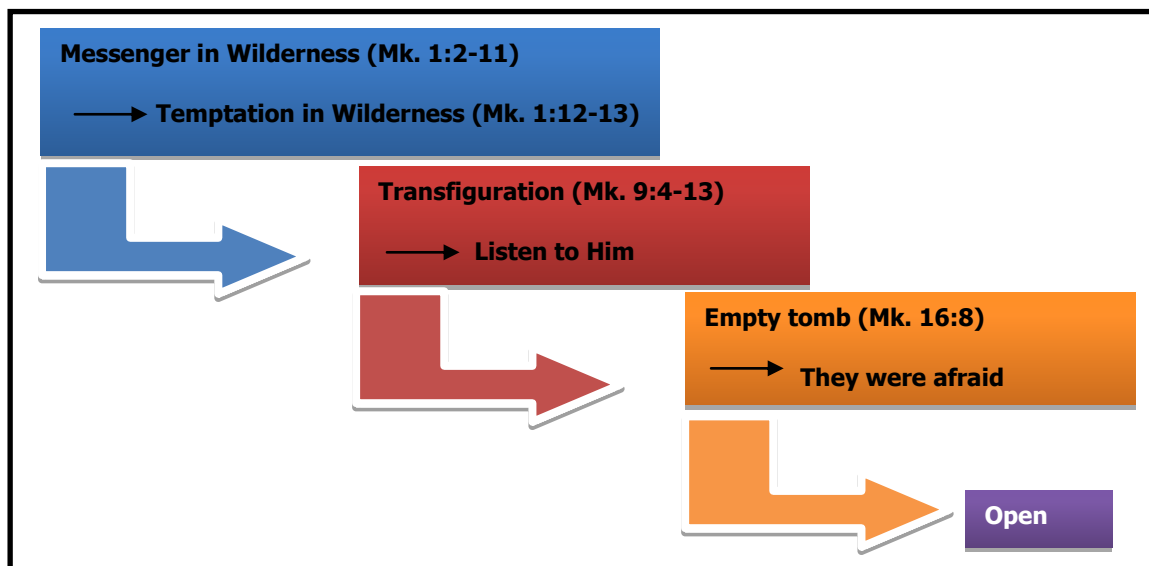


**Figure 7.3: DIAGRAMATIC OVERVIEW OF THE LINK IN MATTHEW'S GOSPEL**

The diagram above corresponds to the mountain setting, described in 7.2.1 (p. 357), where the transfiguration narrative also links to the temptation and commissioning narratives. In Matthew's gospel, therefore, the wilderness as setting is subtly carried through from the temptation narrative, right through to the end.

Turning back to Mark's gospel, there are three pivotal points: Beginning (*The messenger* Mk. 1:2), middle (*the transfiguration of Jesus* Mk. 9:4-13) and end (*the tomb* Mk. 16:8). Mark's Gospel (as was mentioned above) starts in the wilderness with the *messenger's* (John the Baptist) call for repentance (Mk. 1:3-4), followed by the baptism of Jesus (Mk. 1:9). Intertextual links to Elijah are noticeable in different aspects: The abrupt beginning; the wilderness; the Jordan; the prophetic speaker's external appearance; the animals/ravens; the angels, and abrupt calling to disciples (1 Kgs. 17:3, 6; 19:4-8, 19-21; 2 Kgs. 1:8). From Jesus' baptism, the narrative stays in the *wilderness* until after the *temptation narrative*.

In the middle section of Mark (transfiguration), the *mountain-top* drama has a clear connection with 2 Kings 1 and 2. First, with regard to fire which comes down from heaven and then to fire, which carries Elijah to heaven. Furthermore, Elijah's name is mentioned five times in the transfiguration narrative. But, in the entire central section of Mark (Mk. 6:14-9:13), Elijah's name is mentioned seven times. The question to consider is whether Mark wanted to compare Jesus to Elijah, and whether Mark used the Elijah narrative as *backbone* for his own gospel? As an answer to both these questions would be speculative, the point to focus on should rather be the miraculous aspects of the three main pivotal points as mentioned above (Figure 6.4, p. 301):



**Figure 7.4: DIAGRAMATIC OVERVIEW OF THE WILDERNESS THEME OF MARK**

Initially, there is no function for a miracle in the beginning of Mark's gospel (the narrative of John the Baptist in the wilderness). John's words, "After me will come one more powerful than I [...]" (Mk. 1:7), do however anticipate that, through Jesus, great things will happen. According to Luke 7:18 John asks the question later on: "Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?" Jesus' answer<sup>15</sup> would give the reason (function) for his miracles, namely, to *legitimate* (validate) him as a prophet greater than Moses and Elijah.

To conclude the wilderness as setting then, as was the case with *water* as setting, the open end in Mark's gospel suggests that the narrative goes on. Again, the open end includes not only the first readers (implied readers), but also the real readers. Even in Matthew's gospel an open end is suggested with regard to the great commissioning: "[...] therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matt 28:19). Therefore, a new kind of Exodus, which will lead to repentance and a fresh start, is anticipated.

<sup>15</sup> Luke 7:22-23 "Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor. Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me".

## 7.3 THEMES

There are a number of themes within the Canon of Scriptures which can be linked to each other, certainly more than three. With regard to the scope of this dissertation, the researcher did, however, choose to work with only three (prominent) themes<sup>16</sup>: Need-intervention-resolution; Promise of the Land (Kingdom); and Presence.

### 7.3.1 Need-Intervention-Resolution (N-I-R)

The theme of N-I-R is visible within the meta-narrative of Exodus 1-14. It is, however, more condensed within the sub-plots of the Wilderness narrative. The latter part of Exodus 1-18 (15-18), therefore, denotes more of a resemblance to the Elijah cycle (1 Kgs. 17 to 2 Kgs. 2), because both Exodus and Kings fall within the Deuteronomistic history<sup>17</sup>. The *triad*<sup>18</sup> theme of N-I-R always starts with either a group of people, or a single person in need. In the meta-narrative of Exodus, for instance, Israel (group of people) was in *need* because they were oppressed by the Pharaoh. YHWH saw their need (and remembered his promises) and *intervened* by sending Moses to free his people. The *resolution* was orchestrated through **nine wonders** and **one plague**, which lead to Israel's deliverance from Egypt (parting of the sea). The Wilderness narrative consists of five sub-plots, of which two (Marah and Rephidim) had to do with the lack of water (need). The intervention at Marah took place when Moses had to throw a stick in the undrinkable water, after which it became sweet (resolution). At Rephidim Moses had to hit a rock (intervention), after which water poured out from the rock (resolution). The fourth and fifth sub-plots consist of Israel's defeating the Amalekites and Jethro's visit to the camp of Israel<sup>19</sup>.

Four sub-plots within the narrative of 1 Kings 17-19 demonstrate that, whereas the focus in Exodus was on the people, the individual is now of importance: Elijah's need (water and food at the Kerith Ravine); the widow of Zarephath (jar of flour and illness of her son); and Elijah in the Wilderness (nurtured by an angel with bread and

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<sup>16</sup> To name but a few, other themes: The Kingdom of God; Salvation; Coming of the Lamb; Son of man; Jesus as martyr; Jerusalem; Temple; etc. The scope of investigation does not permit a more detailed study into this matter.

<sup>17</sup> See 4.6.1 (first par. p. 119) and 5.6.1 (first par. p. 205)

<sup>18</sup> Triad is also a strong *motif*.

<sup>19</sup> See p. 120.

water)<sup>20</sup>. Within the Deuteronomistic history the author/s shows/show the reader that YHWH not only notices the needs of his people (as group), but also cares for the individual, even across the border (widow of Zarephath).

The theme of N-I-R is just as noticeable in the Synoptic Gospels and John. Compared to the Synoptic gospels, John's gospel displays the least miracle narratives. The theme of N-I-R is, however, highly visible in John's gospel. Furthermore, John places high emphasis on the *sign motif* in his miracle narratives. In the first miracle described by John (miracle at Cana), the sign aspect of Jesus' miracle (transforming water into wine) sets the pattern for the rest of the miracles in John's Gospel. Although direct intertextual links between the Cana narrative and the Old Testament are not obvious, the theme of N-I-R certainly is, even though it might or might not have been intentionally orchestrated by the author of John's Gospel in this manner<sup>21</sup>. The theme of N-I-R in John's gospel has a two-fold function: Firstly, to demonstrate Jesus' creational power. The *sign-aspect* of Jesus' miracles legitimized him as true prophet, in the likes of Moses and Elijah. Secondly, because Jesus' miracle acts legitimized him as true prophet, they also intended to make people (the disciples) believe in him. So too, the three signs in Exodus 4 were meant to confirm Moses as YHWH's chosen prophet to the people and to produce belief. Likewise, the signs Elijah performed in 1 Kings 17 legitimized him as prophet. In this regard, remarkable resemblances between John 2:1-11 and to 1 Kings 17:1-16 are noteworthy:

- Need - A woman informed the prophet of a shortage (1 Kgs. 17:12; Jn. 2:3);
- Intervention - A command was given to use available vessels in which a miracle occurred (1 Kgs. 17:14; Jn. 2:7);
- Resolution - A position of lack was changed to that of abundance (1 Kgs. 17:15; Jn. 2:8-9).

A final example of N-I-R marks the narrative of the feeding of the five thousand (Jn. 6:1-14; Matt. 14:13-21; Mk. 6:31-44; Lk. 9:11-17). In John's narrative, the discourse which follows the story, points to Jesus, being the *bread of life*. The authors of the Gospels thus seem to use the theme of N-I-R to point to the fact that Jesus himself fulfilled what prophets like Moses' and Elijah's deeds pointed at:

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<sup>20</sup> See p. 205-206

<sup>21</sup> See p. 308

- There was a certain need, for instance the lack of food; the prophets acted (intervened) on behalf of YHWH;
- The problem (lack of food) was resolved by a miraculous act of YHWH. Jesus resolves the problem of need directly, whether the need is shown (pointed out) to him by someone close to him, an outsider, or when he notices the need himself;
- The important fact remains though: the theme of N-I-R which is visible in the miracle narratives, points to something beyond the miracle act itself.
- For the reader/s of the Gospels, the message would be that their need, in the first place, was not physical (food or water), but spiritual. This spiritual need could only be fulfilled by the Giver of Life.

### 7.3.2 Promise of the (land) Kingdom

The theme of the Promise of the Land is considered to be one of the main themes of the Pentateuch. In Exodus 1-18 it surfaces several times:

- To Moses in Exodus 3:17: “[...] I have promised to bring you up out of your misery in Egypt into the land of the Canaanites [...] - a land flowing with milk and honey”;
- To the patriarchs (Ex. 6:4,6) the promise is expressed in terms of the gift of the land of Canaan;
- With the institution of the Passover (Ex. 13:5,11);
- With the crossing of the Sea (Ex. 15:13,17);
- With the provision of the manna (Ex. 16:35).

Especially during the Passover (Ex. 13:5), the Promise of the Land served as an important moment, as it pointed forward to a *new beginning*, a *future beyond* oppression. The theme of the Promise faded in Exodus 15-18 though, as Israel did not enter into the Promised Land (yet).

In 1 Kings 17 to 2 Kings 2 there is no obvious reference to the Promise of the Land. By the mention of specific words or phrases though<sup>22</sup>, the author/s place the emphasis on the re-confirmation of Israel as a people of YHWH. At Carmel (1 Kgs. 18) the people were transformed again as children (Israel) of YHWH when they fell on their faces and admitted that YHWH alone is Lord. Gilgal (2 Kgs. 2:2) is linked to the possession of the

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<sup>22</sup> Elijah's question to the people in 1 Kgs. 18:21; twelve stones in 1 Kgs. 18:31; specific mentioning of forebears' names in Elijah's prayer; the words Gilgal and Bethel in 2 Kgs. 2:1, 2.

Land, as it was an important cultic centre. It was also the first stop after the people entered the land. *Bethel* and *Gilgal* therefore brought back memories of the *promise*, but also memories of the *taking of the land*, for at Gilgal Joshua stacked twelve stones after Israel passed through the Jordan on dry ground. Thus, with words like *twelve stones*, *Bethel* and *Gilgal*, the author/s show that, although the people forgot YHWH's promises of the land, YHWH never forgot.

The Synoptic Gospels point to the *Kingdom of God* as something (promise) to come. For John, however, the *Kingdom* is already present. He uses motifs like *water* (Jn. 4:1-26), *bread of life* (Jn. 6:1-14), *light-and-darkness* (Jn. 9:1-41), and *life-and-death* (Jn. 11:33-44) to demonstrate that in Jesus, abundant life is available. Jesus' miracle signs confirm that he indeed is the giver of life and that he has power over all of creation, including life and death. Jesus' miracle actions prove exactly that. In his miracle deeds he makes use of the land. For example, Jesus transforms water into wine; he feeds five thousand with a few pieces of bread. Humanity's nourishment and sustenance, in other words, come from the earth:

- Vine produces grapes for wine;
- Earth produces grain for the making of bread.
- Earth consists of dust, which is used to make clay in order to transform a man from being blind since his birth, to someone who can see (Jn. 9:38).

The theme of the *Kingdom of God*, as with the theme of the *promise of the Land*, thus points to a new (spiritual) setting, which involves the transformation of circumstances. Jesus' miracles show those new circumstances to be imminent as well as present. To inherit the Land, in New Testament terms, is thus to be understood as a spiritual way of inheriting the Kingdom, which is already present. In Matthew's words: "Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people" (Matt. 4:23).

Therefore, in Jesus' understanding of the *coming of the Kingdom*, a geographical setting was not at stake, as if YHWH would be reigning over this *earthly land*. Jesus understood the Kingdom in terms of a *restored land*, metaphorically pointing to *restored human beings*. Through his miracle deeds, Jesus has shown how Jews and non-Jews could, through the coming of the Kingdom, be *renewed* and *restored* in a spiritual way. The authors of the Synoptic gospels and of John, through the narration

of miracle stories, point out that *Restoration* and *Renewal* indeed take place in the acceptance that Jesus is Lord and creator of all things.

### 7.3.3 Presence

Some scholars highlight the theme of *presence* as the most important theme in Exodus<sup>23</sup>. *Presence* has even been described as the *centrepiece* and theological *anchor* or *compass* of the main theological unity in Exodus. Several Hebrew nouns (face; glory; name; tabernacle), prepositions (before/in the face of; in the midst of; with; *fear*), and verbs (to do away/depart; go out from; come down/descend; lead; passing over) denote to YHWH's presence in Exodus 1-18<sup>24</sup> and in 1 Kings 17 to 2 Kings 2.

YHWH's presence is described in different ways in Exodus 1-18:

- Fire - the burning bush (tree) in Exodus 3:2. Promise: "I will be with you".
- "Pillar of cloud" by day and a "pillar of fire" by night (Ex. 13:22) – leading presence.
- Nurturing – water, manna and quails in the Wilderness (Ex. 15-17).

The opposite of presence, so to speak, is absence. However, in biblical terms absence does not mean that YHWH is not present. Evidently this fact is demonstrated in the cries of the people and Moses (Ex. 2:23; 3:7, 9; 14:10, 15; 15:25; 17:4). Therefore, absence could also be described as presence *surging and returning* [to Israel].

Words, such as fire and water, are also noticeable in 1 Kings 17 to 2 Kings 2. So too are YHWH's nourishing acts (1 Kgs. 17 and 19). It is fair to say that, in the Deuteronomist's mind, the golden thread of YHWH's presence continues throughout the *whole narrative* of 1 Kings 17 to 2 Kings 2.

A verb which occurs more frequently in the Elijah cycle is the verb *come* (בוא). In 1 Kings 19 it is used in the context of Elijah who first *left* his office, after which Elijah *faced* YHWH and was then *restored* (by YHWH) in his office<sup>25</sup>. The emphasis thus turns to *restoration*. The verb is used again in 2 Kings 1:13, where a third officer *came* (בוא)

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<sup>23</sup> See 4.6.3 (par. 1, p. 122)

<sup>24</sup> See par. 2 (p. 122)

<sup>25</sup> See par. 4 (p. 209)



to Elijah and fell on his knees and begged for forgiveness, whereas the previous two officers had demanded that Elijah *come* (ἔλθῃ) down. For them, punishment (fire) was inevitable. For the third officer, however, the narrative moved from judgement to forgiveness. In it all, judgement and forgiveness, YHWH's presence remained, especially in forgiveness.

Turning to the New Testament, the *theme of Presence* is an important theme as well. In the Gospels, God's presence is visible through Jesus Christ. As in Epoch 1 and 2, the Lord's presence is demonstrated in different ways: Through specific words, through nourishing acts, nature miracles, his Spirit, *et cetera*. Miracle narratives with a *presence theme* which share obvious similarities to Epoch 1 and 2 are *nature* miracles and *nourishing* miracles done by Jesus. There are two *nature* miracle narratives in which presence as theme certainly stands out: *Calming the sea* (Matt. 8:23-27; Mk. 4:35-41; Lk. 8:22-25) and *Walking on the sea* (Matt. 14:22-33; Mk. 6:45-52; Jn. 6:15-21). The *feeding miracle* (Matt. 14:13-21; Mk. 6:30-44; Lk. 9:10-17; Jn. 6:1-14) serves as a good example of a *nourishing presence*.

With regard to nature miracles, early [New Testament] tradition understood YHWH's redemption of Israel from Egypt (Ex. 18:8; Isa. 63:12) to parallel His creational act when He defeated all chaos, especially water, which was considered to be a symbol of chaos. Jesus defeated the so-called *symbol of chaos*, that is, the *stormy sea*. Because water was also seen as a place where the forces of darkness lived, the final victory of God over the so-called powers of darkness is present in Jesus. In the Exodus narrative YHWH showed his supremacy over and against the so-called gods of Egypt. So too, in 1 Kings 18, YHWH's supremacy was shown over and against Baal.

When Jesus cast out a demon in Capernaum (Mk. 1:25), he used the same words which he uttered to calm the storm: "be still" (Mk.4:39). Jesus' defeat over the *primeval forces of demonic chaos* (the sea) points to the power and victory of God over and against the powers of darkness (death). In the end the ultimate demonstration of Jesus' power over the forces of darkness was given on the cross and in the resurrection.

In the Deuteronomistic history, YHWH's miracle acts pointed to his guiding, nourishing and forgiving presence. YHWH could do to the individual and to his people what no other deity was capable of doing. Even the mere words: "I will be with you", turned

out to be more than enough evidence of his presence. This suggestion is carried through to the New Testament in Jesus Christ.

## 7.4 MOTIFS

In the researcher's view, the most prominent feature which denotes similarities in the miracle narratives of the three different Epochs is *motifs*. The most important motif, also the centre point of this investigation, is the miracle motif: *Signs* (אות [oth]) and *wonders* (מופת [mopheth]) in the Old Testament and *semeion* [σημειον] and *teras* [Τερας] in the New Testament<sup>26</sup>. Signs and wonders, from an Old Testament viewpoint, had the function to create faith<sup>27</sup>, but also to legitimate a prophet in his office. Usually, signs also pointed to events in the future. Therefore, it is possible that a sign could, in any given situation, culminate with an event in the distant future. Within a New Testament context, the significance and functionality of Jesus' miracles can be divided in four categories: *Proof of identity*; *a display of mercy*; *a means to arouse faith*; and *signs*.

Table 7.1 below gives an indication of some of the obvious (similar) motifs sighted in the three Epochs, bearing in mind that *not all motifs* could be dealt with in this dissertation. Table 7.1 **serves only as an example** of how motifs in the three different Epochs could relate to each other. Besides the *wonder motif*, other motifs<sup>28</sup> to consider are *three*; *fear*; *water*; *life-and-death*; and *healer*.

**TABLE 7.1: OVERVIEW OF OBVIOUS MOTIFS SIGHTED IN THE THREE EPOCHS**

Motifs	Epoch 1	Epoch 2	Epoch 3
<b>Wonder (miracle) motif</b>			
• <b>Proof of identity</b>	Elders acknowledge Moses' leadership (Ex. 4:1-9; 29-31) People believe in Moses and in YHWH (Ex. 14:31)	Widow acknowledges Elijah as prophet (1 Kgs. 17:24)	Disciples acknowledge Jesus as Son of God (Matt. 14:32-33) Peter confesses Jesus' identity as true <sup>31</sup> Son of God (Matt. 16:16)
• <b>Display of mercy</b>	Jewish people are spared from 9 wonders (Ex. 7:14-10:29) and 1 plague which tortured Egypt (Ex. 12:30)	Third captain is not devoured by judgemental fire from heaven, but receives mercy (2 Kgs. 1:13)	Blind men received sight <sup>32</sup> (Matt. 9:27)
• <b>Arousing faith: YHWH alone is Lord</b>	The people feared the Lord after they saw what he did at the sea (Ex. 14:31)	On Carmel the people acknowledged YHWH as Lord (1 Kgs. 18:39)	Blind men believed (Mat 9:28)

<sup>26</sup> There are other words for wonders as well (see chapter 3), but these are the most prominent.

<sup>27</sup> See definitions on p. 43 & 47

<sup>28</sup> In chapters 4 and 5 eight motifs were dealt with. In the Synoptic Gospels and John some motifs share common ground. Motifs such as *healer* and *creation*, *fear* and *murmur*, can interrelate in the same narratives. Epoch 3 has no miracle which has to do with fire, therefore, the diagram shows six motifs and not eight.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Signs</b></li> </ul>	<p>Signs pointing to judgement over Pharaoh and Egypt (Ex. 7:3-5; 10:1-2)</p> <p>First of nine wonders (Ex. 7:14-11:10), pointing to death of the firstborn (final judgement on Egypt)<sup>29</sup></p>	<p>Announcement of drought, pointing to judgement over the house of Agab (1 Kgs. 17:1)</p> <p>Reviving the widow's son (1 Kgs. 17:17-24)<sup>30</sup></p>	<p>Raising Lazarus from the dead (Jn. 11:43)<sup>33</sup></p> <p style="text-align: center;">↑↓</p> <p>Miracle at Cana (Jn. 2:1-11)<sup>34</sup></p>
<p><b>Three</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Three days</b></li> <li>• <b>Triad</b></li> </ul>	<p>Three days of darkness (Ex. 10:21-24)</p> <p>Three days in Wilderness without water (Ex. 15:22).</p> <p>Nine wonders in Exodus 7:14-11:10 clustered in groups of three.</p>	<p>Elijah stretching over boy for three times (1 Kgs. 17:21)</p> <p>Men seeking Elijah for three days (2 Kgs. 2:17b)<sup>35</sup></p> <p>1 Kings 17-19, three chapters, consisting of three narratives each<sup>36</sup>.</p>	<p>People being with Jesus for three days before breaking of bread miracle (Matt. 15:32; Mk. 8:2)<sup>37</sup>.</p> <p>Matthew 8-9 and first half of Mark's gospel: Miracle stories clustered in groups of three<sup>38</sup>.</p>
<p><b>Fear</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Apprehension of evil</b></li> <li>• <b>Awe for higher authority</b></li> </ul>	<p>Israelites overwhelmed by fear when Pharaoh chases after them (Ex. 14:10, 13, 31).</p> <p>Moses fears when he realizes that YHWH is speaking to him (Ex. 3:6)</p>	<p>Elijah was afraid and ran for his life (1 Kgs. 19:3).</p> <p>Elijah pulled his cloak over his face outside the cave (1 Kgs. 19:13).</p>	<p>Evil spirits, fearing Jesus, begged him to send them into pigs (Mk. 5:12)<sup>39</sup>.</p> <p>The disciples feared when they saw Jesus calming the storm (Mk. 4:41).</p>
<p><b>Water<sup>40</sup></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>New beginning</b></li> <li>• <b>Creational power</b></li> <li>• <b>Purifying/healing</b></li> </ul>	<p>Transforming water into blood (Ex. 4:9)<sup>41</sup>.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p>Death of first born (Ex. 12:30).</p> <p>Journey through the sea of Reeds (Ex. 14:21-31)<sup>42</sup>.</p> <p>Strong wind divided Sea of Reeds (Ex. 14:21)</p> <p>Waters of Marah (Ex. 15:25)<sup>43</sup>.</p>	<p>Elijah receiving water and bread from an Angel (1 Kgs. 19:8)<sup>44</sup>.</p> <p>Journey through the Jordan (2 Kgs. 2:8).</p> <p>Wind brought forth rain (1 Kgs. 18:45).</p>	<p>First sign miracle, transforming water into wine (Jn. 2:11)<sup>45</sup>.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p>Water pouring from Jesus' side (Jn. 19:34)<sup>46</sup>.</p> <p>Commissioning by the sea (Jn. 21:15-17)<sup>47</sup>.</p> <p>Jesus calmed the storm (Matt. 8:23-27; Mk. 4:35-41; Lk. 8:22-25).</p> <p>Jesus heals blind man's</p>

<sup>31</sup> See par. 2 (p. 324) on the correlation between Exodus 14:31 and Matthew 16:16.

<sup>32</sup> Reversed order to Exodus (wonder of darkness). YHWH caused darkness so that the Egyptians could not see. In Matthew 9 the blind men received their sight because of Jesus' merciful deed (par. 2, p. 325).

<sup>29</sup> The Nile, which was transformed into blood, was seen as the birthplace of Egypt. Therefore, it is no coincidence that the blood in the river is pointing to the final blow upon Egypt, their firstborn.

<sup>30</sup> YHWH gives that which Baal is not capable of doing: YHWH gives life.

<sup>33</sup> Reversed order: In Epochs 1 and 2 YHWH could bring death (judgement), as he has power over life and death. Jesus, who also has power over life and death, can transform death into life. Judgement is also reversed. The death of Lazarus points to Jesus' own death, where judgement is afflicted upon him. When he rises from death, death and judgment are overturned, proclaiming life to those who believe.

<sup>34</sup> With regard to signs, pointing forward and backwards, see par. 2 (p. 326).

<sup>35</sup> See important notes on three day motif on p. 225.

<sup>36</sup> There is a linear flow through all three chapters. Same patterns exist in 2 Kings 1-2 (par. 3, p. 223).

<sup>37</sup> Three days signal the maximum period which people can withstand no light, or be without water. See par. 3 (p. 153).

<sup>38</sup> See last par. on p. 329 with regard to presence, *surging and returning*, pointed out in triad patterns.

<sup>39</sup> See Burdon's note regarding an antitype of the Sea of Reeds, par. 4 (p. 332).

<sup>40</sup> Water denotes to different meanings in different settings (4.7.4, p. 148).

<sup>41</sup> The path of the sign of blood in Exodus 4:1-9 has been clearly shown in a diagram under 4.7.1.4 (p. 335). The diagram shows how the sign is connected to all the miracle narratives in Exodus, right through till the splitting of the sea (Ex. 14:21-31).

<sup>42</sup> Through deliverance comes a new beginning with YHWH.

			eyes with spittle (water) and dust (Jn. 9:6) <sup>48</sup> .
<b>Life-and-death</b>	<p>Wonder of darkness (Ex. 10:21-29).</p> <p>Death of firstborn (Ex. 12:30).</p> <p>Manna and quail in desert (Ex. 16:1-35).</p> <p>Drowning of soldiers in Reed Sea (Ex. 14:15-20).</p>	<p>Widow gathers sticks to prepare last meal (1 Kgs. 17:12).</p> <p>Death of widow's son (1 Kgs. 17:17).</p> <p>Bread and water to Elijah (1 Kgs. 19:8).</p> <p>Death of Ahaziah (2 Kgs. 1:15-17).</p>	<p>Feeding of five thousand (Matt. 14:13-21; Mk. 6:30-44; Lk. 9:10-17; Jn. 6:1-14).</p> <p>Blind men healed (Matt. 20:29-34; Mk. 10:46-52; Lk. 18:35-43).</p> <p>Widow's son at Nain (Lk. 7:11-16).</p> <p>Feeding of four thousand (Matt. 15:32-39; Mk. 8:1-10).</p> <p>Empty tomb- resurrection<sup>49</sup> (Matt. 28:1-10; Mk. 16:1-8; Lk. 24:1-12; Jn. 20:1-18).</p>
<b>Healer</b>	YHWH as Israel's healer (Ex. 15:26).	<p>Young boy healed (1 Kgs. 17:22).</p> <p>Land restored by rain (1 Kgs. 18:42-46).</p>	<p>Healing of <i>Jairus' daughter</i> (Mk. 5:22-23).</p> <p>Healing of Canaanite woman's daughter (Matt. 15:22)<sup>50</sup></p>

## 7.5 THEOLOGICAL OUTCOME

Epochs 1 and 2 were written by the Deuteronomist to readers, probably in Babylonian exile. Epoch 1 reminded them that they were the new people whom YHWH created for him. He took them on a journey to a Promised Land. The narrative of Elijah is a foil to the narrative of Moses. The people are reminded that they cannot serve two gods. There is but one living Lord, YHWH. If they disregarded YHWH's ordinances, they would suffer the consequences. The message of Epoch 2 points to a restored people, acknowledging that there is only one living God. Epoch 3 focuses on a new Kingdom, which is prepared for those who accept Jesus as Lord and saviour.

<sup>43</sup> Coming into the Wilderness was a healing process. Israel had to be healed from their longing to go back to Egypt. Marah reminded them of the bitterness they experienced in Egypt (4.7.4.3, p. 150).

<sup>44</sup> Water is symbol of death (under world) and birth. Elijah receives new life (strength to carry on).

<sup>45</sup> With the first sign miracle, transforming water into wine, the author points to the fact that Jesus would transform his new community after his death, through his chosen disciples.

<sup>46</sup> See last paragraph, p. 335.

<sup>47</sup> Through deliverance (Jesus who conquered death), a new beginning awaits the disciples (and his new community, the church).

<sup>48</sup> See remarks on p. 336 (last paragraph) with regard to creational power and earth.

<sup>49</sup> The empty tomb points to Jesus' authority over death. The Exodus narrative has shown that YHWH has power over death; he defeated all the so-called gods of Egypt. The drowning of the soldiers in the Sea of Reeds was the final blow against Egypt's deities. In 1 Kings 17 – 2 Kings 2 YHWH shows his supremacy over Baal who is the so-called giver of life. YHWH defeats Baal on Carmel. The death of Ahaziah is the final blow against Baal. Only YHWH has power to take life and give life.

<sup>50</sup> Whereas Elijah had to lie on the child and pray three times, Jesus could heal by one word, by one touch and even over a distance (p. 343).

The theological outcome, with regard to miracle narratives in the three different Epochs, can be summarized as in Table 7.2:

**TABLE 7.2: THEOLOGICAL OUTCOME WITH REGARD TO MIRACLE NARRATIVES**

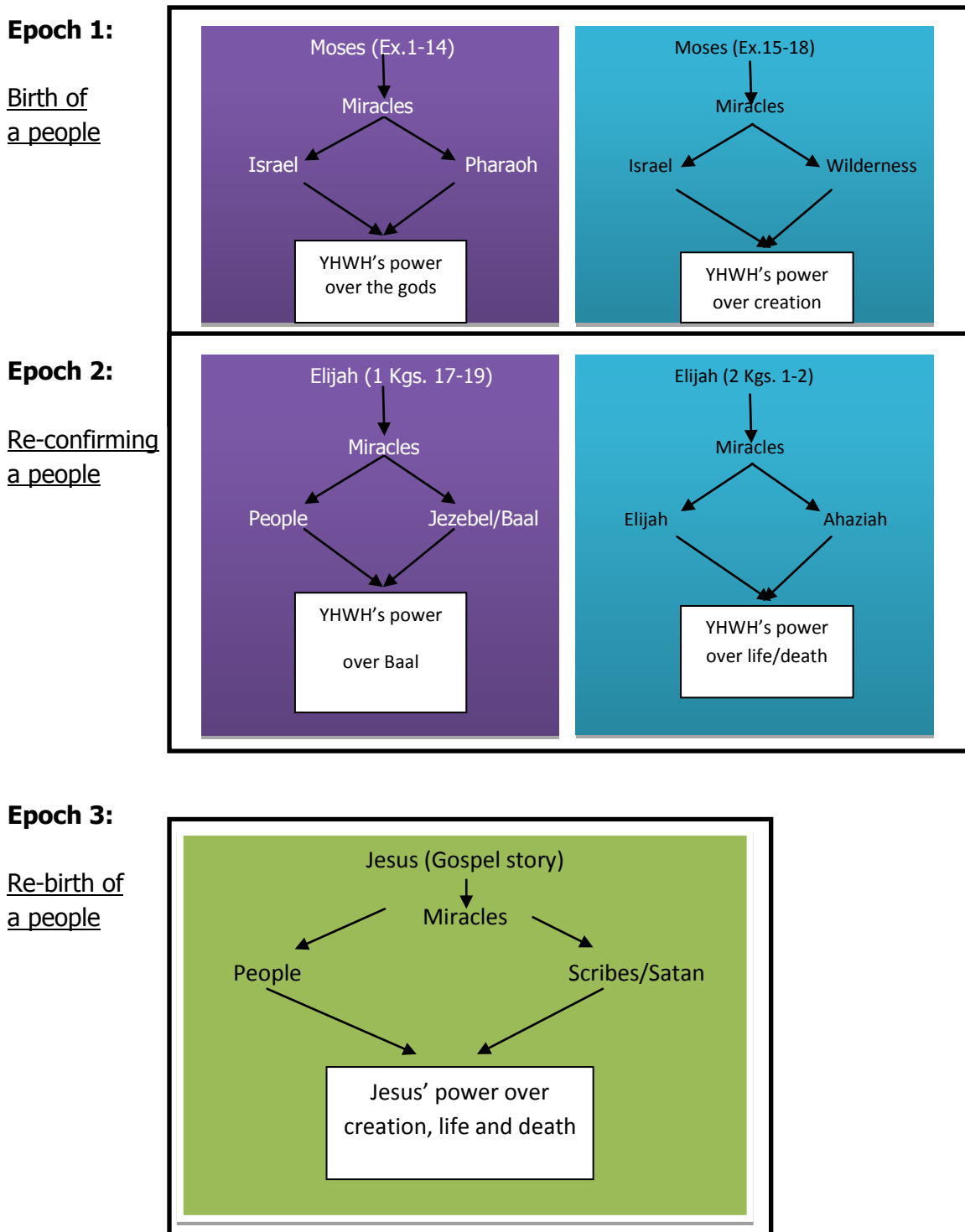
	<b>Epoch 1</b>	<b>Epoch 2</b>	<b>Epoch 3</b>
<b>Structure</b>	<p>* YHWH hears the cries of his people during oppression by the Pharaoh. He remembers his promises.</p> <p>* YHWH chooses Moses to lead (through miraculous deeds) his people out of Egypt.</p> <p>* In order to survive in a hostile desert, the people must learn to rely on YHWH alone.</p>	<p>* The Omride dynasty is the worst in Israel's history.</p> <p>* YHWH sends Elijah as an interruption to the idolatrous lifestyle of Israel, by proclaiming a drought (judgement).</p> <p>* The narrative of Elijah is moulded on the Exodus story, reminding Israel of the consequences if YHWH's ordinances are not lived by. Miracle stories also remind that YHWH alone is Lord.</p>	<p>* An introduction describes Jesus' birth and descentance/origin.</p> <p>* His ministry begins in Galilee, extending to other locales in the North.</p> <p>* From the North Jesus moves towards Jerusalem.</p> <p>* The confrontation in Jerusalem culminates in his passion and resurrection.</p>
<b>Settings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Mountains</b> Place where YHWH is met (Moses in Ex. 3; Moses and the people in Ex. 19).</li> <li>• <b>Wilderness</b> Place where YHWH is met. Place to submit to YHWH. YHWH sustains life in the most harsh conditions.</li> <li>• <b>Water</b> Creational power of YHWH. The splitting of the sea sets a new journey, a new beginning. YHWH sustains life.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Mountains</b> On Carmel YHWH shows that he alone is Lord. Baal is nothing. At Horeb, as with Moses, YHWH encourages and instructs Elijah.</li> <li>• <b>Wilderness</b> The wilderness story in 1 Kings 19 shows the reader that life does not always turn out as one anticipates. Sometimes it is interrupted, and YHWH is likely to be that interruption.</li> <li>• <b>Water</b> With the splitting of the Jordan the reader is reminded that the same YHWH who worked in Exodus is still at work.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Mountains</b> In the gospels, mountains are seen as a focalizing symbol, drawing attention especially to Jesus' <i>Lordship</i> and <i>Sonship</i>. The transfiguration seen in particular, for the Christian community, suggests that Jesus would stand in as mediator, interpreter and teacher (like Moses and Elijah). During the transfiguration scene, the voice, "listen to Him", suggests a mimesis of what Jesus taught his disciples about the Kingdom of God (creating a new people).</li> <li>• <b>Wilderness</b> The wilderness in the gospels anticipates a new kind of Exodus which will lead to repentance and a fresh start. Wilderness as setting puts the emphasis on the authority of God. It is the ideal place for people to experience nearness to God. It is also the ideal place for a "fresh start", to be in a position where one was meant to be, in the Kingdom of God.</li> <li>• <b>Water</b> The sea is described as a spatial setting which causes the crossing of traditional limits. As a spatial setting, sea also serves as a pivot between what happened before and what is to come. Teaching and healing take place by the sea. Jesus even walks on water, showing his divine ability.</li> </ul>
<b>Themes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Presence</b> Israel experienced YHWH's</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Presence</b> YHWH's presence is written</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Presence</b> Just by the mention of</li> </ul>

	<p>presence by hearing him and seeing (pillar of fire and cloud) him. When they did not hear or see him, they considered him absent. His absence is presence, surging and returning to his people.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>N-I-R</b> YHWH notices his people's needs. He intervenes in such a way that they (Israel) must know that YHWH is the resolution to their needs.</li> <li>• <b>Promise of the Land</b> The promise of the Land foreshadows a new beginning for a new people beyond oppression.</li> </ul>	<p>all over the Elijah narrative. It is visible in judgement and in forgiveness.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>N-I-R</b> YHWH not only notices his people, but also the need of the individual.</li> <li>• <b>Promise of the Land</b> The Elijah narratives in 1 Kings culminate in the Carmel event, where the emphasis is on the re-confirmation of Israel as a people of YHWH. Gilgal and Bethel in 2 Kings 2 also remind the reader of YHWH's promises about the Land.</li> </ul>	<p>Jesus' name, presence is put to the forefront. Jesus' presence is demonstrated in different ways: Through words; nourishing acts; nature miracles; etc. Jesus as figure resembles the presence of God. Because Jesus allowed his miracle actions to speak for him, all his miracles pointed to his presence.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>N-I-R</b> Within the examples of narratives consisting of the theme of N-I-R, the sign aspect of miracles was especially noticeable, showing the significance of signs: Pointing forward and/or backwards. Miracle acts described in the N-I-R narratives always point beyond themselves. Therefore, it is important to remember that the N-I-R narratives, in the first place, point to the fact that the physical need described, is metaphorical of a spiritual need. The spiritual need can only be satisfied by Jesus, the giver of true Life.</li> <li>• <b>Promise of the Kingdom</b> Jesus' miracle signs are a response to human need, which is a <i>spiritual need</i>. The theme of the Promise of the Kingdom points to a new (spiritual) setting. It involves the transformation of circumstances. Jesus' miracles show the new circumstances to be imminent and present.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Motifs</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Wonders</b> Each wonder which took place pointed to an event/s in future. They were extreme and severe, leading to knowledge of YHWH, who he is and what he, as creator, is capable of doing.</li> <li>• <b>Three</b> Three day motif serves as symbol of hope. YHWH has the ability to turn the situation of the weary around, within three days!</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Wonders</b> In 1 Kings 17-18 the message of the wonder narratives is clear: Acknowledge YHWH like the widow and YHWH will sustain; combat YHWH like the queen, and suffer the consequences (drought).</li> <li>• <b>Three</b> The motif of three is strongly captured within the structural triad patterns in 1 Kings 17 to 2 Kings 2. The linear lines in tables 5.2 (p. 224) and 5.3 (p. 226) show how the narratives point forwards and backwards. There is no chance to waver between two thoughts. It is either YHWH or Baal, but Baal is</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Wonders</b> Jesus' wonders had the function to proof his identity; to display mercy; to arouse faith; and to act as signs (pointing forward and backwards). Eventually, the wonder motif identifies Jesus as the ultimate true prophet, but also as the only true Son of God.</li> <li>• <b>Three</b> Three as motif usually signals the completion of a task; pointing to a climax; or pointing to a new action. This is especially true in the fact that Jesus rose from the dead after three days.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Fear</b> For the first reader (probably in the context of the Babylonian exile) the <i>fear motive</i> in Exodus was both comforting and encouraging. YHWH's wonders are ultimately what lead the people to fear him.</li> <li>• <b>Water</b> For the person in exile the <i>water-motif</i> reminds the reader of YHWH's promise of a new beginning, made possible by the Creator WHO can change circumstances, as he is able to change nature; he can clean and purify his people from their past, as he is able to manipulate water; and he can keep them from diseases if they submit to his ordinances.</li> <li>• <b>Healer</b> The promise of good health is held out to those who obey YHWH's ordinances. To those who do not fear YHWH, the same illnesses which struck Egypt would come upon them.</li> <li>• <b>Life-and-death</b> YHWH controls life and death. He could inflict death on his opponents at any given moment. The gift of life, through his sustaining love is held out to his people.</li> </ul>	<p>dead.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Fear</b> The message in the Elijah cycles regarding fear is not to fear people, but YHWH. YHWH's words to Elijah (2 Kgs. 1:15), not to be afraid remind Elijah of his own words to the widow in 1 Kings 17. YHWH is in control. Fear him not, and suffer like Ahaziah.</li> <li>• <b>Water</b> The announcement of no rain points to YHWH's creational power, but also judgement to those who do not fear him.</li> <li>• <b>Healer</b> YHWH is capable of healing the land by sending rain. He can also heal those in need, seeking his help.</li> <li>• <b>Life-and-death</b> Life to the faithful is a gift of YHWH. Death is the sure outcome for those who oppose YHWH. YHWH alone has control over life and death.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Fear</b> Fear, in miracle stories in the Synoptic Gospels and John is usually connected to faith. The fear motif usually had a positive outcome, which pointed forward to a promise.</li> <li>• <b>Water</b> Water serves as spatial or geographical focal point. It does have a symbolic meaning also, as in life-and-death, or healing. Water as motif serves to highlight Jesus' creational power. He has the power to tame the seas and the wind. He can even walk on water.</li> <li>• <b>Healer</b> Jesus' ability to heal by touch, or merely just a word (even over a distance), proved him to be a true prophet. Outperforming all other miracle deeds ever done, he serves to be the true Messiah.</li> <li>• <b>Life-and-death</b> All four elements which are essential for life (water, bread, light and blood) feature in the miracles of Jesus. Most significant is Jesus' own resurrection from death, proving his authority over death and thus focussing on Him as giver of everlasting Life.</li> </ul>
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### 7.6 FINAL CONCLUSION

The outcome of miracles in the three Epochs is illustrated in the Figure 7.7:



**Figure 7.5: DIAGRAMATIC OVERVIEW OF OUTCOME OF MIRACLES IN THE THREE EPOCHS**



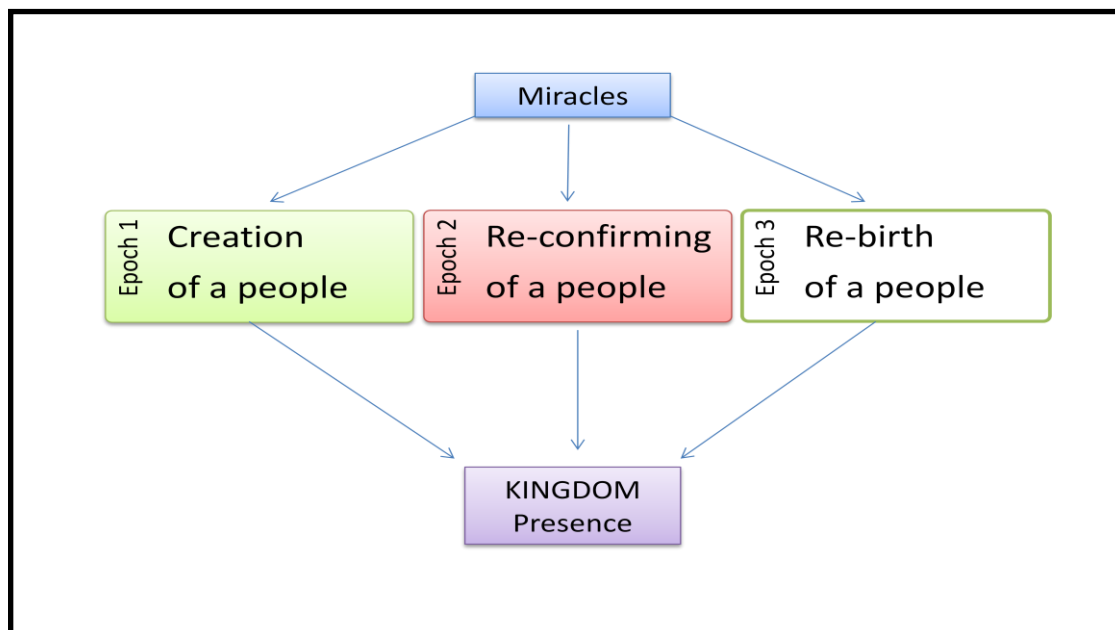
In Epoch 1 YHWH created for him a people, to live in the Promised Land. In Epoch 2 he re-confirmed Israel, who suffered the consequences of losing the Promised Land, as his people. In Epoch 3 a re-birth of his people is necessary to come into his new land, the Kingdom of God. All three Epochs had the necessity for wonders, as oppression and evil forces threatened to jeopardise God's creational plan for his people:

- In Epoch 1 it was Pharaoh and the so-called deities of Egypt (Ex. 1-14). During the Wilderness sojourn (Ex. 15-18) the people longed back to Egypt and had to learn to trust YHWH alone for survival in the Wilderness.
- In Epoch 2 it was the evil Omride house, serving Baal and leading the people into idolatry (1 Kgs. 17-19). 2 Kings 1-2 shows the final blow against the Omride house. YHWH alone has control over life and death.
- In Epoch 3 the Jews were oppressed by the Roman Empire, the main enemies however, were the forces of Satan and the Pharisees and Scribes. The people and the Scribes are shown that Jesus alone has authority over creation, life and death. His ultimate proof is his own resurrection from death.

One of the important features of a miracle is to point to something beyond itself, all three Epochs point to the following:

- There is no one like YHWH.
- YHWH is always present, no matter the circumstances.
- YHWH keeps his promises.
- The wonders point forward and backwards, reminding YHWH's people of the above.
- There is always a promised land (Kingdom), filled with the presence of YHWH.

In the end, the above three charts can be summarised in the last chart on the following page:



**Figure 7.6: SUMMARISED CHART**

## 7.7 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER INVESTIGATION

Although this thesis is a comprehensive study, only the surface has been “scratched”. Within Biblical studies there is still a lot to do with regard to themes in both the Old and the New Testament which have something in common. The theme of miracles is but one example. Concerning the theme of wonders, though, there are still many more possibilities:

- More detailed research of miracles in *each* of the Synoptic gospels and John, with regard to possible Old Testament intertextual links, seems inevitable. Each of the four gospels has its own voice. A full grip on all four gospels in this study is impossible. The model which has been used in this investigation will be better explored within one narrative line, for instance, only Matthew, or Luke.
- Much work has already been done in respect of New Testament miracles and their possible links to the Hellenistic world, but the Old Testament, in this researcher’s view, is still under explored.
- Miracles in Acts and their possible intertextual links to the gospels and to the Old Testament need further study. Perhaps a fourth Epoch could be considered - two Epochs in the Old Testament and two Epochs in the New Testament?
- The Elisha cycle needs further study, as many similarities between Elisha’s miracles and those of Jesus are noticeable.

- In the field of narratology much more can be done regarding *structure, settings, themes and motifs* denoting a theological relationship between the Old and the New Testament. Hopefully, this dissertation will contribute to a debate (once more) which J.P. Gabler started way back in 1787 and has been almost forgotten.

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## SUMMARY

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**Key terms:** Biblical Theology, Narratology, Miracles, Wonders, Epochs, Moses, Elijah, Jesus, Old Testament, New Testament, Structures, Settings, Themes, Motifs.

In the Canon of Scriptures, the phenomenon of miracles/wonders falls into three great Epochs. In the Old Testament there are two Epochs where decisive turning-points marked its course with an intensification of miracles/wonders. First, there are the wonders in the so-called plague narratives and during the "wilderness" in the Exodus tradition. Then, in the ministry of Elijah and Elisha (1 and 2 Kings), came the second Epoch. Both of them (Elijah and Elisha) did miraculous deeds. The third Epoch heralds the ministry of Jesus Christ in the New Testament. This study shows that there are similarities between wonders in the first and the third Epoch, and there are similarities between wonders in the second and the third Epoch, and even in all three. The researcher uses a narrative model which is a combination of existing narrative models, to point out the significance of the similarities between wonders in the three Epochs. Selected aspects used in the model, such as *structures, settings, themes and motifs*, highlight the fact that there must be a coherent Theological relationship between the three Epochs. Miracles in all three Epochs point to events (forwards and backwards) in the future and in the past, helping the reader to understand that the same God is at work, present, future and past. In all three Epochs the miracle stories give hope to people finding themselves in some kind of oppression. Their hope ultimately lies in God's presence, shown in his miraculous acts through his agents, Moses and Elijah and his Son, Jesus. The thesis addresses the lack of a detailed examination on the theme of corresponding miracles in the miracle narratives surrounding the figures of Moses, Elijah and Jesus. In order to achieve the goal of a comprehensive narratological study, the model used by the researcher consists of two divisions: A. *Preliminary reading* and B. *Closer investigation*. The preliminary reading helps the researcher to get a grip on the narrative as a whole, but also to identify certain aesthetical elements such as *structure, settings, themes and motifs*, which the authors of the three different Epochs used to craft their miracle stories. The aesthetical "tools" of *structure, settings, themes and motifs* form the backbone of the study. They point right to the fact that there are similar aspects in miracle stories in the three Epochs. Hence, they show that, in the field of Biblical studies, a thematic approach opens up new possibilities to discuss the coherence between Old Testament and New Testament studies: The theme of

"wonders" is one possibility. Hopefully, this dissertation will contribute to a debate (once more) which J.P. Gabler started way back in 1787 and which has been almost forgotten.

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## **OPSOMMING**

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**Sleuteltermes:** Bybelse Teologie, Narratologie, Wonderwerke, Wonders, Tydperke, Moses, Elia, Jesus, Ou Testament, Nuwe Testament, Struktuur, Ligging, Temas, Motiewe.

In die Bybelse Kanon vind wonderwerke in drie groot Tydperke plaas. Twee spesifieke Tydperke in die Ou Testament word gekenmerk deur 'n toename in wonders/wonderwerke. Eerstens is daar die wonders/wonderwerke in die sogenaamde plaagnarratiewe en gedurende die "woestyn" van die Eksodustradisie. Die tweede Tydperk breek tydens die bediening van Elia en Elisa (1 en 2 Konings) aan. Beide Elia en Elisa het wonderwerke verrig. Die derde Tydperk kondig die prediking van Jesus Christus in die Nuwe Testament aan. Hierdie studie toon aan dat daar ooreenkomste tussen die wonderwerke in die eerste en derde Tydperke bestaan, en ook tussen die wonderwerke in die tweede en derde Tydperke. Daar is trouens oorkomste tussen wonders in al die die Tydperke. Die navorser gebruik 'n narratiewe model wat 'n kombinasie is van bestaande narratiewe modelle om die (betekenis of belangrikheid of belang) van die ooreenkomste tussen die die Tydperke aan te dui. Aspekte soos *struktuur, ligging, temas en motiewe* word in die model aangewend om aan te dui dat daar 'n koherente Teologiese verband tussen die drie Tydperke is. Wonderwerke in al drie die Tydperke wys op gebeure in die toekoms en die verlede (vorentoe en terug in tyd), en dit help die leser om te begryp dat dieselfde God aan die werk is in die hede, verlede en toekoms. In al drie die Tydperke gee die wonderwerke hoop aan mense wat op een of ander manier onderdruk word. Hulle hoop is te vinde in die *teenwoordigheid* van God soos gemanifesteer in Sy wonderdade deur sy agente Moses, Elia en Sy Seun, Jesus. Hierdie tesis spreek die gebrek aan 'n gedetailleerde ondersoek na die tema van ooreenstemmende wonderwerke in die wonderwerknarratiewe van Moses, Elia en Jesus aan. Om die oogmerk van 'n omvattende narratologiese studie te bereik,

bestaan die navorser se model uit twee afdelings: A. *Aanvanklike lees-en-interpretasie* en B. *Nadere ondersoek*. Die aanvanklike *lees-en-interpretasie* help die navorser om 'n begrip van die narratief as geheel te vorm, maar help ook in die indentifisering van sekere estetiese elemente soos *struktuur, plasing, temas* en *motiewe* wat die outeurs in die drie Tydperke gebruik het om hulle wonderwerkstories te skep. Hierdie gemelde estetiese hulpmiddels vorm die basis van hierdie studie. Hulle dui op die feit dat daar ooreenkomste bestaan in die wonderwerknarratiewe van die drie Tydperke. Dit toon weer aan dat 'n tematiese benadering nuwe moontlikhede in die veld van Bybels-Teplogiese studies meebring om die koherensie tussen Ou en Nuwe Testamente te bespreek. Die tema van "wonderwerke" is hier een moontlikheid. Hopelik sal hierdie studie (nogmaals) 'n bydrae lewer tot 'n byna vergete debat wat in 1787 deur J.P. Gabler begin is.