



**Adrianus van Selms:**  
Concise versions of his  
contributions in Dutch  
and Afrikaans theological  
journals (1936–1982)

Hans van Rensburg







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UJ Press

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# Contents

1.	Orientation .....	1
2.	Onder Eigen Vaandel .....	3
3.	Nederlands Theologisch Tijdschrift .....	11
4.	Kerk en Theologie .....	15
5.	Hervormde Theologische Studies .....	37
6.	Die Hervormer .....	93
7.	Almanak .....	115
8.	Acta Classica .....	123
9.	Pro Veritate .....	125
10.	Van Selms' contributions in context .....	127
	Indexes .....	141
	Biblical personal names within subheadings .....	147
	Foreign expressions within subsections .....	149
	Sources referred to in subsections .....	155
	Non-Biblical persons mentioned in subdivisions .....	159
	General subjects mentioned within subdivisions .....	161
	Bibliographies .....	163
	Van Selm's writings not included in the discussion of selected journals .....	171
	General references to sources .....	187





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## Isaiah 40:7

Het gras verdort, de bloem valt af,  
maar het woord van onze God houdt ewig stand.  
(*Bybel*. 1968. Amsterdam: Het Nederlandsch  
Bijbelgenootskap)

Die gras verdor, die blom verwelk;  
maar die woord van onse God hou stand in ewigheid.  
(*Die Bybel*. 1963. Kaapstad [Cape Town]:  
Die Bybelgenootskap van Suid-Afrika)

The grass withers, the flowers fade,  
but the word of our God endures for evermore.  
(*The New English Bible*. 1970. Oxford:  
Oxford University Press)



# Translator's notes and acknowledgements

Adrianus van Selms (1906–1984) was a Dutch pastor (1930–1938) who became senior lecturer and professor in Semitic languages at the University of Pretoria (1938–1972) and lecturer in Biblical archaeology (1938–1962) at the Faculty of Theology of the Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika (Dutch Reformed Church of Africa). He was an acknowledged academic in South Africa and abroad and the author of numerous publications. His books were predominantly in Dutch, but he wrote most of his articles in English, thus they are theoretically accessible to the scholarly public.

A number of articles, however, were published in Dutch and Afrikaans, dialects that are less easy to comprehend by those not familiar with the said two languages. The present book is an attempt to overcome the linguistic barrier and to present in a summarised way Van Selms' contributions in three Dutch journals (*Onder Eigen Vaandel*, *Nederlands Theologisch Tijdschrift*, and *Kerk en Theologie*), two academically-orientated Afrikaans journals (*Hervormde Teologiese Studies* and *Acta Classica*) and three journals of a more popular nature (*Die Hervormer*, *Pro Veritate* and *Almanak*). In total, 87 separate articles (discussed in 79 sections) of Van Selms receive attention.

Articles in the Dutch journal *Kerk en Theologie* appeared continuously from 1938 to 1982. To the contrary, contributions of Van Selms in publications of the Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika (Dutch Reformed Church of Africa) are only attested up to 1961. This is due to his severing links with the Church, first by resigning as lecturer in Biblical archaeology in 1962 and later as member of the Church in 1967. The main reason was Van Selms' disagreement with the officially sanctioned practice of racial segregation within the Dutch Reformed Church of Africa.

The appellation, Dutch Reformed Church, is customarily also used as the English equivalent for the South African doctrinally related, Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk (NG Kerk). However, all references in the book pertain only to the Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika. Occasionally (e.g., 4.2) mention will be made to Netherlands Reformed Church, sister church of the Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika in Netherland (presently known as the Protestantse Kerk [Protestant Church] of Netherland).

Translations printed in the present book are condensed and abridged versions of the Dutch or Afrikaans contributions, supplemented with thematically related literature, indexes and bibliographies:

- In producing the versions, the chronological sequence in which they originally appeared in the respective journals is adhered to.
- Contributions have been presented from a reader's perspective, frequently using phrases such as 'according to Van Selms' (e.g., 4.10, 5.6, 6.14, 7.5), 'in Van Selm's view' (e.g., 4.5, 5.4, 6.16, 9.1) or 'by Van Selms' (e.g., 5.19, 6.5, 7.5, 9.1).
- Titles of the 79 separate portions are in English, supplemented with detail of the Afrikaans or Dutch versions by way of footnotes. In the bibliography, English subheadings plus the original titles are given.
- Biblical references in the original articles were retained as far as possible, and an index is provided at the end of the book.
- Translations of Biblical verses are phrased to suit individual contexts (as suggested by Van Selms), using as basis the *New International Version (NIV)*, 1983.
- The concise versions of contributions are supplemented where necessary with additions such as dates usually excerpted from Wikipedia via Google.

In collecting the sources translated in the present book, invaluable assistance was rendered by the meticulously

*Translator's notes and acknowledgements*

minded Mr Nándor Sarkady, archivist of the Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika. A word of thanks to him.

Highly appreciated is the writing of the foreword by Prof Jeanet Conradie of the Department of Chemistry at the University of the Free State (granddaughter of Prof van Selms) as well as the input at various stages of the manuscript's preparation by Dr Fanie Cronje, editor of the *Journal for Semitics*, and by two colleagues at the University of Johannesburg, namely Dr Gudrun Lier, senior lecturer in Hebrew and Aramaic, and Ronel Smit, librarian.





# Foreword

As granddaughter of Adrianus van Selms (1906-1984), it is with great pleasure and deep admiration that I have the honour of writing the foreword for this remarkable book. The book encompasses a profound exploration of theological works published by Adrianus van Selms in three Dutch and five Afrikaans journals during 1938 to 1982. As I delve into the pages of this extraordinary work, I am struck by the immense knowledge, wisdom and intellectual rigour by the author, Hans van Rensburg, who translated, condensed and provided abridged versions of the 86 publications of Adrianus van Selms, originally published in Dutch and Afrikaans. The meticulous research of Hans van Rensburg, coupled with his ability to synthesise and articulate complex ideas with clarity and eloquence, makes this book an invaluable resource for scholars, students and anyone with a genuine curiosity about theology. Each chapter is a testament to the author's unwavering commitment to intellectual integrity and the pursuit of truth. I am particularly moved by the author's insightful analysis that brings Adrianus van Selms' theology to life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Adrianus van Selms is the author of more than 37 books and 350 contributions to academic and popular journals. Many of these books had more than one edition, for example the book *God en de Mensen* had more than 12 editions from circa 1938 till 1984. During his life, he was well-known by most pastors and theological students due to his refreshing new way of thinking about church reformation and theology. Van Selms has enjoyed recognition from many quarters. In 1976, he received the Stals Prize for Theology from the South African Academy of Science and Art (Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns). In 1959, he was named an Officer in the Order of Orange-Nassau ("Orde van Oranje-Nassau") and in 1975, an honorary member of the British "Society of Old Testament Study". The University of South Africa honoured him with an honorary doctorate in Theology in 1977 and the

## Adrianus van Selms

University of Pretoria in 1982 with an honorary doctorate in Arts and Philosophy. He was also named one of the hundred greatest achievers in the academic field during the 20<sup>th</sup> century at the University of Pretoria.

However, Adrianus van Selms lived in a pre-electronic era, implying that none of his works were published electronically on the internet during his lifetime. Also, many of his works were in Dutch or Afrikaans, implying that they are not accessible by the new generation that strongly rely on online resources for information. This contribution of Hans van Rensburg thus fulfils a need in making selected works of Adrianus van Selms known to Generation Z.

It is my sincere hope that this book will find its way into the hands of both seasoned theologians and curious seekers of truth. With Hans van Rensburg's passion for the theological ideas of Adrianus van Selms, I am confident that readers will be captivated by the depth of insight and intellectual stimulation that awaits them within these pages.

In closing, I would like to express my gratitude to Hans van Rensburg for his invaluable contribution. It is a privilege to introduce this exceptional work to the world and to witness the impact it will undoubtedly have on the realm of theological studies.

**Jeanet Conradie**

Professor

University of the Free State

11.06.2023

## 1. Orientation

In the present orientation, tendencies and themes discernible within the translated versions as a whole will receive attention.

The first feature characteristic of the articles and general contributions is the multiple references to Biblical passages. Two articles in particular can be typified as concordance studies. They are 'Adunata in the Gospels' (4.12) and 'Historical and geographical names in the book of the Psalms' (5.18), abundantly mentioning Matthew and Psalms respectively. Other Biblical books that are often cited are Genesis, Exodus and 1 and 2 Kings.

The second feature that is immediately observable is the great range of themes addressed by Van Selms. Attention is mostly given to topics derived from the Old Testament (OT). However, the New Testament (NT), usually contextualised within the OT frame, also receives frequent attention. Readers are introduced to old documents, e.g., the scroll of Abiša of the Samaritans (3.1), the new Isaiah scroll discovered at Qumran (6.18), Hittite hieroglyphs (5.5) and the Baal text from the temple archive of Ugarit (7.1). Meticulous descriptions of cities and sites are given, e.g., Korazin (4.5), Bethlehem (6.22), the oldest Jerusalem (6.17), the church on top of Golgotha (7.2) and the city where Jan van Riebeeck was born (7.6). Attention is given to prominent figures from early 4<sup>th</sup> century church history, e.g., Rabbula of Edessa and Augustine (5.4); 16<sup>th</sup> century theologian John Calvin (3.2); 17<sup>th</sup> century Netherlands poet-pastors, Willem Sluiter (7.3) and Johannes Vollenhove (7.4); and 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century OT scholars (5.19). OT theology is discussed (2.1, 2.2, 4.3, 5.1 and 6.6-8) as well as NT theological themes, e.g., the Holy Ghost (6.15) and the mother of the Lord (6.27). Contemporary issues pertaining to the practice of racial segregation within the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa are addressed in general (5.14) and specifically (4.4 and 9.1).

In characterising his own methodology in interpreting a text, Van Selms sides with a sociological approach rather than

the tradition-historical method, form-critical and religion-historical orientations (5.19). He is aware of the growth and conflation of Biblical tradition as evident in his exegesis of Psalm 14 and 53 (4.1). However, no attempt is made to discover consecutive layers underlying tradition. Verses are usually accepted at face value and contextualised within Israelite or Ancient Near Eastern milieu. He is particularly fond of citing Babylonian parallels, e.g., as regards number parallelism (5.3) and names among Judean kings (5.12).

In the articles selected, Van Selms' idiosyncratic views at times surface. He believed, for example, that absolute predestination of God does not leave room for man to choose, but only to obey (4.2; Josh. 24:15). Van Selms was convinced that at the last supper with his disciples, Christ expressed the conviction (Matt. 26:29) that He would drink 'new wine' (cf. Lev. 26:10) with his followers at the coming Feast of the Tabernacles (4.7). In Van Selms' conception all OT prophecies were fulfilled in Christ (6.6, second article). Furthermore, the Jewish nation had (after the coming of Christ) no special place in the overall plan of God with the world (6.8).

## 2. Onder Eigen Vaandel

The theological journal, *Onder Eigen Vaandel* (Beneath own banner), commenced publishing in 1926 and continued to do so until 1942 when publication was terminated by the outbreak of the Second World War (1939-1945). It was succeeded by the journal *Kerk en Theologie* (Church and Theology) in 1950. As far as can be established, Van Selms published two articles (1936 and 1938) in *Onder Eigen Vaandel*, both pertaining to the interpretation of the OT.

### 2.1 How do we read the Old Testament?<sup>1</sup>

In this article Adrianus van Selms, arguing from a theological point of view, discusses the status and function of the OT within Christian context.

He refers to the status accorded to it within Christian tradition; differentiates between the Sinai covenant and the corpus of OT writings; refers to aspects of continuity, discontinuity and tension between the OT and the NT; focuses on eschatology and concepts such as holiness and justice; draws attention to the role of the Holy Spirit of God in the interpretation of Scripture; mentions unique features of the OT and finally suggests foci in conveying its general contents within catechetical context.<sup>2</sup>

According to Van Selms, the question of how to read the OT should be answered from the viewpoint of the church dogma. Guidance is provided by the Netherlands Confession of Faith (Article 4) which makes no distinction between the books of the OT and NT.<sup>3</sup>

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1 Van Selms, A. 1936. Hoe lezen wij het Oude Testament? *Onder Eigen Vaandel* 11:10-27.

2 The paper was originally read at a conference of the Nederlandse Christen-Studenten Vereniging (NCSV) at Woudschoten on 3 September 1935 with catechetical tuition as overall theme.

3 The Netherlands Confession of Faith, Article 4, states: "We include in the Holy Scripture the two volumes of the Old and

Initially, the corpus of OT writings was accepted unchallenged. As matter of fact, for the NT writers, the OT was the only firmly established (vasgelegde) word of God. They regarded their own writings as commentary on the OT. Only when the Christian dogma crystalised did the NT writings become a corpus comparable to the OT.

However, during the period associated with the theologian Marcion (c. 85–c. 160) the position of the OT within the Christian church was questioned. It may be that this view was responded to in the Nicaea–Constantinople creed which states that the Holy Ghost had spoken “through the [OT] prophets”.

The Christian canon consists of a series of books typified as OT and NT. Earliest evidence is provided by the Festal Letter of Athanasius (dated 367 CE). ‘Old’ and ‘New’ as typologies may be linked to Heb. 8 which refers to a new covenant quoting Jer. 31:31–34. According to Hebrews 8:13 the said new covenant “made the first one [with the house of Israel and Judah (Jer. 31:31)] obsolete; and what is absolute and ageing will soon disappear”. However, the old covenant associated with the OT still had a standing at present (1935/6). Within congregational context there is an expressed preference for pastors ‘preaching from the Old Testament’.

With the coming of Christ and his death and resurrection, the Sinai covenant with all its prescriptions had become obsolete, but it does not mean that the OT had lost its value. The OT contains a variety of material that reaches further than the old covenant. Examples are the faith of Abraham, the prayer of Moses, the sin of David and the suffering of Jeremiah. There are also specific texts that can be labelled as Messianic, but seen from another perspective, every word in the OT has bearing on the Mediator of the NT. The old covenant cannot be removed from the OT, and the OT cannot be regarded as having lost its value. Every word of the OT can become God’s word for us.

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New Testaments. They are canonical books with which there can be no quarrel at all.”

It cannot be denied that tension exists between the OT and NT, not only in Christian thinking but also in Christian life. In this regard attention is drawn to the statement of John Calvin in his institutions (II, XI, 9):

Then, again, we deny that they (i.e., children of the New Covenant) did possess the spirit of liberty and security in such a degree as not to experience some measure of fear and bondage [of the law].

Between the OT and NT, Calvin observes ‘similarity’ (II, X) and ‘dissimilarity’ (II, XI).<sup>4</sup> Van Selms prefers the characterisation ‘continuity’ and ‘discontinuity’. Using the analogy of a line drawn between the testaments as example, the question may be asked whether it is continuous or broken.

Continuity between the OT and NT is most obvious in Israel’s future expectations. The OT continuously mentions what God would do in the future to the honour of His name. Specific attention in this regard is drawn to the systematic presentations of the prophet Ezekiel. The NT also reflects a strong eschatological tendency, although not in exact continuity with the OT. Statements of Jesus (supported by Paul) reveal that expectations regarding the future had been fulfilled, e.g., (Luke 4:21): Today this scripture (Isa. 61:1-2) is fulfilled in your hearing”; (Luke 11:20) “But if I [Jesus] drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come to you” and (2 Cor. 6:2) “Behold, now is the time of God’s favour, now is the day of salvation”.

Discontinuity between the OT and NT is particularly evident in the unfinished (‘onafgesloten’) character of OT series of conceptualisations. The first impression of the OT (according to Van Selms) is that of a chaotic mass. Making sense of the wonderful whole of writings comes from outside.

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4 Calvin, Institutions, II, X has as heading, ‘The resemblance between the Old Testament and the New’; and II, XI has as heading, ‘The difference between the two testaments.’ Cf. John Calvin. 1845. *The institutes of Christian religion*, translated by Henry Beveridge. Grand Rapids: Christian Classics Ethereal Library.

It appears that, consciously or unconsciously, the people who are speaking foresee, point towards or call for a final understanding (sin), i.e., the fulfilment of the OT. By way of illustration the concepts 'holy' and 'justice' are discussed by Van Selms.

Within the context of the OT the concept 'holy' finds no closure and crossing over to the NT is necessary. Reference is made to the book *Das Heilige*<sup>5</sup> of Rudolf Otto (1869-1937) in which he draws attention first to those in OT times who experienced holiness passively, second to the prophets who experienced it actively, and finally to Christ

one in whom is found the Spirit in all its plenitude, and at the same time in his person and in his performance is become most completely the object of divination, in whom Holiness is recognized apparent.

Such one is more than Prophet. He is the Son.

As a second example of discontinuity between the OT and NT Van Selms, selects the concept of *ṣĕdāqā* (righteousness) of which the exact translation in each different verse of the OT is problematic. The suggestion of A. Jeremias (*Israelitische Heilandserwartung*) that *ṣĕdāqā* (justice) be rendered to 'freedom' ('vrijheid') is found applicable to NT context by Van Selms, while observing that the history of the word in the OT drifts in this direction.

The OT examples ask for fulfilment in Christ, not as continuation but as indication of never-ending potential applicability ('potentiering'). The essential message of the Bible, OT and NT, is that a person's life is determined by judgement and mercy ('oordeel en genade') of God. God has the freedom to reject and accept. In the OT mercy comes after judgement, while mercy may be followed by judgement. The

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5 Cf. Rudolf Otto, [1917] 1924. *The Idea of the Holy: An inquiry into the non-rational factor in the idea of the Divine and its relation to the rational*. London: Oxford University Press, 182; translation of *Das Heilige*, 1917 [1926] by John W. Harvey.



Biblical book Judges in its canonical, edited format is a typical example. However, in the NT in the cross of Jesus, judgement and mercy overlap, with the latter being victorious.

For the believer the sequence judgement – mercy is irreversible. Those who in the judgement of God received his mercy, have it for ever. This continuity between OT and NT, however, also constantly underlines their discontinuity. In this uncertainty within man room is provided for the Spirit of God who guides his people in all truth. This guidance must be believed and trusted in the official usage of the OT. This does not mean that at a specific moment everything stated in the OT can be sensed as God's word. People may also differ in their application of OT traditions. The history of Samson (Judg. 13-16), continuously commented on negatively by H. Boschma, may (according to Van Selms) be interpreted as a moving example of the immense loneliness of one elected by God.

Discontinuity between the OT and NT may mean that the OT is subjected to the judgement of the NT. Isa. 59:2 may serve as example. It states

But your iniquities have separated you from God ...

Van Selms admits that there are moments (when applying the verse to his own life) he has to acknowledge in shame and sadness that it is so. But there are also moments that these words become a palimpsest<sup>6</sup> overwritten by the NT words

For I am convinced that neither death nor life ... nor anything in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 8:39)

There are in the OT concepts that are not found in the NT, or are not so prominent. One such example is the strong bonding with the nation that is often expressed in OT writings. When

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<sup>6</sup> Palimpsest: a manuscript or piece of writing material on which later writing has been superimposed on effaced earlier writing.

reading how Ezra and Nehemiah<sup>7</sup> confess, as if their own, the sins of some people from Israel and how they share in the guilt with their fathers and the disobedient people at present, Van Selms cannot but greatly admire them.

Similar admiration needs to be evoked by the social and political organisation that is stated in Israel's legislation. The said theocracy cannot be repeated. Every such an attempt would lead to clericalism. However, Van Selms utters his admiration for the system, stating that the NT provides no positive information regarding the organisation of state and society.

A third aspect that needs to be mentioned is the OT's positive perspective on the bodily life found in the poetry of Song of Songs, celebrating spring and love. Song of Songs (4:16) states

Awake, north wind, and come south wind!

Blow on my garden, that its fragrance may spread abroad,

Let my lover come into his garden and taste its choice  
fruits.

However, the respect, admiration and appreciation of the earthly are of temporary nature and have no place in the eternal Gospel which brings joy to Angels and the blessed ('zaligen'). Furthermore, in general, it is not advisable to appropriate those (political and social) features in the OT that are left aside in the NT.

Finally, Van Selms discusses the usage of the OT in catechetical tuition. His point of departure is to bear in mind that we are children of the New Covenant. Portions from the OT should be selected that accentuate the essence of God's involvement in history. Young people should be informed about the patriarchs, the exodus from Egypt and the election of David; aspects mentioned in the Psalms (e.g., 78, 105 and 106) and referred to in the NT. The history of the later kings and

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7 Ezra 9:6-15 and Neh. 1:5-11.

vicissitudes of Israel belong to the profane history. Literary-historical problems such as the dating of Deuteronomy should not be discussed. Most important in catechetical tuition is to teach young people to see in the God of the OT the Trinity, that is the God of the NT. Theologically stated God is one, also in the variety [of manifestations]. The patriarchs worshipped the same God as we do, not a 'part' ('deel') of God. Therefore, their belief is our belief, their hope our hope. Learners should be taught in the catechetical class to believe like Abraham, to love like Isaac, to hope like Jacob and with them to direct all belief, hope and love to the Eternal God.

## 2.2 Gospel and law in the exegesis of the Old Testament <sup>8</sup>

In a second article in *Onder Eigen Vaandel*, Van Selms discusses the problem of Gospel and law in the interpretation of the OT. According to Van Selms, grace and law are "one in God". To illustrate his point of view, he focuses on four scenarios featuring in the OT.

The first pertains to the early history of mankind. The curse of God upon woman and man in the Garden of Eden [Genesis 3:16f.] is typified as judgement, but simultaneously as an example of Divine care. God steps in between ('treedt ... tussen') man and sin. The same applies to the curse by God upon Cain who murdered his brother, Abel. Cain is driven from his land (judgement upon sin), but also given a mark so that no-one who found him would kill him (act of Divine mercy) [Genesis 4:15].

Second, Van Selms refers to Abraham for whom the legal ruling of circumcision for every male (Genesis 17:10) was prescribed as sign of the covenant between God and man. Once again, law and mercy go hand-in-hand.

Third, Van Selms mentions the Sinai events during the leadership of Moses. The Ten Commandments (law)

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8 Van Selms, A. 1938. Evangelie en wet in de exegese van het Oude Testament, *Onder Eigen Vaandel* 13(2). <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v2i4.3375>

commence (Exodus 20:1) by reminding the people that it was God who had brought them out of Egypt (mercy).

Fourth, attention is drawn to the functioning of Gospel and law during the time of the Major Prophets. Mention of coming doom is accompanied by promises of mercy. Reference is specifically made to Jeremiah (45) and Isaiah (7). In Jeremiah 45:4, the prophet announced the judgement of the Lord to Baruch saying, “I will overthrow what I have built and uproot what I have planted throughout the land”, but in 45:5 the secretary is consoled, “but wherever you go I will let you escape with your life”. In Isa. 7:7, the prophet assures King Ahaz that the attempt of the two neighbouring kingdoms to overthrow his kingdom “will not take place”. However, at the same time (7:15) the king of Judah is reprimanded, “Is it not enough to try the patience of men? Will you try the patience of my Lord also?”.

### 3. Nederlands Theologisch Tijdschrift

*Nederlands Theologisch Tijdschrift* (Dutch Theological Journal) (1946 -) accepted three articles (3.1-3) of Van Selms for publication during 1949–1951. They are of diverse nature, focusing on the Samaritans, Calvin and the succession of teaching.

#### 3.1 A book–religion: The honouring of the scroll of Abiša by the Samaritans<sup>9</sup>

In this article, Van Selms discusses the history of the so-called Abiša scroll of the Pentateuch and the reverence for it among the Samaritan community at Nablus, located about 49 km north of Jerusalem.

Codices and fragments of the Samaritan Pentateuch are to be found in European libraries (1947), but not scrolls. The so-called Abiša scroll is particularly precious for the Samaritan community. It is stored away from public attention. According to the colophon, added to the scroll within Deut. 6:4 to 13:18, the copyist was Abiša, son of Phinehas the son of Eleazar the son of Aaron (cf. 1 Chron. 5:30 [6:4]). The scroll is dated “the 13<sup>th</sup> year of the rule of the children of Israel over Canaan”, which would correspond to 1625 BCE according to the Samaritan calendar (when Shiloh [cf. 1Sam. 1] rather than Shechem became Eli’s sanctuary). The authenticity of the colophon and the accuracy of its information are doubted. Scholars date the scroll between 1355 CE (when its existence was first mentioned) and 300 BCE (palaeographical arguments).

Very few people outside the community actually saw the scroll and the colophon. Among those who did are Abu’l Faḥ (14<sup>th</sup> century) and Mešalma (1714), who described in Arabic the ritual purification beforehand and the people’s awe when being shown the scroll. A descendant of Mešalma, who also viewed the scroll in 1849, recounted how members of the community

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9 Van Selms, A. 1947. Een boek–religie: De Verering van de rol van Abiša door de Samaritanen, *NTT* 1947:193–203.

kissed the unrolled scroll at Num. 6:22-27 (benediction of Aaron). For them, the scroll carried divine power.

### **3.2 Communication: An oversight of Calvin?<sup>10</sup>**

In this communication Van Selms responds to a statement by Dr Dankbaar<sup>11</sup> in a previous (February) edition of *NTT* in which the latter stated: “Once even he [Calvin] allows himself to be misled – without doubt having the missionary activity of the Jesuits in mind – putting in doubt all missionary activity to heathens”. The remark of Calvin thus interpreted was a statement in his commentary on Rom. 2:12, “All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law”. Calvin’s comment was, “[The passage from Romans applies] to those who single out, through misplaced sympathy, from the judgement of God heathens who have been robbed of the light of the Gospels”.

Van Selms argues that Calvin indeed propagated missionary activity among heathens. They need the salvation expounded in the Gospels to save them from the judgement of God.

### **3.3 The succession of teaching as a form of authority<sup>12</sup>**

In this article Van Selms discusses the authority ascribed to the contents of specific teachings communicated by successive transmitters.

Traditions that receive attention are Classical Latin, Christianity, Judaism and Islam.

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10 Van Selms, A. 1949. Mededeling. Een lapsus van Calvijn? *NTT* 4:413-415.

11 Willem Frederik Dankbaar (1907-2001) Professor of Christianity and History of Christianity (Geschiedenis der leerstellingen van de Christelijke godsdienst, Geschiedenis van het Christendom) at the University of Groningen from 1953 to 1975.

12 Van Selms, A. 1951. Leersuccessie als gesagsvorm, *NTT* 5:257-276.

Latin sources quoted are Cicero (*Academica Prioria* VI par. 16),<sup>13</sup> Ovidius (*Tristia* IV, 10, lines 51–55),<sup>14</sup> Lucretius (I, 731) and Horatius (*Ars poetica* 400). Within Christian tradition he mentions Irenaeus (IV, 27, I)<sup>15</sup> and Papias referred to by Eusebius (*Historia ecclesiastica* III, 39, 4). Examples from Jewish tradition are excerpted from Mishna tractates *Pirque Abot* ('Sayings of the Fathers'; par. 1 and 2)<sup>16</sup> and *Jebamot* (16, 7) and (the Talmudic) *Berakot* (10b). Islamic tradition is highlighted through reports of what the prophet Muhammad had said or done. This information is abound in hadith literature, usually preceded by the enumeration of a chain (*isnad*) of transmitters.

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- 13 Cicero (*Academica Prioria* VI par. 16): “and at the first stage it [the system of the 5<sup>th</sup> Greek philosopher Zeno of Elea] was preserved by **Lacydes** only, but afterwards it was completed by **Carneades**, who is the fourth in line from **Arcesilas**, having attended the courses of **Hegesinus** who had attended Evander, the pupil of **Lacydes** as Lacydes had been the pupil of **Arcesilas**”. Cf. Yonge, CD. 1880. *The academic questions, treatise de finibus, and Tusculan disputations of M.T. Cicero*. London: George Bell.
- 14 Ovidius (*Tristia* IV, 10, lines 51–55): “and greedy fate granted **Tibullus** no time for my friendship, He came after you, **Gallus: Propertius** after him: **I was the fourth**, after them, in order of time”. Cf. Book TIV.X:41–92 Ovid’s Autobiography: Youth and Manhood [https://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Latin/OvidTristiaBkFour.php#anchor\\_Toc34217196](https://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Latin/OvidTristiaBkFour.php#anchor_Toc34217196) Accessed October 2023.
- 15 Irenaeus (IV, 27, I): “As I have heard from a certain **presbyter**, who had heard it from those who had seen the **apostles**, and from those who had been their **disciples**, the punishment [declared] in Scripture was sufficient for the ancients in regard to what they did without the Spirit’s guidance”. Cf. *Against Heresies* (Book IV, Chapter 27) [Sa]. <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103427.htm> Accessed October 2023.
- 16 *Pirque Abot*, par. 1: “**Moses** received the Torah from Sinai and gave it over to **Joshua**. Joshua gave it over to the **Elders**, the Elders to the **Prophets**, and the Prophets gave it over to the **Men of the Great Assembly**”. Cf. Chapter 1 Pirkei Avot. [Sa]. [https://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/516679/jewish/Chapter-1-Pirkei-Avot.htm](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/516679/jewish/Chapter-1-Pirkei-Avot.htm) Accessed October 2023.

Van Selms suggested four general features characteristic of the mentioning of a series of transmitters. First, absolute credibility is ascribed to the first transmitter. Second, the individual transmitters only repeat what they have received without any addition or change. Third, the transmitted tradition is believed to ultimately report revelatory contents. Fourth, a premium is set on oral tradition due to the personal communication of information.

However, oral tradition is eventually compiled in written collections. Biblical, including Christian traditions, were canonised. Jewish rabbinic traditions are reported in the Mishna, Talmud and Tosefta, while Islamic traditions are compiled in six extensive corpuses.<sup>17</sup>

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17 Sahih Bukhari, Muslim and al-Tirmidhi; and Sunan al-Sughra, Abu Dawood and Ibn Majah.



## 4. Kerk en Theologie

*Kerk en Theologie* (Church and Theology; 1950 -) is a Netherlands Protestant journal that publishes four editions annually. During the period 1951-1982, Van Selms published 16 articles (discussed in 14 portions, 4.1-4.14). A typical topic was endeavouring to contextualise NT expressions within the OT frame (cf. 4.6-4.11). An important article, seen from a political perspective, is 'The Dutch Reformed Church in Africa and the colour divide' (4.4). Here, Van Selms criticises racial segregation, particularly where it features in the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa.

### 4.1 Textual criticism and exegesis in the discussion of the Psalms<sup>18</sup>

Van Selms distances himself from the view that textual criticism and exegesis can be separated with the latter following the former. Establishing the correct ('juiste'; De Bondt)<sup>19</sup> or original (Berkhouwer)<sup>20</sup> upon which interpretation may be based is a difficult endeavour. In the case of the Psalms different stadia in textual production need to be established. Interim phases may be discerned with the help of ancient translations such as the Greek Septuagint. However, to derive the initial from the final version in the Psalter conjecture is often needed.

Regarding the Psalms, scientific methods that may be applied are metrical patterns and strophic arrangement. These two points of departure are utilised by Van Selms in his analysis of two almost identical psalms, 14 and 53, eventually deriving from them a single version deemed to be the text underlying the two present versions.

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18 Van Selms, A. 1951. Tekscritiek en exegese in de behandeling van der Psalmen, *Kerk en Theologie* 2:76-79.

19 De Bondt, A. 1950. *Tekst en eksegeze van het Oude Testament*. Kampen: Kok, 20-21.

20 Berkhouwer, GC. 1938. *Het probleem der Skriftekritiek*. Kampen: Kok.

For example, verse 4 of Ps. 14 states:

Those that devour my people [as] they devour bread  
do not call on YHWH

In similar vein verse 5 of Ps. 53 declares

Those that devour my people [as] they devour bread  
do not call on God

The two versions are integrated and amended by Van Selms, who suggested the following as the original format:

Those that devour my people  
do not call on YHWH

Headings of the Psalms usually reflect impressions based upon the final version, for example relating it to some stage in the history of King David. Van Selms opines that the Psalms in their eventual format approaches the time of the apocrypha and Talmud. It should also be borne in mind that the collection of the 150 psalms was with a view to the cult in Jerusalem.

In support of his theory pertaining to phases in the establishing of the text, Van Selms refers to article three of the Netherland Profession of Faith. For Van Selms, the inspired word is that which had been spoken and written by the original authors. Later editing of the text belongs to the domain of interpretation and translation. Study of the different phases exacts alternative methods. Textual criticism focuses on the space ('ruimte') between the present text and the (presumed) original; historical criticism on the space between the written word and the spoken word; and theological criticism on the space between the man's word and God's word. Underlying the allocation of domains is the presupposition that God inspired – man spoke (theological criticism), what man spoke was then written down (historical criticism), followed by a period of copying and editing until the production of the final text (textual criticism).

#### **4.2 Choose today whom you will serve<sup>21</sup>**

In no. 6 of the series 'Geskriften betreffende de orde der Ned.Herv.Kerk' (Writings regarding the ordinance of the Netherlands Reformed Church), published by the journal *Kerk en Theologie*, A.A. Van Ruler responds to the question, 'Heeft het nog zin van 'Volkskerk' te spreken?' ('Is there still any reason to speak of a 'People's Church'?)<sup>22</sup> by stating inter alia "The absolute predestination [De vrijmachtige uitverkiezing] of God tends to be reflected [wil sich weerspiegelen] and realised in the choice of man: 'Choose this day whom you will serve'".

In Van Selms' view the absolute predestination of God does not leave room for man to choose, but only to obey. This supposition also underlies the sacrament of baptism to young children (i.e., sign of God's grace to be responded to by a life of obedience).

The centre of Van Selms' argumentation is the interpretation of the Biblical quotation, "Choose this day whom you will serve". The citation is an adapted version of Josh. 24:15, "But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living".

Object of the verb 'choose' in the above quotation is 'gods of your forefathers' and 'gods of the Amorites'. Idols are thus referred to and not the God of Israel. Van Selms furthermore argues that 'choose' usually alludes to the act of selecting among alternatives. In this regard he mentions Judg. 5:18 ("When they [Israel] chose new gods ..."), 1 Sam. 17:40 ("Then he [David] chose five smooth stones from the stream ..."), Exodus 17:9 ("Moses said to Joshua, 'Choose some of our men and go out to fight the Amalekites.'"), Exodus 18:25

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21 Van Selms, A. 1958. Kiest u heden, wie gij dienen zult, *Kerk en Theologie* 9:210-218.

22 Van Ruler, AA. 1958. *Heeft het nog zin van 'volkskerk' te spreken?* Geskriften betreffende de orde der Ned Herv Kerk, no. 8. Wageningen: Veenman en Zonen.

(“He [Moses] chose capable men from all Israel ...”) and Deut. 23:16 (“Let him [the slave] live ... in whatever town he chooses”). In harmony with Van Selms’ train of thought is also the NT passage John 15:16, “You did not choose me, but I chose you ...”.

Seemingly contrary to the viewpoint that God chooses and man only obeys is Josh. 24:22, “Then Joshua said, ‘You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen to serve the Lord’”). According to Van Selms, the choice referred to in Josh. 24:22 does not mention any alternatives from whom the Israelites had made a selection. At that stage the Lord had already been the God of Israel for eighty years. The verb ‘to choose’ is thus used in Josh. 24:22 in an uncommon way (‘oneigenlijk gebruikt’).

In his response, Van Ruler (1958:218-223) quotes various authorities to support his view that human freedom to choose does not contradict divine predestination. For example, according to H.W. Hertzberg, Josh. 24 recounts the establishment of a religious alliance between the twelve tribes and a deliberate choice in favour of the God of Israel rather than idols of other nations. Josh. 24:15 does imply the act of choosing. J. de Groot emphasises that the Israelite religion is not simply a folk religion but a deliberate choice to serve God. Predestination is not merely a matter of God determining and man as a matter of consequence following. Man is called through the working of the Spirit to respond to God’s love. It is not enforced upon him.

#### **4.3 Theology of the philologist<sup>23</sup>**

In volume 10 of *Kerk en Theologie*, Van Selms wrote three articles elucidating the theme, theology of the philologist. The three articles had as subtitles, ‘Introduction’ and ‘[1] God as verb’ (1959:65-76), ‘[2] God as plural’ (1959:129-138) and ‘[3] God as numeral’ (1959:201-209).

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23 Van Selms, A. 1959. Theologie van de filoloog, *Kerk en Theologie* 10:65-76, 129-138, 201-209.

Introducing the first article, Van Selms (1959:65–66) explains that dealing with the theme as philologist implies dealing with theology from a linguistic point of view, without typical theological presuppositions regarding eternity, time or revelation. He then firstly focuses on the theme ‘God as verb’ (1959:66–76). 1 John 4:8 states “God is love” (*ho theos agape estin*). By means of an auxiliary verb (*estin*: ‘is’), God is equated with a *nomen actionis*, ‘loving’. The essence of God (according to 1 John 4:8) is to love. In a way subject and predicate of the verse coincide. God is not a noun but a verb. According to Van Selms, the Nicene characterisation of God as *mia ousia tres hypostaseis*<sup>24</sup> has been wrongly translated in the West as *una substantia tres personae*.<sup>25</sup> Support for his view of characterising God as verb is found in the Vulgate’s rendering of John 1:1, *et Deus erat verbum*. An old French translation follows suit by rendering *logos* of John 1:1 as *verbe*<sup>26</sup> rather than *parole* or *mot*. The Aramaic equivalent of *logos* would be *mēmar*,<sup>27</sup> derived from *amar* which in turn is etymologically related to the Arabic verb *amara* (he ordered).<sup>28</sup>

In the second part of the first article Van Selms (1959:71f) discusses the verbal affinities of the four consonant

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- 24 *mia ousia tres hypostaseis*: Formulation of the doctrine of the Divine Trinity by the Cappadocian fathers, 381 CE, which can be rendered in English as ‘One being three substances / actual existences / realities’ (Liddell & Scott, revised edition, 1940 [1843], *hypostasis* B III, 2). Preferred by Van Selms, possibly due to the affinity of noun *hypostasis* to the verb, *huph-histēmi* (<*hupo-histēmi*) ‘give substance to, cause to exist’. (Liddell & Scott, revised edition, 1940, *huph-histēmi* 4)
- 25 *una substantia tres personae*: Latin rendering of the Greek *mia ousia tres hypostaseis*, usually associated with Tertullian (c. 155 AD – c. 220 AD), “one [divine] substance [in] three persons”.
- 26 The French word ‘verbe’ has both the connotations of ‘verb’ (in grammatical contexts) and ‘word’.
- 27 The Aramaic expression ‘*mēmar*’ (‘The Word’) is occasionally used, e.g., Gen. 3:10, in Targums (Aramaic interpretative renderings of the Bible) when referring to the Divine.
- 28 The Arabic equivalent ‘*amara*’ (‘he said’; cf. Qur’an 7:29) is used by Van Selms to broaden the Semitic background and possible etymology of the Greek word ‘*logos*’.

appellation YHWH (usually rendered as ‘the Lord’). The last three consonants, HWH, remind of the verb ‘to be’ (*hāwāh* > *hāyāh*) in Hebrew. Compare Exodus 3:14 where God introduces himself to Moses by stating, “I am what I am” (*ehyeh ašer ehyeh*), which can also be rendered as “I become what I become”.

Argumentation in the preceding two paragraphs leads Van Selms to conclude that God should be spoken of not as substantive, but as action.

In the second article Van Selms (1959:129-138) pays attention to the theme ‘God as plural’. The word (*’ēlōhīm*) by means of which God is usually referred to in the OT is grammatically plural, but used with a singular verb when it is the subject of a clause. Van Selms opines that the plural indicates that the concept God comprises all that is ascribed to individual heathen gods. Use of the plural is also a way of showing respect.

The plural form is furthermore used in cases of self-reference by the Deity to himself, e.g., Genesis 1:26 (“Let us make man in our image”).

In the NT the plural as way of reference is particularly associated with statements relating to the Trinity concept. The latter conviction cannot directly be derived from the word *’ēlōhīm* (God), although it is significant that in the Near East (e.g., Egypt) the plural always implies three or more [people or objects].

The third article (Van Selms, 1959:201-209) has as theme ‘God as numeral’. A significant example is Deut. 6:4 which Van Selms renders as “Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord is one”. There are several NT parallels e.g., Mark 12:29, James 2:19 and 1 Cor. 8:4-6. OT parallels are less. Van Selms cites only Zech. 14:9. The statement, ‘The Lord is one’, emphasises that God has no family relationships. However, humans may also be typified as ‘one’ (*’eḥād*), e.g., Abraham in Isa. 51:2, “When I [God] called him [Abraham] he was but one, and I blessed him and made him many”.

#### **4.4 The Dutch Reformed Church in Africa and the colour divide<sup>29</sup>**

An important article of Van Selms (1961:151-165) commented on the racial policy extant in the Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika (Dutch Reformed Church in Africa). The article focused on Article 3 of the Church Law of the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa which foresees the establishment of churches for different nations (i.e., racial groups), but simultaneously limits membership of the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa to whites only. Being a lecturer for one period a week at the Theological Faculty of the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa, Van Selms felt obliged to offer his response in writing.

Article 3 was phrased to make official provision, within the framework of Church policy, for missionary activity referred to as evangelisation. Van Selms admits that he was involved in formulating the article, but emphasises that it was with a view to further missionary activity by the Church. Separate churches, in his view, were envisaged in a way analogous to the Netherland example which made provision for different churches for Netherlands and French speaking congregations on a voluntary basis.

Segregation within churches was not limited to the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa but also pertained to other Afrikaans churches, leading to criticism covertly or overtly by Prof Ben Marais and B.B. Keet respectively. Within the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa, a prominent opponent of the so-called Article 3 was Prof A.S. Geysers. In his view the article lacked any NT support. Together with other scholars such as Van Selms, he stressed his point at a meeting of pastors. The meeting was, however, persuaded by other speakers to endorse Article 3. Arguments pro and contra the article is published in *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 16 (3-4).

General resistance to the article and church apartheid gave rise to ecumenical study groups, and eventually to

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29 Van Selms, A. 1961. De Nederduits Hervormde Kerk van Afrika en de Kleurscheidslin, *Kerk en Theologie* 12:151-165.

the publication of the book *Vertraagde Aksie* and its English translation *Delayed Action*. The books led to lively debate, some of which was directly aimed at Van Selms, for example an open letter by Reverend C.L. van den Berg.

The world took notice of the situation in South Africa and at the so-called Cottesloe conference members of the World Council of Churches and delegates of Afrikaans churches exchanged views. The final resolutions which expressed concern about the practising of segregation in churches were followed by a counter declaration by the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa in which it proclaimed its support for apartheid as the only viable solution for the racial problems of South Africa. At a general church meeting the said declaration was accepted, noting the opposition of Prof Geysers. The meeting appointed a commission of exegetes to investigate whether Article 3 had any NT foundation. The commission reported that unity of the church was to be found in Christ. Integrated church communities were not necessary.

Van Selms opposed the findings, referring to Article 27 of the Netherlands Confession of Faith. His argumentations and those of Geysers were, however, not found acceptable by the general church meeting. After an intensive debate the church meeting once again endorsed the present church policy. It also made adherence to the existing policy of the Church compulsory. Van Selms' opposition was however noted. The latter emphasised that he would be guided by Scripture and Confession in future.

The article is concluded by Van Selms distancing himself from the concept of a spiritual and invisible church unity.

#### **4.5 Reflections in Korazin<sup>30</sup>**

In a 1963 publication in *Kerk en Theologie* (14:157-163), Van Selms shares 'Reflections in Korazin' ('Gedachten in Chorazin') with the journal's readers. He firstly describes his

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30 Van Selms, A. 1963. Gedachten in Chorazin, *Kerk en Theologie* 14:157-163.



journey to this site close to Capernaum, with a view upon the Sea of Galilea. Then he characterises the landscape, followed by an overview of ancient sources, e.g., the Babylonian Talmud<sup>31</sup> and Jerome,<sup>32</sup> that refer to Korazin. The OT does not mention Korazin, but the NT cites Jesus' words in Matt. 11:21-22:

Woe to you Korazin! Woe to you Bethsaida! If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I tell you, it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgement than for you.

At the time of Van Selms' visit the site was desolate, but in early post-NT times there were flourishing Jewish communities. The statement of doom expressed by Jesus was, in Van Selms' view, eschatological, to be fulfilled at the end of time. However, in the synagogue of Korazin, built in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, he reflects on Jesus' words, trying to ascertain the mood in which they were expressed. Eventually he comes to the conclusion that the sayings were the uttering of a disappointed preacher, underlying the human nature of Jesus usually characterised only as Son of God.

#### **4.6 Authority to hold the Key, an exegesis of Matthew 16:19<sup>33</sup>**

The next article of Van Selms (1970) in the journal *Kerk en Theologie* (70:247-260) is titled 'Authority to hold the

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31 Babylonian Talmud: *Menachot* 85a refers to "grain grown in Kerazayim and Kefar Aḥim". Cf *William Davidson* [digital] *Talmud*. William Davidson Foundation.

32 Jerome: In his commentary on Matt. 11:21-22 Jerome refers to Corozaim, locating it two miles from Capernaum. Cf. *Catena Aurea by Saint Thomas Aquinas: Commentary on the four gospels collected out of the works of the fathers*, volume 1, 1874. Oxford: John Henry Parker.

33 Van Selms, A. 1970. Sleutelmacht, een exegese van Matt. 16:19, *Kerk en Theologie* 21:247-260.

key ('Sleutelmacht'), an exegesis of Matt. 16:19'. The said verse states:

I will give you [Peter] the keys of the kingdom of heaven;  
whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven;  
whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

Van Selms opines that Matt. 16:19 should be interpreted in terms of Isa. 22:15-25. Specifically, Isa. 22:22 states:

I [God] will place on his [Eliakim's] shoulder the key to the house of David; what he opens no-one can shut, and what he shuts no-one can open.

Previously Shebna was appointed 'over the house', i.e., in charge of the palace (Isa. 22:15), but he was replaced by Eliakim.

Eliakim taking over from Shebna, is paralleled in the Matthew context by Peter resuming responsibilities that Judas previously exercised.

A kernel expression as regards authority to hold the key is 'over the house'. These words are found on an inscription of a grave which may have been that of Shebna.

Holding the key leads to the question: which space does it give access to?. In the case of Shebna, Van Selms is convinced that it was the key of the store-room. Attention is also drawn to the Joseph story: Potiphar (Genesis 39:4) put him in charge of (literally 'over') his house, and the Pharaoh in turn made him vice-ruler over the Egyptian kingdom (Genesis 45:26). Furthermore, during the reign of Solomon, Ahishar was appointed "over the palace" (1 Kings 4:6) and Azariah over the district officers (1 Kings 3:5). When Azariah [king of Israel] was afflicted with leprosy, his son Jotham was appointed "over the palace" (2 Kings 15:5).

Regarding the Shebna parallel, his successor Eliakim was appointed over the palace (2 Kings 18:18, cf. Isa. 36:3), the same position Shebna held, also referred to as steward or caretaker

(*sōkēn*; Isa. 22:15). The latter term is furthermore mentioned in the Amarna letters, a Phoenician and Aramaic inscription.

In Matt. 16:19, the future function confirmed upon Peter is (in the light of the afore-mentioned discussion) interpreted by Van Selms as being responsible for the distribution of heavenly treasures. That would include preaching and the administering of sacraments. While the responsibility of Peter, it is also of the other disciples of Jesus. Paul even mentions Apollos (1 Cor. 4:6) in this regard. Sharing heavenly treasures, excludes in Van Selms view, the right of excommunication typically associated with Matt. 16:19.

#### **4.7 A case of nearby expectation without and with ‘congregational theology’<sup>34</sup>**

The procedure of contextualising a NT passage within the OT frame is demonstrated by Van Selms (1975) in an article in *Kerk en Theologie* 26:43-50. It is titled ‘A case of nearby expectation without and with ‘congregational theology’ (Een geval van Nah-erwartung zonder en met ‘gemeentetheologie’).

A scrutiny is made of Matt. 26:29 and parallel passages in the NT and related OT contexts. Matt. 26:29 states:

I tell you; I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink [it] *kainon* with you in my Father’s kingdom.

Question is whether the Greek expression *kainon* (new) should be interpreted as adverb (I drink [it] newly) or as substantive (I drink it [as] new [wine]). Proceeding from the latter expression, Lev. 25:22 needs to be borne in mind:

While you plant during the eighth year, you will eat from the old (*yāšān*) crop and will continue to eat old [crop] until the harvest of the ninth year comes.

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34 Van Selms, A. 1975. Een geval van Nah-erwartung zonder en met ‘gemeentetheologie’, *Kerk en Theologie* 26:43-50.

Context of Leviticus is the Sabbath year. Further elucidation is provided by Lev. 26:10:

You will still be eating last year's harvest (*yāšān nōšān*: i.e., [the] old that has become old) when you will have to move it out to make room for the new (*ḥādāš*).

According to Van Selms, 'new [wine]' referred to in Matt. 26:29 may have bearing on the new harvest that would be celebrated at the coming Feast of the Tabernacles (cf. subdivision 4.11). Wine drunk at Passover would be classified as old wine. Feast of the Tabernacles was associated with Messianic expectations (John 7:2-7).

In Luke 22:18, words related to that of Matthew 26:29 are expressed:

For I tell you I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.

Context of Luke is the Passover. No mention is made of any new wine, and Luke seemingly has the next Passover in mind. Feast of the Tabernacles precedes Passover. The realisation of the event of participating in the drinking of wine is thus projected as close by Matthew and further away by Luke. The tradition as reported by Luke may perhaps be ascribed to congregational theology.

#### **4.8 'Tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.' An Old Testament exegesis of Luke 12:13<sup>35</sup>**

In an article published in *Kerk en Theologie* 27:18-23, Van Selms (1976) suggests an OT contextualisation in order to understand Luke 12:13 and its relationship to the subsequent Parable of the Rich Fool (Luke 12:16-21).

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35 Van Selms, A. 1976c. 'Zeg tot mijn broeder, dat hij de erfenis met mij dele. Een Oudtestamentische exegese van Luc. 12:13', *Kerk en Theologie* 27:18-23.

Luke 12:13, according to the rendering of *NIV* (1984), states:

Someone in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide (*merisasthai*) the inheritance with me.”

In response Jesus replied (Luke 12:14), “Man, who appointed me a judge (*kritēn*) or an arbiter (*meristēn*) between you?”

Comparable with Luke 12:14 is the characterisation of Moses (in a derogatory way) in Exodus 2:14 (cf. Acts 7:27) when he attempted to mediate a fight between two Hebrew men.

Commentaries, both English and German, consulted by Van Selms do not convincingly explain the relationship of Luke 12:13 and 14-21.

In turn, Van Selms regards Luke 12:13 as reflecting a situation of an undivided inheritance with two brothers staying together.

The Hebrew term for staying together is *yāšab yaḥdāw*, used a number of times in the OT. Ps. 133:1, for example, recommends brothers living together:

How good and pleasant it is  
when brothers live together in unity (*yāḥad > yaḥad*).

According to Van Selms, the reference is to two brothers, the younger and elder, residing in one house.

Deut. 25:5 uses the term in context of the levirate marriage:

If brothers live together (*yaḥdāw*) and one of them dies without a son, his widow must not marry outside the family. Her husband’s brother shall take her and marry her and fulfil the duty of a brother-in-law to her. The first son she bears shall carry on the name of the dead brother so that his name will not be blotted out from Israel.

In Van Selms' view the levirate marriage is limited to a situation of two brothers living together sharing an undivided inheritance.

Genesis 13:5-6 refers to the sojourn on Abraham and Lot together:

Now Lot, who was moving about with Abraham, also had flocks and herds and tents. But the land could not support them while they stayed together (*yaḥdāw*), for their possessions were so great that they were not able to stay together (*yaḥdāw*).

Although Lot was Abraham's nephew (son of his brother, Genesis 12:5), Abraham referred to their relationship as equal to that of brothers (Genesis 13:8). What they shared was the same pastures.

Neh. 3:23 states:

Beyond them [i.e., repairs made by others], Benjamin and Hasshub made repairs in front of their house (*bētām*); and next to them.

Conclusion drawn by Van Selms is that they shared, as brothers, the same residence.

Jer. 31:24 gives as promise to the exiles when they would return to their country:

People will live together in Judah and all its towns-farmers and those who move about with their flocks.

This statement is interpreted by Van Selms as providing the assurance that in future Jerusalem would be the mutual possession of those who dwell in cities and in the country side.

Applied to Luke 12:13-15, Van Selms opines that the situation underlying the request and the response of Jesus is that of a shared inheritance with the younger brother (who has to accept the authority of the elder brother) seeking his

share of what can be divided of the inheritance in order to gain independence and self-determination.

#### 4.9 'Robbery' in Philippians 2:6<sup>36</sup>

Announced by means of the theme, 'Robbery' in Phil. 2:6, Van Selms (27:199-204) once again contextualises the NT within the OT framework. Phil. 2:6 (according to the rendering of NIV 1984) states:

[Christ] Who, being in the very nature of God,  
did not consider equality with God  
something to be grasped (*harpagmon*)

Van Selms shares the opinion that Phil. 2:6 is an old Christian hymn. He highlights repetitive features in Phil. 2:6-11 and suggests that each part was sung by half of the choir in turn. Van Selms furthermore decides that Phil. 2:6 is the Greek version of an original Hebrew song as was typically sung in the synagogue. Thus, he comes to the conclusion that the Greek term *harpagmon* is best rendered by the Hebrew term *šālāl* which he regards as 'spoils' that were legitimately procured (cf. Num. 31:11). The term *šālāl* may also [figuratively] refer to something already in a person's possession. In Jer. 21:9, 38:2, 39:18 and 45:5 the prophet is promised his life (*nefeš*) as prey (*šālāl*), meaning that he would remain living. Furthermore, arguing that obtaining spoils provides an occasion for joy, Van Selms suggests paraphrasing Phil. 2:6 as

[Christ] Who, being in the very nature of God,  
did not seek his joy (*harpagmon* > *šālāl*) in equality  
with God.

In support of his view reference is made to the alternative rendering proposed by the New English Bible: "He did not prize [i.e., value highly] his equality with God".

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36 Van Selms, A. 1976b. 'Roof' in Phillipenzen 2:6, *Kerk en Theologie* 27:199-204.

#### 4.10 The inner room<sup>37</sup>

An article in *Kerk en Theologie* 27:283-289 by Van Selms (1976) is titled 'The inner room'. It provides his suggested interpretation of the concept *heder bē-heder* which appears four times in the OT, namely in 1 Kings 20:30, 1 Kings 22:25, 2 Chron. 18:24 and 2 Kings 9:2. The respective passages may be rendered according to Van Selms as follows:

1 Kings 20:30

The rest of them (i.e., the army of Aram) escaped to the city of Aphek where the wall collapsed on twenty-seven thousand of them. And Ben-Hadad fled. And he came into the city [namely into a] *heder bē-heder*.

1 Kings 22:25 and 2 Chron. 18:24

Michaiah replied [to Zedekiah], "You will find out [the truth of my prophecy of doom] the day you will go *heder bē-heder* to hide yourself."

2 Kings 9:2

[When you get there, look for Jehu son of Jehoshaphat, the son of Nimshi.] Go to him, get him away from his [armed] companions and take him *heder bē-heder* (in order to anoint him as new king of Israel).

In each of the above instances, Van Selms renders *heder bē-heder* as inner room. In doing so he quotes and discusses other modern and ancient translations (e.g., the LXX and Vulgate). He also refers to an article of his in *Bibliotheca Orientalis* [1975:5-8] dealing with an Ammonite inscription where reference is made to an inner door (*dlt b-dlt*).

Inner room in Van Selms' view is a room that can only be reached from the inside of the house. In terms of this

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37 Van Selms, A. 1976a. De Binnekamer, *Kerk en Theologie* 27:283-289.



definition some passages in the NT may also allude to such a room. For example

Luke 12:3: What you have whispered in the ear in the inner rooms [*en tois tamieiois*] will be proclaimed from the roofs.

Matt. 24:26: If anyone tells you ... “Here he [the coming Christ] is in the inner rooms [*en tois tamieiois*] (which may also refer to an inner room)”, do not believe it.

Finally, Van Selms suggests that the concept of an inner room may also apply to the inner sanctuary (*dēbīr*) of the Jerusalem temple (1 Kings 6:24), a place of darkness (1 Kings 8:12-3).

#### **4.11 The heading of the Gospel according to Mark<sup>38</sup>**

Mark 1:1 states:

The beginning (*arkhē*) of the Gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

This verse is regarded by Van Selms (1978:13-18) as heading of the Gospel as whole. The first word of Mark 1:1 reminds of a similar expression in Genesis 1:1, *b<sup>er</sup>rēšīt* (in the beginning) also featuring in Jeremiah 26:1, 28:1 and 49:34. In the Jeremiah context the concept is used to indicate the beginning of the reign of a king. Comparable is the Akkadian equivalent *reš šarruti* and Genesis 10:10 *rešīt mamlakto* (the beginning of his kingship).

New Year according to Jewish tradition commenced at the beginning of autumn, in the month Tisri. The beginning of the year commemorates the kingship of YHWH (cf. Ps. 47, 93 and 96). Official reign of a new king also started at the Feast of the Tabernacles in the month Tisri.

Van Selms is convinced (cf. *Kerk en Theologie* 26, 1975:43-50) that Mark expected the Parousia of Jesus at the nearest Feast of Tabernacles (cf. subdivision 4.7). The latter

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38 Van Selms, A. 1978. Het opschrift van het Evangelie naar Marcus, *Kerk en Teologie* 29:13-18.

event was regarded as the consummation or climax of his coming (cf. Rev. 12:5). Van Selms opines that Mark portrays Jesus' work on earth as spanning a period of one year, beginning in May or June when the corn ripened (cf. Mark 2:3).

Climax of Jesus' sojourn in the view of Luke and Matthew, however, is the command of Jesus to do missionary work, showing his authority. Linking of death and second coming is also evident in the words spoken by Christ at the institution of the Holy Communion, quoted in 1 Cor. 11:26:

... whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup you  
proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

#### 4.12 Adunata in the Gospels, with consolation for exegetes<sup>39</sup>

Van Selms (1979:9-18) discusses the Latin concept *adunata* (plural of *adunaton*) and furnishes five types of examples from the Gospels that can thus be categorised. In his view, the concept '*adunaton*' refers to phenomena that are both impossible and improbable. His suggested examples are quoted below, adding an exclamation mark to a feature of which the possibility and probability are doubted by Van Selms.

##### 1. *Adunata* expressed in the most overt way

- **Matt. 5:14:** You are the salt of the earth. But if salt loses its saltiness [!], how can it be made salty again?
- **Matt. 5:18:** I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear (*parelthē*) [!], not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished (*genētai*).
- **Matt. 6:3:** But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know [!] what your right hand is doing.
- **Matt. 7:3-5:** Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank [!] in your own eye.

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39 Van Selms, A. 1979. Adunata in de Evangeliën; met troost voor exegeten, *Kerk en Theologie* 30:9-18.

- **Matt. 17:20:** If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, “Move [!] from here to there” and it will move.
- **Matt. 19:24:** Again I tell you; it is easier for a camel [!] to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.
- **Matt. 23:24:** You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel [!].
- **Luke 19:40:** “I tell you”, he replied, “if they keep quiet, the stones [!] will cry out.”

## 2. *Adunaton* in question format

- **Matt. 6:27:** Who of you by worrying can add a single hour (cubit) to your life [!]?
- **Matt. 7:16:** Do people pick grapes [!] from thorn bushes?
- **Mark 4:21:** Do you bring in a lamp [!] to put it under a bowl or a bed?
- **Luke 6:39:** Can a blind man [!] lead a blind man?

## 3. *Adunaton* as exaggeration

- **Matt. 5:29:** If your right eye [!] causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away.
- **Matt. 5:30:** And if your right hand [!] causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away.
- **Matt. 13:8:** Still other seed fell on good soil where it produced a crop—a hundred [!], sixty [!] or thirty [!] times what was sown.
- **Matt. 13:32:** Though it [a mustard seed] is the smallest of all your seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree [!], so that the birds of the air come and perch in its branches.
- **John 21:25:** Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world [!] would not have room for the books that would be written. Cf. the Qur’anic verse 31:27: If all the trees on earth were pens and all the seas, with seven

more seas besides, [were ink,] still God's words would not run out.

#### 4. *Adunata as improbable events*

- **Matt. 13:25:** But while everybody was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away.
- **Matt. 15:14:** If a blind man leads a blind man, both will fall into a pit.
- **Matt. 20:13:** I want to give the man who was hired last the same as I gave you [who worked the whole day].
- **Matt. 21:39:** So they [the tenants] took him [the son of the landowner] and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.
- **Matt. 22:6:** The rest [of those invited to the wedding] seized his servants, ill-treated them and killed them.
- **Luke 16:8:** The master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly [debt of a thousand bushel reduced to eight hundred].

#### 5. *Adunata in comparisons*

- **Matt. 6:26:** Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns.
- **Matt. 6:28:** See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labour or spin.
- **Matt. 7:6:** Do not throw your pearls to pigs.

#### 4.13 **Why do we not celebrate the Feast of the Tabernacles?**<sup>40</sup>

Jewish festivals such as Passover and Pentecost are celebrated by the Christian church, giving them a new context. However, the Feast of the Tabernacles with the accompanying Day of Atonement and the New Year festival have not become part of the Christian religious calendar.

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40 Van Selms, A. 1981. Waaron vieren wij geen Loofhuttefeest? *Kerk en Theologie* 32:299.

The NT nevertheless bears testimony to the commemoration of the Feast of the Tabernacles, evident within the context alluded to in John 7:1-10:21. In this portion an account is given of Jesus associating himself with the living water (7:38), light of the world (8:12) and good shepherd (10:1-18); and his performing the miracle of the healing of the man born blind (9:1-12). Acts 27:9 refers to fasting on the Day of Atonement.

Traditionally, the Feast of the Tabernacles was celebrated in autumn when the first rains of the year started falling. Furthermore, it was kept (by staying in a booth for seven days) as a reminder of God “bringing them [the Israelites] out of Egypt” (Lev. 23:43).

The response of the crowd when Jesus entered Jerusalem is reminiscent of the rituals during the Feast of the Tabernacles. People cut branches from the trees (Matt. 21:8), palm branches (John 12:13) and spread them (Mark 11:8). According to Van Selms, the setting of the entry at an earlier date (compared to the other Gospels) by John, links its occurrence to the raising of Lazarus from death (John 11:38-44), creating the impression of an anticipation of an epiphany, i.e., the eschatological era. The latter is pictured in Revelations by means of vocabulary reminding of the Feast of the Tabernacles. For example, 21:3, “Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them” and 21:6, “I [i.e., God] will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life”.

For the Christian community the celebration of the Feast of the Tabernacles is a future eschatological event which is still foreseen, and not yet celebrated.

#### 4.14 The table and two misconceptions regarding the table<sup>41</sup>

In this article Van Selms discusses references to the concept table in Middle Eastern literature, particularly the OT. He also shows how the incorrect translation of the word within a specific context causes statements to become logically unintelligible.

Attention is drawn to the word for table in Sumerian (*ban-šūr*), Akkadian (*paššūrum*), Latin (*tabula* and *mensa*), Greek (*diskos*) and Hebrew (šulḥān).

Various conceptualisations of a table that can be derived from a study of relevant literature are discussed. Writing desks in the form of a trapezium (with the longest side on top) were used in Qumran. Ezek. 40:39-43 mentions tables of stone on which meat intended for sacrifice was placed. Bread of Presence (*leḥem panīm*, cf. Exodus 25:30), destined for the temple, was placed on a table manufactured from wood overlain with gold (Exodus 25:24) or silver (1 Chron. 28:16). Tables were also owned by people, particularly kings (1 Sam. 20:24) or governors (Neh. 9:4). However, common people mostly used the skin of a sheep or goat as table as can be derived from 2 Kings 4:10 (table for Elisha), Ps. 128:3 (family around table) and Ps. 23:5 (table in presence of enemies).

Regarding the NT, reference is made to the vision of a large sheet seen by Peter (Acts 10:11).

Finally, Van Selms refers to two passages that are usually, in his view, wrongly translated or understood. In the OT, Ps. 69:23, the speaker asks, “May the table set before them become a snair”, and in a poem by Vergilius Aeneis 3:257, the consuming of tables (*absumere mensas*) is mentioned by the poet. In both cases the ‘table’ should be conceptualised as the skin of a sheep or goat (cf. subdivision 8.1).

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41 Van Selms, A. 1982. De tafel en twee stijbloempies van de tafel, *Kerk en Theologie* 33:301-308.

## 5. Hervormde Teologiese Studies

*Hervormde Teologiese Studies*, presently known as *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies*, is a journal of which four editions appear per year, collected in volumes dating from 1943 till present.

Twenty-two articles of Van Selms were selected, ranging from 1945 to 1961. Excepting two (cf. 5.4 and 5.5), all of them relate to the OT.

The following writings were omitted from the present study:

- Ten book reviews (1948-1957)
- A critical analysis of the translation of the Gospel of Mark in the official Afrikaans version of the Bible (1950)
- A personal debate between Van Selms and the editor of *HTS*, Joh Dreyer, about the contents and views expressed in the controversial journal, *Pro Veritate* (*HTS*, June 1963:7).

### 5.1 Place of the Old Testament in the preaching<sup>42</sup>

In an article, first published in *Nieuwe Theologiese Studien*, 21, 2 (1938), Van Selms discusses the function of the OT within Christian preaching. He commences by stating that the OT is the Holy Scripture that guided the Lord Jesus from birth until his death on the cross at Golgotha. According to Luke 23:46 (cf. Ps. 31:5) his last words were, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit”. The Jews, on the other hand, used the OT as basis in accusing Jesus before Pilate, stating, “We have a law, and according to that law he must die, because he claimed to be the Son of God” (John 19:7, cf. Lev. 24:16).

Three problematic issues regarding the Christian use of the OT are mentioned. The first is whether the Church has the right to use the OT within Christian preaching. The second is

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42 Van Selms, A. 1945. De Plaats van het Oude Testament in die verkondiging, *HTS* 2-3:101-115. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v2i3.3370>

whether the Church is not obliged to accept the whole OT with its rites and traditions. Finally, the third is whether the Church may reject parts of the OT.

Van Selms then discusses the duty ('taak') of Church when using the OT. The primary obligation of Christians is to proclaim salvation through Jesus Christ. In Christ the OT is fulfilled. Only through Christ's words and deeds does the OT obtain its full sense. Real exegesis is where the preacher addresses the congregation. Using both OT and NT, the preacher has to call upon them to confess their sins. Secondly, the congregation must be reminded of the forgiveness of sins due to the salvation of Christ. Exact use of the OT depends on the occasion and the guidance of the Spirit of God (cf. 2.1). Relating Christ to the OT has a charismatic character, but is nevertheless a formal duty of the preacher. However, this does not exclude the use of sources that shed light on the text and context of the OT.

## **5.2 Love for the fatherland in Old-Israel<sup>43</sup>**

The OT does not have a word to express the concepts 'love for the fatherland' or 'patriotism'. However, these sentiments are illustrated in some examples such as 1 Kings 11:21 where Hadad of Edom said to his brother-in-law, the pharaoh of Egypt, "Let me go that I may return to my own country". Van Selms regards it as remarkable that Hadad refers to his country and not to his people. Within Israelite context focus was more often on people rather than country.

A popular word is 'house of ...' (e.g., Israel, Judah, Levi). The clan is conceptualised as a family with a father as ancestor. People married within their own tribe, e.g., Jacob with Rachel (Gen. 29). God is also portrayed as presenting Himself to Isaac as the God of your father Abraham (Gen. 26:23). For nomads, family relations were all that mattered. Therefore, sexual morality was of great importance (cf. Lev. 18 and 20).

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43 Van Selms, A. 1946. *Vaderlandsliefde in Oud-Israel*, HTS 3-4:166-179. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v3i3/4.3556>



However, tribes had areas that they regarded as their own, with wells that they could use. For example, in Num. 21:17-18, people led by Moses sang about the well the nobles had sunk. Wells were important, but it was, moreover, people (nobles in Num. 21) that mattered. In David's lament for Saul and Jonathan (2 Sam. 1:19-27), he expresses his sorrow about the death of father and son, and demonstrates no concern about the loss of territory.

As Israel became more settled in their country, property rights became more important. Naboth refused to surrender his property to King Ahab, saying "The Lord forbid that I should give up the inheritance of my fathers" (1 Kings 21:3). Nature was also appreciated as a gift of God (e.g., Ps. 65) and not regarded as worth sacrificing one's life for (as alluded to in South Africa's national anthem).

During the course of time, cities were allocated to different tribes, e.g., Caleb was given Hebron by Joshua (Josh. 14:13). More than one clan also inhabited the same city (e.g., Neh. 11:1-2).

With the multiplication of cities and the establishment of the monarchy, genealogy became less important and the king took the place of the ancestor.

Loyalty to one's own city was particularly based on religious sentiment, e.g., Jerusalem and Mount Zion (Ps. 48). During the time of exile people longed to return to their country. They had no enthusiasm to sing the songs of Zion in a foreign country (Ps. 137). Israel was regarded as having received Divine favour because of the revelation of God's word. Within an eschatological scenario, other people were visualised as becoming part of Israel's religious establishment (cf. Isa. 56:3, 6-8).

Remnants of genealogical attitude, however, remained even in NT times, cf. Paul's love for the people of Israel, his brothers and fellow men (Rom. 9).

### 5.3 The number-step- proverb [number parallelism]: A Semitic figure of speech<sup>44</sup>

Van Selms discusses number parallelism as figure of speech by selecting examples from Ugarit; the OT; Proverbs of Jesus, son of Sirach; Proverbs of Achiqar; Babylonian and even from the Greek Odyssey.

Van Selms defines number parallelism as two parallel lines respectively containing a lower and higher number.

1. An example from Ugarit is taken from text I D, 42-44 (Charles Virolleaud's classification):

Seven years Ba'al had lack of food [yʃrk]  
eight he who rides on the clouds [rkb 'rpt]

2. Regarding the OT, the oldest examples are (according to Van Selms) those in Amos 1 and 2. This figure of speech is used seven times with reference to foreign nations and once (the eighth) pertaining to Israel, cf. Amos 1:9

For three sins of Tyre,  
even for four, I will not turn back my wrath.

The second line with the increased number usually contains an explicative addition which Van Selms typifies as a 'Wortfolgprinzip'. Mic. 5:4-5 states:

When the Assyrian invades our land  
and marches through our fortresses,  
we will raise against him seven shephards,  
even eight leaders of men.  
They will rule the land of Assyria with the sword,  
and the land of Nimrod with drawn sword.

Number parallelism is typical of wisdom literature, e.g., Prov. 6:16:

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44 Van Selms, A. 1947a. Die getalle-trap-spreuk: 'n Semitiese stylfiguur, *HTS* 4:1-20. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v4i1.3528>

There are six things the Lord hates,  
seven that are detestable for him.

In some cases, the rendering of the Masoretic text (MT) and that of the Greek Septuagint text (LXX) differ. Job 5:19, MT, states:

From six calamities he will rescue you,  
and in seven [*ū-bě-šeba'*] no harm will befall you.

The equivalent LXX version is:

Six times he shall deliver you out of distress;  
and in the seventh [*en de tō hebdomō*] harm shall not touch you.

In the Greek version, the cardinal number 'seven' (MT) is replaced by an ordinal 'seventh', which according to Harold L. Ginsburg (ZAW 1936) is the basic way of expressing the second number within number parallelism.

3. Van Selms draws attention to examples of number parallelism in the proverbs of Jesus ben Sirach (25:7). He uses the Greek (LXX) version, comparing and emending it with the partially available Hebrew text, e.g., 25:7:

I could think of nine [experiences] I would call blessed,  
and a tenth my tongue proclaims.

4. An example is provided from the Aramaic proverbs of Achiqar:

Two things are outstanding  
and with three Samas is pleased.

5. Some Babylonian examples are provided, e.g., from the *Enuma eliš* epic (Ttablet 6 lines 60–62):

For one year they prepared its bricks  
and at the beginning of the second they made high the top  
of Esagila.

Van Selms speculates on the origin of the number parallelism as figure of speech. He opines that it was originally used as a formula to state an oath, and in a similar vein to express a threat (cf. Amos and Micha) or a warning. He also considers the possibility that number parallelism demonstrated in the Greek *Odyssey* (circa 850 BC) was via Phoenician influence, e.g., V 278–280

Seventeen days he sailed across the sea,  
and on the eighteenth day the shadow-rich mountains of  
the land of Faike appeared.

#### 5.4 Rabbula of Edessa, a Syrian parallel of Augustine<sup>45</sup>

Van Selms discusses Rabbula (350–435 CE), bishop of Edessa, within six subdivisions: Syrian literature in general, the early life of Rabbula, his conversion to Christianity, the period of his ascetic existence, his term as bishop of Edessa (411–435 CE) and finally his literary heritage. In almost every section cursory reference is made to Augustine.

Regarding the Syrian literature, Van Selms refers to the importance of the Syrian Bible translations, the Syrian contribution to Church and doctrinal history and literary history (fables and legends). However, according to him, there is commonly a lack of interest in Syrian literature, because it is generally regarded as mediocre and monotonous. There are nevertheless some interesting bibliographies such as that of Rabbula written by an unknown author.<sup>46</sup>

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45 Van Selms, A. 1947b. Rabbula van Edessa, 'n Siriese parallel van Augustinus, *HTS* 4:95–118. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v4i2/3.3536>

46 English translation of life of Rabbula by Overbeck, JJ. 1865. *S. Ephraemi Syri Rabulae Episcopi Edesseni Balaei Aliorumque opera selecta*. London: Alexander Macmillan. Newer edition by Phenix Jr., RR. and Horn, CB. 2017. *The Rabbula Corpus: Comprising the Life of Rabbula, His Correspondence, a Homily Delivered in Constantinople, Canons, and Hymns* (Writings from the Greco-Roman World Book 17). Atlanta, GA: SBL Press.

Rabbula was born in Qennesrin in 350 CE, also known as Chalcis, situated 25 miles south-west of Aleppo. In Van Selms' view, the city was at the border of Syrian-Greek civilisation. Augustine (354-430 CE), bishop of Hippo (396-430), was born in Thagaste in Roman North Africa, presently known as Algeria. Both Rabbula and Augustine had a heathen father and Christian mother. The parents of Augustine were Patricius and Monnica, while the names of Rabbula's parents are unknown. Contrary to Augustine, the parents of Rabbula had a high social standing in their society. Both Rabbula and Augustine had a thorough schooling in literature, Augustine at Madauros and Carthage. Both married, Rabbula with an unknown Christian lady and Augustine with a mistress with whom he lived in a monogamous marriage for 14 years. Both Rabbula and Augustine had children; Augustine was father of a son who died at the age of 18 years, while the number and names of the children of Rabbula are unknown.

Tradition accounts the conversion of both Rabbula and Augustine to ascetic Christianity; Rabbula from idolatry and Augustine from Manicheism. In the case of Rabbula, apart from the influence of his mother and wife, a prominent role was played by Abraham, a hermit as well as Eusebius bishop of Qennesrin, and Acacius, bishop of Aleppo. Comparitively, Augustine's mother played a great role together with Ambrosius, bishop of Milan. The latter baptised Augustine while Rabbula was baptised by Christian priests at the Jordan river in Palestine.

Following his conversion, Rabbula led an ascetic life, later establishing a monastery of his own. He resigned from his duty as a Prefect and sold all his properties, distributing the money among the poor people. August resigned from his position as academic professor, sold all his inherited property and together with friends established a monastic society. Rabbula's wife joined a monastery herself while Augustine sent away his mistress, freeing her from marital obligations in order to marry again. Rabbula eventually left his own monastery to live as an ascetic in seclusion. He later returned to societal life again and together with Eusebius, one of his

followers, did missionary work in Ba'albek. At a later stage, the citizens of Edessa chose Rabbula as their bishop. Augustine was ordained as priest in 391 and became bishop of Hippo in 396.

Augustine's position as bishop involved pastoral, juridical and administrative duties. Rabbula refrained from initiating any church building activities, paying all his attention to benefit the lives of ordinary people. He cared for those with leprosy who lived a secluded life and he established hospitals for men and women. Strict regulations pertaining to the lives of monks and nuns were issued by Rabbula, more rigorous than those initiated by Augustine. Rabbula made purposeful attempts to eradicate sectarian movements, for example the Arians and Nestorians (whose views he did not initially oppose). Augustine in turn opposed Manicheans, Donatists and Pelagians.

The literary heritage of both Rabbula and Augustine survived their respective deaths. However, that of Augustine, consisting of several books<sup>47</sup> and numerous letters, greatly exceeded that of Rabbula. The latter is credited for his contribution to the Syriac New Testament. Van Selms opines that he possibly edited a pre-Peshitta version.

### 5.5 An archaeological sensation<sup>48</sup>

Using as source the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* dated 3-11-47, Van Selms mentions some archaeological excavations that shed light on the Hittite empire and provides guidelines for the deciphering of Hittite hieroglyphs. In Karatepe in Southern Turkey, 23 km from Kadirli, two palaces were excavated with well-preserved inscriptions in the entrance hall of one of them. The inscriptions were bilingual, written in Hittite hieroglyphs and an Old Semitic script (Phoenician). Although the texts were not identical, both referred to King Asitawandas

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47 Augustine books, e.g., *Confessions* (c. 400) and *The City of God* (c. 413-426).

48 Van Selms, A. 1948a. 'n Argeologiese sensasie, *HTS* 4:181-184. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v4i4.5737>

of the Danuna kingdom (9<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> century BC). Reliefs were also found depicting various scenes.

The so-called Hittite or Anatolian hieroglyphs proved to be written in the Luwian script consisting of 500 signs.

They should be distinguished from Hittite cuneiform script adapted from a form of the late Old Babylonian syllabary

### **5.6 The king's prayer as component of the ritual at the coronation<sup>49</sup>**

1 Kings 3:4-15 and 2 Chron. 1:1-13 describe a similar event, but in different ways. The younger version, 2 Chron. 1:1-13, made use of the 1 Kings and the 'Annotations on the book of kings' (*midraš sēfer ha-mēlākīm*, 2 Chron. 24:27) which, according to Van Selms, also contained traditions (additional to Kings).

The event described by both versions is King Solomon's sacrifices and prayer at Gibeon. However, in 1 Kings the episode is preceded by King Solomon's revenge on his opponents which took place at least three years earlier (cf. 1 Kings 2:39), and his marriage to the daughter of the Pharaoh of Egypt (2 Kings 3:1). In 2 Chronicles the event heralds the official beginning of Solomon's reign, commencing with the statement, "Solomon son of David established himself firmly over his kingdom ...". Furthermore, 2 Chronicles pictures King Solomon as accompanied by representatives of the whole of Israel (2 Chron. 1:2), thus establishing his reign over the northern tribes, comprising at least the confederation with Benjamin at its centre, i.e., the old kingdom of Saul.

According to Van Selms, after offering the sacrifices, the king went to sleep in the sanctuary awaiting a dream oracle (cf. the Jacob tradition in Gen. 28:11). What was anticipated happened, and both 1 Kings (3:5) and 2 Chron. (1:7) report that God appeared to King Solomon. Solomon was told, "Ask whatever you want me to give you". In response to the

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49 Van Selms, A. 1948b. Die koningsgebede as element in die kroningsritueel, *HTS* 5:40-48. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v5i1/2.3585>

sacrifices offered by King Solomon, God thus responded, signifying a covenant between the king and the divine.

In Van Selms' view, God's words (šě'al mā 'etten lāk) should be rendered as two clauses, namely, 'Ask' and 'What must I give you'. Solomon's request was according to 2 Chronicles, "Give me wisdom and knowledge that I may lead this people", and according to 2 Kings, "Give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong". God granted his wish and gave abundantly more because King Solomon did not ask for wealth, riches, honour, the death of his enemies (2 Chron. 1:11) or a long life (2 Kings 3:10).

In the above episode, Van Selms identifies a ritual accompanying the coronation of a monarch, consisting of sacrifice by the king, invitation by the divine to express a wish and the subsequent wish by the king.

Van Selms refers to Biblical parallels to substantiate his view: Ps. 2:8, 20, 21 and 27:4.

Ps. 2:8 states, "Ask [šě'al] of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance and the ends of the earth your possession". According to Van Selms, the context is the enthronement of the new king. Mentioning of the nations as the king's possession possibly alludes to Edom and Moab who had to pay tribute. They were subdued but not formally annexed, only regarded as subordinate to the king of Israel.

Ps. 20 is also classified as a psalm accompanying the coronation of the king. Sacrifices and burnt-offerings by the king are specifically mentioned (20:3). Then the psalm (20:4) expresses the wish, "May he [God] give you the desire of your heart". The latter implies victory over the chariots and horses of the enemy (20:7).

Ps. 21, similarly categorised by Van Selms, states, "You have granted him the desire of his heart" (21:3). That included life (21:5) as well as splendour and majesty (21:6), items also mentioned in 1 Kings 3:13.



Ps. 27:4 informs, “One thing I ask [šā’altī] of the Lord, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life”. Should the king be speaking, his wish is unique. However, the context reminds of the preceding Biblical portions, referring to a besieging army and the breaking out of war (27:6).

In extra Biblical literature, Van Selms finds examples in the Amarna letters and the Assyrian literature.

In one of the Amarna letters (1<sup>st</sup> half of 14<sup>th</sup> century BCE), King Tušratta writing to Pharaoh Amenhotep III, expresses the wish, “May Ištar [...] protect my brother and me. May that lady grant both of us hundred thousand years and joy”. The contents remind of the Biblical passages, but the context is not a coronation. At the time of writing, Tušratta had been king for 36 years and was close to his death.

The Assyrian parallel comprises a wish pertaining to Aššurbanipal (685–631 BCE) at the time of his coronation, asking the gods to grant him the giving of orders and obedience (of subordinates), and to reign with justice and fairness. No mention is made of the Assyrian king asking for these favours because the situation depicted is not a dialogue between the king and the god(s).

## **5.7 Righteousness as a Biblical concept<sup>50</sup>**

As point of departure, Van Selms refers to a verse from the song of Deborah (Judg. 5:11b), “They [the singers] recite the righteous acts of the Lord [šidqōt YHWH]”. ‘Righteous acts’, according to Van Selms, can also be paraphrased as ‘acts of salvation’ (‘heilsdade’).

The concept of ‘righteousness’ was also extant in extra-Biblical sources such as the El-Amarna letters where reference is made to Adoni-šedeq (‘My Lord is righteous’), an early king of Jerusalem (during the invasion of Canaan).

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50 Van Selms, A. 1948c. Geregtigheid as ’n Bybelse begrip, *HTS* 4:133–144. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v4i4.5731>

Linguistically, the root *ṣ-d-q* may express *justitia activa* or *passiva*, declaring someone as just or being pronounced just. The second meaning may be applied to a situation where one of the two sides in a dispute is favoured in a judgement. A king as sovereign has the prerogative to acquit a person as an act of grace. The latter thus receives the *kabōd* of the king, i.e., experiencing the majesty of the king undeservedly to his advantage. If two sides are involved, they could respectively be characterised as *ṣaddīq* (innocent) or *rāšā'* (guilty),<sup>51</sup> depending whether judgement is in their favour or against them.

In the Bible God is typified both as judge and as one of the two contesting parties. The latter situation is often described. Within a dispute (*rīb*) God is depicted as the accuser. In Mic. 6:1-8, God calls as witnesses the hills and mountains, reminding his people of all his righteous acts.

Alternatively, man may be pictured as the accuser, e.g., Job who insists on his righteousness, but simultaneously asks God to hear his case (Job 31:35-37).

A third version of divine dispute is between God and the idols of heathen nations, e.g., the gods of Babylon (Isa. 46). The God of the house of Jacob presents himself as incomparable and promises salvation to the people in exile, thus bringing his righteousness near them.

The history of Israel is depicted as an extensive summary of the righteous deeds of YHWH. In response, man is to acknowledge his sinfulness; having no case when in dispute with God, and dependent upon God when quarrelling with his fellow men. However, God declares the sinner not guilty and grants him righteousness (*hiṣḏīq*). According to Van Selms, the NT expresses God's righteousness through Jesus. God forgives man by making himself sin in Jesus.

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51 Cf. Prov. 24:24

## 5.8 Prudishness in Chronicles<sup>52</sup>

Van Selms commences the article by drawing attention to the open-mindedness with which the Bible reports about sexual matters.

However, in doing so, euphemisms are often used. Expressions for sexual relations are, e.g., *šakab* (lie [with], cf. Gen. 19:33), *yādaʿ* (know > have intimate relations with, cf. 1 Kings 1:4), *qārab ʿel* (go to > have sexual relations with, cf. Isa. 8:3), *g-l-h* (*gillā*) *kānāp* (uncover the wing/blanket/nakedness, cf. Deut. 23:1 [22:30]). Terminology used to refer to the masculine sexual organ are *basār* (flesh, cf. Lev. 15:2), *raglayim* (feet, cf. Exodus 4:25) and *yād* (hand, cf. Isa. 57:8).

It also happens that sexually related accounts are completely omitted. According to Van Selms, this occurs in the Biblical book Chronicles, creating the impression that the author purposely avoided the mentioning of things that may be regarded as ethically improper.

1 Chron. 2:3b (cf. Genesis 38:7) states, “Er, Judah’s firstborn, was wicked in the Lord’s sight; so the Lord put him to death”. However, no historical record is provided for Onan, Judah’s second son. According to Genesis 38:10, a similar fate befell him for refusing to produce offspring for his late brother, as exacted by the Levirate custom (cf. Deut. 25:5-10). Gen. 38:9 recounts that whenever Onan lay with Er’s wife, he would spill the semen on the ground. Van Selms expresses the view that the author of Chronicles omitted Onan’s sin and fate because he found the episode indecent or at least unethical.

1 Chron. 2:4 reports, “Tamar, Judah’s daughter in law [i.e., wife of the late Er] bore him Perez and Zerah”. The statement is vague, which may create the impression (according to Van Selms) that reference is made to his grandchildren whom he adopted (cf. Genesis 50:23 grandchildren placed at Jacob’s knees). No background information is provided. The author of Chronicles seemingly

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52 Van Selms, A. 1948d. Preutsheid in Kronieke, *HTS* 4:133-144. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v4i4.5731>

found it undesirable to add the detail elucidated in Genesis 38:11–30 which recounts how Tamar, disguised as a prostitute, seduced her father-in-law.

1 Chron. 15:27b–16:3 repeats almost verbatim the text of 2 Sam. 6:14–19. The Chronicle version relates how the Ark of the Covenant was brought to Jerusalem, accompanied by shouts and the sounding of rams' horns and trumpets. Reference is also made to King David's dancing and celebrating that was not to the liking of his wife, Michal daughter of Saul, causing her to despise him in her heart. However, the subsequent discussion between King David and his wife, reported in 2 Sam. 6:20–23, is not included in the text of Chronicles. In it, Michal reprimands King David, "How the king of Israel has distinguished himself, disrobing in the sight of slave girls of his servants as any vulgar fellow would". Van Selms presumes that David danced naked, baring his private parts. Therefore, this statement is left out in the Chronicles version.

A remarkable omission from the parallel history in 1 Chronicles is 2 Sam. 11–20, featuring the illicit relationship of King David with Bathsheba; the rebuke of the prophet Nathan; the rape of Tamar by Ammon, her half-brother; the revenge by her brother Absalom; the conspiracy by Absalom, its suppression and his eventual death. Van Selms's view is that all the above events are dominated by sins relating to sexual relations ('geslagslewe'). He mentions seven examples pertaining specifically to the following verses:

1. 2 Sam. 11:4: Allusion to the monthly periods of Bathsheba
2. 2 Sam. 11:4: David's adultery
3. 2 Sam. 11:8–13: David's attempt (after being informed about Bathsheba's pregnancy) to persuade Uriah to have intercourse with his wife
4. 2 Sam. 12:8: David's taking possession of Saul, his father in law's wives (harem), thus contravening Lev. 18:17 (because among the wives may have been the mother of Michal).
5. 2 Sam. 12:11: The threat of Nathan towards David that the royal wives would be given to someone close to him.
6. 2 Sam 13:1–22: The rape of Tamar by Ammon.

7. 2 Sam. 16:22: Absalom's lying with his father's concubines

A well-known event omitted by the author of Chronicles is also 1 Kings 3:16–28, referring to two prostitutes who contested motherhood of a son and sought King Solomon's ruling. Van Selms ascribes this omission to the fact that the two women were typified as 'prostitutes' (1 King 3:16), suggesting the conducting of life in an immoral way.

When discussing the reign of Solomon's successor, the name of Naamah mother of Rehoboam (2 Chron. 12:13) is mentioned, but no reference is made to Bathsheba. Her name, cited as Bathshua, only appears in the genealogical list at the beginning of 1 Chronicles (3:5).

Van Selms opines that the above omissions should be ascribed to the first compiler of 1 Chronicles. Not including verses and passages with a sexual connotation may possibly be due to the fact that Chronicles was intended as a source book for educating young members of David's family.

**5.9 Take-over of a harem by a new king<sup>53</sup>**

After he had sexual relations with the wife of Uriah the Hittite, and had caused Uriah to be struck by the sword, the prophet Nathan rebuked David, reminding him about all the Divine favours he had received. Nathan stated, for example, "I gave your master's [i.e., Saul's] house to you, and your master's wives into your lap". At that time, Saul was David's father-in-law. He was married to Michal, Saul's younger daughter whose mother was Ahinoam.

Commentators find the statement problematic for at least two reasons. Firstly, being married simultaneously to a woman and her daughter was legally forbidden (Lev. 18:17). Secondly, the Bible refers to a concubine of Saul (2 Sam. 3:7), but gives the impression that Saul had only one wife (1 Sam. 14:50).

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53 Van Selms, A. 1949. Die oorname van 'n harem deur 'n nuwe koning, *HTS* 5:25–41. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v5i3.3590>

Van Selms responds to the said difficulties by stating that being entitled to the harem of his predecessor could have been in a 'non-active' way and does not imply any physical relationship. Furthermore, the possibility exists that Saul had more than one wife although the Bible does not mention them.

As regards Saul's concubine, Rizpah, she was taken over by Ish-Bosheth. His son de facto became acting monarch after his father's death. However, his position was not secure. The Bible refers to war between "the house of Saul and the house of David" (2 Sam. 3:6), but mentions disunity within the Saul faction. Ish-Bosheth's leadership was challenged by Abner, commander of Saul's army and a cousin of Saul (1 Sam. 14:50). The Bible states that he "had been strengthening his own position in the house of Saul" (2 Sam. 3:6). According to Van Selms, part of Abner's strategy was to sleep with Rizpah. This act angered Ish-Bosheth (2 Sam. 3:7) because by doing so Abner acted as if he were the sovereign entitled to the harem of his predecessor.

David himself experienced the taking over of his harem by his son Absalom during the latter's rebellion. When David fled, his ten concubines were left behind "to take care of the palace" (2 Sam. 15:16). Purposely intending to offend his father David (at the advice of Ahitophel), the Bible informs that his followers "pitched a tent for Absalom, and he lay with his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel" (2 Sam. 16:22). Having had himself been declared as "king in Hebron" (2 Sam. 15:10) and being addressed as such by Hushai the Arkite (2 Sam. 16:16) and even indirectly by David (2 Sam. 15:19), Absalom thus secured his usurped position by officially taking over the harem of his father. However, when the rebellion of Absalom was quelled, the ten former concubines of David were put in a house under guard, cared for but "kept in confinement till the day of their death, living as widows" (2 Sam. 20:3).

1 Kings 2:13-25 recounts how Adonijah, the elder brother of King Solomon attempted to marry Abishag the Shunammite, a lady who took care of King David at the end of his life. She was officially a member of King David's harem although

the king had no intimate relations with her. The strategy of Adonijah was to request Bathsheba, mother of Solomon, to ask King Solomon to allow him to marry the said lady. However, such a matrimony would have amounted to the taking over of King David's harem, and was interpreted as an attempted coup by Adonijah to attain royal power. The response of King Solomon was to order the execution of Adonijah (1 Kings 2:25).

When Ben-Hadad of Aram and his allies invaded Israel (1 Kings 20), besieging and attacking Damascus, he sent messengers to Ahab, king of Israel, exacting tribute. Ahab was told, "Your silver and gold are mine, and the best of your wives and children are mine". Ahab agreed, possibly to win time, whereupon Ben-Hadad responded, exacting even more (all Ahab's wives and children) and threatening to send officials to search the palace and houses of Ahab's officials seizing everything of value. Fortunately for Israel, the force of Ben-Hadad was eventually defeated. However, Van Selms observes that Ben-Hadad's demands (particularly regarding Ahab's wives) provide an example of a victorious king exacting the wives of the subdued king with a view to take over the latter's harem.

Similar to the Ben-Hadad episode, Van Selms draws attention to the tribute paid to Sennacherib, king of Assyria, by Hezekiah, king of Judah, at the former's demand. According to 2 Kings 18:14, the king of Assyria exacted from Hezekiah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold. However, in the prism [column 3] of Sennacherib [705/704–681 BCE] that was excavated, the king of Assyria stated that Hezekiah sent to him 800 talents of silver and a range of other treasures as well as his daughters, concubines (*segrēti*) and male and female musicians. The concubines may have been (according to Van Selms) part of the harem that he had taken over from his father, Ahaz, and kept in seclusion to prevent them from remarrying. Male and female singers are also referred to in Ezra 2:65 and Neh. 7:67 at the end of a list of exiles that returned to their home country. The author of Eccles. 2:8 also states, "I acquired male and female singers, and a harem as well—the delights of the heart of a man". An expressed

scholarly opinion is that the said male and female singers refer to masculine and feminine slaves and prostitutes.

To the above list of examples, Van Selms also adds Ps. 45 which he regards as commemorating the enthronement of a king. Part of the ritual, the entering of the new king into the harem is described (Ps. 45:10):

Daughters of kings are among your honoured women:  
At your right hand is the royal bride [*šēgal*] in gold of Ophir

‘Daughters of the kings’ may refer (in Van Selms’ view) to the daughters of vassal kings such as Moab and Elam and the royal bride (*šēgal*) reminds of the *gēbīrah* (queen mother, cf. 2 Kings 10:13) whose son was destined to become the future king. In terms of Van Selms’ reasoning, at his enthronement, the new king takes over an existing harem (and does not select candidates anew).

As an additional example, Van Selms quotes Genesis 49:3-4:

Reuben, you are my firstborn,  
my might, the first sign of my strength,  
excelling in honour, excelling in power.  
Turbulent as the waters, you will no longer excel,  
for you went up onto your father’s bed,  
onto my couch and defiled it.

The allusion in the above verses of Genesis is to Reuben sleeping with Jacob’s concubine Bilhah (Gen 35:22). If the status of Jacob within tribal setting is compared to that of a ruler, the misdeed of Reuben may have been a purposeful act, compared to the taking over of a harem in advance, to assert his claim as future leader of the tribe.

In the final part of his article, Van Selms comments on the notice in 1 Kings 11:3 that King Solomon had seven hundred wives of royal birth and three hundred concubines. According to Van Selms, these women did not necessarily cohabit with the king in Jerusalem, but probably belonged to harems of



the former rulers of subjugated city states taken over by King Solomon. However, within Jerusalem, King Solomon would have had a personal harem consisting of a number of women. Song 6:8-9 refers to sixty queens and eighty concubines, with one of them favoured by the king and praised by the other women.

From Greek literature, Van Selms cites an example mentioned by Herodotus (1:8-13) recounting how Gyges (680-644 BC) dethroned Candaules, killing his adversary and acquiring his wife and the kingdom of Lydia (presently a West Turkish province). The area concerned is within Hittite domain, prompting Van Selms to recommend the study of the Hittite language and culture at the University of Pretoria.

#### **5.10 The home inviolable at night: A Canaanite legal provision<sup>54</sup>**

Four OT historical accounts create the impression that no one may enter the house of another person during the night. They are: 1 Sam 19:9-17, 1 Kings 19:1-3, Josh. 2:1-22 and Judg. 19:1-3.

**1 Samuel 19:9-17** relates King Saul's attempts to kill David, firstly by trying to pin him to the wall with his spear (19:10) and secondly by sending men to David's house "to watch it and kill him in the morning" (19:11). Both attempts were unsuccessful: The spear missed David and his wife, Michal, warned him: "if you don't run for your life tonight, tomorrow you'll be killed". Michal let David through a window that was seemingly on the wall of an enclosure and he fled and escaped.

Van Selms finds it remarkable that the enclosure in which David and his wife stayed were not penetrated during the night. This leads him to the conclusion that a regulation existed forbidding the entering of a home at night.

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54 Van Selms, A. 1950. Die huis by nag onskendbaar: 'n Kanaanitiese regsbepling, *HTS* 6(3). <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v6i3.3615>

**1 Kings 19:1-3** states: “Now [King] Ahab told [his wife] Jezebel (the Phoenician princess) everything that [the prophet] Elijah had done [on Mount Carmel] and how he had killed [with the people’s help hundreds of Baal] prophets with the sword. So, Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah to say: ‘May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely, if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like that of one of them.’ [Hearing this threat] Elijah was afraid and ran for his life”.

The obvious strategy would have been to kill Elijah during the night, instead of waiting for the next morning. Once again, Van Selms opines that a home was regarded as inviolable at night.

**Joshua 2:1-22** comprises an account of two spies sent by Joshua to explore the Canaanite city Jericho and its vicinity. However, they were discovered and reported to the king of Jericho. In the meantime, the spies had entered the house of a prostitute, Rahab, and stayed there. Knowing where the spies were, the king of Jericho sent a message to Rahab: “Bring out the men who came to you and entered your house, because they have come to spy over the whole land”. Rahab, however, let the king know that the spies had already left by dusk, when it was time to close the city gate. Possibly regarding her home inviolable at night, it was not searched, which enabled the spies to escape.

**Judges 16:1-3** recounts the visit of Samson to a prostitute in Gaza within the Philistine territory. When the people were told, they surrounded the place and lay in wait for Samson the whole night at the city gate, but did not enter the home of the prostitute. The inviolability of the dwelling at night was once again respected.

The four above examples led Van Selms to the conclusion that in Israel, among the Canaanites, the Phoenicians and the Philistines, the same custom was observed. He ascribes it to the continuous influence of ancient Canaanite culture. A remarkable aspect of this culture was the acknowledgement of the rights of the individual citizen, recognised even by kings and rulers.

### **5.11 Ps. 137. By the rivers of Babylon<sup>55</sup>**

Ps. 137 is usually classified as post-exilic, creating the impression of being more patriotic than religious. It demonstrates a strong sentiment towards Jerusalem—the author even expresses a curse upon himself should he forget this city.

Van Selms divides the psalm into three parts (137:1-3, 4-6 and 7-9); consisting respectively, after some editing, of four, three and four *qīnāh*-metre (3+2) stanzas.

The psalm is written in the past tense (e.g., “we sat ... wept ... remembered”) and refers to the place of exile as a former location (“*there* our captors asked us for songs”) which gives the impression that the author no longer resided where he used to be.

However, Van Selms argues that the psalm was written (as in Greek and Latin literature) from the perspective of the receiver. The contents of the psalm were to be conveyed by a messenger, speaking as if he were the exile bringing report from Babylon.

Mesopotamian and Biblical examples are furnished in support, e.g., 2 Chron. 2:12[13] which cites a letter from King Hiram of Tyre to King Solomon promising assistance with the building of the temple. This included the seconding of an artisan of whom King Hiram states, “*I have sent to you Hiram-Abi, a man of great skill*”.

Van Selms thus suggests that the author of the psalm was indeed living in Babylon at the time of writing, The psalm was meant as an address to God and was to be recited in the sanctuary in Jerusalem (or where religious practices continued after the destruction of the temple). In support of an act of this kind, Isa. 37:14 is mentioned, relating how King Hezekiah went up to the temple and spread out the ultimatum he received from the envoys of the Assyrian king, Sanherib. Letters of this

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55 Van Selms, A. 1951a. Ps. 137. By die riviere van Babel. *HTS* 8:7-18. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v8i1.3643>

kind and some psalms were possibly kept in the temple archive in Jerusalem and could be accessed by later generations.

Regarding the context of the psalm, Van Selms explains the first few lines (137:1-3) as describing unwelcome attention by the local Babylonian population. Rather than singing a Zion song in their presence, a new song (Ps. 137) of love for Zion (137:4-6), but simultaneously revenge on the Babylonians (137:7-9), is conceptualised. Harsh things are said against the “daughter of Babylon”, prophesying her destruction and complementing the person who would seize her infants and dash them against “the rock”.

The ‘daughter of Babylon’ is identified by Van Selms as the Edomites who, according to 137:7, exhorted the Babylonians to tear down the foundations of Jerusalem. He regards them as the “infants of Babylon” over whose cruel death the author of the psalm rejoices in anticipation. The situation envisaged is possibly a repetition of what is described in 2 Chron. 25:11-12. According to Biblical tradition, King Amaziah of Judah ordered the killing of ten thousand captive Edomites by throwing them down a cliff.

In the light of his interpretation, Van Selms regards Ps. 137 as a messianic psalm. The coming Messiah is pictured in a similar vein as in Ps. 110:6, judging the nations and heaping up the dead. Such a characterisation applied to Jesus, regarded as the promised Messiah in the NT, is seemingly in contrast to the way Christ is traditionally typified. However, Van Selms reminds of Biblical passages such as Rev. 25:11-15 which announces the Rider on a white horse, named the Word of God: “He is dressed in a robe dripped in blood ... out of his mouth comes a sharp sword to strike down the nations”.

## **5.12 Multitude of names among Judean kings<sup>56</sup>**

Gods and people may have more than one name.

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56 Van Selms, A. 1951b. Veelheid van name by Judese konings, *HTS* 7:141-163. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v7i2/3.3635>

The Babylonian epic *Enuma eliš* (When above) sings the praise of the god, Marduk, referring to his fifty names.<sup>57</sup> In the Ugaritic literature some gods have double names, e.g., *qdš w-'amr*. Even the God of the OT is known by double names such as *'el 'elyōn* (Gen. 14:18). Islamic tradition bears testimony to the ninety-nine names of Allah.

People known by more than one name in the OT are Abram – Abraham (Gen. 17:5), Jacob – Israel (Gen. 32:28), Esau – Edom (Gen. 25:30), Jethro (Ex, 3:1) – Reuel (Ex. 2:18) and Gideon – Jerub-Baal (Judg. 6:32).

Five Judean kings were known by separate names in different areas of their kingdom:

1. King Solomon received the name Jedidiah through the prophet Nathan by order of YHWH (2 Sam. 12:25). Based upon phonetic arguments, Van Selms argues that the name Solomon (š-l-m-[h]) should be associated with Jerusalem ([‘-y-r]- š-l-[y]-m), city of David, while the name Jedidiah was probably his royal appellation as king of Judah (and Israel).
2. The son of King Amaziah of Judah is referred to as Azariah in the list of descendants of King David in 1 Chron. 3:11, and as Azrijau in an inscription of King Tiglatpilezer III [d. 727]. Elsewhere the name Uzziah appears (e.g., Isa. 7:1 and Amos 1:1), perhaps his Jerusalem name.
3. King Hezekiah was known both as *yēḥizqiyyāhū* (> *yēḥazzēqyāhū*; Hos. 1:1) and *ḥizqiyyāhū* (2 Kings 16:20) which respectively mean ‘YHWH makes strong’ and ‘my strength is YHWH’. The name *yēḥizqiyyāhū*, cited in prophetic books, was probably his Jerusalem name and *ḥizqiyyāhū* the name by which he was known as king of Judah.

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57 *Enuma eliš*, lines 143-144: “With the word ‘fifty’ the great gods called his [Marduk’s] fifty names and assigned to him an outstanding position”, cf. Lambert, WG. 2013. *Babylonian creation myths*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781575068619>

4. King Jehoahaz (2 Chron. 36:1) of Judah was also called Shallum (Jer. 22:11), the former possibly being his official name and the second (Shallum) his Jerusalem name.
5. King Jehoiakim of Judah, son of Jehoahaz, was known both as *yěhōyāqīm* (2 Kings 23:35) and *yěkonyāhū* (Jer. 24:1). The latter name as quoted by Jeremiah was possibly his Jerusalem name and the former his appellation as Judean king.

In addition to the above five examples, Van Selms refers to Isa. 9:5 (9:6 in translations) which provides the four names of a child to be born. The names of the child were *pele' yō'ēs*, *'ēl gibbōr*, *'ābī'ad* and *sar šālōm*: Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father (or Father of the Booty) and Prince of Peace. Isa. 9:1 mentions a time of gloom and distress, and 9:5 reminds of a warrior's boot used in battle. According to Van Selms, the allusion could be to the Assyrian infantry during the campaign of Sanherib. A future king is promised who would rule over four areas: Jerusalem (as *sar šālōm*, Prince of Peace), Northern Israel (as *'ēl gibbōr*, Mighty God), Zion (as *'ābī'ad*, Father of the Booty [displayed in Zion]) and Judah (as *pele' yō'ēs*, Wonderful Counsellor). Within Christian perspective the child is associated with the God-man Jesus Christ.

### 5.13 The city according to Israelite representation<sup>58</sup>

The common Hebrew word for 'the city' is *hā-'ir*. However, when conceptualising a city in Biblical times, one should not have any contemporary city such as Johannesburg or Cape Town in mind. The average number of inhabitants were approximately 3,000.

People thus knew one another and cities were experienced as places of safety. Having provided lodging to the prophet Elisha, the Shunamite woman refused any favour as compensation, saying. "I have a home among my own people" (2 Kings 4:14). She was satisfied to stay among her co-citizens of Shunem. Dangers common to a modern city were unknown.

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58 Van Selms, A. 1952. Die stad in die Israelitiese voorstellingslewe, *HTS* 8:79-89. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v8i2.3649>

Within such a city, public opinion helped to preserve ethical norms. Gossiping could easily occur. After Ruth the night with Boaz on the threshing floor, he told her the next morning, “Don’t let it be known that a women came to the threshing floor” (Ruth 3:14).

Staying in a city did not estrange its people from nature. Cities were situated where farming was the main way of existence.

Masses of people, immorality and estrangement from nature, features of modern cities, were absent within Israelite cities of old. During Hezekiah’s reign (2 Kings 18), there were approximately 50 cities in Judah. They were situated on areas of two (e.g., Gibeah of Saul; 1 Sam. 14:2) to ten morgen (Gezer; Josh. 10:33) of ground, with an average of four morgen.

Cities were usually surrounded by a wall, known as *qīr* in Hebrew. This term denotes a city in the Moabite inscription (lines 11 and 12) and is phonetically and etymologically related to *‘īr*.

Evidence about the origin of cities is provided by a passage such as 2 Sam. 20:18 and 19. Sheba who rebelled against King David took refuge in Abel Beth Maacah. Joab and David’s soldiers besieged the city, but were persuaded not to destroy it in exchange for the head of Sheba. The mediator on behalf of the city was a wise woman who negotiated with Joab. She said:

Long ago they used to say, “Get your answer at Abel”, and that settled it. We are the peaceful and faithful in Israel. You are trying to destroy a city that is a mother in Israel. Why do you want to swallow up the Lord’s inheritance?

Motivation for the continued existence of the city is based upon three reasons:

1. People used to consult the oracle at Abel during pre-Israelite, Canaanite times which accentuates the city’s glorious past and proves the link between subsequent (Canaanite and Israelite) settlements.

2. Abel is a mother in Israel, distinguished by peaceful and faithful ethics.
3. The city is the Lord's inheritance which may not be violated or harmed.

The prehistory of cities is also reflected by various genres of literature, e.g., the geographical poem that may either ridicule or praise. The former may refer to hordes of nomads entering from the desert, while the latter portrays the city in a positive way. Both kinds of poems may be indirectly gleaned from Biblical passages.

The prophecy of Micah [chapter 2] provides evidence of a poem of ridicule, reflecting a clash between the intruders and the established population.

In comparison, remnant of a song praising a city, played upon by way of a prophecy of woe, is found in Isa. 28:1-6. Reference is made to the city of Samaria's "glorious beauty, set on the head of a fertile valley" (28:1, 4), and her reputation as "proud crown" (28:1, 3, 5). Focus is on the geographical setting and beauty of Samaria.

Assets of Jerusalem are numerated in a comparable way in Ps. 48, stating "It is beautiful in its loftiness, the joy of the whole earth. Like the utmost heights of Zaphon is Mount Zion, the city of the Great King". The overall context, however, is religious. The psalm commences with, "Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise, the city of God, his holy mountain".

Although being associated with Jerusalem, the God of Israel was regarded as transcendent rather than immanent. Names of Canaanite cities reflect the latter conviction, e.g., Bethel (house of El). Proof of the former conviction (transcendence) is demonstrated by the moveable sanctuary, the tabernacle (cf. Ex. 26), that accompanied Israel during its exodus from Egypt. The concept of transcendence is also reiterated in the NT by the name Immanuel (God is with us) given to Jesus (Matt. 1:21), an appellation which "originally apparently did not depict a permanent condition".



The idea of Jerusalem as city of God was, however, never abandoned. The author of Revelations (21:2) “saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband”.

To the contrary, Jerusalem is at times pictured as the ‘anti-god-city’, about whom Jesus said (Matt. 23:37), “you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you”.

Similarly, the reality of the present contrasts with the coming glory; the antithesis between *Civitas Dei* (City of God) and the Great Inquisitor contained within Fyodor Dostoevsky’s 1880 novel, *The Brothers Karamazov*

Christ comes back to Earth in Seville at the time of the Inquisition. He performs a number of miracles (echoing miracles from the Gospels). The people recognise him and adore him at the Seville Cathedral, but he is arrested by Inquisition leaders and sentenced to be burnt to death the next day. The Grand Inquisitor visits him in his cell to tell him that the Church no longer needs him.

#### **5.14 The “mixed marriage” in the Old Testament<sup>59</sup>**

The concept ‘mixed marriage’ can be interpreted in various ways. In essence, a marriage represents the mixture of two lives and families. Comparable Latin and Greek terms are respectively *misceo* and *mignumi*, both referring inter alia to the act of uniting within marriage. In Netherland and England, ‘mixed marriages’ refer to a wedlock between a male and female belonging to different religious persuasions. Such marriages are not acknowledged by the Roman Catholic Church. They are regarded as legitimate, but not desirable by Protestant churches. In South Africa, ‘mixed marriages’ refer to a union between a male and female of different races, but may also apply to situations where husband and wife belong to different language groups.

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59 Van Selms, A. 1953a. Die “gemengde huwelik” in die Ou Testament, *HTS* 9:34-47. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v9i2.3667>

However, the focus of the article is to provide a survey of 'mixed marriages' mentioned in the OT. Attention will firstly be given to marriages that are directly and indirectly referred to and, secondly, unfavourable and favourable responses to such a state of affairs will be analysed.

As regards **direct evidence**:

Genesis 16:1 states, "Sarai, Abram's wife [...] had an Egyptian maidservant named Hagar; and unable to bear children for Abram, Sarai said to her husband, 'Go sleep with my maidservant; perhaps I can build a family through her.'" Although seemingly an example of a mixed marriage, Van Selms opines that Hagar, on account of the etymology of her name, was of Semitic (not Egyptian) origin.

Genesis 25:1 reports that Abraham, after the death of his wife Sarai, "took another wife whose name was Ketura", who bore him six sons. However, she seemingly only had the status of a concubine as her sons were sent away by Abraham (Gen. 25:5), in favour of his own son, Isaac by Sarai.

Two of the twelve sons of Jacob married foreign women. Judah who took as his wife the daughter of a Canaanite man (Gen. 38:2) and Joseph was given an Egyptian wife by the Pharaoh (Gen. 41:45).

Moses married twice. His first wife was Zipporah, the daughter of a Midianite priest (Exodus 2:21), and his second, a Cushite woman (Num. 12:1).

According to Judg. 14:1, "Samson went down to Timnah and saw there a young Philistine woman" whom he wished to marry. She is also referred to as his wife (Judg. 14:16), but due to Samson's clash with her fellow Philistines the marriage was not consummated (Judg. 14:21).

Well-known is the story of Ruth, the Moabite woman, whom Boaz took as wife (Ruth 4:14). She was previously married to a son of Naomi when they sojourned in Moab (Judg. 1:4), but returned with her mother-in-law to Bethlehem, informing Naomi, "Your people will be my people and your God my God" (Ruth 1:16).

King David married an Aramaean woman, daughter of Talmi, king of Geshur (2 Sam. 3:3), and his son, Solomon, married multiple foreign women from kingdoms such as Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians and Hittites (1 Kings 11:1).

Notorious is the marriage of King Ahab of Israel to Jezebel, daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians, due to whose influence he eventually “began to serve Baal and worship him” (1 Kings 16:31).

Esther, the exiled Jewish lady, was given a preferential position within the harem of the Persian monarch, King Xerxes (Esth. 2:9). She did not, however, reveal her nationality and family background (2:10).

Fierce opposition against mixed marriages is ascribed to Nehemiah, former cupbearer of King Artaxerxes (Neh. 1:11), who forbid, and in fact terminated, marriages of men to women from Ashdod, Ammon and Moab (Neh. 11:23). He used a stipulation found in Deut. 23:3 as a guideline: “No Ammonite or Moabite or any of his descendants may enter the assembly of the Lord, even down to the tenth generation”. Van Selms, however, doubts whether the said prohibition was strictly applied during the course of time.

As regards **indirect evidence**:

Ezra 10:18f lists a substantial number of those among descendants of priests and Levites who had married foreign women. Previously, Rahab the prostitute and her family, who were spared when Jericho was put to fire, were allowed “to live among the Israelites to this day” (Josh. 6:25). The population of Gibeon (Josh. 9), later associated with the tribe of Benjamin (2 Chron. 8:39), was regarded as part of the Israelites in Neh. 7:25. Furthermore, the Jebusite population of Jerusalem, who settled among the Israelites, was allowed to retain their property. One of them specifically mentioned in the Bible is Arauna whose threshing floor was bought by King David (2 Sam. 24:24). According to Van Selms, the name ‘Arauna’ seems to be Hittite. Another Hittite mentioned in the Bible is

Uriah, husband of Bathsheba, with whom King David had an illicit relationship (2 Sam. 11:2-5).

**Unfavourable verdict** on mixed marriages:

In Deut. 7:1, the Israelites are told to totally destroy the Hittites, Girgashites, Ammorites, Canaanites, Hivites and Jebusites once they have defeated them. Exodus 34:15f warns the Israelites “not to make a treaty with those who live in the land”, because they would entice them to worship idols. To this must also be added the stipulation of Deut. 23:3 discussed above. The dominant reason for prohibition against mixed marriages is the preservation of exclusive Israelite religious identity.

**Favourable verdict** on mixed marriages:

Samson’s intended marriage to a Philistine woman was condemned by his parents, but according to Judg. 14:4, “[h]is parents did not know that this was from the Lord, [who was seeking an occasion to confront the Philistines]”. Deut. 21:10-14 prescribes the manner in which a captive woman had to be treated, presupposing a custom of mixed marriages. Ephraim and Manasseh, the two sons of Joseph and his Egyptian wife, were reckoned by Jacob (his father) as his own (Gen. 48:5). Chronicles refers in a matter-of-fact way to the marriages of Sheshan’s daughter to his Egyptian servant, Jarha (1 Chron. 2:34-5), and that of Mered to the Pharaoh’s daughter, Bithiah (1 Chron. 4:17). Ps. 87:4 states (without specifically mentioning mixed marriages), “I will record Rahab and Babylon among those who acknowledged me—Philistia too and Tyre, along with Cush—and will say, ‘This one was born in Zion.’”.

Finally, Van Selms remarks that the OT does not provide unambiguous guidance regarding mixed marriages between different races, but discourages marriages between believers and unbelievers. If the state chooses (as in the 1950s) to prohibit mixed marriages in terms of race, the Church should not attempt to defend this policy by seeking examples from the OT.

### **5.15 The continuity of the Church under the old and new covenant<sup>60</sup>**

From the Anglo-Saxon side, it is often said that the Church was founded at the Easter feast in Jerusalem. However, this view is contrary to statements made in the confessions of the Church. In Article 27 (see *italics*), the Netherland Confession of Faith states:

This Church hath been *from the beginning of the world*, and will be to the end thereof; which is evident from this, that Christ is an eternal King, which, without subjects, cannot be. And this holy Church is preserved or supported by God, against the rage of the whole world; though she sometimes (for a while) appears very small, and in the eyes of men, to be reduced to nothing: as *during the perilous reign of Ahab*, the Lord reserved unto him seven thousand men, who had not bowed their knees to Baal.

A similar notion is also found in Sunday 21, question 54 (see *italics*) of the Heidelberg Catechism:

I believe that the Son of God, [1] out of the whole human race, [2] *from the beginning of the world* to its end, [3] gathers, defends, and preserves for Himself, [4] by His Spirit and Word, [5] in the unity of the true faith, [6] a church chosen to everlasting life. [7] And I believe that I am [8] and forever shall remain a living member of it.

The third and fourth main points of the Doctrine of the Canons of Dort, article 6 (see *italics*) declare:

What, therefore, neither the light of nature nor the law can do, God accomplishes by the power of the Holy Spirit, through the Word or the ministry of reconciliation. This is the gospel about the Messiah, through which it has

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60 Van Selms, A. 1953b. Die kontinuiteit van die Kerk onder die ou en nuwe verbond, *HTS* 9:93-100. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v9i3/4.3673>

pleased God to save believers, *in both the Old and the New Testaments.*

Convictions expressed within the confessions regarding the presence of the Church in the OT are supported by evidence from the NT.

In Eph. 2:20, the congregation is told that they had been “built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ Jesus as the chief cornerstone”. The term ‘prophets’ is associated with the OT and the term ‘apostles’ with the NT. However, both terms are also used within NT context (Eph. 3:5).

Revelations refers six times to the 24 elders (4:4; 5:8; 10; 11:16; 14; 19:4). They present a symbolic relationship between the Church under the Old and New covenant. Twelve are representative of the people of the tribes of Israel and 12 of the people gathered through the preaching of the apostles. Similarly, Revelations mentions “144,000 of all the tribes of Israel” (7:4), but also recounts the vision of John of “a great multitude [...] from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb” (7:9). To this may be added the woman, the child to whom she gave birth and the dragon (Rev. 12). The child may be equated with Jesus Christ, and the woman as Mary, who is also a symbol of the Church.

Rom. 11:13-32 draws the picture of the converted gentiles as a “wild olive shoot” having been “grafted in” among the existing branches and who now “share in the nourishing sap from the olive root” (11:17). Eph. 2:19 tells its readers, “You are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow-citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household”. And 1 Pet. 2:10 states, “Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God”. Elsewhere gentiles are called “the Israel of God” (Gal. 6:16).

The Greek word for ‘church’ in the NT is *ekklesia*, which used to refer to a meeting of the citizens of a city, but also rendered the Hebrew word *qāhal*. Where the latter term is

used in the first four books of the OT, it is translated by the Septuagint as *sunagōgē* (synagogue).

A covenant of God in the OT and NT refers to a relationship initiated by God, which is indicative of his mercy and compassion. Included are the people as a whole and the individual person. The covenant features in the present, but attains its consummation in the future. The covenant was affirmed at Sinai, but existed already during the time of the patriarchs. When he was called by God, Moses was instructed (Exodus 3:15) to tell the people, “The Lord, the God of your fathers—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob—has sent me to you”. Commencement of the covenant is reported in Genesis 3:15: “And I will put enmity between you [snake] and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel”. The words reflect God’s forgiveness towards Adam and Eve, and contain the promise of the Messiah.

Commenting on Gen. 3:15, the Netherlands Confession of Faith (Article 17) states:

We believe that our good God, by marvellous divine wisdom and goodness, seeing that Adam and Eve had plunged themselves in this manner into both physical and spiritual death and made themselves completely miserable, set out to find them, though they, trembling all over, were fleeing from God.

And God comforted them, promising to give them his Son, born of a woman, to crush the head of the serpent, and to make them blessed.

Furthermore, Article 27 declares: “This Church hath been from the beginning of the world”, which Van Selms interprets as from the beginning of the world as we know it. He adds:

Just as the Dutch Reformed Church of Africa (Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika) will never allow itself to be persuaded to detach the bond with the Church of Van

Riebeeck, similarly we keep, as the apostles, the bond with Israel and the patriarchs in the earlier period.

### **5.16 The place of Israel in our theological-ecclesiastical view<sup>61</sup>**

Van Selms discusses the topic ‘The place of Israel in our theological-ecclesiastical view’ by means of four subthemes. He firstly pays attention to the concept ‘Israel’; secondly to the method of research; thirdly to related Biblical, particularly NT, material; and fourthly elucidates the concept ‘our theological-ecclesiastical view’.

The concept ‘Israel’ should not be associated with the state of Israel established in 1948. Neither should ‘Israel’ be viewed as an ethnographic entity, as just another nation (cf. the Hebrew *gōy* and the Greek *ethnos*) among those mentioned in the Bible. Terms applicable in the case of ‘Israel’ are *am* (Hebrew) and *laos* (Greek), referring to a human community as bearer of spiritual values. They could be characterised as God’s people (‘Godsvolk’); part of human history, but simultaneously elected to play an active role in the salvation history (‘heilsgeschiedenis’) through the power and freewill of God.

Van Selms’ method of research is to approach the concept ‘Israel’ predominantly from a Christian perspective, although Jesus was rejected as Messiah by his own people. NT evidence should be used as a guideline even when consulting the OT. According to the NT and the confession of the Church, OT prophesies were fulfilled in Christ.

Related NT sources are firstly the letters of the apostle Paul. In 1Thes. 2:14-16 displeasure is expressed because of the Jews’ negative attitude towards the preaching of the Gospel. Paul refers to their “effort to keep us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved”. By doing so, “they always

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61 Van Selms, A. 1956. Die plek van Israel in ons teologies-kerklike beskouing, *HTS* 12:97-109. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v12i3.3726>



heap up their sins to the limit”, bringing upon them the “wrath of God”. In Gal. 4:25, Jerusalem is compared to Hagar, maid and later wife of Abraham, “because she is in slavery with her children”. Furthermore, in 1 Cor. 1:22 reference is made to the disbelief of the Jews demanding “miraculous signs” similar to the Greeks who “look for wisdom”. However, Paul also adds that to “those whom God has called both Jews and Greeks” he preaches “Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God”. The apostle Paul thus demonstrates (according to Van Selms) a dialectical attitude towards Israel. The wrath of God is upon them, but they nevertheless remain the people of God (‘Godsvolk’).

Paul’s solution is to reinterpret the concept ‘Israel’, both narrowing and broadening its membership. In Rom. 9:6, Paul states, “not all who have descended from Israel are Israel”; and in Gal. 3:29, “[i]f you belong to Christ, then you [as Gentiles] are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise”. The stubbornness of Israel can be interpreted as advantageous to the Gentiles. Paul thus informed the Romans (11:25-26), “Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of Gentiles has come in. And so, all Israel will be saved”. Jews remained “the heirs of the prophets and the covenant” God had made with their fathers (Acts 3:25). However, the promise of God also included “all who are far off” (Acts 2:39). Jesus told the Canaanite woman, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel” (Matt. 15:24), but also stated (after the demonstration of faith by the Roman centurion), “many will come from the east and the west and will take their places with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 18:11). According to John 4:22, Jesus told the Samaritan woman, “[s]alvation is from the Jews” but, to the contrary, told the Jews, “[y]ou belong to your father, the devil” (John 8:44).

Finally, Van Selms comments on the concept ‘our theological-ecclesiastical view’, linking it to the NT statements cited in the previous paragraph. Rejecting Jesus, the Jews as former recipients of the divine glory and covenants have estranged them from God. However, Van Selms also

reminds of the sympathetic attitude of Paul: “I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers” (Rom. 9:2-3).

### **5.17 The formula “You are my ...: I am your ...”<sup>62</sup>**

The article discusses the application of the formula “You are my ...: I am your ...” in various Ancient Near Eastern and OT contexts.

Setting of the formula (including its negative version) was probably a solemn oral declaration in the presence of a crowd of witnesses when concluding contracts, later replaced by a written agreement.

Sumerian legal documents determine punishments for an adopted son who said to his foster parents, “You are not my father” or “You are not my mother”. Within Sumerian family laws, punishments were also prescribed for a spouse denying the marriage bond. A woman who said, “You are not my husband” was to be thrown into the river, while a male person who declared, “You are not my wife” had to be fined a half mina silver.

Legal responses to the formula are also attested in the Codex of Hammurabi (1700 BCE). A son who denied kinship to any of his foster parents was to be punished by cutting off his tongue (Article 192). Furthermore, a slave would lose an ear if they tell their owner, “You are not my master” (Article 282).

In the Gilgamesh epic [Tablet 3], Ishtar, trying to persuade Gilgamesh to marry her, tells him, “Grant me largesse, [for] my husband shalt thou be and I’ll be thy consort”. Similarly in the Ugaritic epic poem, Aqht [Tablet 1], the goddess Anat tried to win the favour of the son (Aqht) of the legendary King Dnīl by saying, “Listen to me young Aqht, you are my brother and I am your sister”.

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62 Van Selms, A. 1958a. Die formule “Jy is my ...; ek is jou ...”, *HTS* 14:130-141. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v14i2/3.3766>

The most explicit example of the use of the formula in the OT is found in Hosea 2:2 where the prophet is ordered to “[r]ebuke your mother, rebuke her, for she is not my wife, and I am not her husband”. The statement, ‘she is not my wife’, was probably an acknowledged way of severing links with a spouse.

Psalms 2:7 (cf. Ps. 89:27) mentions the adoption of the king of Zion by God, stating, “I will proclaim the decree of the Lord: He said to me, ‘You are my Son; today I have become your Father’”.

In Job 17:14, the first-person speaker refers to his coming death as adoption within the realm of the nether world, “I say to the grave, ‘You are my father’, and to the worm, ‘My mother’ or ‘My sister’”.

1 Kings 29:32 reports that the officials of the defeated King Ben-Hadad went to the king of Israel with the request, “Your servant Ben-Hadad says: ‘Please let me live’, Whereupon Ahab, king of Israel replied, ‘Is he still alive? He is my brother.’”

Proverbs 7:4-5 states, “Say to wisdom, ‘You are my sister,’ and call understanding your kinsman; they will keep you from the adulteress, from the wayward wife with her seductive words”. Within context, ‘sister’ may imply ‘wife’; cf. Song 5:1 where the lover tells his partner, “I have come into my garden, my sister my bride”.

The formula is also mentioned in a marriage contract (454 BCE) discovered at Elephantine where a Jewish military colony resided. Stated in the third person, the male partner declared, “She is my wife and I am her husband from today and for ever”.

In all the above contexts, be it marriage, adoption, legitimation or slavery, in essence the contract may be regarded as a covenant between a senior person, *patria potestas*, and the other party. The formula was used to establish official inter-human relationships, but also to describe the bond between the believer and God. Portraying a future

positive scenario, Hos. 2:15 states, “‘In that day’ declares the Lord, ‘you will call me ‘my husband’; you will no longer call me ‘my master’””. The prologue to the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1) states, “And God spoke all these words: I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery”. Israel is by implication adopted as nation by the Lord.

### **5.18 Historical and geographical names in the book of the Psalms<sup>63</sup>**

Van Selms’ attention was drawn to the historical names in the Bible and particularly the book of the Psalms when drawing up a register as an addition to the annotated Afrikaans Bible translation (published in 1959).

Regarding the Bible in general, he noticed the uneven distribution of geographical names within the books of the OT. He found that the highest frequency appears in the book Joshua. Interesting is the remarkable difference in number of newly mentioned names in consecutive Bible books. Leviticus only contains names that are also attested in Genesis and Exodus, while Numbers produces a series of names that do not appear elsewhere in the Bible. Ezra and Nehemiah add many names additional to those in Joshua, but the next Bible book, Esther, contains only one.

Pertaining to the book of the Psalms, it is difficult to make a clear distinction between historical (including personal) and geographical names. Tribes of Israel and the sons of Jacob, for example, appear in both contexts. The same applies to the name Israel.

Names associated with the prehistory of mankind (Genesis 1–11) are absent in the Psalms. No mention is made of Adam, Eve, Cain, Abel, Seth and Noah. For the authors of the Biblical psalms the salvation history commenced with Abraham. Psalm 47:10 refers to “the God of Abraham”.

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63 Van Selms, A. 1958b. Historiese en geografiese name in die boek van die Psalms, *HTS* 14:1–12. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v14i1.3750>

Psalm 105 calls Abraham God's servant (6, 42) with whom He had made a covenant (9). His contemporary Lot and his descendants are mentioned in Ps. 83:9, and the priest Melchizedek in Ps. 110:4.

Abraham's son Isaac features in Ps. 105:9, while his grandson Jacob appears in Ps. 105:6, 10. However, Jacob in the context of the people of Israel is frequently mentioned (e.g., Ps. 20:2, 22:24 and 44:5). The same applies to his second name Israel (e.g., 22:24 [Jacob // Israel], 55:7 [Jacob // Israel] and 68:27).

Some of the sons of Jacob are referred to in the Psalms; e.g., Levi (Ps. 135:20), Benjamin, Zebulon and Naphtali (Ps. 68:28). No women who lived during this period are mentioned.

The historical event of the liberation from Egypt frequently appears in the Psalms, e.g., Ps. 77:16-21 and Ps. 106:7-12. Moses and Aaron are both mentioned in Ps. 77:21. Where they are referred to separately, the priest Aaron (e.g., Ps. 118:3 and 133:2) is mentioned more frequently than Moses (e.g., Ps. 103:7).

The journey through the desert and the accompanying miraculous events (e.g., Ps. 77:14-42) as well as the giving of the statues and decrees at Sinai (e.g., Ps. 99:7) are frequently reflected upon in the Psalms. As regards the conquest of the Transjordan area, the names of Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan, are mentioned twice in the Psalms (135:11 and 136:19-20). However, no reference is made to the kings of the western side of the Jordan.

None of the names of the judges appear in the Psalms, but some of the events during this period are mentioned, e.g., the catastrophe at Shiloh (Ps. 78:60).

A popular topic is the kingship of David, e.g., Ps. 18:51 and 89:4-5. Particular events are also referred to, e.g., the bringing of the ark to Jerusalem (Ps. 132:1-10). Nothing is said about the period between the reign of David and the last Judean king, Zedekiah. However, the Babylonian exile is alluded to in several psalms, particularly 137.

Concerning the names of nations, the Egyptians are referred to most often, usually within the context of Israel's deliverance from slavery, e.g., Ps. 106:7 and 21. Edom is mentioned the second most (e.g., Ps. 60:10) followed by the Philistines (e.g., Ps. 83:8 [Philistia]). Tyre (e.g., Ps. 45:13) and Babylon (e.g., Ps. 137:1 and 8) are both referred to thrice. A positive attitude towards neighbouring nations is seldom attested in the Psalms. The exception is Ps. 87, e.g., verse 4, "I will record Rahab [i.e., Egypt] and Babylon among those who acknowledge me".

Regarding geographical names, Palestine is mentioned as "the land" (e.g., Ps. 65:10) or referred to as "Canaan" (e.g., 106:38). Mountains surrounding the land are often a topic of discussion, e.g., Lebanon (Ps. 29:5) and Hermon (Ps. 42:7). Zion, called "the holy hill" (e.g., Ps. 15:1) and "the hill of the Lord" (Ps. 24:3) is repeatedly referred to. Sinai is mentioned in Ps. 68:9 and Horeb in Ps. 106:19. Only the Jordan River features in the Psalms (e.g., 114:5), but several regions are mentioned, e.g., Ephrathah and the fields of Jaar (Ps. 132:6). Jerusalem (Ps. 51:20) also known as Zion (Ps. 2:6) and Salem (76:3) is referred to several times, but the other cities seldom. Those that are mentioned are include Endor (Ps. 83:11) and Shechem (Ps. 60:8).

The Egyptian landscape features in the Psalms, e.g., its rivers (Ps. 78:44), the Red or Reed Sea (Ps. 106:7) and its southern neighbours, Cush (Ps. 87:4) and Midian (Ps. 83:10).

Authors of the Psalms were aware of regions east of Canaan, e.g., Kedar (Ps. 120:5) within and Babylon (Ps. 137:1) outside the North-Arabic-Syrian desert. They were also familiar with Tarshish far away in the Mediterranean ocean (Ps. 48:8).

Seen as a whole, it can be inferred from the statistics that tribes and nations are mentioned most frequently in the Psalms. According to Van Selms, it is a remarkable proof that Israel and the OT demonstrate a strong collective orientation. In comparison, only a small number of cities are mentioned,

excepting Jerusalem. This feature possibly indicates the influence of the centralisation of the cult in 622 BCE.

In total the numerous mentioning of historical and geographical names in the Psalms is striking. The psalmists experienced the immediacy of God within each period of time, confessing His deeds of intervention. Subscripts of Psalms, although not statistically analysed by Van Selms, attempt to locate the psalms within specific historical eras. They present examples of early exegesis of the psalms, exhibiting a historical orientation. Van Selms agrees, together with Jan Ridderbos,<sup>64</sup> that modern interpreters of the psalms should always bear in mind that any psalm reflects a specific situation. Authors were convinced that God always reveals himself at a specific time and place. They believed that God was with them.

This point of view, however, could also be dangerous. Assuming the invincibility of Israel due to the belief that God (permanently) resided in his temple proved to be fatal during the time of Eli and Jeremiah. The mistake was to localise the presence of God too narrowly. Israel nevertheless remained the elected nation, a position not allotted to any other nation, be it ancient or modern. However, through Christ, one can believe nations may share in Israel's history and in the longing for the New Jerusalem.

### **5.19 Standing of the Old Testament scholarship, particularly in South Africa<sup>65</sup>**

In this article, Van Selms provides an overview of the standing of OT scholarship globally with cursory attention to South Africa.<sup>66</sup> In order to facilitate the reading of the contents,

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64 Ridderbos, J. 1955. *De Psalmen. Deel 1. Commentaar op het Oude Testament. (Deel I, psalm 1-41)*. Kampen: Kok.

65 Van Selms, A. 1959a. Die stand van die Ou-Testamentiese wetenskap, in sonderheid in Suid-Afrika, *HTS* 4:41-52. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v14i2/3.3755>

66 The paper was read at the first meeting of the Ou-Testamentiese Werkgemeenskap in Suid-Afrika [Old Testament Society of South Africa] in Pretoria.

background information regarding cited scholars is provided, occasionally marked by means of square brackets [ ].

At the start of the discussion, Van Selms refers to the views expressed by Joseph Ernest Renan [27 February 1823 – 2 October 1892], a French orientalist and Semitic scholar. Renan questioned the Semitic character of newly discovered Assyrian inscriptions. He also regarded OT exegesis as a depleted science which the young academic Franz Delitzsch tried to invigorate in vain. A similar view is ascribed to Julius Wellhausen [17 May 1844 – 7 January 1918], a German biblical scholar and orientalist and author of several books. Being an acknowledged authority [focusing in terms of the ‘documentary theory’ on the historical and social context of Biblical books], he regarded his own contributions as the final and ultimate progress of the OT science.

Contrary to the views of the above scholars, the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> century was a period of flourishing of OT studies. Several journals dedicated to this field were published, e.g., *Vetus Testamentum* [1951-], *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* [1881-], *Revue Biblique* [1892-], *Biblische Zeitschrift* [1903-] and *Biblica* [1920-].

Initially Germany was the main centre of OT studies. Ernst Sellin [26 May 1867 – 1 January 1946] stated at the beginning of the bibliography of his *Einleitung in das Alte Testament* (1910):<sup>67</sup> “We possess in Germany five great Evangelical commentary series of the whole Old Testament”. In addition (by way of a footnote), he also referred to two German Roman Catholic OT commentary series.

Other countries could not, during this period, match the German output. Scholars in Britain and the United States of America (USA) produced the *International Critical Commentary of the Old Testament* [1899-]. In other European countries commentaries of single Biblical books were published.

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67 Sellin, E. 1910. *Einleitung in das Alte Testament*. Leipzig: Verlag von Quelle und Meyer.



At the time of writing the article (1959), the above situation had changed. A new series within the German context was *Das Alte Testament Deutsch* [1949-], while older journals such as *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* [1881-] remained of great importance. However, international publications pertaining to the OT started appearing. Well-known authors included William Foxwell Albright [born 1891] and Millar Burrows [born 1889]. According to Van Selms, it was archaeology in particular that interested scholars in the USA. Robert Henry Pfeiffer's *Introduction to the Old Testament*<sup>68</sup> provided a kind of renaissance of German thinking ('denkbeelde') at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Scandinavian scholars who produced important contributions about the OT were Aage Bentzen [*Introduction to the Old Testament*, 1952], Sigmund Mowinckel, Johannes Pedersen [*Israel: Its Life and Culture*, 1946], Nathan Söderblom and Germanis Grönbeck.

Well-known English scholars with whom Van Selms was familiar were Samuel Rolles Driver [*An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament*, 1897], Harold H. Rowley [*The Re-Discovery of the Old Testament*, 1946], William Oscar Emil Oesterley [*The Jews and Judaism during the Greek Period: The Background of Christianity*, 1941] and Theodore Henry Robinson [co-editor with W O E Oesterley, *A History of Israel*, 1932].

Within Swiss circles there was a remarkable interest in the OT. The country produced OT scholars such as Walther Eichrodt, Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner [co-editors of *Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros*, 1953] as well as Wilhelm Vischer [*Das Christuszeugnis des Altes Testaments*, 1934].

France had a long tradition of OT scholars, e.g., featuring Edouard Paul Dhorme [*Choix de Textes Religieux Assyro-Babyloniens: Transcription, Traduction, Commentaire*, 1907] and Marie-Joseph Lagrange [a Dominican priest who in 1890 had founded the *École Biblique*, a school of advanced biblical

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68 Pfeiffer, RH. 1941. *Introduction to the Old Testament*. New York, NY: Harper & Brothers.

studies in Jerusalem]. A famous successor at École Biblique was Roland De Vaux. France is also known for the highly-rated journal, *Revue Biblique* [1946-].

Italy produced scholars such as G. Furlani [the Assyriology expert, S. Moscati [who focused on Semitic languages and cultures] and Giuseppe Ricciotti [*The History of Israel: From the Exile to A.D.*, 1958]. A series of course books had been published by the Pontifical Biblical School in Rome, titled *Analecta Orientalia*.

The Czechoslovak Oriental Institute produced the journal, *Analecta Orientalni*. Experts in Middle Eastern culture were Hrozný [orientalist and pioneer of Hittite studies] and his later successor Lubor Matouš.

During the period preceding 1959, the study of the OT flourished in Israel, particularly at the orthodox Bar-Ilan and the more secular-orientated Jerusalem university. Three prominent scholars were E.L. Sukenic [*The Dead Sea Scrolls of the Hebrew University*, 1955], H. Torczyner [*Lachish: The Lachish Letters*, 1938] and Michael Avi-Jonah [expert on Palestine archaeology].

Netherland scholars framed by Van Selms were Theodoor Christiaan Vriezen [*Hoofdpijnen der theologie van het Oude Testament*]<sup>69</sup> and P.A.H. De Boer [involved in the early stages of publishing *Oud Testamentische Studien*]. Furthermore, Herman N. Ridderbos and Willem Hendrik Gispen were co-founders of the series *Commentaar op het Oude Testament* [1948-], to which two Netherland scholars in South Africa, Barend Gemser and J.H. Kroeze, contributed.

South African born scholars are not named by Van Selms, but he does refer to the recently published [1958] edition of *Die Bybel met Verklarende Aantekeninge* [The Bible

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69 Vriezen, TC. 1949. *Hoofdpijnen der theologie van het Oude Testament*. Wageningen: Veenman & Sonen.

with Explanatory Notes],<sup>70</sup> co-authored by several South African scholars.

As far as a general approach towards the OT is concerned, Van Selms contrasts liberal Protestantism with Neo-Calvinism. As an author associated with a liberal point of view, Gerrit Wildeboer [1855-1911; *The Origin of the Canon of the Old Testament: An Historico-Critical Enquiry*] is quoted. Representing the more orthodox approach to Scripture, the oecumenical American School of Oriental Research [1900- ] is mentioned. This upheaval while writing the article was ascribed to a renewed interest in great cultures of the past and the newer philosophy, which had demonstrated that past scientific presuppositions were only suppositions and hypotheses that could be counter balanced by alternative suppositions and methods leading to different results.

Reference is also made to progress within Roman Catholic circles away from a previous fundamental attitude towards Scripture. Attention is once again drawn to the Pontifical Bible Institute in Rome and the École Biblique in Jerusalem. Contrary to the insistence on the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch reflected in a statement dated 27 June 1906, a recent view expressed by German Catholic theologian Gottfried Hoberg [died 19 January 1924], cited by Hubert Junker in *Das Buch Deuteronomium*,<sup>71</sup> is that “the Pentateuch is the product of the religious development within the people of revelation [‘openbaringsvolk’] from the time of Moses to the Babylonian exile”.

A tendency similar to the Roman Catholics is observed by Van Selms within the Jewish community. According to him, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century scholars who studied the OT from a scientific point of view were scarce. Most literature reflected a devotional attitude. The work of Abraham Geiger [considered the founding father of Reform Judaism], namely *Urschrift*

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70 *Die Bybel met verklarende aantekeninge*. 1958. Deel 1 (Genesis tot Esther) en Deel 2 (Job tot Malegi). Kaapstad: Verenigde Protestantse Uitgewers.

71 Junker, H. 1933. *Das Buch Deuteronomium*. Bonn: Hanstein.

*und Uebersetzungen der Bibel* (1857),<sup>72</sup> was the exception. However, paging through *Vetus Testamentum*, the number of Jewish contributors as well as the variety of approaches were significant. High-quality articles were also published in the Israel based journal, *Hebrew Union College Annual* [1924-].

The OT can no longer be regarded as “an isolated monument of the past”. Scholars need to know Babylonian and Ugaritic; Egyptian, if the focus is on older history; Hittite and Sumerian for background of the kingship and jurisprudence of Israel; a knowledge of Southern Arabic for cultic studies and Arabic and the twelve branches of Aramaic if lexicography and grammar are the objective. Those interested in textual criticism should be familiar with Greek, Latin, Ge‘ez [an ancient Ethiopic language], Armenian [written in its own writing system, introduced in 405 AD by the priest Mesrop Mashtots], Coptic [descended from ancient Egyptian and flourished during the period 325-c. 800 CE], Georgian [based on the Kartlian dialect and evident in literature from the 5<sup>th</sup> century CE] and Gothic [known primarily from the Codex Argenteus, a 6<sup>th</sup> century copy of a 4<sup>th</sup> century Bible translation].

Discoveries and deciphering of texts reflecting cultures of Ancient Middle Eastern countries broaden the context of Biblical studies. Attention is drawn to a legal text from Nuzi associated with the time of the patriarchs, prophecies in cuneiform tablets from Mari [trade centre and hegemonic state between 2900 BC and 1759 BC] and texts from Ugarit [12<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> century BCE] that are of particular importance for interpreting the Biblical psalms.

Reference is made to exegetical methods at the time of writing the article: the literary-historical approach and its later manifestation, the tradition-historical method; form-critical and religion-historical orientations and sociological foci, which Van Selms would associate himself.

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72 Geiger, A. 1857. *Urschrift und Uebersetzungen der Bibel*. Breslau: Verlag Hainauer.

Special attention is given to the value of Qumran texts for the study of the OT. They had been discussed in multiple articles, many (but not all) of which had been numerated in a *Bibliographie zu den Handschriften vom Totem Meer* by Christoph Burchard.<sup>73</sup> Qumran texts are particularly helpful for the study of textual criticism of the OT. Full texts, e.g., pertaining to Habakkuk, Samuel and the Psalms have become available, but also thousands of fragments published in the series *Discoveries in the Judean Desert* (volume 1, 1955) by D. Barthélemy and J.T. Milik.<sup>74</sup> Versions of texts based on the contents of Biblical books, such as a paraphrase of parts of Genesis, are also important for the study of Hebrew grammar and lexicography.

In addition, Semitic languages are valuable for the study of the NT. Future scholars would possibly benefit more by knowing Aramaic than Attic Greek [standard form of ancient Greek]. Attention should also be given to the Dead Sea scrolls. A helpful study was *The Dead Sea Scrolls*<sup>75</sup> by Millar Burrows.

Within the South African context, special tribute is paid to Barend Gemser who resided in South Africa for almost 30 years [1925-1955] as a lecturer in Semitic languages and OT. He was an inspiration for others (cf. subdivision 7.8).

At the time of writing the article, South African scholars had produced monographies, but some areas were identified by Van Selms as neglected. This included text critical studies as well as Palestinian geography and archaeology. An absence of source-related literature is given as a possible reason, which in turn may be due to the cost of publications of this nature.

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73 Burchard, C. 1957. *Bibliographie zu den Handschriften vom Totem Meer*. 2 vols. BZAW 76, 89. Berlin: Töpelmann. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783112314951>

74 Barthélemy, D & Milik, JT. 1955. *Discoveries in the Judean Desert*, volume 1. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

75 Burrows, M. 1955. *The Dead Sea Scrolls*. New York, NY: Viking Press.

## 5.20 The expression “Man of God” in the Bible<sup>76</sup>

In this article, Van Selms discusses contexts where the expression ‘man of God’ appears in the OT, NT and related literature.

The expression ‘man of God’ is used 75 times in the OT and 2-3 times in the NT. However, at the time of writing the article, the said expression had received almost no attention in scholarly literature.

In his overview of the functioning of ‘man of God’ in the OT, Van Selms chooses the presumed chronology of Biblical history as a guideline. OT figures with whom the expression is frequently associated are Moses, Samuel, David, Elijah and Elisha.

**Moses** is called ‘man of God’ six times in the OT. Deut. 33:1, regarded as relatively young by Van Selms, states, “This is the blessing that Moses the man of God pronounced on the Israelites before his death”. Another example is Josh. 14:6, a ‘post-Deuteronomist’ verse dependent upon Deut. 1:22 [referring to the sending of spies to do reconnaissance]: “Now the men of Judah approached Joshua at Gilgal, and Caleb ... [asking the inheritance promised to him] said, ‘You know what the Lord said to Moses the man of God at Kadesh Barnea about you and me.’”. Psalm 90:1, showing similarities to Deut. 32 and 33, announces that the song to be cited was “a prayer of Moses the man of God”.

According to Van Selms, in Deut. 33:1 and Ps. 90:1 the expression ‘man of God’ summarises all that the authors knew of Moses. In Josh. 14:6 the said phrase embodies the belief that Moses brought the word of God to Israel. These two generalisations also apply to the three remaining texts in the Biblical Chronicles that refer to Moses as the ‘man of God’. 1 Chron. 23:14 lists the ascendants of Moses the “man of God”, mirroring an appreciation of his conduct as a whole.

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76 Van Selms, A. 1959b. Die uitdrukking “Man van God” in die Bybel, *HTS* 15:133-149. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v15i2/3/4.3789>

2 Chron. 30:16 views Moses as mediator of the revelation of God, stating, “Then [during the reign of Hezekiah] they [the priests and Levites] took up their regular positions [for the slaughtering of the Passover lamb] as prescribed in the law of Moses the man of God”. Similar theological contexts can be assumed about Ezra 3:2: “Then Jeshua [...] and Zerubbabel [...] began to build the altar [...] in accordance to what was written in the Law of Moses the man of God”.

All six statements pertaining to Moses refer to traditions that were chronicled relatively late. Those referring to **Samuel** are deemed to have been preserved closer to the events themselves. 1 Sam. 9:6-10 uses the appellation ‘man of God’ four times when speaking of Samuel. Samuel is depicted as a person who has the gift of seeing and knowing what other persons do not see and know, e.g., “But the servant [of Saul] replied, look in the town there is a man of God [Samuel] ... Perhaps he will tell us what way to take [in order to find the lost donkeys].”

Characterisations of **David** as ‘man of God’ appear in sources that are regarded as late. Similar to Moses and Samuel, David is also typified as mediator of the revelation of God. 2 Chron. 8:14 states: “He [Solomon] also appointed the gatekeepers by divisions for the various gates [of the temple], because this what David the man of God has ordered”.

The prophet **Elijah** is called ‘man of God’ seven times by various people. He is twice addressed as man of God by the widow of Zarephath. When her son was dying, she reproached Elia (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?” But when life returned to her dead son after Elia had prayed to God, she said, “Now I know that you are a man of God and that the word of the Lord from your mouth is true.” These two occasions led Van Selms to decide that a man of God is presented as the mediator of divine revelation, and someone who affirms the truth of the revelation by means of miracles.

This point of view is supported by 2 Kings 1:9-11. Elijah is addressed as ‘man of God’ successively by three captains sent

by Ahaziah, king of Israel, to fetch Elijah. Ahaziah wanted to know whether he would recover from an injury. The first two captains ordered Elijah to come to the king and were consumed by fire. However, Elijah accompanied the third captain who begged Elijah to spare his life. The first two captains used the term man of God without considering the status of Elijah. Their respective deaths proved that Elijah was truly a man of God.

The appellation 'man of God' is applied at least 28 times to **Elisha**, the successor of Elijah. In 2 Kings 4:7, Elisha is introduced as man of God, telling the poor widow to whom the miracle of the abundant oil occurred, "Go and sell the oil and pay your debts. You and your sons can live on what is left." The term is also used, with the addition of the adjective 'holy', by a well-to-do woman of Shunem who told her husband, "I know that this man who often comes our way is a holy man of God. Let us make a small room on the roof [...] for him." Addressing Elisha, 'man of God' is repeated in 2 Kings 4:16 by the said childless Shunammite woman while expressing disbelief that she would hold a son in her hands "about this time next year". It is mentioned three more times by the author (4:21, 25, 27) when relating the subsequent episode of the said son's dying and returning to life again after Elisha's praying to God.

Elisha is also referred to as 'man of God' several times in 2 Kings 3:8, 14, 15, 20 by the editor when relating the event of the miraculous healing of the leprosy of Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Aram. The term is furthermore used in connection with Elisha (twice by people and once by the author) when narrating dialogues with Elisha as regards the illness of Ben-Hadad, king of Aram, as well as prophecies pertaining to his successor Hazael (2 Kings 8:7, 8, 11). Finally, in 2 Kings 13:19, it is stated in connection with Jehoash of Israel, "The man of God [i.e., Elisha] was angry with him and said, 'You should have struck the ground [with the arrows as requested] five or six times: then you would have defeated Aram and completely destroyed it. But now you will defeat it only three times.'".



Another prophet identified as ‘man of God’ is **Semaiah** who cautioned Rehoboam of Judah against fighting the Israelites (2 Kings 12:22-24, cf. 2 Chronicles 11:1-4). A few **unidentified prophets** are characterised in the same way. The appellation ‘man of God’ is applied in 1 Samuel 2:27 with regard to the prophet who foretold the fate of Eli and his sons. An unknown prophet from Judah is also mentioned 13 times in 1 Kings 13. He was commissioned to foretell doom to King Jeroboam of Israel, but allowed himself to be persuaded by an old prophet to transgress the prohibition not to eat bread after completing his mission (1 Kings 13:9). He fell prey to a lion that killed and devoured him (1 Kings 13:24-28). A third person called ‘man of God’ prophesied to King Ahab of Israel that he would defeat King Ben-Hadad of Aram (1 Kings 20:13, 22). A fourth example is found in 2 Chron. 25:7 and 9 referring to a prophet cautioning Amasiah of Judah not to make use of troops from North-Israel in his battle against the Edomites.

In Judg. 13:6 and 8 the title ‘man of God’ is used by Manoah and his wife (cf. Judg. 13:3, 16) when discussing the appearance of an **angel** of the Lord. The angel prophesied the birth of Samson and forbade the use of alcohol by both the mother and the son to be born.

The Septuagint, the Greek translation of the OT, renders the concept ‘man of God’ (*iš hā-ēlōhīm*) by means of the expression *anthrōpos tou theou*, but often replaces it with the personal name Elisha (e.g., 2 Kings 4:16 and 5:14). In the classical Latin version of the OT, the Vulgate, the term ‘man of God’ is translated both as *homo dei* (e.g., 1 Kings 13:4) and *vir dei* (e.g., 1 Kings 13:1).

Statistically viewed, the expression ‘man of God’ appears abundantly in the books of Kings (54 times), but once only in the Pentateuch (Deut. 33:1), the prophetic books (Jeremiah 35:4) and the poetic books (heading of Psalm 90). According to Van Selms, the term was, except for the Chronistic work, seemingly not in use in the exilic period.

Personal names consisting of the noun *iš* (or a comparable term) plus a divine appellation were not

uncommon. Biblical examples are Ish-Bosheth (2 Samuel 2:8) also referred to as Esh-Baal (1 Chron. 8:33) and Methushael ('Man of El', Genesis 4:18). In Babylonian-Assyrian the personal names Mutum-Ištar and Awil-Ili are found.

Theologically defined, 'man of God' accentuates his prophetic function. Such a person is not bound by national, tribal or other human relationships. Family life may even be forsaken as in the case of Samuel (1 Samuel 1:11, 28) or Elia (for whom no genealogy is supplied). A man of God is the representative of God among his people.

In the NT, the expression *anthrōpos tou theou* is used twice, namely 1 Tim. 6:11 (direct address) and 2 Tim. 3:17 (general statement). According to Van Selms, a Christian is a person who has loosened earthly fetters and has become the property of God (cf. Matt. 10:37), "Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me."

### **5.21 The book of the covenant of the justice of Goshen<sup>77</sup>**

In this article, Van Selms argues in favour of the Mosaic origin of the compilation of the laws expounded in the book of the covenant, Exodus 20:22-23:33. Contrary to scholars such as Noth,<sup>78</sup> he accepts Biblical evidence proclaiming Moses both as leader and legislator. Examples of ancient codification of laws are furnished by the Babylonians, Sumerians and Hittites.

Analysing the contents of the book of the covenant, Van Selms provides evidence that the laws do not reflect stipulations extant within a nomadic community. Laws regulate agriculture, e.g., Exodus 22:5 (grazing of livestock), 23:10 (leaving the land unploughed during the Sabbath year), 21:28 (bull injuring people), 21:33 (covering of a pit) and 22:3 (thief breaking in).

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77 Van Selms, A. 1961a. Die bondsboek van die reg van Goosen, *HTS* 16:329-343. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v16i4.3821>

78 Noth, M. [1950] 1966. *Geschichte Israels*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht.

Van Selms does not agree with theories relating the book of covenant to the stay of the Israelites at Kadesh Barnea during the sojourn through the desert. Neither does he agree that the laws were promulgated with a view to their stay in Canaan at some point in the future.

It is suggested that the casuistically formulated laws remind of the Canaanite statutes extant at Ugarit. The laws mention no jurisdiction by a central government as would have been the case if they were formulated during the monarchic period or the earlier reign of judges. The most acceptable theory for Van Selms is to assume that Jacob and his small tribe, when they came to stay in the area of Goshen, brought with them a legal tradition that had been influenced by Canaanite jurisprudence. The land of Goshen, probably identical with Wadi Tumilat (a 48 km strip of land), was suitable for sowing and the keeping of animals.

In support of his thesis that the book of the covenant originated in Goshen, Van Selms makes the following observations:

Some words used in the book of the covenant are not attested elsewhere in the Bible, e.g., *rāša'* (piercing of the ear).

The ancient origin of the book of the covenant is also evident in the rhythmic formulation of some laws, e.g., Exodus 21:2-11 repeatedly commencing with *im* ('if') and referring to masculine slaves and feminine slaves respectively by means of five sentences each.

Later additions to the laws may be ascribed to the hand of Moses, e.g., Exodus 23:9: "Do not oppress an alien [...] because you were aliens in Egypt."

As in the Hammurabi laws, the role of the Divine is acknowledged, e.g., Exodus 22:13: "However, if he does not do it [i.e., causing the death of a person] intentionally, but God lets it happen, he is to flee to a place I will designate." The book of the covenant also refers to Divine punishment in case of the ill-treatment of orphans and widows (Exodus 22:23-24). The conclusion to be drawn is that God has a higher regard

for justice than the existence of a nation, to which Van Selms adds the remark, “Hear Israel, hear South Africa!”

The God to whom the Israelites called in the time of persecution (Exodus 2:23) was still without name. Only later did He reveal Himself to Moses and Israel.

Van Selms concludes the article by stating that the Goshen hypothesis brings to the fore the figure of Moses both as reformer of the law and prophet.

## **5.22 Conviction and tolerance<sup>79</sup>**

In this article, Van Selms provides his own interpretation of the two concepts ‘conviction’ and ‘tolerance’, and elucidates their application within Near Eastern, OT, Islamic and Christian contexts.

‘Conviction’ can be the result of having been convinced of an alternative point of view. The strongest convictions, however, are those that have been arrived at without persuasion by others. Convictions should be distinguished from certitudes such as one’s age when there are documents to prove it. Convictions always comprised an element of personal preference. This subjective certitude is simultaneously a proof of an objective uncertainty. The person concerned experiences conviction as an overpowering feeling.

Any conviction also implies a counter conviction which may result in confrontation as proven in world history.

‘Tolerance’, on the other hand, is to acknowledge the right of the existence of an alternative point of view. Within the Ancient Near East, Sumerian, Egyptian and Greek people accepted the existence of local cults and city gods. The Philistines also tolerated the existence of old Canaanite gods next to their own gods of Aegean origin. The only monarch to enforce his religious views upon his country was Amenhotep IV [1353–1336] of Egypt, known as Akhenaton, who declared the

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79 Van Selms, A. 1961b. Oortuiging en verdraagsaamheid, *HTS* 17:113–122. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v17i2/3/4.3881>

sun god Aten as supreme deity. However, after two decades the traditional deity Amun again acquired national importance, and Akhenaton was stigmatised as the heretic king.

A second Middle Eastern example of religious intolerance pertains to Israel. Three stadia corresponding to historical periods can be distinguished.

The first stage can be typified by means of Deut. 6:4, "Hear Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one /alone". This emphasises the dissimilarity of the God of Israel, characterising him as unique and not part of any pantheon.

The second stage may be defined as henotheistic, implying that the God of Israel was the only one to be worshipped without specifically denying the reality of other deities, cf. Mic. 5:4, "All the nations may walk in the name of their gods; we will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever".

The third phase is purposeful monotheism, cf. the first-person statement in Isa. 45:22, "for I am God and there is no other". A polemical attitude towards other gods, regarded as idols, is demonstrated, cf. Ps. 115:3-4. "Our God is in heaven [...] but their idols are silver and gold, made by the hands of men". A complete intolerance is exhibited during the Maccabean period when the sanctuaries dedicated to idols were destroyed.

Christians were prosecuted by Roman emperors, but old Christian apologists exhibited a polemical attitude towards non-Christian religious conceptualisations, mocking them.

In Christian literature, Islam is usually portrayed as presenting the summit of intolerance. However, Christians and Jews are regarded as 'people of the Book' in the Qur'an, and [in early times] Jews were treated better in Muslim countries than in the West. Both Moses and Jesus are regarded as prophets by Islam, but Muhammad is not allocated a similar status within Judaism. In the history of Judaism, Christianity and Islam there are clear examples of people that were forcefully converted to

the respective religion, i.e., given the choice between either the sword or changing their belief.

The ideal is conviction paired with tolerance. There are four potential options that may be illustrated by means of different interpretations of John 14:6 where Jesus is said to have declared, “No-one comes [*erchetai*] to the Father except through me”.

The first option may be characterised as spiritual poverty. The person concerned makes no choice, has no clear conviction and does not associate with any religious community. No truth is absolute, not even John 14:6.

A second option is tolerance due to an absence of love. The person concerned has their convictions, regards alternative views as senseless, but has no interest in those with a different outlook or in their ultimate fate. To them, John 14:6 means: I come to the Father through Christ, and thus to salvation. Others who do not accept Christ, do not concern me.

Tolerance as a consequence of modesty is a third option, which may be regarded as a positive feature contrary to the attitudes reflected by the previous two convictions. The person concerned has a deep-rooted conviction based upon a personal understanding of the Bible and life. However, aware of the subjectivity of everything, accepts that others may arrive at different convictions based upon the same sources.

A fourth option, related to the third (modesty) and preferred by Van Selms, is tolerance of belief. The person concerned is convinced of their point of view and shares it with others. A fixed belief is coupled with love for fellow human beings. John 14:6 is experienced as a joyful eschatological prospect. Christ is confessed as objective reality with God and directed towards the world, independent of subjective convictions regarding him (Christ). Option four is thus a belief in the eventual triumph of the truth (revealed and presented by Christ).

## 6. Die Hervormer

*Die Hervormer* is a magazine published monthly since 1910. Thirty-one contributions (discussed in 28 sections, 6.1-6.28) of Van Selms were selected dating from 1939 to 1960. Eleven of them (1939-1940 and 1956) feature responses to theological questions of readers. Two of them (cf. 6.1 [1939] and 22 [1956]) were written with a view to the celebration of Christmas. A range of other topics are covered by the other articles, for example, a series regarding the future of Israel (cf. 6.6-8), theological issues (6.15 and 26) and matters relating to the organ (6.20), organists (6.21) and melodies of hymns (6.28).

### 6.1 Christmas sermon<sup>80</sup>

Reflecting on the meaning of Christmas, Van Selms uses as text Luke 2:12, “his will be a sign for you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger”. He also refers to the preceding verses, 10-12: “But the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.’”

Fear is common among all people, but the message to the shepherds is, ‘Do not fear’, communicated not by a man but by a holy angel of God. The content of the message is a sign. The shepherds would find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger. The context depicted is one of poverty. Israelites were expecting a glorious appearance of the Messiah, a majestic ruler (cf. Isa. 9:5(6)), but the shepherds are directed towards a manger and a baby. However, this baby was destined to become a Saviour.

Luke 2:12 and the following verses provide consolation also to modern man. God sent a Saviour in our midst, knowledgeable about life. In fact, in Christ, God meets us. Jesus is the proof of God’s love and mercy. In modesty, God’s glory is

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80 Van Selms, A. 1938. Kersfees-Oordenking, *Die Hervormer*, November 1938:7-9.

revealed. The task of the church is to take note of the Christmas events, worship and proclaim the message of the Gospel.

## 6.2 Shall we know our family in heaven?<sup>81</sup>

In response to a question whether family members would know each other in heaven like on earth, Van Selms opines that it would be the case. He bases his view on 1 John 3:2, “Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.” Van Selms even surmises that we would know one another better and love each other more than had been the case on earth. Affection would, however, not be limited to family members. Matt. 22:30 reports that Jesus said, “At the resurrection people will neither marry or be given in marriage; they will be like angels in the heaven.”

## 6.3 Mark of Cain<sup>82</sup>

Van Selms responds to a question whether the sign received by Cain from God (Gen. 4:15) as protection from vengeance for the murder of his brother could be linked to the seal on the foreheads of the servants of God to safeguard them from harm mentioned in Rev. 7:2. Did it mean that God had forgiven him for the murder of his brother? And could Cain thus be categorised as child of God?

The answer of Van Selms was that Cain was thereby forgiven for the murder of his brother, but his eventual fate is unknown due to a lack of Biblical information.

However, he would not link the sign [Hebrew, *'ot*, Greek Septuagint, *sēmeion*] of Cain to the seal [Greek, *sphragida*] referred to in Rev. 7:2. The seal given to the servants of God in Rev. 7:2 is elucidated in Rev. 14:1 as containing the name of the Lamb and the Father.

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81 Van Selms, A. 1939c. Sal ons familie in die hemel ken?, *Die Hervormer*, Oktober 1939:21.

82 Van Selms, A. 1939a. Die Kainsteken, *Die Hervormer*, November 1939:19.



#### 6.4 Deserted by friends<sup>83</sup>

In an untitled section following the 'sign of Cain' theme, Van Selms was asked why best friends desert one in time of need and whether experiencing distress was a sign that one was not a child of God.

In response, Van Selms emphasises that suffering should not be interpreted as sign that one is not a child of God. Believers often suffer more than disbelievers. Examples from the OT are the histories of Joseph (Gen. 37-45) and Jeremiah (19:7-18) as well as Psalm 73 and Isa. 53. In the NT, the suffering of the Apostle Paul is frequently mentioned (cf. 1 Cor. 4:9-13 and 2 Cor. 11:23-30).

Friends deserting one another in time of need show that they were not true friends. True friends are willing to sacrifice their lives for one another (e.g., John 15:13 referring to Jesus).

#### 6.5 Was the Gospel proclaimed to the deceased?<sup>84</sup>

In response to this question, Van Selms discusses the interpretation of 1 Pet. 3:19 and 4:6.

1 Pet. 3:18b and 19 state: "He [Christ] was put to death in the body but made alive by the spirit, through whom/which also he went and preached to the spirits in the prison".

1 Pet. 4:6 states: "For this reason the gospel was preached even to those who are dead, so that they might be judged according to men in regard to the body, but live according to God in the spirit".

The latter verse (4:6) is interpreted by Van Selms as referring to the preaching of Christ to those who are presently dead. In this regard Van Selms draws attention to 1 Pet. 4:5, "But they

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83 Van Selms, A. 1939d. Verlaat deur vriende, *Die Hervormer*, November 1939:19.

84 Van Selms, A. 1939b. Is die Evangelie aan die Dode verkondig? *Die Hervormer*, Desember 1939:11-12.

will have to give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead”.

A similar interpretation is suggested for 1 Pet. 3:19. The spirits in the prison to whom Christ preached are the unbelieving people who are presently dead. ‘Prison’ refers to the place of judgement.

## 6.6 The future of Israel according to the Bible (parts 1-3), Old Testament prophecies<sup>85</sup>

In a set of articles comprising five parts—discussed in three portions (cf. 6.6-6.8) in the present study—Van Selms provides an introduction and then discusses the future of Israel from the viewpoint of OT prophecies.

He commences with an **Introduction** (part 1) referring to the current interest (1939) in the topic.

Examples are given of the persecution of Jews by the Russians, and discrimination in European countries such as Germany, Italy and Rumania. To escape from ill-treatment, Jews have fled to various countries, creating refugee problems.

Some of them chose to reside in Israel, particularly after World War I (1919). These Zionists have contributed to the progress of Palestine by building cities and improving the agriculture. A remarkable feature is also the revival of the Hebrew language spoken by thousands of children at the time of the writing of the article. The resettlement of Jews in Israel leads to the question whether Zech. 3:1 is not being fulfilled: “In that day each of you will invite his neighbour to sit under his vine and fig tree”. At the opening of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem (1925), a Jewish rabbi experienced at the occasion a resemblance to Isa. 60:4, “Lift up your eyes and look about

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85 Van Selms, A. 1939e. Die toekomst van Israel volgens die Bybel (deel 1). Inleiding, *Die Hervormer*, Desember 1939:9-10; and Van Selms, A. 1940a. Die toekomst van Israel volgens die Bybel (deel 2 en 3). Ou-Testamentiese profesieë, *Die Hervormer*, Januarie 1940:14-17.

you: All assemble and come to you; your sons come from afar, and your daughters are carried on the arm”.

In the **second article** (part 2), however, Van Selms warns against using only a few verses from Daniel, Ezekiel, Isaiah or Zechariah when applying prophecies to present day situations. According to him, all OT prophecies were fulfilled in Christ.

In support of his view attention is drawn to a few Biblical passages. Commenting on Isa. 61:1-2, Jesus stated (Luke 4:21): “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.” Promises made to Israel (e.g., freedom to prisoners, release of the oppressed) were fulfilled by the coming of Christ. However, the fulfilment was the object of belief as spiritual reality. Acts 3:24 quotes the apostle Peter saying, “Indeed all the prophets from Samuel on, as many as have spoken, have foretold these days”. Promises to Israel in Amos 9:11-12 (rebuilding of David’s fallen hut; Gentiles bearing the name of the Lord) are associated with Christ and applied by James (15:15-17) in support of accepting Gentiles as members of the church. The church, glorying in Christ, is called by Paul the spiritual Israel in Phil. 3:3 and the Jerusalem above in Gal. 4:26.

A similar kind of reasoning is also followed in the **third article** (part 3). Prophecies predating or written during the exile have a contemporary bearing, foreseeing the return of Israel to the Holy Land, e.g., Mic. 4:1, “The mountain of the Lord’s temple will be established [...] and people will stream to it”. Such a resettlement of Israel indeed took place in the time of Zerubbabel and Nehemiah (537-432 BCE). However, hyperbolic statements such as those found in Isa. 49 (e.g., verse 7, ‘Kings will see you and rise up’) and Ezek. 47 (water streaming from the temple mount becomes a torrent) have been spiritually realised by the coming of Christ.

A second return to Israel in modern times was not prophesied by Biblical authors. Zech. 10:9-10 refers to the gradual resettlement during the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE in Palestine by exiled Jews from the north and east.

Apocalyptic literature, e.g., the visions of Daniel (7-8 and 10-11), primarily reflect occurrences in Palestine after

Alexander the Great [20/21 July 356 BCE – 10/11 June 323 BCE]. They do not prophesy future events after the coming of Christ. A common trend in apocalyptic literature is to foresee the world history coming to an end with a battle of the nations against Jerusalem and God interceding and destroying the enemy. A typical description is found in Ezek. 38 and 39, mentioning Gog and Magog. They should not be associated with present (1939) countries or policies (such as Russian communism), but foretell that all powers will be judged by God leading to the salvation of his congregation.

#### **6.7 The future of Israel according to the Bible (part 4). Promises in the New Testament<sup>86</sup>**

In part 4, Van Selms discusses promises mentioned in Revelations, the Gospels and the letters of Paul.

Revelations is phrased in figurative language, proclaiming the judgement of God upon those who refuse to accept the Gospel and the salvation of the elected people. Focus is on the kingdom of the Lord and his Christ (Rev. 11:15).

The Gospels [e.g., Mark 13] prophesy the fall of Jerusalem and the end of the world, but do not specify any date.

It is only in the letters of Paul, particularly Romans, that the future of Israel is discussed in detail. Rom. 11:25 states "I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in". Conclusions drawn are firstly that Paul has the spiritual wellbeing of Israel in mind. Secondly, the hardening of Israel has been predestined by God so that the Gospel may be proclaimed to the Gentiles. Thirdly, the salvation of Israel has been postponed, but not excluded. Rom. 11:27 (cf. Isa. 59:20) states: "And this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins". Finally, Van Selms observes that Christians

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86 Van Selms, A. 1940b. Die toekoms van Israel volgens die Bybel (deel 4). Beloftes in die Nuwe Testament, *Die Hervormer*, Maart 1940:7-9.

should be disturbed by the slow progress of missionary work among the Jews.

### **6.8 The future of Israel according to the Bible (part 5). Our attitude towards Judaism<sup>87</sup>**

In part 5, Van Selms makes a few general observations regarding Christians' attitude towards Jewish people.

The Bible provides no information about the economic and political future of Israel. A neutral attitude towards Zionism is suggested. Objections raised against it in 1940 was inter alia that it was a-religious. According to Van Selms, the Jewish nation had (after the coming of Christ) no special place in the overall plan of God with the world. A Christian, however, should not despise a Jew. Jews and Christians should appreciate one another, but that does not imply encouraging inter-marriage between members of these religious persuasions. Jews as well as Afrikaners and Hollanders should not denounce their own nationalities. Jewish people, subjected to suppression, have developed many competencies during the course of time, which they should not be denied. However, dishonest business practices among Jews and non-Jews are unacceptable. Christians have a missionary obligation towards Jews, in such a way that the converted Jews still retain their national identity.

### **6.9 Revelations 17: Meaning of the animal, woman and kings<sup>88</sup>**

In response to a question, Van Selms provides a context (within Roman history) for the animal, woman and kings and accompanying events detailed in Rev. 17.

The woman represented the city of Rome (Rev. 17:18) which was at the pinnacle of its might at the time Revelation

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87 Van Selms, A. 1940c. Die toekoms van Israel volgens die Bybel (deel 5). Ons houding teenoor die Jodendom, *Die Hervormer*, April 1940:9-10.

88 Van Selms, A. 1940h. Openbaring 17: Betekenis van die dier, vrou en konings, *Die Hervormer*, April 1940:14-15.

was written. The scarlet beast with its seven heads represented the hills upon which Rome was built, but also seven Roman kings dating from August (27-14 CE) to Titus (79-81 CE). An eighth king was also added: Domitian [81-96 CE], the greatest persecutor of Christians. The ten horns of the beast stood for the ten satrap kings of the Parthian empire.

The aim of the depictions in Rev. 17 was, according to Van Selms, to prophesy that the devilish powers would not be able to overpower the kingdom of Christ.

### **6.10 Can the deceased return to the earth?<sup>89</sup>**

Van Selms was asked whether the deceased could physically return to the earth. Biblical evidence appears to be ambiguous.

The possibility is seemingly attested by 1 Sam. 28:14 and Isa. 8:19. 1 Sam. 28:14-15 describes the appearance of Samuel to Saul through the mediation of the witch of Endor. Isa. 8:19 advises people to enquire of their God, asking, “Why consult the dead on behalf of the living?”

According to Luke 16:27-29, on the other hand, the dead cannot communicate with the living. In the parable of Lazarus and the rich man, the latter’s request to send Lazarus to warn his five brothers was denied by Abraham.

In response, Van Selms declared that the appearance of spirits of the deceased is indeed possible. Samuel did appear to Saul, while Isaiah mentions the possibility without saying that spirits were really successfully consulted. Luke 16:27 leaves the option open, but rules out the physical returning of the dead to the earth (cf. verse 30).

Van Selms adds two remarks to the above interpretation. Firstly, the deceased are in the hand of God and man is not able to let spirits appear at his own discretion. Secondly, it should be borne in mind that God forbids the consultation of the

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89 Van Selms, A. 1940e. Kan afgestorwenes na die aarde terugkeer?, *Die Hervormer*, Mei 1940:16-17.

spirits of the deceased. 1 Chron. 10:13 in fact condemns Saul's seeking guidance from a dead person's spirit [*'ōb*].

### 6.11 Regarding Spiritism and Methodism<sup>90</sup>

Van Selms was asked to explain spiritism and to comment on the statement that Methodism leads to sectarianism.

Spiritism is understood by Van Selms as consultation of the deceased, which he accepts in theory, but only when God gives the order. He furthermore doubts the veracity of information thus obtained regarding life after death and warns against deceit.

Methodism (originally an Evangelical revival movement), in his opinion, focuses on human emotion, neglecting the doctrine of the church, and thus opens the door for heretic views.

### 6.12 The rock, copper snake, total destruction, buried with Christ through baptism into death<sup>91</sup>

Being questioned about a range of subjects, Van Selms responds to each matter individually.

Asked whether Moses really had to speak to a rock as reported in Num. 20, Van Selms replies in the affirmative. However, he prefers to translate *wě-dibbartem el-ha-sela' lě-ēnē-hem* in verse 8 as "address the rock before their eyes". Emphasis is on the omnipotence of the Word of God; it is not the rock that obeyed.

A similar argument is used by Van Selms in connection with the copper or bronze snake referred to in Numbers 21:8. Moses was ordered to make the snake and put it up on a pole so that anyone among the Israelites who was bitten by a venomous snake survived. It was, however, not the snake that

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90 Van Selms, A. 1940g. Oor Spiritisme en Metodisme, *Die Hervormer*, Junie 1940:10-11.

91 Van Selms, A. 1940d. Die rots, die koperslang, die ban en die begrawing deur die doop in die dood, *Die Hervormer*, Julie 1940:10-12.

cured the people, but God. People wrongly ascribed magical powers to the snake, even burning incense to it during the reign of Hezekiah, king of Judah (2 Kings 18:8).

Total destruction, i.e., the killing of people and animals (cf. 1 Samuel 15:3) and burning of the city while preserving precious articles (Josh. 6:24), was received and interpreted as an order of God and had to be obeyed. Achan who disobeyed and kept some of the goods (Josh. 7:21) out of greed was put to death together with his family and cattle and then burned. Instructions from God had to be carried out meticulously. However, destruction was not always commanded in OT times. In 2 Kings 6:22, it is recounted how Elisha told the king of Israel to treat well the captured Aramean army. Furthermore, total destruction is not mentioned in the NT. Rom. 12:1 asks for personal self-dedication.

Rom. 6:4 refers to being buried with Christ through baptism into death, then experiencing being raised through the glory of the Father into a new life. The ritual indicated the passing from one form of existence (Jew or heathen) into a new way of life. Most importantly, however, was not the external ceremony (i.e., being immersed in water) but the spiritual reality. Baptism, according to Van Selms, was the sign of God's intervention in favour of man.

### **6.13 People who ascended to heaven<sup>92</sup>**

A reader asked Van Selms' commentary on an apparent discrepancy between statements in the OT and the NT.

According to Gen. 5:24, "Enoch walked with God; then he was no more, because God had taken him away [*lāqah*]". Similarly regarding the prophet Elijah, it is said: "And he went up [*wa-ya'al*] to heaven".

To the contrary, in John 3:13 Jesus (speaking to Nicodemus) is quoted to have said: "No-one [*oudeis*] has ever

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92 Van Selms, A. 1940f. *Mense wat na die hemel opgevaar het, Die Hervormer*, Augustus 1940:15.



gone [*anabebēken*]) into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man.”

In response, Van Selms suggests that ‘No-one [*oudeis*]’ should be paraphrased as ‘No-one on earth whom you could consult’.

#### **6.14 Once more: The Christian church year<sup>93</sup>**

As follow-up to an article by Reverend Joh. Dreyer, ‘Our Christian church year’, Van Selms adds a few suggestions.

He firstly comments on *Dominica Trinitatis*, Trinity Sunday, commemorated the Sunday after Pentecost. According to Van Selms, it is the day on which the totality of all the gifts received through the mercy of Christ is celebrated, honouring the Trinity. The topic should be elucidated in sermons and appropriate hymns (e.g., one of the first three hymns in the 1946 hymn book) should be sung.

Secondly, attention is given to the civilian New Year’s Day. Strictly speaking, the first Sunday of Advent should be observed as New Year’s Day in the church. However, falling a week after Christmas, New Year’s day has been linked in Christian tradition to the circumcision of Christ eight days after his birth (cf. Luke 2:21). Simultaneous with this event, Luke mentions that the infant Jesus received his name which the angel had given him before. Van Selms thus suggests that the latter be given attention by way of sermons. Alternatively, Gal. 4:4-5 could be considered. The verses refer to Jesus “born under the law, to redeem those under the law”. Adherence to the prescriptions regarding circumcision illustrate the subjugation of Jesus (according to his humanity) to the law of Moses.

Thirdly, in the northern hemisphere, on Sundays within the month November (the beginning of winter) death and eternity were reflected upon. In South Africa, lying in the

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93 Van Selms, A. 1946. Nog ‘n keer: Die Christelike kerkjaar, *Die Hervormer*, Junie 1946:4-5.

southern hemisphere, the appropriate month would be May. In November, summer commences.

### 6.15 The Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life<sup>94</sup>

The article is announced as being an excerpt from the 10<sup>th</sup> chapter of Van Selms' book, *Licht uit licht* (Light from Light; published in 1948), which provides an exposition of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed.

Regarding the Holy Ghost, the creed states: "And [I believe] in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of Life, Who proceeds from the Father and the Son; Who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified".

Van Selms commences the discussion by quoting John 4:24, "God is spirit [*pneuma*], and his worshippers must worship in spirit and truth". In the Nicea creed, 'God is spirit' is interpreted as referring to the Holy Ghost, although the epithet 'Holy' also applies to the Father and Son. The adjective 'Holy' is not meant to draw a line between the Spirit, Father and Son, but to distinguish the Spirit from all creatures. He is called the Comforter ('Trooster') in John 16:7, although the Greek word (*paraklētos*) can also be rendered as 'The One who Intercedes' (cf. Rom. 8:26) and 'The One Who Inspires'.

The appellation 'Spirit' refers particularly to the self-revelation of God in the heart of man. 'Spirit' can be associated with the giving of life and divine power. This dimension of 'Spirit' is elucidated by the Hebrew equivalent *rūah*. In Isa. 31:3, for example, the statement is made: "But the Egyptians are men and not God; their horses are flesh and not spirit [*rūah*]". Referring to God as 'Spirit' also brings to mind the idea of an unwavering and powerful 'Will'. In some places in the Bible, the appellation 'Holy Spirit' can be substituted by the expression 'Holy Will'. Thus argued, 'Holy' may also be descriptive of God's 'Will'.

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94 Van Selms, A. 1947. Die Heilige Gees, die Heer en Lewendmaker, Die *Hervormer*, Mei 1947:3-5.

The 'Holy Spirit' alone should be worshipped and to Him our lives should be dedicated. Van Selms criticises Goethe's statement that those who possess science and art also have religion. A clear distinction should be made between the Holy Spirit and all other spirits. In his conversation with Nicodemus, Jesus characterises the event of being born again as "born of the Spirit" (John 3:8). Rom. 8:26 states that "the Spirit intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express". The Holy Spirit is active in the lives of believers and should not be resisted, but honoured as Lord and Giver of Life.

### 6.16 Christ in Leviticus<sup>95</sup>

The present article uses Lev. 1:1-2 as its point of departure: "And He called [*wa-yiqrā'*] Moses, and the Lord spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting. He said: 'Speak to the Israelites and say to them: 'When any of you brings an offering [*qorbān*] to the Lord, bring as offering an animal from either the herd or flock.'"

According to Van Selms, it was the third time that God called Moses. The first time was when He sent Moses to Egypt to deliver the people from slavery (Ex. 3:10)]. The second time was at Sinai when the law was promulgated [Ex. 19:20]. At these occasions focus was on God's salvation, obedience to the law and cultic specifications. Emphasis in Leviticus falls on the latter, providing minute details of the way God had to be venerated. These cultic requirements function, in Van Selms' view, as a prophecy of the events pertaining to Jesus. The statement in Heb. 10:1, "The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming", also has bearing upon cultic matters.

Lev. 1:1 and what follows were revealed by God Himself speaking from the Tent of Meeting. However, this does not rule out Phoenician influence. They designed and built the temple of Solomon, and it can be presumed that many sacrificial customs were of Phoenician origin. Revelation need not always bring something new; it may affirm what already exists. On

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95 Van Selms, A. 1948. Christus in Levitikus, *Die Hervormer*, September 1948:3-4.

the other hand, many practices of surrounding nations were strictly forbidden, for example shrine-prostitution (Deut. 23:18).

### **6.17 Oldest Jerusalem<sup>96</sup>**

The oldest inhabitants of Jerusalem were the Jebusites, but the area where they resided is situated outside the present Jerusalem. According to Van Selms, Jerusalem is almost encircled by two streams respectively in the Gehinnom and Kidron valleys. And within them are two ranges to the west and the east. The eastern range has three mountainous elevations namely the Temple Mount, 'Ofel' and Jebus, also known as the City of David. Close to the most northern part of the eastern mountain is a fountain. And close to the fountain is where the first inhabitants stayed, living in a city of approximately 1610 metres by 480 metres. Although small, the city was nevertheless fortified. A picture is shown of a remnant of one of the walls as well as a turret. Van Selms suggests that the wall was erected by the Jebusites and the turret by David or Solomon. The Jebusite site lies outside Jerusalem at present due to the Roman emperor Hadrian (117-138 CE), who rebuilt the city (shifting it more to the north) and calling it Aelia Capitolina.

### **6.18 The new Isaiah scroll<sup>97</sup>**

Van Selms draws attention to the newly discovered Isaiah scroll, and in particular to chapter 53 of the Qumran text. Comparing it with the commonly used Masoretic edition, he discovered 71 variant readings, mostly pertaining to the spelling of words. Among them he regarded 16 as grammatically important and 18 that may affect traditional translations. In six cases the word 'and' was added to the Biblical text. Van Selms expresses the wish that future

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96 Van Selms, A. 1950b. Oudste Jerusalem, *Die Hervormer*, Januarie 1950:1.

97 Van Selms, A. 1950a. Die nuwe Jesajarol, *Die Hervormer*, September 1950:1.

translations consider amending the Masoretic text in accordance with the Isaiah scroll.

A few verses are discussed in detail.

Verse 3 according to the Masoretic text refers to the sufferer as “knowledgeable [passive participle] of suffering”, while the Isaiah scroll option can be rendered as “knowing [active participle] suffering”.

Verse 5 is rendered by the Masoretic text as “through his wound we are healed”, while the Isaiah scroll renders the phrase as “through his wounds we are healed”.

Verse 8 is rendered by the Masoretic text as “for the transgression of my people he was stricken”, while the Isaiah scroll renders the phrase as “through the transgression of his people he was stricken”.

Verse 12 is rendered by the Masoretic text as “for he bore the sin of many”, while the Isaiah scroll renders the phrase as “he bore the sins of many”.

### 6.19 The Calvinism of the First Settlement<sup>98</sup>

Van Selms provides an overview of the theological tendencies in the Netherlands from the 17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century and then pays attention to the kinds of Calvinism extant in the Cape since the arrival of Jan van Riebeeck. Van Selms constantly referred to the diary of Van Riebeeck<sup>99</sup> as his source. The focus of the diary was not personal matters, but factual reports.

Generally seen, Van Selms finds none of the characteristics of puritanism portrayed in Van Riebeeck’s conduct. The clothes he wore had a fine texture; and tobacco and alcoholic drinks were generously distributed. Sundays had a religious character, but, if necessary, wine was delivered on Sundays and cattle traded.

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98 Van Selms, A. 1952a. Die Calvinisme van die Eerste Nedersetting, *Die Hervormer*, April 1952:8.

99 Van Riebeeck, J [edited by HB Thom]. 1952. *Journal of Jan Van Riebeeck: Volume 1-3*. 1952. Cape Town: Balkema.

As head of the community, Van Riebeeck also played a leading role in external matters of the church. He was flexible about his Calvinistic convictions and was not in favour of the church exerting too great influence on governmental matters. Van Riebeeck was furthermore patient and forgiving in his relationship with the indigenous population. Van Selms ascribes to him the qualities listed in Col. 3:12 (compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience).

### **6.20 Where do we build the organ?<sup>100</sup>**

Van Selms commences the article by asking who is to decide where the organ should be placed within the church. Congregations usually allow the architect to determine this. And the latter chooses to place the organ pipes behind the pulpit. However, Van Selms opines that the position of the organ as a whole should preferably be at the side of the church building. He also criticises the custom of placing the organ as a musical instrument on a gallery above the pulpit. This prevents the organist from having direct contact with the preacher.

From a liturgical point of view, Van Selms makes the observation that the organ and the organist should be situated within the congregation. The singing of the people and the musical accompaniment should be directed towards the pulpit where the Word of God is preached.

### **6.21 Report of the first conference of organists, pastors and church councils<sup>101</sup>**

At a congress held at Krugersdorp [presently Mogale City] on Tuesday, 31 March 1953 attention was given to the place of music and song within a church service. The event was organised by the Council for Church Music of the Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk (Dutch Reformed Church of Africa) under

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100 Van Selms, A. 1952b. Waar bou ons die orrel? *Die Hervormer*, April 1952:9.

101 Van Selms, A. 1953. Verslag van die eerste konferensie van orreliste, predikante en Kerkrade, *Die Hervormer*, Julie 1953:7.

the chairmanship of Van Selms. Various matters received attention, e.g., the collaboration between the pastor, organist and church council.

Van Selms was asked to hold a liturgic service. The contents of the service are not reported, attention is only given to the structure of the service consisting of an introduction, continuation ('deurgang') and exit. On eight occasions the congregation was asked to participate through the singing of hymns. The chosen portion of Scripture was Isa. 53:1-8 to which was added the reading of article 21 (redemption through Christ) of the Dutch or Belgic Confession of Faith.

After a tea-break, Van Selms also addressed the meeting to explain the meaning and function of a liturgic service, stating that it was a service in which everyone participated. He advised pastors to inform organists beforehand about the theme of the service so that they could choose hymns that would be in harmony with the focus of the service. When appointing an organist, church councils should not select the best qualified person, but rather the organist that would fit in best within the congregational context. Organists should be paid well and should be provided with music books.

## **6.22 A visit to Bethlehem<sup>102</sup>**

The article, intended as contribution to the 1955 Christmas edition of *Die Hervormer*, was, according to the author of *Die Hervormer*, received too late and thus published in January 1956. At the time of writing the most important sanctuaries of Christianity were not situated in the state of Israel, but in Jordan. According to Van Selms, visitors preferably accessed Bethlehem by a small plane landing at an airfield slightly north of Jerusalem after departing from Beirut in Lebanon. Previously, it was possible to walk from Jerusalem to Bethlehem, a journey of an hour and a half by foot.

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102 Van Selms, A. 1956. 'n Besoek aan Bethlehem, *Die Hervormer*, Januarie, 1956:20-21.

Van Selms complains about a street used by cars and busses running through Bethlehem. However, there were still small alleys left with steps and arches over the streets.

For the purpose of the article, sole attention is given to the Church of Nativity, commemorating the place where Jesus was born according to tradition. Visitors enter it through a small gate and porch. However, the interior of the church was experienced by Van Selms as impressive, characterising it as a majestic basilica— a large church with a curved end and two rows of columns inside. It was built in the 4<sup>th</sup> century at the initiative of Helen (246-330 CE), mother of Constance the Great; while Emperor Justin (6<sup>th</sup> century CE) is credited for the mosaic tiles covering the floor. A gate, passage beneath the floor and descending steps provided entrance to a cave approximately 11 x 3.7 metres and a silver inscription stating that this was the place where the Virgin Mary gave birth to Jesus Christ. The cave was decorated by many ceremonial lamps and small paintings, and at the side was a marble manger. The Bible does not mention that Jesus was born in a cave. Luke 2 only refers to Jesus being placed in a manger after birth. This, however, does not exclude the possibility of a cave because, according to Van Selms, cattle were often sheltered in caves during that time.

### **6.23 Were animals torn to pieces [i.e., killed by one another] in the Paradise?<sup>103</sup>**

In response to a reader's question, Van Selms discusses whether death (particularly among animals) occurred during the time of Adam and Eve's sojourn in Paradise before their sin, and the pronouncing of God's curse upon the earth (Gen. 3:14). He expresses the conviction that death was not unknown in Paradise. Gen. 2:17 refers to the death of humans, but presupposes the existence of death (among plants and animals): "...when you [Adam and Eve] eat from it [tree of knowledge of good and evil] you will surely die". To elucidate

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103 Van Selms, A. 1958b. Is diere in die paradys verskeur?, *Die Hervormer*, Januarie 1958:6-7.



his point of view, Van Selms also cited NT passages that exclusively refer to the death of man due to sin, e.g., Rom. 6:23, 1 Cor. 15:21 and James 1:15. The OT prophesy in Isa. 11 (cf. verse 6: 'the wolf will lie with the lamb ...') focuses on future glory and not the re-establishment of Paradise circumstances. Van Selms opines that death in general was ordained by God, but for man it is an unnatural event. If sin had not occurred, a human being would possibly have been taken away (cf. Enoch, Gen. 5:24) or gone up (as Elijah, 2 Kings 11:11) at a certain stage.

#### **6.24 Regarding inherited sin<sup>104</sup>**

In response to a question in the January edition of *Die Hervormer*, Van Selms elucidates a remark of his that appears in his book, *Lig uit Lig* [Afrikaans version of *Licht uit Licht*, published in 1952]: "Inherited sin is no sin and is not inherited". The focus point of his explanation is the interpretation of Psalm 51:7, "In iniquity [*bě-‘āwōn*] I was brought to birth, and my mother conceived me in sin [*bě-ḥēṭ*']". According to Van Selms, the poet of Psalm 51:7 intended to say: 'As far as he can go back into his life, even to his existence as unborn child, he always discovers the power of sin, the condition in which each person lives'. The expressions 'in iniquity' and 'in sin' are important. The verse makes hyperbolic statements. No person has any recollection of their being as unborn child.

The Calvinistic point of view is that each soul (i.e., person) is a creation of God, practically cancelling the doctrine of the inherited sin, while the Lutheran viewpoint is that the soul of a child originates from the souls of his or her parents.

#### **6.25 Pulpit and table for Holy Communion<sup>105</sup>**

Sermon and sacraments are part of a church service. The question is, however, where the pulpit and the table for Holy

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104 Van Selms, A. 1958c. Oor die erfsonde, *Die Hervormer*, Maart 1958:8-9.

105 Van Selms, A. 1958d. Preekstoel en nagmaaltafel, *Die Hervormer*, Mei 1958:8.

Communion should be placed. Different views were expressed by Van Selms and a pastor of the Hervormde Kerk.

In order to accentuate the importance of the sacraments in addition to the preaching of the Word, Van Selms suggests that they be placed next to one another in front of the church. This would imply moving the pulpit slightly to the side, away from the centre of the church.

The alternative is to keep the pulpit in the centre and to place the table for Holy Communion to the right in front of the pulpit. By doing so, the table for Holy Communion would thus be situated between the pulpit and the congregation, leading to practical problems at occasions when people gather in front of the pulpit.

### **6.26 The origin of the word 'Bible'**<sup>106</sup>

In this two-page article, Van Selms discusses the origin of the word 'Bible'.

The Afrikaans word 'Bybel' is derived from the Netherlands word 'Bijbel', as used by the 'Statenvertaling' (first print 1637 CE), a translation of the Bible by order of the Netherlands parliament known as the 'Staten-Generaal'.

Bijbel / Bybel in turn is derived from *Biblia*, plural of the diminutive of the Greek word *Biblos* which again relates to the name Byblos, an ancient Phoenician city 32 km north of Beirut, the capital of Lebanon. From this city, papyrus, the forerunner of paper, was imported.

The plural form *Biblia* (singular of *to biblion*) reflects the time when the Bible consisted of multiple manuscripts.

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106 Van Selms, A. 1958a. Die oorsprong van die woord 'Bybel', *Die Hervormer*, Augustus 1958:10-11.

### 6.27 The mother of the Lord<sup>107</sup>

In this two-page article, Van Selms responds to an opinion expressed by Pope Johannes the 23<sup>rd</sup> that Christ was not alone when he carried his cross, but was assisted and helped by the Holy Virgin. The pope also reproached the Protestants, asking why they had banned the Holy Virgin out of the belief.

In Van Selms' opinion, the Pope thus declares Mary, the mother of Jesus, as co-saviour in addition to the Catholic doctrines regarding the immaculate conception and assumption of the Virgin Mary.

Van Selms remarks that the Roman Catholic Church is pursuing its own shadow in the veneration of Mary. The Protestants, in turn, do honour Mary as the mother of Jesus. In the Apostolic Creed (shared by Catholics and Protestants), confessing belief in Jesus Christ, it is stated that He "was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary".

She is allocated an elevated position in the Gospels, referred to as "the mother of my Lord" by Elizabeth (Luke 1:43) and called "highly favoured" by the angel (Luke 1:28, cf. 1:30). Mary herself also praises God for being mindful of her humble state, adding "from now on all generations will call me blessed" (Luke 1:48).

However, Jesus declared all believers on a par with Mary (Luke 11:27-8, cf. Matt. 12:47-8). Mary is blessed because she is one of the great multitude of believers "standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb" (Rev. 7:9).

### 6.28 Melodies of Voortrekkers [early pioneers] in our church services<sup>108</sup>

In two subsequent articles Van Selms repudiates the use of melodies associated with the Voortrekkers in church services.

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107 Van Selms, A. 1959. Die moeder van die Here, *Die Hervormer*, Desember 1959:3-4.

108 Van Selms, A. 1960. Voortrekkerwysies in ons kerkdienste, *Die Hervormer*, September 1960:17 & Oktober 1960:10-11.

The matter is discussed from ecclesiastic, organisational, musical and liturgical points of view.

The ecclesiastical argument is that Article 22 of the ordinances of the Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika states that only psalms and hymns from the official hymn book may be sung in church services. According to Van Selms that included both the words and melodies of the songs.

Seen from an organisational point of view, the church is an organisation, structured in a specific way. This includes a church council that has the obligation to ensure that church services are conducted according to the ordinances of the Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika.

Observed from musical angle, Van Selms states that the so-called Voortrekker melodies are from miscellaneous origin and often popular tunes accompanying dances. They tend to undermine the dignity of psalms and hymns and do injustice to the contents of the songs.

Liturgically seen, Voortrekker melodies undermine the liturgical heritage of the Reformation. Presumed melodies of Voortrekkers do not fit the style and solemnity of a church service. They have come into use randomly and were not composed by acknowledged musicians. In some cases, a hymn is even edited to suit the popular melody (e.g., the hymn based on Ps. 100).

## 7. Almanak

The journal, *Almanak*, is an official publication of the Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika (Dutch Reformed Church of Africa). *Almanak* (Almanac), to which a Biblical diary is presently added, has appeared annually since 1906. Van Selms contributed seven articles, three of which (7.3, 7.4 and 7.60) focus on 17<sup>th</sup> century Netherland personalities.

### 7.1 A text from the temple archive of Ugarit: 1938<sup>109</sup>

In this article, Van Selms introduces readers to recently (1928) discovered Ugaritic texts at Rash Shamra. From the Baal cycle he provides a translation and discussion of what is presently known as IV AB + RŠ 319 (and BH).<sup>110</sup> He quotes an article of Charles Virolleaud (1936:150-173) in the journal *Syria*, volume 37 as his source. The text gives an account of a meeting of the two deities from the Ugaritic pantheon, Baal and Anat. The latter comes to visit “Baal in his house, the god Hadad in the midst of his temple”.

Van Selms draws attention to similarities between the Ugaritic and Biblical poetical style (e.g., repetitions), but simultaneously warns against prematurely seeking relationships between Ugaritic and Biblical material.

### 7.2 The church on top of Golgotha and the garden of Joseph of Arimathea<sup>111</sup>

In this article, Van Selms discusses the history and present (1939) condition of the church complex erected above the presumed locality of Golgotha, where Jesus was crucified, within the garden of Joseph of Arimathea that held the grotto

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109 Van Selms, A. 1938. Een tekst uit het tempelargief van Ugarit, *Almanak* 1938:129-139.

110 Cf. Pritchard, JB. 1955. *Ancient Near Eastern texts relating to the Old Testament*, 2nd edition. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 141-142. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400882762>

111 Van Selms, A. 1939. Die kerk bo Golgotha en die tuin van Josef van Arimathea, *Almanak* 1939:33-45.

where Jesus had been buried according to Biblical tradition. At the time of writing, visitors were barred from entering the buildings which were in a lapidated condition due to an earthquake in 1927.

Initially, a temple for idols had been built on the site, but the Christian Roman emperor Constantine (272-337 CE) gave instructions in 330 CE for a church to be put up. His mother, Helen, was also involved in the construction and the preservation of artefacts. The buildings (then still a temple for idols) were initially outside the walls of Jerusalem, but later became part of the city when Caesar Hadrian (76-138 CE) enlarged the city and named it Aelia Capitolina. The structure was erected on relatively level ground; there is no evidence that Golgotha (the place where crucifixions took place) was on a hill.

Prominent features with historical significance within the church complex are the place where the cross of Jesus was believed to have stood, the stone of anointment where Nicodemus anointed the body of Jesus and the grotto where Jesus was buried.

### **7.3 Willem Sluiter and his congregation<sup>112</sup>**

In this article, Van Selms discusses the life and poetic contributions of the Netherlands pastor Willem Sluiter (1627-1673).

Sluiter studied theology in Utrecht under Voetius, was accepted as a candidate for ministry in 1650 and ordained as minister of Eibergen, a congregation in Eastern Netherlands, in 1652. In 1662, he married Margaretha Sibilla Hoornaart, but she died in 1664 shortly after the birth of their second child.

Sluiter was a dedicated pastor and the author of 900 pages of religious poetry. Two of his poems were printed in an old collection of Evangelical songs of the Netherlands Reformed Church (numbered 185 and 190), and two in the

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112 Van Selms, A. 1949. Willem Sluiter en sy gemeente, *Almanak* 1949:79-95.

hymn book of the South African Reformed Church (numbers 185 and 188).

According to Van Selms, Sluiter's poetry, composed for various religious purposes in different quarters of his congregation, provides insight into the life of a pastor in 17<sup>th</sup> century Netherlands. Several extracts from the poetry of Sluiter are cited as illustration, for example, he stated (freely rendered) that in consoling poor people that real wealth was found.

... in a wealthy mind:  
Calling itself rich  
in addition to being poor.  
The affluent, to the contrary were told,  
Rich people speak too much about money and profit  
or the animal that may bring them financial gain.

#### **7.4 Vollenhove's triumph of the cross. The path of suffering of a poem<sup>113</sup>**

In this article, Van Selms discusses the life and poetic contributions of the Netherlands pastor Johannes Vollenhove (1632-1708). Vollenhove was pastor of congregations in Vledder, Zwolle and Gravenhage. He became famous as preacher and poet, but is particularly known as the author of the 600-line poem "Triumph of the Cross" ('Kruistriomf').<sup>114</sup> Part of it (56 lines) was used, in edited format, in the composition of song 125 of the previous hymn book (1847-1944) of the Reformed Church in Netherland. Since its exclusion in 1944, a revised edition (32 lines) was printed as song 123 in the hymn book of the South African Reformed Church.

Van Selms quotes verse five of hymn 123 as example. The original Vollenhove stanza stated:

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113 Van Selms, A. 1950. Vollenhove se kruistriomf. Die lydensgang van 'n gedig, *Almanak* 1950:123-132.

114 Vollenhove, J. 1666. *Kruistriomf*. Gravenhage: Michael van Heyningen.

Righteousness kept on punishing  
Mercy competed for protective escort;  
Here God's wisdom intervened  
To satisfy both

In the Afrikaans version, the first two lines were accepted, but the last two were emended, possibly due to theological considerations (God's love, not his wisdom, intervened):

But to the demand of both [Righteousness and Mercy]  
God provided satisfaction unconditionally.

In Van Selms' view, the shortening and emendation of the original poem can be typified as "the path of suffering of a poem".

### **7.5 The Short Summary [of the Heidelberg Catechism] and the confirmation class<sup>115</sup>**

In this article, Van Selms criticises the present Short Summary of the Heidelberg Catechism presently used within the South African Reformed Church in confirmation classes.

The summary was compiled in 1608 by Rev. H. Faukelius, pastor of the Netherlands congregation Middelburg in Zeeland. The reason for abbreviating the Heidelberg Catechism (published in 1563) was to simplify it so all students could understand its contents. According to Van Selms, there was a delay in its official approval. However, it gained recognition and during the course of time was accepted by the provincial synod of Southern Netherland in 1637 as part of the Symbolic and Liturgical Writings.

Various points of criticism are raised by Van Selms. For example, it reflected the polemics of the 17<sup>th</sup> century against Roman Catholicism and certain baptismal groups. Some theological statements in the Short Summary also differed slightly from those in the Heidelberg Catechism.

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115 Van Selms, A. 1951. Die Kortbegrip en die katkesasie, *Almanak* 1951:40-51.



Van Selms furthermore questions its usefulness as a course book for the young people at that time (1951). Four aspects are noted. Firstly, he finds fault with some of the formulations and translations of theological concepts. Secondly, scholastic tendencies that reflect Greek philosophy are identified. Thirdly, redundant information, particularly regarding the Holy Communion, is provided. Fourthly, Van Selms draws attention to shortcomings in the Short Summary. Aspects such as the authority of Scripture and relations between churches are not addressed.

Van Selms argues in favour of the compilation of a new Short Summary for use in confirmation classes.

A new catechism was indeed prepared by Van Selms titled, *Die belydenis van die Hervormers: 'n Katkisasieboek oor die Christelike geloofsleer* (The confession of the Reformers: A catechism regarding the Christian faith).<sup>116</sup> It was completed in 1962 or soon afterwards, but due to Van Selms' doctrinal dispute with the church it was never published.

## **7.6 The city where Jan van Riebeeck was born<sup>117</sup>**

In this article, Van Selms discusses the history and present (1952) layout of Culemborg where Jan van Riebeeck was born.

Culemborg (on the bank of Lek, an artery of the Rhine River) came into existence in 1271 when Hubert II, a master of Beusichem (a neighbouring town), built a castle on the west side of the present Culemborg. People settled in the vicinity of this castle as well as a later castle erected by Jan III of Culemborg. In 1318, Culemborg obtained city status. Several extensions were added. At the time of Jan van Riebeeck (prior to 1652)

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116 Cf. *Die belydenis van die Hervormers: 'n Katkisasieboek oor die Christelike geloofsleer*. Opgestel en uitgegee in opdrag van die Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika. Prof Adrianus van Selms (opsteller), Prof Natie van Wyk (agtergrond en redaksionele versorging). 2016. *Tydskrif vir Hervormde Teologie* 4(1).

117 Van Selms, A. 1952. Die geboortestad van Jan van Riebeeck, *Almanak* 1952:35-53.

there was an old town (home to commerce) and a new town (centre of agricultural activities).

Culemborg had several leaders. Well-known among them was Elisabeth (1475-1555) who ruled from 1504 until 1555 as the last sovereign lord or lady of the fiefdom of Culemborg (promoted to a county by Charles V [1500-1558 CE], Holy Roman Emperor shortly before her death). She initiated several architectural projects, among them the city hall (1534) and an orphanage which are still in existence (1952).

Due to a dispute between the provinces of Gelderland, Utrecht and Holland, the fiefdom / county of Culemborg remained relatively independent until 1795 (time of the French Revolution). Culemborg was thus not attached to any province of Netherland when Jan van Riebeeck was born. The place where Van Riebeeck was born is disputed. He was baptised in the Reformed Church (Hervormde Kerk), Culemborg, but no documents relating to his baptism are available any more.

### **7.7 Deficiencies in our hymn book<sup>118</sup>**

The Afrikaans hymn book was officially accepted for use in congregations on 29 October 1944. Van Selms accentuates the necessity for such a book quoting Biblical passages such as Col. 3:16 and Eph. 5:19. However, he finds that the Afrikaans version of the hymn book has certain lacunae with regard to special occasions celebrated in congregations. They are the solemnising of marriages, the confirmation of pastors, elders and deacons, children's services and services preparatory to the Holy Communion. Examples of appropriate Netherlands hymns (1847 and 1938 collections) are cited.

### **7.8 At the departure of Prof. Gemser<sup>119</sup>**

In this article, Van Selms pays tribute to Prof. Gemser who recently (1955) retired after 31 years of service as professor

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118 Van Selms, A. 1955. Leemtes in ons gesangboek, *Almanak* 1955:39-49.

119 Van Selms, A. 1956. By die vertrek van prof. Gemser, *Almanak* 1956-58:58-69.

of Old Testament Studies at the theological faculty of the Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk, University of Pretoria. An overview is given of his contributions as researcher and lecturer as well as the influence he had on his students.

As a researcher, Gemser produced several academic publications. His thesis, accepted in 1924, focused on personal names as a source of knowledge of the life and thought of the Babylonians and Assyrians.

In the series, *Teks en Uitleg* (Text and Interpretation), he wrote commentaries on the *Proverbs of Solomon* (2 volumes; 1930-1931), *Ecclesiasticus and Song of Songs* (1931) and *Psalms III* (1949; following volume I and II by De Liagre Böhl).

In the series, *Handbuch zum Alten Testament*, he wrote *Sprüche Salomos*. He was also responsible for the first course book on Hebrew grammar in Afrikaans, titled *Hebreeuse Spraakkuns* (1953).

Gemser also collaborated on the project *Die Bybel met Verklarende Aantekeninge* [The Bible with Interpretative Notes] (1958) as a member of the editorial committee and as the author of commentaries on Ecclesiasticus, Jeremiah, Daniel 7-12, Hosea and Habakkuk.

He was furthermore a regular contributor to the journals *Die Hervormer*, *Almanak* and *Hervormde Teologiese Studies*.

In addition, Gemser was interested in Modern Hebrew and published *Nieu-Hebreeuse Kortverhale, Versamel en Vertaal* [Modern Hebrew Short Stories, Collected and Translated] in 1933.

He was internationally acknowledged as a scholar and was a member of the editorial committee of *Vetus Testamentum* and contributed to *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*.



## 8. Acta Classica

*Acta Classica* (1958–) is published annually by the Classical Association of South Africa. Van Selms contributed one article in which he suggests interpreting a Latin expression in a similar way to a Hebrew verse.

### 8.1 Celaeno's word of doom and its fulfilment<sup>120</sup>

Van Selms commences the article by quoting lines 255–257 from the third book of the *Aeneid* (29–19 BCE) by the Latin poet Virgil. The books relate the legendary story of Aeneas, a Trojan who fled the fall of Troy and travelled to Italy, where he became the ancestor of the Romans. In the said lines the mythological Celaeno tells Aeneas and his companions that they would reach Italy and freely enter its harbours, but she adds a curse, stating:

*Sed not ante datam cingetis moenibus urbem  
quam vos dira fames nostraeque iniuria caedis  
ambesas subigat malis absumere mensas*

But you shall not gird with walls your promised city  
until dread hunger and the wrong of violence towards us  
force you  
to gnaw with your teeth and devour your very tables

The expression *absumere mensas*, 'devour tables', is problematic. Van Selms discusses several solutions, and then suggests that the reference is to a hide (animal skin) used in the Semitic world as a 'table' that food was placed on. He quotes Psalm 69:23: "May the table [i.e. animal hide] set before them become a snare" (cf. subdivision 4.14).

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120 Van Selms, A. 1982. Celaeno se doemwoord en die vervulling daarvan, *Acta Classica* 25:141–144.



## 9. Pro Veritate

*Pro Veritate* was a monthly journal published by the Christian Institute of Southern Africa from 1962 to 1977. The journal was banned by the South African Government on 19 October 1977 under the Internal Security Act of South Africa. Van Selms contributed at least four articles (discussed in one section) in 1966, using OT and NT passages to convey his views about inter-racial relationships.

### 9.1 Being Christian in this country<sup>121</sup>

*Pro Veritate* was established to challenge the official and unofficial practice of apartheid (i.e., segregation), particularly by means of arguments based on Scripture (mostly NT). Van Selms wrote a series of four articles titled, 'Being Christian in This Country' ('Christen wees in hierdie land') of which the last three could be accessed.

The point of departure of the first article (15 July), referred to in the 15 August edition, was Isaiah 33:14. The prophet quotes the "sinners in Zion", saying "Who of us can dwell with the consuming fire? Who of us can dwell with the everlasting burning" (cf. Heb. 12:29). The rhetorical questions were in response to the threat of judgement expressed in verse 12: "The people will burn as if in lime". However, Van Selms rephrases Isa. 33:14b as: "Who can endure the glowing of the everlasting love [of God]". He then returns to Isaiah's answer (verse 15): "He who walks righteously and speaks what is right". In Van Selms' view, righteousness was to be demonstrated in positive relations with fellow men.

In the second article (15 August), Van Selms elaborated on the topic of love for neighbours. The article is titled, 'The Last Word About God' (cf. Heb. 1:1). An extended Afrikaans version is provided, followed by a summary in English. Van Selms commences by quoting Luke 12:49 where Jesus states: "I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were

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121 Van Selms, A. 1966. Christen wees in hierdie land, *Pro Veritate* 5(3-6) (15 July, 15 August, 15 September & 15 October).

already kindled.” Jesus as “the radiance of God’s glory” (Heb. 1:3) exacts complete obedience to his command of brotherly love, even if it means severing ties with one’s family and nation. This instruction from Jesus is particularly applied to relations of the white population towards their fellow black citizens.

Article three (15 September, 1966) is titled, ‘The Holy Ghost Works in Our Hearts’. Several aspects of the Holy Spirit’s guidance are mentioned. While believers trust that the future is predestined by God, the Spirit also exhorts that the Christendom be united. In the time of the apostle Paul, Jews and Gentiles were declared equal before God (Rom. 1:16). Within South Africa, the scope of the verse can be extended to the divide between white and black. An exclusively white church is regarded as unacceptable.

The fourth article (15 October) focuses on ‘The Christian Witness’. Van Selms opines that one cannot confess to be a Christian and remain silent. He quotes as evidence Acts 4:20: “For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard”. Resistance should not be feared, neither should the friendship of the world be sought. Being witness of the Gospel is the obligation of each believer, but also of the Church as whole. In Van Selms’ view, a church that keeps quiet, even about certain aspects of the Gospel, is no church.



## 10. Van Selms' contributions in context

In this subdivision attention will be given to literature responding, or thematically related, to the contributions of Van Selms discussed so far.

### 10.1 Response to contributions

**Piet B. Boshoff**, in his discussion titled, 'Adrianus van Selms as Reformative Theologian',<sup>122</sup> refers to seven of the above contributions of Van Selms, classifying them under three headings.

- 1) The historical-critical method
  - 2.1 How do we read the Old Testament?
    - 4.1 Textual criticism and exegesis in the discussion of the Psalms
    - 4.6 Authority to hold the Key, an exegesis of Matthew 16:19
- 2) Gospel and law or indicative and imperative
  - 2.2 Gospel and law in the exegesis of the Old Testament
  - 4.3 Theology of the philologist
- 3) The doctrine of two reigns
  - 5.7 Righteousness as a Biblical concept

Regarding 'The historical-critical method', Boshoff (2017:72-74) argues that this approach also includes dogmatics. He quotes with approval Van Selms' point of view that the question of how to read the OT should be answered from the viewpoint of the church dogma (cf. 2.1). There is unity in thought between the OT and NT with judgement and mercy as leitmotiv, and underlying it is the dogma of election

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122 Boshoff, P. 2017. Adrianus van Selms as reformatorese teoloog. *HTS* 73(5):69-90. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v73i5.4562>

and justification. The exegete should study dogmatics, but similarly be textually orientated, discerning the exact Divine words (cf. 4.1). Dogmas need to be tested and corrected where necessary in accordance with the Biblical text. The authority to hold the key of the Kingdom of Heaven (Matt. 16:18) implies inviting people through the proclamation of the Gospel, but does not sanction the right of excommunication referred to in the Heidelberg catechism, Sunday 31 (cf. 4.6).

Pertaining to ‘Gospel and law or indicative and imperative’, Boshof (2017:72-74) states that there is a dialectic relation between the proclamation of the Gospel and the law, citing the Ten Commandments as an example. The indicative is the people of Israel’s liberation from slavery, and the imperative is: “You shall have no other gods before me” (Ex. 20:3) (cf. 2.2). Even a single word may have both the connotations of an indicative and an imperative. John 1:1 states: “In the beginning was the Word [*logos*]” translated in Latin as, “*In principio erat verbum*” (‘verb’). This alludes to Gen. 1:3, “And God said”, which implies “God commanded” (cf. 4.3).

‘The doctrine of two reigns’ (Boshoff, 2017:76-77) refers to teachings regarding the spiritual and worldly domains, the reign of Jesus through his word and spirit versus the authority of the state. Ideally, church and state (which naturally uses force to rule) should function independently. Such was the management style of Jan van Riebeeck, which was devoid of theocratic tendencies (cf. 6.19). In response to the righteousness deeds of the Divine, the spiritual obligation of man is to confess his sins and honour God (cf. 5.7).

A debate (published in *Kerk en Theologie*) between **A.A. van Ruler** (1958) and Van Selms (1958) was discussed previously in subdivision 4.2 (Choose today whom you will serve).

Based on Josh. 24:15, Van Selms expressed the view that people can opt to serve foreign gods should they wish, but that in the Israelite religion, God chooses and man only obeys. His

conviction of absolute predestination was in turn challenged by Van Ruler (1958) quoting OT authorities.

However, in an article by David Sperling,<sup>123</sup> Van Selms' opinion receives support. According to Sperling (1987:122, 129):

In Deuteronomy [the 'language' of which is reflected in Josh. 24:15] it is Yahweh who chooses, not the people. See Deut. 4:37, 7:6 [and] 7, 10:15, 14:2.

## **10.2 Thematically related literature**

Topics discussed by Van Selms in the subdivisions have also received attention by other authors. Their views are juxtaposed with Van Selms' in this division, thus matching what he had said with opinions expressed in academic literature.

In addition to 4.2 mentioned above, seventeen other subdivisions are reviewed below, one published in *Onder Eigen Vaandel*, seven in *Kerk en Theologie*, nine in *Hervormde Theologische Studies* and one (elucidated by a book of Van Selms) in *Die Hervormer*.

### **– 2.1. How do we read the Old Testament?**

In this article, Van Selms, arguing from a theological point of view, discusses the status and function of the OT within Christian context, bringing into scope the aspects of continuity and discontinuity between the OT and NT. Continuity is manifested (according to Van Selms) in the fulfilment of OT future expectations in Christ (e.g., Isa. 61:1-2 - Luke 4:21); discontinuity is evident in the unfinalised ('onafgesloten') character of a series of OT conceptualisations with no linear link to the NT (e.g., 'holiness' experienced passively by the prophets and actively by Christ).

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123 Sperling, D. 1987. Joshua 24 re-examined, *Hebrew Union College Annual* 58:119-136.

In a related article, C. van der Waal (1980)<sup>124</sup> argues in favour of continuity between the OT and NT. His presupposition is that both Testaments represent two quantities which individually form a unit (1980:3). Reference is made to structural similarities, e.g. Torah (Genesis-Deuteronomy) and prophets in the OT are matched by the Gospels and Revelations in the NT (1980:5). Furthermore, the Torah is the book of the covenant with stipulations, while the NT contains the gospel with the law attached to it (1980:8). There is also a typological relationship between the OT and NT, e.g., the exodus from Egypt and the exodus from Babylon are followed by Jesus leading the decisive exodus as *Moses redivivus* (1980:12).

#### – 4.1. Textual criticism and exegesis in the discussion of the Psalms

Van Selms' attempt to reconstruct the presumed text underlying the related but slightly divergent versions reflected by Ps. 14 and 53 is paralleled by an early study by Karl Budde (1926).<sup>125</sup>

Van Selms suggests that the similarly phrased Ps. 14:4b(i) and 53:5b(i), “Those that devour my people [as] they devour bread” should be shortened to “Those that devour my people”, and that 14:4b(ii), “do not call on YHWH” should receive preference above 53:5b(ii), “do not call on God”.

Budde (1926:164-165 and 183-184) in turn combines the two verses to read:

Those that devour my people [as] they devour bread,  
me [’ōtī] they do not fear [yārē’ū].

Verses 14:4b(i) and 53:5b(i) are thus retained as they were by Budde, while a more drastic, theologically-motivated emendation is suggested regarding 14:4b(ii) and 53:5b(ii).

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124 Van der Waal, C. 1980. The continuity between the Old and New Testaments, *Neotestamentica* 14:1-20.

125 Budde, K. 1926. Psalm 14 und 53, *Journal of Biblical Literature* 47:160-183. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3259523>

**-4.6. Authority to hold the Key, an exegesis of Matthew 16:19**

Matt. 16:19, referring to the “keys of the kingdom of heaven” given to Peter by Christ, is compared to Isa. 22:22 which promises to Eliakim “the key to the house of David”.

Grundmann (1971)<sup>126</sup> also parallels Matt. 16:19 to Isa. 22:22. Both Grundmann and Van Selms agree that Peter was thus given the responsibility of distributing heavenly treasures. In Van Selms' view, it implied the duty (together with the other disciples) of preaching and the administering of sacraments. Grundmann mentions the aspect of applying the teaching of Jesus in new situations. The right of excommunication is rejected by Van Selms, but included by Grundmann, implying the acceptance within the congregation, or expulsion.

**- 4.7.A case of nearby expectation without and with 'congregational theology'**

Matt. 26:29 quotes Jesus' statement: “I tell you; I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink [it] *kainon* ([as] new [wine]) with you in my Father's kingdom.” According to Van Selms, ‘new wine’ may have bearing (cf. Lev. 25:22 and 26:10) on the new harvest that would be celebrated at the coming Feast of the Tabernacles.

In his study of the meaning and evolution of the Feast of the Tabernacles, George W. MacRae (1960:275),<sup>127</sup> does not refer to Matt. 26:29 in his overview of the Feast of the Tabernacles celebration. In his view, the only place in the NT where it is mentioned is John 7, with the possibility of an allusion in John 8:12.

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126 Grundmann, W. 1971. *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*. Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt.

127 MacRae, G. 1960. The meaning and evolution of the Feast of the Tabernacles, *The Catholic Quarterly* 22:251–276.

– 4.8. ‘Tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.’ An Old Testament exegesis of Luke 12:13

In Luke 12:13, Jesus is requested to act as an arbiter in an inheritance dispute, which he refuses. The situation depicts a sibling unwilling to divide the bequest to give his brother the share due to him.

Van Selms interprets the context as referring to two brothers, the younger and elder, residing in one house. According to him, their living together reminds of Deut. 25:5 which specifies that ownership of property should be kept within the family through the marriage of a brother with the childless, deceased’s wife.

Weifel (1988:236-237)<sup>128</sup> frames the situation within the Jewish inheritance law promulgated in Deut. 21:17. This determined that the elder son receives two thirds of the possessions. In Luke 12:13, the younger sibling now insists on receiving his share, which Jesus senses as greediness.

–4.9. ‘Robbery’ in Philippians 2:6

According to Phil. 2:6 Christ “did not consider equality with God something to be grasped (*harpagmon*)”. Equating *harpagmon* with *šālāl* (spoils) and the satisfaction it brings, Van Selms interprets the text as Christ “did not seek his joy in equality with God”.

Charles J. Robbins (1980:80),<sup>129</sup> after analysing the structure of Phil. 2:6-11, translates “he [Christ] did not consider it usurpation to be on the same level with God”. The *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary* (2018)<sup>130</sup> defines ‘usurp’ as ‘to take somebody’s position or power without having the right to do this’.

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128 Weifel, W. 1988. *Das Evangelium nach Lukas*. Berlin: Evangelische Verlaganstalt.

129 Robbins, CJ. 1980. Rhetorical structure of Philippians 2:6-11, *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 42:73-82.

130 *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary*, 9th edition. 2018. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

– 4.11. The heading of the Gospel according to Mark

Mark 1:1 states: “The beginning (*arkhē*) of the Gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God”, which Van Selms interprets as the heading of the Gospel as a whole. He is supported in his view by N. Clayton Croy (2001:125),<sup>131</sup> who nevertheless regards Mark 1:1 as defective (*arkhē*—being a vague temporal marker).

However, according to Bolkestein (1966:13-14),<sup>132</sup> supported by Grundmann (1973:26),<sup>133</sup> Mark 1:1 refers to the beginning of the preaching of the Gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

– 4.14. The table and two misconceptions regarding the table

In Ps. 69:23 the speaker asks, “May the table set before them (*lipnē-hem*) become a snare”, which (according to Van Selms) most likely refers to the skin of a sheep or goat spread on the ground.

The verse is also quoted in Rom. 11:9, rendering it as “May their table become a snare and a trap [(*eis*) *thēran*]”.

Practically visualised, Van Selms' view has merit if Ps 69:23 and Rom. 9:11 are understood literally. However, Hans-Joachim Kraus (1972:484)<sup>134</sup> conceptualises the context as a sacrificial festivity (Opfergelage) of the ‘enemy’ in the vicinity of the temple to demonstrate their righteousness in public. Both table and snare are thus allocated a metaphorical meaning individually and combined.

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131 Croy, NC. 2001. A non-theological interpretation of Mark 1:1, *Novum Testamentum* 43:105-127. <https://doi.org/10.1163/156853601753453314>

132 Bolkestein, MH. 1966. *Het Evangelie naar Marcus*. N.V. – Nijkerk: Callenbach.

133 Grundmann, W. 1973. *Das Evangelium nach Markus*. Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt.

134 Kraus, H-J. 1972. *Psalmen*, 2. Teilband. Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag.

– 5.3. **The number-step-proverb [number parallelism]: A Semitic figure of speech**

The occurrence of number parallelism (n // n+1) is illustrated in five sources. Van Selms opines that this stylistic figure of speech was originally used as a formula to state an oath or express a threat (cf. Amos and Micha) or warning.

Wilfred G.E. Watson (1984:145)<sup>135</sup> expresses the opinion that number parallelism apparently developed from such casual prose utterances as “two or three eunuchs [looked down upon him (i.e., Jehu)]” (2 Kings 9:32). In poetry, the graded numerical sequence provides a frame within which a list of items can be given, helping disparate items to form a coordinated whole (1984:147).

– 5.6. **The king’s prayer as component of the ritual at the coronation**

Several Biblical parallels to Solomon’s dream (reported in 1 Kings 3:4-15 and 2 Chron. 1:1-13) are cited by Van Selms, drawing attention to the different contexts the dream accounts in 1 Kings and 2 Chronicles feature in. In 1 Kings, for example, the episode is preceded by King Solomon’s revenge on his opponents.

More general examples are provided by C.L. Seow (1984)<sup>136</sup> who suggests that the story of the royal dream in 1 Kings may have been to legitimise the kingship of Solomon who had just killed Adonijah, the heir apparent to the throne (1 Kings 2:13-25) (1984:144).

– 5.7. **Righteousness as a Biblical concept**

According to Van Selms, linguistically the root *ṣ-d-q* may express justitia activa or passiva, declaring someone as just or being pronounced just. If two sides are involved, they could

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135 Watson, GE. 1984. *Classical Hebrew poetry, a guide to its techniques*. Sheffield: JSOT Press.

136 Seow, CL. 1984. The Syro-Palestinian context of Solomon’s dream, *Harvard Theological Journal* 77:141-152. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017816000014267>



respectively be characterised as *ṣaddīq* (innocent) or *rāšā'* (guilty).

The root and its grammatical and lexical manifestations in various sources and contexts are discussed by K. Kock (1976).<sup>137</sup> Attention is also given to the aspects highlighted by Van Selms, quoting additional examples. The king's judicial function is exemplified by a statement by the would-be usurper of his father David's throne. Absalom declared (2 Sam 15:4, cf. Kock 1976:512): "Everyone who has a complaint [*rīb*] or case could come to me and I would see that he receives justice [should I become king]". The law concerned is mentioned in Deut. 25:1 (cf. Kock 1976:514): "When men have a dispute [*rīb*], they are to take it to court and the judges will decide the case, acquitting the innocent [*ṣaddīq*] and condemning the guilty [*rāšā'*]". God is regarded as the ultimate judge, and He is requested in Ps 71:24 (cf. Kock 1976: 522) to: "Deliver me, O God, from the hand of the wicked (*rāšā'*)".

#### – 5.8. Prudishness in Chronicles

Van Selms refers to variations between the versions of Kings and Chronicles where similar accounts are reported (1 Chron. 2:3b, 2:4, 15:27b–16:3,) as well as the omission of 2 Sam. 11–20 in 1 Chronicles. All these passages have, according to Van Selms, a sexual connotation and were edited or excluded due to the fact that Chronicles was intended as a source book for educating young members of David's family.

In his commentary on 1 Chronicles, Roubos (1969:36; discussion of 2:3)<sup>138</sup> concurs with Van Selms' argument of prudishness pertaining to the passages concerned. However, he does not ascribe to the Van Selms' source-book notion.

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137 Kock, K. 1976. *ṣ-d-q* gemeinschaftstreu / heilvoll sein. In: *Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament* [THAT]. Edited by E. Jenni and C. Westermann. München: Kaiser Verlag, 507–530.

138 Roubos, K. 1969. *1 Kronieke*. N.V. – Nijkerk: Callenbach.

Hertzberg ([1956] 1964:309),<sup>139</sup> in discussing David's affair with the wife of Uriah, states that Chronicles omits this incident almost certainly because of the serious blemish it leaves on David's reputation.

**– 5.10. The home inviolable at night: A Canaanite legal provision**

Four OT historical accounts create the impression that no one may enter the house of another person during the night. They are 1 Sam 19:9–17, 1 Kings 19:1–3, Josh. 2:1–22 and Judg. 19:1–3. According to Van Selms, they bear testimony that in Israel, among the Canaanites, Phoenicians and Philistines the same custom was observed. He ascribes it to the continuous influence of ancient Canaanite culture.

CAD (1977:272; *mušītum* b 2)<sup>140</sup> quotes a statement of Ashurbanipal referring to a night march, *mu-šī-ti kalaša ardēma allik*, “[during] the night, the whole of it, I continued going”. However, attacking at night seldom happened in warfare. Favourable conditions rather than darkness were preferred (De Vaux [1957] 1961:251).<sup>141</sup> A single night operation reported in the Bible is Gideon's onslaught on the Midianites (Judg. 7:19–21). The confusion created among the Midianites demonstrates why darkness is not necessary a shield, but an obstacle.

If related to the above reasoning, refraining from trying to arrest the sought-after person may thus be ascribed to tactical decisions rather than adhering to a customary law.

A close perusal of the four occasions mentioned by Van Selms also suggests that they should be viewed individually. In 1 Kings 19:1–3 (Jezebel versus Elijah), night per se is not mentioned; in Joshua 2:1–22 (Rahab and the two spies), the

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139 Hertzberg, HW. ([1956] 1964. *1 and 2 Samuel, a commentary*. London: SCM Press.

140 *The Assyrian Dictionary of the University of Chicago* [CAD], volume 10 part 2. 1977. Chicago, IL: Oriental Institute.

141 De Vaux, R. [1957] 1961. *Ancient Israel, its life and institutions*. London: Darton, Longman and Todd.

king of Jericho and his men were misled by Rahab and initially sought the spies outside the city walls. Only in the case of David (1 Sam. 19:9-17) and Samson (Judg. 16:1-3) did the enemy lie in wait all night.

### **5.11. Ps. 137. By the rivers of Babylon**

Van Selms divides the psalm into three parts (137:1-3, 4-6, 7-9). A similar partition is suggested by Morris Halle and John J. McCarthy (1981:166-167)<sup>142</sup> with the exception of the last part (7-9). Instead, this is subdivided into two portions (7 and 8-9).

This statement in the psalm is problematic (137:3, cf. 2): “there our captors asked us for songs”. However, Van Selms argues that the adverb ‘there’ and the use of past tense are stylistic features as the psalm originated in Babylon.

His view is supported by John Ahn (2008:270),<sup>143</sup> stating:

It is reasonably certain that it [Ps 137] was composed in Babylon during the first half of the sixth century B.C.E. It echoes vividly the experience and emotions of those that were taken captive, and may, therefore, be assigned to the first generation of the Exiles.

Ahn suggests (2008:273) that the adverb ‘there’ poetically replaces ‘Babylon’ without having to use the term overtly and constantly.

### **– 5.12. Multitude of names among Judean kings**

In addition to the five examples of kings with double names, Van Selms refers to Isa. 9:5 (9:6 in translations) which provides the four appellations of a child to be born, namely *pele’ yō‘ēṣ*, *’ēl gibbōr*, *’ābī‘ad* and *sar šālōm*—Wonderful

142 Halle, M & McCarthy, JJ. 1981. The metrical structure of Psalm 137, *Journal of Biblical Literature* 100:161-167. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3266062>

143 Ahn, J. 2008. Psalm 137: Complex communal laments, *Journal of Biblical Literature* 127:267-289. <https://doi.org/10.2307/25610120>

Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father (or Father of the Booty) and Prince of Peace respectively. Each of the names is then associated with a specific locality in Israel.

Hans Wildberger (1972)<sup>144</sup> extensively discusses the etymology of the names but does not link any of them to individual places. He observes (1972:380): “9:5f. should be understood as a *prophetic imitation* (Nachahmung) of a *proclamation of hope* pertaining to Jerusalem, stated soon after the birth of a crown prince reflecting the dignity (Würde) with which he is regarded”.

#### – 5.20. The expression “Man of God” in the Bible

The expression ‘man of God’ (according to Van Selms) is used 75 times in the OT and 2-3 times in the NT. In his discussion an encyclopaedic overview is given of almost all occurrences, focusing consecutively on Moses, Samuel, David, Elijah, Elisha, Semaiah, unidentified prophets and an angel of the Lord. The function of the appellation *iš hā-ēlōhīm* with regard to each of them is ascertained, concluding that theologically defined ‘man of God’ accentuates his prophetic function. Such a person is not bound by national, tribal or other human relationships.

In a related article with a similar title, Raphael Hallevy (1958:243-244)<sup>145</sup> states that the history of the Bible writers’ use of the epithet *iš ēlōhīm* may be divided into two periods:

Firstly, a man of God as a divine messenger tells the future and performs miracles. To this layer belong the stories regarding the prophets Elijah and Elisha as well as the accounts featured in Judg. 13 (angel appearing to Manoah), 1 Sam. 2 (unidentified prophet addressing Eli), 1 Kings 12 (Shemaiah) and 2 Chron. 25 (prophet during the reign of Amaziah of Judah).

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144 Wildberger, H. 1972. *Jesaja*, I. Teilband. Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag.

145 Hallevy, R. 1958. Man of God, *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 17:237-244. <https://doi.org/10.1086/371478>

Secondly, in the post-exilic period *iš ʔlōhīm* is not a prophet, indicating only the special nearness of the man of God to the Godhead.

#### – 5.21. The book of the covenant of the justice of Goshen

In this article, Van Selms argues in favour of the Mosaic origin of the compilation of the laws expounded in the book of the covenant, Exodus 20:22–23:33.

He admits this view contradicts Noth. Noth ([1950] 1966:100)<sup>146</sup> regards the book of the covenant as containing a version of the oldest covenant law of Israel. However, he does not consider a Mosaic origin, suggesting that the laws were extant during the early confederation of tribes. Von Rad ([1957] 1975:20)<sup>147</sup> dates the laws from the time between the conquest and the rise of the state. Albertz (2018:85 and diagram 5)<sup>148</sup> opines that the book of the covenant (Ex. 19–24) emerged in a pre-exilic period framed by the primeval story and accounts of Abraham, Jacob, Joseph and Moses. During the course of time composites were added, with the final edit of Ex. 1–34 taking place in the exilic period.

Fensham (1970:145),<sup>149</sup> states that the transmitted Mesopotamian law and the development of it in the land Goshen can be viewed as background for several ordinances. Other laws reflect as setting in life a semi-nomadic society in general. Some stipulations may have originated during the time of Moses, and even earlier.

#### – 6.17. Oldest Jerusalem

The oldest inhabitants of Jerusalem were the Jebusites, but the area where they resided is situated outside the present

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146 Noth, M. [1950] 1966. *Geschichte Israels*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht.

147 Von Rad, G. [1957] 1975. *Old Testament Theology*, volume one. London: SCM Press.

148 Albertz, R. 2018. The recent discussion on the formation of the Pentateuch / Hexateuch, *Hebrew Studies* 59:65–92. <https://doi.org/10.1353/hbr.2018.0003>

149 Fensham, FC. 1970. *Exodus*. N.V. – Nijkerk: Callenbach.

Jerusalem. Although small, their city was nevertheless fortified.

The capture of their stronghold is described in 2 Samuel 5:6-8, and elaborated on by Van Selms (1968:37)<sup>150</sup> in his book *Jerusalem door de eeuwen heen van voor koning David tot generaal Dayan* [Jerusalem throughout the ages from prior to David to General Dayan]. Their confidence in addressing David, stating that “even the blind and the lame can ward you off”, proved to be wrong.

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150 Van Selms, A. 1967. *Jerusalem door de eeuwen heen, van voor koning David tot generaal Dayan*. Baarn: Hollandia.

## Indexes

### Biblical references within subheadings

#### *Genesis*

**1:1** [4.11], **1:26** [4.3], **1-11** [5.17], **2:17** [6.23], **3:10** [4.3], **3:14** [6.23], **3:15** [5.14], **3:16** [2.2], **4:15** [2.2, 6:3], **4:18** [5.19], **5:24** [6.13, 6.23], **10:10** [4.11], **12:5** [4.8], **13:5-6** [4.8], **13:8** [4.8], **16:1** [5.13], **17:5** [5.12], **17:10** [2.2], **19:33** [5.8], **25:1** [5.13], **25:5** [5.13], **25:30** [5.12], **26:23** [5.2], **28:11** [5.6], **29** [5.2], **32:28** [5.12], **37-45** [6.4], **38:2** [5.13], **38:7** [5.8], **38:9** [5.8], **38:10** [5.8], **38:11-30** [5.8], **39:4** [4.6], **41:45** [5.13], **45:26** [4.6], **48:5** [5.13], **49:3-4** [5.9], **50:23** [5.8].

#### *Exodus*

**2:14** [4.8], **2:18** [5.12], **2:21** [5.13], **2:23** [5.21], **3:10** [6.16], **3:15** [5.14], **4:25** [5.8], **17:9** [4.2], **18:25** [4.2], **20:1** [2.2, 5.16], **20:22-23:33** [5.21], **21:2-11** [5.21], **21:28** [5.21], **21:33** [5.21], **22:5** [5.21], **22:23-24** [5.21], **23:9** [5.21], **23:10** [5.21], **25:24** [4.14], **25:30** [4.14], **26** [5.13].

#### *Leviticus*

**1:1** [6.16], **1:1-2** [6.16], **15:2** [5.8], **18:17** [5.8, 5.9], **18 and 20** [5.2], **23:43** [4.13], **24:16** [5.1], **25:22** [4.7], **26:10** [4.7].

#### *Numbers*

**6:22-27** [3.1], **12:1** [5.13], **20** [6.12], **21:8** [6.12], **21:17-18** [5.2], **31:11** [4.9].

#### *Deuteronomy*

**1:22** [5.19], **6:4** [4.3, 5.22], **6:4-13:18** [3.1], **7:1** [5.14], **21:10-14** [5.14], **23:1** [22:30] [5.8], **23:3** [5.14], **23:16** [4.2], **23:18** [6.16], **25:5** [4.8], **25:5-10** [5.8], **33:1** [5.19].

#### *Joshua*

**2:1-22** [5.10], **6:24** [6.12], **6:25** [5.13], **7:21** [6.12], **9** [5.13], **10:33** [5.13], **14:6** [5.19], **14:13** [5.2], **24:15** [4.2], **24:22** [4.2].

**Judges**

**5:11** [5.7], **5:18** [4.2], **6:32** [5.12], **13:3** [5.19], **13:6 and 8** [5.19], **13-16** [2.1], **14:1** [5.13], **14:4** [5.13], **16:1-3** [5.10], **19:1-3** [5.10].

**Ruth**

**1:16** [5.13], **3:14** [5.13], **4:14** [5.13].

**1 Samuel**

**1:11 and 28** [5.19], **2:27** [5.19], **9:6-10** [5.19], **14:2** [5.13], **14:50** [5.17], **15:3** [6.12], **20:24** [4.14], **28:14-15** [6.10].

**2 Samuel**

**1:19-27** [5.2], **2:8** [5.19], **3:3** [5.13], **3:6** [5.17], **3:7** [5.17], **6:14-19** [5.8], **6:20-23** [5.8], **11:2-5** [5.13], **11:4** [5.8], **11:8-13** [5.8], **11-20** [5.8], **12:8** [5.8], **12:11** [5.8], **13:1-22** [5.8], **15:16** [5.17], **15:19** [5.17], **16:16** [5.17], **16:22** [5.17], **16:22** [5.8], **20:3** [5.17], **24:24** [5.13].

**1 Kings**

**1:4** [5.8], **2:13-25** [5.9], **2:25** [5.9], **2:39** [5.6], **3:4-15** [5.6], **3:5** [4.6, 5.6], **3:13** [5.6], **3:16-28** [5.8], **4:6** [4.6], **6:24** [4.10], **8:12-13** [4.10], **11:1** [5.13], **11:3** [5.9], **11:21** [5.2], **13** [5.19], **13:1** [5.19], **13:4** [5.19], **13:24-28** [5.19], **16:31** [5.13], **17:18** [5.19], **18:5** [4.6], **19:1-3** [5.10], **20** [5.9], **20:13 and 22** [5.19], **20:30** [4.10], **21:3** [5.2], **22:25** [4.10], **29:32** [5.16].

**2 Kings**

**1:9-11** [5.19], **3:1** [5.6], **3:8, 14, 15 and 20** [5.19], **3:10** [5.6], **4:7** [5.19], **4:10** [4.14], **4:14** [5.13], **4:16** [5.19], **5:14** [5.19], **6:22** [6.12], **8:7, 8 and 11** [5.19], **9:2** [4.10], **10:13** [5.9], **11:11** [6.23], **12:22-24** [5.19], **13:19** [5.19], **15:5** [4.6], **16:20** [5.12], **18** [5.13], **18:8** [6.12], **18:14** [5.9], **18:18** [4.6], **23:35** [5.12].

**1 Chronicles**

**2:3** [5.8], **2:4** [5.8], **2:34-35** [5.13], **3:5** [5.8], **3:11** [5.12], **4:17** [5.13], **5:30** [6:51] [3.1], **8:33** [5.19], **10:13** [6.10], **15:27-16:3** [5.8], **23:14** [5.19], **28:16** [4.14].



## Indexes

### **2 Chronicles**

**1:1-13** [5.6], **1:2** [5.6], **1:7** [5.6], **1:11** [5.6], **8:14** [5.19], **8:39** [5.13], **11:1-4** [5.19], **18:24** [4.10], **24:27** [5.6], **25:7 and 9** [5.19].

### **Ezra**

**2:65** [5.9], **3:2** [5.19], **10:18** [5.13].

### **Nehemiah**

**1:5-11** [2.1], **1:11** [5.13], **3:23** [4.8], **7:25** [5.13], **7:67** [5.9], **9:4** [4.14], **9:6-15** [2.1], **11:1-2** [5.2], **11:23** [5.13].

### **Esther**

**2:9** [5.13].

### **Job**

**5:19** [5.3], **17:14** [5.16], **31:35-37** [5.7].

### **Psalms**

**2:6** [5.18], **2:7** [5.17], **2:8** [5.6], **14** [4.1], **15:1** [5.18], **18:51** [5.18], **20:2** [5.18], **20:3** [5.6], **20:4** [5.6], **21:3** [5.6], **21:5** [5.6], **22:24** [5.18], **23:5** [4.14], **24:3** [5.18], **27:4** [5.6], **29:5** [5.18], **31:5** [5.1], **42:7** [5.18], **44:5** [5.18], **45:10** [5.9], **47** [4.11], **47:10** [5.18], **48** [5.2, 5.13], **48:8** [5.18], **51:7** [6.24], **51:20** [5.18], **53** [4.1], **55:7** [5.18], **60:8** [5.18], **65** [5.2], **65:10** [5.18], **68:9** [5.18], **68:27-28** [5.18], **69:23** [4.14, 8.1], **73** [6.4], **77:16-21** [5.18], **78** [2.1], **78:44** [5.18], **83:8** [5.18], **83:9** [5.18], **83:10** [5.18], **83:11** [5.18], **87:4** [5.14], **89:4-5** [5.18], **89:27** [5.17], **90:1** [5.20], **93** [4.11], **96** [4.11], **100** [6.28], **103:7** [5.18], **105** [2.1], **105:6, 9, 42** [5.18], **106** [2.1], **106:7-12, 19, 21, 38** [5.18], **110** [5.11], **110:4** [5.18], **114:5** [5.18], **115:3-4** [5.22], **118:3** [5.18], **128:3** [4.14], **132:1-10** [5.18], **132:6** [5.18], **133:1** [4.8], **133:2** [5.18], **135:11, 20** [5.18], **135:20** [5.18], **136:19-20** [5.18], **137** [5.2, 5.11].

### **Proverbs**

**6:16** [5.3], **7:4-5** [5.17], **24:24** [5.7].

### **Ecclesiastes**

**2.8** [5.9].

***Song of Songs***

**4:16** [2.1], **5:1** [5.17], **6:8-9** [5.9].

***Isaiah***

**7** [2.2], **7:1** [5.13], **7:7** [2.2], **8:3** [5.8], **8:19** [6.10], **9:1** [5.13], **9:5** [6.2, 6.4], **9:5(6)** [5.13] **11:6** [6.23], **22:15-22** [4.6], **28:1-6** [5.13], **31:3** [6.15], **33:14** [9.1], **36:3** [4.6], **37:14** [5.11], **45:22** [5.22], **46** [5.7], **49:7** [6.6], **51:2** [4.3], **56:3**, **6-9** [5.2], **57:8** [5.8], **59:2** [2.1], **59:20** [6.7], **53:1-8** [6.21], **60:4** [6.6], **61:1-2** [2.1].

***Jeremiah***

**19:7-18** [6.4], **21:9** [4.9], **22:11** [5.13], **24:1** [5.13], **26:1** [4.11], **28:1** [4.11], **31:24** [4.8], **31:31** [2.1], **35:4** [5.20], **38:2** [4.9], **39:18** [4.9], **45:4** [2.2], **45:5** [4.9], **49:34** [4.1].

***Ezekiel***

**38-39** [6.6], **40:39-43** [4.14], **47** [6.6].

***Daniel***

**7-8** [6.6], **7-12** [7.8], **10-11** [6.6].

***Hosea***

**1:1** [5.13], **2:2** [5.17], **2:15** [5.17].

***Amos***

**1:1** [5.13], **1:9** [5.13], **1 and 2** [5.3], **9:11-12** [6.6], **33:14** [9.1].

***Micah***

**2** [5.13], **4:1** [6.6], **5:4** [5.22].

***Zechariah***

**3:1** [6.6], **10:9-10** [6.6], **14:9** [4.3].

***Matthew***

**5:14** [4.12], **5:18** [4.12], **5:29** [4.12], **5:30** [4.12], **6:3** [4.12], **6:19** [4.6], **6:27** [4.12], **6:28** [4.12], **7:3-5** [4.12], **7:6** [4.12], **7:16** [4.12], **10:37** [5.20], **11:21-22** [4.5], **13:8** [4.12], **13:25** [4.12],

## Indexes

**13:32** [4.12], **15:14** [4.12], **15:24** [5.16], **17:20** [4.12], **18:11** [5.16], **19:24** [4.12]. **20:13** [4.12], **21:8** [4.13], **21:39** [4.12], **22:6** [4.12], **22:30** [6.2], **23:24** [4.12], **24:26** [4.10], **26:29** [4.7].

### *Mark*

**1:1** [4.11], **2:3** [4.11], **4:21** [4.12], **11:8** [4.13], **12:29** [4.3], **13** [6.7].

### *Luke*

**1:43** [6.27], **1:48** [6.27], **2** [6.22], **2:12** [6.1], **2:21** [6.14], **4:21** [2.1, 6.6], **6:39** [4.12], **11:20** [2.1], **11:27-28** [6.2], **12:3** [4.10], **12:13** [4.8], **12:14-28** [4.8], **12:49** [9.1], **16:8** [4.12], **16:27-29** [4.10], **19:40** [4.12], **22:18** [4.7], **23:46** [5.1].

### *John*

**1:1** [4.3], **3:8** [6.15], **3:13** [6.13], **4:22** [5.16], **4:24** [6.15], **7:1-10:2** [4.13], **7:2-7** [4.7], **8:44** [5.16], **11:38-44** [4.13], **12:13** [4.13], **14:6** [5.22], **15:13** [6.4], **15:16** [4.2], **16:7** [6.15], **19:7** [5.1], **21:25** [4.12].

### *Acts*

**2:39** [5.16], **3:25** [5.16], **4:20** [9.1], **7:27** [4.8], **10:11** [4.14], **27:9** [4.13].

### *Romans*

**1:16** [9.1], **6:4** [6.12], **6:23** [6.23], **8:26** [6.15], **8:39** [2.1], **9:2-3** [5.16], **9:6** [5.16], **11:13-32** [5.15], **11:25** [6.7], **11:25-26** [5.16], **11:27** [6.7], **12:1** [6.12].

### *1 Corinthians*

**4:9-13** [6.4], **8:46** [4.3], **11:26** [4.11], **15:21** [6.23].

### *2 Corinthians*

**6:2** [2.1]

### *Galatians*

**3:29** [5.16], **4:4-5** [6.14], **4:25** [5.16], **4:26** [6.6], **6:16** [5.15].

***Ephesians***

**2:19** [5.15], **2:20** [5.15], **3:5** [5.15], **5:19** [7.7].

***Philippians***

**2:6** [4.9], **3:3** [6.6].

***Colossians***

**3:12** [6.19], **3:16** [7.7].

***1Thessalonians***

**2:14-16** [5.16].

***1 Timothy***

**6:11** [5.20].

***2 Timothy***

**3:12** [5.20].

***Hebrews***

**8:13** [2.1], **10:1** [6.16], **12:29** [9.1].

***1 Peter***

**2:10** [5.15], **3:18-19** [6.5], **4:6** [6.5].

***1 John***

**3:2** [6.2], **4:8** [4.3].

***Revelations***

**7:2** [6.3], **7:9** [6'27], **11:15** [6.7], **12:5** [4.11], **14:1** [6.3], **17** [6.9],  
**21:2** [5.13], **25:11-15** [5.11].

## Biblical personal names within subheadings

**Abel** (Gen. 4:8) [2.1], **Abiša** (1 Chron. 5:30) [3.1], **Abishag** (2 Kings 2:17) [5.9], **Abner** (1 Sam. 14:50) [5.9], **Abraham** (Gen. 26:23) [5.2] (Gen. 13:5-6) [2.1] (Gen. 17:10) [2.1] (Gen. 25:1) [5.14], **Abram** – Abraham (Gen. 17:5) [5.12], **Absalom** (2 Sam. 16:22) [5.8], **Achan** (Josh. 7:21) [6.12], **Adam and Eve** (Gen. 2:17) [6.23], **Adonijah** (1 Kings 2:13) [5.9], **Ahab** (1 Kings 21:3) [5.2] (1 Kings 20:13 and 22) [5.20], **Ahaz** (Isa. 7:15) [2.1], **Ahishar** (1 Kings 4:6) [4.6], **Ahitophel** (2 Sam. 15:12) [5.9], **Amasiah** (2 Chron. 25:7, 9) [5.20] (2 Chron. 25:11-12) [5.11], **Azariah** (1 Chron. 3:11) and Uzziah (Isa. 7:1, Amos 1:1), alternative names of Amaziah of Judah [5.12], **Baruch** (Jer. 45:4) [2.1], **Bathsheba** (2 Sam. 11:4) [5.8], **Ben-Hadad** (1 Kings 20:30) [4.10] (1 Kings 20) [5.9] (1 Kings 29:32) [5.17], **Benjamin and Hasshub** (Neh. 3:23) [4.10], **Bilhah** (Gen 35:22) [5.9], **Boaz** (Ruth 3:14) [5.13], **Cain** (Gen. 4:15) [6.3; 2.1], **Caleb** (Josh. 14:13) [5.2], **Canaanite woman** (Matt. 15:24) [5.16], **David** (1 Chron. 15:27b-16:3) [5.8] (1 Sam. 19:10) [5.10] (2 Chron. 8:14) [5.20], **Elia** (1 Kings 17:18) [5.20], **Eliakim** (Isa. 22:22) [4.6], **Elijah** (1 Kings 19:1-3) [5.10] (2 Kings 2:11) [6.13], **Elisha** (2 Kings 4:7) [5.20] (2 Kings 6:22) [6.12] (2 Kings 4:14) [5.13], **Enoch** (Gen. 5:24) [6.13], **Er** (1 Chron. 2:3b, cf. Gen. 38:7) [5.8], **Esau** – Edom (Gen. 25:30) [5.12], **Esther** (Est. 2:9) [5.14], **Ezra** (Ezra 9:6-15) [2.1], **Gideon** – Jerub-Baal (Judg. 6:32) [5.12], **Hadad** (1 Kings 11:21) [5.2], **Hazael** (2 Kings 8:7, 8, 11) [5.20], **Hezekiah** named *yēḥizqiyyāhū* (> *yēḥazzēqyāhū*; Hos. 1:1), and *ḥizqiyyāhū* (2 Kings 16:20) [5.12] (2 Kings 18) [5.13] (2 Kings 18:14) [5.9] (2 Kings 18:8) [6.12], **Hiram** (2 Chron. 2:12[13]) [5.11], **Huram-Abi** (2 Chron. 2:12[13]) [5.11], **Hushai** (2 Sam. 16:16) [5.9], **Ish-Bosheth** (2 Sam 3:7) [5.9] (2 Sam. 2:8) [5.20], **Jacob** – Israel (Gen. 32:28) [5.12], **Jacob** (Gen. 29) [5.2], **Jedidiah**, alternative name of Solomon (2 Sam. 12:25) [5.12], **Jehoiakim** of Judah, known both as *yēḥōyāqīm* (2 Kings 23:35) and *yēkonyāhū* (Jer. 24:1) [5.12], **Jehu** (2 Kings 9:2) [4.10], **Jeremiah** (Jer. 45:4) [2.1], **Jethro** (Ex. 3:1) – Reuel (Ex. 2:18) [5.12], **Jezebel** (1 Kings 16:31) [5.14], **Joab** (2 Sam. 20:18-19) [5.13], **Job** (Job 31:35-37) [5.7], **Jonathan** (2 Sam. 1:19-27) [5.2], **Joseph** (Gen. 41:45) [5.14], **Joshua** (Ex. 17:9) [4.2] (Josh. 14:13) [5.2] (Josh. 2:1-22)

[5.10], **Judah**, son of Jacob (Gen. 38:2) [5.14], **Lazarus**, parable (Luke 16:27-29) [6.10], **Lot** (Gen. 12:5) [4.8], **Manoah** and his wife (cf. Judg. 13:3, 16) [5.20], **Michaiah** (1 Kings 22:25) [4.10], **Michal** (2 Sam. 6:20-23) [5.8] (1 Sam. 19:11) [5.10], **Moses** (Ex. 19) [2.1] (Num. 21:17-18) [5.2] (Ex. 3:15) [5.15] (Deut. 33) [5.20] (Ex. 17:9) [4.2] (Num. 20) [6.12], **Naamah** (2 Chron. 12:13) [5.8], **Naaman**, (2 Kings 3:8, 14, 15, 20) [5.20], **Naboth** (1 Kings 21:3) [5.2], **Naomi** (Judg. 1:4) [5.14], **Nathan** (2 Sam. 12:11) [5.8], **Nehemiah** (Neh. 1:11) [5.14] (Neh. 1:5-11) [2.1], **Nicodemus** (John 3:13) [6.13], **Onan** (Gen. 38:10) [5.8], **Paul** (1Thess. 2:14-16) [5.16], **Peter** (Matt. 16:19) [4.6], **Potiphar** (Gen. 39:4) [4.6], **Rachel** (Gen. 29) [5.2], **Rahab** (Josh. 2:1-22) [5.10], **Reuben** (Gen. 49:3-4) [5.9], **Rizpah** (2 Sam 3:7) [5.9], **Rut** (Ruth 3:14) [5.13], **Samson** (Jud. 13-16) [2.1] (Judg. 14:1) [5.14] (Judg. 16:1-3) [5.10], **Saul** (2 Sam. 1:19-27) [5.2] (1 Sam. 19:9-17) [5.10], **Semaiah** (2 Kings 12:22-24) [5.20], **Sennacherib** (2 Kings 18:14) [5.9], **Shallum**, alternative name of Jehoahaz (2 Chron. 36:1) [5.12], **Sheba** (2 Sam. 20:15) [5.13], **Shebna** (Isa. 22:15) [4.6], **Shunamite woman** (2 Kings 4:14) [5.13] (1 Kings 4:6) [4.6] (2 Chron. 2:12[13]) [5.11], **Solomon** (1 Kings 2:39) [5.6], **Talmi** (2 Sam. 3:3) [5.14], **Tamar** (1 Chron. 2:4) [5.8], **Uriah** (2 Sam. 11:8-13) [5.8], **Witch of Endor** (1 Sam. 28:14-15) [6.10], **Xerxes** (Est. 2:9) [5.14], **Zedekiah** (1 Kings 22:25) [4.10], **Zipporah** (Ex. 2:21) [5.14].

## Foreign expressions within subsections

### Akkadian

[4.11] *rēš šarrūti*, ‘the beginning of the kingship’

[4.14] *paššūrum*, ‘table’

[5.3; 5.12] *Enuma eliš*, ‘When above’ (name of Babylonian creation epic)

[5.9] *segrēti* (Prism of Sennacherib), ‘concubines’

### Arabic

[4.3] *amara*, ‘he ordered’

### Aramaic

[4.3] *mēmar*, ‘word’

[4.3] *amar*, ‘he said’

### Greek

[4.3] *mia ousia treis hupostaseis*, ‘one being three substances / actual existences / realities’

[4.3] *kai theos ēn ho logos* (John 1:1), ‘And God was [the] Word’

[4.7] *kainon* (Matt. 26:29), ‘new’

[4.9] *harpagmon* (Philippians 2:6), ‘robbery’ / ‘something that has been seized’, in the sense of ‘legitimately procured’ and ‘provides an occasion for joy’

[4.8] *merisasthai* (Luke 12:13), ‘to divide’

[4.8] *kritēn* (Luke 12:14), ‘a judge’

[4.8] *meristēn* (Luke 12:14), ‘an arbiter’

[4.10] *en tois tamieiois* (Luke 12:3, Matt. 24:26), ‘in the inner room/s’

[4.12] *par-elthē* (Matt. 5:18; Aorist), ‘disappear’

[4.12] *genētai* (Matt. 5:18; Aorist), ‘accomplished’

[4.14] *diskos*, ‘table’

[5.3] *en de tō hebdomō* (Septuagint, Job 5:19), ‘and in the seventh’

[5.15] *ekklēsia*, ‘church’

[5.15] *sunagōgē* (Septuagint, Num. 16:3), ‘congregation’

[5.16] *ethnos*, ‘nation’

[5.16] *laos*, ‘people’

[5.20] *anthrōpos tou theou, homo dei, vir dei*, ‘man of God’

[6.3] *sphragida* (Rev. 7:2), ‘seal’

[6.3] *semeion*, ‘sign’

[6.13] *oudeis anabebēken* (John 3:13), ‘No-one has gone up’

[6.26] ‘*Biblia*’ (singular of *to biblion*), ‘books’

### Hebrew

[4.3] *YHWH* (Yahweh), ‘The Lord’

[4.3] *ehyeh āšer ehyeh* (Ex. 3:14), ‘I am what I am’

[4.3] *hāwāh > hāyāh*, ‘he was’ (verb ‘to be’)

[4.3] *’ehād* (Isa. 51:2), ‘one’

[4.6] *sōkēn* (Isa. 22:15), ‘steward’ or ‘caretaker’

[4.7] *yāšān* (Lev. 25:22), ‘old’

[4.7] *yāšān nōšān* (Lev. 26:10), ‘[the] old that has become old’

[4.7] *ḥādāš* (Lev. 26:10), ‘new’

[4.8] *šebet ... yāḥad [> yaḥad]* (Ps. 133:1), ‘staying ... together’

[4.9] *šālāl* (Num. 31:11), ‘spoils’ that were legitimately procured’

[4.9] *nefēš ... šālāl* (Jer. 21:9), ‘life as prey’

[4.10] *ḥeder bē-ḥeder* (1 Kings 20:30), ‘inner room’ (‘room in room’)

[4.10] *dēbīr* (1 Kings 6:16), ‘inner sanctuary’



Foreign expressions within subsections

- [4.11] **bě-rēšīt** (Gen. 1:1), 'in [the] beginning'
- [4.11] **rēšīt mamlakto** (Gen. 10:10), 'the beginning of his kingship'
- [4.14] **šulhān** (Ex. 25:23-24), 'table'
- [4.14] **lehem pānīm** (Ex. 25:30), 'Bread of Presence'
- [5.6] **midraš sēfer ha-mēlākīm** (2 Chron. 24:27), 'annotations on the book of kings'
- [5.6] **šē'al mā 'etten lāk** (1 Kings 3:5), 'Ask'. 'What must I give you?'
- [5.6] **šā'altī** (Ps. 27:4), 'I ask'
- [5.7] **šidqōt YHWH** (Judg. 5:11b), 'the righteous acts of the Lord'
- [5.7] **šaddīq... rāšā'** (Prov. 24:24), 'innocent... guilty'
- [5.7] **rīb** (Micha 6:2), 'dispute'
- [5.7] **mašdiq** (Isa. 50:8), 'vindicate'
- [5.8] **šākab** (Gen. 19:33), 'lie [with]'
- [5.8] **yāda'** (1 Kings 1:4), 'know > have intimate relations with'
- [5.8] **qārab 'el** (Isa. 8:3), 'go to > have sexual relations with'
- [5.8] **gillā kânāp** (Deut. 23:1 [22:30]), 'uncover the wing/blanket/nakedness'
- [5.8] **bāsār** (Lev. 15:2), 'flesh'
- [5.8] **raqalayim** (Ex. 4:25), 'feet'
- [5.8] **yād** (Isa. 57:8), 'hand' (euphemism for nakedness)
- [5.12] **'el 'elyōn** (Gen. 14:18), 'God Most High'
- [5.12] **yēhizqiyāhū [> yēhazzēqyāhū]** (Hos. 1:1), 'YHWH makes strong' (name of king)
- [5.12] **hizqiyāhū** (2 Kings 16:20), 'my strength is YHWH' (name of king)
- [5.12] **yēhōyāqīm** (2 Kings 23:35), 'YHWH restores' (name of king)

[5.12] **yěkonyāhū** (Jer. 24:1), ‘steadfast (?) is YHWH’ (name of king)

[5.12] **pele’ yō’ēš, ’ēl gibbōr, ’ābī’ad, sar šālōm** (Isa. 9:5 [6]), ‘Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father (or Father of the Booty), Prince of Peace’

[5.13] **hā-’īr**, ‘the city’

[5.15] **qāhāl**, ‘assembly’

[5.16] **’am**, ‘community’

[5.20] **iš hā-’ēlōhīm**, ‘man of God’

[5.21] **im** (Ex. 21:2-11), ‘if’

[6.3] **’ōt**, ‘sign’

[6.13] **lāqaḥ** (Gen. 5:24), ‘had taken [him] away’

[6.13] **wa-ya’al** (2 Kings 2:11), ‘And he went up’

[6.24] **bě-’āwōn ... bě-ḥēṭ’** (Ps. 51:7), ‘In iniquity ... in sin’

### Latin

[4.3] **una substantia tres personae**, ‘one [divine] substance [in] three persons’

[4.3] **Et Deus erat verbum**, ‘and God was the Word’ (*verbum*, also rendered as ‘verb’ in grammatical context)

[4.12] **Adunaton** (also spelt *adynaton*), a kind of hyperbole in which the exaggeration is so great that it refers to an impossibility

[4.14] **tabula** and **mensa**, ‘table’

[6.14] **Dominica Trinitatis**, ‘Trinity Sunday’

[8.1] **absumere mensas**, ‘devour tables’

### Old French

[4.3] **verbe**, ‘verb’ / ‘word’

### Sumerian

[4.14] **ban-šūr**, ‘table’

**Ugaritic**

[5.3] **yšrk**, 'had lack of [food]'

[5.3] **rkb** '**rpt**, 'rides on the clouds'

[5.12] **qdš w-'amr**, 'Q-d-š and Amr' (double name of deity)



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