

**THE LIFE-GIVING AND LIFE-THREATENING POTENTIAL OF WATER  
AND WATER-RELATED PHENOMENA IN THE OLD TESTAMENT  
WISDOM LITERATURE: AN ECO-THEOLOGICAL EXPLORATION**

**by**

**KIVATSI JONATHAN KAVUSA**

**Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of**

**DOCTOR OF THEOLOGY**

**in the subject**

**OLD TESTAMENT**

**at the**

**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**SUPERVISOR: PROF. S W VAN HEERDEN**

**SEPTEMBER 2015**

## DEDICATION

**To my beloved wife:**

**KAHINDO KYAKIMWA Maguy,**

מִעַיִן בְּנַיִם בְּאֵר מַיִם חַיִּים וְנַזְלִים מִן־לְבָנוֹן: [Song 4:15]

(A garden fountain, a well of living water,  
and flowing streams from Lebanon).

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank God for the protection, care and unfailing grace he has granted me during my studies at the University of South Africa (UNISA). I am grateful to many people for the completion of this thesis that tries to explore the ecological significance of the life-giving and life-threatening potential of water and water-related phenomena in the Old Testament wisdom books.

I am particularly indebted to my promoter, Professor Willem van Heerden, who first introduced me to the ecological interpretation of the Bible and provided me with updated resources about the ongoing debates within this new hermeneutical trend. I benefited immensely from his academic guidance, expertise and availability to discuss with me how to involve the ecological hermeneutics in socio-historical and literary analysis of the biblical texts.

I also thank him for having given me the opportunity to present some of the material of this thesis in papers at scholarly conferences held in Pretoria (*Shir-Ha Shirim* workshop at UNISA 2013), Cape Town (AASR conference at UCT 2014) and Kruger National Park Berg-en-Dal camp (OTSSA Ecology Group 2014). I learned much from him, both on a scholarly and a human level, and I hope that much of the intellectual stimulation I gained can be observed in this thesis.

My thanks are also due to the World Council of Churches' Department of Ecumenical and Theological Education for the three years financial grants supporting both my Master's and PhD projects at UNISA. Likewise, a deep sense of thankfulness goes to Langham Partnership International for having awarded me a three-year scholarship to complete this PhD thesis.

I also express my hearty thanks to the current management board of the ULPGL led by Professor Kambale Karafuli, and the General Secretariat of the *Communauté Baptiste au Centre de l'Afrique* (CBCA) led by Reverend Dr Kakule Molo, for their numerous efforts that enabled my postgraduate studies at UNISA.

### III

I am indebted to all the staff in the Department of Biblical and Ancient Studies of the University of South Africa for having organised various seminars and lectures. I learnt much from the enriching insights of these events.

I owe gratitude to Ms Elsabé Nell, the Subject Librarian for Theology at the UNISA Library, for her friendly support in finding relevant resources for my study. Mrs Ball and Dr Symonds also deserve my thanks for the language editing of the material of this thesis. I owe gratitude to Dr Emmanuel Tsilenga who gave me the opportunity to minister in the International Church of Pretoria during my PhD studies at UNISA.

I am deeply thankful to my wife and best friend, Kahindo Kyakimwa Maguy, for her continuous support, and mostly for forgiving my 'absence' in person and mind while I was working on this thesis. Her perseverance and unfailing love have been supportive for the completion of this project. This thesis is dedicated to her and our forthcoming offspring for whom I hope a world that is free from anthropocentric attitudes against nature and water mismanagement.

I finally thank all my friends, colleagues and family members whose valuable support contributed to the completion of this thesis.

**DECLARATION**

Student Number: **4606-395-1**

I declare that ‘**The Life-Giving and Life-Threatening Potential of Water and Water-Related Phenomena in the Old Testament Wisdom Literature: An Eco-Theological Exploration**’ is my own work and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

---

**SIGNATURE**

**(KAVUSA, K J)**

**7 September 2015**

**DATE**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>DEDICATION .....</b>	<b>I</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....</b>	<b>II</b>
<b>DECLARATION .....</b>	<b>IV</b>
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS .....</b>	<b>V</b>
<b>LIST OF FIGURES.....</b>	<b>XVI</b>
<b>SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>XVII</b>
<b>KEY WORDS .....</b>	<b>XVIII</b>
<b>ABBREVIATIONS.....</b>	<b>XIX</b>
<b>ABBREVIATION OF THE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE .....</b>	<b>XXIII</b>
<b>CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGICAL</b>	
<b>CONSIDERATIONS.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1    Motivation/Rationale for the study.....	1
1.2    Problem statement .....	4
1.3    Research questions .....	10
1.4    Hypothesis .....	11
1.5    Objectives and aims of the study.....	11
1.6    The relevance of wisdom books to eco-theology.....	11
1.7    Theoretical framework .....	13
1.8    Methodological considerations.....	15
1.8.1    Historical critical methods.....	15
1.8.2    Literary analyses.....	17
1.8.3    Metaphor theory .....	19
1.9    Delimitation and selection of biblical texts.....	20
1.9.1    Delimitation and scope of the study .....	20

1.9.2	Selection of references to water and water-related phenomena.....	21
1.10	Proposed chapters.....	22
<b>CHAPTER TWO: EXTANT STUDIES ON WATER AND WATER-RELATED PHENOMENA IN THE OLD TESTAMENT .....</b>		<b>24</b>
2.1	Introduction .....	24
2.2	Old Testament studies on water and water-related phenomena.....	25
2.2.1	Introduction .....	25
2.2.2	Studies on water and water-related phenomena in biblical dictionaries and encyclopaedias.....	25
2.2.2.1	On ignoring the Old Testament wisdom books.....	26
2.2.2.2	On scanty references to the Old Testament wisdom books .....	27
2.2.3	Specific publications on water and water-related phenomena in the Old Testament.....	29
2.2.3.1	Books on water and water-related phenomena in the Old Testament.....	29
2.2.3.2	Articles on water and water-related phenomena in the Old Testament.....	33
2.3	Eco-theological studies about water and water-related phenomena .....	36
2.4	Studies on wisdom texts containing water and water-related phenomena...	39
2.4.1	Introduction .....	39
2.4.2	Studies on texts containing water and water-related phenomena in Job..	41
2.4.3	Studies on texts containing water and water-related phenomena in Proverbs .....	45
2.4.3.1	Studies on Proverbs 5:15-20.....	45
2.4.3.1.1	Feminist approaches to Proverbs 5:15-20.....	45
2.4.3.1.2	Erotic readings of Proverbs 5:15-20 .....	46
2.4.3.2	Studies on Proverbs 9:13-18 and Proverbs 25:23-26 .....	48
2.4.3.3	Studies on Proverbs 3:19-20 and Proverbs 8:22-31 .....	49

2.4.4	Studies on texts containing water and water-related phenomena in Qoheleth.....	49
2.4.5	Studies on texts containing water and water-related phenomena in the Deutero-canonical wisdom books .....	52
2.4.5.1	Introduction .....	52
2.4.5.2	Studies on texts containing water and water-related phenomena in the Wisdom of Solomon .....	53
2.4.5.3	Studies on texts containing water and water-related phenomena in Jesus Son of Sirach.....	54
2.5	Conclusion.....	55
<b>CHAPTER THREE: WATER AND WATER-RELATED PHENOMENA IN THE BOOK OF JOB .....</b>		<b>57</b>
3.1	Introduction .....	57
3.2	Introduction to the book of Job .....	58
3.2.1	The date and context of the book of Job .....	58
3.2.2	Literary structure and genres of the book.....	59
3.2.3	The created order and waters in the book of Job.....	60
3.3	Water and water-related phenomena in Job 14:7-12.....	62
3.3.1	The Masoretic Text.....	62
3.3.2	Translation.....	63
3.3.3	Exegetical remarks .....	63
3.3.3.1	Delimitation of the text.....	63
3.3.3.2	Literary structure .....	64
3.3.3.3	Linguistic and semiotic analysis of Job 14:7-12 .....	64
3.3.4	Eco-theological analysis of the text.....	65
3.3.4.1	Water and the flora kingdom (verses 7-9).....	65
3.3.4.2	Humans vanish as water vaporises (verses 11-12).....	67
3.3.4.3	Eco-theological synthesis .....	70
3.4	Water and water-related phenomena in Job 36:26-37:13.....	71

## VIII

3.4.1	Masoretic Text of Job 36:26 - 37:13 .....	72
3.4.2	Translation of Job 36:26-37:13 .....	73
3.4.3	The literary observations .....	75
3.4.3.1	Delimitation of the text.....	75
3.4.3.2	Literary structure .....	77
3.4.4	Eco-theological observations.....	78
3.4.4.1	Ecological significance of the rain (Job 36:26-28) .....	78
3.4.4.2	Ecological significance of the rainstorm (36:29-37:5).....	80
3.4.4.3	Ecological insights of the snow, wind and shower rain (37:6-12) ...	82
3.4.4.4	Eco-theological synthesis .....	85
3.5	Water and water-related phenomena in Job 38:22-38.....	86
3.5.1	Introduction .....	86
3.5.2	The Masoretic Text of Job 38:22-38 .....	87
3.5.3	Translation of Job 38:22-38.....	89
3.5.4	Literary position of Job 38:22-38 .....	90
3.5.5	Retrieval of ecological wisdom in the text .....	91
3.5.5.1	Ecological significance of the storehouses (רִצְוֹן) (Job 38:22-24) ....	91
3.5.5.2	The ecological potential of the rain in Job 38:25-27 .....	94
3.5.5.3	The potential of other forms of moisture (Job 38:28-30).....	96
3.5.5.4	The role of constellations related to water (Job 38:31-33).....	100
3.5.5.5	The clouds as water-carriers (Job 38:34-38) .....	102
3.5.5.6	Eco-theological synthesis .....	105
3.6	Comparative conclusion .....	106
<b>CHAPTER FOUR: WATER AND WATER-RELATED PHENOMENA IN THE BOOK OF PROVERBS .....</b>		<b>108</b>
4.1	Introduction .....	108
4.2	References to water and water-related phenomena in the metaphorical texts of Proverbs.....	109
4.2.1	Water and water-related phenomena in Proverbs 5:15-20 .....	110
4.2.1.1	Masoretic Text of Proverbs 5:15-20.....	110

4.2.1.2	Discussion of variants on Proverbs 15:16 .....	110
4.2.1.3	Translation .....	111
4.2.1.4	Proverbs 5:15-20 in its literary structure .....	112
4.2.1.5	The structure of Proverbs 5:15-20.....	114
4.2.1.6	Retrieving the ecological wisdom of Proverbs 5:15-20.....	116
4.2.1.6.1	Cisterns and wells in the Old Testament (verse 15ab).....	116
4.2.1.6.2	The significance of well/cistern metaphors (verse 15) .....	118
4.2.1.6.3	Springs and fountains in the Old Testament (verses 16-18).....	120
4.2.1.6.4	Ecological insights of springs/fountain images (verses 16-18)	122
4.2.2	Water and water-related phenomena in Proverbs 9:13-18 .....	125
4.2.2.1	Introduction .....	125
4.2.2.2	The Masoretic Text of Proverbs 9:13-18 .....	125
4.2.2.3	Translation of Proverbs 9:13-18.....	126
4.2.2.4	Social and literary contexts of Proverbs 9:13-18 .....	127
4.2.2.5	Ecological significance of Proverbs 9:17-18.....	129
4.2.2.5.1	Stolen water is sweet (verse 17).....	129
4.2.2.5.2	Sheol and waters in the Old Testament.....	131
4.2.2.5.3	Ecological meaning of Sheol in Proverbs 9:18.....	133
4.2.3	Water and water-related phenomena in Proverbs 25:23-26.....	135
4.2.3.1	Introduction .....	135
4.2.3.2	The Masoretic Text.....	135
4.2.3.3	Translation .....	136
4.2.3.4	Literary considerations .....	136
4.2.3.4.1	General observations.....	136
4.2.3.4.2	Literary structure of Proverbs 25:23-26.....	138
4.2.3.5	Ecological insights of water images in Proverbs 25:23-26 .....	139
4.2.3.5.1	North wind's rains as sly tongue's effects (verses 23-24) .....	139
4.2.3.5.2	Metaphor of cold water for a thirsty person (Pr 25:25) .....	144
4.2.3.5.3	Metaphor of polluted springs/fountains (verse 26).....	146
4.3	Water and water-related phenomena in Proverbs 3:19-20 and 8:22-31 .....	148
4.3.1	Introduction .....	148

4.3.2	Water and water-related phenomena in Proverbs 3:19-20 .....	149
4.3.2.1	Introduction .....	149
4.3.2.2	General literary considerations.....	149
4.3.2.2.1	The Masoretic Text of Proverbs 3:19-20 .....	149
4.3.2.2.2	Translation of Proverbs 3:19-20 .....	149
4.3.2.2.3	Position of Proverbs 3:19-20 in Proverbs 1-9.....	150
4.3.2.2.4	Structure of Proverbs 3:19-20 .....	150
4.3.2.3	Eco-theological reading of Proverbs 3:19-20.....	151
4.3.2.3.1	Life-giving quality of water in Proverbs 3:19-20 .....	151
4.3.2.3.2	Life-threatening potential of water in Proverbs 3:19-20.....	152
4.3.2.3.3	Eco-theological synthesis.....	154
4.3.3	Water and water-related phenomena in Proverbs 8:22-31 .....	154
4.3.3.1	Introduction .....	154
4.3.3.2	The Masoretic Text of Proverbs 8:22-31 .....	154
4.3.3.3	Translation of Proverbs 8:22-31 .....	155
4.3.3.4	Wisdom and creation in Proverbs 8:22-31 .....	156
4.3.3.5	Life-threatening potential of water (verses 24-26).....	157
4.3.3.6	Life-giving quality of water (verses 27-29) .....	158
4.3.3.7	Eco-theological synthesis .....	159
4.4	Comparative conclusion .....	159
<b>CHAPTER FIVE: WATER AND WATER-RELATED PHENOMENA IN THE BOOK OF QOHELETH .....</b>		<b>162</b>
5.1	Introduction .....	162
5.2	Introduction to the book of Qoheleth .....	162
5.2.1	Socio-historical context of the book of Qoheleth.....	162
5.2.2	The use of nature languages in Qoheleth .....	164
5.3	Water and water-related phenomena in Qoheleth 1:4-11.....	166
5.3.1	Introduction .....	166
5.3.2	Literary considerations .....	166
5.3.2.1	The Masoretic Text of Qoheleth 1:4-11 .....	166

5.3.2.2	Artful ambiguity in Qoheleth 1:4-11 .....	168
5.3.2.3	Delimitation of Qoheleth 1:4-11 .....	170
5.3.3	Ecological insights of Qoheleth 1:4-11 .....	171
5.3.3.1	Wearisomeness of nature (Murphy, Krüger, Perdue & Brown) ....	171
5.3.3.1.1	Wearisomeness of nature in general .....	171
5.3.3.1.2	Wearisomeness of water (verse 7) .....	172
5.3.3.2	Wonders of the regularity of nature (Whybray, Lohfink) .....	173
5.3.3.2.1	Wonders of nature in general: romantic reading.....	173
5.3.3.2.2	Wonders of water in verse 7 .....	175
5.3.4	Critical conclusion and assessment .....	178
5.3.4.1	Nature in general .....	178
5.3.4.2	Water and water-related phenomena in verse 7 .....	179
5.3.4.3	Eco-theological retrieval of the text .....	181
5.4	Water and water-related phenomena in Qoheleth 2:4-6.....	182
5.4.1	Introduction .....	182
5.4.2	The Masoretic Text of Qoheleth 2:4-6.....	182
5.4.3	Translation of Qoheleth 2:4-6 .....	182
5.4.4	Literary considerations .....	183
5.4.5	Socio-literary analysis of Qoheleth 2:4-6.....	184
5.4.5.1	Qoheleth 2:4-6 versus Ancient Eastern inscriptions .....	184
5.4.5.2	The 'Eden water theme' in Qoheleth 2:4-6 .....	187
5.4.6	Eco-theological significance of Qoheleth 2:4-6.....	189
5.5	Water and water-related phenomena in Qoheleth 11:1-6.....	191
5.5.1	Introduction .....	191
5.5.2	The Masoretic Text of Qoheleth 11:1-6.....	192
5.5.3	Translation .....	193
5.5.4	Literary considerations .....	193
5.5.5	Ecological significance of water in Qoheleth 11:1-6 .....	194
5.5.5.1	Water ambivalence in Qoheleth 11:1-2.....	194
5.5.5.2	Water volatility and the agrarian life (verses 3-4 & 6).....	196

5.5.5.3	Eco-theological wisdom of Qoheleth 11:1-6.....	199
5.6	Conclusion.....	200
<b>CHAPTER SIX: WATER AND WATER-RELATED PHENOMENA IN THE DEUTERO-CANONICAL WISDOM BOOKS .....</b>		<b>202</b>
6.1	Introduction .....	202
6.2	Water and water-related phenomena in Sirach 24:23-34 and 43:13-26.....	202
6.2.1	Introduction .....	202
6.2.2	Introduction to the book of Sirach.....	203
6.2.2.1	The date and context of Sirach .....	203
6.2.2.2	Texts and versions of Sirach.....	204
6.2.2.3	Literary structure of the book .....	204
6.2.3	Water and water-related phenomena in Sirach 24:23-34 .....	205
6.2.3.1	Introduction .....	205
6.2.3.2	Position of Sirach 24:23-34 within Sirach 24 .....	205
6.2.3.3	The Hebrew text of Sirach 24:23-29 .....	205
6.2.3.4	Translation of Sirach 24:23-29 .....	206
6.2.3.5	Literary structure of Sirach 24:23-29 .....	207
6.2.3.6	Wisdom as life-giving water (verses 23-27) .....	208
6.2.3.6.1	Brimful like Pishon and Tigris (verse 25).....	208
6.2.3.6.2	Running over like the Euphrates and the Jordan (verse 26) .....	209
6.2.3.6.3	Flooding like the Nile and Gihon (verse 27) .....	211
6.2.3.7	Wisdom as deeper/greater than a sea/abyss (verses 28-29) .....	213
6.2.3.8	Sirach 24:23-29 as a metaphor for the Promised Land .....	214
6.2.4	Water and water-related phenomena in Sirach 24:30-34 .....	215
6.2.4.1	The Hebrew text of Sirach 24:30-34 .....	215
6.2.4.2	Translation of Sirach 24:30-34.....	215
6.2.4.3	Literary structure of Sirach 24:30-34 .....	216
6.2.4.4	The idea of abundance and sharing .....	216
6.2.5	Eco-theological synthesis of Sirach 24:23-34 .....	217
6.2.5.1	Intrinsic worth of water .....	217

### XIII

6.2.5.2	The mystery of water.....	218
6.2.6	Water and water-related phenomena in Sirach 43:13-26.....	219
6.2.6.1	Introduction.....	219
6.2.6.2	Literary considerations.....	219
6.2.6.2.1	The Hebrew text of Sirach 43:13-26.....	219
6.2.6.2.2	The LXX text of Sirach 43:13-26.....	220
6.2.6.2.3	Translation.....	221
6.2.6.2.4	Position of Sirach 43:13-26 in Sirach 42:15-43:33.....	222
6.2.6.2.5	Literary structure of Sirach 43:13-26.....	223
6.2.6.2.6	Sirach 43:13-26 and Psalm 104.....	224
6.2.6.3	Significance of water in Sirach 43:13-26.....	225
6.2.6.3.1	Destructive water and water-related phenomena (vv.13-17b)..	225
6.2.6.3.2	Cool water and water-related phenomena, verses 17c-20.....	226
6.2.6.3.3	The life-giving quality of dew (verses 21-22).....	227
6.2.6.3.4	The abyss and sea under control (verses 23-26).....	228
6.2.6.4	Eco-theological synthesis.....	230
6.3	Water and water-related phenomena in Wisdom 11:2-14.....	231
6.3.1	Introduction.....	231
6.3.2	Introduction to the book of Wisdom.....	232
6.3.2.1	The context and date of the book.....	232
6.3.2.2	The literary structure of the book.....	233
6.3.2.3	Creation in the book of Wisdom.....	234
6.3.3	Literary analysis of Wisdom 11:2-14.....	235
6.3.3.1	Midrash of the exodus story in Wisdom 11:2-19:22.....	235
6.3.3.2	The LXX text of Wisdom 11:2-14.....	237
6.3.3.3	Translation of Wisdom 11:2-14.....	238
6.3.3.4	Ambivalence aspects of water in Wisdom 11:2-14.....	240
6.3.3.4.1	Water used to bless and punish, verses 2-7.....	240
6.3.3.4.2	Thirst as educative and retributive, verses 8-10.....	241
6.3.3.4.3	The mystery of water upon the Egyptians, verses 11-14.....	242
6.3.4	Other forms of water ambivalence in Wisdom 19:1-12.....	242

6.3.4.1	The LXX text of Wisdom 19:1-12 .....	242
6.3.4.2	Translation of Wisdom 19:1-12.....	243
6.3.4.3	The literary considerations .....	245
6.3.4.4	Position of Wisdom 19:1-12 in Wisdom 11:2-19:22 .....	245
6.3.4.5	The use of the principle of interchangeability.....	246
6.3.4.6	Alternating functions of water.....	247
6.3.4.7	Eco-theological synthesis .....	248
6.4	Conclusion.....	249
<b>CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSIONS – ECO-THEOLOGICAL</b>		
<b>IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY .....</b>		
		<b>251</b>
7.1	Introduction .....	251
7.2	Returning to the working hypothesis.....	251
7.3	Substantial contributions to eco-theology .....	252
7.3.1	Abundancy of references to water and water-related phenomena in wisdom books .....	252
7.3.2	Insights about water and water-related phenomena in the wisdom books.....	253
7.3.2.1	Water and water-related phenomena in Job .....	253
7.3.2.2	Water and water-related phenomena in Proverbs.....	255
7.3.2.3	Water and water-related phenomena in Qoheleth .....	258
7.3.2.4	Water and water-related phenomena in Sirach and Wisdom .....	260
7.3.3	Critical comparison and assessment.....	262
7.4	Ecological implications of the study for today.....	264
7.4.1	Introduction .....	264
7.4.2	Implications of texts of the book of Job .....	264
7.4.3	Implications of texts of Proverbs.....	265
7.4.4	Implications of texts in Qoheleth .....	267
7.4.5	Implications of texts in Sirach.....	268
7.5	Remaining questions for further research.....	270

7.6	Difficulties and limitations of the study .....	270
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b> .....		<b>272</b>
<b>APPENDIX A: REFERENCES TO WATER AND WATER-RELATED PHENOMENA IN THE OLD TESTAMENT WISDOM BOOKS</b> .....		<b>302</b>
<b>APPENDIX B: REFERENCES TO THE LIFE-GIVING AND LIFE- THREATENING POTENTIAL OF WATER AND WATER-RELATED PHENOMENA</b> .....		<b>319</b>

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Structure of Job 14:7-12.....	64
Figure 2: Structure of Job 36:26-37:13 .....	77
Figure 3: Rhetorical structure of Proverbs 5:15-20.....	115
Figure 4: An Ancient Cistern in Ancient Israel.....	119
Figure 5: Structure of Proverbs 25:23-26.....	138
Figure 6: A rainstorm in Florida, photo by C. Perez.....	141
Figure 7: Failure of maize crops due to unexpected rainstorm/Goma-DRC.....	142
Figure 8: A dead fish in a polluted spring, photo by J. Foser .....	148
Figure 9: Rhetorical structure of Proverbs 3:19-20.....	150
Figure 10: Structure of Proverbs 8:22-31 .....	156
Figure 11: Literary structure of Sirach 24:23-29.....	207
Figure 12: God Hapy offering a tray of abundant foods .....	212
Figure 13: Chiastic structure of Sirach 24:29.....	213
Figure 14: Literary structure of Sirach 24:30-34.....	216
Figure 15: The Hebrew text of Sirach 43:13-26.....	220

**SUMMARY**

The thrust of this thesis proceeds from two main presuppositions. The first is that the Old Testament wisdom books are generally ignored or not given enough attention in the studies about water and water-related phenomena. The second is that the romantic perspective on elements of the natural world is dominant in eco-theological studies. To highlight this twofold problem, a sample survey into the works of the scholarly biblical dictionaries, encyclopedias, books and articles as well as ecotheological studies is offered in the second chapter of this thesis.

In an attempt to (partly) address this problem, this study argues that, firstly, despite a scarcity of scholarly interest in water and water-related phenomena in the Old Testament wisdom books, this body of literature contains a rich variety of references to water and water-related phenomena. Secondly, it is shown in this study that an overly-romantic view of nature does not do justice to the richness, complexity, and variety of portrayals of elements of nature in the texts themselves.

In this sense, this study aims at retrieving ecological wisdom from particular texts that give voice to both the life-giving and life-threatening potential of water and water-related phenomena in the Old Testament wisdom books. The exploration is facilitated by elements of the historical-critical and literary approaches through an ecological framework informed by four of the six eco-justice principles of the Earth Bible Project.

The thesis suggests that scholars who attempt ecological readings of the Bible will gain more if they also take less favoured texts into consideration. The exploration of water and water-related phenomena in the Old Testament wisdom books, therefore, goes beyond what studies on water or water-related phenomena have hitherto done. Furthermore, a study on both aspects of water as a life-giving and life-threatening entity demonstrates that an eco-friendly view of nature does not do justice to the biblical texts themselves. This will be seen through the third, fourth, fifth and sixth chapters.

**KEY WORDS**

Water; water-related phenomena; eco-theology; life-giving water; life-threatening water; wisdom literature; anthropocentrism; fountains; streams; springs; flood; drought; rain; Sheol; sea/river; waters; wells; cisterns; water management; Earth Bible Project, Earth Bible principles;

## ABBREVIATIONS

AAA	:	<i>Acta Academiae Aboensis</i>
AASR	:	African Association for the Study of Religion
AJSL	:	American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures
ANE	:	Ancient Near East
ANETS	:	Ancient Near Eastern Texts and Studies
ATF	:	Australian Theological Forum
AUS	:	American University Studies
AWRA	:	American Water Resources Association (Water Resources Bulletin)
AYB	:	The Anchor Yale Bible
BA	:	Biblical Archaeologist
BASOR	:	Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research
BAR	:	Biblical Archaeologist Review
BCE	:	Before Christian Era
<i>BETS</i>	:	Bulletin of the Evangelical Theological Society
BFC	:	Bible Français Courant
BHS	:	<i>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i>
BS	:	<i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i> (journal)
BT	:	Bible Translator (journal)
CBAA	:	The Catholic Biblical Association of America
CJB	:	Complete Jewish Bible
CBQ	:	Catholic Bible Quarterly
CBQMS	:	Catholic Bible Quarterly Monograph Series
CE	:	Christian Era
DRC	:	Democratic Republic of the Congo
EMJ	:	Encounters Mission Journal
FOFLLL	:	Facts on File Library of Language and Literature
GI	:	Greek Translation of Ben Sira's Grand Son
GII	:	The Expanded Greek Translation of Ben Sira
GICOC	:	Global Issues in Context Online Collection

HSM	:	Harvard Semitic Monographs
HTI	:	Hebrew Original of Ben Sira
HTII	:	Expanded Hebrew Text of One or More Recensions of Ben Sira
HTR	:	Harvard Theological Review
HTS	:	<i>Hervomde Teologiese Studies</i>
HUCA	:	Hebrew Union College Annual
IEJ	:	Israel Exploration Journal
Inscr.	:	Inscription
JARCE	:	Journal of the American Centre in Egypt
JBL	:	Journal of Biblical Literature
JBQ	:	Jewish Bible Quarterly
JNSL	:	Journal of the Northwest Semitic Languages
JPS	:	Jewish Publication Society
JR	:	Journal of Religion
JSJ	:	Journal for the Study of Judaism
JSOT	:	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament
JSPSSup	:	Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha – Supplement Series
JSOTSup	:	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament – Supplement Series
JTS	:	Journal of Theological Studies
KJV	:	King James Version
LSG	:	Louis Segond
LTJ	:	Lutheran Theological Journal
LXX	:	The Septuagint
MT	:	The Masoretic Text
NAB	:	The New American Bible
NAS	:	The New American Standard Bible
NEB	:	The New English Bible
NET	:	The New English Translation
NICOT	:	The New International Commentary of the Old Testament
NIV	:	New International Version
NJB	:	The New Jerusalem Bible

NJPS	:	The New Jewish Publication Society (Bible Version)
NRSV	:	The New Revised Standard Version
NTSSA	:	New Testament Society of South Africa
OPT	:	Occupied Palestinian Territory
OTE	:	Old Testament Essays
OTL	:	Old Testament Library
OTM	:	Oxford Theological Monographs
OTSSA	:	Old Testament Society of South Africa
PIBA	:	Proceedings of the Irish Biblical Association
4QQoh <sup>a</sup>	:	The Earliest Qoheleth Scroll Fragments at Qumran
RB	:	Revue Biblique
REJ	:	Revue d'Études Juives
RSV	:	The Revised Standard Version
s.a.	:	<i>Sine anno</i> (No date)
SBL	:	Society of Biblical Literature
SCM	:	Student Christian Movement
Sir	:	The book of Jesus Ben Sira, also called Ecclesiasticus or Sirach
SPCK	:	Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge
SSN	:	<i>Studia Semitica Neerlandica</i>
SWBA	:	The Social World of Biblical Antiquity Series
<i>ThlZ</i>	:	<i>Theologische Literaturzeitung</i>
TEV	:	Today's English Version (Good News Bible)
TANAK	:	<i>Torah Nebiim Ketubim</i> (i.e. Acronym for the Hebrew Bible)
TOB	:	Traduction Œcuménique de la Bible
UCT	:	University of Cape Town
UELCI	:	United Evangelical Lutheran Church in India
UF	:	<i>Ugarit Forschungen</i>
ULPGL	:	Université Libre des Pays des Grands Lacs
UNEP	:	The United Nations Environmental Programme
UNESCO	:	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNISA	:	University of South Africa

## XXII

v./vv.	:	Verse/Verses
VT	:	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
VTSup	:	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i> Supplements
WBC	:	Word Biblical Commentary
Wis	:	The book of Wisdom of Solomon
WTJ	:	The Westminster Theological Journal
WWF	:	World Wide Fund for Nature
ZDPV	:	<i>Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins</i>
ZAW	:	<i>Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>

## ABBREVIATIONS OF THE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

The abbreviations for the books of the Bible follow the prescriptions of the New Testament Society of South Africa (NTSSA) as indicated in the Research Guide for Master's and Doctoral students of the Department of Biblical and Ancient studies at the University of South Africa.

### **Old Testament**

Genesis: Gn ; Exodus: Ex ; Leviticus: Lv ; Numbers: Nm ; Deuteronomy: Dt  
 Joshua: Js ; Judges: Jdg ; 1 Samuel: 1 Sm; 2 Samuel: 2 Sm; 1 Kings: 1 Ki; 2  
 Kings: 2 Ki; Psalms: Ps; Job: Jb; Proverbs: Pr; Ruth: Rut; Song of Songs: Can;  
 Qoheleth: Qoh; Lamentations: Lm; Esther: Es; Daniel: Dn; Esdras: Esd; Nehemiah:  
 Neh; 1 Chronicles: 1 Chr; 2 Chronicles: 2 Chr. Isaiah: Is; Jeremiah: Jr ; Ezekiel:Ezk;  
 Hosea: Hs; Joel: Jl; Amos: Am; Obadiah: Ob; Jonah: Jnh; Micah: Mi; Nahum: Nah;  
 Habakuk: Hab; Zephaniah: Zph; Haggai: Hg; Zechariah: Zch; Malachi: Ml

### **New Testament**

Mathew: Mt ; Mark: Mk; Luke: Lk; John: Jn; Acts: Ac ; Romans: Rm; 1 Corinthians:  
 1 Cor; 2 Corinthians: 2 Cor; Galatians: Gl; Ephesians: Eph; Philippians: Phlp;  
 Colossians: Col; 1 Thessalonians: 1 Th; 2 Thessalonians: 2 Th; 1 Timothy: 1  
 Tm; 2 Timothy: 2 Tm; Titus: Tt; Philemon: Phlm; Hebrews: Heb; James: Ja; 1 Peter:  
 1 Peter; 2 Peter: 2 Pt; 1 John: 1 Jn ; 2 John: 2 Jn; 3 John: 3 Jn; Jude: Jude;  
 Revelations: Rv

# CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

## 1.1 Motivation/Rationale for the study

Water is essential for all life: it is a unique substance containing distinctive properties which influence life on earth. Without water, scientists confirm that it is uncertain that life on Earth would have arisen since ‘no organism can live without it’ and ‘there are no substitutes for most of its uses’<sup>1</sup> (Van As, Du Preez, Brown & Smit 2012:124). It is, therefore, not an exaggeration to say that a river<sup>2</sup> reflects the life and history of any country or region since water is the link that binds everything, both living beings and non-living things, regardless of the effect (Meganck 2012:vi). The following statement of UNESCO is more explicit in defining water as:

A unifying element: it is a substance (H<sub>2</sub>O) in gas, liquid and solid form; it is an agent, a transformative force, a realm, a source of life and death; and, in a human sense, water can be an entity, an idea, a source of power and wealth, of misery and woes, or inspiration and joy (Johnston 2012:ix).

The demand for water is therefore an urgent issue across the planet, while too much water (floods or tsunamis) often results in disasters. In Africa,<sup>3</sup> more than six hundred thousand people die yearly from unsafe water, and water-related diseases, such as

---

<sup>1</sup> About 71% of the earth surface is covered with water. All organisms are made up mostly of water: for instance, while 60% of a tree’s weight consists of water, most animals contain an average of 50-60% of water. Furthermore, water aids in arousing the Earth’s surface, moderating climate since the global oceans store and transport vast amounts of heat around the Earth, which in turn impacts regional climate and rainfall patterns. For these reasons, ‘water can be regarded as a miracle substance since it exhibits so many unique properties contrary to many substances’ (Van As *et al.* 2012:124).

<sup>2</sup> The World Bank Senior Water Advisor declared that ‘there is no precedent for a country developing without harnessing its rivers and utilising its water resources (quoted in Yohannes 2008:87). There is therefore an intimate link between water, human security and economic development (World Bank 2004:2).

<sup>3</sup> The United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) reported, for instance, that 50 million people (or three quarters of the population) in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) have no access to safe drinking water, even though the country holds over half of Africa’s water reserves. See United Nations Environmental Program (2011). 50 million people lack clean water to drink in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Available from: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=37850&Cr=dr+congo&Cr1> (Accessed 22 March 2012).

malaria, kill more than one million people every year (Van As *et al.* 2012:224).<sup>4</sup> It is also believed that in the coming years:

Water stress will turn into water scarcity with more frequency and with greater impact. Water refugees will become an even more common phenomenon. And while water conflicts have been infrequent in the past, they are anticipated to escalate, prompting growth in the numbers of ‘hydrological refugees’ (Meganck 2012:vi).

Water is thus a valuable treasure and a potential threat that can either give or threaten life through its highly nuanced, variable and complex forms (Gerstenberger 2012:35). The issue is so vital that it cannot be left to natural sciences alone, but must be treated with an interdisciplinary focus. UNESCO recognises that the sustainable future of the planet requires the inputs of cross-discipline and cross-cultural statements about water.<sup>5</sup> The increasing fragility/threat of water resources calls for diverse approaches to water management to be recognised and supported (Johnston 2012:xx).

Therefore, we are practising theology in the context where millions of people struggle to have fresh water, suffer from having to drink unsafe water or are victims of disasters connected to water. It would then be a contradiction to speak about the promise of God in terms of ‘living water’ if we are not greatly disturbed by the fact that so many people are victims of water-related problems (Ayre 2011:9-10).

However, the crisis of water which is currently an essential problem due to ecological changes was already one of the most important concerns in the biblical world. The Bible reflects this issue extensively and in multivalent ways. In this case, we need to read the Bible as a whole and acknowledge insights from its different parts containing water and water-related phenomena in order to promote the global biblical understanding of water that will help to re-imagine our relationship towards the water sphere. If we agree with Habermas (2003:256-57) that the biblical texts can be the

---

<sup>4</sup> Scientists remarked that 97.5% of total water is in oceans, therefore unfit for human use, and of the 2.5% that is fresh, only 0.4% is available as liquid and accessible fresh water on the Earth’s surface. Over 1.2 billion people (18% of the world’s population) lack access to safe water, 2.6 billion (42%) have no access to basic sanitation facilities, and over 2 million die every year because of water-related diseases (Makdisi 2011:430).

<sup>5</sup> See UNESCO. Water issues. Available Online from: [http://www.unesco.org/water/water\\_links/Water\\_Issues/](http://www.unesco.org/water/water_links/Water_Issues/) (Accessed 6 June 2013).

basis on which modern thoughts can be drawn for inspiration, then we need to discern the ‘subject of water’ as it is presented in the different parts of the Bible.

In fact, as it will be shown in the problem statement of this thesis, biblical scholars and theologians have favoured certain texts and ignored others in the eco-theological readings of several issues in the Bible, including water and water-related phenomena. Many texts that are read to explore water and water-related phenomena are taken from the Pentateuch, the Prophets and the Psalms. The Old Testament wisdom books have not gained enough attention of biblical scholars and eco-theologians in the study of water and water-related phenomena.

Therefore, the following study is mainly focused on the wisdom literature, as the other parts of the Bible have already been widely covered. Although there is a scarcity of scholarly works on water and water-related phenomena in these books, the references to water and water-related phenomena occur frequently in the Old Testament wisdom books, and deserve a thorough exploration. Given the profusion of references to water and water-related phenomena,<sup>6</sup> this study has a narrow focus on the wisdom texts that give expression to the life-giving and life-threatening potential of water and water-related phenomena in the wisdom books.<sup>7</sup>

After years of viewing the ‘subject of water’ primarily through the lenses of the Pentateuch, Psalms and prophetic literature, biblical scholars and eco-theologians are here invited to embrace a new way of thinking and acting imbued by the wisdom literature’s focus on observation, for the wisdom books could provide the means of realistic and practical answers to contemporary crises (Cervantes-Ortiz 2011:278). We need to investigate what the wisdom literature has preserved about Israel’s views on water, this significant and indispensable element of life on Earth for plants, animals and human beings. The focus on these books is thus motivated by two reasons:

- The scarcity of scholarly works on water and water-related phenomena in the Old Testament wisdom literature,

---

<sup>6</sup> The Old Testament Wisdom books contain more than six hundred references to water and water-related phenomena (see Appendix A).

<sup>7</sup> See Appendix B at the end of this thesis.

- The need for retrieving ecological insight from the Old Testament wisdom texts that point to the life-giving or life-threatening potential of water and water-related phenomena.

## 1.2 Problem statement

Lynn White's famous article entitled 'The historical roots of our ecologic crisis', published in 1967, placed the blame for the modern ecological crisis upon Western Christianity (1967:1207). This article, and to some extent also Carl Amery's book *Das Ende der Vorsehung: Die gnadenlosen Folgen des Christentums*, which was published in 1971, sparked heated discussions of environmental issues in Christian theology. Understandably, a number of Christian theologians and biblical scholars reacted by attempting to demonstrate that, to the contrary, the Christian Bible contains valuable ecological wisdom.

In this sense, at least two major reductionist tendencies characterise many current eco-theological interpretations of the Bible, namely: (a) favouring certain texts, and (b) offering a 'thin' or romanticised portrayal of (elements of) nature. In relation to the first tendency, Conradie (2006:69) has observed that numerous ecological readings of the Bible have adopted a 'reductionist trend'<sup>8</sup> that consists of focusing on a few 'favourite texts' that explicitly deal with nature or with creation theology and ignore other references and subjects. Genesis 1-3 containing the passage about human rule (Gn 1:28),<sup>9</sup> the Yahwist stories in Genesis 2-3<sup>10</sup> and the flood narratives (Gn 6-9) are the focal point of many essays.

---

<sup>8</sup> Reductionism refers to the practice of analysing and describing a complex phenomenon in terms of (one or more of) its simple or fundamental constituents, especially when this is said to provide a sufficient explanation.

<sup>9</sup> See these recent publications: Habel, N C 2000a. Geophany: The Earth Story in Genesis 1, in Habel, N C & Wurst, S (eds), *The Earth story in Genesis*, 34-48. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press. (Earth Bible 2); Habel, N C 2008. Introducing Ecological Hermeneutics, in Habel, N C & Trudinger, P (eds), *Exploring Ecological Hermeneutics*, 1-8. Atlanta: SBL; Habel, N C 2009. *An Inconvenient Text: Is a Green Reading of the Bible Possible?* Hindmarsh: ATF Press; Habel, N C 2011b. *The Birth, the Curse and the Greening of Earth: An Ecological Reading of Genesis 1-11*. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press. (The Earth Bible Commentary Series 1); Van Heerden, S W 2005. Norman Habel se Interpretasie van Genesis 1:1-2:4a binne die Raamwerk van die Earth Bible Project. *OTE* 18/2, 371-393; Van Dyk, P J 2009. Challenges in the Search for an Ecotheology. *OTE* 22/1, 186-204; Wittenberg, G 2007. Plant and Animal Rights – An Absurd Idea or Ecological Necessity: Perspective from the Hebrew Torah, in *Resistance Theology in the Old Testament*, 157-171. Collected Essays by G Wittenberg. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications; Wittenberg, G 2010. In Search of the Right Metaphor: A Response to Peet van Dyk's 'Challenges in the Search for an Ecotheology.' Part One: Metaphor and Dominion.

Additionally, scholars have turned to the green insights in the Holiness Code (Lv 17-26),<sup>11</sup> several Psalms<sup>12</sup> (8; 19; 24; 42, 96; 98;104; 124) and many prophetic texts in Isaiah (9-11; 40; 48; 65), Ezekiel (36; 47 etc.),<sup>13</sup> Joel 1-2, Jonah,<sup>14</sup> a few wisdom texts such as Job 36-42<sup>15</sup> and some New Testament passages (Lk 8; Rm 8:18; Jn 4 & Rev 21-22).<sup>16</sup> These texts, among many, have constituted a kind of ‘canon within a canon’ that involves ignoring texts that do not present themselves as containing ecological wisdom (Bergant 2000:138).

Regarding the second reductionist tendency, elements of nature have often been portrayed in romantic and, therefore, one-sided ways. Mckusick comments that for the romanticist ecologists, the perception of ‘Nature’ need not be confined to settings of Big Wilderness – as a negative entity – but must be seen through eyes awake to ‘Love and Beauty’, responding ‘to our innate sense of wonder in the presence of things we

---

*OTE* 23/2, 427-453; Horrell, D G 2010a. Introduction, in Horrell, D G, Hunt, C, Southgate, C & Stavropoulou, F (eds), *Ecological Hermeneutics: Biblical, Historical and Theological Perspectives*, 1-11. New York: T & T Clark; Horrell, D G 2010b. *The Bible and the Environment: Towards a Critical Ecological Biblical Theology*. London, Oakville: Equinox; and Creagan, N H 2004. Theological Foundations of the Ecological Crisis. *Stimulus* 12/4, 30-36. The list of publications is not exhaustive.

<sup>10</sup> Extensive ecological readings of the Yahwist narratives have been made by Hiebert, T 1996. *The Yahwist Landscape*. New York: Oxford University Press; and Brown, W P 1999. *The Ethos of the Cosmos: The Genesis of Moral Imagination in the Bible*. Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge, U K: W B Eerdmans, p.133ff.

<sup>11</sup> Habel, N C 1995. *The Land is Mine: Six Biblical Land Ideologies*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, p. 102; and Meyer, E E 2011. Respect for Animal Life in the Book of Leviticus: How Green were the Priestly Authors? *OTE* 24/1, 142-158.

<sup>12</sup> Prinsloo, G T M 2003. Historical reality and mythological metaphor in Psalm 124. *OTE* 18/3: 790-810; Watson, R S 2005. *Chaos Uncreated: A Reassessment of the Theme of ‘Chaos’ in the Hebrew Bible*. Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter; Brown, W P 2006. Deep calls to Deep: Retrieving the Liturgical Voice of the Many Waters. Available online from: [http://www.sbl-site.org/meetings/Congresses\\_Abstracts.aspx?MeetingId=5](http://www.sbl-site.org/meetings/Congresses_Abstracts.aspx?MeetingId=5) (Accessed 26 June 2013).

<sup>13</sup> For eco-theological publications on references in Psalms and the prophetic books, see Habel, N C 2001c (ed). *The Earth Story in the Psalms and the Prophets*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.

<sup>14</sup> See Person, R & Stroede, P 2011. The Story of Jonah as Retold by the Sea, in Habel, N C & Trudinger, P (eds), *Water: A Matter of life and Death*, 73-80. Adelaide: ATF. (*Interface Journal*, Vol.14/1); Van Heerden, S W 2014. Ecological Interpretation of the Jonah Narrative – Have They Succeeded in Overcoming Anthropocentrism. *Journal for Semitics* 23/1, 114-134.

<sup>15</sup> See Habel, N C 2001a. Earth First: Inverse Cosmology in Job, in Habel, N C & Wurst, S (eds), *The Earth Story in Wisdom Traditions*, 65-77. Sheffield/Cleveland: Sheffield Academic Press/Pilgrim Press; and Habel, N C 2001b. Is the Wild Ox Willing to Serve You? Challenging the Mandate to Dominate, in Habel, N C & Wurst, S (eds), *The Earth Story in Wisdom Traditions*, 179-189. Sheffield/Cleveland: Sheffield Academic Press/Pilgrim Press.

<sup>16</sup> On water in the Gospel of Luke, see Elvey, A 2011. Partnering the Waters in Luke 8:22-25, in Habel, N C & Trudinger, P (eds), *Water: A Matter of life and Death*, 81-34. Adelaide: ATF. (*Interface Journal*: Vol.14/1).

On water in the Gospel of John, see Letourneau, P 2012. ‘Give Me this Water...’: The Water of Life in John’s Gospel, in Lefebvre, S & Wacker, M T (eds), *Water Marks Our Life*, 58-67. (*Concilium* 2012/5). London: SCM Press (IJT); and Cadwallader, A 2011. ‘Give the Girl a Drink’: Reading John 4 from a Dry Parched Land, in Habel, N C & Trudinger, P (eds), *Water: A Matter of life and Death*, 95-110. Adelaide: ATF. (*Interface Journal*, Vol.14/1). On water of life in the book of Revelation 22, see Lord, J L 2012. Texts in Context: The River Flows. *Word & World* 32/1, 63-70.

have not created ourselves' (2010:10).<sup>17</sup> In this way, many eco-theological studies have approached biblical passages with the aim of only retrieving the eco-friendliness of elements of nature.

Indeed, on the one hand, focusing on a category of favourite texts ironically might reinforce the understanding that ecological concerns are a marginal matter in the Bible since the above passages contain only one aspect of creation theology, namely the relationship between humans and nature. On the other hand, adopting a romanticist perspective of elements of the natural world in ecological readings of the Bible is also a reductionist focus.

In this sense, Conradie suggests that the scope of retrieving the ecological wisdom of the Bible be enlarged by including, not only texts about each aspect of God's work,<sup>18</sup> but also passages that refer to earth, mountains, hills, air, soil, trees, animals, birds, insects, waters etc. (2006:69). Therefore, this study is an attempt to address not only the issue of favouring certain texts by taking up the challenge to offer an ecological interpretation of a particular subject in the Old Testament wisdom books, namely, water and water-related phenomena, but it also critically explores this subject of water and water-related phenomena in its complexity in terms of its life-giving and life-threatening potential.

In his pioneering eco-theological article in South Africa,<sup>19</sup> Loader observed that very little or no attention is given to the Old Testament wisdom books in eco-theological studies (1987:22). In this sense, many of the current biblical studies on water and water-related phenomena give not only little or no attention to the Old Testament wisdom books, but also have a reductionist romanticist view of nature. A number of

---

<sup>17</sup>This author is commenting on Coleridge, S T 1912. This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison, in Coleridge, E H (ed) *The Complete Poetical Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, Vol. 1, 178-181. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

<sup>18</sup>For Conradie (2006:69), the retrieval of ecological wisdom in the Bible has to be doctrinally comprehensive in involving several texts that deal with each aspect of God's work, namely creation, providence, humanity, sin, redemption, the church, the sacrament and eschatological consummation from an ecological perspective.

<sup>19</sup>Van Heerden designates James A Loader as the first South African Old Testament scholar who pioneered eco-theological debates in South Africa. In 1987, Loader read a paper titled 'Image and Order: Old Testament Perspectives on the Ecological Crisis' at an interdisciplinary symposium on Ecology and Theology, hosted by the Institute for Theological Research at the University of South Africa. (see Van Heerden, S W 2009. Taking Stock of Old Testament Scholarship on Environmental Issues in South Africa: The Main Contributions and Challenges. *OTE* 22/3, 695-718 [see page 696].

studies have a narrow textual focus, for example the Pentateuch, the Prophets or the Psalms. In her insightful thesis focusing on the ‘romantic view of nature’<sup>20</sup> in terms of the religious function of springs and wells in the Hebrew Bible, Klopper thoroughly explores several texts from the Pentateuch (Gn 16; 24; 26; Ex 2; 15; 17; Nm 20; 21, etc.), Prophetic books (1 S 28; 1 Ki 1; Is 48; Jr 31; Ezk 47, etc.) and Psalms (74; 104), but devotes only a few pages to isolated verses in the book of Proverbs (13:14; 14:27; 16:22; 18:4 & 25:2) (2002a:207-210).

In a subsequent article, not only does Klopper select texts that favour a romantic view of water in terms of springs and wells in the wilderness, but also ignores the Old Testament wisdom books. For this scholar, these water-related phenomena (spring and well) occur only in three contexts: in historical texts dealing with the desert wandering after the exodus event, in creation texts with a mythological background –primarily in the Psalms, and in prophetic passages related to postexilic recreation and restoration (Klopper 2005:253). With this idea in mind, it is clear that the wisdom books would inevitably be dismissed or ignored in the analysis of the subject.

In his famous thesis about water and three related phenomena: crossing, flood and abundant water, Anthonioz has the value of virtually dealing with both aspects of water as life-giving and life-threatening entity. However, his analysis uses only mythological and historical texts from the Old Testament as well as Ancient Near Eastern writings. He deliberately excludes what he calls ‘pragmatic texts’– of which the wisdom books form part – in order to discern the significance of water in the official statements in Sumer and the Bible during a period of several millennia (Anthonioz 2009:1).

A year later, Tsumura developed an essay on biblical theology of water as ‘plenty, flood or drought in the created order’. The author is aware of both aspects of water as life-giving and life-threatening, but most of his analyses developed texts that concern the life-giving potential of water in the Pentateuch, Prophets and Psalms (Tsumura 2010:165-183). Even when he speaks about water-related phenomena such as drought

---

<sup>20</sup> A romantic view of nature is understood as the positive view of nature; for example, nature in the service of life for humans.

or flood, the intention is to explain either ‘the lack of water for drinking and irrigation’ or God’s control of water. Also, the wisdom books are practically ignored, except references to Job 36:27 and Job 37:5-7 (Tsumura 2010:174).

Recently, in his essay entitled ‘Water in the Old Testament’, Gerstenberger (2012:36-44) developed a theology of water from references in the Pentateuch (Gn 1-2; 6-9; 20; 26, Ex 14; 17, etc.), the Prophets (Jnh; Is 28; Ki17) and Psalms (42; 104), but simply ignores the wisdom books. In addition to this, when he dealt with the threatening potential of water, this author adopted a romanticist view of water claiming that ‘The monstrous floods [of the Bible] had to serve life’ (Gerstenberger 2012:37).

Likewise, Samuel (2005:207-213), Richard (2005:214-240) and Resane (2010:3-4) not only carefully chose texts that point to a romanticist aspect of water in Genesis 20-26; Exodus 17; Numbers 5:11-31 and so forth, but also completely overlook the wisdom texts. In Bible commentaries on the Old Testament wisdom books, only a few, mostly incidental comments have been made regarding water and water-related phenomena in these books.<sup>21</sup>

When we turn to several works of ecological hermeneutics,<sup>22</sup> the patterns of favouring certain texts on the one hand, and the tendency to a romanticist view of nature on the other, can be observed as well. In the second volume of the Earth Bible Project, the only study that specifically focuses on water not only selects texts from Genesis, but

---

<sup>21</sup> On Job 38, see for example, Habel, N C 1985. *The Book of Job*. London: SCM Press (OTL), p. 400; and Balentine, S E 2006. *Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary: Job*. Macon, Georgia: Smyth & Helwys, p. 640. On Proverbs 5:15-20, see for instance, Cook, J 1994. הַיָּדֵי הַזֵּהָבִים (Proverbs 1-9 Septuagint): A Metaphor for Foreign Wisdom? ZAW 106, 458-476; Van Leeuwen, R C 1997. The Book of Proverbs, in Keck, L E (ed), *The New Interpreter’s Bible (NIB): General Articles and Introduction, Commentary and Reflections for Each Book of the Bible including the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books in Twelve Volumes*. Vol.5, 17-264. Nashville: Abingdon Press; and Horne, M P 2003. *Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary: Proverbs-Ecclesiastes*. Macon, Georgia: Smyth & Helwys, 96-97. For Sirach 24:23-29, see, for example, Perdue, L G 2007. *Wisdom Literature: A Theological History*. London/Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, p. 247. For Wisdom 11-19, see Kolarcik, M 1997. The Book of Wisdom, in Keck, L E (ed), *The New Interpreter’s Bible (NIB): General Articles and Introduction, Commentary and Reflections for Each Book of the Bible including the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books*. Vol.5, 435-600. Nashville: Abingdon Press; and Cheon, S 1997. *The Exodus Story in the Wisdom of Solomon: A Study in Biblical Interpretation*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press. (JSPSSup 23).

<sup>22</sup> This problem statement is based on books and articles that appeared from the year 2000 until now, the time when several bodies raised proper biblical ecological hermeneutics. These are works of the Earth Bible Project in Australia, many worldwide SBL consultations on ecological hermeneutics, and the Exeter project in the United Kingdom dealing with the Uses of the Bible in Environmental Ethics.

also chooses references in terms of their romanticist view of water as springs and wells (Hobgood-Oster 2000:187-199). A few incidental references to water as a life-threatening entity are provided in the analyses of the voices of Earth in Genesis 6 and 9 (Gardner 2000:117-129; Olley 2000:130-139; Fejo 2000:140-147). Not only is there no essay concerning both aspects of water, but there are also no studies about water in the wisdom books.

The 2011 volume of the journal *Interface*, entitled ‘Water a matter of life and death’ is currently one of the most noteworthy biblical and eco-theological studies on water and water-related phenomena in the Bible. This volume provides a series of essays of theologians, including biblical scholars and scientists who seriously engage with the concept of water ‘as a spiritual well and also as a physical resource for all living beings on earth’ as well as a potential threat (Habel 2011a:4-5). However, even in this volume explicitly entitled to be about both aspects of water in the Bible, most essays focus on the positive value of water.<sup>23</sup> It also contains no studies on water in the Old Testament wisdom books.

Finally, in September 2014, a significant book was published with the title ‘Thinking of Water in the Early Second Temple Period.’<sup>24</sup> This publication clearly favours texts from the Pentateuch and prophetic books. Although the books of Proverbs, Qoheleth, Sirach and Wisdom of Solomon belong to the Second Temple period, their views on water are simply ignored, except ‘a brief overview’<sup>25</sup> on the imagery of water and water-related phenomena in the book of Job (Nõmmik 2014:279-297). The book is, however, aware of the two aspects of water as a life-giving and life-threatening entity.

The above-mentioned favoured texts presented themselves to scholars who studied the subject of water since water as a physical reality plays a central role in these biblical texts. It is clear that no thorough analysis of water and water-related phenomena in general, and water as bearing life-giving and life-threatening potential in particular, in

---

<sup>23</sup> See Habel, N C 2011. Introduction: Water a Matter of Life and Death, in Habel, N C & Trudinger, P (eds), *Water: A Matter of life and Death*. (*Interface*: Vol.14/1), 1-8. Adelaide: ATF

<sup>24</sup> See Ben Zvi, E & Levin, C 2014 (eds). *Thinking of Water in the Early Second Temple Period*. Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter.

<sup>25</sup> By the words ‘A brief overview’, Nõmmik (2014:297) implies that his essay is not an in-depth analysis of water in the book of Job, but that much has to be done on the subject.

the Old Testament wisdom literature has been done before, especially not from an eco-theological point of view. Also, the romanticist view of nature is dominant in the eco-theological Old Testament scholarship which does not do justice to the global perception of elements of nature as depicted in the Old Testament texts.

Therefore, despite the reductionist tendency of romanticism and the scarcity of studies about water and water-related phenomena in the Old Testament wisdom texts, the wisdom books themselves are filled to the brim with passages containing multifaceted potential of elements of nature, including water and water-related phenomena.<sup>26</sup> This is not surprising since the wisdom literature typically stores and preserves everything that people have encountered through the course of time (Petrova 2003:333). Water is both a basic need of living beings, and sometimes a destructive factor that is present in the daily lives of human beings. Therefore, this problem statement leads to several questions to be investigated.

### **1.3 Research questions**

Given the nature of the problem as stated above, this study investigates the following three questions:

1. How often do references to water and water-related phenomena occur in the Old Testament wisdom books?
2. What are the functions of water and water-related phenomena that are depicted with the life-giving and life-threatening potential in the Old Testament wisdom texts where they indeed occur?
3. Do the texts in the Old Testament wisdom books where this twofold potential of water and water-related phenomena occur offer ecological wisdom?

---

<sup>26</sup> We found more than six hundred references to water and water-related phenomena in the Old Testament wisdom books (see Appendix A).

## **1.4 Hypothesis**

The problem statement of this study highlights reductionist tendencies with regard to ecological interpretations of the Bible. In an attempt to (partly) address this problem, this study is guided by the following twofold working hypothesis:

- (a) Despite a scarcity of scholarly interest in water and water-related phenomena in the Old Testament wisdom books, this body of literature contains a rich variety of references to water and water-related phenomena in general.
- (b) A study on the life-giving and life-threatening potential of water and water-related phenomena demonstrates that an overly-romantic view of nature does not do justice to the biblical texts themselves.

This study attempts to determine the validity of the above two statements.

## **1.5 Objectives and aims of the study**

This study aims to address two limiting factors related to ecological interpretations of the Bible. First, it aims to show that – in addition to focusing on some favourite biblical texts – scholars who attempt ecological interpretations of biblical texts will be richly rewarded when they also take less favoured texts into consideration, for example, those that merely contain motifs related to elements of nature, such as water.

Secondly, the study aims to address the problem of interpreters of the Bible sketching, or assuming, an overly-romantic view of nature, which does not do justice to the richness, complexity, and variety of portrayals of elements of nature in the texts themselves. In this sense, this study aims at retrieving ecological wisdom from particular references that give voice to both the life-giving and life-threatening potential of water and water-related phenomena in the Old Testament wisdom books.

## **1.6 The relevance of wisdom books to eco-theology**

Firstly, it is necessary to clarify what the word ‘wisdom’ means. There is a difference between 1) ‘Wisdom’ as a human faculty and 2) ‘Wisdom’ as Wisdom Literature with

its characteristic ideas and literary forms. The faculty of wisdom is designated through a number of expressions in the Old Testament, most prominently *חָכְמָה*. The distinctive feature for *חָכְמָה* in all its occurrences is a high degree of knowledge and skill in any domain, in other words, ‘expertise’ (Fox 2012:232).

The wisdom books are a literary construct that seeks to instil this wisdom. In Proverbs 8:22-31, Wisdom claims to have been personally present at creation: it is the principle by which God established the cosmos (Brown 2010:163). Thus, the main teaching of the wisdom books is that one recognises the order which God put in creation from the beginning and lives according to it (Crenshaw 1976:34). This optimistic sapiential idea is clearly stated in the book of Proverbs suggesting that if one desires happiness and success then one needs to adjust one’s life to the creation order. Failure to abide by this order/wisdom (*ma’at* in Egypt) will lead inter alia to calamities.

In this sense, the sapiential books would be relevant to address the current ecological crisis. Surprisingly, very little or no attention seems to have been paid to their vision. Loader highlights the relevance of the wisdom books and the wisdom that they teach in the sense that wisdom preserves – ‘not incidentally, not as one aspect among many (more) important things, but as the very fundamental cornerstone of *all* human culture’ (1987:22). Here we find no polarity between humans and nature, but a quest for order.

Interestingly, there is a self-criticism within the sapiential literature. The books of Job and Qoheleth argue that the cosmos order is made up with both life-giving and life-threatening entities that are beyond human knowledge. Therefore, Job 38-42 conclude with the harmony of the cosmic order in a poetic symmetry, while Qoheleth 11:1-6 depicts human incapacity to master the mysteries of nature (see also Sirach 24:29).

In this sense, the Wisdom books offer almost a realistic vision that, without being anachronistic, can aid in re-defining and re-questioning our relationship with nature. They offer insightful wisdom regarding our contemporary ecological crisis, including water issues.

## 1.7 Theoretical framework

This study is done from an eco-theological framework informed by a hermeneutics of suspicion and retrieval/trust, as well as insights from the six eco-justice principles of the Earth Bible Project, namely intrinsic worth, interconnectedness, voice, purpose, mutual custodianship and resistance.<sup>27</sup> According to The Earth Bible Team, readers of the Bible may not find all these principles useful in reading a given biblical text afresh (2000:39). This study is an attempt at reading the wisdom texts containing water as a life-giving or life-threatening entity in the framework of four eco-justice principles, namely the principles of *intrinsic worth*, *interconnectedness*, *voice and purpose*.

Additionally, this study makes use of a hermeneutics of suspicion and retrieval/trust. With regard to the element of suspicion, we suspect that biblical texts, written by human beings and written to human readers, reflect primarily the interests of humans. Briefly, the Bible has long been understood as God's book for humans in that all its passages are normally interpreted from the perspective of humans. The new ecological awareness requires that we begin reading the biblical text with the suspicion that it is likely to be inherently an anthropocentric and/or has traditionally been read from an anthropocentric perspective.

However, ecological wisdom could also be retrieved from biblical texts. Many texts give voice to more than only human members of the Earth community. In some cases, human actions and thoughts reflect remarkable ecological insight. Biblical texts also deserve the trust of its readers as a dialogue partner in search of ecological wisdom.

By applying a hermeneutics of suspicion and retrieval/trust, an attempt will be made in this study to detect instances where water and water-related phenomena are in the service of anthropocentrism, but also to be aware of instances where ecological wisdom can be retrieved from the texts. The mere selection of texts portraying both the life-giving and life-threatening potential of water and water-related phenomena shows that this study hopes to find ecological wisdom in the Old Testament wisdom

---

<sup>27</sup> For details about the six eco-justice principles, see The Earth Bible Team (2000:42-53).

books. These elements of the text may have been unnoticed, silenced or hidden through human-centred reading lenses.

Ecological hermeneutics should not be confused with exegetical methods or with the wide range of approaches to biblical exegesis. Similar to feminist or liberation readings, ecological hermeneutics is an interpretative strategy referring to techniques of re-appropriation used by readers to overcome the historical gap between the text and a modern issue (Conradie 2010:300). Basically, ecological hermeneutics enables the interpreters to read afresh the Bible in the context of ecological crises, and creates ‘doctrinal keys’ that function ‘as *critical keys*’ to interact with the text (Conradie 2006:13).

This interpretative strategy assumes that there is no ‘absolute truth’ in the text, but that interpreting a text involves the ‘fusion of horizons’ – the one of the text and that of the reader – from which emerges a new meaning (Gadamer 1975:341). Ricoeur calls this result the ‘surplus of meaning’ in the sense that the text can yield an array of diverse meanings without compromising its literary integrity (1976:45-46). Therefore, while the historical setting and literary structure of our selected wisdom texts will be considered, this thesis also assumes that their meaning can be brought beyond cultural and generational boundaries to convey various messages in diverse contexts, such as contemporary water issues.

Therefore, within its ecological awareness and the use of the selected four eco-justice principles as doctrinal keys, and the hermeneutics of suspicion and retrieval/trust, the framework of this study will lead us to the Old Testament wisdom literature’s critical power and continuing stimulus in interaction with our modern ecological water crisis. Indeed, adopting insights from the six eco-justice principles of the Earth Bible Project does not mean that our hermeneutics will consider these principles as a kind of ‘small dogmatics’ to judge the ‘validity’ of biblical texts as is the case in the Earth Bible series.<sup>28</sup>

---

<sup>28</sup> For further critiques of the Earth Bible Project hermeneutics models, see Conradie, E M 2004. Towards an Ecological Biblical Hermeneutics: A Review Essay on the Earth Bible Project. *Scriptura* 85, 123-135; and

The eco-justice principles that will be used in this study are not more than ‘doctrinal keys’<sup>29</sup> or ‘interpretative constructs’ that will help us to unlock the significance of the Old Testament wisdom books’ references to water and water-related phenomena in relation to our context of ecological crises. This reading posture assumes that biblical texts, written in a pre-modern society, might freely reveal their character as something unique and different to our contemporary issues. Yet, our questions and analysis of the texts are informed by current water crises and the four selected eco-justice principles, but we will never confuse the world of the texts with our contemporary realities.

## **1.8 Methodological considerations**

This research relies on methodological elements of historical criticism as well as literary approaches. When applied to biblical texts, these methods bring illumination of a holistic understanding of the text. Rather than viewing them as opposites, the two methods complement and enrich one another. Thus, the researcher examines how the historical and literary methods can assist in retrieving ecological insights in the selected wisdom texts that contain the life-giving and life-threatening potential of water and water-related phenomena.

### **1.8.1 Historical critical methods**

Through historical criticism, the author examines and interprets selected wisdom texts in relation to their historical and literary contexts. In this hermeneutical process, the reader examines how insights from the socio-historical and geographical contexts of a given text can contribute to its understanding. In this study, the approach aids in utilising relevant information about culture, mentality, religion, meteorology and hydrological concerns that prevailed in the socio-historical setting of certain wisdom texts. The aim of historical criticism is to tell the reader not merely what the text did or did not mean, but what it can or cannot mean (Barton 1998:7).

---

Conradie, E 2010. What on Earth is an Ecological Hermeneutics? Some Broad Parameters, in Horrell, D G, Hunt, C & Southgate, C (eds), *Ecological Hermeneutics: Biblical, Historical and Theological Perspectives*, 295-313. New York: T&T Clark [see page 308].

<sup>29</sup>Conradie (2010:301) explains that doctrinal constructs simultaneously enable the interpreter to establish a link between text and contemporary context, as well as providing a strategy to identify both the meaning of the modern context and of biblical texts. They are not only used to find similarities but to construct similarities, to makes things similar if necessary.

Indeed, it is not the ‘historical’ fact that is the defining element of historical criticism, but rather its ‘critical’ character (Barton 1998:18-19). The method is defined by its emphasis on asking free and critical questions about the meaning of the text, regardless of any constraints of church traditions or individual interests. In this case, the various wisdom texts on water as a life-giving or life-threatening entity are studied not only in relation to their geographic context, their Palestinian, Mesopotamian, Egyptian or Hellenistic settings, but also to other sapiential literatures of Judaism during the same period.

Given its ecological awareness, the study will ask questions that transcend previous anthropocentric historical analysis of the texts. Special attention will be given to the meaning of the life-giving and life-threatening potential of water and water-related phenomena in relation to historical and social changes experienced by Israel. Perdue (2007:326) observed that creation, including the *מְיָן* (cosmic waters), was the centre of sapiential theologies that were produced over more than eight centuries, but the variety of its expression altered in response to the historical and social/cultural events of subsequent periods of the ancient Israel and early Judaism.

The wisdom texts cannot thus be dissociated from the social and historical context and geographical settings of Israel. The physical context of the Old Testament wisdom books is characterised by physical climates of dryness and abundance of water. The wisdom books that originated in dry places paid special homage to the life-giving function of the rain (Job 36:27) while those informed by destructive floods use water as a vehicle for life-threatening matters.

The *Biblia Hebraïca Stuttgartensia* (BHS)<sup>30</sup> is utilised as the basis for the analysis of passages from the books of Job, Proverbs and Qoheleth, while Rahlf’s Septuagint version (LXX)<sup>31</sup> is used for the study of Wisdom 11:2-14 and 19:1-12. The analysis of Sirach 23:23-34 largely relies on the Hebrew text as presented by Skehan (1979:374), while the study of Sirach 43:13-26 is based on the Ben Sira Scroll from Masada

---

<sup>30</sup> Elliger, K & Rudolph, W 1997 (eds). *Biblia Hebraïca Stuttgartensia*, ediz.5. (Amended by Schenker, A). Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft.

<sup>31</sup> Rahlf, A 1979 (ed). *Septuaginta*. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft.

containing Sirach 39:27-43:30 as presented by Yadin (1965:485-86). In both the BHS and LXX, the textual criticism and lexical analysis are used – if necessary – to justify the translation of the texts.

Thereafter, the analyses focus on specific key-words or metaphors in order to uncover the wide ecological patterns that are hidden or implied in the texts. The abbreviations for the books of the Bible follow the prescriptions of the New Testament Society of South Africa (NTSSA), while biblical quotations are drawn from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV).

### **1.8.2 Literary analyses**

Given the didactic focus of the wisdom literature, it would not be appropriate to limit our analyses of the texts to historical criticism, but also to involve the internal dynamics of the texts in order to generate meaning. The self-critical, epigrammatic and reflexive nature of the wisdom literature lends to its work a character of versatility and transferability of literary form and rational insights, which may sometimes reveal more insight beyond the literary contexts (Fontaine 1994:395). Thus, the historical-critical reading will be complemented by the inner-textual or literary aspect of the text.

The selected texts for this study represent various literary genres, each requiring an appropriate reading strategy. In this sense, all the references from the book of Job<sup>32</sup> belong to the sapiential poems narrated in the form of anamnesis, dialogue and rhetorical questions (Job 3:1-42:6) (Newsom 1997:320). Besides this, the references from Proverbs and Qoheleth<sup>33</sup> are proverb poems, riddles and sayings (maxims), while Sirach provides us with hymnal material praising wisdom and delighting in creation. The book of Wisdom provides us with materials of literary diptychs using the comparing and contrasting elements of poetic *Syncretism* (Kolarcik 1997:443).

---

<sup>32</sup> Only Job 1:1-2:13 and 42:7-17 (respectively prologue and epilogue) are written in prosaic form. The rest of the book are sapiential poems (Newsom 1997:320)

<sup>33</sup> Qoheleth is the transliteration of the Hebrew name for the book of Ecclesiastes. I will use both words for the same book.

Therefore, in addition to its diachronic approach, this study relies on the insights from the literary methods. These approaches imply that the text sends back to ‘its codes’, not to its ‘speaker’ in the sense that a text as a whole ‘stands at a distance from its author’s intention and from its original situation and audience ...’ (Ricoeur 1975:64), and then becomes available to a limitless number of readers. The main task will not be merely on the reproduction of the text meaning, what it meant in the past, but on the power of the text to ‘re-create a meaning’ (Reese 1990:389). The approach is defined as a literary strategy that has the function:

(a) to let the world created by the text unfold; (b) is to let the structure of this world reveal reality, reveal the world and reveal each reader’s own story; (c) recognising the multi-dimensional reality of this world: cosmic, communication, historical, cultural, anthropological, ethical and personal; (d) responds to the world of the text in its poetic nature, that is, as creative of limitless possibilities (Ricoeur 1974:80-88).

In practice, our literary reading strategies will consist of exposing the ways that the genres of wisdom poems or sayings (maxims) are presented with parallelisms or word-pairs and chiasms before uncovering the ecological significance of water and water-related phenomena in a given text. That is, the procedural task consists of acknowledging and surpassing the historical insights while focusing on how the individual wisdom poems (proverbs) or metaphors give several meaning possibilities. The analysis will not only focus on standard forms, patterns and formulas utilised by poets of the wisdom traditions, but will also explore how each poet casts traditional form and uses ‘water metaphors’ in his or her unique style in response to a given context (Lee 2002:7). This is the case for the ironical references in the book of Qoheleth.

The enterprise will then consist of acknowledging that as a literary work, ‘a text has not only meaning – what it says/said – but also reference, a “claim to truth”, or “*that about which it says it*”’ (Ricoeur 1975:81). That is why attention will be given to lexical, grammatical and semantic patterns in terms of similarity, oppositions and expectations of parallelisms conveyed in several biblical metaphors (Berlin 2008:127-

34) in order to grasp the dynamics of the wisdom texts.<sup>34</sup> In fact, the wisdom texts can be used in hetero-situational, poly-functional and poly-semantic ways since:

The meaning of a proverb [wisdom statement] as a single (virtual or written) text is, for a researcher or user, a mere semantic potential. The final and maximally definite meanings of a certain text manifest themselves only in concrete actualisation of this text (Krikmann 1974:5).

In order to avoid anachronism or imposing the current realities on biblical texts' focus, the insights of Gadamer about the three worlds of a text (the worlds *behind*, *in*, and *in front of*)<sup>35</sup> will be seriously valued. The researcher will refer to the 'world *behind* the text' – the historical setting of a text – when it is needed. However, the thesis will mainly focus on the 'world *of* the text' and the 'world *in front of* the text', especially in accordance with elements of the theoretical framework of this study, namely the four selected eco-justice principles of the Earth Bible Project and the hermeneutics of suspicion and retrieval/trust.

### 1.8.3 Metaphor theory

In the introduction of his essay on metaphor, Grünfeld stated: 'Metaphor provides us with a way of learning something new about the world and about how the world may be perceived and understood' (1992:83). It is normally said that people use metaphor when the resources of literal language are not enough to articulate significant insights about what is expected to be conveyed. In this sense, Ben Zvi concluded that it is because of its puzzling nature that water turned into a central metaphor in which Israel could express, formulate, reformulate and communicate in comprehensible ways concepts that would have been difficult for them to say in other language (2014:27).

---

<sup>34</sup> This is because wisdom texts are mostly *linguistic signs* which name recurrent situations and whose meaning can only be attained by analysing the intertextuality of their use and the basic feature of *language as a system of signs*. See Crenshaw, J L 1990. Questions, Dictons et Épreuves Impossibles, in Gilbert, M (ed), *La Sagesse de l'Ancien Testament : Nouvelle Édition Mise à Jour*, 96-111. Leuven: Leuven University Press, p.98 ; Abrahams, R D & Babcock, B A 1994. The Literary Use of Proverbs, in Mieder, W (ed), *Wise Words: Essays on the Proverbs*, 415-438. New York/London: Garland Publishing, p. 415; and Fowler, R 1981. *Literature As Social Discourse: The Practice of Linguistic Criticism*. London: Bastsford Academic and Educational Ltd, p.25.

<sup>35</sup> Gadamer (1975:254-264) exposed 'three main worlds' to consider in the interpretation of a text: the world *behind* the text, the world *of* the text and the world *in front of* the text. While the world behind the text refers to historical setting of the text, the world of the text refers to the text itself, and the 'world *in front of* the text' alludes to the new world of meaning made possible by interpretation – which is in our case, the eco-theological interpretative possibility of the text.

A metaphor has three elements: the vehicle, the referent, and the tenor.<sup>36</sup> The tenor links the vehicle and the referent. In Proverbs 5:15-20 for instance, the element of nature serves as the vehicle. The tenor concerns elements of the vehicle (water or water-related phenomenon) that invite particular understandings of the referent (erotic love). Erotic love is the referent, which is linked to the vehicle through the tenor. In Sirach 24:23-34, for example, the tenor concerns features of the vehicle (abundance, fertility and sustenance of the six ANE rivers) that convey specific considerations of the relevance of the referent (wisdom/Torah).

In both texts, the tenor concerns elements of the vehicle (water or water-related phenomenon) that invite particular understandings of the significance of the referent. The main focus will be, for instance, which assumptions about water or water-related phenomena are reflected in the authors' use of water imagery in an attempt to describe erotic love or wisdom in these texts. Each water metaphorical word will be 'studied as an instance of restructuring or redescription of some sphere of human experience' (Eidevall 1996:47) before retrieving its ecological wisdom.

## **1.9 Delimitation and selection of biblical texts**

### **1.9.1 Delimitation and scope of the study**

This study is neither a treatise of meteorology nor hydrology, although it uses insights of these subjects to understand the ecological wisdom of water and water-related phenomena presented with life-giving and life-threatening potential in the selected wisdom texts. Given that no single study can deal with all passages in the wisdom books that contain water and water-related phenomena, this thesis limited its scope to representative and comprehensive references about water as a life-giving and life-threatening entity in the wisdom books.<sup>37</sup> The selection of biblical texts for this thesis is, thus, presented in the following section.

---

<sup>36</sup> See Boer, R [s. a.]. *Keeping it Literal: The Economy of the Song of Songs*. Available online from: <http://jhsonline.org/cocoon/jhs/a067.html> (Accessed 26 August 2013).

<sup>37</sup> The researcher is aware of the wisdom texts in other parts of the Bible. However, there is still great debates on the classification of the wisdom texts in other books of the Bible. Scholars ask why Psalm 1:1-3, for instance,

### 1.9.2 Selection of references to water and water-related phenomena

The selection of wisdom texts on water and water-related phenomena has been made possible by the use of the electronic Bible-Works version 7, the NRSV concordance of Köhlenberger III (1991) and the NRSV Exhaustive Concordance of Metzger (1991). Two appendices that list references to water and water-related phenomena accompany this thesis. The first, Appendix A, is a list of more than six hundred references to water in the Old Testament wisdom books, while the second, Appendix B, has a narrow focus, since it contains a list of texts that give expression to the life-giving or life-threatening potential of water and water-related phenomena, plus minor instances regarding other aspects of water.

Appendix B, therefore, reflects the focus and delimitation of this study, while Appendix A provides the bigger picture. In other words, Appendix A serves as support material for our attempt to show that references to water and water-related phenomena abound in the Old Testament wisdom literature. This appendix mainly concerns the first of the two reductionist tendencies discussed in the objectives of this study: favouring certain texts and therefore keeping others out of view.

Appendix B serves as an overview of some texts that are discussed in depth in this study. This appendix mainly concerns the second of the two reductionist tendencies: offering an overly-romantic view of nature (water and water-related phenomena in this case). It is provided here more than one hundred instances of the life-giving and life-threatening potential of water and water-related phenomena in the Old Testament wisdom books.<sup>38</sup>

For the purpose of efficiency, considering the substantial contribution of this thesis, the researcher limited his eco-theological analyses to a number of representative and comprehensive texts that give voice to the life-giving and life-threatening potential of

---

would be a wisdom text and not Psalm 119 while both refer to the idea of the Torah meditation. In this sense, Murphy (1990:104) argues that it is the reader's responsibility to 'form his or her own criteria for wisdom, and challenge the number of the Psalms that have been classified as wisdom'. Besides, Crenshaw (1998:173) argues that even Psalm 1 is not substantially a wisdom text, but a 'kind of psalm sharing certain characteristics with wisdom literature'. Given this scholarly impasse, this study focuses solely on the wisdom books.

<sup>38</sup> See the classification of texts in Appendix B.

water and water-related phenomena. In the book of Job, this study involves the analysis of Job 14:7-12; Job 36:26-37:13 and Job 38:22-38. In the book of Proverbs, the researcher investigates water-related phenomena in metaphorical texts (Pr 5:15-20; 9:13-18 and 25:23-26) and wisdom poems where water appears as a physical entity, namely Proverbs 3:19-20 and 8:22-31.

In the book of Qoheleth, this thesis explores the life-giving and life-threatening potential of water and water-related phenomena in Qoheleth 1:4-11; 2:4-6 and 11:1-6. For the deuterocanonical wisdom books, the thesis involves the eco-theological exploration of Sirach 24:23-34 and 43:13-46 before concluding with Wisdom 11:2-14 and 19:1-12. These texts will be analysed in depth, while occasional references will be made to other texts on water water-related phenomena in the Old Testament wisdom books. The reasons for this selection are given in the introductory sections of the exegetical chapters of this thesis, namely the third, fourth, fifth and sixth chapters.

## **1.10 Proposed chapters**

### **Chapter One: Introduction and Methodological Considerations**

This chapter presents the motivation for the study, the problem that is studied, the hypotheses, the objectives of the study, the approaches and theoretical framework that are used in the research before stating the selection of the texts and the delimitation of the study.

### **Chapter Two: Extant Studies on Water and Water-related Phenomena in the Old Testament**

This chapter reviews biblical studies on water and water-related phenomena in the Old Testament. This chapter is a systematic analysis of major publications stemming basically from two groups: first, studies on water and water-related phenomena in the Old Testament; second, studies on the wisdom texts containing references to water and water-related phenomena.

### **Chapter Three: Water and Water-related Phenomena in the Book of Job**

This chapter explores the life-giving and life-threatening potential of water and water-related phenomena in the book of Job with Job 14:7-12; Job 36:26-37:13 and Job 38:22-38 as case studies. The reasons for this selection are given in the introduction of the chapter.

#### **Chapter Four: Water and Water-related Phenomena in the Book of Proverbs**

This chapter deals with the life-giving and life-threatening potential of water and water-related phenomena in Proverbs 5:15-20; 9:13-18; 25:23-26; Proverbs 3:19-20 and 8:22-31. The first three texts use water and water-related phenomena as metaphors while the last two texts treat water and water-related phenomena in a real cosmic sense. The rationale for this selection is provided in the introduction of the chapter.

#### **Chapter Five: Water and Water-related Phenomena in the Book of Qoheleth**

This chapter makes an eco-theological analysis of the life-giving and life-threatening potential of water and water-related phenomena in Qoheleth 1:4-11; 2:4-6 and 11:1-6. The reasons for this selection are given in the introduction of the chapter.

#### **Chapter Six: Water and Water-related Phenomena in the Deutero-Canonical Wisdom Books**

This chapter involves the eco-theological exploration of the life-giving and life-threatening potential of water and water-related phenomena in Sirach 24:23-34 and 43:13-26 as well as Wisdom 11:2-14 and 19:1-12. The reasons for this selection are listed in the introduction of the chapter.

#### **Chapter Seven: Conclusions – Eco-theological Implications of the Study**

This final chapter revisits the problem statement, the research questions, and assesses the working hypotheses. It also offers ecological considerations and implications on how the Old Testament wisdom references to water and water-related phenomena can inspire modern people in this context of water crises. It, thereafter, proposes insights for further investigations in future.

## **CHAPTER TWO: EXTANT STUDIES ON WATER AND WATER-RELATED PHENOMENA IN THE OLD TESTAMENT**

### **2.1 Introduction**

The structure of this chapter covers four main sections: general studies about water and water-related phenomena in the Old Testament; eco-theological studies on water and water-related phenomena; studies on the Old Testament wisdom texts containing water and water-related phenomena, and a brief synthesis of the literature review by way of conclusion.

Regarding the first section, reviewing general Old Testament studies on water and water-related phenomena, this chapter will examine two kinds of works. The first category contains studies that have either completely ignored the Old Testament wisdom literature or made use of scanty references from these Bible books. This group comprises the biblical dictionaries and encyclopaedias. The second category of works concerns general publications that have explicitly limited the scope of their studies about water in other parts of the Bible.

The second section will involve eco-theological studies on the issue of water in the Old Testament in general since, as far as the researcher knows, no scholarly eco-theological study on water in the Old Testament wisdom books has been undertaken before. Books, journals and essays that are about water will be the object of review in this section.

The third section of this chapter contains studies on the Old Testament wisdom texts<sup>39</sup> containing water and water-related phenomena and the way scholars have dealt with the subject. Given the large number of texts containing references to water and water-related phenomena, this section focuses on representative texts from the five Old Testament wisdom books. The section will make use of more than five comprehensive

---

<sup>39</sup> In this study, the expression Old Testament wisdom books refers both to canonical and deuterocanonical wisdom literature: 1) Canonical wisdom books: Job, Proverbs and Qoheleth; and 2) Deuterocanonical wisdom books: Sirach and Wisdom of Solomon.

and scholarly commentaries on each book as well as several scholarly articles and essays on specific texts in which water and water-related phenomena feature.

Finally the chapter summarises the main trends in studies on water and water-related phenomena in the Old Testament and indicates the way forward. Here it will be evaluated how the two reductionist tendencies of favouring texts and romantic readings have also characterised biblical studies on water and water-related phenomena. Thereafter, the author will raise the relevance of this study and its expected original contribution in the Old Testament scholarship.

## **2.2 Old Testament studies on water and water-related phenomena**

### **2.2.1 Introduction**

A great number of publications deal with the issue of water in the Old Testament. This part of the literature review focuses on a representative number of works which claim either to be about water in the Old Testament as a whole,<sup>40</sup> or have explicitly limited their scope to other bodies of the Old Testament. This section does not deal with the way these works have interpreted the subject of water or water-related phenomena, but investigates to what extent they made use of the Old Testament wisdom books, and if so, how they dealt with the texts they enlisted. The section encompasses a number of dictionaries, encyclopaedias due to their claim of being comprehensive, as well as general books and articles about water or water-related phenomena in the Old Testament.

### **2.2.2 Studies on water and water-related phenomena in biblical dictionaries and encyclopaedias**

As far as the researcher found, most Bible dictionaries and encyclopaedias contain no explicit entries or references of wisdom books as primary loci for the study of water and water-related phenomena and if they do, such reference is given only a secondary

---

<sup>40</sup> This implies that the three main parts of the Hebrew Bible (Pentateuch, Prophets and Writings) would have been given equal value and attention in those studies.

status. Few dictionaries completely ignored the Old Testament wisdom books, while others have made use of scanty texts from these books.

### 2.2.2.1 On ignoring the Old Testament wisdom books

The dictionary entitled *A Theological Wordbook of the Bible* (Walls 1957) in which many scholars dealt with the theological meanings of various subjects in the Bible, including water and water-related phenomena, is an example of how the Old Testament wisdom books in the study of water and water-related phenomena in the Bible are ignored. Dealing with water-related phenomena such as drink, wash and purity, Walls<sup>41</sup> carefully distinguishes between four functions of water in the Bible, namely waters of destruction, waters of cleansing, water to drink and waters of fruitfulness and refreshment. None of the references come from the Old Testament wisdom texts whereas all these four functions of water are also present in the Old Testament wisdom books (cf. Appendix A).

The same trend is visible in a more recent dictionary entitled *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible* (Jenney 2000). Its essay on issues related to the physical and theological significance of water-related phenomena such as fountains, floods or rivers simply ignores the Old Testament wisdom books.<sup>42</sup> In the same group, one can also include *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (Klingbell 2006). Its essay about water in the Bible totally ignores the Old Testament wisdom. None of its sections, namely the semantics of water in the Bible, water and daily life, water and creation<sup>43</sup> and theology of water contain wisdom references to illustrate the writer's thoughts.<sup>44</sup> The essay contains references in the Pentateuch, Prophets, Psalms and New Testament books.

---

<sup>41</sup> Walls, R C 1957. Wash, Water & Unclean: Water, Drink, Fountain, Sea & Wash, in Richardson, A (ed), *A Theological Word Book*, 279-281. London: SCM Press.

<sup>42</sup> See Jenney, T P 2000. Water, in Freedman, D N (ed), *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, 1367-69. Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge, U K: Eerdmans.

<sup>43</sup> There is a slight reference to Job 36:27 that is assumed as obvious since this Joban text and Genesis 2:6 are the only places in the Hebrew Bible where the word מַיִם is literarily used (see Tsumura 1989:115).

<sup>44</sup> See Klingbell, G A 2006. Water, in Sakenfeld, K D (ed), *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*. Vol 5, 818-821. Nashville: Abingdon Press.

With regard to encyclopaedias, the situation is even worse. The *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopaedia of the Bible* (Bowses 1975) simply ignores the wisdom books in its article about the use of water in the Bible.<sup>45</sup> Similarly, the *Baker Encyclopaedia of the Bible* (Elwell 1988) discusses many functions of water, such as water of destruction (2 Pt 3:5), sustenance of life (Gn 2:5-14), ritual matters in Leviticus and Numbers as well as its metaphorical use in Psalms, the Prophets and the Johannine literature in the New Testament. None of its references are to a text from the Old Testament wisdom books.<sup>46</sup>

Indeed, the Old Testament wisdom books do not have many references about the ritual use of water.<sup>47</sup> However, those dictionaries and encyclopaedias cannot be excused for neglecting wisdom books for the other uses of water, such as water of destruction, water to drink and water of fruitfulness and refreshment as well as the metaphorical use of water.

#### **2.2.2.2 On scanty references to the Old Testament wisdom books**

*The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (1962) boasted that it provided the scholarly world and the general public with an up-to-date and comprehensive treatment of all significant biblical subjects in the canonical and deuterocanonical books (Buttrick 1962:xix). Its article dealing with water carefully makes use of many texts from the Pentateuch, Prophets, Psalms and New Testament, but does not pay enough attention to the Old Testament wisdom books in this regard.<sup>48</sup> Ritual matters, curse, cleansing, baptism, floods and human sustenance are the main issues reflected within its selected references. Scanty references to Proverbs 8:22-31; 27:29; Job 26:10-13, 38:8-11 are used in a secondary position to other bodies of the Bible as additional loci for the studied subjects, but not as primary sources.

---

<sup>45</sup> See Bowses, D R 1975. Water, in Tenny, M C (ed), *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopaedia of the Bible*. Vol. 5, 902-906. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan.

<sup>46</sup> Elwell, W A 1988 (ed). *Baker Encyclopaedia of the Bible*, 2132-2134. Vol. 2. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House.

<sup>47</sup> There are however some metaphorical wisdom texts about the ritual power of water (see Sirach 3:30).

<sup>48</sup> See Anderson, B W 1962. Water, in Buttrick, G A (ed), *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, 806-810. Vol.4. New York/Nashville: Abingdon Press.

The matter does not stop there. The *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Kaiser 1980) continues the same tendency. Its article about water and its related phenomena such as water for ritual (washing and purification), metaphorical use of water (God as living water, much water as distress) and eschatological use of water (water freshness as restoration) are evaluated from the perspective of other bodies of the Old Testament. There are scanty references to isolated Old Testament wisdom verses (Pr 5:15; 9:17; Job 36:27) which are raised only as proof of the existence of the subject in other places of the Bible. For the essay, the primary sources for the study of water and water-related phenomena in the Bible are the Pentateuch, Prophets and Psalms.<sup>49</sup> The point to note is that no analysis is provided for verses in the wisdom books whereas other bodies of the Bible were worthy of arrayed explorations.

Similarly, the *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (Fabry 1997) followed the same tendency. The dictionary has practically nothing about the Hebrew word מַיִם (water) in the Old Testament wisdom books except scanty entries from the book of Job.<sup>50</sup> Its argument is that with its five hundred uses in the Old Testament, the word מַיִם occurs more than two hundred times in the Pentateuch relating to the issues of the flood story (Gn 7-9), the exodus event (Ex 14f), the ritual matters (Lv 11 & Nm 19) and water of sustenance in the wilderness (Nm 20). The author adds that about a hundred cases of the word are attested in the Deuteronomist passages related to issues of Gideon's water test (Jgs 7) and 1 Kings 13. The dictionary is particularly eloquent in saying that fifty-three cases of the word are found in Psalms before minor occurrences in the books of Ezekiel, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Job (Fabry 1997:266). There is almost nothing about the wisdom books.

Likewise, the *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis* (Grisanti 1997) is not free from the tendency of favouring certain texts in the study of water. Its entry about the Hebrew word מַיִם (water) and its related concepts follows the

---

<sup>49</sup> See Kaiser, W C 1980. מֶטֶר (rain), מַיִם (water), in Harris, R L, Archer, G L, Waltke, B K (eds), *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*. Vol. 1, 500-503. Chicago: Moody Press.

<sup>50</sup> See Fabry, H-J 1997. מַיִם (Mayim), in Botterweck, G J, Ringgren, H & Fabry, H-J (eds), *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (trans. by Stott, D W), Vol.8, 265-288. Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge, U K: Eerdmans.

same pattern.<sup>51</sup> The dictionary mainly focuses on issues related to ritual matters (Lv & Nm), mythology (creation in Gn 1-2, flood in Gn 6-9) and the Exodus event in Exodus 14-15 and in various Psalms the expression ‘many waters’.<sup>52</sup> A few references are made to Job 14:11-12; 22:11; 34:7, Proverbs 5:15 and 9:17 about the metaphors of water. However, no explicit analysis is provided for those wisdom texts.

It seems that those entries in dictionaries and encyclopaedias have impacted many later publications on the selection of the references about water in the Old Testament.

### **2.2.3 Specific publications on water and water-related phenomena in the Old Testament**

It should be noted here that most books and articles on water and/or water-related phenomena in the Old Testament explicitly confine the scope of their research to passages of the Pentateuch, Prophets and Psalms. A few studies claimed to undertake a comprehensive exploration of water in the Old Testament as a whole. In the review of each book/article it will be determined whether the book or articles have explicitly defined their scope or not. The researcher will therefore proceed to a critical analysis of a given work according to its scope of study.

#### **2.2.3.1 Books on water and water-related phenomena in the Old Testament**

In 1958, Reymond wrote about water and its meaning in the Old Testament. This book purported to undertake a comprehensive exploration of water and/or water-related phenomena in the Old Testament, but scarcely makes use of the Old Testament wisdom books.<sup>53</sup> From the 1980s, a number of works appeared with explicit limited scope of study on the Pentateuch, Prophets or Psalms. In 1987 Propp<sup>54</sup> carefully

---

<sup>51</sup> Psalms (Ps 104; 107 etc.), Pentateuch (Gn 1; 6-9; Lv 14:5-6; Ex 15; 17; Nm 20, Dt 8 etc.), Prophets (Is 17:12-13; Jr 31:10-14 etc.).

<sup>52</sup> Grisanti, M A 1997. מַיִם (mayim), in VanGemeren, W A (ed), *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*, 929-934. Vol.2. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House.

<sup>53</sup> See Reymond, P 1958. *L'eau, sa Vie et sa Signification dans l'Ancien Testament*. Leiden: Brill. (VTSup VI). One will hardly notice in this book isolated references to the wisdom books, such as Proverbs 5:15; 21:1.

<sup>54</sup> See Propp, W H 1987. *Water in the Wilderness: A Biblical Motif and its Mythological Background*. Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press. (HSM 40).

explored the subject of water in the wilderness in relation to mythological references from Exodus, Psalms, Deuteronomy and a variety of texts from the prophetic books in Jeremiah, Second Isaiah and Ezekiel.<sup>55</sup> The book hardly refers to the mythological text of Job 28:9-11 which is given a secondary status with almost no analysis (Propp 1987:37).

This tendency also occurs in most of the subsequent studies on water and water-related phenomena. In this sense, in order to establish a link between his hydrogeological findings about water resources in ancient Palestine and Bible texts, Issar (1990)<sup>56</sup> thoroughly selected texts from Genesis, Exodus, the Deuteronomic literature (Dt, Jos, Jdg, Sm, Ki) and Chronicles.<sup>57</sup> None of the references come from the wisdom literature. Indeed, this archaeologist author is not to be blamed since his study is not about a theological analysis of biblical texts. As a non-biblical scholar, he referred to texts that are often raised in biblical works. Still, his selection reflects the vein of favouring certain texts that characterised theological and biblical studies on water in the Bible.

Thereafter, Woods<sup>58</sup> issued his book dealing with the rainstorm, in the Deuteronomic history, mainly in the cycles of Elijah/Elisha, where this water-related phenomenon is polemically used in a persuasive context against Baalism (1994:8). The author explicitly limited his investigation to the books of Kings and Chronicles. It is obvious that other parts of the Bible are out of his focus. It should also be admitted that the Old Testament wisdom books have no explicit entries on water and the Baalism, except an implication in some poem about the rainstorms in the book of Job.<sup>59</sup> With the same perspective, one can also raise the book of Tsumura<sup>60</sup> that is explicitly titled to be

---

<sup>55</sup> Lists of references: Exodus (17; 32), Psalms (78; 81; 95; 105; 107; 114), Deuteronomy (8; 33; 32)

<sup>56</sup> See Issar, A S 1990. *Water shall Flow from the Rock: Hydrogeology and Climate in the Land of the Bible*. Berlin/Heidelberg: Springer-Verlag.

<sup>57</sup> One will notice verses such as Genesis (1:6-10; 2:4-5.10; 7:10-12), Deuteronomy (11:10-11; 32:1-2), Exodus (9:23; 15:22-23); Joshua (3:15-16); Judges (5:19-21), Kings (1Ki 20:20) and Chronicles (2 Ch 32:2-4)

<sup>58</sup> See Woods, F E 1994. *Water and Storm Polemics against Baalism in the Deuteronomic History*. Frankfurt am Main/Berlin/Wien/Paris: Peter Lang. (AUS).

<sup>59</sup> The wisdom books have no explicit entry about water and Baalism, but it is implied in the imageries of Job 22:22-38 about the storm-god and the origin of rain and land fertility as well as in Elihu's speech (36:26-37:13) with its references to the raincloud.

<sup>60</sup> Tsumura, D T 1989. *The Earth and the Waters in Genesis 1 and 2: A Linguistic Investigation*. Sheffield: JSOT Press. (JSOTSup 83).

about a linguistic investigation of ‘water and earth in Genesis 1 and 2.’ The reference to Job 36:27 is only raised to show that his assumption about ‘ $\text{מַיִם}$ -waters’ in Genesis 2:6 also fits the meaning of ‘ $\text{מַיִם}$ -waters’<sup>61</sup> in Job 36:27 (Tsumura 1989:115).

Similarly, in her book entitled *Chaos Uncreated: The Reassessment of the Theme of ‘Chaos’ in the Hebrew Bible*, Watson<sup>62</sup> is mainly interested in addressing the issue of waters of destruction in the book of Psalms. It is in this sense, that some texts in Job and Isaiah<sup>63</sup> are given a secondary status in order to show whether her argument can be supported by evidence in other books of the Old Testament (Watson 2005:265). Indeed, one could not expect much from the book since its scope is clearly stated to be about the Psalms that have a mythological background.

In addition to the tendency of favouring certain texts and ignoring the wisdom books, many books also have a clear inclination to the romantic aspect of water. This is the case for the essay of Hembrom<sup>64</sup> enlisting five notions of the significance of water in the Old Testament: the essentiality of water for the survival of living beings, water as a cleansing agent, the ritual use of water, water and food making and some metaphorical uses of water to mean fertility.<sup>65</sup> Hembrom (2007:49-56) only pointed out a few isolated texts<sup>66</sup> from the wisdom books without further analysis. The same trend is visible in the study of Ross<sup>67</sup> about ‘water and life’. Not only does Ross omit the wisdom books,<sup>68</sup> but he also radically affirms that water has always meant life in the Bible (2007:88). For him, even when water was used as a destructive agent against enemies it was for the purpose of salvation (life) of God’s people.

---

<sup>61</sup> These matters will be discussed further in the third chapter in the textual critical analysis of the Hebrew text of Job 36:26-37:13.

<sup>62</sup> See the introductory pages of Watson, R S 2005. *Chaos Uncreated: A Reassessment of the Theme of ‘Chaos’ in the Hebrew Bible*. Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter.

<sup>63</sup> Job 7:12; 38:8-11; 26:7-13 ; Isaiah 19:5ff; 27:1; 44:24-28

<sup>64</sup> See Hembrom, T 2007. Significance of Water in the Old Testament, in John, V J (ed), *Water Struggle*, 49-56. Kolkata: Bishop’s College.

<sup>65</sup> For the essentiality of water for the survival of living beings (1Ki 6:22; Ps 1:3; Ezk 17:5; Job 8:11 etc.); for water as cleansing agent (Ex 29:4; Gn 18:4; 24:32); for the ritual use of water (1Ki 7:23; Lv 14:15ff); for water in food preparation (Ki 19:21; Lv 8:31) and for the metaphorical use of water (Ps 1:3; Job 29:19).

<sup>66</sup> These are Job 8:11; 9:30; 14:9; 24:19; 28:8; Proverbs 30:16.

<sup>67</sup> Ross, M M 2007. Water for Life, Water of Life and Water as Life: Meaning and Symbol in Theology, in John, V J (ed), *Water Struggle*, 80-101. Kolkata: Bishop’s College.

<sup>68</sup> His references include Genesis 1-2; Genesis 6-9; Revelation 21:1etc.

Likewise, in his essay on the use of water as a metaphor in the Bible, Caleb<sup>69</sup> not only ignores the wisdom books, but also points to passages in which references to water and water-related phenomena appear with romantic potential such as water as symbol for life and strength, water as symbol for purity and humility and water as a metaphor for God's justice.<sup>70</sup> What is striking is while his study is entitled 'the use of water as a metaphor and symbol in biblical theology', he omitted the Old Testament wisdom books whereas these are the ones that have more metaphorical uses of water than any other part of the Bible (cf. Appendix A).

Continuing the same favouring trend in his substantial work on the water symbolism in wide-ranging literature ranging from Mesopotamia to Palestine during a period of more than two millennia, Stéphanie Anthonioz (2009)<sup>71</sup> discusses three water-related phenomena: the flood, crossing of water, and the abundance of water. In this study, he made use of many texts from Genesis, Exodus and the Deuteronomic books.<sup>72</sup> The author explicitly said that the scope of his study is about historical and mythological texts of the Old Testament, and therefore deliberately excludes what he called 'pragmatic texts' – such as the wisdom books (Anthonioz 2009:1).

In September 2014, an outstanding book was published with the title *Thinking of Water in the Early Second Temple Period*<sup>73</sup>. In the introductory section, Levin (2014a:1) boldly claims that the book is not primarily about water as such, but rather the effect of water on the awareness of people, and the degree to which it determined not only daily life's conditions, but also the intellectual and spiritual culture. A number of distinguished biblical scholars engaged with the ideological and linguistic symbol of water and water-related phenomena in the literature of the late Persian/early Hellenistic periods.

---

<sup>69</sup> Caleb, S M 2007. The Use of Water as a Metaphor and Symbol in Biblical Theology: An Exploration, in John, V J (ed), *Water Struggle*, 69-79. Kolkata: Bishop's College.

<sup>70</sup> His references include Exodus 15:22-17:7; Isaiah 35:7; Jeremiah 17:13 for water as life; Isaiah 1:16; Ezekiel 36:26; Psalm 51:4 for water as symbol for purity/humility and Jeremiah 15:18; Amos 5:24 for water as a metaphor.

<sup>71</sup> Anthonioz, S 2009. *L'eau, Enjeux Politiques et Théologiques, de Sumer à la Bible*. Leiden/Boston: Brill:

<sup>72</sup> His biblical texts include Genesis 1-2, 6-9; Exodus 14; Deuteronomy 1-4 and Joshua 1, 3-4, 6, 10, 13 and several other references, except the wisdom books.

<sup>73</sup> See Ben Zvi, E & Levin, C 2014 (eds). *Thinking of Water in the Early Second Temple Period*. Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter.

Although Proverbs, Qoheleth, Sirach and Wisdom of Solomon belong to the period of the Second Temple, their perspectives on water are simply ignored in favour of pentateuchal and prophetic texts as well as ‘a brief overview’ on the images of water and water phenomena in the book of Job (Nõmmik 2014:279-297). Unlike many previous publications, the book is aware of the life-giving and life-threatening function of water in biblical texts.

Indeed, most of these publications must not be blamed for ignoring the Old Testament wisdom books since they have explicitly defined the scope of their studies. Yet, they have inherited the vein of favouring certain texts that are traditionally and intuitively recognised as primary loci for the study of water and water-related phenomena.

### **2.2.3.2 Articles on water and water-related phenomena in the Old Testament**

In their discussion of the subject of ‘rain and fertility of the soil’ in the Hebrew Bible, Futato (1998) and Rogland (2010) made use of many texts from the Pentateuch, the Prophets and Psalms,<sup>74</sup> but only quote a few wisdom texts such as Job 36:27-28 and Ecclesiastes 1:3 about the ‘rain clouds’.<sup>75</sup> It should be said here that their studies explicitly indicated that they are about the interpretation of the word מַטָּר in Genesis 2:5-7. The few references from other parts of the Bible are mentioned in a supplementary status.

In her article explicitly scoped to aspects of creation in Psalms and the Prophets, Klopper<sup>76</sup> demonstrates that springs and wells (water in the wilderness) occur in three different contexts: in historical texts dealing with the desert wandering after the exodus, in creation texts with a mythological background – primarily in the Psalms, and in prophecy dealing with postexilic recreation (Klopper 2005:253). It is in this way that she deliberately explored texts from Psalms and prophetic books. It is not

---

<sup>74</sup> References from the Pentateuch (Gn 1:2; Gn 2:5-7), the Prophets (1Ki 18:44; Jr 10:13), the Psalms (135),

<sup>75</sup> See Futato, M D 1998. *Because It Had Rained: A study of Genesis 2:5-7 with Implications for 2:4-25 and Genesis 1:1-2:3*. *WTJ* 60, 1-21 & Rogland, M 2010. *Interpreting מַטָּר in Genesis 2:5-6: Neglected Rabbinic and Intertextual Evidence*. *JSOT* 34, 379-392.

<sup>76</sup> Klopper, F 2005. *Aspects of Creation: The Water in the Wilderness motif in the Psalms and the Prophets*. *OTE* 18/2, 253-264.

certain whether this scholar has changed her view since in her 2002 doctoral thesis she also explored isolated texts from the wisdom books about springs and wells.<sup>77</sup>

Therefore, Klopper's view that these water-related phenomena (springs and wells) can be restricted to three different contexts in the Old Testament can be questioned since we have encountered several wisdom texts containing springs and well that cannot be classified in any of the three evoked contexts.<sup>78</sup> Strikingly, several earlier and subsequent studies about springs engage with repetitive analyses of certain favoured references from the Pentateuchal and prophetic books.

This is the case for studies of Merrill and Resane<sup>79</sup> about the twelve springs of water at Elim (Ex 15:27), the Beer account (Num 21:16-18), the healing water at Marah (Num 33:9; Ex 15:23-26), the rock water at Rephidim (Ex 17:1-7) as well as water tunnels<sup>80</sup> (Merrill 1994:204; Resane 2010:4). Likewise, one can also point to the intertextual analysis of Terblanche<sup>81</sup> about the notion of abundance of living waters in Zechariah 14:8 in relationship to Ezekiel 47:1-12 depicting a miraculous stream/spring flowing from the holy mountain and the threshold of the rebuilt temple to restore the creation order (2004:125).

Similarly, Klopper published about the conflicting views of the fountain and springs in Song of Songs 4:12-15 read against Leviticus 12:6-7 where these water-related phenomena are loathed.<sup>82</sup> Later, Rudman<sup>83</sup> (2003:73-8) explored the notion of water of/for impurity in Numbers 19. The study of Ched<sup>84</sup> (2012:33-5) on various prophetic

---

<sup>77</sup> Klopper, F 2002a. Oë in Die Wildernis. Die Religiöse Funksie Van Fontein en Putte in Die Hebreuse Bybel. 'n Godsdienshistoriese Studie. Unpublished DLitt & Phil Thesis. University of South Africa, Pretoria, p207-10.

<sup>78</sup> For references, see Appendices A and B.

<sup>79</sup> See Merrill, E H 1994. *A Historical Survey of the Old Testament*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House; and Resane, T 2010. The Theological Responses to the Socio-Economic Activities that Undermine Water as a Resource. *HTS* 66/1, 1-7.

<sup>80</sup> References for the building of water tunnels include 1 Kings 15:13; 2 Kings 23:4-12; 2 Chronicles 15:16; 2 Chronicles 29:16, 30:14.

<sup>81</sup> See Terblanche, M D 2004. An Abundance of Living Waters: The Intertextual Relationship between Zechariah 14:8 and Ezekiel 47:1-12. *OTE* 17/1, 120-129.

<sup>82</sup> See Klopper, F 2002b. The Rhetoric of Conflicting Metaphors: A Fountain Desired in the Song of Songs but abhorred in Leviticus. *OTE* 15/3, 675-686.

<sup>83</sup> See Rudman, D 2003. Water for Impurity or Water of Impurity? The red cow of Numbers 19 revisited. *OTE* 16/1, 73-78.

<sup>84</sup> See Ched, M 2012. Everything Will Live Where the River Goes. *Sojourners Magazine* 41/4, 33-35.

texts<sup>85</sup> concerning the eschatological rehydration of the earth should also be highlighted. All those studies have explicitly delineated the scope of their studies to certain corpuses of the Old Testament, mainly the Pentateuch, the Prophets and Psalms. It is therefore clear that scholars have published enough about water from other books' perspectives but ignored the wisdom books.

Since the publication of *Schöpfung und Chaos in Urzeit und Endzeit* (1895) of Gunkel,<sup>86</sup> several articles have been attempts to study the watery chaos motif in the book of Psalms. The earliest is the article of May<sup>87</sup> concerning cosmic connotations of 'many waters' (מַיִם רַבִּיִּים) where the author mainly made use of references from the prophetic books and Psalms.<sup>88</sup>

Recent publications include the articles of Prinsloo<sup>89</sup> (2003), Brown<sup>90</sup> (2006) and Sylva<sup>91</sup> (2012) respectively exploring the waters of chaos in Psalm 124, the voice of 'many waters' in the book of Psalms and the deep and the created order in Psalm 93. We should also note the article of Rudman<sup>92</sup> (2001a) focusing on the metaphorical use of water to mean Sheol in many texts of the Old Testament. Prinsloo, Brown and Sylva have explicitly limited their studies to the book of Psalms. In his attempt to get support for 'Sheol and waters', Rudman adds a few references from the book of Job<sup>93</sup> as these are among rare loci in the Old Testament where the word Sheol appears in connection with water imagery (2001a:241).

Finally, it is clear that the Old Testament wisdom books have not yet received enough attention from scholars in studies about water and water-related phenomena. As far as the researcher could gather, not a single study, essay or article that is about the notion

<sup>85</sup> His prophetic texts include Isaiah 35:6; 14:3-8; 37:22-24; 1 Kings 5:6ff; Jr 2:3; Zechariah 11:1 etc.

<sup>86</sup> This study makes use of the English translation of this German book, namely Gunkel, H 2006. *Creation and Chaos in the Primeval Era and the Eschaton: a Religion-Historical Study of Genesis 1 and Revelation 12*. Trans. by Whitney, K W. Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge, U K: Eerdmans.

<sup>87</sup> May, H G 1955. Some Cosmic Connotations of Mayim Rabbîm, 'Many Waters'. *JBL* 74/1, 9-21.

<sup>88</sup> His biblical texts contain Isaiah (17:12-14; 23; 44; 51:9-10 etc.), Habakkuk (3:13-15), Ezekiel 29 and many Psalms (29; 69; 74; 77; 89; 104; 114 etc.).

<sup>89</sup> Prinsloo, G T M 2003. Historical Reality and Mythological Metaphor in Psalm 124. *OTE* 18/3: 790-810.

<sup>90</sup> Brown, W P 2006. Deep Calls to Deep: Retrieving the Liturgical Voice of the Many Waters. Available online from: [http://www.sbl-site.org/meetings/Congresses\\_Abstracts.aspx?MeetingId=5](http://www.sbl-site.org/meetings/Congresses_Abstracts.aspx?MeetingId=5) (Accessed 26 June 2013).

<sup>91</sup> Sylva, D 2012. The Rising נהרות of Psalm 93: The Chaotic Order. *JSOT* 36/4, 471-482.

<sup>92</sup> Rudman, D 2001a. The Use of Water Imagery in Descriptions of Sheol. *ZAW* 113, 240-244.

<sup>93</sup> Job 7; 17:13-16; 18:18.

of water could be found in the Old Testament wisdom literature. Major essays and monographs that purported to be comprehensive have, however, pointed at references from the books of the Pentateuch, the Prophets and the Psalms where some wisdom texts appear only as supplementary sources. Furthermore, many publications have explicitly defined the scope of their studies to other bodies of the Bible implying that one cannot expect them to reflect on biblical texts that do not belong to their corpus of study.

It should be stated precisely here that not only did many publications ignore the wisdom books in the selection of the references concerning water, but also most of them have a clear inclination towards the romantic aspect of water. These are, for instance, Klopper (2005) on spring and well, Terblanche (2004) on the future rehydration of earth, Futato (1998) and Rogland (2010) on the idea of water as rain, as well as Ross (2007) for whom water always meant life in the Bible. Many other authors present the same vein of argument, such as Caleb (2007) and Resane (2010) and more. Let us then turn to eco-theological studies that have been done on the Old Testament wisdom texts containing water.

### **2.3 Eco-theological studies about water and water-related phenomena**

To the best of the researcher's knowledge no scholarly eco-theological investigation about water and water-related phenomena in the Old Testament wisdom books, has been undertaken before. This section reviews several eco-theological studies that have been made on water and water-related phenomena in the Bible in general or the Old Testament in particular. Several other essays that are literary entitled *Water in the Old Testament* will also be included in the debate.

The tendency to ignore wisdom books in the study of water and water-related phenomena also occurs in eco-theological interpretations of biblical texts. In the second volume of the Earth Bible Project, the only study that is about water and water-related phenomena selects not only texts from the book of Genesis, but also

chooses texts<sup>94</sup> reflecting the positive potential of water found at springs and wells.<sup>95</sup> A few references to water and water-related phenomena as life-threatening entities features in supplementary status to analyses of the *voice of Earth* in the flood stories of Genesis 6-9.<sup>96</sup>

Similarly, in her magnificent thesis on the religious function of springs and wells in the Hebrew Bible, Klopper claims to re-evaluate nature in the Hebrew Bible and view humans as not standing above, but as part of nature.<sup>97</sup> Illustrating her thesis, she carefully shows that groundwater sources were not only life-giving agents in the arid setting of Israel, but also functioned as cultic centres where theophanies took place, kings were crowned, lawsuits conducted and marriage promises were made.<sup>98</sup> Her biblical texts are drawn from the Pentateuch, Prophets and Psalms<sup>99</sup> as well as a few isolated verses in the book of Proverbs (13:14; 14:27; 16:22; 18:4 & 25:2) (see Klopper 2002:207-210).

Likewise, in her two articles concerning the problem of water in the Old Testament, Deutschmann (2009 & 2011)<sup>100</sup> mainly selected biblical texts from the Pentateuch.<sup>101</sup> While Deutschmann deploys significant efforts to provide comments on these passages from the Pentateuchal books, she quotes Job 36:27-28 without any analysis (2009:17 & 2011:67). Tucker<sup>102</sup> did the same when he reads the statement of Job

---

<sup>94</sup> The biblical references to wells and springs include Genesis 21:17-20 (Hagar, Ishmael and the well); 21:25-34 & 26:17-22 (Abraham, Isaac and Abimelech on conflict over water supply).

<sup>95</sup> See Hobgood-Oster, L 2000. 'For Out of that Well the Flocks were Watered': Stories of Wells in Genesis, in Habel, N C & Wurst, S (eds), *The Earth Story in Genesis*, 187-199. Sheffield/Cleveland: Sheffield Academic Press/Pilgrim Press.

<sup>96</sup> See Gardner, A 2000. Ecojustice: A Study of Genesis 6:11-13, in Habel, N C & Wurst, S (eds), *The Earth Story in Genesis*, 117-130. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press; Fejo, W A 2000. The Voice of the Earth: An Indigenous Reading of Genesis 9, in Habel, N C & Wurst, S (eds), *The Earth Story in Genesis*, 140-146. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press; and Olley, J 2000. Mixed Blessing for Animals: The Contrasts of Genesis 9, in Habel, N C & Wurst, S (eds), *The Earth Story in Genesis*, 130-139. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.

<sup>97</sup> It is precisely for this claim that the researcher categorises her thesis among eco-theological studies.

<sup>98</sup> See the English version of her thesis summary. Pages prior to her first chapter are not numbered.

<sup>99</sup> Here references include the Pentateuch (Gn 16; 24; 26; Ex 2; 15; 17; Nm 20; 21 etc.), Prophetic books (1 S 28; 1 Ki 1; Is 48; Jr 31; Ezk 47 etc.) and Psalms (74; 104 etc).

<sup>100</sup> See Deutschmann, B 2009. Water Lines: Towards a Creational View of Water. *Zadok Perspectives* 102, 15-19 and Deutschmann, B 2011 Abraham, Isaac and the Problem of Water, in Habel, N C & Trudinger, P (eds), *Water: A Matter of Life and Death*, 63-72. Adelaide: ATF. (*Interface Journal*: Vol.14/1).

<sup>101</sup> Her references concern God's providence of water (Dt 11:10-12; 8:7-9a), the ecological effects of the flood (Gn 8:21-22), Moses and a water crisis (Num 20:12; Ex 15:22-27; 17:1-7), the patriarchs and water issues (Gn 21:22-34; 26; 1-33) as well as theophany around sites of water (Gn 16:7; 21:8-20; 24 & 29).

<sup>102</sup> See Tucker, G M 1997. Rain on a Land Where No-One Lives: The Hebrew Bible on the Environment. *JBL* 116/1, 3-17.

38:25-26, 'rain on the land where no one lives' in terms of Job's limit of wisdom and control over the created order (1997:11).

However, acknowledgment should be made of the essay of Tsumura devoting specific attention to references to water and water-related phenomena in Job 36-37. In addition to broad analyses of several texts about water and water-related phenomena (dew, snow, rain, etc.), this scholar enlisted Job 36:27, 37:6-7 that he deems offers 'the most extensive theology of rain and weather in the entire Bible' (Tsumura 2010: 174). It would imply that anybody undertaking a study on the theme of rain in the Old Testament would at least quote Job 36:26 and 37:6-13 among other basic references,<sup>103</sup> such as Genesis 2:5-7.

Finally, the 2011 volume of the journal *Interface*<sup>104</sup> entitled 'Water: a matter of life and death' is currently one of the most noteworthy biblical and eco-theological studies on water and water-related phenomena in the Bible. This volume provides a series of essays of theologians, including biblical scholars and scientists who seriously engage with the concept of water 'as a spiritual well and also as a physical resource for all living beings on earth' (Habel 2011a:4-5). However, even in this volume explicitly entitled to be about both aspects of water, most essays focus on the positive value of water, and none have explored texts from the Old Testament wisdom books.<sup>105</sup>

As illustration one could mention the study of Daly-Denton<sup>106</sup> who carefully made use of a great number of references from other parts of the Bible that reflect the romantic aspects of water<sup>107</sup> for drinking. She quotes two brief references to the wisdom books (Pr 25:21 & Sir 24:21-27). Indeed, Daly-Denton (2011:116f) explicitly claims that her essay concerns the theme of drinking in the Gospel of John. In this sense, one cannot expect from her arrayed analysis of this water-related phenomenon in other texts.

---

<sup>103</sup> Evidence is the above-stated articles of Futato (1998:1-21) and Rogland (2010:384).

<sup>104</sup> See Habel, N C & Trudinger, P 2011 (eds). *Water: A Matter of Life and Death*. Adelaide: ATF Theology. (*Interface Journal*: Vol.14/1).

<sup>105</sup> See Habel, N C 2011. Introduction: Water: A Matter of Life and Death, in Habel, N C & Trudinger, P (eds), *Water: A Matter of Life and Death*. (*Interface*: Vol.14/1), 1-8. Adelaide: ATF

<sup>106</sup> See Daly-Denton, M M 2011. To Hear What Water Is Saying to the Churches, in Habel, N C & Trudinger, P (eds), *Water: A Matter of Life and Death*, 111-125. Adelaide: ATF Theology. (*Interface*: Vol.14/1).

<sup>107</sup> Here references contain the romantic aspect of water in the Pentateuch (Gn 2, Dt 23:4; Ex 15:17-18; 17:1-7; 34:28; Nm 20:8-10 etc.), the Prophets (Is 3:1; 30:20; 33:16; 44:3; Jr 2:13; 17:13; 1 Sm 30:11, Ezk 12:19; 39:29; Jl 2:28-29 etc.), the Psalms (Ps 36:8-9; 65:9-10 etc.), Esdras 10:11.

In the same volume, Ayre (2011)<sup>108</sup> enlarges the scope of references to water and water-related phenomena. Although Ayre admits that his study does not intend to be a comprehensive study of biblical references to water, his selection of texts reflects the same pattern of favoured texts from the Pentateuch, Prophets and Psalms.<sup>109</sup>

Regarding the few eco-theological studies that have indeed been made on the wisdom books, one can notice that not only is there no study concerning water and water-related phenomena in the Old Testament wisdom books but also those which were made have an inclination towards the romantic potential of water. The next section turns to studies that have been made on the wisdom texts containing references to water and water-related phenomena, and explores the ways scholars have dealt with the subject.

## **2.4 Studies on wisdom texts containing water and water-related phenomena**

### **2.4.1 Introduction**

As far as the researcher knows, there is no major monograph, essay or book that is solely focused on water and water-related phenomena in the Old Testament wisdom books. This is perhaps due to three facts. Firstly, ‘not too long ago wisdom literature was somewhat of an orphan, even eliminated from the concern of Old Testament theology’ (Murphy 1969:289). It is only recently that they have gained the attention of scholars. Secondly, protestant scholars simply ignore the Deutero-canonical wisdom books as they are not part of the canonical structure of their interest. Finally, eco-theology is a very young discipline, and much needs to be done to cover all the books of the Bible.

It implies also that there is no work that has studied the life-sustaining/life-threatening potential of water and water-related phenomena in the Old Testament wisdom books.

---

<sup>108</sup> Ayre, C 2011. Water: More Than a Symbol, in Habel, N C & Trudinger, P (eds), *Water: A Matter of Life and Death*, 49-62. Adelaide: ATF Theology. (*Interface*: Vol.14/1).

<sup>109</sup> Ayre records texts about the flood stories in the Pentateuch and Psalms (Gn 6-8; Ex 15:5ff; Ps 18:16), water associated with cleansing and renewal in the Prophets, Psalms and the New Testament (Is 1:16; 12:3; Jr 17:13; Ps 1:3; Jn 3:5; 4:10; Rv 22:1) and water for drinking in Exodus 17 and Mathew 10:42 (2011:50-51). See also Gerstenberger, S E 2012. Water in the Old Testament, in Lefebvre, S & Wacker, M T (eds), *Water Marks Our Life*, 36-47. London: SCM Press (*Concilium* 2012/5, IJT).

There are very few and mostly incidental references to water and water-related phenomena in general publications, such as Bible commentaries, articles or books dealing with certain matters on passages from the Old Testament wisdom books in which water references feature.

It should, therefore, be stated that this study has chosen to review only a limited number of Bible commentaries, especially those which are scholarly renowned for their academic rigour. It is assumed here that many more commentaries could have deserved investigation as well. The views of commentaries will be supplemented with insights in books and articles that have incidentally mentioned water or water-related phenomena. The titles of those books and articles will be provided either in the body of discussions or in footnotes in order to designate what a given study was intending to address.

Given the great number of texts in the Old Testament wisdom books containing water and water-related phenomena, this review is limited to a number of representative passages from the five Old Testament wisdom books according to the potential of water and water-related phenomena as life-giving and life-threatening entities. These are Job 14:7-12; Job 36:26-37:13 and Job 38:22-38; Proverbs 5:15-20; Proverbs 9:13-18; Proverbs 3:19-20; Proverbs 8:22-31 and Proverbs 25:23-26; Qoheleth 1:4-11, 2:4-6 and 11:1-6; Wisdom 11:2-14 and 19:1-12 as well as Sirach 24:23-34 and 43:13-26.

Some of the reasons for the choice of those texts comprise the following: 1) most Bible commentaries and monographs have acknowledged the significance of water metaphors in some of these texts, but none have said why the author found those water imageries suitable to depict certain issues; 2) they have all been objects of exploration for various matters<sup>110</sup> in many publications where water and water-related phenomena features in secondary position.

These texts will be supplemented by others in the discussion regarding the exegetical principle of intertextuality. This will often apply to passages in the book of Job where

---

<sup>110</sup> Marriage for Proverbs 5:5-20; Proverbs 9:17-18 & 25:25-26; God and the created order for Job 36:26-37:13 & 38; Charity or business for Ecclesiastes 11; praise of wisdom for references in Sirach and Wisdom of Solomon.

the texts of Job 36-37 and 38 are a kind of response to Job's earlier allegations in Job 3; 9; 12 and 24.

#### **2.4.2 Studies on texts containing water and water-related phenomena in Job**

In his commentaries on Job 36:26-37:13, Newsom<sup>111</sup> gave no attention to water-related phenomena (hail, clouds, snow, rainstorms) as subjects that he develops in the background of the analysis of the wonders of God, which is the main theme in the speech of Elihu in Job 36-37 (1997:590). Previously, the commentary of Dhorme<sup>112</sup> mentioned that the whole passage is about the wonderful work of God in nature (1967:552).

Commentaries often interpret texts of the book of Job intertextually with others. In this sense, the rain motif of Job 36:26-37:13 is linked with the scent of water that gives life to a dead plant (Job 14:7a) which is, however, anthropocentrically read in terms of scent of hope that does not exist for human beings (Job 14:10). In his commentary on Job 14, Chase<sup>113</sup> adds that unlike the tree cut down, leaving a stub whose roots can recover life, humans die forever lifeless (Chase 2013:88).

The commentary of Clines<sup>114</sup> on Job 14 is more specific: 'anthropopathically' speaking, the tree can be said to have hope, a rare commodity in Job's life (1989:328). Those human-centric readings are interested in the human condition or the significance of human suffering as reflected in the text and overlook or silence the intrinsic worth of the water clearly expressed in the text.

In his article entitled *God's Answer to Job*, Brenner recognises that the text of Job 38 contains various references to water and water-related phenomena. He thinks that it is probably not an accident that most of this chapter involves God's domination,

---

<sup>111</sup> See Newsom, C A 1997. The Book of Job, in Keck, L E (ed), *The New Interpreter's Bible (NIB): General Articles and Introduction, Commentary and Reflections for Each Book of the Bible including the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books in Twelve Volumes*. Vol. IV, 317-638. Nashville: Abingdon Press.

<sup>112</sup> Dhorme, E 1967. *A Commentary on the Book of Job*. (Trans. by Knight, H). London: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>113</sup> See Chase, S 2013. *Job*. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press. (Belief: A Theological Commentary of the Bible).

<sup>114</sup> Clines, D J A 1989. *Job 1-20*. Dallas, Texas: Word Books. (Word Biblical Commentary).

conquest, subduing and further control of water in its various forms and mutations (Brenner 1981:132). However, he mainly reads all its water-related phenomena merely as background to themes about God's response to Job. Has von Rad's<sup>115</sup> salvation historical theology influenced the interpretation of this scholar here and many others later? For von Rad (1984:138-9) nature should not be considered for its own value, but rather as performing a secondary role to stimulate human faith in God. This view seems to be shared in many interpretations or commentaries about Job 38.

In his essay on the *Divine creative power and the decentring of creation*, Patrick<sup>116</sup> argues that God's rhetorical speech in Job 38:22-27 invites us to recognise our limits and admire the cosmos from the creator's perspective (2001:115). To the allegation of Job that God releases water for destructive purposes rather than salutary ones (Job 12:15), God responds by pointing not only to the rainstorms' ordered release of moisture, but also their beneficial raining over the 'land where no one lives' (vv.26-27) (Habel 1985:542). The focus is about God's encounter with Job and the created order, and not the ecological significance of the water-related phenomena themselves in Job 38 (cf. Bauckham 2010:40ff). It is all about inviting Job (humans) to embrace a kind of cosmic humility within the created order, not to explain the ecological implication of water.

In this sense, the destructive rainstorms (hail, snow, wind) of Job 38 are interpreted in relation to their frequent occurrences in the context of theophanic glory and judgment of the wicked or salvation of God's people (humans) (Westermann 1981:202). In this way Luc (2000:120) comments that in Job 38:22-24, God reserves and commands the meteorological forces (snow, hail and wind) to sustain his purposes of sentence and battle, illustrating to Job his design and control in creation. Job should then change and view his case in light of the total cosmic design of the created order because only God has power over the hail, snow and rain (Habel 1985:534; Perdue 2007:202). As

---

<sup>115</sup> von Rad, G 1984. The Theological Problem of the Old Testament Doctrine of creation, in *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays*, 131-143. Trans. by Dicken, E W T. London: SCM Press.

<sup>116</sup> Patrick, D 2001. Divine Creative Power and the Decentring of Creation: The Subtext of the Lord's Addresses to Job, in Habel, N C & Wurst, S (eds), *The Earth Story in Wisdom Traditions*, 103-115. Sheffield/Cleveland: Sheffield Academic Press/Pilgrim Press.

could be noticed, the focus of these authors is not on water itself, but on God as source of the created order and its supreme decision-maker.

Therefore, in his book about the voice from the whirlwind, Schifferdecker argues that Job 38 reacts to Job 12:15 conveying God's tyrannical work in the natural world (2008:43). The water-related phenomena in Job 12:15 are therefore flouted in terms of the unjust nature of God causing drought and flood on earth at will the way God made Job lose everything with no clear justifications. In his essay titled *Job 12: the Cosmic Devastation and Social Turmoil*, Sinnott<sup>117</sup> argues that this text portrays God as promoting destruction in the cosmos rather than peace, order and stability (2001:78). The focus is not about water, but about Job's existential struggle to reconcile his own experience while in the midst of crushing isolation, poverty and emotional pain.

Similarly, Brenner observed that the great number of water-related phenomena in Job 38 indirectly depicts God's nature as dual as the nature of water:

It [water] may be a blessing, indeed is indispensable; but, at the same time, if it appears in the form of a flood (v.25) it is immensely dangerous and potentially destructive. Water can transform a desert into a garden (vv. 26-27), but as snow and hail (v.23) it can cause great damage... (Brenner 1981:132)

For this author, water serves as an appropriate basis for dealing with the paradox of the two-sided Godhead as the creator and the supreme destroyer. Brenner's focus is on the magnificence of God's handiwork, his ability as a creator and his indisputable control over his creation. Job 38:8-11, for instance, says that when the sea 'bursts from the womb', God wraps it in a 'swaddling band' of 'clouds' and 'darkness' (Habel 1985:538).

In her study about the reassessment of the motif of chaos in the Hebrew Bible, Watson conveys that these water images indicate God comforts and cares for his own creation as a mother would (2005:278). To the language of hopelessness, with Job wishing chaos and death (Job 3), God presents order and design (Chase 2013:260). The water-related phenomena serve as a background to explain scholars' interest about God's

---

<sup>117</sup> Sinnott, A M 2001. Job 12: Cosmic Devastation and Social Turmoil, in Habel, N C & Wurst, S (eds), *The Earth Story in Wisdom Traditions*, 78-91. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press. (The Earth Bible 3).

answer to Job (humans) and the mystery of the created order. This is why no study has given any attention to the ecological meaning of water and water-related phenomena contained in those texts.

Scholars wrote essays from an anthropocentric perspective, yet were interested in defying human fundamentalism. That is why the issues about the source of rain and weather in Job 38:22-27 are anthropocentrically rendered and no more than rhetoric. Fox said the whole chapter is all about God's wonders, and in pointing to them God is affirming the infinity of his own wisdom and the limitation of Job's (1981:60).

The ecological relevance of water and water-related phenomena themselves, as they are depicted in several passages of Job, has not yet gained the attention of scholars. In short, readers are mainly interested in the topic of God responding to Job by pointing to elements of the created order that are beyond his means, and then inviting his humility. Hence, Lacocque (2007:86) declared:

The spatial references evoked by the text [the book of Job] are as remote as can be from human self-centeredness: 'the foundations of the earth, the doors of the primordial sea, the horizon of dawn, the recesses of the sea and the gates of death, the home from which night and darkness emerge, the storage places of snow, hail, rain, and wind.'

In his comments on Elihu's speech in the book of Job, Habel rendered the torrential rain in Job 37:5-8 as not only linked with the theophany of Israel's God (Ps 68:10; Jg 5:4-5; 1 Ki 18:41-45), but also as visible evidence of God's grace and blessing to human beings that went unnoticed by the complainer Job (Habel 1985:512). The mythological sea monsters Behemoth and Leviathan (40:15-24 & 41:1-34) and the chaotic waters escape human control, but fit in God's design of the cosmos (Newsom 1997:602). The focus is not on water and the water-related phenomena themselves, but on the created order as containing elements that are beyond human control, but that are firmly governed by God.

Special recognition must be given to Nõmmik (2014:279-98) who wrote an overview, *Thinking of water in the book of Job*. Nõmmik (2014:297) observed that, except the prologue (Job 1:1-2:13) and epilogue (Job 42:7-17), the book of Job abounds with

references to water and water-related phenomena in all the major parts of the book. He also points out that water occurs with ambivalent and multivalent portrayals in the book. Still, not only is the essay a ‘brief overview’ (Nõmmik 2014: 297), but it is also more concerned with the ideology of water than the eco-theological exploration of water. The overview of Nõmmik features amongst the rare studies on water in the book of Job and calls for in-depth exploration.

Briefly, there is no substantial essay or monograph that has been conducted on the theme of water in the wisdom literature, especially from an ecological perspective. We found incidental notes on water and water-related phenomena in isolated paragraphs of general works written on the book of Job or in Bible commentaries; these, however, were anthropocentric. The water-related phenomena are used here in support of God’s dialogue with Job, but not as the main subject. Thus, no scholar has investigated the subject of water itself for the aim of explaining its ecological significance. Contrary to previous studies, this thesis is entirely devoted to the ecological significance of water and water-related phenomena, whether used as metaphors or as physical entities in the texts of Job.

### **2.4.3 Studies on texts containing water and water-related phenomena in Proverbs**

#### **2.4.3.1 Studies on Proverbs 5:15-20**

The metaphorical language of Proverbs 5:15-20 contains ecological insights about water and water-related phenomena. However, the text is regularly interpreted in terms of two main approaches: the feminist approach and the erotic focus.

##### **2.4.3.1.1 Feminist approaches to Proverbs 5:15-20**

In her essay, *Visual metaphors and Proverbs 5:15-20*, Fontaine<sup>118</sup> (2005:200) states that, ‘the cistern and well remind us of the male effort in stabilising the waters by

---

<sup>118</sup> See Fontaine, C R 2005. Visual Metaphors and Proverbs 5:15-20: Some Archaeological Reflections on Gendered Iconography, in Troxel, R, Friebel, K G & Magary, D R (eds), *Seeking the Wisdom of the Ancient: Essays Offered to Honour Michael V. Fox on the Occasion of his Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, 185-202. Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns.

providing a useful container'. It is argued that the text is a clear echo of patriarchy in which female images are 'stationary' (cistern/well) contrary to male 'movable' water-related images (spring, fountain or streams). Fontaine emphasises that 'the well, the jar, and the cistern furnish a comforting, female solution: inert, made and maintained by male effort, they contribute stability to the flow as they encompass the male streams' (2005:201).

The metaphor uses stereotypical male language picturing the woman as an object of the man (Horne 2003:97). The metaphor echoes thus a kind of patriarchal structure in which the male gender is normative and owner of the female. The gendered images of the female body as a 'receptacle' (cistern/well) in clay, stone or flesh is locked and loaded with patriarchal fantasies of control (Fontaine 2005:202). Briefly, the female element in the metaphor is reduced to the instrumental rank in the service of the master of the waters and kept in the cistern/well. However, feminist readings do agree that the metaphor is about sexuality in marriage.

#### **2.4.3.1.2 Erotic readings of Proverbs 5:15-20**

In his commentary on Proverbs, Davis<sup>119</sup> (2000:51) argues that this text sets forth the sharp contrast between a healthy eroticism, protected by the fresh-flowing waters of 'the wife of your youth' (v.18), and a perverse attraction to the strange woman (v.20). Likewise, Fox<sup>120</sup> (2000:199) explains that the text commands: 'stay loyal to your wife sexually', while the images of a cistern and well suggest 'cool, limpid refreshment for hot [sexual] desires, which are satisfied by "drinking", that is, lovemaking'. This view is shared by the commentaries of Perdue<sup>121</sup> (2000:121) as well as Waltke<sup>122</sup> (2004:316), viewing the whole passage as motivation for 'faithful sexual intimacy in marriage'.

---

<sup>119</sup> See Davis, E F 2000. *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs*. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press.

<sup>120</sup> See Fox, M V 2000. *Proverbs 1-9: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. New York: Doubleday. (The Anchor Bible).

<sup>121</sup> See Perdue, L G 2000. *Proverbs: Interpretation. A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*. Louisville, Kentucky: John Knox Press.

<sup>122</sup> See Waltke, B K 2004. *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1-15*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans.

Indeed, the text is about marriage. However, since the sage used the image of water to address the issue of sexuality in marriage, it could be asked why the author found ‘the cistern/well’ metaphor appropriate to talk about this matter. Which assumptions about or attitudes towards water are reflected in the writer’s use of water management metaphors in an attempt to promote faithfulness in marriage? As far as the researcher knows, there is no specific study that has asked such questions about Proverbs 5:15-20. Scholars do recognise that the metaphor reflects the ‘significance of water in its real, materialist sense in an arid region where cisterns were built to store water for irrigation and survival’ (Horne 2003:96).<sup>123</sup>

However, no attention has been paid to the significance of the water image itself, but to what specifically the cistern/well metaphors designate within marriage. For the commentary of Longman III<sup>124</sup> (2006:161), these watery images refer to ‘highly erotic images’ for a ‘woman’s vagina’. The passage is traditionally and often interpreted in terms of a father seeking to convince his son that genuine sexual satisfaction comes only within the context of marriage (Aitken 1995:217; Clifford 1999:71; Chisholm 2000:397). No attention has been given to the possibility of retrieving ecological wisdom from the metaphor of water itself as a subject in the text, but debates read the water-related metaphors as merely serving sexuality matters within marriage. The researcher implies that the metaphor of Proverbs 5:15-20 makes a call for proper management of water. Horne (2005:96-7) is right when she declares:

In a land where water was scarce, where cisterns were built to store every drop for the sake of irrigation and survival, the image makes a strong equation between marital infidelity on the parts of the husband and the wife and the wastage of the precious natural resource.

The ‘root metaphor’<sup>125</sup> of ‘water management’ used in Proverbs 5:15-20 advising the son to drink water from his own cistern/well and warning against the useless spilling

---

<sup>123</sup> See also Van Leeuwen, R C 1997. The Book of Proverbs, in Keck, L E (ed), *The New Interpreter’s Bible (NIB): General Articles and Introduction, Commentary and Reflections for Each Book of the Bible including the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books in Twelve Volumes*. Vol.5, 17-264. Nashville: Abingdon Press, p68.

<sup>124</sup> See Longman III, T 2006. *Proverbs*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic.

<sup>125</sup> A root metaphor is defined as the underlying worldview or perception that shapes a writer’s understanding of a situation. A ‘root metaphor’ provides us with more possibilities for application and elaboration in proportion

of spring/fountain streams on public areas provides us with a means of understanding its valuable ecological wisdom. The ‘water management’ root metaphor is employed to discourage extra-marital sex and confines sexuality within the context of marriage. In this sense, the study will point to the transformative power of Proverbs 5:15-20 that premises the value of water and the necessity of its proper management.

#### **2.4.3.2 Studies on Proverbs 9:13-18 and Proverbs 25:23-26**

As for Proverbs 5:15-20, water as a metaphor in Proverbs 9:13-18 & 25:23-26 is often interpreted in terms of the target domains, the subject conveyed by the metaphor. In Proverbs 9:13-18, for instance, the significance of the ‘stolen waters’ and ‘depths of Sheol’ are only read as about adultery and secret liaisons with the prostitute (Fox 2000:302 & Horne 2003:137). Some have even read the metaphor with religious matters such as comparing the victim of the prostitute with people who give way to apostasy and then prove themselves as false disciples and worthy of death (1 Cor 15:2; Col 1:22-23 & 2 Tim 2:12) (Waltke 2004:445).

An ecological sensitivity could ask why the sage found it suitable to link an adulterous behaviour with the stolen waters that lead to the depths of Sheol. What does this water metaphor teach us about this aspect/function of water? As far as the researcher knows no study has investigated the ecological potential of this metaphor.

Similarly, the water-related phenomena in Proverbs 25:23-26 have not yet interested eco-theological readings. In fact, Proverbs 25:23-26 consists of two proverb pairs (Pr 25:23-24 & 25:25-26) using water and water-related images respectively pertaining to unexpected conflict due to hostile speech and contrasting restoration with ruin. While in verses 23-24, the sly speech from a wife is unwelcome as the rain from the ruinous north wind, verses 25-26 contrast the watering of a weary person to perseverance by a good word with a wavering righteous person’s lack of diligence (Waltke 2004:334). In both pairs of proverbs, water and water-related phenomena are clearly expressed.

---

to a number of corresponding characteristics it shares with the thing or situation it describes in the text (see Holland, G 1992. Paul’s Root Metaphor: Slavery. *Proceedings* 12, 185-194 [see pages 185ff]).

However, scholars are interested in contrasting the slanderous wife of Proverbs 25:23-24 with the sexually satisfying wife of Proverbs 5:15-20 in the sense that the husband prefers to live in a corner of the roof, unprotected from the rain, than to live in the same house with her (Malbim 1973:262; Clifford 1999:226-27). As to Proverbs 25:25-26, debates focus either on the exhausted person due to thirst rather than the cold water itself, or on the wavering righteous person rather than the muddied spring itself (Van Leeuwen 1997:220; Horne 2003:309; Longman III 2006:459). In these texts both the texts and modern readers show an anthropocentric bias which prevents the retrieval of ecological wisdom of water and water-related phenomena occurring in these texts.

### **2.4.3.3 Studies on Proverbs 3:19-20 and Proverbs 8:22-31**

Proverbs 3:19-20 and 8:22-31 are generally termed as the main texts that treat creation in any cosmic sense in the longer texts about the Woman Wisdom (Pr 1-9). However, studies on these texts mainly focus on the role of wisdom in creation rather than the domains of the created order themselves, including water and water-related phenomena which are the dominant features in the texts.<sup>126</sup>

### **2.4.4 Studies on texts containing water and water-related phenomena in Qoheleth**

There are not many references to water and water-related phenomena in the book of Qoheleth. However, a few texts on water in this book, such as Qoheleth 1:4-11; 11:1-6 and 2:4-6, are often muted in favour of anthropocentric debates. The ‘continuous flowing water to the sea’ metaphor in Qoheleth 1:7 is often flouted in terms of comparison with the routine of human works and futility.<sup>127</sup> The text is said to explain

---

<sup>126</sup> See Clifford, R J 1992. The Theology of Creation in Proverbs 8:22-31, in Clifford, R J & Collins J J (eds), *Creation in the Biblical Traditions*, 85-96. Washington, DC: CBAA. (CBQMS 24); Clifford, R J 1999. *Proverbs: A Commentary*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press; Waltke, B K 2004. *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1-15*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company (NICOT), pp. 408-22.

<sup>127</sup> See Whybray, R N 1994a. Ecclesiastes 1:5-7 and the Wonders of Nature, in Zuck, R B (ed), *Reflecting with Solomon: Selected Studies on the Book of Ecclesiastes*, 233-240. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker House; Crenshaw, J L 1994. Nothing New Under the Sun: Ecclesiastes 1:4-11, in Zuck, R B (ed), *Reflecting with Solomon: Selected Studies on the Book of Ecclesiastes*, 241-248. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker House; Perdue, L G 2007. *Wisdom Literature: A Theological History*. London/Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, pp.49-58.

the futility of human life by the use of natural phenomena: the courses of the sun, the wind and the rivers (water).<sup>128</sup> Drawing on many linguistic ambiguities and ironies, this thesis will put forth that water-circle is both purposeful (positive) and wearisome (negative) just as human life is complex and puzzling.

Similarly, scholars naturally link the riddle of Qoheleth 11:1-6 ‘send out your bread upon the water’ (v.1) with trade matters<sup>129</sup> (Towner 1997:349) or charity<sup>130</sup> (Seow<sup>131</sup> 1997:343). In his article entitled *Principles of financial investment: Ecclesiastes 11:1-8*, Hubbard<sup>132</sup> declares that ‘bread upon the waters to be found later’ is Qoheleth’s way of depicting investment in prevailing mercantile enterprises (1994:342).

By contrast, the commentary of Perry<sup>133</sup> attempts to link the riddle with sexual issues since, in his view, the Hebrew verb  $\text{שָׁלַח}$  (send) means sexual intercourse in Qoheleth 3:5 while  $\text{לֶחֶם}$  (bread) relates to sex in Proverbs 9:17 and 20:17 (1993:161). Even Whitwell whose essay is entitled *The Variation of Nature in Ecclesiastes 11*, is mainly interested in the meaning of the riddle in terms of the *target domain* of charity claiming that as ‘water eddies and varies in speed and direction ... an act of charity may, or may not, be rewarded’ (2009:87-88). The worst is that some analyses simply ignore the water-related phenomena in Qoheleth 11:1-6 (Lucas 2003:158-9).<sup>134</sup>

Indeed, these interpretations of charity or investment are in line with many parallels in the Ancient Near East, such as the Egyptian proverb, ‘Do a good deed and throw it in

---

<sup>128</sup> See Towner, W S 1997. The Book of Ecclesiastes, in Keck, L E (ed), *The New Interpreter’s Bible (NIB): General Articles and Introduction, Commentary and Reflections for Each Book of the Bible including the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books in Twelve Volumes*. Vol.V, 265-360. Nashville: Abingdon Press, p.293.

<sup>129</sup> The verse is traditionally linked with Isaiah 18:2.

<sup>130</sup> This is according to the Egyptian sage *Anksheshonqy*: ‘do a good deed and throw it in the water; when it dries you will find it’ (see Whitwell 2009:88). In the words of von Rad (1972:128, 130-1) ‘... by every evil deed or every good deed a momentum was released which sooner or later also had an effect on the author of the deed’; even though ‘a man’s goodness benefits not only himself but also the next generation’.

<sup>131</sup> Seow, C L 1997. *Ecclesiastes: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. New Haven/London: Yale University Press. (AYB).

<sup>132</sup> Hubbard, D A 1994. Principles of Financial Investment: Ecclesiastes 11:1-8, in Zuck, R B (ed), *Reflecting with Solomon: Selected Studies on the Book of Ecclesiastes*, 341-346. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books.

<sup>133</sup> See Perry, T A 1993a. *Dialogue with Kohelet: The Book of Ecclesiastes, Translation and Commentary*. Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press.

<sup>134</sup> For further review of Ecclesiastes 11:1-2, see Lavoie, J J 2007. *Laisse Aller ton Pain sur la Surface des Eaux: Etudes de Qohélet 11:1-2*, in Berlejung, A & Van Hecke, P (eds), *The Language of Qoheleth in Its Context: Essays in Honour of Prof. A. Schoors on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday*, 75-89. Leuven/Paris/Dudley: Peeters Publishers.

the water, and when it dries you will find it' (Lichtheim 1980:174), and an Arabic proverb, 'Do good, throw your bread on the waters, and one day you will find it' (Brown 2000:101). However, if one reads Ecclesiastes 11:1-6 as a whole unit, the text may also possibly be connected with the Egyptian hymn to god Hapy, and then would probably relate to elements of risks in an agricultural context.

This hymn praises Hapy, the personified inundating Nile river, for its life-nourishing power in watering the land, and the theme of bread sustaining humanity. The hymn warns that 'anyone who consorts with the sea does not harvest grain' (Lichtheim 1973:208; Crenshaw 1988:178). This idea resembles Qoheleth 11:1-6 as a whole where bread is related to the sea, and it is stated that 'whoever observes the wind will not sow, and whoever regards the clouds will not reap' (Crenshaw 2005a:110). This diachronic element implies a 'root metaphor' in an agricultural context.

Given its ecological awareness, this study would investigate whether the metaphor of Qoheleth 11:1, the expression 'send out your bread upon the waters (עַל־פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם)' bears any allusion to Genesis 1:2b related to the primeval deep prior to the 'fertility of the land' before the separation process of the universe. This assumption will draw on authors who think that Qoheleth 11:1 alludes to both the Hapy hymn and the Egyptian practice of sowing by casting the seed from the boats during the Nile inundation<sup>135</sup> so that when the waters retreat the grains in the alluvial soil spring up (Is 32:20) (Erman 2005:10). Does Qoheleth 11:1 have any ecological presumption of water and the fertility of the land since verses 2-4 directly relate to an agricultural context?<sup>136</sup>

Concerning Qoheleth 2:4-6, commentaries and essays have not given much attention to the mentions of 'making pools to water the forest' and 'irrigation system of the garden and parks' but dismissed them in terms of belonging to Solomon's fabulous

---

<sup>135</sup> Indeed, if we read the comparison of the Wisdom instruction with the actions of the Nile in Egypt and Gihon in Israel in Sirach 24:23-29, one would understand that this assumption is noteworthy. 'The inundation of the Nile valley by the Nile enriched the soil and made agriculture in Egypt extremely productive, while in Israel the Gihon's flowing waters brought life to nearby vineyards and the city of Jerusalem' (Perdue 2007:247). Still, the Nile inundation has the similarity with the waters of Genesis 1:1-2 that on their retreat, the earth becomes fertile and productive (Gn 1:11ff) (See Tsumura 1989:42-43). With the Nile in flood, 'the fields laugh and the river-banks are overflowed. The god's offerings descend, the visage of men is bright, and the heart of the gods rejoiceth' (Erman 2005:10).

<sup>136</sup> Sowing during the Nile inundation is also an act of risk similar to the metaphor of bread scattered upon the sea in Qoheleth 11:1.

‘measures of a life of luxury’ (Murphy 1992:18; Towner 1997:297; Seow 1997:150; Brown 2000:32; Horne 2003:405; Koh 2006:30). Even though these Solomonic initiatives were measures of pleasure (הֵנָּחֵץ), what do they mean when the text is read from an ecological perspective?

Specifically, did ancient kings’ building projects of making pools and garden watering presume the ecological relevance of water given the aridness of Palestine? Does the text of Ecclesiastes 2:4-6 ecologically relate to other sapiential texts<sup>137</sup> highlighting the significance of ‘water in garden motif’, such as Song of Songs 4:12-15 or Genesis 2:5-6, and Ancient Near Eastern inscriptions about parks, cisterns and reservoirs for water supply and irrigation purpose? Finally, can the boasting of Qoheleth of building water canals not for his people but only for him (לִי)<sup>138</sup> aid us to challenge or criticise the modern unbalanced distribution of water supply? This self-centred boasting is uniquely found in Ecclesiastes about the issue of a king’s responsibility for water supply in a city.

## **2.4.5 Studies on texts containing water and water-related phenomena in the Deutero-canonical wisdom books**

### **2.4.5.1 Introduction**

While there are few references to the Old Testament wisdom texts in studies on water and water-related phenomena, the situation is even worse for the Deutero-canonical wisdom books. This might not have been deliberate, because for Protestants, these books are Apocryphal while for Roman Catholics they are Deutero-canonical books (Clifford 1997:1). Practically, Protestants do not consider these books as normative and thus only Roman Catholic scholars can reflect on them. However, given that these books were given the status of wisdom books in ancient Israel, this study will include

---

<sup>137</sup> See also Song of Songs 8:11; Sirach 48:17 & 50:4-5. Other references are Jeremiah 39:4; 52:7; 2 Kings 25:4; Nehemiah 3:15 etc.

<sup>138</sup> While other Ancient Near Eastern inscriptions, such as those of Azatiwada, Hadad, Kilamuwa, Mesha and Panamu boast of the good that they had done in favour of their people in terms of securing peace and prosperity of the land (of which the building of irrigation systems), Qoheleth’s focus lies solely on demonstrating the extent of his private wealth and lifestyle achievements that he deems הַבֵּל (Koh 2006:81).

them in the investigation. The researcher has found that these books provide some fascinating references to water and water-related phenomena.

#### **2.4.5.2 Studies on texts containing water and water-related phenomena in the Wisdom of Solomon**

Wisdom 11:2-14 contains many ecological insights about water and water-related phenomena. It establishes a contrast between life-giving water in the wilderness with the deadly waters of the Nile (Wis 11:4-7). God benefited the Israelites through the same natural element of creation (water) by which he sentenced the Egyptians in the first plague (Ex 7:14ff). While one would expect comments on the ambivalent aspects of water that are evident in the text, commentaries and essays' debates often turn on anthropocentric religious matters of blessing of the righteous and punishment of sinners (people) (see Murphy<sup>139</sup> 1990:90; Kolarcik<sup>140</sup> 1997:531-2). Acknowledgement should be made to Bergant<sup>141</sup> for her eco-theological reading of the book of Wisdom of Solomon as a whole (2000:142-145). Her analysis is insightful although her focus is not primarily on any specific text in the book.

In Wisdom 19:1-12,<sup>142</sup> the rhetoric displays an antithesis between the destruction of the Egyptians in the Red Sea and the salvation of the Israelites through the Red Sea. However, as usual the debate turns on 'the positive function of the cosmos to highlight the final moment of salvation of God's People' (Kolarcik 1997:593). As Bergant (2000:143) declared: 'it is as if reward and punishment were built into the structures of the universe'. Finally, the eschatological watery images (hail, water, storms, rivers) as figured in Wisdom 5:22-23 are merely dismissed or overlaid in terms of the generic word 'creation' (Kolarcik 1997:486).

---

<sup>139</sup> See Murphy, R E 1990. *The Tree of Life: An Exploration of Biblical Wisdom Literature*. 3<sup>rd</sup> edn. Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge, U.K: Eerdmans.

<sup>140</sup> See Kolarcik, M 1997. The Book of Wisdom, in Keck, L E (ed), *The New Interpreter's Bible (NIB): General Articles and Introduction, Commentary and Reflections for Each Book of the Bible including the Apocryphal/Deutero-canonical Books*. Vol.5, 435-600. Nashville: Abingdon Press.

<sup>141</sup> See Bergant, D 2000. The Wisdom of Solomon, in Habel, N C (ed), *Reading from the Perspective of Earth*, 138-150. Sheffield/Cleveland: Sheffield Academic Press/Pilgrim Press.

<sup>142</sup> See also Wisdom 10:18-19.

### 2.4.5.3 Studies on texts containing water and water-related phenomena in Jesus Son of Sirach

The book of Jesus Son of Sirach (Sirach, hereafter) contains significant ecological insights about water and water-related phenomena that are relevant to this thesis. The poem of Sirach 24:23-29 is about the praise of wisdom that is equated with the Torah and further likened to the six rivers. In many commentaries on Sirach, the rivers Pishon and Gihon are only observed as related to the prehistory of Israel (Gn 1-11), while the other four rivers (Tigris, Euphrates, Nile and Jordan) are simply linked with the real history of Israel.<sup>143</sup> Nothing is conveyed to show why the author uses the image of these rivers as the profile of the Torah.

In his commentary on Sirach 24:23-29, Perdue (2007:247) stresses the inexhaustibility of the Torah like the four rivers of the Paradise (Pishon, Gihon, Tigris & Euphrates), ‘which form the cosmic life-giving river watering the garden of Eden once it leaves the garden, to flow throughout the earth (Gn 2:10-14).’ Wisdom tuition is equated with the fertility of the land made possible by two rivers: the Nile and the Jordan that spill ‘over their banks with beneficial gifts to those who depend on water for survival’ in Egypt and Israel (Crenshaw 1997:758).

These statements are noteworthy, but still the focus of these authors is on the wisdom praise rather than water itself. That is why further comments of these authors bring the readers to appreciate the significance not of water, but of the wisdom from the Torah that has to be sent forth even to the Jewish diaspora and future generations to shine like the dawn (vv.32-34). For Sheppard<sup>144</sup> (1980:69), here Sirach praises wisdom in terms of ‘her presence in the Edenic garden of intellectual, material, and religious delights.’ The researcher’s ecological awareness will lead him to search why the sage finds the life-sustaining water of these rivers appropriate to portray wisdom.

---

<sup>143</sup> See Skehan, P & Di Lella, A A 1987. *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*. New Haven/London, Yale University Press (The Anchor Yale Bible), p. 336.

<sup>144</sup> See Sheppard, G T 1980. *Wisdom as a Hermeneutical Construct: A Study in the Sapientializing of the Old Testament*. Berlin/New York: De Gruyter.

Likewise, in his study about *Wisdom as Nourisher*, Sandelin (1986:52) gave a brief glimpse of the relationship between the overflowing Wisdom descending from the Law in Sirach 24:25 with the rivers of Paradise, the Nile and the Jordan, without giving further attention to this metaphorical comparison. Instead, the author's focus turns to those receiving the Wisdom (people), needing to obtain more nourishment from Wisdom (Sir 24:21). The topic of drinking and eating Wisdom in Sirach 24:21 is then interpreted in terms of 'good conduct because it prevents its accomplishers from sinning' (Sandelin 1986:48). Actually, one cannot expect further ideas from Sandelin since his focus is on how Wisdom is a nurturer, not on how water features in this text.

Furthermore, in Sirach 24:29, Sirach compares the difficulty of mastering Wisdom to the impossibility of containing a sea and a great abyss, and in verses 30-34, Sirach is equated with a canal channelling water to fertilise the field. These water-related entities have not gained enough attention of biblical scholars. In this sense, this study will ask why Sirach finds it suitable to compare the vastness of these water-related phenomena with the fathomlessness of Wisdom. What does this metaphor convey about these particular water-related phenomena?

Finally, Sirach 43:13-26 contains much about the threatening and life-giving powers of water and water-related phenomena that are often ignored. Crenshaw (1997:834), for instance, says nothing about it except enlisting the geophysical phenomena of the text such as clouds, wind, snow, frost, mist, ice, hail, dew and the sea without commenting on their function in the text. In the same way, the truth on water in Sirach 29:21 – where water features as the first necessity of life before bread and clothing – is simply dismissed (Crenshaw 1997:779). The list can be lengthened, but there is too much about water and water-related phenomena in this book that can be raised only if read from an eco-theological approach.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

It is clear that the Old Testament wisdom books have not only been ignored in the Old Testament publications on water and water-related phenomena, but also many essays have a romantic view of nature. No major monograph on water and water-related

phenomena in the Old Testament wisdom books has been attempted. Only incidental references to wisdom texts in general publications and commentaries have been encountered.

Furthermore, even when studies are made on wisdom passages containing water and water-related phenomena, usually they bypass the subject of water, which frequently serves as background due to the anthropocentric bias of both the ancient texts themselves and their contemporary readers.

Habel (2008:1-8) has raised an awareness of the anthropocentric nature of the Old Testament, but still believes ecological retrieval is possible, though it would need a radical reorientation towards the text. Our task will therefore consist in identifying the intrinsic value of water and water-related phenomena which the anthropocentric traditions of the Bible and interpreters have muted or ignored. This task will be observable in the subsequent chapters in which four of the six eco-justice principles related to the Earth Bible Project<sup>145</sup> are used, namely the principles of intrinsic worth, interconnectedness, voice and purpose.

---

<sup>145</sup> For all the six eco-justice principles, see Habel, N C & Wurst, S 2001 (eds), *The Earth Story in Wisdom Traditions*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, p. 22.

## CHAPTER THREE: WATER AND WATER-RELATED PHENOMENA IN THE BOOK OF JOB

### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter attempts an ecological reading of certain Joban passages on the potential of water and water-related phenomena as life-giving or life-threatening entities. Given that the prose prologue (1:1-2:13) and epilogue (42:7-17) of the book of Job lack mention of water and water-related phenomena, our analyses will be made on the poetic part of the text, namely Job 3:1-42:6.<sup>146</sup> Practically, this chapter involves the analyses of one text from Job's speeches (Job 14:7-12), one from Job's friends' speeches (Elihu's speech in Job 36:26-37:13) and one text from God's speeches (Job 38:22-38).

Some of the reasons for choosing these passages involve the following: 1) in chapter two of this thesis, these texts belong to the sample in the literature review; 2) each one is a literary unit and contains various functions of water and water-related phenomena as source of life or death; 3) they are a comprehensive sample of different views of the main characters of the book<sup>147</sup> about the use of elements of creation as a vehicle to explain Job's suffering; 4) they have been objects of exploration of various matters in many books and publications where water and water-related phenomena feature in secondary position.

The analysis of these passages is carried out in terms of the problem statement of this thesis, namely that firstly, they are not given enough attention in the study of water and water-related phenomena, secondly that they contain various references to water and water-related phenomena. Their analysis will recall the notion of intertextuality within the book of Job. The close reading of these texts will also be improved by

---

<sup>146</sup> Job 3-40 contains four alternative characters whose speeches form the theological progression in the book: Job's speeches, his friends' speeches (Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar and Elihu). For the repartition of the speeches, see Habel, N C 1985. *The Book of Job*. London: SCM.

<sup>147</sup> Job 12:7-12 belong to Job's speeches; Job 36:26-37:13 is part of Elihu's speeches (representing Job's friends' views) and Job 38:22-38 belongs to the voice from the whirlwind, the speech of God. The researcher will thus discern whether references to water and water-related phenomena in these texts present ecological wisdom.

socio-historical issues about the book of Job as well as geographical, meteorological and hydrological insights in the ancient world. Attention will be given to socio-historical features that pave the way for our ecological awareness of the texts.

## 3.2 Introduction to the book of Job

### 3.2.1 The date and context of the book of Job

Although the date of the book of Job is not the major concern of this thesis, an outline of diachronic issues of the book deserves some attention in order to know why the author/redactor of the book finds it appropriate to turn to elements of creation, mostly water and water-related phenomena, in various parts of the book of Job to address various issues. This point is thus not an attempt to replace scholarly publications about the book of Job, but draws on their insights to address the theme of this thesis.

There is no conclusive answer on the dating of the book of Job. A number of modern scholars date the final form of the book to the postexilic era,<sup>148</sup> while recognising that some parts might have been written during the pre-exilic<sup>149</sup> or even the exilic<sup>150</sup> periods.<sup>151</sup> This inconclusiveness on the dating of the book results from a lack of clear historical clues, either references to specific kings or time periods.<sup>152</sup> The Hebrew of the poetic part of the book (Job 3:1-42:6) contains many *hapax legomena*, words

---

<sup>148</sup> See Gordis, R 1965. *The Book of God and Man: A Study of Job*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p.163.

<sup>149</sup> Pope attributes the poetic dialogue of the book to the seventh century BCE and adds that the dating of the book as a whole is equivocal and inconclusive and still an open question (1973:xxxvi-xxxvii). He is convinced that the book could not have been written during the Exile or immediately afterwards because the book lacks nationalist concerns. His argument fails to acknowledge that Old Testament wisdom books (including Job) in general tend to be more universalist than other biblical texts even when they are addressing national issues. Gordis (1965: 213) explains that its lack of a nationalistic view is part of the universalism spirit that prevailed within the Judaism of the Second Temple. However, Kaufmann favoured a pre-exilic time for the book (see Kaufman, Y 1972. *The Religion of Israel* (trans. by Greenberg, M). New York: Schocken Books, pp. 334-38).

<sup>150</sup> See Hurvitz, A 1974. The Date of the Prose-Tale of Job Linguistically Recognised. *HTR* 67, 17-34. Basing his assumptions on linguistic elements, Hurvitz argues that while the story of Job might be ancient, 'the final shaping of the extant Prose-Tale is incompatible with the date prior to the Exile' but rather is an exilic/postexilic product (1974:33).

<sup>151</sup> For a comprehensive overview of scholarly opinion concerning the dating of the book of Job, see Pope, M H 1973. *Job*. New York: Doubleday, xxx-xxxvi.

<sup>152</sup> For this reason, some scholars have judged the dating attempts of the book of Job as a futile exercise since, they say, the book of Job is a universal work that cannot be restrained to a specific time or place. Roberts (1977:113) for instance, claims that the actual date of the composition of the book of Job is irrelevant. Likewise, Habel (1985:42) conveys that the dating of the book is ultimately irrelevant since the book has a universal appeal and quality. This kind of view tears the book from its historical context and reduces the values that would result from diachronic revelations.

which appear nowhere else in the Bible (Schifferdecker 2008:15). Furthermore, the only connection between Job and other books is found not in the book of Job but in places where the prophet Ezekiel presents Job next to Noah and Daniel as a model of righteousness.<sup>153</sup>

Therefore, drawing on convincing studies of Hurvitz and Gordis, the composition of the book of Job would not be earlier than the Babylonian exile with the great possibility that the final product is of early postexilic times. It seems that the author of the book of Job is reacting to a profound tragedy of national extents within the Israelite audience that is familiar with Israel's sacred texts (Hurvitz 1974:30). Whether the circumstances addressed in the book were those of the Babylonian exile or early later events cannot be known conclusively. The important thing is that Job responds to human suffering not by pointing at the Israelite doctrine of salvation, but elements on the created order, including water and water-related phenomena.

Later in the researcher's analyses, diachronic elements will be drawn on in order to understand whether various water and water-related phenomena within the book of Job offer ecological wisdom. Links with the Babylonian exile or the post-exilic era/texts as well as Ancient Near Eastern thoughts and experiences about water will be provided at the appropriate points in the analyses in order to highlight the relevance of the use of water and water-related phenomena in a given Joban text.

### **3.2.2 Literary structure and genres of the book**

The frame of the book consists of a prose prologue (1:1–2:13) and epilogue (42:7-17) that use a blend of speech and action to tell the story of a righteous person who patiently suffers terrible disaster 'for no reason' (2:3) and at the end is fully rewarded for his unfailing fidelity. The centre of the book comprises a long series of discourses between Job and his friends (3–31) and between Job and God (38:1–42:6) (Balentine 2006:13-14).

---

<sup>153</sup> Dhorme (1967: xx-xxi) provides a helpful summary of parallels between Job and the Patriarchs as to his wealth of flocks (Gn 26:13-14 & Job 1:3; Gn 30:29-30 & Job 1:10) and death (Job 42:17; Gn 25:8; 35:29). The currency in Job is the same as at the time of Jacob (Job 42:11 & Gn 33:19). See Dhorme, E 1967. *A Commentary on the Book of Job*. Trans. by Knight, H. London: Thomas Nelson, p.xxff.

These lengthy series of dialogues are written in poetry, not prose, and are filled with the speeches, not the actions of the characters. Through literary genres of disputation and lament, these speeches display various profiles for the friends, Job, and God (Balentine 2006:14). Job's friends, who are compassionate and silent in the prosaic prologue (1:1-2:13), in Job 3-37 gradually become vociferous interlocutors whose aim is clearly not to comfort Job but to convict him. While the prologue/epilogue basically confirms that God can be trusted to prosper the righteous and punish the wicked, the dialogues between Job and his friends contest this statement (Schifferdecker 2008:32).

In his speech (38-41), God takes extraordinary measures to discuss with Job the intricate details of the created order's day-to-day rhythms. Whether God's objective is to minimise Job's contribution to God's hopes and expectations for the world or to enhance it remains a matter for debate. However, there can be little question that the voice from the whirlwind speeches (38-41) constitutes a dramatic exchange between Creator and creation in which elements of the created order, including water, are viewed either for themselves or as acting forces of destruction or blessing.

### **3.2.3 The created order and waters in the book of Job**

After water in the Old Testament has been discussed in general through the first chapter of this thesis, it is now important to assess the particularity of the book of Job concerning water and water-related phenomena. We should notice first of all that unlike the Pentateuch or prophets (such as Hosea), the book of Job does not point at the Sinai *בְּרִית* (covenant) to teach or exhort, but wisdom is exhorted through the perspective of the created order. However, the book does not present a single vision of the created order. Creation is presented in the book of Job via three different visions: Job's speeches, friends' speeches (mostly Elihu, Job 32-37) and God's speeches.

Job's speeches are predominantly questioning God's violent attack towards cosmos parts – fiercely moving mountains, shaking in anger earth and earth's pillars (e.g. 12:5-6), luminaries (v. 7), sea and skies (vv. 8-9) – and maintains that God's power is arbitrarily utilised at the cost of innocent people like him (12:2-3; 13:1-2). By contrast, Elihu's speeches (Job 32-37) are theologically, structurally and

cosmologically conceived to react against Job's allegations prior to God's speeches in Job 38-41 (Waters 1999:41).

God's speeches (38-41) react to Job's claims of violence and careless manipulation of elements of the creation by God (9:5-13; 10:8-13; 12:13-25) (Clifford 1994:189). In all three speeches as well as in the quasi-totality of the book, the ecological insights of water and water-related phenomena are frequently expressed.

In God's speeches, the created order, and especially water-related phenomena, such as the rainstorms (38:22-27), are presented as having their own way (דָּרָךְ). For Habel (2001a:75), the terms מְקוֹם (place) and דָּרָךְ (way) throughout the book indicate the belief that Earth (created order) is 'not governed by direct divine intervention, but rather by internally regulated systems within which each component of Earth has its locus and function in the system.' This is an axiom within the ecological framework of the created order in the book that there is no other entity out of the created order that is responsible for evil or good (cf. the principle of Interconnectedness of the Earth Bible Project).

It is possibly for this reason that the book deals with a number of potential water and water-related phenomena with their places and ways affecting the created order for good or evil. In this sense, water is probably appropriate to depict the life-giving and life-threatening nature of God reflected in his creation. Water is presented as an indispensable blessing, while when it appears in the form of a flood (Job 12:15) it is dangerous and potentially destructive. Water recovers the life of a dead plant (Job 14:7ff) and it may transform a desert into a land that puts forth grass (38:26-27), but as hail (38:22-23), water can cause great damage. As rain (Job 36:27-28) it provides humans with abundant food, but as rainstorm it is feared even by the beasts (37:6-8).

It is therefore not an accident that most references in the book examine the reining in, the conquest, and the subsequent functions of water in its various forms and mutations (Brenner 1987:133). Most water-related phenomena such as rain or hail are unpredictable and volatile and may also affect other elements of the created order, including humans and animals, for better or for worse (37:6-13). Water is perhaps the

basic natural element that lends itself best to depict the dual presentation of cosmology in the book of Job in the exilic or post-exilic contexts as response to absurd questions of God's justice or injustice during those periods.

To evaluate this statement, the analyses of this thesis will involve one text from Job's speech (Job 14:7-12), one text from Job's friends' speeches (Job 36:26-37:13) and one text from God's speeches (Job 38:22-38). In the subsequent sections, the primary aim will then be to scrutinise these three texts and hopefully to discern whether one can retrieve ecological wisdom in these anthropogenic<sup>154</sup> texts that for years were often anthropocentrically interpreted.

### 3.3 Water and water-related phenomena in Job 14:7-12

#### 3.3.1 The Masoretic Text

The very reason that it is preferable to reproduce the Hebrew text here is that some of its words will be rendered differently from the prevailing modern translations that often overlook the ecological dimensions of certain key words. Our analyses will show that the Hebrew text enables readers to enter into fascinating discussions related to the ecological focus of this study. Interestingly, the text does not pose textual problems. The translation of the text is therefore based on the researcher's understanding of the Hebrew text.

7 כִּי יֵשׁ לְעֵץ תִּקְוָה אִם-יִפְרֹת וְעוֹד יִחְלֶיף וְיִנְקָתוֹ לֹא תִחַדָּל:

8 אִם-יִזְקֶיךָ בְּאֶרֶץ שָׂרְשׁוֹ וּבְעֵפָר יָמוֹת גִּזְעוֹ:

9 מֵרֵיחַ מַיִם יִפְרֹחַ וְעָשָׂה קִצִּיר כְּמוֹ-גֹטֶעַ:

10 וּגְבַר יָמוֹת וַיִּחַלֵּשׁ וַיִּגְוַע אָדָם וְאִיוֹ:

<sup>154</sup> An anthropogenic text is a text originating from humans. An anthropocentric reading is a human-centred lens of reading a text considering other earth-members as mere 'objects'. For more details, see Habel, N C 2008. *Introducing Ecological Hermeneutics*, in Habel, N C and Trudinger, P (eds), *Exploring Ecological Hermeneutics*, 1-8. Atlanta: SBL [See page 4].

11 אֲזִלוּ-מַיִם מִנֵּי-יָם וְנִקְרָר יִתְרַב וַיִּבֶשׁ:

12 וְאִישׁ שָׁכַב וְלֹא-יִקְוֶה עַד-בְּלִתֵּי שָׁמַיִם לֹא יִקְיָצוּ וְלֹא-יֵעָרוּ  
מִשְׁנָתָם:

### 3.3.2 Translation

The passage of Job 14:7-12 does not present critical problems for its translation. The translation below is drawn from the proposition of Longman III (2012:197) improved by the researcher's understanding of the Hebrew text. The researcher's preference is influenced in the way Longman III has rendered both the syntax of Job 14:9-12 and some key-words of the Hebrew text (such as יָם and נִקְרָר) that have implications for an ecological reading of this Joban simile.

#### Job 14:7-12

- <sup>7</sup> For a tree, there is hope that if cut down,  
it will sprout again, that its shoots will continue to grow.
- <sup>8</sup> Though its roots grow old in the earth  
and its stump dies in the ground,  
<sup>9</sup> yet at the scent of water it will bud  
and put forth branches like a young plant.
- <sup>10</sup> But mortals die and dwindle away;  
humans expire and are no more.
- <sup>11</sup> Water disappears from the sea,  
and rivers dry up and wither away.
- <sup>12</sup> so people lie down and do not arise;  
until the heavens are no more, they do not awake,  
they are not roused from their sleep.

### 3.3.3 Exegetical remarks

#### 3.3.3.1 Delimitation of the text

Job 14 as a whole belongs to Job's third speech framed in Job 12-14. Chapter 14 of the book of Job is made up of four main literary units, namely Job 14:1-6; Job 14:7-12; Job 14:13-17 and Job 14:18-22 (Longman III 2012:211-214). The whole chapter

deals with Job alleging that human life is short and full of troubles (v. 1) unlike the tree that can revive (vv. 7-9) but like a dried river that disappears forever (vv. 10-12).

The simile of Job 14:7-12, is thought to be the main rhetoric part of Job 14 in the sense that, through a number of contrasted similes drawn on nature, it highlights the principle of ‘no hope for humans’ which is broadened in Job 14:13-17 and Job 14:18-22.

### 3.3.3.2 Literary structure

A	there is hope for a dead tree	vv.7-8
B	by a scent of <i>water</i> it will revive	v. 9
A'	but mortals die forever lifeless	vv.10
B'	they are like inland <i>waters</i> that vanish	vv.11-12

Figure 1: Structure of Job 14:7-12

This parallelism is literarily framed within Job’s third speeches (Job 12-14) reflecting an interesting progression of nature images juxtaposed with traditional axioms about human death (Habel 1985:235). The framework consists of two major units (14:1-6 & 7-22) both conveying traditional beliefs about mortals and bold images from nature. In our poem (14:7-12), the poetry makes an exciting analogy between water imageries and human fate. The question is why does the author find it suitable to use water and water-related metaphors to contrast the renewal of a dead tree with the ephemerality of mortals who are like inland waters that vanish forever?

In order to respond to this exegetical question, one has to understand how the poetry functions and the relevance of water images that are the pivotal motifs of the poem.

### 3.3.3.3 Linguistic and semiotic analysis of Job 14:7-12

This poem is made in what biblical scholars call ‘an alternating parallelism’ presenting a form of ABA'B' (Willis 1987:50). As printed in the Masoretic text, A (vv.7-8) and A' (v.10) depict the compared/parallel subjects (the tree and mortals), while B (v.9) and B' (vv.11-12) contain aspects of water. The verb *יָמַת* (to die) occurs

in the postulates A and A' conveying the basic principle of similarity of natural fate (death) for both plants and humans. However, only plants experience the life-giving power of water, while mortals' death is compared to the waste/failing of water from the sea or the drying up of a river that disappears forever.

Thus, the contrast of revival hope between the flora and humans is presented by two aspects of water in BB': first there is water reviving a stump of plant (B) while its evaporation from a sea is likened to humans who die forever lifeless (B'). The word *שׁלֵט* (v.10) entails human loss of power after death as contrasted with the tree's renewal by a scent of water after it is cut down (vv. 7-9). The alternating poetical pattern tends here to underline the life-giving power of water (vv. 7-9), and the Joban plea about the death of humans that is likened with the waste of this natural blessing from a sea or the drying of a river (vv. 10-12).

The Joban simile in Job 14:7-12 links up with a number of images of water from Job 4-27 where water and water-related phenomena provide metaphors for attitudes and actions of Job and his friends. Job likened his friends to a Wadi that dries up in the summer time (6:15-17); Bildad replies by likening the wicked (Job) to a papyrus that withers for waterlessness (8:11-13); Eliphaz advises Job that once he repents, he will come out of his grave just as grain comes up to the threshing floor in its season (5:26). All those statements relate to the 'root metaphor' informed by the life-giving function of water that is further highlighted in the simile about the life of a tree and human death in Job 14:7-12.

### **3.3.4 Eco-theological analysis of the text**

#### **3.3.4.1 Water and the flora kingdom (verses 7-9)**

The use of the expression 'like' conveys that Job 14:7-12 is not a metaphor but a simile.<sup>155</sup> In Job 14:7-12, water is highly considered as a life-giving source that allows a plant to sprout again by a scent of water, while humans are like waters that

---

<sup>155</sup> The difference between a simile and a metaphor is that while the first uses the expression 'as' or 'like' for the comparison of two subjects, the second does not. In other words, in a comparison between X and Y, a metaphor claims for instance that X is Y, while a simile would say X is like Y.

evaporate from the sea forever. The idea is that both plants and humans naturally die (יָמוּת), but only plants can recover life and put forth fresh grass (v.9). In this sense, humans are both ‘unlike’ the tree that rejuvenates by water and thus ‘like’ water that vanishes forever from a river (Bimson 2012:5). As to our text, the question is which assumptions about or attitudes towards nature are reflected in the author’s use of water imageries in an attempt to describe the fate of the mortals?

As for the image of ‘a tree renewed by a scent of water’, it seems that the principles of water as having intrinsic value and purpose are respected in the ‘root metaphor’ of Job 14:7-12. The text is also aware of the principle of interconnectedness of the earth (אֶרֶץ) or ground (עֶפְרָה) and water to revive a stump (גִּזְעוֹ) of a tree (עֵץ). As noted earlier in the second chapter, a root metaphor is the basic worldview or perception informing the author’s understanding of a situation. In this text, it provides us with more possibilities for ecological application in accordance with the situation it describes or contrasts here, namely human death.

This image of water rejuvenating a tree recalls a widespread idea in myths about death maintaining that ‘mortals could die and be rejuvenated either by shedding their skins like snakes, by growing forth from the ground as plants, or by similar process’ (Habel 1985:238). Besides, meteorological data suggest that the image of ‘water reviving a tree’ (vv. 8-9) draws also on the Transjordan practice of ‘cutting off old fig trees, pomegranates, and vines close to the ground, so that in the next year new grass may sprout forth freely’ (Balentine 2006:218).

The tree is a well-known symbol of the gift of immortality in Ancient Near Eastern myths.<sup>156</sup> However, wherever healthy trees are depicted it is in connection with a stream of water. That is why the restored Jerusalem in Ezekiel 47:1-12 is depicted with a fresh stream of water flowing eastwards towards the Dead Sea and bringing abundant fertility to the arid land of Israel (Terblanche 2004:126). This fertility is marked by evergreen trees growing on the banks of the stream, which are a constant source of fresh fruit that provides food and healing (cf. Ps 1:3 and Job 14:8-9). The

---

<sup>156</sup> See the Epic of Gilgamesh in Sandars, N 1972. *The Epic of Gilgamesh*. Baltimore, Maryland: Penguin Books, 106-7.

woman of Song of Songs 4:12-15 is also depicted as a ‘locked garden’ with flowing springs sourced from Lebanon to irrigate her fruits and exotic plants (Exum 2005:180).

Water is therefore viewed in this simile as having intrinsic value and may affect life for the better. Job’s complaint questions why this power of the rejuvenation of a tree by a scent of water is not applicable for humans. According to Job, God is the one who prevents mortals from experiencing the same rejuvenating power of a tree.

### 3.3.4.2 Humans vanish as water vaporises (verses 11-12)

Many translations render the *waw* in the expression  $\text{וַאִישׁ וְשֶׁכֶב}$  as a *waw adaequationis* or *waw of comparison* between the ‘waters of the lake and humans’.<sup>157</sup> This translation is not convincing regarding the meaning of the simile in Job 14:11-12. A metaphor or a simile has three elements: the vehicle, referent, and tenor. The tenor links the vehicle and the referent.<sup>158</sup> In Job 14:11-12, the evaporation of water serves as vehicle for human death. The idea of permanent vanishing is the referent, which is linked to the vehicle via the tenor. The tenor concerns elements of the vehicle (water evaporation) that invite a particular understanding of the referent (permanent disappearance).

It seems thus that the comparison is between the evaporation of waters (tenor) rather than on waters themselves (vehicle).<sup>159</sup> Clines is right when he declares that:

These verses draw a comparison between water that evaporates or drains away and the human being who sinks down into the dust of the earth (Clines 1989:329).

<sup>157</sup> A *waw adaequationis* compares humans with water. This is the case for the NJB translation: ‘**Job 14:11-12** the waters of the sea will vanish, the rivers stop flowing and run dry: <sup>12</sup> a human being, once laid to rest, will never rise again, the heavens will wear out before he wakes up, or before he is roused from his sleep’.

<sup>158</sup> For further insights about the metaphorical languages, see Grünfeld, J 1992. Kittay’s Theory of Metaphor. *Science et Esprit*, 44/1, 83-89; Moughtin-Mumby, S 2008. *Sexual and Marital Metaphors in Hosea, Jeremiah, Isaiah and Ezekiel*. New York: Oxford University Press. (OTM), p31-35; see also Holland, G 1992. Paul’s Root Metaphor: Slavery. *Proceedings* 12, 185f;

<sup>159</sup> Van Hecke opposes this kind of interpretation since for him, if the author would like to compare human death with evaporating water, he would not have chosen precisely those bodies of surface water that are the least likely to evaporate (2011:208). In contrast, I think the choice of these bodies of water reinforces the power of the simile. The idea is that humans disappear on death the way even those viewed as permanent bodies of water ( $\text{מִיָּם}$  and  $\text{נִקְרָה}$ ) may vanish.

The simile is more striking since the disappearance is related to mythological bodies of water that were considered as pre-existing and perennial<sup>160</sup> (יָם, sea/ocean and נָהָר, river) contrary to related words such as נַחֲל (water-place)<sup>161</sup> or נַחַל (wadi<sup>162</sup>) used for seasonal water courses. Wilson (2007:154) convincingly argues that Job here uses ‘river’ (נָהָר) rather than ‘wadi’ (נַחַל), because the latter often dries up and then with rain or melting snow comes to replenish itself. In an absurd thought, Job 14:11-12 compares an irretrievable situation of drying up of perennial water supplies (sea/streams) with the death of human beings. Just as there is no hope for a river/sea to refill, so once humans die, they will not be roused again (Longman III 2012:213). The simile is appropriate in ancient Israel which was:

Un pays où la présence – et l’absence – d’eau se font sentir davantage qu’ailleurs. S’il y a beaucoup d’eau, le pays devient un « pays de délice » (אֶרֶץ חֶפְזָה, Mi 3:12). Mais d’ordinaire il n’y en a pas trop et le danger de la sécheresse est toujours présent (Reymond 1958:1-2)<sup>163</sup>.

The effect of the disappearance of such bodies of water which were considered as life or better, permanent sources of life, would have horrible effects on humans, plants and animals, and in extension on Earth. Intertextual insights support this assumption of the intrinsic worth of water. Job 14:10-12 assumes the tradition of the drying up of the Nile in Isaiah<sup>164</sup> 19:5-10, an example of perennial bodies of waters totally vanishing (Clines 1989:329). The parallelism between Isaiah 19:5 (וְנִשְׁתַּחֲוּ מַיִם מִהַיָּם וְנָהָר יִחָרֵב וְיִבֶשׁ) and Job 14:11 (אֶזְלֵי-מַיִם מִנְיָגִם וְנָהָר יִחָרֵב וְיִבֶשׁ) is remarkable.

Isaiah 19:5-10 is placed in an Egyptian context where the Nile was the source of life, whose yearly inundation provided fertility for its agriculture (Balogh 2011:242). That

<sup>160</sup> נָהָר literally refers in Hebrew to a permanent water course with a huge flowing rate.

<sup>161</sup> See נַחַל in Brown, F, Briggs, C & Driver, S 1968. *Hebrew and English Lexicon on the Old Testament*. London: Oxford University Press, p.1460.

<sup>162</sup> See 1 Kings 17:7.

<sup>163</sup> The English translation: *[Israel was] a country where the presence and the absence of water are felt more than elsewhere. When there is enough water, the land becomes a land of delight (אֶרֶץ חֶפְזָה, Mi 3:12). However, very often, there is not too much water and the threat of drought is always present* (the researcher’s own translation).

<sup>164</sup> Van Hecke opposes this comparison with Isaiah 19:5 because in Job 14:11-12 the drying up is due to natural fact while in Isaiah the phenomenon occurs as a result of divine intervention (2011:207). One could oppose this scholar in that many natural phenomena are attributed to God in the Bible not because they are not natural facts, but because biblical authors wanted to explain everything Theo-centrally claiming the superiority of their God vis-à-vis other ancient eastern gods. This is the case in many texts and Psalms (104) with creation background.

is why through god Hapy<sup>165</sup> hymns, Egyptians sang about the Nile River bringing food and life to the country. It was well known in most regions of the Ancient Near East, including Judah, that Egypt was dependent<sup>166</sup> on the periodic inundation of the Nile. In this sense, ancient Egypt has no flood narratives since the flooding of the Nile was viewed not as a threat, but a generous event providing blessing and life-giving water to the country and the Nile valley (Caleb 2007:70; Deutchmann 2009:16).

The wide range of water-related phenomena in Isaiah 19:5–6 (יָבֵשׁ; יְבֵשׁוּת; יָבֵשׁ) and the expressions וְנִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה מֵיָם מִהַיָּם (and the water shall fail from the sea) and וְיִבֶשׁ (and will be parched) portray a total ecosystem disaster in Egypt due to the dryness of the Nile. Distinctive water plants such as papyrus and reed, inseparably related to the Egyptian landscape as well as the hieroglyphic symbols of Lower and Upper Egypt, will wither<sup>167</sup> (Balogh 2011:304). The fields where agricultural plants would grow (מְזֵרַע) will also dry up once the desired Nile flooding stays away (vv.5-7).

The dryness of the Nile will also affect its fauna. There will be no fish in the rivers, and consequently no work and food for Egypt's anglers and those relying on their products (v.8). Water is also essential for the flax that is used in Egyptian textile industries. Once the Nile River is dried up, Egypt's textile-workers will become jobless (9-10). Briefly, the desiccation of the Nile would affect the vast majority of the Egyptian society from the most prominent (שָׂרֵי), to low rank wageworkers (עֲשִׂי-שָׂרֵי). The whole passage of Isaiah 19:5-10 may be summarised in:

The progression of events from the drying of the watercourses, through the destruction of reed beds and farmland, to the devastation of the fishing and weaving industries based around the Nile ... when the mighty Nile ceases to flow, the whole of society grinds to a halt (Marlow 2007:332).

---

<sup>165</sup> Egypt honoured its Nile River in a personified form as the god Hapy. The researcher will come back to this diachronic element in the analysis of water in Ecclesiastes in relation to the hymn for god Hapy. For details, see Currid, J D 1997. *Ancient Egypt and the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 240–45.

<sup>166</sup> When the Assyrian king boasts of having conquered Egypt, he maintains that he dried up with his foot all the water channels of Egypt (Isa 37:25; 2 Kgs 19:24). In his prophecy on Egypt, possibly alluding to Isaiah 19, Ezekiel combines the defeat of Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar with the desiccation of the Nile (Ezk 30:10-12).

<sup>167</sup> In this sense, Job 8:11 claims: 'Can papyrus grow where there is no marsh? Can reeds flourish where there is no water?' (NRSV)

For Isaiah 19, drought and its ruinous effects on the social and cosmic order are results of the judgment of YHWH (Is 19:1-4 & 11-14). It is possible that Job 14:11-12, which was written after the Proto-Isaiah, was informed by such drying traditions of bodies of water that are considered eternal blessing and sources of life-giving power. Thus, the dryness of the Nile waters in Isaiah 19:5ff that has disastrous effects on plants, humans, fish and the created order (*ma'at*<sup>168</sup>) is echoed in the thoughts of Job 14:10-12 as a metaphor for human death.

### 3.3.4.3 Eco-theological synthesis

The insight behind Job 14:7-12 presumes awareness of life-giving potential of water stated either in its connectedness with the flora realm (vv.7-9) or in lamenting about the irretrievable disappearance of this natural blessing (vv.10-12). An eco-justice reading assumes that the author of this text would have a kind of perception of the 'intrinsic value' of water, whose drying up or vanishing is compared to death.

The intertextual reading of both texts thus implies that Job 14:11-12 likens human beings with those reservoirs of water, the symbol of life (v.9); yet they too may dry up and never be refilled with life (v.11). The same idea is also found in Job 7:9 that, 'As the cloud fades and vanishes, so those who go down to Sheol do not come up'. That is why Habel thinks that the Hebrew verb שָׁכַב in Job 14:12a might also mean 'laid to rest' in Sheol as it is suggested in the following verse (Job 14:13) and other verses in Job (3:3; 7:21; 20:11 & 21:26) (1985:241).

Wisdom 2:1 depicts the supreme power of Sheol/death in that there is no one who has come back from Hades. That is why it is said in Job 12:12c that the skies would cease to exist before humans would wake up from death. Jonah 2:2-6 is more explicit about terror that תְּהוֹם and Sheol inflict on the world of mortals and God must be more powerful to remove faithful people from their womb:

I called to the LORD out of my distress, and he answered me; out of the belly of Sheol I cried, and you heard my voice. <sup>3</sup>You cast me into the deep, into the heart

---

<sup>168</sup> The *ma'at* is the Egyptian concept for the principle of moral and cosmic order upon which depends the stability of the created order (Knight 1985:149).

of the seas, and the flood surrounded me; all your waves and your billows passed over me. <sup>4</sup>Then I said, ‘I am driven away from your sight; how shall I look again upon your holy temple?’ <sup>5</sup>The waters closed in over me; the deep surrounded me; weeds were wrapped around my head <sup>6</sup>at the roots of the mountains. I went down to the land whose bars closed upon me forever; yet you brought up my life from the Pit, O LORD my God (Jnh 2:2-6, NRSV).

The detailed depiction of the drought in Isaiah 19:5-10 and its echo in the metaphorical words of Job 14:11-12 have thus significant implications with regard to contemporary issues of water. In sub-Saharan Africa where desertification and the drying of lakes such as Thad are major threats to the well-being of many people, it is worth noticing that the Israelite wisdom thought in Job 14:11 was aware of the relevance of a reliable water supply and of the effect of a drought on the social order. The simile of Job 14:11 implies the ecological insight that:

L’eau est donc considérée en Palestine avant tout comme quelque chose de bon, d’utile, mais aussi comme quelque chose dont on risqué facilement de manquer (Reymond 1958:2).<sup>169</sup>

Yet, the current problems regarding desertification may largely be attributed to human activity rather than to divine fiat. Job 14:11 virtually calls modern inhabitants to become aware of this possibility of withering of water reserve and its interconnected effect on the whole society, and then restrain from activities that can undermine water supplies. After showing the relevance of water for the flora kingdom, the simile of Job 14:11-12 understands the dryness of a water supply as irretrievable and irreversible as the death of mortals since there is no hope for a possible remedy: it is like being in Sheol. There is no substitute for water just as there is none for human death.

### **3.4 Water and water-related phenomena in Job 36:26-37:13**

The present references present more than simply the life-giving potential of water and water-related phenomena. Our translation draws on the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) with some *italicised* changes. Contrary to the preceding text that did not have many exegetical problems, the body of the Masoretic Text here will be filled

---

<sup>169</sup> English translation: *Water is therefore considered in Palestine primarily as something good, useful, but also something that is likely to be missed* (the researcher’s own translation).

with bold numbers pointing to footnotes related to our rendering of a given word or verse. Exegetical and eco-theological remarks will then follow.

### 3.4.1 Masoretic Text of Job 36:26 - 37:13

26 הוֹ-אֵל שָׁגִיא וְלֹא נִדְעַ מִסֶּפֶר שְׁנֵי וְלֹא-חֶקֶר:

27 בִּי יִגְרַע נְטֵפֵי-מַיִם<sup>170</sup> יִזְקוּ מִטֵּר לְאֲדוֹ:

28 אֲשֶׁר-יִזְלוּ שְׁחֻקִים יִרְעֵפוּ עָלָיו אָדָם רַב:

29 אַף אִם-יִבְיֹז מִפְּרִשֵׁי-עֵב תִּשְׂאוֹת סִכָּתוֹ:

30 הוֹ-פָּרַשׁ עָלָיו אוֹרוֹ<sup>171</sup> וְשִׂרְשֵׁי הַיָּם כִּסָּה:<sup>172</sup>

31 כִּי-בָם יִדִּין עַמִּים יִתּוּ-אֶכֶל לְמִכְבִּיר:

<sup>170</sup> The editors of the Masoretic Text (note 27<sup>a</sup> in the BHS) propose to render נְטֵפֵי-מַיִם (*drops of water*) by נְטֵפֵים (*drops from the sea*). In this sense, לְאֲדוֹ (the last word of the MT - note 27<sup>c</sup> in the BHS) is also rendered *from his rain cloud* in light of LXX word νεφέλη and the Ugaritic Eblaite Month name *i-du* (Dahood 1981:537). Tsumura retorts that the association of אֲדוֹ with the Ugaritic etymology does not have a good foundation. After a thorough exploration of prevailing renditions of the word, Tsumura is convinced that אֲדוֹ is a loan from Sumerian via Akkadian *edû* and refers to the ‘water flooding out of the subterranean ocean’. For him, the word has the same meaning as its occurrence in Genesis 2:10 where the garden was watered by a river (אֲדוֹ) emanating from a spring, not by rain (Tsumura 1989:115; see also Cassuto 1961:104). This study agrees with Dahood’s rendition because the idea of water emanating from below is not compatible with the theme of rain that should come from above. The process of providing rain involves the gathering of drops of water from the sea (water below) before distilling them as rain from the raincloud (water above). The editors of the MT have even proposed not to read לְאֲדוֹ (to the raincloud), but מִן-אֲדוֹ (from the raincloud). Dahood (1981:537) claims that even the Hebrew particle לְ before אֲדוֹ in the MT can mean *from* as well as *to*, and that the Hebrew poetry and prose often employ לְ in the same manner as Ugaritic.

The translation of the verse would then be:

*When he draws up drops from the sea,  
they distil as rain from the raincloud.*

<sup>171</sup> Given the subject discussed in the previous verses, the Targum proposes to render אוֹרוֹ (his lightning) into אֲדוֹ (his raincloud). This rendition supplies a much clearer meaning of God unrolling his rain (mist) to veil/cover the sea. However, even the lightning is one of the raincloud/rainstorm’s elements. We prefer here to keep the MT. The researcher also discerns with Pope (1973) and Habel (1985:499) that the expression עָלָיו (upon it) presumes עָלֵי in the name יְיָ, a substantive used for the divine name of the Most High. The title occurs elsewhere in the Old Testament (Gn 14:20) and in Ugaritic texts it is applied to Baal as the god of rain and weather. It is because God unfolds his rain clouds (mist) over the sea that the depths of the sea become veiled (Dhorme 1967:555).

<sup>172</sup> Some scholars have suggested changing כִּסָּה (he covers) with כִּסְאוֹ (his throne). Their assumption indeed fits with the mythic tradition of the Canaanite El dwelling at the confluence of the deeps (for detail about El and the sea, see Tsumura 1989:145). For further discussion, see also Clifford, R J 1971. The Tent of El and the Israelite Tent of Meeting. *CBQ* 33, 221-7). However, the suggestion of others that the word כִּסָּה be read as in an intensive form (*piel*) in the sense of ‘to expose’ would fit the pattern of the activities of storm gods that are found in others texts (Ps 18:16) and Ugaritic literature. It could then be quite arbitrary to change כִּסָּה to כִּסְאוֹ (Dhorme 1967:555).

- 32 עַל־כַּפַּיִם כֹּסֶה־אֹר וַיֵּצֵו עָלַיָּהּ בְּמִפְגִּיעַ:  
 33 יִגִּיד עָלָיו רַעְו מִקְנֵה<sup>173</sup> אֶף עַל־עוֹלָה:  
 1 37 אֶף־לְזֹאת יִתְרַד לְבִי וַיִּתֵּר מִמְּקוֹמוֹ:  
 2 שָׁמְעוּ שְׁמוֹעַ בְּרָגֵז קוֹלוֹ וְהִגָּה מִפִּיו יֵצֵא:  
 3 תַּחַת־כָּל־הַשָּׁמַיִם יִשְׁגְּהוּ וְאוֹרוֹעַל־כַּנְפוֹת הָאָרֶץ:  
 4 אֶתְרִיו וַיִּשְׁאֲג־קוֹל יַרְעֵם בְּקוֹל גְּאוֹנוֹ וְלֹא יֵעַקְבֵּם כִּי־יִשְׁמַע קוֹלוֹ:  
 5 יַרְעֵם אֵל בְּקוֹלוֹ נִפְלְאוֹת עֲשֶׂה־גְדֵלוֹת וְלֹא נִדְעַע:  
 6 כִּי לִשְׁלֵגוֹ יֹאמֵר הֲוֹא אֶרֶץ וְגִשְׁמֵם מְטָר וְגִשְׁמֵם מִטְרוֹת<sup>174</sup> עֵזוֹ:  
 7 בְּיַד־כָּל־אָדָם יִחַתֵּמוּם לְזַעַת כָּל־אֲנָשִׁים מְעַשְׂהוּ:  
 8 וַתִּבֹּא תִיָּה בְּמוֹ־אָרֶב וּבְמַעֲוֹנֹתֶיהָ תִשְׁכֹּן:  
 9 מִן־הַחֲדָר תִּבֹּא סוּפָה וּמִמְזָרִים קָרָה:  
 10 מִנְשֵׁמַת־אֵל יִתּוֹ־קָרַח וְרַחַב מֵיָם בְּמוֹצָק:  
 11 אֶף־בְּרִי יִטְרִיחַ עָב לְפִיז עֲנַן אֹרוֹ:

### 3.4.2 Translation of Job 36:26-37:13

- <sup>26</sup> Surely God is great, and we do not know him;  
 the number of his years is unsearchable.  
<sup>27</sup> When he draws up drops from the sea,  
 they distil as rain from his raincloud,  
<sup>28</sup> which the skies pour down  
 and drop upon mortals abundantly.

<sup>173</sup> The word מִקְנֵה (cattle) is often rendered by a name derived from the root קנה (be jealous). In accordance with the critical textual principle of *lectio difficilior*, this study is in line with the MT.

<sup>174</sup> Some translations have followed the proposal of the MT that מְטָר וְגִשְׁמֵם מִטְרוֹת עֵזוֹ is an error of dittography. They then omit one of the references to the torrential rain (see the NET and CJB). Repetition however is typical in the Hebrew syntax and the whole section of Job 37:1-13 is full of repetitions (vv.2,4,5). The repetitions might be a poetic means to reinforce the significant power of the imagery (Habel 1985:500).

- <sup>29</sup> Can anyone understand the spreading of the clouds,  
the thundering<sup>175</sup> of his pavilion?  
<sup>30</sup> Behold, the Most High spreads his lightning  
and covers the depths of the sea.  
<sup>31</sup> For by these he feeds peoples;  
he gives food in abundance.  
<sup>32</sup> He covers his hands with the lightning,  
and commands it to strike the mark.  
<sup>33</sup> *The thunderclap announces the coming storm  
the cattle also, concerning the storm's approach.*<sup>176</sup>

- Job 37:1** At this also my heart trembles,  
and leaps out of its place.  
<sup>2</sup> Listen, listen to the thunder of his voice  
and the rumbling that comes from his mouth.  
<sup>3</sup> Under the whole heaven he lets it loose,  
and his lightnings to the corners of the earth.  
<sup>4</sup> After it his voice roars;  
he thunders with his majestic voice  
and he does not restrain the lightning when his voice is heard.  
<sup>5</sup> God thunders wondrously with his voice;  
he does great things that we cannot comprehend.  
<sup>6</sup> For to the snow he says, 'Fall on the earth';  
and the shower of rain, his heavy shower of rain,  
<sup>7</sup> serves as a sign on everyone's hand,  
so that all whom he has made may know it.  
<sup>8</sup> Then the animals go into their lairs  
and remain in their dens.  
<sup>9</sup> From its chamber comes the whirlwind,  
and cold (water) from the scattering winds.<sup>177</sup>  
<sup>10</sup> By the breath of God ice is given,  
and the broad waters are frozen fast.  
<sup>11</sup> He loads the thick cloud with moisture;  
the clouds scatter his lightning.  
<sup>12</sup> They turn round and round by his guidance,  
to accomplish all that he commands them  
on the face of the habitable *earth*.  
<sup>13</sup> *Whether for a curse – even on his own earth –  
Or for a blessing, he causes it to happen.*<sup>178</sup>

<sup>175</sup> In the entire thesis, the researcher will use interchangeably the words thunderstorms and rainstorms.

<sup>176</sup> The translation of TOB (Traduction Œcuménique de la Bible) has a more plausible rendering: <sup>TOB</sup> **Job 36:33** *Son tonnerre annonce sa venue, les troupeaux même pressentent son approche.*

<sup>177</sup> The *scattering/driving winds* reflects the Hebrew word *וּמִקְצֵרִים* referring to the north winds that bring the cold water, air, the ice, snow and heavy torrential rains (cf. Job 38:32).

### 3.4.3 The literary observations

#### 3.4.3.1 Delimitation of the text

This literary sequence of Job 36:26-37:13 is part of the six chapters (32-37) attributed to Elihu, the fourth person appearing from nowhere, after the three supposed friends of Job (Elphaz, Bildad and Zophar) failed to make Job retract his allegations. Job 32-37 covers five separate speeches<sup>179</sup> presenting a unique perspective on the dilemma and suffering of Job (Waters 1999:29). Our passage belongs to the final admonitions of Elihu (36:1-37:13) consisting of two parts: the first group describes God's dealings with humans (36:1-21), while the second is the splendid creation hymn that celebrates God's power and majesty (36:22-37:24) (Murphy 1990:42).

The argument of Elihu<sup>180</sup> in Job 36:1-37:13 is basically the same as that of the previous three friends, namely that Job must admit that God is always right and that Job as a mere human being is always wrong. However, in contrast to the former three friends, Elihu based his assumption on elements of the creation. The whole speech contains a great number of creation images, principally in the last unit (36:22-37:24) that uses a genre of 'sapiential nature hymn'<sup>181</sup> addressing the injustice allegations raised earlier by Job (Newsom 2003:228). Job 36:26-37:13 belongs thus to this sapiential hymn about the majesty of God through hydrological and meteorological forces. For the purpose of this thesis, the researcher will not pay further attention to Elihu's argument, but will concentrate on references to elements of creation, namely water and water-related phenomena.

---

<sup>178</sup> Once more, the TOB has a good translation here: *Qu'il s'agisse d'accabler ou d'arroser la terre ou de la bénir, c'est eux qu'il délègue* (Job 37:13).

<sup>179</sup> Job 32:6-22; 33:1-33; 34:2-37; 35:2-16; 36:1-37:24. There are different opinions about both the authenticity and the division of these speeches attributed to Elihu. For a detailed discussion of the matter, see Diewert, D A 1991. *The Composition of the Elihu Speeches: Poetic and Structural Analysis*. Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Toronto, Toronto, pp. 576-579. See also, Waters, L J 1999. *The Authenticity of the Elihu Speeches in Job 32-37*. BS 156, 28-41.

<sup>180</sup> The Hebrew name אֱלִיָּהוּ transliterated as Elihu means *He is my God* or literally *My God is He*. In this sense, the name Elihu is similar to the name Elijah, *Yhwh is my God*. It is implied by some authors that Elihu's name can even be 'the expression of his theological program' that resembles in many aspects God's speeches in Job 38-41. It is therefore said that 'the message epitomised in his name became an integral part of Elihu's message to Job (e.g. 33:12-13; 34:18-19, 23, 31-32; 35:2-11; 36:26; 37:22-24)' (Wisdom 1987:29).

<sup>181</sup> Newsom defines the sapiential nature hymn as an arrayed depiction of creation that combines the aspects of a hymn of praise and a sapiential teaching. The other form of sapiential nature hymn is found in Sirach 42:15-43:33. For more details, see Newsom, C A 2003. *The Book of Job: A Contest of Moral Imaginations*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.220-30.

Job 36:26-37:13 conveys a number of water and water-related phenomena, namely rainclouds, lightning, thunder, storm, snow, cold wind, frost, hail, all acting under the divine command, whether for curse or for blessing (37:13). Many scholars have made convincing comparisons between this speech of Elihu with God's speech in Job 38-41. Like Job 38-41, Job 36:23-37:24 points to creation elements for the purpose of offering Job an encounter with God, shifting Job from the centre of value and judgment (Newsom 2003:231). Likewise, the Hebrew words *מְעוֹנוֹת* (dens) and *אָרְבַּי* (lair) about the wild animals (37:8), appear again in the whole book only in Job 38:40.

By depicting God's work in creation, Elihu recalls some of Job's earlier claims<sup>182</sup> and prefigures the content of the divine speeches in Job 38-41. The two speeches differ in the fact that Elihu's speech is both anthropogenic and anthropocentric (37:23), while God's speeches are anthropogenic and cosmo-centric (38:1) (Schifferdecker 2008:57). In this sense, Job 36:26-37:13 is highly anthropocentric in that human beings are the primary or perhaps the only beneficiaries of God's works. It is stated that God sends abundant rain on humans, governs peoples and feeds them (36:27-28).

Still eco-theological retrieval is possible since the last verse (Job 37:13) claims that all the meteorological and water-related phenomena enlisted in the passage as a whole serve as God's weapon 'for a curse or blessing on earth'. Furthermore, the way these elements of nature are depicted would raise questions about the way ancient texts conceived the universe, especially when it comes to the ecological significance of diverse water-related phenomena. It should be said here that Elihu explains the majesty of God (36:26) by pointing to the hydrological cycle in Job 36:27-28 and other water-related phenomena in Job 36:29-37:13 (Frevel 2013:162). One cannot therefore understand God's power/majesty in Elihu's speech unless one pays attention to ecological implications of water and water-related phenomena in this text.

---

<sup>182</sup> See Job 9:5-10; 12:7-15; 26:5-14 in which Job depicts God as a tyrant and capricious in using elements of the creation.

### 3.4.3.2 Literary structure

The literary structure of Job 36:26-37:13 can be presented as follows:<sup>183</sup>

A	The mystery of rainclouds	36:26-29
B1	The purpose of thunder and lightning	36:30-33
B	The mystery of thunder and lightning	37:1-4
C1	The purpose of winter storms	37:5-7
C	The mystery of winter storms	37:8-10
A1	The purpose of rainclouds	37:11-13

**Figure 2: Structure of Job 36:26-37:13**

The speech is articulated on two modes of meteorological operations. The first mode which is descriptive and emotive highlights the mystery of the process and evokes a response of wonder (see A, B, C). The second mode relates to the ‘purpose’ of God’s atmospheric operations in his overall governance of earth (see B1, C1, A1) (Habel 1985:504). As one could see, Elihu’s speech focuses on the natural phenomenon of rainstorms combined with the hydrological cycle as unpredictable mysteries that God uses in ruling over the earth for the purpose of curse or blessing.

The rhetoric of Elihu’s speech in Job 36:26-37:13 includes:

A balanced interplay between mystery and meaning, between amazement in the face of the incomprehensible and comprehending its purpose, between hymnic description and wisdom interpretation of the same phenomenon (Habel 1985:505).

The gathering of water from the sea that is poured on earth as rain is, for instance, one of the mysteries that none can understand (36:27-29). The thunder and lightning are other meteorological phenomena accompanying the rainclouds whose functions on earth provoke awe (37:1). Besides, the purpose of the rainclouds, thunder and lightning is to judge and feed people on earth (36:31). The function of the rain or rainstorm is to serve as a sign of God’s works either for curse or blessing (37:5-13).

---

<sup>183</sup> This structure is borrowed from Habel (1985:504).

### 3.4.4 Eco-theological observations

#### 3.4.4.1 Ecological significance of the rain (Job 36:26-28)

In Job 36:26, Elihu says that God is beyond human understanding, and in verses 27-28 he argues that God is behind the hydrological cycle. God is portrayed as the rain-maker. God does it by gathering drops of water from the sea-water (גְּטֵפֵי-יָם) <sup>184</sup> before distilling them as rain from the raincloud (יְדֵלֶת). The word יְדֵלֶת is only found again in Genesis 2:6 where it refers to the subterranean river watering the garden. Tsumura argued that יְדֵלֶת means underground water in both instances, <sup>185</sup> while the NRSV and NET translated it as a *mist* following the LXX rendition of יְדֵלֶת in 36:26 means νεφέλην (vapour) in contrast to יְדֵלֶת as πηγῆ (spring/fountain) in Genesis 2:6.

However, as mentioned earlier regarding the translation of the text, the word יְדֵלֶת is probably referring here to a celestial reservoir of water or rainclouds, given the idea of the rain-making (Dahood 1981:537). Both the sea (יָם) and יְדֵלֶת-water (raincloud) are not viewed in Job 36:27-28 as created by God, but as pre-existing spheres. <sup>186</sup> The Targum on Job 36:27 comments that Yahweh ‘holds back the drops of water (which) would drop as rain into His clouds’ implying that the clouds receive the rain already as liquid (Sutcliffe 1953:100). For modern people, this idea of the clouds receiving water from the sea suggests evaporation. The word יְדֵלֶת is probably here the celestial counterpart to the subterranean waters below both understood in Job 36:27-28 as watery entities.

Syntactically, the Hebrew word יְדֵלֶת probably refers to the source from which comes גְּטֵר (rain) in Job 36:28. In connection with the Semitic *i-du*, יְדֵלֶת refers here to something like ‘raincloud’, the celestial source of *ga-šúm* (heavy rain, in Eblaite) or גְּטֵר (rain, in Hebrew) which falls upon the ground during the months of November-December, which is even called in the old <sup>187</sup> Eblaite calendar *Itu ga-šúm* (the month

<sup>184</sup> See our text critical note on verse 27.

<sup>185</sup> See the discussions of Tsumura, D T 1989. *The Earth and the Waters in Genesis 1 and 2: A Linguistic Investigation*. (JSOTSup 83). Sheffield: JSOT Press, p. 94-116.

<sup>186</sup> The text echoes Genesis 1:6-10 in which the two spheres of water (water below and water above) are not created but resulted from the separation process of pre-existed waters.

<sup>187</sup> While the Old Eblaite calendar was agricultural in character in the sense that the name of the months reflected the main activity of a given month, the new calendar (introduced by the last king of the dynasty documented in the archives, King Ibbis-Sipis) is more theological in the sense that the months took their names

of heavy rain) (Dahood 1981:535). These rains of November-December were dangerous in the way they fell down but they resulted in the fertility of the land, and thus food in abundance (Job 36:28). Joel 2:23 refers to them as the ‘first (or early) rains’ (גְּשֶׁם בְּרֵאשִׁוֹן).

Although they were dramatic in form (cf. Job 37:6-7), the ‘early rains’ were vital for the success of the agricultural activity to the point that their arrival was longed for and celebrated (Ps 65:9-13). Ancient Israel also experienced in April-May a rain period referred to in Joel 2:23 as the ‘latter rains’ (גְּשֶׁם וַיִּמְלֵקוּשׁ) which were expected to persist through this time for the grain harvest, otherwise the summer drought could be ruinous for crops and animals (Bimson 2012:1).

It seems that Job 36:27-28 assumes the latter rains given the notion of rain and harvest (food), even though the early rains are also implied. The early rains will be clearly expressed in Job 37:6-7. Both rain seasons are seen as gifts from above. That is why Deuteronomy 11:13-15 states the divine promise in terms of the provision and timeliness of the rains as follows:

If you will only heed his every commandment that I am commanding you today — loving the LORD your God, and serving him with all your heart and with all your soul — <sup>14</sup> then he will give the rain for your land in its season, the early rain and the later rain, and you will gather in your grain, your wine, and your oil; <sup>15</sup> and he will give grass in your fields for your livestock, and you will eat your fill (NRSV).

Elihu shares the cosmological views typical in most regions of the Ancient Near East. It was believed that a cosmic reservoir existed above the earth, and the waters were held in check by a dome (Gn 1:6), sometimes obscured by clouds, but sometimes the windows were opened to allow water to flow earthward (Crenshaw 2011:145). This is what is echoed in the hydrological cycle of Job 36:27-28, departing from the gathering of water from the sea (water below), to the raincloud (water above), before falling on

---

from the deities responsible for the execution or success of the specific activities of the month dedicated to them. For instance, while July-August was called *itu ša-'à-tum* or *ša-'à-na-at* (the month of flocks), in the new calendar it is called *itu-aštar* (the month of Ashtar), the divinity responsible for the fertility of the flocks (Dahood 1981:535).

earth as rain, resulting in the fertility of the land.<sup>188</sup> Clines convincingly suggests that this text is about the changing of salt water in the sea to freshwater in the cloud which fall down as rain (2006:870).

The words *יִגְרַע נְטַפֵּי-מַיִם* (he draws drops of water, 36:27) reinforce the intrinsic value of water. The sea (*יָם*) is not said to be created by God but implied in Job 36:26-28 as a pre-existent material on which God draws to collect drops of water that are further distilled from the raincloud (*לְאָדוּ*) to produce rain (*מְטָר*) causing abundant food on earth. Water is here a precious pre-existent sphere and functions for the good of human beings. The aspect related to the principle of interconnectedness is also respected given the idea of the hydrological cycle reflected in the text and its role of producing food on earth for mortals.

Therefore, the text is decidedly in the service of anthropocentrism since the rain is said to be poured only on human beings in verse 28. It is stated that God sends abundant rain on humans (*מְאֲדָם*) rather than on *הַדְּמָה* as is the case in Genesis 2:5. Dahood suggests that *מְאֲדָם* may be the equivalent of *הַדְּמָה* (dry ground) as in Genesis 16:12, Jeremiah 32:30, Zachariah 13:5 and Proverbs 30:14 (1963:124). While his argument is convincing for other texts, this view is unlikely in Job 36:28 since Elihu's focus is not on the land, but on humans (Job) who must experience this mystery of God's goodness providing for mortals through the hydrological cycle, and thus forces Job to retract his plea against God (see also 36:25).

#### **3.4.4.2 Ecological significance of the rainstorm (36:29-37:5)**

God is depicted as the producer of cloud and thunder. God is presented as a storm-God who not only manages the dispensation of moisture, but sends the thundering (*תְּשֻׁאוֹת*) from his pavilion (Habel 1985:511). The meteorological word *תְּשֻׁאוֹת* relates here to pay attention (*יִבְיֶן*) to the voice of God (Job 36:29) since in Job 37:2, Elihu, who is terrified of the natural phenomenon, asks Job to listen carefully to the thunder (*בְּרִגְזוֹ*) of his voice (*קִלְוֹ*). The Hebrew form comprising an infinitive absolute directly

<sup>188</sup> Rain was a guarantee for the fertility of the land. Sufficient rain resulted in the sprouting of grass (Ps 72:6; 2 Sm 23:4), the growing of flowers (Song 2:12) and cereals (Is 32:20; Hos 2:24) and even the trees may put forth fruit (Ez 34:27; Ps 1:3).

preceded or followed by a verbal form of the same verb such as *שמעו שמוע* in Job 37:2 is called *paronomasia* denoting the intensity of the order (Waltke & O'Connor 1990:585). The infinitive absolute *שמעו* emphasises not the meaning denoted by the verb's stem *שמע* but the force of the verb in context, in the sense that *שמעו שמוע* literally means 'listen very carefully'.

Thus, Elihu challenges Job to listen carefully to the mighty roaring of the rainstorm sent by God, and restrain his allegation against God. For Elihu, the rainstorm, which is mainly made by water, is mastered by God, but terrifies humans. Earlier, Elihu argued that no one can understand (*יבין*) the spreading of the clouds and God's sending of rain, lightning and thunder (36:29) because it is by these natural phenomena that God nourishes mortals, governs people and shows forth his anger of judgment (36:31-33) (Singgih 2012:687).

In other words, Job is not challenged to listen to the word of God, but to the rainstorm (whose main ingredient is water) which is the voice (*קלו*) of God. This water-related phenomenon is depicted as having a voice, and thus as a subject. The word *קל* (voice or rather thunder in this text) occurs five times in Job 37:2-5. Ironically, the constant rumbling of a rainstorm has the same effect on earth as Job's sickness, bringing *רָגַז* (quaking, cf. Job 3:26) (Crenshaw 2011:145). Elihu compares the roaring of the rainstorm with that of a lion (*ישאג קול*) or the rumbling of an earthquake (*ירעם בקול*) (*גאונו*) (Job 37:4) as well as words related to wondrous thunders such as *בקו נפלאות* to highlight the power of the threatening aspect of a rainstorm (Job 37:5).

The storm imageries are often linked with Baal or Yhwh,<sup>189</sup> but in Elihu's speech they are connected with El (God). The word pavilion (*טבתו*) is the celestial tent made for the storm-God to appear in his glory with his meteorological attendants (Habel 1985:511). In Job 36:30, the deity rides the clouds and scatters lightning that covers the roots of the sea above. The images of storm-God connected with water are also found in Psalm 29:3-11 in which the thunder of God roars over the waters, God sits

<sup>189</sup>YHWH is a national God for Israel. Baal is the storm god of Canaan. El is at the top of the Canaanite Pantheon and was viewed as sage god. YHWH came to be known as EL or Elohim later during the Babylonian exile. See Patai, R 1939. The Control of Rain in Ancient Palestine: A Study in Comparative Religion. *HUCA* 14, 251-286.

over the flood and strengthens and blesses his people. The image is similar here where the spreading of the lightning covers the surface of the sea and from the rainstorm God governs and feeds people abundantly (v.31) highlighting thus the anthropocentric focus of the text (Job 36:30).

The image of the rainstorm is ambiguous: it is both positive and negative. Luc has shown that the storm imageries in the whole book of Job<sup>190</sup> basically point two ways: ‘in various forms the storm provides a negative image for Job’s suffering but a positive portrayal of God’s design and control’ (2000:122). What is implied in Elihu’s speech is that the rainstorm does not have only a romantic potential, but is both fascinating and terrifying. For water, one of the fundamental elements of a rainstorm is the unity of beneficial and destructive features of life and death (Brenner 1981:133). Elihu foresees these dual potential of storms as demonstrations of God’s judicial role (vv.31-32).

The idea is that the purpose of the storm-God in causing rain (vv.27-28) and revealing his majesty to the depths of the sea (vv.29-30) involves both sustenance and control (v.31). Not only does the rainstorm bring rain that causes abundant harvest, but it also sets into motion the lightning bolts that strike their targets with absolute accuracy (Crenshaw 2011:144). Providing food (נָתַן אֶזְכָּלָהּ) in due time is part of God’s caring activity in Psalm 104:27 along with giving rain (Ps 104:13). This is exactly what Job raised to mock God in Job 24:8. Elihu reacts that the rainfall is unpredictable and volatile for humans (אֲיָם יִבִּין מִפֶּרֶשׁ יִעֲבֹב, 36:29), and thus Job does not have the comprehensive view to criticise the rainfall on the poorly dressed people.

#### **3.4.4.3 Ecological insights of the snow, wind and shower rain (37:6-12)**

God is depicted as commanding the snow and wind earthward. Elihu focuses on their effect on humans and animals. The observation that the beasts (חַיָּוָה) retreat to their lairs to escape the tempest points to violent summer storms and extreme ice and snow that may immobilise even the great creatures (Crenshaw 2011:145-6). In the book of Job, חַיָּוָה belongs to the fauna realm that inspires strength and power and lives

---

<sup>190</sup> The prologue, Job’s speeches, the wisdom poem, Elihu’s speech, as well as God’s speeches.

independently from the human domain.<sup>191</sup> However, here in Job 37:8 they are said to also be fragile to the power of heavy rain operating at a direct command of God since they go into their lairs to escape the rainstorm (Habel 1985:513).

The heavy rain (37:6) which is here read גְּשֶׁם מְטָר can be linked with the Eblaite noun *ga-šúm* (torrential rain) in the sense of destructive rain that occurred in November-December. Job 37:6 may refer to those heavy rainfalls over the hills that could become flash floods provoking land erosion, sometimes strong enough to sweep people away (Bimson 2012:1). Hence, the greatest issues of agriculture on sloping ground consisted of how to control the erosive power of rain and promote the absorption of water into the soil rather than its escape as surface runoff (Hillel 2006:146). Unless this problem was solved, there could be no sustainable agriculture in the highlands of Canaan.<sup>192</sup>

Even though we have rendered the verb הָרָא as an imperative ‘fall’, the sense points to a concept of encouragement, like the Syriac הָרָא, Arabic *hayâ* or the biblical הָרָא in relation to Zachariah 2:10. Here God calls or invites his attendants including the snow and rain, just as one calls a horse for a battle (Tur-Sinai 1967:508). The Masoretic phrase כִּי לְשֵׁלַג יֹאמֵר הָרָא אֶרֶץ (37:6) implies that God commands the snow as partner or subject to fall earthward the way he commanded the waters in Genesis 1:6<sup>193</sup> to retreat so that the dry land could appear. It is implied that the natural thing should respond as a subject.

That is why Job 37:6 shows the positive response of the snow as well as the torrential rain falling earthward as a sign for humans (v.7). Job 37:8 shows that even the beasts escape the falling down of the heavy rains and go into their lairs where they stay until required (v.8). It is from these lairs (הַקְּדָר) that the סוּפָה (storm or whirlwind) comes

<sup>191</sup> See Job 38:39-39:30.

<sup>192</sup> To solve this problem, Israelites erect retaining walls on the contours, thus dividing the slopes into a series of flat terraces. Behind the terrace walls, which kept the soil from eroding, they planted olives, grapes, figs, pomegranates, and almond and other fruit trees. In the valleys, they sowed field crops (vegetables, wheat, and barley) and reserved the non-terraced portions of the hillsides for pasture (Hillel 2006:155).

<sup>193</sup> The Priestly creation account (Gn 1:1-2:4a) recognises the creative powers inherent in אֶרֶץ and מַיִם. The divine speeches in Genesis 1:6-8 and Genesis 1:11-12 only consist of summoning them to exercise these powers to generate life on earth. For this reason, the direct source of vegetation is not merely the command of אֱלֹהִים, but אֶרֶץ and מַיִם cooperating with God in producing flora and fauna on the cosmos (Habel 2011b:33).

(37:9). We are dealing here with cosmological concepts referring to God's stores of rain, snow, ice and hail (cf. also Job 38:22). The meaning of אֶצְרוֹת can therefore be related to the storing-up of water by God above.<sup>194</sup> In Job 26:8, God is stated to be the one who 'binds up the waters in his thick cloud' (צָרַר-מַיִם בְּעָבָיו), while in Proverbs 30:4 God is the one 'who has bound (צָרַר) the waters in his garment'. Jeremiah 18:14 implies that God binds the snow in a store when he says: 'will the snow of Lebanon leave the storing-place (field) of Shadai?' (הֲיֵעֲזֹב מִצּוֹר שְׁלֵג לְבָנוֹן).

In addition, the Assyrian king Sennacherib boasted to the people of Judah in declaring 'I have dug and drunk the cold waters of the זָרִים (foreign), and with the soles of my feet have I dried up all the rivers of God's storing place' (מִצּוֹר)<sup>195</sup> in the cosmic reservoir (2 Ki 19:24). This king is mocking Hezekiah for trusting in his God because Sennacherib claims to have besieged the storing places (מִצּוֹר)<sup>196</sup> where the water is kept carefully, and thus nobody can resist him. In the Ancient Near East, it was a military strategy to besiege a water supply in order to force enemies to surrender (Resane 2010:4)<sup>197</sup>. In Job 37:9-11, מְזָרִים refers to God's precious water store, while rain (מָטָר), snow (שֶׁלֶג) and ice are squeezed out of the clouds. The word קָרָה in Job 37:9 does not mean 'frost', but the 'cold water'<sup>198</sup> squeezed out of the cloud (Tur-Sinai 1967:511). place a solid dome

Job 37:10 confirms our assumption about the word קָרָה. By the storm, God freezes the abundant waters of the celestial sea behind a solid (מִיֶּצֶק) dome. This dome, which is called רִקִּיעַ in Job 37:18, is very strong as it can permanently hold the mass of primeval waters above. The dome can sometimes be opened for destruction (as flood in Genesis 6-9) or for blessing (as rain in Genesis 2:5-6). Job 37:10 alludes thus to the idea that God restrains by a solid firmament the waters above that may threaten humans, but which can be used both for correction or mercy (Crenshaw 2011:146).

<sup>194</sup> The researcher explores the notion of the storehouses of the snow and hails in the analysis of Job 38:22-23.

<sup>195</sup> There is no reason for modern translations to render the word מִצּוֹר in 2 Kings 19:24 as Egypt. It is a *lectio difficilior* that has to be maintained. The idea is that Sennacherib is mocking Judah for the weakness of other gods who are not able to protect the precious resource such as water.

<sup>196</sup> The מִצּוֹר as a place from where cold waters come is also mentioned in Isaiah 37:25 and Jeremiah 18:14.

<sup>197</sup> Hezekiah used this strategy to deprive the attacking Assyrians of water (2 Chr 32:4).

<sup>198</sup> The term יַמְזַרִּים refers to the chamber in which water is stored and from whence comes the north wind (storms) that scatters ice, snow and torrential rains.

This idea of fixing the limits of the waters is further highlighted in God's speech in Job 38:8-11.

#### 3.4.4.4 Eco-theological synthesis

The above analysis shows that the text highlights the intrinsic value of water which exists separately from the human realm, but exists very close to God who can use it for a particular reason. Job 37:13 concludes that God uses weather, water and water-related phenomena for curse or for blessing. The references to water and water-related phenomena in Job 36-37 are not portrayed as created bodies, but regarded as pre-existing entities and God's partners that might be used to punish or bless (Singgih 2012:689). They reflect deeper ordering and wisdom that are beyond human understanding.

Job 37:2, for instance, tries to demonstrate how the voice of God is identical to the rainstorm of God, which is a subject with voice. How many times have we listened to the voice of nature when it reacts against our anthropocentric use of its resources? For Elihu, Job does not need an encounter with God's word, but with the power of God expressed through this water-related phenomenon. In other words, elements of the created order may raise their voice to humans as God's attendants.

God, as a cosmic pilot, guides the rainstorms like ships or chariots on their appointed courses across the sky, as well as controls their moisture content and lightning for curse (לְשֹׁבֵט) or mercy (רַחֵם) (Habel 1985:514). The antithesis אֲמַלְלֵם (for scourge, for curse) and רַחֵם (for mercy/blessing) testifies to the dual potential a rainstorm – whose main ingredient is water – and its interconnectedness with life or death on earth (Job 37:13). This is reflected in the falling down of the rains, which are dangerous in their forms (Job 37:6-7), but beneficial in their result of land fertility (Job 36:27-28).

The water-related phenomena are clearly seen in Job 36:26-37:13 with the life-giving and life-threatening potential. The message is for Job to restrain his allegations based on a one-sided view of nature. This is explained by the fact that all the water-related phenomena in Job 36:27-28 (sea, rainstorm and rain) are anthropocentrically depicted

as God's partners to feed and judge human beings (Job 36:31). In Job 36:26-37:13, the water-related phenomena arouse horror in humans, animals and Earth.

A close analysis of the texts shows that all the nature forces are also used in accordance with the 'principle of purpose'. Job 37:6-7 depicts God as directly bringing the rain (רָטַף) and snow (גָּלַף) on earth to serve as a sign for humans. Even the icy water and clouds exist to 'accomplish' God's will on the face of the habitable earth (Job 37:10-12). What is striking is that while water remains connected with the fertility of the land in the Old Testament, Job 37:13 portrays both the water and fertility as 'God-given', whether for correction or blessing (Tsumura 2010:174).

While Job 36:26-37:13 is highly human-centred, it implies the awareness of the intrinsic value of water depicted in terms of the sea and the raincloud, for instance, which are not portrayed as created bodies but God's valued pre-existing partners to enable the hydrological cycle, as well as for feeding and judging people. The text reflects also the principles of interconnectedness and purpose since each body of nature is interconnected to another within the cosmos and serves a specific purpose.

This is the case for the process of making rain which implies the collection of water from the sea, its distilling from the raincloud before its falling down on earth which, scientifically speaking, re-joins the sea, even though Elihu's speech is concerned with the effect of rain on human lives rather than the hydrological cycle. All the water-related phenomena respond to God's command for good or harm on Earth.

### **3.5 Water and water-related phenomena in Job 38:22-38**

#### **3.5.1 Introduction**

Job 38-41 is filled with many sequences containing water-related phenomena. The most important are Job 38:8-11 about the limits of the sea and earth, Job 38:22-38 containing various references to water and water-related phenomena and Job 40-41 involving two beasts (Leviathan and Behemoth) that live around watery places. The researcher will concentrate on Job 38:22-30 because it is more comprehensive containing significant references about water in the book of Job: the limits of the

upper-waters, the wisdom of certain animals in predicting water-events (Job 38:36) and the intrinsic value of the rain that, contrary to Elihu's speech, is not envisioned to feed people, but to rain even on a land empty of human life (v.27).

Job 38:22-38 is a literary unit displaying various water and water-related phenomena as sources of life or death. Contrary to Elihu's speech, Job 38:22-38 also present many water-related phenomena for their own value, and not for their usefulness for anything else, not even human beings. Our translation of the text draws on the NRSV. A few changes will be made to the NRSV text, shown in italic font. In this sense, the chapter will provide the original text from the Masoretic Text which will be filled with bold numbers pointing to footnotes related to our emendation of a given word or verse. The translation as well as exegetical and eco-theological analyses will then follow.

### 3.5.2 The Masoretic Text of Job 38:22-38

22 הַבָּאֵת אֶל־אֲצֵרוֹת שְׁלֵג וְאֲצֵרוֹת בְּרֵד תִּרְאֶה:

23 אֲשֶׁר־חִשְׁבֹּתִי לְעַת־צָר לְיוֹם קָרֵב וּמְלַחֲמָה:

24 אֵי־זֶה־הַדֶּרֶךְ<sup>199</sup> יִתְּלַק אֹר<sup>200</sup> יִפֹּץ קָדִים עַל־אָרֶץ:

25 מִי־פִלֵּג<sup>201</sup> לְשֹׁטֵף תִּעְלָה וְזָרַח לְחַזִּיז קִלּוֹת:

<sup>199</sup> Contrary to the NRSV, the researcher prefers to render the word דֶּרֶךְ as 'way' rather than 'place'. The translation of the word as 'way' has not only a strong theological meaning in the Old Testament wisdom literature, but also insightful eco-justice implications. The researcher will come back to this issue in further analysis of the text.

<sup>200</sup> The word אֹר has been a matter of discussion between scholars. It is stated that there is a kind of awkwardness in the parallelism between אֹר (light) and קָדִים (east wind). The Talmud as well as editors of the Masoretic Text in footnote propose to change אֹר into רֵיחַ (wind) in an attempt to link the two parts of verse 24 (v.12a & v.12b). In this sense, Tur-Sinai (1967:529) claims that the word אֹר means 'air currents' or west wind in accordance with Babylonian pronunciation awuru, which later was rendered in Aramaic inscriptions by אור. Dhorme (1967:587) has simply changed the word into אֶד in accordance with LXX πῦγμα (mist or cosmic flood) which renders אֹר in Job 38:29. Habel (1985:522) maintains the Masoretic reading אֹר (lightning) in reference to the translation of the word in Job 37:11, where the same idea of scattering is used (see also Job 36:32; 37:3,15). This translation is better enhanced by Clines (2011:1049) maintaining that אֹר should be re-vocalised to אור (heat) so that the verse speaks about the storehouse of heat, which is scattered across the earth by the hot Sirocco. Given the idea of rain and the parallel with the east wind, this rendering is plausible in relation to Job 36:32 & 37:3.

<sup>201</sup> The researcher understands in this verb not 'creation' (in the past), but the regular cycle of nature. In this sense, we will follow the rendering of Clines (2011:1061) of פִּלֵּג in the present tense as 'who cuts'.

- 26 לְהַמְטִיר עַל-אֲרֶץ לֹא-אֵישׁ מְדַבֵּר לֹא-אָדָם בּוֹ:
- 27 לְהַשְׁבִּיעַ שְׁאֵה וּמִשְׁאָה וּלְהַצְמִיחַ מִצָּא<sup>202</sup> דְּשָׂא:
- 28 הַיֵּשׁ-לְמִטָּר אָב אֹ אוֹ מִי-הוֹלִיד אֲגִלִּי-טָל:
- 29 מִבֶּטֶן מִיִּצָּא הַקָּרַח וּכְפֹר שָׁמַיִם<sup>203</sup> מִי יִלְדוּ:
- 30 בְּאֶבֶן מַיִם יִתְחַבְּאוּ וּפְנֵי תְהוֹם יִתְלַכְדוּ:
- 31 הַתְּקַשֵּׁר מֵעֲדָנוֹת כִּימָה אוֹ-מִשְׁכּוֹת כְּסִילֵת־פִּתְחֵהּ:
- 32 הַתְּצִיא מִזְרוֹת בְּעֵתוֹ וְעֵישׁ<sup>204</sup> עַל-בְּנֵיהָ תִנְחֵם:
- 33 הַיִּדְעֵתָ חֻקֹּת שָׁמַיִם אִם-תִּשְׁמַע מִשְׁטָרוֹ בְּאֲרֶץ<sup>205</sup>:
- 34 הַתְּרִים לְעֵב קוֹלָהּ וְשִׁפְעֵת-מַיִם תִּכְסֶּה<sup>206</sup>:
- 35 הַתְּשַׁלַּח בְּרִקִּים וַיִּלְכוּ וַיֵּאמְרוּ לָךְ הַיָּנּוּ:
- 36 מִי-נִשְׁתַּבַּחְתָּ בְּטַחֲוֹת<sup>207</sup> חֲכָמָה אוֹ מִי-נִתְּנוּ לַשָּׁכּוֹי בִּינָה:

<sup>202</sup> The word מִצָּא (source as in Job 28:1) is amended either as צָמָא (thirsty land) as in Isaiah 44:3, or in accordance with the Hiphil לְהוֹצִיא (to put forth) as in Ecclesiastes 5:1b (NRSV). The word pair מִצָּא דְשָׂא (place where grass springs) does not however comply with the idea of challenging Job. The emendation מִצְיָה would be in line with the idea of the verse in the sense of making grass grow or put forth in the desert, something unbelievable by Job. Also the word לְהַשְׁבִּיעַ should be translated as ‘irrigating’ in relation to the same verb in Genesis 41:29 and Proverbs 30:9 where the verb שָׁבַע implies the notion of abundance.

<sup>203</sup> Contrary to the NRSV, שָׁמַיִם is rendered as sky in the sense of ‘what is related to water’. See the interpretation of שָׁמַיִם in the article of Kee, M S 2012. A Study on the Dual Form of Mayim, Water. *JBQ* 40/3, 187.

<sup>204</sup> Driver (1956:2), followed by Clines (2011:1064), has convincingly argued that the word עֵישׁ or עֵשׂ does not refer to a Bear as is the case in the NRSV and many versions, but Aldebaran, while the word בְּנֵיהָ does not mean children, but Hyades, although the evidence of the ancient Versions is conflicting. This rendering is probable for two reasons: first, Pleiades, Orion and Hyades are often grouped together as marking the changing season, while, secondly the Hebrew עֵישׁ has the same meaning as the Arabic *gaitu* (rain) referring to the rain (Driver 1956:1-2).

<sup>205</sup> It is likely that the words-pairs שָׁמַיִם (33a) and אֲרֶץ (v.33b) refer here to physical entities as in Genesis 1:1. אֲרֶץ מִשְׁטָרוֹ refers to the rule of the skies (water-below) on Earth given to the whole argumentation. In this sense, the spiritualising tendency of heaven for שָׁמַיִם is avoided as is the case in the commentary of Habel, N C 1985. *Job: A Commentary*. London: SCM Press, p.523 referring the word-pairs חֻקֹּת שָׁמַיִם (translated as ‘orders of heaven’) and מִשְׁטָרוֹ (its rules) to the tablets of stone which Moses received from God on Sinai from heaven to regulate life on earth. Given the argument drawn on nature elements through the whole poem, it seems here that those words have simply nature potential and connotations.

<sup>206</sup> Here the rendering of LXX as καὶ τρόμφῳ ὕδατος λάβρω ὑπακούσεται σου (and make the torrents of rain answer you) is preferred instead of the MT (and make the flood of waters cover you).

37 מִי־יִסְפֹּר זְשָׁקִים בְּחֶכְמָה וְנִבְלֵי שָׁמַיִם מִי יִשְׁכִּיב:

38 בְּצִקַּת עֶפֶר לְמוֹצֵק וְרִגְגִים יִדְבְּקוּ:

### 3.5.3 Translation of Job 38:22-38

- <sup>22</sup> Have you entered the storehouses of the snow,  
or have you seen the storehouses of the hail,  
<sup>23</sup> which I have reserved for the time of *scarcity*,  
for the day of battle and war?  
<sup>24</sup> *Where is the way where the lightning (heat) is distributed,*  
*or where the east wind is scattered upon the earth?*  
<sup>25</sup> Who *cuts* a channel for the torrents of rain,  
and a way for the thunderbolt (*rainstorms*),  
<sup>26</sup> to bring rain on a land where no one lives,  
on the desert, which is empty of human life,  
<sup>27</sup> *to irrigate (water) the waste and desolate land,*  
*and to make the grass spring up from the dry ground?*  
<sup>28</sup> Has the rain a father,  
or who has begotten the drops of dew?  
<sup>29</sup> From whose womb did the ice come forth,  
and who has given birth to the hoarfrost of *skies*?  
<sup>30</sup> The waters become hard like stone,  
and the face of the deep is frozen.  
<sup>31</sup> Can you bind the chains of the Pleiades,  
or loose the cords of Orion?  
<sup>32</sup> Can you lead forth the Mazzaroth in their season,  
*or can you guide Aldebaran with its Hyades (trains)?*  
<sup>33</sup> Do you know the ordinances of the *skies*?

<sup>207</sup> The word טְחוּת is rendered in the NRSV as inward parts following the Vulgate in relation to the sense of this word in Psalm 51:8. Burns (2001:134) thinks that Job 38:36 was shifted from Job 39 to Job 38 due to a scribal error of *homoioteleuton*. More recently, Van Hecke draws on the earliest version of the Rabbinic Targum and renders the word לְשִׁכְוֵי as the ‘heart’ or the ‘inner part’ of a human being. In relation with Job 38:37, this scholar argues that חֶכְמָה should not be understood as a property of the clouds, but that Job 38:36 asks a rhetorical question: Who put that kind of wisdom in human’s inner part? (Van Hecke 2011:324). By contrast, Habel (1985:523) follows the proposal of Kissane (1939) connecting the word טְחוּת to the Hebrew verb טוּחַ (to cover) and translates it as ‘cloud canopy’ which is then the parallel of סִכּוּחַ of Job 36:29 interpreted meteorologically as ‘thick cloud’ (see also Lm 2:6). This rendering seems in line with the weather-related phenomena which set the original context of this text, but it should be admitted that it is a stranger idea to attribute wisdom and understanding to the cloud. The most contested rendering is the one that translates the word לְשִׁכְוֵי (v.36b) as ‘Cock’ and its parallel טְחוּת (v.36a) as ‘Ibis’ in relation to the Egyptian god Thot (Dhorme 1967:540). Ibis and Cock were renowned for their wisdom, and were furthermore famous for their skills of predicting certain natural phenomena such as the rain and Nile Inundation (Clines 2011:1116). However, there is a good cultural and ecological reason why these birds (Cock and Ibis) are mentioned here as they are both associated with the coming rain which is the main theme of Job 38:22-38.

- Can you establish their rule on the earth?
- <sup>34</sup> Can you lift up your voice to the clouds,  
*And make the torrents of waters (rains) answer you?*
- <sup>35</sup> Can you send forth lightnings,  
 so that they may go and say to you,  
 ‘Here we are’?
- <sup>36</sup> *Who has put wisdom in the Ibis?*  
*Or who gave understanding to the Cock?*<sup>208</sup>
- <sup>37</sup> Who has the wisdom to number the clouds?  
 Or who can tilt the waterskins of the *skies*
- <sup>38</sup> when the dust runs into a mass  
 and the clods cling together?

### 3.5.4 Literary position of Job 38:22-38

Job 38:22-38 belongs to the voice from the whirlwind speeches in Job 38-41 describing wonders of the created order that are beyond human wisdom. God is pointing to them not merely for showing Job’s limits, but something that human beings can clearly see if they broaden their perspective: God’s wisdom and power reflected in the deeper ordering and rules of the created order (Fox 1981:60).

God’s speeches in Job 38-41 are divided into two main sections (Job 38:1-40:2 & Job 40:6-41:26), which are separated by a brief answer from Job (40:3-5). The first speech (Job 38:1-40:2) comprises a series of God’s rhetorical questions to Job about the vast expanse of the created order: questions on the founding of the world and the origin of the sea as well as about meteorological forces, the constellations and wild beasts. The second speech (Job 40:6-41:26) depicts two mythic animals: Behemoth and Leviathan. Both God’s speeches ‘are majestic poems, rich in lyric artistry, literary ambiguity, and theological profundity’ (Habel 1985:526).

Our text (Job 38:22-38) belongs to God’s first speech related to the founding of creation (Job 38:1-40:2). A careful analysis of the speech shows that Job 38:22-38 holds its centre. Its opening report (Job 38:1-21) depicts the establishment of creation or the created order in general, while Job 38:39-40:2 concerns the wild animals. The

---

<sup>208</sup> This translation follows NJB: **Job 38:36** Who endowed the ibis with wisdom and gave the cock his intelligence? Or the French rendering: *Qui a mis dans l'ibis la sagesse, donné au coq l'intelligence?* (TOB).

centre, Job 38:22-38, contains comprehensive life-giving and life-threatening potential of water and water-related phenomena in the created order as one of God's responses to Job's claims. It should be precisely stated that the whole section of Job 38:22-38 deals with the rain and other water-related phenomena such as the upper-water (sea-above), clouds as water-carriers, lightning as acolytes of rain as well as other forms of moisture (ice, dew, hail, snow) and the rule of the stars on rainy seasons.

### 3.5.5 Retrieval of ecological wisdom in the text

#### 3.5.5.1 Ecological significance of the storehouses (אוֹצָר) (Job 38:22-24)

The Hebrew word אוֹצָר can refer either to a treasure-house (Neh 10:39), the treasury or the valuable store/supply of food or drink (2 Chr 11:11) or wealth (Pr 8:21; 15:16), or the arsenal of weapons (Jr 50:25) (Brown, Driver and Briggs 1968:70). In Psalm 135:7 it is referred to as the store of the cloud, while in Ecclesiasticus 43:14 it is the supply of the celestial sea or the upper-waters. The word is a store of rain in Deuteronomy 28:12 or of wind in Jeremiah 10:13 and 51:16 as well as a store of waters (תְּהוֹמוֹת) in Psalm 33:7.

In this context of Job 38:22 the plural אֲצִרוֹת is used for the storehouses of God for snow and hail. In the Bible, hail (בָּרָד) appears with awful aspects, and mostly functions as divine weapons to punish the wicked (Is 28:17; Ezk 13:11) and the enemies (Js 10:1; Is 30:30), or to destroy crops (Ex 9:22-26; Hg 2:17). Agricultural effects of hail also include the destruction (הָרַג) of vines (Ps 78:47), the smashing (שָׁבַר) of trees (Ex 9:25) as well as causing death of humans and animals (Ex 9:19; Ps 78:48). Here in Job 38:22, hail is reserved for the time of battle as a life-threatening weapon.

Job 38:23 is slightly ambiguous. It is the storehouse and its contents are kept for the time of scarcity (לְעֵת-צָרָה) and battle (וּמִלְחָמָה). Although the two parts of verse 23 present a parallelism of scarcity and war – in the sense that war time is a time of scarcity/distress – it seems that שָׁלֵג relates to scarcity (v.23a) while בָּרָד is directly

linked to battle (v.23b). It is hail (בָּרָד), and not snow (שֶׁלֶג),<sup>209</sup> which is preciously stored up for use as a threatening weapon in warfare (Clines 2011:1109).

Snow (שֶׁלֶג) is also daintily kept not as a damaging weapon, but perhaps as a source of water in time of scarcity due to its refreshing function in time of war. In Jeremiah 18:4 the prophet exclaims about the water-stores: ‘will the snow of Lebanon leave the storing-place of Shaddai?’ In a time of scarcity, the snow is welcome as an auxiliary source of water for the crops. In ancient Israel, the snow was seen as a moistening and fertilising agent of the land next to the rain, as declared in Isaiah 55:10-11:

<sup>10</sup>For just as rain and snow fall from the sky and do not return there, but water the earth, causing it to bud and produce, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater; <sup>11</sup>so is my word that goes out from my mouth – it will not return to me unfulfilled; but it will accomplish what I intend, and cause to succeed what I sent it to do (CJB).

The coolness of the snow in time of harvest is metaphorically linked to its refreshing function in Proverbs 25:13: ‘Like the cold of snow in the time of harvest are faithful messengers to those who send them; they refresh the spirit of their masters’ (NRSV). Snow is also a sign of cleanness/purity (Lm 4:7). Job 38:22-23 therefore use two water-related phenomena (snow and hail), which have two different functions during the time of trouble. Hail is a life-threatening weapon, while snow is a friendly life-giving water-related phenomenon.<sup>210</sup> The stock for the hail would be rendered as a mere military arsenal in accordance with the translation of Clines (2011:1049):

Have you entered the **storehouse** of the snow? Or have you seen the **arsenals** of the hail? (Job 38:22)

---

<sup>209</sup> The Cambridge dictionary defines the snow as the small soft white pieces of ice which sometimes fall from the sky when it is cold, while hail is seen as the hard balls of ice from the sky like rain. While the first is positive, the second is quite dangerous. In this sense, one will observe the examples of the dictionary as follows: 1) for the hail: ‘The Prime Minister was greeted with a **hail** of insults as she arrived at the students’ union.’ 2) for the snow: ‘Let’s go and play in the snow!’ (see Snow and Hail in Walter, E 2008 (ed). *The Cambridge Advanced Learners’ Dictionary*. 3<sup>rd</sup> edn. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

<sup>210</sup> Indeed, apart from metaphors that link its coldness or whiteness with certain matters (Ex 4:6; Nm 12:10; 2 Ki 5:28; Is 1:18; Ps 51:7), the snow does not appear as physically playing a significant role in the Old Testament. Its falling during summer time is even viewed as inadequate since heat will make it disappear: ‘Like snow in summer or rain in harvest, so honor is not fitting for a fool’ (Pr 26:1). Snow is not a reliable source of water even though its persistence on the hills of Lebanon is a sign of God’s care (Ezk 47).

What is striking is that these water-related phenomena are not only stored up in treasuries (place), but also designed to be used during specific ‘times’ (of scarcity and battle). By this annotation, the text testifies to an awareness of intrinsic worth of these water-related phenomena (snow and hail), which are valuable commodities for use ‘when’ needed. Hail may fall at times of extreme cold, but can also be employed as God’s weapon during war (Js 10:11). By contrast, the refreshing function of snow is in the service of life in the time of scarcity. These forces which are at God’s disposal for both seasonal and retributive functions are also those powers that are invited in Psalm 148:8 to celebrate their Lord (Habel 1985:542).

In the translation of Job 38:24 the researcher opted for the suggestion that the Hebrew word אור be re-vocalised as אור (heat) to mean the storehouse of heat, which is scattered across the earth through the east wind. The latter, also identified as sirocco (קָדִים), is a naturally hot and violent wind from the desert which has earlier been referred to by Job (15:2) as a hot and dangerous force (Clines 2011:1109). The words wind, water and light/heat in Job 38:22-24 are not random but common motifs in the Ancient Near Eastern texts related to creation.<sup>211</sup> The word דָּרַךְ (way) in Job 38:24 implies that the wind that scatters heat across the earth acts in accordance with a fixed course governing its movements within the design of the cosmos and in relation to the water-related phenomenon they are connected to, namely the rain.

The replication of the word דָּרַךְ in Job 38:24-25 implies that the meteorological forces related to water (wind and lightning) respect a fixed course (דָּרַךְ) that results in deep order in the cosmos. In this sense, in texts where the storehouses of water are subjects, it is stated that their windows automatically open/close in due course. This is the case in Genesis 7:11/Isaiah 24:18 where the windows burst forth (פָּתַח, in Niphal) and Genesis 8:2 in which the windows close themselves (סָכַר, in Niphal) on God’s order. In few cases, God may decide to open them (Mal 3:10; Ps 78:23). However, due to modern human effects on ecosystems, the course (דָּרַךְ) and automaticity of nature are

---

<sup>211</sup> The 1934 discovery of the epigraphic from Tell Balāṭa (biblical Shechem) is a proof that wind, water and light/heat are common in many cosmogonies and thus testifies to the ecological significance these three natural forces inspire for ancient people. See, Obermann, J 1938. Wind, Water, and Light in an Archaic Inscription from Sichem. *JBL* 57/3, 239-253 [see pages 249-50].

often perturbed, and results in global ecological crises, including drought, the rising of sea levels and inundations.

### 3.5.5.2 The ecological potential of the rain in Job 38:25-27

This strophe has a different perspective from Elihu's statement in Job 36:27-28 about the rain. The strophe describes the delivery of rain on earth in torrents even on the land which is apparently useless for humans (vv.25-27). In contrast to Elihu's speech which is about God as 'rainmaker', there is nothing here about 'creation' but rather the regular cycle of nature (Clines 2011:1110).

The word *תַּעֲלָה* is used as stream/channel for *פִּלַּג לְשֹׁטֶף*<sup>212</sup> (cutting out for the flood).<sup>213</sup> The course (*תַּעֲלָה*) that the rain takes links the sky (*שָׁמַיִם*) and the earth as for the flood account where the waters-above fall down via a great gate (*אֲרֻבֹת*) of the sky (Gn 7:11). The word *תַּעֲלָה* (course, v.25) could be a surprising term here for the rain which normally falls in drops rather than as an unending stream as in 2 Kings 18:17 or Isaiah 7:3 where *תַּעֲלָה* is used for a constant conduit of a pool (Sutcliffe 1953:101).

However, the focus in verse 25 is on *שֹׁטֶף* (flood of water-above) which was believed to be held/limited in the sky (*שָׁמַיִם*) and sometimes might fall earthward through rain by following a fixed conduit (*תַּעֲלָה*). This airy aqueduct was viewed as means of both ensuring and regulating the supply of upper-waters on Earth:

Given that these upper – waters are supported by the solid vault of the heavens [sky] and yet descend upon the earth, it was believed that there must be apertures [holes/channels] in the sky capable of being opened and shut as occasion requires. If these were opened and the water allowed to descend on the earth without the intermediary of clouds, the effect was devastating and destructive, (Genesis 7: 11; 8:2, Isaiah 24:18) (Stucliffe 1953:99)

<sup>212</sup> The *piel* *פִּלַּג* comes from the root *פִּלַּג* (divide), which is used here in the sense of cutting out a channel for the flood to fall earthward. In Psalm 65:10 the word *פִּלַּג* is used in association with God, *פִּלַּג אֱלֹהִים* (rivers of God): *You visit the earth and water it, you greatly enrich it; the river of God (פִּלַּג אֱלֹהִים) is full of water; you provide the people with grain, for so you have prepared it* (NRSV).

<sup>213</sup> It serves as a transition from the storehouse of hail and snow in Job 38:22-24 to the theme of rain in Job 38:25-27, the various kinds of moisture in Job 38:28-30, the rule (influence) of the stars on the seasons (Job 38:31-33) and the rainclouds and lightning in verses 34-38.

In this sense, the rainstorm (רַדְדָּ) also has a fixed way (דְרֹךְ) to follow in its distribution of lightning and moisture on earth. It should be noted that rains in ancient Israel were often accompanied by violent lightning so that Psalm 135:7 declares that YHWH made the lightning for the rain.<sup>214</sup> Indeed, the terms תְּעֹלָה and דְרֹךְ (course and way) and the notion of ‘time’ emphasise the principle of the cosmic order, otherwise an accidental rain could result in disastrous effects as Reymond (1958:5) declares:

Une pluie accidentelle venant au milieu de l’été ne serait guère utile si ce n’est pour rafraîchir l’atmosphère et donner un supplément d’eau potable; mais souvent elle risque d’être nuisible en détruisant les récoltes par sa violence.<sup>215</sup>

In this sense, in the Ancient Near East, the solidity of the dome (רִקְיעַ) and the blue colour of the sky (שָׁמַיִם) were assumed as holding the upper – waters<sup>216</sup> so that they may fall down at specific times. The word שָׁמַיִם is etymologically defined as ‘what relates to water’.<sup>217</sup> Therefore, ‘as water falls, in the form of rain, from on high, the only conclusion possible seemed to be that there exists above a great reservoir and the only position that could be assigned for this was above the vault of heaven’ (Sutcliffe 1953:99). The idea in Job 38:25 is not about the ordinary rain (מָטָר or מְהַרְרֵה), but torrential rainfall (פֶּלַג לְשֹׁטָף) that follows a given course (תְּעֹלָה) to reach the earth and overwhelm it with life-giving or life-threatening waters.

However, the significance of the פֶּלַג לְשֹׁטָף (torrential rains) and thunderstorm<sup>218</sup> (רַדְדָּ) is not just on their ways (תְּעֹלָה & דְרֹךְ), but mostly on their life-giving beneficial supply of water through rain over the land where no one lives (v.26). While Job alleged that God withholds and releases celestial waters (Job 12:15) as well as the storm (Job 9:17)

<sup>214</sup>In ancient Israel people knew that lightning is often followed at once by increased violence in the rainfall (Sutcliffe 1953:103).

<sup>215</sup> English translation: *An accidental rain falling during the middle of summer would be only helpful to refresh the atmosphere and give a supplement of drinking water; but often it may be harmful by destroying crops by its violence* (the researcher’s own translation).

<sup>216</sup> For the ancients, the sky’s colour was blue like that of the ocean, because the water above was seen through the expanse. Hence, Ezekiel 1:26 depicts the colour of the expanse, when looked upon, as that of sapphire. And since there is water above the sky, some passages in the Bible declare that the upper waters/fountains may rain down or pour out in a flood when the window in the skies is opened (Gn 7:11; 8:2 & Is 24:18). For more details, see Kee, M S 2012. A Study on the Dual Form of Mayim, Water. *JBQ* 40/3, 185ff.

<sup>217</sup> Sachs maintains that the Hebrew letter ש prefixed to the three-letter root מַיִם extends the underlying idea of שָׁמַיִם (*sha-mayim*) as the superlative of מַיִם (water) suggesting that there is water above the sky (2006:130).

<sup>218</sup> In his article about ‘clouds as water-carriers’, Sutcliffe observed that in the ancient Israel’s thought, ‘lightning is often followed at once by increased violence in the rainfall, for this seems to be the meaning of the words used of God, that He “made lightning flashes for the rain”’ (1953:103).

for destructive rather than salutary purpose, Job 38:26-27 provides the antithesis. God sends the rain to irrigate the desolate and wasteland (הַשָּׂדֵה וְהַמִּשְׁעָה) and to cause the dry ground to put forth fresh grass (Job 38:27).

The word *shoah* (הַשָּׂדֵה) implies total desolation and it is contemporarily utilised for the crime of the Jewish holocaust (Crenshaw 2005b:182).<sup>219</sup> In the Bible, the expression *shoah* (הַשָּׂדֵה וְהַמִּשְׁעָה) also occurs in Job 30:3 and Zephaniah 1:15 to mean terrible affliction. In Job 30:3 the words are used for people who are accounted among dogs and ‘gnaw at the desolate ground’ (הַשָּׂדֵה וְהַמִּשְׁעָה). Job 38:27 implies that God sends life-giving rain even to those places that Job (humans) usually despises. In other words, ‘God satisfies even such a desolate place, providing rain so that it sprouts grass, bringing forth life in a land that humanity has rejected as worthless’<sup>220</sup> (Schifferdecker 2008:71).

In contrast to Elihu’s speech, the water-related phenomena are seen not for their usefulness for humans, but for their own value and their power of creating life in the wilderness. Job 38:26-27 testifies to the awareness of the intrinsic worth of water. The target of the rain in this text is not just the productive land worked to satisfy human hunger as in Job 36:27-28, but the wilderness which is transformed into a fertile land. Although the animals are not referred to explicitly, they are implied as the beneficiaries of such rain that results in dry ground putting forth their foodstuff (Job 38:27).

### 3.5.5.3 The potential of other forms of moisture (Job 38:28-30)

The focus in this strophe shifts from the majestic torrential rainfalls – but with life-giving waters – to the softer forms of moisture: the rain (מָטָר, v.28a), dew (לֵילִי-טָל,

<sup>219</sup> See also the psychological interpretation of the book of Job and the modern Jewish holocaust in the book: Alford, C F 2009. *After the Holocaust: The Book of Job, Primo Levi, and the Path to Affliction*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 58ff.

<sup>220</sup> The sprouting of grass (מִצֵּא דְשֵׁבַע) in the dry ground of Job 38:27 might be read as echoing the sprouting of vegetation in Genesis 1:11-12 (וַתֵּצֵא הָאֲדָמָה יְרֵק וְעֵשְׂבָא דְשֵׁבַע) implying the present fertility of the land that was previously barren. In both texts, the land was in a state of desolation before God’s actions. In Genesis, the desolation is described in terms of תְּהוֹ וְרֵבִוּוּהוּ (formless wasteland), while in Job the land is in a situation of הַשָּׂדֵה וְהַמִּשְׁעָה (total desolation). In Genesis, the fertility of the land is made possible by further separation of waters that gave place to the dry land (הַיַּבֵּשֶׁת) which later puts forth grass. In Job, the fertility of the dry ground is made possible by beneficial distribution of life-giving water/rain to the wasteland and desolate land. In both texts, the theme of water is at the basis of the productivity of the land.

v.28b), ice (קָרָה, v.29a) and hoar-frost (כִּפֹּר, v.29b). The unfrozen pair of water, Rain and Dew which form drops (אֶגְלִים<sup>221</sup>) stand in interlinear parallelism with the pair of frozen forms, Ice and Hoar-frost in Job 38:28-29 (Vall 1995:505). The question ‘Does the rain have a father?’ is a rhetorical question expecting a No answer.<sup>222</sup> All three questions in Job 38:28-30 about the origin of rain, dew, ice and hoar-frost should be answered as follows: no one begot the rain and the dew drops; the ice came from no one’s womb and no one gave birth to the hoar-frost (Vall 1995:512).

It is, however, implied that God is the one who brings rain in contradiction to the myth of the Canaanite entourage of the storm god Baal comprising ‘Pirdya, daughter of mist’ and ‘Taliya (Dew), daughter of showers’ (Habel 1985:542). Perhaps Job 38:28 is intended in part to refute the notion that Baal is responsible for the rain and dew as is the case in the polemical words of Jeremiah 14:22. Earlier, Job’s friend Eliphaz stated that God is ‘the one who brings rain upon the face of the earth, who sends water on the surface of the fields’ (Job 5:10; see also 12:15; 26:8; 28:25-26; 36:27-28).

In this sense, Schökel and Díaz<sup>223</sup> argued that Job 38:28-29 is an obvious vestige of a myth where the male sky fertilises the female earth through the semen rain and dew. However, the rain and dew in our text are not even viewed for their fertilising role, but their birth. It is implied that their mysterious origin would testify to the extraordinary functions they can play on earth (Habel 1985:543).

The author and the implied reader of Job 38:28 are surely aware of the relevance of rain and dew in an arid land of Israel. Ancient Palestine was a land whose fertility depended exclusively on the fall of the yearly rain (Dt 10:11-17). Due to its ecological

---

<sup>221</sup> This word is a *hapax legomenon*. It is not found anywhere in the Bible. The rendering ‘drops’ is based on the context and the ancient versions (Vulgate, Targum, Syriac).

<sup>222</sup> Buitendijk claims that the question ‘Does the rain have a father?’ should be answered affirmatively. He claims that in Arabia and in Scotland ‘the wind’ is referred to as ‘the father of the rain.’ This scholar links the verse with Proverbs 25:23 that reads ‘the north wind brings forth rain’ (1922:289). The question is not even about knowing the origin of the water of the strophe, but to show the limitation of the human mind.

<sup>223</sup> See Schökel, L A & Díaz, J L 1983. *Job: Commentario Teológico Y Literario*. Madrid: Cristiandad, p560.

relevance for the land of Israel, rain was even a subject of prayers.<sup>224</sup> In this sense, the final aim of the Sukkot festival during the days of the Temple's reconstruction was to assure the fall of rain (Patai 1939:253).

Likewise, during the dry season, dew was a very significant source of water. That is why the pair 'rain and dew' occur together many times in many parts of the Bible.<sup>225</sup> The issue is that apart from human efforts at water-storage and irrigation, crops that grow during the dry months (olive, fig or grape) depended on dew especially in the central coastal plain where dew contributes up to 55mm of water per year.<sup>226</sup> In Genesis 27:28, dew is part of the blessings that Isaac entrusted to his son Jacob, while Gideon could wake up early in the morning and wring dew from the fleece to fill a bowl with water (Jg 6:38). The absence of dew and rain is seen as a curse in 2 Samuel 1:21:

You mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew or rain upon you, nor bounteous fields! For there the shield of the mighty was defiled, the shield of Saul, anointed with oil no more (NRSV).

Rain and dew are therefore not only two main sources of water from the sky, but also fall earthward and act without human effort as declares Micah 5:7:

Then the remnant of Jacob, surrounded by many peoples, shall be like dew from the LORD, like showers on the grass, which do not depend upon people or wait for any mortal (NRSV).

It is thus implicit in Job 38:28 that the falling down of rain and dew is not an accidental feature even though Job does not understand it, but a proof of the deeper order in nature. Rain and dew are so relevant in ancient Israel that the simile in Hosea

---

<sup>224</sup> The prophet Samuel produced rain by praying God to prove to the people that their wickedness is great in his eyes (1 Sm 12:17-18); The prophet Joel convoked the priests and the ministers of the altar to gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land into the house of the Lord to pray for the end of drought (Jl 1:8ff).

<sup>225</sup> Baly (1957:143) recently reported that during the summer drought, the growth of grapes significantly relied on dew fall. For biblical references, see 2 Samuel 1:21; Deuteronomy 32:2.

<sup>226</sup> Dew-fall in ancient Israel depends on moist air from the Mediterranean and is heaviest near the coast and on the western side of the central hill-country. See Table No 3 'Mean annual dew amount (mm)' in the article of Gilead, M & Rosenan, N 1954. Ten Years of Dew Observation in Israel. *IEJ* 4/2, 120-123.

14:6 declares that God will be like dew<sup>227</sup> of Lebanon for Israel, while in Hosea 6:3 it said that YHWH will come to Israel ‘like the rain, like the spring rains that water the earth’. We also know from the apocalyptic prophecy of Isaiah 26:19 the idea that certain dead people could receive unction of the vivifying dew that must bring them back to life (Martin-Achard 1956:106). This refreshing power of dew will make the dust bring back the dead:

Your dead shall live, their corpses shall rise. O dwellers in the dust, awake and sing for joy! For your dew is a radiant dew, and the earth will give birth to those long dead (Is 26:9, NRSV).

The other forms of moisture include frost and ice (Job 38:29-30). Psalm 78:47 depicts frost as a life-threatening water-related phenomenon that can destroy a sycamore/tree, while Zechariah 14:6 views the day of the Lord as lacking threats of cold and frost. Ice is often depicted as something that cannot last, it disappears by the rise of heat (Job 6:16-17). However, in Job 38:29-30 ice plays a significant role of hiding the face of the Deep (תְּהוֹם) together with its chaotic terrors against the created order. In Job 38:16-17, Job is rhetorically exposed to massive unruly secrets that keep the תְּהוֹם:

<sup>16</sup> Have you gone to the springs that fill the sea, or walked about in the recesses of the deep? <sup>17</sup> Have the gates of death been revealed to you, or have you seen the gates of deep darkness? (NRSV)

Briefly, the whole strophe of Job 38:28-29 focuses the reader’s attention on diverse and amazing life-giving functions that the enlisted water-related phenomena play in nature. The rain and dew have no father, but play a major role in creation to which humans are witness. Though the water of the sea is notoriously unruly (Job 38:16-17) and impossible to collect once it is spilled on the ground (2 Sm 14:14; Ps 22:15), God is able to gather the water into small, delicate drops of dew over the surface of the earth that play a significant role in agriculture without human efforts. The slim rocks of frost and huge chunks of ice hide the terror of the Deep. The water-related

---

<sup>227</sup> The Hebrew word used here is לֹא פִקְבָנוּן לֹא פִקְבָנוּן (for him as fragrance of Lebanon). The intertextual analysis could read the word פִקְבָנוּן as scent of water in relation to Job 14:9 or even dew in relation to the permanent presence of dew on the mountain Lebanon that is its fragrance.

phenomena are viewed for their own (intrinsic value), their ‘way’ (דֶּרֶךְ) in the created order, and not for how they can be useful for humans.

#### 3.5.5.4 The role of constellations related to water (Job 38:31-33)

The four constellations in this strophe are all connected with the coming of rains. The identity of Pleiades and Orion is widely accepted, while Mazzaroth and Aldebaran still give rise to debates.<sup>228</sup> The presence of these four constellations here is perhaps due to their importance for their rain-telling function. Job’s ability to establish or influence these constellations is then challenged. In other words, if Job was responsible for the governing of the universe as he alleged earlier, he would at least need to manage the rain-bringing stars, whose function is vital for life on earth (Clines 2011:1112). It should be noted that stars were generally believed as exerting influence on the seasons and weather on Earth (see Gn 1:14-16).

The phrase ‘bind (קָשַׁר) the Pleiades and loose (פָּתַח) the cords of Orion’ (v.31) cosmogonically presumes the ability to establish these stars in their places which are respectively the portent of spring and herald of winter (Clines 2011:1113). In other words, the phrase to ‘bind’ the Pleiades would mean functionally to check the spring-rains that they release, while ‘loosing’ Orion’s belt would be to disable the autumn-rains (Driver 1956:7).

As one can see, the question is not about creating these stars, but controlling their role as omens of spring or autumn rains. In more modern terms, Newsom thinks that the binding of the Pleiades refers to their invisibility during the hot time (the beginning of April), while losing Orion’s cords<sup>229</sup> refers to the month of July onward when Orion’s arrows of heat and dryness have been discharged over earth (2003:242). The context

---

<sup>228</sup> *Pleiades*, also known as the seven sisters, is a cluster of stars in the constellation of Taurus. The brightest *Pleiade* is *Alicyone*, which is a thousand times more luminous than our own sun would be at the same distance. The Hebrew word כִּיקָה for Pleiades probably means ‘herald’. Orion is one of the most easily recognised stars in the northern sky. In mythology, Orion the hunter is often accompanied by his dogs, *Canis Major* and *Minor* for hunting celestial animals, including *Lepus*, rabbit, *Taurus*, the bull. Orion’s belt is made by three bright stars in a straight line. *Mazzarot* is a *hapax legomena*, and has been variously identified with the zodiac circle, with *Acturus*, *Sirius*, *Venus*. *Aldebaran* is the bright star that forms the eyes of *Taurus*. For more details, see Driver, G R 1956. Two Astronomical Passages in the Old Testament. *JTS* 7, 1-11.

<sup>229</sup> Ancient people believed that the stars were suspended from the sky with a cord, which could also be used to move them from side to side (see Hirschberg, J W 1935. Job 38:1. *REJ* 99, 130-132).

suggests the question whether Job, like God, can control their supposed seasonal influences.

The phrase bringing out (אָצַף) Mazzarot and guiding (הִנְחִיף) Aldebaran with its Hyades in Job 38:32 refers to the same rhetorical questions asked to Job. The verb אָצַף also occurs in Isaiah 40:26 in relation to the idea of God ‘calling out’ the stars one by one by their name, while in Nehemiah 4:15 the verb refers to the ‘coming out’ of the stars. Job is asked whether he can bring out into the night sky the star known as Mazzaroth. The action of guiding (הִנְחִיף) the star called Aldebaran with its train (Hyades) would also relate to the same challenge. What is important here is that all the four stars are related to the coming of rain. As in Genesis 1:14-18,<sup>230</sup> it is not their identity with which the text is concerned, but their role as signs for time/seasons.

Above all, in verse 33, Job is challenged about the laws of the sky on earth. Not only the stars were believed to influence seasons and events<sup>231</sup> on earth, but also the שָׁמַיִם (sky) itself impacts life on earth via its water. The word שָׁמַיִם (sky) is closely related to water in ancient cosmogonies such as the epic of *Enuma Elish*.<sup>232</sup> The point is that, generally, the words denoting sky in the Semitic languages are all spelled by prefixing *sh* to the words meaning water (Van Wolde 1998:24).<sup>233</sup> The word שָׁמַיִם in Hebrew or Aramaic and *shamu* in Akkadian could therefore be seen as terms combining ‘of/one of which’ (ש) and ‘waters’ (מַיִם) assuming that the sky is ‘one of the waters/of the waters’ (Kee 2012:187). These are the waters that follow a channel (cf. Job 38:25-27) to reach earth through rain.

<sup>230</sup> Genesis 1:14-18 depicts the function of the planets as time-tellers, the first created thing (Time) enabling life on earth (Gn 1:3). Here in Genesis 1, it is not their personality that the text is about, but the expectation from their ruling/separating mandate (מְשֻׁל) over day and night. For further details, see Kavusa, K J 2013. *Humans and Ecosystems in the Priestly Creation Account: An Ecological Interpretation of Genesis 1:1-2:4a*. Saarbrücken: Lambert Academic Press.

<sup>231</sup> In neighbouring cultures, the sun and the moon were some of the most important gods in the pantheon, and the stars were often credited with controlling human destiny and seasons on earth. For more details, see Wenham, G J 1987. *Genesis 1-15*. Waco, Texas: Word (WBC 1), p.21ff.

<sup>232</sup> See comparisons between *Enuma Elish* and the Priestly texts in Sparks, K L 2007. *Enuma Elish and Priestly Mimesis: Elite Emulation in Nascent Judaism*. *JBL* 126/4, 625-648 [see p.629ff].

<sup>233</sup> In her analysis, Van Wolde (1998:24ff) thinks that the letter -ש of the word שָׁמַיִם (sky) might have been used as an abridged form of the relative pronoun אֲשֶׁר (that), and thereby the word שָׁמַיִם would mean ‘that relates to’ שָׁמַיִם’. This would explain why the function of שָׁמַיִם (sky) in Genesis 1:6 aims only at separating the שָׁמַיִם above from the מַיִם below, since prior to this שָׁמַיִם, there was only a vertical and unspecified mass of water called תְּהוֹם characterised by utter darkness, חֹשֶׁךְ. For further details, see Van Wolde, E 1998. *Facing the Earth: Primeval History in a New Perspective*, in Davies, P R & Clines, D J A (eds), *The World of Genesis. Persons, Places, Perspectives*, 22-47. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.

Given the rain context of the text, it seems that the rule of these upper-waters falling earthward is one of the laws/ordinances referred to in Job 38:33. The related text in Job 28:26 affirms that the rain does not happen accidentally, but follows a rule (חוק) set for it. It is not about the rules that govern the movements of the stars as in Isaiah 47:13, but the regularities connecting a given star with the spring or autumn rainy seasons (Clines 2011:1114).

This is a comprehensive answer against Job's allegations in Job 12:13-25 and 24 that the universe is made up of chaotic and unruly things, especially when it comes to Job's perception of God's use of water and water-related phenomena. God's response in Job 38:33 points to the cosmic order in which earth and sky are united by 'laws'<sup>234</sup> written in the sky that exercise their rule over the earth, especially in relation to rain provision on earth. For God, creation is not only made up of life-threatening waters, but water and water-related phenomena can also be used for life on earth.

### 3.5.5.5 The clouds as water-carriers (Job 38:34-38)

This strophe conveys the falling of rain from the clouds as a response to the voice of God. The whole strophe is about the majestic control of God over the rains (vv.34-35), animals' prediction of the arrival of rain (Cock & Ibis, v.36), and a famous image of the sending down of the rains and their effects on earth (vv.37-38).

In contrast to Elihu's speech in Job 36:26-37:13 where the clouds with their water and lightning are used as life-giving or life-threatening, these water-related phenomena are primarily presented as manifestations of God's involvement in his universe and his skill in its maintenance. By the question 'Can you lift up your voice ...' (v.34), Job is challenged whether the abundant waters-above may obey his command and fall down the way they respond to God's order. It is ironically implied that even if Job can shout as strongly as possible, his voice would not even reach the clouds, the carriers of waters-above (Job 36:29) that fall down as rain accompanied by lightning (v.35).

---

<sup>234</sup> These laws in Job 38:33 might presume the word Ma'at in Egypt referring to the maintenance of the creative order in שָׁלוֹם (peace) and מִצְדִּיקָה (justice) (Schmid 1984:105) or the Sumerian concept Me relating to preordained divine decrees by which the natural order, religion and society are ordered (Van Dyk 2001:38).

The ideal is reinforcing the intrinsic worth of nature and human limits in controlling nature, especially the upper-waters, clouds or the lightning. What is interesting is that the text presents water-related phenomena as ‘subjects that can hear the voice’ and answer ‘Here we are’ (הִנְנוּ). The word הִנְנוּ presents the lightning as servants acting as full subjects to accomplish a particular mission the way Samuel (1 Sm 4-6) or Isaiah (Is 6:8) replied to God’s voice.

Ecologically speaking, the clouds, the torrents of waters/rains and their accompanied lightning have intrinsic worth, voice and purposely act in relation to the created order. God is apparently challenging Job (humans) to reconsider his claim that nature testifies to the tyranny of God, and instead discover the voice and intrinsic value of Earth teaching God’s wisdom in nature (Habel & The Earth Bible Team 2001:32).

The idea of the wisdom of God in nature continues in verse 36, which is a problematic text for scholars. The rendering of the verse as being about wisdom of the clouds would be in line with the meteorological context of the text. It must, however, be admitted that it sounds strange to attribute wisdom to the clouds or mist (see the rendering of the RSV). As noted earlier in our translation, there is good reason that this verse should be seen as about wisdom and understanding of Ibis and Cock since both birds are often seen in the Ancient Near East as foretellers of the arrival of rain from the clouds.<sup>235</sup>

The Ibis (טְחוֹת) was famously respected for its ability to foretell the rising of the Nile in Egypt, while the cock (שְׂכִי) was valued for its capacity to forecast the rain from the clouds (Jaussen 1924:574-82). This translation is in accordance with Job’s speech in chapter twelve supporting the idea that certain animals and birds have wisdom:

But ask the animals, and they will teach you; the birds of the air, and they will tell<sup>236</sup> you; ask the plants of the earth, and they will teach you; and the fish of the sea will declare to you (Job 12:7-8, NRSV).

<sup>235</sup> See also Peters, J P 1914. The Cock in the Old Testament. *JBL* 33/2, 152-156.

<sup>236</sup> The words וְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וְיִגְדֶּךָ (and the birds of the sky shall tell you, Job 12:7) can also mean ‘the birds of the sky will predict/announce’ in the sense that the root נגד refers to something like ‘to inform, to declare before as it is the case for the meaning of נגד in Genesis 3:11 and 12:18, and especially in Genesis 41:25 where Joseph

The rising of the Nile and the coming of rains from the sky are two phenomena which fit with the main theme of the text. Therefore, Today's English Version (TEV) simply rendered the verse as:

Who tells the Ibis that the Nile will flood? Or who tells the Rooster that the rain will fall? (Job 38:36)

The response is obviously God. The text implies that these birds have wisdom (הִכְמָה) and understanding (בִּינָה) greater than normal, inserted in them by God. By contrast, Job (humans) lacks this skill of foretelling the rains in addition to his (their) inability to command the cloudburst and the lightning. These birds are only a testimony to the actions of the clouds as water-skins pouring down rain earthward.

In this sense, Job 38:37 depicts how, in order to bring rain on earth, God first counts (סָפַר) the clouds before 'tilting' (שָׁכַב) or literally 'to cause to lie down'<sup>237</sup> (Hiphil form) these 'water jars'<sup>238</sup> or water-skins so that their contents spill out and fall on earth. Rain therefore reaches the earth directly from the clouds:

As the celestial reservoir contains the water already in liquid form and ready to come down as rain, the most obvious hypothesis would seem to be that the water passed through the firmament into the clouds to be carried by them to that part of the earth which was to receive the rain (Sutcliffe 1953:100).

Therefore, the verb סָפַר in Job 38:37 about the sky denotes 'the question of counting the clouds rightly, for they are water-skins whose contents should only be poured out with deliberate purpose' (Dhorme 1967: 594). The effect of rain is the accumulation of the dust into a compact mass (v.38).<sup>239</sup> Hillel views this natural phenomenon as a sign of the fertility because:

---

explains Pharaoh that he has been 'foretold/revealed' (הִגִּיד, the form Hophal of נָגַד) by God about things to come.

<sup>237</sup> As earlier commented on the word שָׁמַיִם (sky), the expression נְבֵלֵי שָׁמַיִם (jars of the sky) points here to the water-skins of the skies implying that the clouds form a solid container of upper-waters (Job 26:3) that can be emptied by tilting it or causing it to lie down (שָׁכַב).

<sup>238</sup> In Lamentations 4:2, a 'water jar' (נֶבֶל) is considered as a work of the potter. A water jar is always attested in the Old Testament in reference to wine storage (1 Sm 1:24; 10:3; 2 Sm 16:1; Neh 5:18; Jr 13:12) or oil container.

<sup>239</sup> Job 38:38 probably implies the early rains of October-November that fall down after the summer heat, and thus enable the fertility of the land, as mentioned earlier on rain in Job 36:26-37:13.

The effectiveness of rain in sustaining crops depends on the presence of a receptive and retentive soil. To be productive, the soil must be able to absorb the rainwater rather than shed it and to store the moisture in the rooting zone of the crops to be grown (Hillel 2006:146).

This clue testifies to the text's consciousness of the preciousness and intrinsic value of water contained in the clouds which is to be poured out for the purpose of enabling agricultural fertility. The text is in accordance with the Earth Bible's principles of intrinsic worth and purpose of water and water-related phenomena depicted here.

### 3.5.5.6 Eco-theological synthesis

The above analysis shows that all the water-related phenomena depicted here are viewed for their intrinsic value, purpose and interconnectedness. The intrinsic worth of hail and snow is shown in the fact that these water-related phenomena are not only kept in treasuries (places), but also designed to be used during specific times (of scarcity and life-threatening) (Job 38:22-23). The occurrence of the word **דָּרְדָּר** in Job 38:24-25 implies that the weather forces accompanying rain (wind and lightning) respect a fixed course (**דָּרְדָּר**) in accordance with a deep order in the cosmos.

In addition, Job 38:25-27 turns to the significance of the **פֶּלֶג לְשֹׁטָף** (torrential rains) and thunderstorm (**רִיזִיז**) which not only follow fixed roads (**הַתְּעֹלָה** & **דָּרְדָּר**), but also supply life-giving water to the land where no one lives (v.26) that put forth grass. In contrast to Elihu's speech, rain is not viewed for its usefulness for humans, but for its own value that can create life in a lifeless land. The target of the rain in this text is not just the fruitful land worked to feed people as in Job 36:27-28, but the wilderness which is transformed into a fertile land.

Job 38:31-33 turns to four stars related to the coming of rain. As in Genesis 1:14-18, it is not their identity with which the text is concerned, but their role as signs for time or seasons. In this sense, the principle of purpose is highlighted in verse 33 that the earth and the sky are connected by 'laws' written in the sky that exercise their rule over the earth, especially in relation to rain provision on earth.

Finally, Job 38:34-38 presents the clouds as water-carriers. What is interesting is that the text presents the rainstorm/thunderstorm as subjects that can hear the voice and answer ‘Here we are’ (הֲיִנְנֵנוּ). The word הֲיִנְנֵנוּ presents the rainstorm/lightning as servants acting as full subjects to accomplish a particular mission the way Samuel (1 Sm 3:10) or Isaiah (Is 6:8) replied to God’s voice. Ecologically speaking, the clouds, the torrents of rains and their escorted lightning have intrinsic worth, voice and purposely act in relation to the created order. The text also presents some birds that can feel the coming of rain, a skill that humans lack.

### **3.6 Comparative conclusion**

Apart from a general introduction on the book of Job and an overview on water in the book, this chapter involved the analysis of three different texts from three main characters of the book: Job, Job’s friends and God. The researcher tried to discern the voice, the intrinsic value, the principle of purpose and interconnectedness of water and water-related phenomena expressed in these anthropogenic texts.

Job 14:7-12 exclusively views water as having intrinsic value and life-giving function. This ecological awareness is stated either in its connectedness with the flora realm (vv.7-9) or in comparing human death with the vanishing of bodies of water that were considered as permanent and a perennial source of life, river and sea (vv.10-12). The simile reinforces the life-giving potential of water, and would be of great relevance in Africa where drought and the drying of substantial lakes are major threats. The text can be used to teach about the relevance of a reliable water supply and expects us to resign from activities that may weaken water supplies.

Unlike Job’s speech in Job 14:7-12, Elihu’s speech in Job 36:26-37:13 is informed by both life-giving and life-threatening potential of water and water-related phenomena. Job 37:13 concludes that God uses water and water-related phenomena for curse or for blessing. However, the passage is highly anthropocentric since humans are the unique beneficiaries of the rain in Job 36:27-28. Still, the principle of the intrinsic value of water is implied in the fact that most of the water-related phenomena (sea, rainclouds

or rainstorm) are not created bodies, but assumed to be valuable as God's partners to judge, punish or bless.

Contrary to Job 36:26-37:13, the water-related phenomena in Job 38:22-38 are depicted for their own worth regardless of the interest of human beings. In contrast to Elihu's speech, rain is not viewed for its usefulness for humans, but for its own value creating life in a lifeless land. The target of the rain here is not just the fertile land worked to feed people as in Job 36:27-28, but the wilderness which is transformed into a fertile land. The intrinsic worth and principle of purpose are also emphasised in the fact that most water-related phenomena are not only kept in treasuries, but also designed to be used during specific 'times'.

In the researcher's view, God's speech in Job 38:22-38 contains much ecological and valuable wisdom presupposing that the author was aware of both life-giving and life-threatening potential of water and water-related phenomena. The speech also implies that the sage was informed by the intrinsic worth of nature. The water-related phenomena are also presented in interconnectedness with other nature images (stars, sky, Cock and Ibis) for a specific purpose. Interestingly, Job 38:34-38 depict the rainstorms as 'subjects', not 'objects', that can hear and answer 'Here we are' (הֲיִנְנֵנוּ) the way humans in the Bible responded to God's call.

This is proof that the Old Testament wisdom books contain ecological insights on water that scholars have missed for years. The fact that water-related phenomena<sup>240</sup> respond as subjects is specific to the book of Job. Some words in the analysed verses are even *hapax legomena* such as the 'storehouse' of snow and hail; the unending course of rain to the land empty of human life in contrast to its falling in drops to inhabited fertile land of humans in Genesis 2:4b-6; the theme of punishing and blessing by the same water-related phenomenon (Job 37:13), which explicitly appears again, as far as the researcher knows, only in Wisdom 11:2-14 and 19:1-9. The fourth chapter of this thesis focuses on retrieving ecological insights of water and water-related phenomena in the book of Proverbs.

---

<sup>240</sup> Ecologically, we assume water in Genesis 1:6ff acted as subject but the text does not explicitly say that they responded 'with voice' the way Job 38:34-38 presents them.

## CHAPTER FOUR: WATER AND WATER-RELATED PHENOMENA IN THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter attempts an ecological reading of certain texts of the book of Proverbs containing references about water presented either as a vehicle for human matters or as real cosmic entities. The book of Proverbs has seven sections, namely Proverbs 1-9; 10:1-22:16; 22:17-24:22; 24:23-34; 25:1-29:27; 30:1-33 and 31:1-31.<sup>241</sup> According to the research undertaken, the fourth, sixth and seventh sections do not have significant references about water. The second and third sections contain isolated references that highlight certain aspects of water as life-giving or life-threatening. Only Proverbs 1-9 and 25:1-29:27 contain wisdom poems employing water metaphors as vehicles for human issues, namely Proverbs 5:15-20, 9:13-18 and 25:23-26.

In addition to these metaphorical texts, this study offers an eco-theological analysis of Proverbs 3:19-20 and 8:22-31, which are termed as the main texts that treat creation (including water and water-related phenomena) in a real physical sense in the book of Proverbs (Dell 2006:139). Scholarly studies on these texts accentuate the role of wisdom in creation rather than the creation domains themselves.<sup>242</sup> In this sense, the ecological significance of water and water-related phenomena in these texts is muffled in overwhelming analyses about wisdom's efficacy in creation<sup>243</sup>.

Therefore, this chapter contains two sections. The first section scrutinises ecological potential of water and water-related phenomena in the above-cited metaphorical texts

---

<sup>241</sup> See Waltke, B K 2004. *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1-15*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, pp. 9-27. See also see Appendix A at the end of this thesis.

<sup>242</sup> See Clifford, R J 1992. The Theology of Creation in Proverbs 8:22-31, in Clifford, R J & Collins J J (eds), *Creation in the Biblical Traditions*, 85-96. Washington, DC: The Catholic Biblical Association of America. (CBQMS 24); Brown, W P 1999. *The Ethos of the Cosmos: The Genesis of Moral Imagination in the Bible*. Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge, U K: W B Eerdmans, pp. 272-92; Kavusa, K J 2013. *Humans and Ecosystems in the Priestly Creation Account: An Ecological Interpretation of Genesis 1:1-2:4a*. Saarbrücken: Lambert Academic Press, pp. 170-172.

<sup>243</sup> See Clifford, R J 1994. *Creation Accounts in the Ancient Near East and in the Bible*. Washington: CBAA (CBQMS 26), p 183-185. In this book, several biblical creation accounts, including Proverbs 3:19-20 and 8:22-31, are analysed in comparison with Ancient Near Eastern creation myths.

(Proverbs 5:15-20; 9:13-18 and 25:23-26), while the second is devoted to Proverbs 3:19-20 and 8:22-31 that speak about water as a real physical entity.

Some of the reasons for this choice of texts involve the following: first, in chapter two of this thesis, they were selected as samples for the literature review. Second, each one is a literary unit containing water and water-related phenomena as sources of life and death. Third, they have been objects of analysis in many publications where water and water-related phenomena feature in a secondary position. Fourth, no single study can attempt an in-depth analysis of all references to water and water-related phenomena in the book of Proverbs.

However, a few isolated verses, namely Proverbs 10:11; 13:14; 14:27; 16:22 and 21:1 concerning water as fountain/springs will be incorporated in the analyses of Proverbs 5:15-20 and Proverbs 25:23-26, while Proverbs 18:4 and 20:5 will enhance the analysis of Proverbs 9:13-18.

It is noted again here that the analysis of these passages is carried out in terms of the problem statement of this thesis, namely that firstly, they are not given sufficient attention in the study of water and water-related phenomena, and secondly that they are relevant to a study that focuses on the portrayal of water as a source of life and death. A close reading of these texts will be supplemented by socio-historical considerations about the book of Proverbs, as well as by geographical, meteorological and hydrological information that might have informed the use of water in a certain passage.

#### **4.2 References to water and water-related phenomena in the metaphorical texts of Proverbs**

As mentioned earlier, the selected metaphorical texts in this study are Proverbs 5:15-20; 9:13-18 and 25:23-26. The reasons for this choice are given in the introduction of this chapter.

## 4.2.1 Water and water-related phenomena in Proverbs 5:15-20

### 4.2.1.1 Masoretic Text of Proverbs 5:15-20

The Masoretic Text (MT) does not present major problems except for verse 16, which is the key issue among scholars.

15 שְׁתֵּה-מִים מִבְּוֶרֶךְ וְנִזְלִים מִתּוֹךְ בְּאֵרֶךְ:

16 יִפְּוֹצוּ<sup>244</sup> מֵעֵינֵינִתֶיךָ הַוּצָה בְּרַחֲבוֹת פְּלִגֵּי-מַיִם:

17 יִהְיוּ-לָךְ לְבַגְדֶךָ וְאֵין לְזָרִים אֲתָךְ:

18 יִהְיֶה-מְקוֹרֶךָ בְּרוֹךְ וְשִׁמְחַח מֵאֲשֶׁת נְעוּרֶךָ:

19 אֵילַת אֲהָבִים וַיַּעֲלֵת-יָחוּ דַדֶּיךָ יִרְנֶה בְּכָל-עֵת

בְּאֵהֱבָתָה תִשָּׂגָה תָּמִיד:

20 וְלָמָּה תִשָּׂגָה בְּנִי בְזָרָה וְתַחֲבִיבֵךְ חַק נְכָרֶיךָ:

### 4.2.1.2 Discussion of variants on Proverbs 15:16

The Jussive form יִפְּוֹצוּ in verse 16 of the MT reads ‘Let your springs flow into the streets’. This reading is adopted by many modern translations, including the CJB and JPS. The MT reading would, however, contradict the claim of verse 15, confining sexual activity within a marriage framework. LXX, for example, realised the problem, and translated the verse as ‘lest your springs overflow like a stream in the open street’ adopting the Greek negative preposition *μή* (lest) of the codex *Vaticanus* in the sense of preventing infidelity of one’s wife.

Chisholm (2000:400) and Fox (2000:201) think that Proverbs 5:16 implies that one’s wife may satisfy or attract many men just like a prostitute. The verse is understood in the sense that the husband’s unfaithfulness can lead his wife to adultery (see BFC). This interpretation is unlikely given that it is not even sure whether the preposition *μή*

<sup>244</sup> The translation of this word is explained in section 2.1.2.

belonged to the Greek original text as it is absent in important manuscripts, such as the *Alexandrinus* and *Sinaiticus* (Clifford 1999:68).

Given the problem, Scott (1965) renders the verse to indicate result: ‘and so your springs will flow’. The translation understands ‘springs’ and ‘streams’ as offspring in the sense that if someone restricts his sexual activity to his wife, he will have many legitimate children (not bastards) in the community (see the translation of JPS). This rendition is also dubious because, as far as the researcher investigated, nowhere in the Bible do springs/streams of water refer to descendants.

Kruger tried to solve the matter by suggesting that the metaphor is about ‘private’ versus ‘common’ property: one’s cistern (wife) as against springs of water (harlots) in the open squares or the water that belongs to you alone contrary to waters which are available in public areas (1987:67-68). Kruger is on the right track, but his reading fails to explain how the Jussive **יְהִי־לָהֶם לְבַיְתָהֶם** (‘let them [springs/fountains] be yours alone) in verse 17 could refer to prostitutes (harlots).

The possible translation of Proverbs 5:16 seems to be that this verse is a rhetorical question expecting a ‘No’ answer in the sense that springs and streams of water refer to the husband’s sexuality which must be used only within the framework of marriage (McKane 1970:318; Clifford 1999:71). Skehan (1946:295) explains that Proverbs 5:16 might have been introduced by **אֵיךְ** (how should, see v.12) which was probably overlooked due to an error of haplography since the preceding word is **בְּאֵרְךָ** (your well, v.15b).

#### 4.2.1.3 Translation

The present translation draws on the NRSV except verse 16, which is the fruit of our textual discussion above.

<sup>15</sup> Drink water from your own cistern,  
flowing water from your own well.

<sup>16</sup> How should your springs be scattered abroad,  
streams of water in the streets?

- <sup>17</sup> Let them be for yourself alone,  
and not for sharing with strangers.
- <sup>18</sup> Let your fountain be blessed,  
and rejoice in the wife of your youth,
- <sup>19</sup> A lovely deer, a graceful doe.  
May her breasts satisfy you at all times;  
May you be intoxicated always by her love.
- <sup>20</sup> Why should you be intoxicated, my son, by another woman  
and embrace the bosom of an adulteress?

#### 4.2.1.4 Proverbs 5:15-20 in its literary structure

It is widely agreed that the book of Proverbs is by nature a collection of sayings from anonymous sages over a number of generations, at least from Solomon's reign (10<sup>th</sup> century BCE) to somewhere during the exile or the postexilic (Persian and Hellenistic) eras, but before Ben Sira (2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE) (Fox 2000:6; Dell 2006:19).<sup>245</sup> The book is therefore not a single composition,<sup>246</sup> but an anthology of different works consisting of various poems, instructions, speeches and a few sayings dispersed in several collections.<sup>247</sup>

Proverbs 1-9, which is the original literary context of Proverbs 5:15-20, constitutes the first section of the book. This section, which consists of twelve wisdom poems,<sup>248</sup> may have formerly stood as an independent book prior to the editorial composition (Weeks

<sup>245</sup> For further discussion of the origin and date of the composition of Proverbs, see Toy, C H 1977. *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Proverbs*. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, xix-xxxii.

<sup>246</sup> The title 'Proverbs of Solomon' does not claim that Solomon was the 'author' of the book in the modern sense of the term, but is in accordance with the Ancient Near Eastern principle of honorary and pseud-epigraphic authorship. The title of the work (Pr 1:1) is similar to Egyptian instructional texts, which include the name of the author/compiler formulated in the third person with epithets. In this sense, these titles not only refer to the author of the work, but also identify the voice that is heard throughout the document. The notice 'Solomon son of David' (1:1) implies that editors might have included it to clarify the identity of the speaker in the document. For an interesting discussion of various forms of authorship in the Ancient East, see Van der Toorn, K 2007. *Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, pp.27-49.

<sup>247</sup> Proverbs 1:1-9:18; Proverbs 10:1-22:16; Proverbs 22:17-24:22; Proverbs 24:23-34; Proverbs 25:1-29:27; Proverbs 30:1-33 and Proverbs 31:1-31. For more details, see Waltke, B K 2004. *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1-15*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, pp.9-27.

<sup>248</sup> Ten lectures of the father to his son: 1:8-19; 2:1-22; 3:1-12, 13-35; 4:1-9, 10-19, 20-27; 5:1-23; 6:1-19; 6:20-35; 7:1-27) and two interludes, extended addresses of the Woman Wisdom (1:20-33; 8:1-36).

2007:1). It is considered as the latest redaction<sup>249</sup> due to its precise pedagogic form, its philosophical conceptions, its strict view against certain sins (adultery and robbery) (Toy 1977:xxviii) as well as its status as a kind of introductory<sup>250</sup> framework within which to read the rest of the book (Fox 2000:7). Its discourses do not display a logical flow of thought from one instruction to another; rather they address the issue of seduction from different angles and through distinct rhetorical strategies (Ansberry 2011:44).

The intention is to prepare young people to face the problems and dangers of the adult world so that they may become wise and responsible (Whybray 1994b:11). This refers precisely to wisdom poems that have the nature of instructions from parents to son (or teacher to pupil) about how to make right choices and find the way of wisdom and life rather than the way to folly and death (Dell 2006:22). It is therefore purposefully that the centre of Proverbs 1-9 is held by Proverbs 3:1-4:27 and Proverbs 5:1-6:35 that respectively command to heed teaching about and warn against adulterous sex.<sup>251</sup>

Several scholars<sup>252</sup> have convincingly argued that Proverbs 5:1-20, comprising teaching from father/teacher to son/pupil to avoid extramarital sexual relationships is a distinct literary unit, which is linked to Proverbs 6:1-19 by an editorial addition, namely Proverbs 5:21-23.<sup>253</sup> It is understood that apart from the introduction (Pr 5:1) and the editorial concluding remarks (Pr 5:21-23), Proverbs 5:1-20 contains two

---

<sup>249</sup> However, some have argued for an earlier dating for the section, or at least for the presence of older concepts, genres and material within it. It should be mentioned that, given the nature of the book as a collection or series of collections, an important distinction needs to be made between oral and written stages of materials which may have formerly existed in a context before the one in which they now appear (Dell 2006:18).

<sup>250</sup> The heading 'The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel,' (1:1) is the title not only of chapters 1-9 but also of the whole book (Clifford 1999:1).

<sup>251</sup> For the schematic structure of Proverbs 1-9, see Waltke, B K 2004. *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1-15*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, p.12.

<sup>252</sup> Toy (1977:116) views Proverbs 5:15-20 as the climax of Chapter 5, while verses 21-23 are considered as final editorial addition similar to what is found at the end of Chapters 1, 2 and 3. Whybray (1994b:13) explains that the ending short group of verses (1:19; 2:21-22; 3:53; 4:18-19; 5:21-23), which speak in general terms of the respective fates of the wicked and/or the righteous, is not necessarily the conclusion of the 'original' instruction. In this sense, Proverbs 5:21-23, where the idea is not adultery but God's punishment of sin, seems to be, as McKane (1970:313) said, a Yahwistic addition attempt to link Proverbs 5 with Proverbs 6:1-19.

<sup>253</sup> Fox (2000:204) refutes the argument of editorial addition arguing that the unit verses 21-23 might have existed as independent proverbs before being combined and applied to verses 15-20. Still, Fox recognises that the text is an independent unit with the summarising function on the theological generalisation. It should be admitted that the religious reward of sin is a new theme here which should be regarded as an editorial addition. The book of Proverbs is full of such literary attempts added either for theological or non-theological reasons (for interesting discussions, see Whybray, R N 1994b. *The Composition of the Book of Proverbs*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press (JSOTSup 168), pp.13ff.

opposite speeches: one commanding avoidance of liaisons with harlots whose way leads to Sheol (Pr 5:2-14), and another (Proverbs 5:15-20) advising faithfulness in marriage.

Through the effective use of water-related metaphors, the son's wife in Proverbs 5:15-20 is described as an appropriate receptacle (cistern and well) of trustworthy water to drink, while the male semen is assumed as springs, streams of water and fountains that should not be spilled or wasted on public areas with harlots (vv.15-18). In both cases, water and water-related phenomena serve as a vehicle for anthropocentrism or androcentrism related to human sexuality. Wells and cisterns are a private property for one's own water usage, images contrasted with the common property of streets and squares where the loose women roam (Dell 2006:42).

As mentioned earlier in chapter two of this thesis, a great number of studies have proved that Proverbs 5:15-20 is about a father/teacher instructing his son/pupil that genuine sexual happiness is found within the framework of marriage.<sup>254</sup> While agreeing with erotic interpretations of Proverbs 5:15-20, the researcher attempts the possible retrieval of ecological wisdom suggested by water and water-related metaphors that are found in the text. The question is: which assumptions about or attitudes towards water are reflected in the author's use of water-related management metaphors in an attempt to promote faithfulness in marriage?

#### **4.2.1.5 The structure of Proverbs 5:15-20**

This section presents the structure of the text of Proverbs 5:15-20. The structure draws on insights developed in the book of Brown (1999:293). The section offers a schematic structure of the text followed by comments that will be developed in the section about the retrieval of ecological wisdom from the text.

---

<sup>254</sup> Clifford, R J 1999. *Proverbs: A Commentary*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, p.66-72; Chisholm Jr, R B 2000. "Drink Water from Your Own Cistern": A Literary Study of Proverbs 5:15-23. *BS* 157, 397-409; Fontaine, C R 2005. Visual Metaphors and Proverbs 5:15-20: Some Archaeological Reflections on Gendered Iconography, in Troxel, R, Friebel, K G & Magary, D R (eds), *Seeking the Wisdom of the Ancient: Essays Offered to Honour Michael V. Fox on the Occasion of his Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, 185-202. Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns [see pages 198-201] etc.

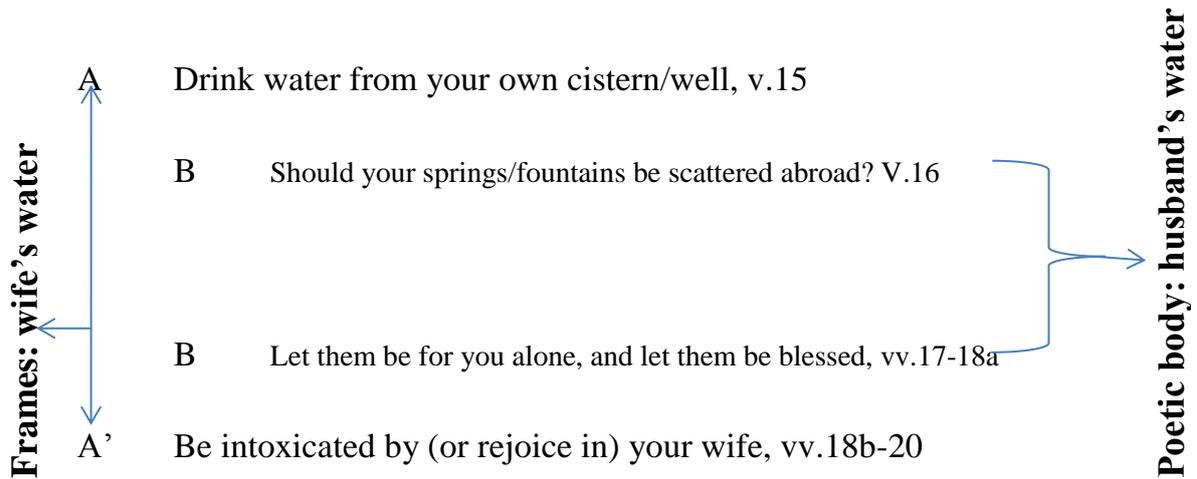


Figure 3: Rhetorical structure of Proverbs 5:15-20

This structure is a kind of alternating parallelism (ring composition) (Willis 1987:49). AA' are employed in a way that the metaphors of cistern/well in A point to the idea of being intoxicated by one's own wife in A'. The imperative 'drink water (שְׁתֵּה-מַיִם) v.15) from your own cistern/well' is used as a synonym for being intoxicated (תִּשְׁכָּה) v.19) by your own wife in the literal sense of becoming drunk of your wife's water. That is why the *piel* form (intensive form) יִרְוֶךָ (from the root רוה) literarily refers to plenty of water in one's wife to quench thirst 'all the time' (בְּכָל-עֵת) and 'always' (תָּמִיד) (v.19). The researcher will return to the possible ecological significance of this statement later.

Furthermore, the water-related metaphors of springs and streams of water (water that is naturally produced without human efforts) in B point to the idea of responsible water management reflected in B'. Despite the fact that springs and fountain streams are caused by natural means, it is assumed that they may not last forever. In this sense, B poses as a rhetorical question that assumes a No answer, which is further commented on in B' that water should not be used for wrong purposes, and should be consumed within specific limits.

While the sections AA' relate to one's wife pictured by cistern/well of water, BB' refer to male sexuality (semen) as natural water that should be managed properly. The wife's 'water' constitutes the frame of the passage (vv.15, 18b, 19-20), while the husband's water fills the poetic body of the unit (vv.16-18a) (Brown 1999:293). The

unit contrasts the dangers from ‘outside’ (streets) and the security from ‘inside’ in the sense that one’s wife is a shield against such dangers and safeguards a man’s wealth or health (Dell 2006:41).

#### **4.2.1.6 Retrieving the ecological wisdom of Proverbs 5:15-20**

In this section, the author examines the ecological implication of the expressions wells and cisterns (v.15ab) as well as springs and fountains (vv.16-18). The researcher will examine first the significance of these water-related phenomena in the Old Testament before retrieving their ecological wisdom in Proverbs 5:15-20 where they are used as metaphors for sexuality in marriage.

##### **4.2.1.6.1 Cisterns and wells in the Old Testament (verse 15ab)**

Prior to the late bronze period,<sup>255</sup> people in Canaan settled only in the Jordan valley where life was possible due to the presence of water for the livestock and agriculture (Reymond 1958:123). As an essential condition of their settlement to other areas such as the highlands of Canaan, the Israelites had to develop ways of water conservation either in hewing out and plastering cisterns in order to collect and store rainwater for the dry seasons, or in digging wells to contain groundwater, which often preceded the installation of people in a city or a village (Jones 1928:6).

The Hebrew expression בְּאֵר מַיִם חַיִּים (a well of living water) in many parts of the Bible implies that with a well, the quality of water supply was assured even in the time of drought. It was therefore the responsibility of the king<sup>256</sup> to dig and manage the well or cistern for a city (Num 21:18). In this sense,

Such wells required communal action to dig, maintain, and regulate, and they provided a reliable, long-term supply of water for an entire village or town. Indeed, the well of each town became the center of communal life, an important meeting place but occasionally also a focus of rivalry (Hillel 2006:316).

<sup>255</sup> Approximatively at 1500 BCE.

<sup>256</sup> See Hezekiah’s efforts in securing a water supply in 2 Chronicles 32:2-5. For further observations, see King, P J & Stager, L E 2001. *Life in Biblical Israel*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox (Library of Ancient Israel), 210-23.

That is why the main concern of the builders of the gigantic wells and water tunnels was to secure a reliable water supply that could be protected during a siege<sup>257</sup> (Hopkins 1985:98). However, given that wells could not be drilled everywhere, the making of cisterns was a considerable discovery that boosted human settlement especially in places where perennial streams and other water sources were neither numerous, reliable, nor voluminous<sup>258</sup> (Hamilton 1962:812). Modern data about Palestine inform that due to unreliable water delivery, virtually every contemporary Palestinian house has at least one or several water cisterns (Amnesty International 2009:15, 39-50; 68-69).

It should be said here that apart from their limited use for garden irrigation,<sup>259</sup> cisterns more likely stored water for human consumption or for watering livestock kept within the settlement (Hopkins 1985:95). They were used either as water supplement during summer (when wells and sources dried up), or played the role of a well – as a public property – in places where it was difficult to dig a well (Reymond 1958:134). The advantage of a cistern over a well is that cisterns can be made everywhere (in gardens, fields, deserts, at home) with all kinds of dimensions since the question of depth is not applicable.

Cisterns and wells implied hard work as indicated by several Hebrew verbs used for their drilling (הָפַר, to drill in Gn 21:30: הָפַרְתִּי אֶת־הַבְּאֵר, I dug the well); נָקַר, to dig in Isaiah 51:1; כָּרַה, to excavate in Gn 26:25. Archaeological findings reveal that cisterns were cut directly into bedrock in the shape of a bottle or bell in order to hold water successfully (Fontaine 2005:198). As it was hard to make a cistern, one will understand why the authors of Deuteronomy 6:11 considered it a privilege for Israel to take possession of a country in which a number of cisterns were already available.

---

<sup>257</sup> The siege of a well/cistern was a measure of oppression in the Ancient East during war. Amnesty international (2009:15) informs us that even in modern times, under the new Israeli military regime imposed in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT), Palestinians could no longer drill new wells or rehabilitate or even just repair existing ones, or carry out other any water-related projects (from pipes, networks, and reservoirs to wells and springs and even rainwater cisterns), without first obtaining a permit from the Israeli army.

<sup>258</sup> The discovery of cistern-making increased the settlement of the Israelites all over the regions of Palestine whereas Canaanites, dependent to nature torrents, were confined to limited areas.

<sup>259</sup> Perhaps one may infer as much from Isaiah 27:3 where a cistern carved in the vineyard would have facilitated the keeper's watering. In any case, cisterns in the fields, would have made water available for hand-watering of household gardens, individual plants such as trees or vines, or rows of other crops.

Cisterns and wells also required thorough maintenance checks in order to keep them in good condition. In this sense, Hillel informs us that:

Cisterns, which required maintenance (clearing of silt, plastering of cracks, and repairing of feeder channels) and contain a finite volume of water that quickly can be depleted, are “owned” by particular tribes and are guarded jealously (2006:57).

Without maintenance, the cistern would soon become useless. Apropos, without naming the origin of the fractures, Jeremiah 2:13 explains how the broken cisterns (בְּרוֹת נִשְׁבָּרוֹת) are useless: they cannot hold or maintain water. The annotations of a woman covering the well’s mouth in 2 Samuel 17:19 and the adjective צָרָה (narrow) for a well in Proverbs 18:27 imply that the makers of cisterns and wells made their orifices as small as possible in order to prevent evaporation and keep water fresh (Jr 6:7). Furthermore, an empty pit or cistern constituted a public danger; certain Psalms compared a cistern to peril of death (Ps 30:2; 40:3) in affirming that God delivered people by ‘drawing (דָּלָה) them from the hole’. In this sense, cistern and well images in Proverbs 5:15 may imply strong ecological insights.

#### 4.2.1.6.2 The significance of well/cistern metaphors (verse 15)

The relationship between husband and wife is conveyed through the images of water, a powerful metaphor in an arid land of Palestine that means sustenance and fertility (Brown 1999:293). One’s wife is not ‘like’ but ‘is’<sup>260</sup> fresh flowing water (נוֹזְלִים) as in Song 4:15 where the beloved is ‘a garden spring, a well of living water, and flowing water (נוֹזְלִים) from Lebanon’. Just as the deeps that fertilise the earth in Proverbs 3:20, so the wife is depicted as the source of sexual sustenance, the son’s well and cistern of reliable water. The metaphor is therefore informed by the intrinsic value of water as life-giver.

The order שָׁתֵּה מִמֵּי מְבוֹרְךָ (drink<sup>261</sup> water from your own cistern) and מִבְּאֵרְךָ (from your own well) reflects circumstances in the 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE<sup>262</sup> where private cisterns in

<sup>260</sup> The text is a metaphor not a simile.

<sup>261</sup> The words ‘stolen water is sweet’ in Proverbs 9:17 recall the action of drinking in an erotic sense.

<sup>262</sup> It is said in 2 Kings 18:31 that people will drink water from their own cistern.

the homes prevailed in addition to city reservoirs (Fontaine 2005:200). The wife's 'water' framing the passage (vv.15 & 18b-20) implies the life-giving power attached to the well-managed water in private containers: the home life depended on them. In Palestine, it was not the natural rivers – which were scarce – that count more, but the life-giving rainwater collected in cisterns, and fresh water caught in wells hewn into bedrock by hard labour (Fontaine 2005:198)<sup>263</sup> as shown in the following image:



Figure 4: An Ancient Cistern in Ancient Israel<sup>264</sup>

The text depicts one's wife both as a cistern (בֹּרַי), which is a manmade reservoir to catch rainfall, and a well (בְּיַעַר) which is a source of fresh water that is always supplied by an underground spring. Although Fox (2000:199) qualifies this distinction as simply poetic rather than an active element in the text, it is however relevant if one looks back to the function of cisterns and wells in an arid Palestine. The text assumes that one's wife plays the role of both a 'basic' source of water (well) and a 'supplement' source of water (cistern).

Ecologically speaking, there is wordplay between human-made and natural sources of water. The text implies the fresh water is both a natural gift and fruit of human efforts. The text teaches that the son will have no water shortage no matter the season/time, on condition that water as a natural gift be valued for its intrinsic worth, and maintained in reliable infrastructures.

<sup>263</sup> In the south of Palestine (Arad, Kadesh Barnea, Beth-shemesh, Tel-sheva), cisterns were cut directly into bedrock in the shape of a bottle or bell, and in regions where rocks were porous, cisterns had to be plastered with lime in order to hold water successfully (Fontaine 2005:198). By contrast, in the north of the country (Gibeon, Hazor, Gezer, Meggido), cistern-makers cut directly down into the bedrock to reach the water-table.

<sup>264</sup> [www.israelimage.com](http://www.israelimage.com)

The Hebrew word נוֹזְלִים related to water from a well (v.15b) elsewhere refers to streams bubbling from a rock in the desert (Ps 78:16), the streams of Egypt (Ps 78:44), streams produced by rainfall (Is 44:3), and the waves of the Red Sea (Ex 15:8). While Song 4:15 associates the word נוֹזְלִים with a mountain (נוֹזְלִים מִן־לְבָנוֹן, flowing stream from Lebanon) and ‘living water’ to a well (בְּאֵר מַיִם חַיִּים, well of living water), Proverbs 5:15 understands נוֹזְלִים as simply the מַיִם חַיִּים (living water) flowing from his own well.

The expression מִבְּוֹרְךָ (from your own cistern) and מִתְּוֹךְ בְּאֵרְךָ (from your own well) implies thus that public (other) wells and cisterns (not managed by you) are not trustworthy. A prostitute is a public well/cistern. That is why Proverbs 23:27 depicts the prostitute as a deep pit (שׁוֹקֵה)<sup>265</sup> and a narrow well in the sense of a potential threat. It should be stated here that sometimes cisterns and wells were used as prisons since one could not get out of them without the help of others (Gn 37:20; Is 24:22; Zch 9:11).

The metaphor of a wife as the son’s cistern/well reinforces the intrinsic value of water that should be contained and restrained in a reliable private receptacle in contrast to public vessels accessible for everybody. Not only is the wife presumed to be unique, like no one else, she is also to be treasured for her own value and not to be shared with others (Clifford 1999:72). She is equated with those private cisterns and wells whose owners maintain them in good condition. It is only this kind of container that will firmly hold water, erotically referred to as ‘her breasts’ (דְּדֵיָהּ), which is suggested as ‘safe drink’ to intoxicate (יְרִי) the man all the time (בְּכָל־עֵת) and always (תָּמִיד) (v19).

The sage continues by equating male sexuality with springs and fountains, which are also two vital water-related phenomena in Israel (vv.16-18)

#### **4.2.1.6.3 Springs and fountains in the Old Testament (verses 16-18)**

In Genesis 1:6-10, the created order resulted from the separation process of the primal waters into water-above the dome (רְקִיעַ) and the lower-waters, including the seas and

<sup>265</sup> A pit was also used for trapping animals (Jr 2:6).

underground waters. The lower-waters were referred to as *tehom*<sup>266</sup> which constantly threatened to break out and turn into chaos the created order. Despite being part of *tehom*, springs and fountains picture the positive aspects of *tehom* as they provide the earth surface with life-giving and controlled underground water (Klopper 2002b:676).

Therefore, springs and fountains consist of natural outflows of underground water on the surface of the earth when the underground water-resistant rock level meets the ground surface, in contrast to a manmade well or cistern (Hopkins 1985:96). The porous state of limestone of Palestine favoured thus the formation of springs and fountains. Good use of such springs resulted in building terrace systems below the springs/fountains for irrigation purposes (Edelstein & Gibson 1982:52). It is in this sense that springs often determined the human settlements.<sup>267</sup>

Topographically, Canaan has a limited number of effective fountain streams flowing a few hours after each rain shower in the Negev,<sup>268</sup> a few days in the Judean uplands, and a few weeks in the north (Hopkins 1985:95). Most streams were often ephemeral, meagre and subject to fluctuations, as they are affected by the rainfall of the previous winter (Hillel 2006:299). Even the perennial streams that are nurtured by overflowing groundwater renewed by seasonal precipitation, decline to a drip during the summer season (Orni & Efrat 1973:441-442).

Feliks asserts that ‘there is no evidence that in ancient times there were more than the hundreds of small springs and the few moderate and large fountains which now exist’ (1971:388). The metaphorical language of Proverbs 5:16 about avoiding scattering the springs (water spill) on the streets is possibly informed by the ecological awareness of the scarcity of this natural resource. Proverbs 25:25 merely expresses deception over the muddying of this natural and scarce resource compared to a wavering righteous. The researcher will return to the ecological significance of these texts later.

---

<sup>266</sup> There is a great debate regarding the association of *tiamat* and *tehom*. This is not the place to argue for or against any perspective. The researcher agrees, however, with Heidel (1963:100) that both words *tiamat* and *tehom* alongside other Babylonian terms such as *tiamtu* or *tamtu* derive from the Semitic root *thm*, and mean ocean, sea or deep, the primeval waters constituting a potential threat for earth.

<sup>267</sup> Thus the frequency of the Hebrew root עין (spring) in place names: עין-דור (Jos 17:11); עין-גדי & עין-גלים (Ezk 47:10); עין-גנים (Jos 15:34); עין-גדי (Jos 15:62); עין-הקדה (Jos 19:21); עין-הקורא (Jg 15:19); עין רמון (Neh 11:29) etc.

<sup>268</sup> The Hebrew word for Negev means literally ‘dried up’.

Furthermore, in Canaan, most springs had sharply carved the limestone through which they course and flow through deeply incised valleys with limited floodplains (Hopkins 1985:95). In this sense, naturally, the extent of areas potentially irrigable by fountain streams remains strictly limited to the usual course of a certain stream. Indeed, this factor reduces agricultural activities in other areas where water could be intercepted, distributed or stored during the seasonal flow of the streams (Hopkins 1985:95).

Still, springs and fountains were considered a manifestation of God's care in an arid land of Palestine. That is why God's special concern/care for the poor and needy is pictured in terms of providing fountains and springs in Isaiah 41:17-18. In this sense, let us assess whether these water-related phenomena may offer ecological wisdom in Proverbs 5:16-18 where they are equated with male sexuality in a marriage.

#### **4.2.1.6.4 Ecological insights of springs/fountain images (verses 16-18)**

As noted earlier in a textual note, the researcher has aligned himself with those viewing verse 16 as a rhetorical question expecting a No answer: 'Should your springs flow into the streets?' referring to male sexuality. This is in accordance with Isaiah 48:1 in which fountains probably stand for sperm in the expression *וַיִּמְצֵי יְהוָה הַיְדֵדָה* (from the fountains/springs of Judah). In this sense, the text is obviously discouraging the husband's infidelity. The sense would therefore be 'Don't seek sexual pleasure in the streets' (Toy 1977:113).

The husband is also a source of water, whose streams are to flow to a limited area, namely to his wife (vv.16-17), just as springs in Canaan had sharply carved the limestone through which they flow 'all the time' and 'always'. Otherwise, the father/teacher warns that the son's springs will dissipate to the streets and strangers (vv.16-17) that would also result in the failing of his life (Brown 1999:293). The streets (*הוֹצָה*) and squares (*רְחֹבוֹת*) were often viewed as unsafe places where harlots and bandits lurked (Pr 1:20; 7:20) (Waltke 2004:319). The idea behind the verb *פָּרֵץ* (to scatter) does not therefore imply the increase of the springs' water flow, but the waste of this natural resource.

The rhetorical insight behind the text is that adultery will lead, *inter alia*, to impotence. In more ecological terms, wrong attitudes towards water resources will lead, *inter alia*, to water depletion. That is why one of principles of water management in the modern Israeli water law (1959) states that ‘Every person is entitled to use water, as long as that use does not cause the salination or depletion of the water resource’.<sup>269</sup> In a land in which water was scarce, where cisterns were built to store every drop of rainwater for the sake of irrigation and survival, the restriction of avoiding scattering water resource uselessly reveals that water was considered as:

Quelque chose de bon, d’utile, mais aussi comme quelque chose dont on risque facilement de manquer (Raymond 1958:2).<sup>270</sup>

Proverbs 5:16 is informed by the principle of the intrinsic worth of water which should be used respectfully and in a certain limit. It is not a coincidence that ancient civilisations (Egypt and Mesopotamia) flourished in river valleys, undertook extensive programs of springs water irrigation and water management, and believed that deities rose from water (Macauley 2010:90). In most of these civilisations, water management was part of the royal code of the empire to the point that:

To spurn or disrespect the waters was an insult, an act of defiance against a figure of authority with the power to punish (Morgan & Smith 2013:109).

Useless water spill on the streets is a disrespectful act towards water and testifies to the ignorance of ecological sustainability. Just as adultery drains away the life of the self, water stagnating on streets is implicated in many diseases in Africa. Proverbs 5:9-10 supports this interpretation mentioning that sexual liaison with the harlot drains away the man’s vigour and wealth. The text is clearly rooted in the desolate Israelite-Arabian context of aridness. The desert issues related to water scarcity may have informed Proverbs 5:16 to express feelings of careful management of the available resources in this metaphor. A parallel Arabian metaphor states:

---

<sup>269</sup> See Israeli Water Law and Water Authorities of 1959. Available online from: [http://www.sviva.gov.il/bin/en.jsp?enPage=e\\_BlankPage&enDisplay=view&enDispWhat=Object&enDispWho=Articals^12419&enZone=wat\\_law](http://www.sviva.gov.il/bin/en.jsp?enPage=e_BlankPage&enDisplay=view&enDispWhat=Object&enDispWho=Articals^12419&enZone=wat_law) (Accessed 14 May 2012).

<sup>270</sup> English translation: water is considered as something good, useful, but also as something that could easily be missed.

Don't pour away your water on the strength of a mirage (Manser 2007:11).

Ecologically, it implies that water spilled in the private cistern/well (v.15) is positively interconnected with the man's life in terms of health and wealth, while the contrast (springs spilled in the streets, v.16) would attract illness and misfortune. Proverbs 5:9-13 mention the dangers of adultery in terms of:<sup>271</sup>

Loss of reputation and health (verse 9), loss of wealth (verse 10), and hence finding oneself on the inevitable path to death and destruction bewailing one's lack of discipline (verses 11–13) (Dell 2006:42).

In this sense, verse 17a and verse 18a are used in a synonymic parallelism. The advice 'let them be for you alone' is the synonym of 'let your fountains be blessed'. The image of fountain streams is a significant metaphor of water that unites both the son or the husband and the wife. Shared among these two sources (husband and wife), water is mutually given and received providing life-giving enjoyment. The text is not about making children as pointed by Fox (2000:201-202), but sensual enjoyment. The basis for the text is rather Isaiah 36:16 where 'drinking from one's cistern' is the sign of wealth (Toy 1977:112). This joyful pleasure must not be shared with strangers. Brown clearly states:

Reserved for them alone, the vehicle of life and erotic joy [fountain streams and springs] must not flow beyond their relationship [to the streets]. So also their passionate abandonment: only from the wife [water in private well and cisterns] must the husband become "always intoxicated" and satisfied with her breasts (vv.19-20) (1999:294).

The wisdom poem assumes then an underlying view of not wasting water or water used for wrong purpose. As springs and fountains were scarce and meagre,<sup>272</sup> wasting the overflowing water from these sources could not be tolerated. Proverbs 5:16-18 assumes also that water is a life-giving entity if used in specific limits, the limitations suggested by Wisdom. As we shall see later, Folly encourages breaking the limitations

---

<sup>271</sup> Adultery would culminate in auto-destruction and death. In fact, death is the prescribed punishment for adulterers and adulteresses in Leviticus 20:10 and Deuteronomy 22:22.

<sup>272</sup> Ancient Israel had tiny streams which barely sufficed for drinking water, about which the village women and girls sat and talked waiting their turns to fill their jars, sometimes until far in the night. See [http://www.biblehistory.com/links.php?cat=39&sub=793&cat\\_name=Manners+%26+Customs&subcat\\_name=Springs+%26+Fountains](http://www.biblehistory.com/links.php?cat=39&sub=793&cat_name=Manners+%26+Customs&subcat_name=Springs+%26+Fountains) (Accessed 11 August 2014).

and drinking forbidden waters in Proverbs 9:17. In contrast, Proverbs 5:15-20 suggests that it is only within the limits of marriage that:

The waters are harnessed and bound by Wisdom to create new life and refresh one's own, but by breach of marriage they are unleashed with a destructive force that dissipates the self and destroys the familial community (Brown 1999:294).

The principles of the intrinsic worth of water as well as its interconnectedness with human life are reflected since water in public areas would result in death of the subject, while water in private cisterns are a source of life (cf. Pr 5:23).

It is all about water management. Although springs and fountains bubble from inside by natural means, they are considered an opportunity for wise use, since they were neither many nor voluminous in ancient Israel. They were also not viewed as something that may last forever. In the preceding chapter of this thesis, the researcher discovered that the Israelites were aware that even perennial and pre-existing streams, such as rivers, could also dry forever just as humans die forever lifeless (see the simile of Job 14:10-12). Proverbs 5:15-20 thus invites responsible water management.

## **4.2.2 Water and water-related phenomena in Proverbs 9:13-18**

### **4.2.2.1 Introduction**

The potential of water and water-related phenomena as sources of life and death are mainly found in verses 17-18. The researcher decided to present the passage as a whole, namely Proverbs 9:13-18, since verses 17-18 would not make sense if they were detached from their immediate literary context. Furthermore, the whole text is not about water, but uses water images to warn against adulterous attitudes.

### **4.2.2.2 The Masoretic Text of Proverbs 9:13-18**

13 אִשָּׁת בְּסִילוֹת הַמָּיָה פְּתִיּוֹת וּבַל־יִדְעָה מָה:

14 וַיִּשָּׁבָה לִפְתַּח בֵּיתָהּ עַל־כַּפָּאֵם מְרִמֵי קִרְתָּ:

15 לָקְרָא לְעַבְרֵי־דָרָךְ הַמַּיִשְׁרִים אֲרֻחוֹתָם:

16 מִי־פָתִי יִסֵּר הַנְּהוֹחֲסֵר־לֵב וְאָמְרָה לֹא:

17 מֵיִם־גְּנוּבִים יִמְתָּקוּ וְלֶחֶם סֹתְרִים יִנְעָם:

18 וְלֹא־יֵדַע כִּי־רַפְּאִים נָשָׂם בְּעַמְקֵי שְׂאוּל קְרֹאֶיהָ:<sup>273</sup> פ

#### 4.2.2.3 Translation of Proverbs 9:13-18

Unlike Proverbs 5:15-20, Proverbs 9:13-18 does not present major textual problems, except that LXX has added to verse 18 a fascinating statement urging the son to avoid foreign water (woman). The LXX addition will not be included in the translation of the text in accordance with the textual principle of *Lectio brevior*. Still, the researcher will draw on it to comment on the related verse. The following translation draws on the short version of the Masoretic Text as rendered in the NRSV that reads:

- <sup>13</sup> The foolish woman is loud;  
she is ignorant and knows nothing.
- <sup>14</sup> She sits at the door of her house,  
on a seat at the high places of the town,
- <sup>15</sup> calling to those who pass by,  
who are going straight on their way,
- <sup>16</sup> "You who are simple, turn in here!"  
And to those without sense she says,
- <sup>17</sup> "Stolen water is sweet,  
and bread eaten in secret is pleasant."
- <sup>18</sup> But they do not know that the dead are there,  
that her guests are in the depths of Sheol.

<sup>273</sup> The LXX has added here a fascinating explanation:

18a *Therefore, run away, do not delay in this place,  
neither fix your eyes upon her,*

18b *for thus will you go through foreign water  
and pass through a foreign river.*

18c *However, abstain from foreign water  
and do not drink from a foreign fountain,*

18d *that you may live for a long time  
and years of life may be added to you.* (Translation by Cook 1994:471).

#### 4.2.2.4 Social and literary contexts of Proverbs 9:13-18

This text is not about water, but associates in verses 17-18 woman Folly with ‘stolen sweet water’ and her way as leading to ‘the depths of Sheol’. Proverbs 9:13-18 as a whole lies in a social context refuting a strange woman or foreign woman who is referred to as an adulterous woman threatening to undermine the reputable order of the family and the society (Pr 2:16-19; 5:1-23; 6:20-35; 7:1-27). The portrayals of this strange woman have given rise to a variety of interpretations about the nature and function of the ‘strange’ or ‘foreign’ woman.<sup>274</sup>

Despite various descriptions of this woman, the father/teacher seems to present her as a single figure in terms of the wife of another man or an adulterous woman. Several parental lectures portray the Strange Woman as a threat as waters of Sheol (Pr 2:18) or water on public areas (Pr 5:16-17), while she depicts her love as ‘stolen sweet water’ (Pr 9:17). She therefore represents a loose woman violating her marriage (Pr 2:17) and seeking to seduce young men into an adulterous relationship (Pr 6:26; 7:10-21) that can last only for one night (Pr 7:18). She is thus not a foreigner from a distant land, but the woman next door, the neighbour’s wife (Brown 1999:290).

The immediate literary context of Proverbs 9:13-18 is the final interlude (Pr 9:1-18) of Proverbs 1-9 in which Woman Wisdom – embodying life, verses 1-6 – stands in contrast to Woman Folly (synonym of death, vv.13-18) (Ansberry 2011:62). The two women (Pr 9:1-6 & Pr 9:13-18) are structurally parallels, both inviting those without sense to partake of their solid and liquid refreshment (Yee 1989:64). However, while Woman Wisdom’s banquet (instruction) leads to life, the Woman Folly’s leads to death.

---

<sup>274</sup> Major interpretations include: 1) ethnical interpretations: here the strange woman is considered as a danger associated with exogamous marriage and embodies the economic problems that threaten the genealogical lineage, land tenure, and cultic rights of members in the *Golah* community; 2) poetic/religious function: here the strange woman as simply playing a poetic role in which ‘foreignness’ alludes to apostasy in Deuteronomist texts; 3) others identify the woman with harlots or prostitutes (for further details, see Ansberry, C B 2011. *Be Wise, my Son, and Make my Heart Glad: An Exploration of the Courtly Nature of the Book of Proverbs*. Berlin: De Gruyter, pp.50-53.

Woman Folly is not more than the אִשָּׁה זָרָה (loose woman) characterised by turbulence (7:11; 9:13), ignorance (5:6; 9:13), and whose path leads to the depths of Sheol (2:18; 5:5; 7:27; 9:18). While the text depicts Woman Wisdom as noble host endowing life to her devotees (9:1-6), Woman Folly is depicted as noisy hostess sitting (יָשָׁב) at the doorway of her house, and on a seat (כִּסֵּא) at the heights of the city (9:13-14) trying to allure the naïve with her seductive words and ‘stolen’ meal (Ansberry 2011:63).

Unlike Woman Wisdom who builds (בָּנְתָהּ) her house on seven pillars, invests energy and care in preparing her banquet before sending out her maidens and inviting guests<sup>275</sup> (9:1-3), Woman Folly is lazy and inept for she only ‘sits’ outside her house (לִפְתָּח בַּיְתָהּ). Woman Folly neither builds a house nor prepares a banquet; rather, she calls to passers-by from her chair ‘outside’ (streets/heights) offering ‘stolen water’ and ‘hidden’ food (Waltke 2004:433; Dell 2006:104). Fox (2000:301) indicates that the words ‘sitting at the door of her house’ may relate to the way in which harlots presented themselves as available to everybody in ancient times. Therefore, the corresponding water-related metaphor of Folly contrasts that of one’s wife in Proverbs 5:15 (as own well/cistern) in the sense that:

Wells and cisterns tended to be private property for one’s own water usage, images contrasted with the common property of streets and squares where the seductive woman roams (Dell 2006:42).

In this sense, she is ambivalently portrayed in Proverbs 9:17–18 as both having ‘sweet water’ and ‘leading to depths of Sheol’ since her water is drunk in secret or stolen. It should be stated that the ecological retrieval of the text will mainly concern these two verses. The researcher wants to investigate the ecological insight behind the sage’s use of this metaphor linking an adulterous behaviour with the ‘stolen water’, which leads to ‘the depths of Sheol’.

---

<sup>275</sup> This annotation suggests that unlike Folly, Wisdom resides inside her house where the guests are supposed to find her (Pr 9:4).

#### 4.2.2.5 Ecological significance of Proverbs 9:17-18

##### 4.2.2.5.1 Stolen water is sweet (verse 17)

As noted above, the addressee in Proverbs 1-9 is set within a liminal situation through a number of wisdom poems. This was shown, for instance, through the root metaphor of one's wife depicted as a private well/cistern implying human effort to hold water in a trustworthy container as well as the command to avoid cheating behaviour consisting of spilling valuable water to public areas – inferring the harlots (Pr 5:15-20). This idea is reflected here in Proverbs 9:17 with the difference that not the father/teacher speaks, but Woman Folly advertising<sup>276</sup> that 'stolen water' is sweet.

The water of Woman Folly or an adulterous woman is depicted as stolen sweet water. This woman, who is depicted in Proverbs 23:27 as a deep pit, is implied here as having sweet water whose drinkers are thought to be many – as she advertises to passers-by – in contrast to Proverbs 5:15 where a cistern/well is a property of one man in his home. Ecologically speaking, this implies that this kind of water is potentially dangerous.<sup>277</sup> Her stolen water and secret bread (Pr 9:17) are chiasmatically paralleled to the bread/wine of Woman Wisdom (Pr 9:5) (Yee 1989: 65).

Indeed, in Palestine where water is a precious commodity whose presence or shortage meant life or death, water theft<sup>278</sup> was certainly committed. Therefore, people secretly emptied their neighbour's tanks and spared their own reserve for the time of drought.<sup>279</sup> Theft and illegal appropriation of water in an arid land has probably informed the use of the water metaphor in this erotic poem. The fact that the words 'stolen water is sweet' are put in the mouth of Wisdom Folly, implies that the sage intends to discourage this kind of behaviour as it would certainly undermine the wellbeing of the society.

<sup>276</sup> Folly is not a teacher, but a lover (McKane 1970:366).

<sup>277</sup> Stolen water may allude to sexual relation as in Proverbs 5:15 with difference that its acquirement is here clandestine alluding to a secret drinking of water from another man's well/cistern.

<sup>278</sup> In modern Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT), water shortages and deepening poverty bring some Palestinians to drill unlicensed wells, while others have connected to the water network illegally, and many have stopped paying their water bills to Israeli authorities (Amnesty International 2009:5-6).

<sup>279</sup> See 'Stolen water is sweet': Online Pulpit's commentary on Proverbs 9:17. Available from: <http://biblehub.com/commentaries/pulpit/proverbs/9.htm> (Accessed 07 July 2014).

The sage may have been informed by the idea of conflicts over water theft, especially Genesis 26:18 in which the herders of Isaac and Gerar quarrelled over the ownership of a springing (sweet) well/fountain water, implying that some are ‘stealing water from others’ well’. Probably ‘Stolen waters are sweet’ was a proverbial mode of expression to prohibit illicit gains (Manser 20007:253). An ideal society is the one in which each one drinks from his own well (Pr 5:15; 2 Ki 18:31; Is 36:16), a reliable supply of living water.

To some extent, water is presented with life-giving potential (sweet) but it can keep its sweetness only up to the morning because it is stolen or drunk in secret (see Pr 7:18). This proverb is particularly important in the modern world where water shortage is partly due to theft of aqueduct materials or illegal appropriation of water (Morgan & Smith 2013:111). ‘Stolen’ means that this water is illicitly gained, and the LXX simply termed it as foreign water and foreign fountain (Pr 9:18c).<sup>280</sup>

The researcher noted earlier that Proverbs 5:15-20 and the whole corpus of Proverbs 1-9 reflect that time of the privatisation of wells/cisterns. Proverbs 9:17 may thus imply that there was sometimes great conflict and contention<sup>281</sup> about the prevailing practice of private sources of water which were sometimes sealed and protected from the use of others. People might have therefore reacted either by making their own wells or cisterns (Pr 5:15-20) or by simply stealing water from neighbours’ vessels (Pr 9:17). While the first reaction was encouraged, the second was prohibited but seemed the easiest given the hard work that involved the drilling of a well/cistern.

Alerting the son about dangers that could derive from this ‘stealing behaviour’, the father/teacher had already insisted: ‘Thieves are not despised who steal only to satisfy their appetite when they are hungry (6:30)’. Yet, Woman Folly protests that drinking banned waters is pleasurable. For the father/teacher, this kind of water or illicit enjoyment is sweet but leads to Sheol since it would involve conflicts. Folly implies that legitimate pleasure (water) from one’s wife (well/cistern) is deficient, and has to

---

<sup>280</sup> Whether in LXX understanding of this foreign water/fountain implies the attractive aspects of Hellenistic wisdom (Cook 1997:285), the intention is the same as in the MT: demonstrating the half-truth of Folly’s words.

<sup>281</sup> Hillel (2006:57) comments that conflicts and disputes over territory, defiling rights, and, especially, water resources were resolved through negotiation and compromise or violence (force).

be completed by clandestine taste, stolen pleasure (water) that has a special savour because it gives a feeling of surplus (Fox 2000:302). Folly's proverbial invitation gives the insight that people find attractive.

The proverb 'stolen water is sweet' is a half-truth, for although it is pleasant for a while, in the end it is disgusting (Waltke 2004:445). The Hebrew words מַיִם-זָנוּבִים (stolen water) would portray the sexual pleasure as being taken from the legitimate owner. Hidden food (וְלֶחֶם סְתוּרִים) complements 'stolen water', for as a thief must steal from his victim, so the adulteress hides her theft. The sage continues that the way of Folly leads to Sheol (v.18).

#### 4.2.2.5.2 Sheol and waters in the Old Testament

שְׁאוֹל (sheol) is a unique Hebrew word designating the underworld, and it indicates human fate in nearly two-thirds of the relevant texts (41/66 times) where it is used (Johnston 1994:416). The etymological meaning of שְׁאוֹל is 'a pit of questionings' (Albright 1918:210). In the majority of its use, Sheol is clearly or implicitly associated with the threatening images of water. Two scholarly explanations have been given to this association between Sheol and waters. First, some have seen in such imagery the idea of shades of the dead crossing over water to reach Sheol;<sup>282</sup> second, others argued that such language serves as a metaphor to divine judgment as in the flood stories.<sup>283</sup>

As to the identification of Sheol itself, some think Sheol is a physical location in the deepest recesses of earth, close to primeval waters.<sup>284</sup> This interpretation perhaps draws on Job 36:5 where the inhabitants of the infernal world are thought to lie under the waters (מִתַּחַת מַיִם). Pedersen (1940:463) advises not to spatially define Sheol as 'underworld' since in other places Sheol appears in relation to other threatening bodies, such as desert. It has also been proved that the word אֶרֶץ means not only earth but everything under the sky including the underworld as in Ugaritic texts (Tsumura 1989:72).

<sup>282</sup> see May, H G 1955. Some Cosmic Connotations of Mayim Rabbîm, "Many Waters". *JBL* 74/1, 9-21 [see page 14. Note 18].

<sup>283</sup> see McCarter, P K 1973. The River Ordeal in Israelite Literature. *HTR* 66/4, 403-412.

<sup>284</sup> see Rudman, D 2001a. The Use of Water Imagery in Descriptions of Sheol. *ZAW* 113,240-244.

Johnston argues that the term Sheol is especially used in contexts of judgment, and is to be construed metaphorically as it often occurs in poetic texts (1994:417). Therefore, rather than trying to locate Sheol in a recessed place under the earth, it would be wise to focus on the reasons why biblical texts characterised it with threatening aspects such as worms/maggots (Is 14:11), grave (Gn 37:5), darkness and being forgotten (Job 17:13; Ps 88:4-6), death<sup>285</sup> or in our case עֲמֻקַּיִם (the depths) or waters (Pr 9:18; Jnh 2). It must be known that water ‘has associations with Sheol since it is a force of chaos and destruction and is also located in the earth’s depths’ (Johnston 1994:416). In this sense, the prophet Jonah cried:

<sup>2</sup>I called to the LORD out of my distress, and he answered me; out of the belly of Sheol I cried, and you heard my voice. <sup>3</sup>You cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the flood surrounded me; all your waves and your billows passed over me (Jnh 2:2-3).<sup>286</sup>

The association of Sheol and waters (rivers) in Old Testament poetic texts relates to the conception of יָם (sea), תְּהוֹם or דָּג (cosmic ocean/river) or נָהָר (river) as a potential threat that is simply seen as death itself.<sup>287</sup> It is understood that it is from the flooding sea (Ex 15:8; Ps 69:3), its מַיִם רַבִּימִים (innumerable waters) (2 Sm 22:17) and its depths (Ps 88:7) that the dead fall down and dwell (Reymond 1958:213). Therefore, what biblical texts speak about Sheol would not be a systematic description of ‘a physical place’ but the feeling of threat that תְּהוֹם (deep waters) (Jb 38:16-17) reflected on humans that is depicted as being in Sheol. That is why Sheol is exclusively used in poetic texts that would imply a figurative language (Harris 1961:133).

Psalm 69:1-3 metaphorically claims that the life of the psalmist is threatened by the rushing waters, those raging waters that threatened the created order in Genesis 6-9. The individual engulfed by chaos waters (depths) denotes the passing of that person from the realm of life to that of death (Sheol). Sheol appears along with the primeval chaos (sea/river and the deep) as threatening entities inspiring death (Batto 1983:33).

<sup>285</sup> In Isaiah 38:18, Hezekiah equates Sheol with death, and the dead in the pit cannot praise God.

<sup>286</sup> Jonah is crying from the deepest parts of the ocean or on the bottom of deep oceans.

<sup>287</sup> See Genesis 7:35; 1 Kings 2:6; Job 7:9; Job 21:13; Ps 18:5; 49:14-15 etc.

Waters are not death themselves, but they have life-threatening aspects that can lead to Sheol, death.<sup>288</sup>

#### 4.2.2.5.3 Ecological meaning of Sheol in Proverbs 9:18

In the book of Proverbs, the concept of Sheol is first found in Proverbs 1:12 and is usually used to characterise dangers related to an adulterous woman. In Proverbs 5:5, the loose woman is depicted as going herself down to Sheol, whereas 9:18 adds that those who enter her house will be brought to Sheol, a place of no-return.<sup>289</sup> Here, as in Proverbs 7:26-27, the sage does not condemn the woman but the foolish young man falling into her trap because the ‘depths of Sheol/death’ (9:18) await him.

The word עֲמֻקֵי שְׁאוֹל (depths of Sheol) is the equivalent of the depths of abyss since in Isaiah 51:10 the substantive מַעְמֻקַּי refers to the lowest part of the life-threatening waters of the sea (יָם) and many waters (תְּהוֹם רַבָּה),<sup>290</sup> bringing death to the created order (Johnston 1994:416). It is thus not an accident that the word עֲמֻקֵי is related to water’s depths in Proverbs 18:4 and 20:5. LXX’s addition of foreign waters as explanation to Proverbs 9:18 is thus significant. In verse 18b, LXX reads: *for thus will you go through foreign water and pass through a foreign river*. It seems that LXX draws on Greek myth assuming that one has to cross the life-threatening river Styx on the way to Hades (Cook 1994:474). This assumption links up with the Canaanite myth believing that the cosmic waters were located at the entrance of the watery abode of Mot (Sheol) (McCarter 1973:405).

This would imply that ancient Israelites believed that Sheol was located near the deep (Rudman 2001a:244). In this sense, death and watery chaos were often paralleled to the point that the expression ‘many waters’ could simply mean Sheol/death.<sup>291</sup> In Ancient Near East, it was believed that on death, people live in an infernal ocean, or

<sup>288</sup> See also Psalm 30:2; 88:11f; 115:17; Isaiah 38:18.

<sup>289</sup> See Job 28:1; 55:15; 88:5; 143:7; Numbers 16:30; Is 5:14; 38:18.

<sup>290</sup> In other texts, the Bible uses the word ‘depths’ or its related concepts in relation to water of death, especially in those texts which are contemporary with the book of Proverbs or later. These are Sirach 24:5; 3 Maccabees 2:7; 3 Esdras 2:7; 4 Esdras 3:18; 5:25; 8:23; 13:52; 16:12; Micah 7:19; Zechariah 10:11; Psalm 68:22; 7:20; Proverbs 8:24; etc. (NRSV)

<sup>291</sup> Texts such as Psalm 69:15-16; 124:3-5; 144:7; Isaiah 43:2 are examples of threatening waters that are symbols of the disasters from which rescue is hoped. For further observations, see May, H G 1955. Some Cosmic Connotations of Mayim Rabbîm, "Many Waters". *JBL* 74/1, 9-21 (see page 17).

should cross the infernal waters before reaching their final dwelling (Reymond 1958:212).

Probably, Proverbs 9:18 echoes this conception in mentioning the depths of Sheol as the destiny of those who follow the way of Folly.<sup>292</sup> The strange woman is here linked or associated with the watery chaos that laps at the threshold of the self, threatening to submerge her victims (Brown 1999:291). In this sense, Proverbs 9:18 implies that:

The chaos waters by their very nature are symbolic of the absence of order [life] and creation ... For the writers of the OT [Proverbs 9:18], who saw the formation of the individual as part of God's ongoing creative activity (Jer 1:5; 49:5; Zach 12:1), and who likewise saw death [Sheol] as a reversal of creation (Gen 2:7; 3:19; Qoh 12:7), the deep would be an appropriate image to denote the cessation of life (Rudman 2001a:244).

Water is presented here with a life-threatening potential. The thieves of water or bread are destined not only to Sheol, but also have to cross life-threatening waters at the gates of Sheol (see Pr 18:18 in LXX). In this sense, Haupt (1917:258) thought that the word Sheol should be written שְׁוֹל (with *Çerê*, not *Šewa*, in the first syllable) from the root *Šûḥ* (*Šaḥt*) denoting the idea of sinking into an 'uncomfortable' damp and wet pit.<sup>293</sup> It was thus believed that being in Sheol is like being in a real cistern of water. Johnson (1950:88) clearly states that Sheol was considered as a great hole located not only under earth, but also under water in the cosmic sea so that Israelites believed that the dead went in a real cistern.

Aware of this potential threat, Proverbs 5:15 commands to drink water from his own container (his wife), since the path of public<sup>294</sup> pots (harlots) leads to depths of Sheol. LXX reads then in Proverbs 9:18d that avoiding the way of the whore will let the young man live for a long time and years of life may be added to him. Water is thus seen here with life-threatening potential associated with death. Just as YHWH

<sup>292</sup> As in Proverbs 2:18; 5:5-6 and 7:24-27 and in the extra-biblical texts related to a goddess inviting heroes in epics of *Gilgamesh*, *Aquat* and the *Odyssey*, the woman's guests are invited to erotic encounters, but they end up in the underworld (Clifford 1999: 107).

<sup>293</sup> Exodus 15:5 uses the word שְׁוֹל (depths) as synonym of עֲקֵימָה (depths) when he states: The floods covered them; they went down into the depths like a stone (NRSV).

<sup>294</sup> Unlike Woman Wisdom (Pr 9:1-6), Woman Folly (Pr 9:13-18) does not build a house or send out maids; rather, she calls to passers-by from her chair. She offers food and drink too – stolen water and bread. She stands at the boundaries of society, representing the chaos of folly (Domeris 1995:99).

contained the watery chaos by Wisdom (Pr 8:22-31), young men will avoid the depths of Sheol through obedience to the decrees of wisdom from the father. The depths of Sheol are life-threatening water-related phenomena designed as destiny for those who follow the way of Woman Folly.

### 4.2.3 Water and water-related phenomena in Proverbs 25:23-26

#### 4.2.3.1 Introduction

This section is devoted to the ecological potential of water used as images in Proverbs 25:23-26. The metaphor of ‘north wind and rains’ is used for unexpected conflicts due to a backbiting tongue (vv.23-24); cold water for a weary person is a vehicle for good news from faraway, whereas a muddied spring or a polluted fountain is a metaphor for the righteous slipping before evil (vv.25-26). The researcher’s aim is to determine whether these water-related metaphors offer ecological wisdom of water as a source of life or death when these anthropocentric texts are read through ecological lenses.

#### 4.2.3.2 The Masoretic Text

The Masoretic Text presents two main problems of interpretation. The first problem relates to scholarly debates concerning the rendering of verse 23, while the second is a textual error of the copyist. The researcher gives explanations in the footnotes as to his option for the translation of the text. These footnotes will be indicated by superscript numbers within the Masoretic Text in order to differentiate them from the ordinary footnotes.

23 רִיחַ צָפוֹן<sup>295</sup> תִּחְוֶלֶל גִּשְׁמֵם וּפְגָמִים נִזְעָמִים לְשׁוֹן סֹתֵר:

24 טוֹב נְשָׁת עַל-פְּנֵת-גֶּגַע מֵאֲשֶׁת מְדוֹנִים<sup>296</sup> וּבֵית הָחָר:

<sup>295</sup> There is a great debate about whether this verse should be translated as north wind or northwest wind. For the meteorological problems of ‘a north wind’ producing rain in Palestine, see McKane, W 1970. *Proverbs: A New Approach*. London: SCM Press (OTL), 582-3. The researcher has aligned himself with Van der Ploeg (1953:89) seeing the word צָפוֹן (north, from the root צָפַן: hidden) as a paronomasia for hidden tongue in verse 23b. The word-play רִיחַ צָפוֹן (north wind/hidden wind) and לְשׁוֹן סֹתֵר (hidden tongue) implies that just as the north wind is a hidden (unexpected) source of rain contrary to the observer’s expectation, so secret speech suddenly produces damages from an unexpected, perhaps a trusted person (Van Leeuwen 1988:60).

25 מֵיִם קָרִים עַל־גֶּפֶשׁ עֵיפָה וְנִשְׁמוּעָה טוֹבָה מֵאַרְזֵי מִרְחָק:

26 מֵעֵין גֶּרֶשׁ וּמִקּוֹר מְשֻׁחָת צְדִיק מִטְּ לִפְנֵי־רִשָׁע:

#### 4.2.3.3 Translation

This translation draws on the insights of Van Leeuwen (1988:60) and is a product of the researcher's judgement of the textual notes in the Masoretic Text and unresolved debates between scholars.

<sup>23</sup> The north [hidden] wind produces rain,  
and a “hidden” tongue, [produces] angry looks.

<sup>24</sup> It is better to live in a corner of the roof  
than in a house shared with a contentious wife.

<sup>25</sup> Cool water on a failing throat,  
is good news from a far country.

<sup>26</sup> A muddied spring or a polluted fountain  
is the righteous slipping before the wicked.

#### 4.2.3.4 Literary considerations

##### 4.2.3.4.1 General observations

Proverbs 25 belongs to a larger composition (Pr 25-27) which is a composite whole attempting to create literary contexts and hermeneutic clues for independent sayings within which they can be understood (Van Leeuwen 1988:31). As assumed in the mention of wisdom collectors (Pr 25:1), Proverbs 25-27 is simply a collection of ancient Hebrew wisdom forms. It is not one proverb, but a number of proverbs held together by a short wisdom poem to form a new whole, which contains minor units (25:2-27; 26:1-12, 13-16, 17- 28; 27:1-22, 23-27).<sup>297</sup>

<sup>296</sup> The Masorah *Qere* (literally what should be cried/read) proposes the word מְדַוְנִים (contentious or nagging) instead of the *Kethiv* (what is written in MT) קְדוּנִים. As it is the case in Proverbs 23:29.

<sup>297</sup> Van Leeuwen (1988:37) argues that the poet-compiler of these units did the job not artificially, but in accordance with firm principles as well as structural, poetic and semantic criteria of mutual significance. For the same composition process in Egyptian wisdom materials, see Lichtheim, M 1979. Observations on Papyrus

It is therefore possible that these units were either adapted or created *ad hoc* to play a role in the larger proverbial composition (Van Leeuwen 1988:37). They were brought together by scribes who selected and structured the proverbs in the standard order in which they are found in collections (Goody 1977:125). This implies that each section is literarily distinct from the other, but has been edited with a view of forming a literary whole (25-27) in which they reveal more insights from the artful juxtaposition of the individual units. The poet-compiler has also identified and arranged sub-units within these units according to the function they convey in the whole unit.

Our passage, Proverbs 25:23-26 is a literary sub-unit in Proverbs 25:2-27, which is now known as a ‘small wisdom book’. The naming ‘small wisdom book’ is due to Bryce (1972) who argued that Proverbs 25:2-27 is a literary unit on the basis of its Egyptian parallels and internal stylistic and thematic features. This scholar has suggested that the whole passage is introduced by verses 2-5 dealing with the book’s two principal subjects: the king (vv.2-3) and the wicked (vv.4-5) which are further developed in verses 6-15 (the king) and verses 16-26 (the wicked).<sup>298</sup> For Bryce, the first section (vv.6-15) of the ‘book’ deals with the relationship between the courier and his superior, while the second (vv.16-26) involves various wicked people (1972:151).

Bryce’s argument about the literary unit of Proverbs 25:2-27 is widely accepted except the rubrics he has given to different units. Van Leeuwen convincingly pointed out that it is not clear how issues such as Sayings and Admonitions in verses 6-15 can be subsumed under the ‘rubric’ of the king or how the hateful friend in verse 17 is a danger *per se* (1988:24). In the researcher’s view, Bryce has carefully identified the main contours of Proverbs 25:2-27, especially in his identification of the sub-units of the texts<sup>299</sup>.

---

Insinger, in Hornung, E & Keel, O (eds), *Studien zu Altägyptischen Lebenslehren*, 283-305. Freiburg: Universitätsverlag. (Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 28). [see pages 286-290].

<sup>298</sup> See Bryce, G E 1972. Another Wisdom-“Book” in Proverbs. *JBL* 91, 145-157 [see pages 151-154].

<sup>299</sup> Two main sections of Proverbs 27 (6-15 & 16-26) are sliced into six sub-units each (first: vv.6-7; 8-9a; 9b-10; 11-12; 13-14; 15 & second: 16-17; 18; 19-20; 21-22; 23-24; 25-26) and introduced by verses 2-5 before ending with verse 27 (Bryce 1972:151-54).

In accordance with Waltke (2005:309-36), this thesis would name different rubrics of the text as follows. First, Proverbs 25:2-27 involves another kind of wisdom poems – next to Proverbs 1-9 – about the court hierarchy and the conflict of the righteous and the wicked. Second, the passage is doubly introduced by verses 2-3 and 4-5, prior to its two main units: a Decalogue of Proverbs for courtiers (vv.6-15) and general human conflicts (vv.16-26), before ending with a conclusion (v.27).

Clearly, the literary context of Proverbs 25:23-26 is Proverbs 25:16-26 containing admonitions and sayings related to human conflict in general. Proverbs 25:16-26 involves two main sub-units: Proverbs 25:16-22 related to conflict resolution, while Proverbs 25:23-26 highlights unexpected conflicts (Waltke 2005:xiii). The following section develops the literary matters of Proverbs 25:23-26.

#### **4.2.3.4.2 Literary structure of Proverbs 25:23-26**

This sub-unit of Proverbs 25:16-26 consists of two proverb pairs (vv.23-24 & vv.25-26) using water-related metaphors as vehicles to depict unexpected matters. The pairs are organised in the way that the water metaphor of verse 23 (A) points to the referent in verse 24 (A'), and the water image of verse 25 (B) points to the referent in verse 26 (B'). Verses 23-24 (AA') involve unexpected conflicts due to bad speech, while verses 25-26 (BB') contrast restoration of a weary person with a wavering righteous person (Waltke 2005:332).

As Proverbs 25:23-26 refers to unexpected human conflicts; all water-related images or metaphors are used in this regard. A schematic structure of the text can be presented as follows:

- A North wind producing rain .... and a sly tongue bringing an angry look (v.23)
- A' Bad weather is better than sharing a house with a nagging wife (v.24)
- B Cold water for a weary person is good news from a distant land (v.25)
- B' A muddied spring/fountain is a wavering righteous person (v.26)

**Figure 5: Structure of Proverbs 25:23-26**

Verse 23 is termed an unexpected 'cause and effect proverb' related to arguments of value (Perry 1993b:75). One of the basic insights of wisdom books is that of reward

and punishment.<sup>300</sup> However, this notion is denied by Job and further by Jonah claiming that God lets the wicked live, implying the reversal of rules. The same idea is behind Proverbs 25:23 where ‘north wind’ acts against expectations by producing rain that would result in damages just as an unexpected sly speech results in darkening the face of the victim.

Verse 24 presents the ‘better than’ chiasmus of natural-versus-human pattern in which the man ironically prefers to be exposed to a rainstorm rather than being exposed to the ‘rainstorms’ of bad speech from a contentious wife. This is what Perry calls ‘the argument of value’ in which all values are either positive or negative – there are no neutral values; it can be termed ‘plus versus minus’ (1993b:71). Both bad weather and sly speech from one’s wife are negative values, but being exposed to bad weather is more endurable than being exposed to a tempestuous wife.

Verses 25-26 present the argument of value as well. The metaphor of life-giving cool water for a weary person that is good news from faraway is contrasted to the muddied spring or polluted fountain that is a vehicle for a slipping righteous person before the wicked. All the water-related metaphors reflect abruptness that is related to their referents. The researcher will therefore attempt to determine whether these water-related images offer ecological wisdom when the text is read through an ecological lens.

#### **4.2.3.5 Ecological insights of water images in Proverbs 25:23-26**

##### **4.2.3.5.1 North wind’s rains as sly tongue’s effects (verses 23-24)**

The first proverb pair uses the theme of unexpected rains deriving from the north wind in order to criticise conflicts arising from a backbiting tongue (v.23). In this sense, verse 23a portrays life-threatening rains caused by the north wind, whereas verse 23b highlights angry faces as effect of a backbiting tongue. The word used for rain is **דֶּשֶׁן** related to the October-December heavy rainfalls accompanied by storms, which could

---

<sup>300</sup> See Proverbs 26:27; Ecclesiastes 10:8; Sirach 27:27 etc.

become flash floods provoking land erosion, especially if occurring at an unexpected time (Bimson 2012:1).

Normally, the rainfall regime in Palestine was linked with the west winds providing gentle rains and well distributed throughout the growing season (Dalman 1928:103). Conversely, untimely and unexpected rains resulted in damaging the crops during their most weak stage of growth, as well as rushing soil erosion (Hillel 2006:157). In this sense, some scholars think that the mention of ‘north wind’ that brings rains in Proverbs 25:23 is geographically inaccurate in Palestine and should be replaced by the northwest wind (Delitzsch 1950:168; Hubbard 1989:406). This kind of interpretation forgets the text’s intention of highlighting the idea of ‘unexpectedness’.

Indeed, Israelites expected the west, not the north wind, to bring rain (Lk 12:4). The cold north wind<sup>301</sup> normally cleared the skies (prevents the rainfall) and brought good visibility to the point that the Ugaritic merchants and sea-captains prayed for it ‘while they were waiting to set out with heavily loaded ships for the main trade targets in the South and Egypt’ (Grave 1980:228). Hopkins states it clearly that:

[The eastern Mediterranean] cyclones bring rain-bearing winds from the southwest and west and are followed by anti-cyclones generating winds out of the northeast and east that bring clear skies (1985:80).

No rainfall could then be expected from the north wind. In this sense, KJV has simply understood the verse as ‘the north wind that drives away rain’ since, to quote Van der Ploeg (1953:189):

Lorsque, en Palestine, souffle le vent du nord, tout le monde sait qu’il ne pleuvra pas.<sup>302</sup>

However, the proverbs ought to be understood as a riddle whose meaning should be guessed. The researcher argued earlier in the textual note that Proverbs 25:23 seems to establish a paronomasia between צָפוֹן (from the root צָפַן: to hide) and סֵתֶר (hidden). The relevance of the metaphor in Proverbs 25:23 is precisely that rain from a north

<sup>301</sup> On the cold north wind, see Job 37:9

<sup>302</sup> English translation: *When, in Palestine, the north wind occurs, everybody knows that it will not rain* (the researcher’s own translation).

wind is hidden (רוח צפון תחולל גשם) and thus unexpected just as a hidden slander brings unexpected damages (נזעמים לשון סתר), an angry face.

The present-day reference to a rainstorm as ‘angry weather’ unwittingly confirms the metaphor of Proverbs 25:23 likening a rainstorm to an ‘angry face’ as illustrated in the following image:



Figure 6: A rainstorm in Florida, photo by C. Perez<sup>303</sup>

In other words, just as the rainstorms/clouds darken the sky, slander darkens the face of the victim (McKane 1970:583). The verb תחולל attributes a fertility power to the north wind begetting rains (גשם) the way living beings procreate (Dt 32:18; Is 51:2). However, the *polet*<sup>304</sup> form of the verb and the abruptness of the rains (גשם) suggest life-threatening aspects denoting that the north wind causes damaging rains just as a backbiting tongue produces an angry face.

‘Face’ is plural (פְּנֵי) in Hebrew, denoting that a backbiting tongue does not affect a single being only, but causes massive troubles in destroying friendly relations between many. A slanderous tongue also excites suspicion and enmity in various areas<sup>305</sup> just as damaging rain causes troubles in many sectors of life (failure of crops; land

<sup>303</sup> Perez, C 2012. Rainstorm or Lightning <http://yourshot.nationalgeographic.com/photos/3896718/> (Accessed 11 August 2014).

<sup>304</sup> The *polet* form of the same verb is used in Psalm 29:9 in the sense of trembling: the voice of God trembles (תחולל) the deer.

<sup>305</sup> See Pulpit’s Commentary on Proverbs 25. Available online from: <http://biblehub.com/commentaries/pulpit/proverbs/25.htm> (Accessed 11 August 2014).

erosion; flooding of a human settlement). The following image of damaged crops taken in the DRC due to an unexpected rainstorm is a patent example:



**Figure 7: Failure of maize crops due to unexpected rainstorm/Goma-DRC<sup>306</sup>**

Rainfall is a significant climatic factor in the physical existence of people in Israel and the agricultural life (Karmon 1971:27). The indicative of the vitality of rain for Israel is shown in its various Hebrew words (מָטָר, יוֹרֵה, מַלְקוֹשׁ, גֶּשֶׁם). Genesis 2:5 is explicit that no vegetation had sprung forth because ‘the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth’.<sup>307</sup> However, the advantage or disadvantage of the rain depended on its season<sup>308</sup>. In this sense, Deuteronomy 11:14 reports that if you fear the Lord, then ‘he will give the rain (מָטָר) for your ground in its season (בְּעִתּוֹ), the early rain (יוֹרֵה) and the latter rain (מַלְקוֹשׁ), and you will gather in your grain, your wine, and your oil.’

Otherwise, accidental rain occurring in mid-summer, for instance, may damage the crops by its violence (Reymond 1958:5). Proverbs 25:23 uses the Hebrew word גֶּשֶׁם referring to the heavy winter rains that soak the ground and replenish the cisterns for the need of agriculture and survival (King & Stager 2001:87). The issue is that here they occur at an unexpected time (from the north wind), and thus are potentially life-threatening just as slanderous speech.

<sup>306</sup> This is the researcher’s own photo captured on March 2014.

<sup>307</sup> See also Psalm 72:6; 2 Samuel 23:4; Song of Songs 2:11-12; a rainless situation is a great deception to the point that Proverbs 25:14 compares ‘clouds and wind without rain to one who boasts of a gift never given’ since a prolonged drought is catastrophic for plant, animal and human life in Palestine.

<sup>308</sup> See Leviticus 26:4; Esdras 10:13; Jeremiah 5:24; Ezekiel 34:26.

In Proverbs 25:23, the damaging function of a hidden speech is as life-threatening – causing an angry face on the victim, וַפְּנֵי־יָדָאֵם נִצְמָמִים – as untimely heavy rains (חֶשֶׁן) from the north wind resulting in the failure of crops and ruins<sup>309</sup> (Waltke 2005:333). The NIV has simply rendered the verse as follows: ‘Like a north wind that brings unexpected rain is a sly tongue which provokes a horrified look’. Just as unexpected heavy rains (חֶשֶׁן) are by nature life-threatening (destructive), so is a sly secret speech. The metaphor has thus been informed by the idea of untimely rains as a threatening force.

That is why in verse 24 the man prefers to be exposed to a rainstorm rather than being exposed to the ‘rainstorms’ of bad speech from a contentious wife. The sage ironically highlights the life-threatening potential of water in a figurative comparison between the north wind and exposure on a corner of the roof. In other words, it is ‘better to live in a corner of the roof, unprotected from the rain, than to live within the shared house unprotected from her’ (Malbim 1973:262).

The point is that the life-threatening effects of bad weather and sudden heavy rains are more bearable than the ‘bad weather’ that can be caused by a contentious wife. Both the rains and backbiting sly speech are damaging (v.23), but being exposed to the bad weather of the north wind’s rain is more endurable than living in a house with a tempestuous wife (v.24). Still, hostile speech is as unexpected and unwelcome as the heavy rains from the north wind. When someone finds that a secret slanderer is working against him, he or she shows it by his/her angry look, just as the sky is dark (angry) with clouds when a storm is threatened.

Implicitly, Proverbs 25:23-24 is a call for behaviour changes just as farmers expect the north wind not to bring heavy rains (חֶשֶׁן), but to clear the sky. In this sense, rain during the time of harvest is a metaphor for honour attributed to the fool in Proverbs 26:1: it is damaging. The New American Standard Bible (NAS) highlights that honour is not fitting for the fool – as he will obviously boast and destroy others – the way snow in summer and rain in harvest time are inconvenient/useless (Pr 26:1).<sup>310</sup> The

<sup>309</sup> The cold north wind’s rain ruins the hope of the farmers (see Proverbs 26:1; 28:3).

<sup>310</sup> The comparison of a fool and a destructive rain appears also in Proverbs 28:3

text testifies to the awareness of life-threatening aspects of rain occurring at an unexpected time just as the modern world is facing unexpected calamities due to climate changes.

#### 4.2.3.5.2 Metaphor of cold water for a thirsty person (Pr 25:25)

This verse equates the relief of cold water to a weary person with hearing good news from a distant land. While giving water in Proverbs 25:21 is an act of charity to slake the thirst of an enemy, here in Proverbs 25:25 it is a remedy. In Proverbs 25:21, giving water is a way of restoring a hurt person in a relationship, whereas Proverbs 25:25 focuses on the life-giving role of ‘cold water’ to revive a ‘weary person’ (נָפֵשׁ עֵינָה) the way Israelites interpreted the lack of water as death in Exodus 17:1-6. The word cold water (מַיִם קְרִיִם) implies the same refreshing function of flowing/running water in a well in Proverbs 5:15.

Therefore, the Hebrew word עֵינָה in Proverbs 25:25 means that the man is completely deprived of energy due to thirst, and so unable and/or unwilling to continue living (Waltke 2005:334). The word עֵינָה derives from the root עִיַּף which often occurs in *qal* form in the Hebrew Bible and refers to a situation of becoming tired (Brown, Driver & Briggs 1968:746). In Genesis 25:29 the word is associated with hunger, while it is connected with exhaustion due to both hunger and thirst in 2 Samuel 17:29. In Judges 4:21, the verb עִיַּף occurs next to the verb וַיָּמָת in the expression וַיַּעַף וַיָּמָת that means losing consciousness before dying. Proverbs 25:25 implies that the weary person needs water to ‘revive’ him and thus refers to the life-giving function of water (see Job 22:7).

This is in fact what occurs in Exodus 17:1-6 or Numbers 20:11 where Israelites refuse to pursue their walk in the wilderness unless Moses gives them water to drink. Any person in such dehydrating situations can no longer endure and needs to be given life-giving water to be revitalised. Water is thus seen as a life-giving entity whereby presence or absence means life or death. As stated earlier in the analysis of Proverbs 5:15-20, the presence of water sources in terms of cisterns, wells, springs and all kinds

of streams was seen as essential for life in the arid land of Palestine,<sup>311</sup> whereas a long time of drought resulted in food crisis and death.

Proverbs 25:25 equates the life-giving water revitalising the weary person with the spiritual remedy for a person weary from anxiety about the well-being of a situation in a distant land (מֵאֶרֶץ מְרֹחֶק) that he cannot control or even reach. The root רחק contains within it the idea of distant land or a remote distance from someone or something to the point that it usually occurs in reference to the land.<sup>312</sup> It can be assumed that the person is mentally unable to continue due to his anxiety about a situation in a distant land (Waltke 2005:335).

A modern reader who is exposed to all kinds of hi-tech means of facilitating access to information cannot understand the ecological significance of the metaphor if he/she does not put him/herself in the biblical context where news travelled upsettingly slowly and was delivered with great difficulty. Any information from a distant country would be very uncertain in arriving at its destination,<sup>313</sup> or would take a long time in transmission. In most cases there would be nothing reliable but vague and fragmentary reports, or a message carried by some passing merchants. In this sense, the coolness of the snow in the day of harvest is equated with the refreshing power of a reliable messenger in Proverbs 25:13. McKane correctly states that:

Just as the cold water revives the stamina of the harvesters, banishing their fatigue and giving them new zest for their work, so a messenger who is completely trustworthy puts new life (nepheš) into his master ... the reliable envoy is a spring of living water to his principal (1970:586)

In reference to the latter exilic context of the text, Proverbs 25:25 may be informed by the nostalgia of an exile, and the craving for news from home (Judah), which is like a

---

<sup>311</sup> For other references to the life-giving function of water and water-related phenomena, see Genesis 21:15ff; 24:15-25; Exodus 15:22-25; 17:1-6; Numbers 20:7-11; Deuteronomy 8:7-9; 11:11

<sup>312</sup> See Genesis 22:4; 37:4; Exodus 2:4; 20:21; 24:1; 1 Samuel 26:13; Psalm 38:12; Proverbs 25:25; Isaiah 13:5; 46:11; 59:9; Jeremiah 6:20; 23:23; Ezekiel 23:40 etc.

<sup>313</sup> Travel and especially pedestrian travel was difficult in Palestine. As widespread as foot travel was by both day and night, lurking bandits and wild animals made walking so hazardous it could result in death and losing the carried information. For security reasons, people preferred caravan travels; while *en route*, travellers relied on the hospitality of others, which was a sacred duty and a virtual necessity for the travellers' well-being (shalom). For more details, see King, P J & Stager, L E 2001. *Life in Biblical Israel*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, p.186.

parching thirst. The long interval of this news and the means by which it was supplied reinforce the ecological significance of cold water as refreshing to the weary person. The relief to the latter, when receiving good news is as refreshing as a draught of cool water to a fainting, weary person.

#### 4.2.3.5.3 Metaphor of polluted springs/fountains (verse 26)

The metaphor moves to the deception of pollution of precious sources of water (springs or fountains) compared to a righteous person slipping before evil. The irresolute righteous one is equated with trampling feet that muddy a spring, while his fall before the wicked is compared to the ruined fountain (Waltke 2005:335). Springs or fountains which are the work of nature, were regarded as arising from the cosmic subterranean ocean to bring life and fertility on earth (see Ps 104:10-11). In this sense, they acted as agents of hope and determined human settlements in the desert (Ex 15:27; Nm 33:9) or in Palestine (Dt 8:7; 1 Ki 18:5) providing sustenance and focal points of social life Hillel (2006:68).

Klopper explains it clearly that:

Springs and wells served as cultic centres and sacred places where theophanies took place, kings were crowned, lawsuits conducted, ancestral spirits conjured up and the future progeny of Israel was ensured when patriarchs betrothed their future brides at wells (2002b:x)

Therefore, a muddied bubbling spring describes the intentional or deliberate befouling of an important supply of water. The *niphal* נִרְפַּשׁ (from the root רָפַשׁ) in verse 26a means ‘to muddy water by trampling’ as is the case in Ezekiel 32:2 and 34:19 where the same verb form occurs (Brown *et al.* 1968:952). In this sense, in preparation for Sennacherib’s invasion of Jerusalem, Hezekiah blocked all the springs in the vicinity as stated in 2 Chronicles 32:3-4:

<sup>3</sup>He [Hezekiah] planned with his officers and his warriors to stop the flow of the springs that were outside the city; and they helped him. <sup>4</sup>A great many people were gathered, and they stopped all the springs and the wadi that flowed through the land, saying, "Why should the Assyrian kings come and find water in abundance?"

Although Proverbs 25:26 is in the service of anthropocentrism – springs as serving a source of water for people – the verse displays the ecological awareness of the relevance of a spring in ancient Palestine. To befoul a water-hole on a tract across the desert is one of the unforgivable criminal acts for the Bedouin,<sup>314</sup> and their flocks whose migration ‘may have been directed along wadi beds towards the Jordan valleys ... or perhaps westward toward the marshes of the coastal plain’ (Hopkins 1985:250). The Hophal  $\text{הִפְשִׁיחַ}$  that literally means ‘was caused to be ruined by’ suggests also that the fountain, another source of vital water, has been cruelly polluted or ruined by people.

The two images of muddied springs and polluted fountains describe the deadly effects of an irresolute life lacking righteousness and thus becoming a danger for others. When a righteous person behaves according to his inner nature (Pr 18:10) and commitment to serve the community, Proverbs 10:11 says that he is a ‘fountain of life’, while the wicked is linked with violence. In an arid land of Palestine, the deliberate decision to pollute a source of vital water such as a spring/fountain was attributed to the wicked (McKane 1970:592). That is why Psalm 104:35 prays that the wicked be removed from the earth, and Job 24:18 adds that their place is on the surface of waters (life-threatening) since their portion on the earth is cursed.

The metaphor is probably informed by this ecological wickedness, and can be used in the modern world to discourage worldwide pollution of sources of water. A wavering righteous person will disappoint the community, just as a muddied spring or a polluted fountain will naturally disappoint, imperil and become a source of life-threatening water for many – plants, animals and humans – relying on it for their survival as is the case in the following image:

---

<sup>314</sup> In the dry Ancient Near Eastern land where the presence or absence of water meant life or death, Bedouins attributed the pollution of a spring/fountain to the wicked.



**Figure 8: A dead fish in a polluted spring, photo by J. Foser<sup>315</sup>**

The metaphor of Proverbs 25:26 also resonates with the principle of the intrinsic value of water as life which is equated to the intrinsic value of a righteous person. By nature, a spring (מְקוֹר) or a fountain (מַעְיָן) was regarded as a ‘collective’ source of life (Ps 104:10-13) to the point that it is often used as a metaphor for wisdom (Pr 16:22), the fear of the Lord (14:27) or the words from the righteous one’s mouth (Pr 10:11; 13:14; Sir 21:23). Therefore, the pollution of a spring/fountain is not its inner character but caused by an external agent that is presupposed in the use of the niphal (נִרְפָּשׁ) for a muddied spring and the Hophal form (מְשֻׁקָּת) for a ruined fountain (v.26).

### **4.3 Water and water-related phenomena in Proverbs 3:19-20 and 8:22-31**

#### **4.3.1 Introduction**

Contrary to previous texts in which water is a metaphor (vehicle) for something else, Proverbs 3:19-20 and 8:22-31 present water as a physical entity. These texts are seen as the loci of the theology of creation in the book of Proverbs, or even the wisdom books (Clifford 1992:85-96). Publications on these texts concern the role of Wisdom

<sup>315</sup> See Foser, J 2012. Pollution of springs. Available on line from: <http://yourshot.nationalgeographic.com/photos/3530357/> (Accessed 11 August 2014).

in Creation<sup>316</sup>. This thesis is not interested in repeating all the debates about this matter, but looks at the significance of water-related entities in this text.

### 4.3.2 Water and water-related phenomena in Proverbs 3:19-20

#### 4.3.2.1 Introduction

This section explores the ecological potential of water and water-related phenomena as pointed out in the wisdom poem of Proverbs 3:19-20. The researcher will first explore general literary matters before retrieving ecological wisdom regarding life-giving and life-threatening potential of water and water-related phenomena in this text. I am not going to explore the theme of wisdom and creation here as this will be one of the main sections in the next chapter of this thesis, especially in the analysis of Sirach 24.

#### 4.3.2.2 General literary considerations

##### 4.3.2.2.1 The Masoretic Text of Proverbs 3:19-20

19 יְהוָה בְּחָכְמָה יָסַד-אֶרֶץ כּוֹנֵן שָׁמַיִם בְּתַבּוּנָה:

20 בְּדַעְתּוֹ תְּהוֹמֹת נִבְקְעוּ וְנִשְׁחָקוּ יַרְעֵפוּ-טָל:

##### 4.3.2.2.2 Translation of Proverbs 3:19-20

Proverbs 3:19-20 does not contain major textual variants. The researcher has therefore opted for the translation of the NRSV. However, unlike the NRSV, the Hebrew word שָׁמַיִם (v.19) will not be translated ‘heaven’ but ‘sky’. The reasons for this rendition will be given in the eco-theological analysis of the text. The translation of the text will appear as below:

<sup>19</sup>The LORD by wisdom founded the earth; by understanding he established the sky; <sup>20</sup>by his knowledge the deeps broke open, and the clouds drop down the dew.

<sup>316</sup> See the literature review on Proverbs 3:19-20 and 8:22-31 in the second chapter of this thesis.

#### 4.3.2.2.3 Position of Proverbs 3:19-20 in Proverbs 1-9

Proverbs 3:19-20 is part of the first section of the book of Proverbs, Proverbs 1-9, setting forth a number of father-son (teacher-disciple) teachings. In its immediate context, Proverbs 3:19-20 fits in the first text about creation theology in the book of Proverbs, namely Proverbs 3:13-20. This wisdom poem has three strophes: the first strophe (Pr 3:13-17) portrays the happiness (אֲשֶׁרִי) that comes to those who find Wisdom. The second (Pr 3:18) personifies Wisdom as a tree of life, a major symbol of fertility in the Ancient Near East.<sup>317</sup> The last strophe depicts Wisdom's role in creation (Pr 3:19-20).

Therefore, the praise of Wisdom culminates in Proverbs 3:19-20 where YHWH uses Wisdom to create and sustain the world. This strophe, which is rhetorically different from verses 13-18, wants to underline that YHWH used his Wisdom in both securing the earth from the life-threatening chaos waters and in supplying the life-giving water that fertilises the cosmos (Perdue 2007:51). The rhetorical structure of Proverbs 3:19-20 is seen in the following section.

#### 4.3.2.2.4 Structure of Proverbs 3:19-20

Biblical scholars agree that Proverbs 3:19-20 evolved as an independent unit in origin, but came to be placed in its current position in order to underline the means and merit of Wisdom's efficacy.<sup>318</sup> In this sense, the unit presents its striking rhetorical structure as follows:

- A YHWH by Wisdom (הַכְּמָה) founded (יָסַד) the earth (אֶרֶץ), v.19a
- B Establishing (כִּוְנֵן) the sky (שָׁמַיִם) by understanding (תְּבוּנָה), v.19b
- A' By his (YHWH) knowledge (דַּעַת) the deeps (תְּהוֹמוֹת) burst open (בָּקַעַע), v.20a
- B' And the clouds (שָׁחַקִים) drop (יִרְעַפּוּ) dew (טֶל), v.20b

Figure 9: Rhetorical structure of Proverbs 3:19-20

<sup>317</sup> Perdue convincingly noted that the description of Woman Wisdom here and later in Proverbs 8-9 borrows from Ancient Near Eastern goddesses (mostly *Ma'at* or Isis) who personify justice and the created order (2007:50).

<sup>318</sup> See von Rad, G 1972. *Wisdom in Israel*. (Trans. Martin, J D). London: SCM, p.151f; Whybray, R N 1994b. *The Composition of the Book of Proverbs*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press (JSOTSup 168), p37; Brown, W P 1999. *The Ethos of the Cosmos: The Genesis of Moral Imagination in the Bible*. Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge, U K: W B Eerdmans, p.284 note 48.

The above structure presents itself as an alternating parallelism<sup>319</sup> in Hebrew poetry. Its poetry is made in the way that lines 1 and 3 relate, as do 2 and 4, to communicate the author's message (Willis 1987:49). In Proverbs 3:19-20, A relates to A' in the sense that the secured earth and the deeps belong to the lower sphere of the created order, while B and B' concern the upper sphere of the created order. Hence, the תְּהוֹמוֹת (Tehomot) may now burst forth its water without turning the created order into chaos because they act according to God's דְּעַת (De'at), or design of the world.<sup>320</sup> Likewise, the skies may send forth its water into dew toward earth via the clouds to fertilize the earth.

However, AA' implies also the life-threatening quality of water (תְּהוֹמוֹת) from which the earth is secured. Likewise, the establishment of the sky (שָׁמַיִם) by understanding implies also the vault that is set to hold above-waters preventing them from collapsing and turning the created order into chaos.

### 4.3.2.3 Eco-theological reading of Proverbs 3:19-20

#### 4.3.2.3.1 Life-giving quality of water in Proverbs 3:19-20

In verse 19, the Hebrew expression בְּחֵכְמָה (by Wisdom) would be understood as God's attribute, but it could also be read as a quality immanent in creation in the sense that 'Creation was raised by God to a state of wisdom or understanding' (von Rad 1972:155). This is in agreement with Psalm 104:24 hymning 'You have made all your works in Wisdom', and Sirach 1:9 stating that God has 'poured Wisdom out upon all his works'.

The three Hebrew words for Wisdom (חֵכְמָה, תְּבוּיָה, דְּעַת) want to underline that there is Wisdom in the limitation of the unruly life-threatening water from which earth is secured (AA' vv.19a & 20a) and in the falling of the life-giving water from the sky (שָׁמַיִם) to the earth via the clouds (BB' vv.19b & 20b). In Proverbs 3:19, the earth and

<sup>319</sup> For different forms of alternating parallelism in biblical poetry, see Willis, J T 1987. Alternating (ABA'B') Parallelism in the Old Testament, in Follis, E R (ed), *Directions in Biblical Hebrew Poetry*, 49-76. Sheffield: JSOT Press.

<sup>320</sup> The word דְּעַת should be understood as חֵכְמָה or even the Egyptian *Ma'at* in the sense of world order. Verse 20 thus identifies 'knowledge' (דְּעַת), which in these chapters is frequently synonymous with wisdom (see Whybray, R N 1994b. *The Composition of the Book of Proverbs*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press (JSOTSup 168), p37.

skies are securely established, and even the life-threatening deeps ‘burst open’ (v.20a) only at YHWH’s דַעַת (knowledge) to fertilise the earth.

Contrary to Genesis 7:11 using the verb בָּקַעַ to describe the beginning of a disastrous flood, Proverbs 3:20a attributes a positive aspect to the cosmic deluge by underscoring the restorative and life-giving role of the waters (תְּהוֹמוֹת) in favour of the earth (Brown 1999:284, see note 49). Probably the sage is implying here Genesis 2:4b where the mist from the subterranean deeps burst open to fertilise the land. YHWH refreshes and revitalizes earth by the life-giving water from both the deeps (v.20a) and dew drops (v.20b). This verse patently juxtaposes the beneficent water flowing from the sky with the released depths, each working for life on earth (Waltke 2004:262).

The word שָׁחֲקִים (v.20b) means clouds that give water in form of dew or rain (see our comments on Job 36:28). The Hebrew word used here for the falling of dew on earth is יָרַעַפוּ. In Elihu’s speech in Job 36:28, יָרַעַפוּ signifies ‘to pour down’, while in Psalm 65:12 it means to flow. In this sense, the verb does not merely refer to the dripping of dew (לָטַף), but that YHWH regularly waters the earth. In Canaan’s rainless summer, the land was almost dependent on dew. That is why the pair ‘rain and dew’ usually occur together in many parts of the Bible (see Appendix A).

#### 4.3.2.3.2 Life-threatening potential of water in Proverbs 3:19-20

The Hebrew verbs יָסַד (to establish) the earth (אֲרָץ) and כוֹנֵן (to secure) the sky (שָׁמַיִם) imply driving the waters off the earth and keeping them in limits that they must not cross. These Hebrew verbs present God as the ultimate architect who lays down a strong foundation and secures a building of walls and pillars, and supports the sky with a roof constructed over the cosmic sea to hold the waters back (Perdue 2007:51).

The text denotes the common cosmogonic ideas of the time in which the earth was conceived as a mass resting on an ocean (Ps 24:2; 136:6), and as having foundations and supported by pillars beneath the ocean (in Sheol) (Is 51:33; Job 9:6; Am9:2-3).<sup>321</sup> Likewise, above the earth, the sky was thought of as a material expanse (רָקִיעַ) fixed in

<sup>321</sup> For more details, see Frymer-Kensky, T S 1987. Biblical Cosmology, in O’Connor, M P & Freedman, D N (eds), *Backgrounds for the Bible*, 231-240. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns (see p.233f).

its place by God (Gn 1:6; Is 20:22) and supported by pillars (Job 26:11) so that the water above should not meet the water below and turn creation into chaos.<sup>322</sup>

The word שָׁמַיִם (sky) etymologically means ‘what relates to water’.<sup>323</sup> In this sense, in the Ancient Near East, the solidity of the dome (רָקִיעַ) and the blue colour of the sky (שָׁמַיִם) were assumed as tightly holding the upper-waters back, and thus preventing the cosmic sea to break up and overwhelm the created order.<sup>324</sup> Just as Genesis 1, Proverbs 3:20a is aware of the unruly waters in specific limits within the created order. By the verbs to ‘secure and establish’, the sage implies that in wisdom God protects his creation from being overwhelmed by the life-threatening chaos waters. In this sense, by דָּעַת, the channels were cleft open to permit some water to come up from the great cosmic ocean into springs on the earth (Emerton 1966:127).

In verse 20a, תְּהוֹמוֹת burst open according to God’s דָּעַת which is a life-giving action. It should be known, however, that תְּהוֹמוֹת normally refers to the primeval deep with life-threatening potential. It is linguistically the equivalent of Tiamat, the Akkadian chaos monster threatening to devour gods. The verb בָּקַע (v.20a) may thus infer the mythical image of Marduk ‘splitting open’ the chaos monster to protect the world from being flooded by chaos (Perdue 2007:51). תְּהוֹם or תְּהוֹמוֹת was a dangerous place, symbolised by the chaos monster living in its depths.

In this sense, Proverbs 3:20a states that תְּהוֹמוֹת is kept in check to act according to God’s דָּעַת (v.20a) by letting some water flow within designed channels to the land, and thus diminishing the volume of its water. Otherwise, תְּהוֹמוֹת would uncontrollably send forth its life-threatening water against the created order. This once occurred during the flood (Gn 7:11; 8:2). תְּהוֹמוֹת both poured down waters through the windows of the vault (above limit of water) and flowed up through the springs: all the springs of the great deep (כָּל־מַעְיֵנוֹת תְּהוֹם רַבָּה) were cleft open (נִבְקָעוּ) and the waters rushed up turning creation into chaos.

<sup>322</sup> The function of the רָקִיעַ (or שָׁמַיִם) is to separate the waters from waters (literally: מֵיִם לְמֵיִם, Gn 1:6b).

<sup>323</sup> The point is that generally, the words denoting sky in the Semitic languages are all spelled by prefixing *sh* to the words meaning water (Van Wolde 1998:24).

<sup>324</sup> The word שָׁמַיִם in Hebrew or Aramaic and *shamu* in Akkadian could therefore be seen as a term combining ‘of/one of which’(ש) and ‘waters’ (מַיִם) assuming that the sky is ‘one of the waters/of the waters’ (Kee 2012:187).

Proverbs 3:20a implies that if the waters are not kept in their appointed place, they are potentially life-threatening. In this sense, the expression תְּהוֹמוֹת נִבְקְעוּ (the deeps burst open) in Proverbs 3:20a probably refers to the creation of channels for this water since verse 19 presumes the original act of creation in Genesis 1:1-2 (Emerton 1966:125). God's act of wisdom does not annihilate life-threatening waters of תְּהוֹמוֹת, but creates channels so that some water can flow from the deep into the springs on the land.

#### **4.3.2.3.3 Eco-theological synthesis**

It is fascinating to see that the text contains both the idea of water as the enemy of the created order (life-threatening quality) and the idea that water plays a major role in the sustenance of life in the created order (life-giving quality). The text is in accordance with the principle of the intrinsic worth of water. For Proverbs 3:19-20, water is life-giving when it flows within fixed limits (i.e. according to wisdom/principle that God used to establish the created order).

Water will then flow from the ground (below) and the dew from the clouds (above) to fertilise the land. However, the primeval deeps (life-threatening waters) continue to flow upwards and are held back by the sky preventing them from overrunning the created order. It is by wisdom, the principle of the created order, that creation is maintained in order.

### **4.3.3 Water and water-related phenomena in Proverbs 8:22-31**

#### **4.3.3.1 Introduction**

This section explores the ecological potential of water in Proverbs 8:22-31. It should be noted that this section does not focus on Wisdom and Creation and as is generally the case in the quasi-totality of publications on Proverbs 8:22-31. The researcher aims to explore the ecological insights of water, which is the dominant feature of the cosmos in Proverbs 8:22-31.

#### **4.3.3.2 The Masoretic Text of Proverbs 8:22-31**

22 יְהוָה קָנְנִי רֵאשִׁית דְּרָכָו קָדָם מִפְּעֻלָּיו מֵאֵז:

- 23 מְעוֹלָם נִסְכַּחְתִּי מִרֵאשׁ מִקְדָּמֵי-אָרֶץ:
- 24 בְּאֵין-תְּהִמּוֹת חוֹלְלָתִי בְּאֵין מְעִינּוֹת נְכַבְּדֵי-מַיִם:
- 25 בְּטָרֵם הָרִים הִטְבַּעוּ לִפְנֵי גְבְעוֹת חוֹלְלָתִי:
- 26 עַד-לֹא עָשָׂה אָרֶץ וְחוֹצוֹת וְרֵאשׁ עֶפְרָוֹת תִּבְּל:
- 27 בְּהִכִּינּוּ שָׁמַיִם שָׁם אָנִי בְּחֻקּוֹ חֹג עַל-פְּנֵי תְהוֹם:
- 28 בְּאַמְצוֹ שְׁחַקִּים מִמַּעַל בְּעֵזוֹ עֵינּוֹת תְּהוֹם:
- 29 בְּשׁוֹמְרוֹ לַיָּם חֻקּוֹ וַמַּיִם לֹא יַעֲבְרוּ-פִּי בְּחֻקּוֹ מוֹסְדֵי אָרֶץ:
- 30 וְאַהֲיָה אֶצְלוֹ אֱמוּנָה וְאַהֲיָה שְׁעֵשְׂעִים יוֹם
- יּוֹם מִשְׁחַקָּת לִפְנֵי בְּכָל-עֵת:
- 31 מִשְׁחַקָּת בְּתִבֵּל אֶרְצוֹ וְשֵׁשְׁעֵי אֶת-בְּנֵי אָדָם: פ

#### 4.3.3.3 Translation of Proverbs 8:22-31

The Masoretic Text does not present major textual variants. This study has opted for the translation proposed by the New Revised Standard Version (1989):

- <sup>22</sup> The LORD created me at the beginning of his work,  
the first of his acts of long ago.
- <sup>23</sup> Ages ago I was set up, at the first,  
before the beginning of the earth.
- <sup>24</sup> When there were no depths, I was brought forth,  
when there were no springs abounding with water.
- <sup>25</sup> Before the mountains had been shaped,  
before the hills, I was brought forth—
- <sup>26</sup> when he had not yet made earth and fields,  
or the world's first bits of soil.
- <sup>27</sup> When he established the heavens, I was there,  
when he drew a circle on the face of the deep,
- <sup>28</sup> when he made firm the skies above,  
when he established the fountains of the deep,
- <sup>29a</sup> when he assigned to the sea its limit,

so that the waters might not transgress his command,  
<sup>29b-30aa</sup> when he marked out the foundations of the earth,  
<sup>30aβ-b</sup> then I was beside him, like a master worker;  
 and I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him always,  
<sup>31</sup> rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the human race.

#### 4.3.3.4 Wisdom and creation in Proverbs 8:22-31

Proverbs 8:22-31 is the central part of the whole chapter 8 of the book of Proverbs. It is preceded by Proverbs 8:4-21 where Wisdom explains her value and vital nature, and followed by Proverbs 8:32-36 that returns to the sapiential theme of verses 4-21 that orders one to listen to Wisdom, for on this depends life or death (von Rad 1972:151).

The artistic structure of this central section has impressed scholars. The beginning (vv. 22-23) and the end (v.30-31) both concern Wisdom's relationship with YHWH, while the poetic body (vv.24-29) narrates the active role of Wisdom in the formation of the cosmos. Just as *Ma'at* in Egypt, Wisdom is here given a special position *vis-à-vis* all creatures, a position of firstborn (רְאִישִׁית) emphasised also in Job 28. Proverbs 8:22-31 therefore presents the following chiasmic structure:<sup>325</sup>

- A YHWH creates Wisdom in primordial time (vv.22-23)
- B Situation before creation (when there were no...) vv.24-26)
- B' Creation ordered by YHWH (when he...) (vv.27-29)
- A' Wisdom's intimacy with YHWH (vv.30-31)

Figure 10: Structure of Proverbs 8:22-31

The poem presents an alternating parallelism where line one points to line four (AA'), while line two and three antithetically correlate (BB'). While the pair AA' points to wisdom intimacy with God, BB' contrasts the precreation situation with the situation after/during the creation. What is striking is that the good or the not-good of creation is determined by the aspects of waters: while verses 24-26 concern the situation before the chaos waters (life-threatening), verses 27-29 depict the boundaries of the waters to secure the created order. In this sense, both the first (AA') and the second (BB') pairs

<sup>325</sup> This structure is adapted from the model presented by von Rad, G 1972, *Wisdom in Israel*. (Trans. Martin, J D). London: SCM, p.151, and augmented by Clifford, R J 1994. *Creation Accounts in the Ancient Near East and in the Bible*. Washington, DC: CBAA (CBQMS 26), p.183.

close with the mention of ‘earth’ (אָרֶץ, v.26a & 29c) (Clifford 1999:96). Waters of life and death are the dominant features of the poem.

#### 4.3.3.5 Life-threatening potential of water (verses 24-26)

Similar to Genesis 2:4b, Wisdom’s creation poem in Proverbs 8:22-31 starts with the negative (not yet) situation of waters’ absence: depths and wellsprings. The hills and mountains are added in the list of lack (vv.24-25). While the priestly creation account (Gn 1:1-2:4a) starts with watery chaos everywhere (עַל־כָּנִי), Proverbs 8:22 goes to the time anterior to the deeps. Wisdom is termed as the first of God’s deeds: she existed even before the watery chaos, the primeval deeps.

The expression בְּאֵין־תְּהוֹמוֹת (when there were no deep) (v.22) would refer to a situation prior to the primeval deeps contrary to Genesis 1:2. Raymond (158:175) argues that תְּהוֹמוֹת here means ‘springs’ as in Deuteronomy 8:7 rather than primeval depths as the idea that there was a time תְּהוֹמוֹת did not exist is stranger in the Old Testament. Still the springs have their origins back in תְּהוֹמוֹת. The answer resides in the meaning of the verb קָנָה<sup>326</sup> in verse 22 and רָאשִׁית in verse 23 in relation to Wisdom.

In accordance with Vawter (1980:213), one would argue that the verb קָנָה points to the idea that here wisdom is said to have pre-existed the created order and therefore be outside it, though it subsequently became instrumental in the production of the created order. God possessed wisdom as an attribute or faculty that he used to order elements of creation, including the תְּהוֹמוֹת. The word רָאשִׁית in verse 23 does not thus indicate temporal precedence, but the ‘principle’ or the model by which creation was made (De Saignac 1954:429).

---

<sup>326</sup> Scholars are divided on the meaning of the Hebrew word קָנָה. Some argue for קָנָה as ‘to acquire’ in the sense that wisdom pre-existed and was then acquired by God to create the world, while others favour the meaning of קָנָה as fathering or forming in relation to the birth language of verses 23-25. The researcher agrees with the first reading that wisdom pre-existed and that God possessed it as *modus operandi*, the principle of God’s creative activity. YHWH took possession of a wisdom that he then proceeded to utilise in his work of creation (Vawter 1980:215). In other words, ‘YHWH possessed wisdom as an attribute or faculty integral to his being from the very first (Scott 1965:71-2). It should be recognised here that these verses deal with an ‘un-Israelite’, i.e., not conventionally Israelite conception of wisdom that ought not be confused with other wisdom concepts of the Old Testament. The Egyptian *Ma’at* conception insisting on the autonomy of order, justice and principle in the cosmos might have influenced these verses (Vawter 1980:2016). In this sense, the word רָאשִׁית in verse 23 means not ‘temporal precedence, but the principle of God’s creative activity (De Saignac 1954:429-32).

Wisdom is the principle of the created order. It is implied here that God possessed Wisdom before the dealing with the waters in verse 24: he had not yet shaped the רְקִיעַ or allowed controlled springs of water to irrigate the earth. Neither had he yet shaped the mountains that would hold up the earth from the sea (Jon 2:6). All were hidden in the life-threatening primeval deeps before God's creative work. In verses 24-26, one can thus notice that the presentation of elements of creation follow the movement from below the earth to above it: from the underground depths (v.24a), to the springs leading to earth's surface (v.24b) to the visible mountains rooted in the depths (v.25a), the hills (v.25b) and the land (v.26) (Waltke 2004:411).

All the enlisted spheres (springs, mountains, hills and earth) have direct links with the life-threatening primeval waters, תְּהוֹמוֹת. When the waters of תְּהוֹמוֹת retreated after the flood event, nature spheres appeared in this logical order (Gn 8:4-12); all were engulfed in the life-threatening waters of תְּהוֹמוֹת. In this sense, verses 27-29 will later deal with several limitations of waters towards shaping, establishing, supporting and stabilising the earth since the unbound תְּהוֹם is a lurking danger against the created order.

#### **4.3.3.6 Life-giving quality of water (verses 27-29)**

Thereafter, verses 27-29 positively depict the forming of the cosmic order similar to that of the Priestly creation account (Gn 1:1-2:4a): the sky, the waters and the earth. The limits of the deep and the sea are set up, while the sky is secured and underground springs are stabilised (Brown 1999:275). The section also concludes with the earth's foundations that are established by the creator (v.29b). With these limits imposed, the waters of the deep are no longer in service of death but of life.

In reading verses 27-29, the sage implies that life arose on earth when the primal deeps were restricted within boundaries and let out again in the form of springs/fountains (v.28) (Klopper 2002b:677). In verse 29, an edict is given by God to the life-threatening primordial deep, keeping it from turning the creation order into chaos. When located within these boundaries, the waters are in the service of life in

the created order. It is by Wisdom that God secures, restrains and arranges the created order by maintaining the waters within limits (Dell 2006:143).

#### 4.3.3.7 Eco-theological synthesis

The poem echoes the separation process of waters in Genesis 1 even though it is not about the technical depiction of the process but rather the presence of Wisdom during these primordial events (Longman III 2012:207). Unlike the priestly creation account, the cosmos of Proverbs 8:22-31 does not point towards a perfect creation. The watery domains are depicted with both life-giving and life-threatening potential.

Therefore, verses 27-28 enlist the limits being imposed on the chaos water (תְּהוֹמוֹת): the establishment of the sky (שָׁמַיִם), the circumcision of the deep (תְּהוֹם), the strengthening of the clouds<sup>327</sup> (שְׁחֻמֵּי), the intensification of the fountains (עֵינֹת) and the decree that sets the limits of the sea (יָם). With the setting up of the skies – שָׁמַיִם: literally, what relates to water (Van Wolde 1998:24)<sup>328</sup> – as well as the deeps limited, the cosmos becomes a bastion of security against the life-threatening potential of תְּהוֹם.

God is therefore the perfect architect, sinking the pillars of the earth in the water in order to launch an arena of life and to survive the threatening pressure of the watery chaos (Brown 1999:276). One would conclude that some of the current Tsunamis result from contemporary technological breaking of geological limits of the waters.

#### 4.4 Comparative conclusion

This chapter has involved the analysis of two categories of texts: texts that use water as metaphor, namely Proverbs 5:15-20; 9:13-18 and 25:23-26 and wisdom poems where water appears as a physical entity, namely Proverbs 3:19-20 and 8:22-31. In the first category, the aim was to explore the possibility of retrieving ecological wisdom

<sup>327</sup> In previous sections, we observed that the clouds are understood as the basin receiving the water from the above-sea and delivering them on earth as life-giving rain on earth. See chapter three of this thesis (on the discourse of Elihu). Without the cloud, the waters from above are simply flood, not rain (see Genesis 7).

<sup>328</sup> In her scholarly essay, Van Wolde thinks that the letter -שׁ of the word שָׁמַיִם (sky) might have been used as an abridged form of the relative pronoun אֲשֶׁר (that), and thereby the word שָׁמַיִם would mean 'that relates to מַיִם' (1998:24). This would explain why the function of שָׁמַיִם (sky) aims only at separating the מַיִם above from the מַיִם below, in Genesis 1:6 since prior to שָׁמַיִם, there was only a vertical and unspecified mass of water called תְּהוֹם characterised by utter darkness, חֹשֶׁךְ.

of water used as vehicle for human matters. The analysis tried to uncover the life-giving and life-threatening potential of water and water-related phenomena that had gone unnoticed, ignored or muted by human-centred and androcentric reading of the passages. In the second category, the attempt consisted of focusing on water and water-related phenomena that are often muffled in studies about the role of Wisdom in creation in Proverbs 3:19-20 and 8:22-36.

Therefore, the analysis observed that Proverbs 5:15-20 displays a number of water-related phenomena with the life-giving potential. The private wells and cisterns along with springs and fountains are all a true depiction of the erotic aspect of water that gives life. It is alluded to that only private cisterns and wells are in the service of life. Besides, the restriction of not spilling the spring/fountains on public areas denotes the idea that bad behaviours will lead *inter alia* to water depletion. It also presumes that the public area contains life-threatening water which is not fit for consumption. Thus, the text is informed by the ecological idea of proper water management.

However, Proverbs 9:13-18 explicitly deals with both aspects of water as a life-giving and life-threatening entity. Folly's water is sweet for a while, denoting the romantic (life-giving) aspect of water, but her path leads to the depths of Sheol (life-threatening water). It was shown that the words עֲמֻקִּים וְשְׂאוֹל (depths of Sheol) are the equivalent of the depths of abyss since the word מְעַמְקִים (depths) refers to life-threatening waters similar to תהום or יָם inspiring death on the created order. In this sense, both aspects of water are present in the metaphorical language of the text.

Finally, Proverbs 25:23-26 is the most insightful text in terms of a clear illustration of both aspects of water as giving life and death. The metaphor of north wind that brings forth rain in verse 23 is informed by the life-threatening function of unexpected heavy rains (גְּשָׁם) resulting in land erosion, crops' failure and thus ruining the hope of an Israelite farmer. The text has thus been informed by an agricultural world in which the rain from the north wind is hidden and potentially damaging just as a backbiting tongue is hidden and thus potentially destructive. The idea of water unpredictability will be emphasised in the analysis of Qoheleth 11:1-6 in the fifth chapter of the thesis.

By contrast, Proverbs 25:25 denotes life-giving functions of water, while verse 26 implies both life-giving and life-threatening aspects of water. In verse 25 the metaphor compares the revitalising power of cold water to the weary (almost dead) to the relief of receiving good news from a distant land. Verse 26 expresses the feeling of deception for a muddied spring or polluted fountain, which is compared to a wavering person righteous before the wicked. As polluted water, the spring or fountain is no longer a source of life, but a life-threatening entity.

Proverbs 3:19-20 and Proverbs 8:22-31 both highlight in their ways the life-giving and life-threatening potential of water. From the mention of primeval deep to the dew drop fertilising earth as well as the limitation of water in the skies and underneath the earth, both wisdom poems underline that water is a lurking danger in the created order while it is vital for the continuance of life in the universe. The following chapter of this thesis, water and water-related phenomena in the book of Qoheleth, contains texts that emphasise the unpredictability of water and water management.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: WATER AND WATER-RELATED PHENOMENA IN THE BOOK OF QOHELETH**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The book of Qoheleth<sup>329</sup> does not contain too many texts that have references about water. The book is primarily anthropocentric, focusing on ‘what is good for humans to do under the sun during the few days of their life’ (2:3). A few passages that have references to water and water-related phenomena include Qoheleth 1:4-11; 2:4-6 and 11:1-6. These texts, however, are used in support of the human-centred approach of the book.

These verses have apparently nothing to do with water itself as a subject, but are used as enigmatic features in Qoheleth’s philosophical understanding of human experience. While Qoheleth 1:4-11 and 11:1-6 use water metaphors to comment on human issues, Qoheleth 2:4-6 is a prosaic autobiographic text enlisting Qoheleth’s measures of pleasure, including water supply in his parks and pools. This chapter of the thesis may be somewhat ambitious as it attempts to retrieve ecological wisdom from texts that seem to have no bearing on environmental matters.

### **5.2 Introduction to the book of Qoheleth**

#### **5.2.1 Socio-historical context of the book of Qoheleth**

This sub-section does not attempt to replace scholarly publications about the book of Qoheleth, but draws on their insights to address the theme of this thesis. Despite the insights of early Jewish and Christian exegesis, it is now accepted that Solomon was not the author of the book of Qoheleth.<sup>330</sup> The famous nineteenth-century scholar

---

<sup>329</sup> The Hebrew name *קֹהֶלֶת* is transliterated as Qohelet or Qoheleth. This study prefers the latter.

<sup>330</sup> Attribution of the book to Solomon was based on Qoheleth 1:1 in which Qoheleth is depicted as ‘the son of David, king in Jerusalem’ and on 1:12 in which Qoheleth describes himself as ‘king over Israel in Jerusalem’ as well as many ‘luxurious enjoyments’ recalling the Solomonic court glory (1 Kgs 10). For scholarly debates about the composition of the book of Qoheleth, see Rudman, D 2001b. *Determinism in the Book of Ecclesiastes*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press. JSOTSup, pp. 2-33; Koh, Y V 2006. *Royal Autobiography in the Book of Qoheleth*. Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, pp.2-16.

Franz Delitzsch even said: ‘If the book of Koheleth were of Salomonic origin, then there is no history of the Hebrew language’ (1968:190).

A number of modern scholars situate the composition of Qoheleth in Jerusalem approximatively during the second half of the third century BCE, during the Ptolemaic reign.<sup>331</sup> The Aramaism theory dating Qoheleth in the Persian context has been demoted by insights from the discovery of scroll fragments of the book (4QQoh<sup>a</sup>) at Qumran that favour the mid-second century BCE.<sup>332</sup> Some of the reasons in supporting the Hellenistic<sup>333</sup> period as the socio-historical context of the book include Qoheleth’s sceptical philosophy of human life, the *Carpe Diem*<sup>334</sup> ideas, and several parallels to Greek words and their meaning<sup>335</sup> (Koh 2006:15).

Qoheleth’s context was characterised by the Ptolemaic reign of ‘force’ and ‘persuasion’ which avoided interfering in local customs of conquered nations. Bagnall reveals a principle that led the Ptolemaic governance: ‘Let the cities run their own affairs so long as they satisfy whatever obligations they have to the crown’ (1976:9). Despite its absolutism, the Ptolemaic reign was a period of peace, agricultural and economic productivity, and various profits for Israel (Tcherikover 1972:59; Bickerman 1988:70).

---

<sup>331</sup> See Krüger, T 2004. *Qoheleth: A Commentary*. Trans. by Dean Jr, O C. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, p.19; Crenshaw, J L 1988. *Ecclesiastes*. London: SCM Press. (OTL), p.50; Murphy, R E 1990. *The Tree of Life: An Exploration of Biblical Wisdom Literature*. 3<sup>rd</sup> edn. Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge, U.K: Eerdmans, p.49; Perdue, L G 2007. *Wisdom Literature: A Theological History*. London/Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, pp.161-2. The Zenon archives reflects a political situation of economic prosperity for the upper class of Jewish society not during the Persian context as suggested by Seow (1997:21), but about 250 BCE (Crenshaw 1995:508). A date between 225 and 250 BCE is thus the most plausible for the book. The meagre political data that scholars have seen in the book refer to the period prior the Maccabean revolt in 164 BCE.

<sup>332</sup> See Muilenberg, J 1954. A Qoheleth Scroll from Qumran. *BASOR* 135, 20-28; Cross, F M 1955. Oldest Manuscripts from Qumran. *JBL* 74/3, 147-172 (see pp. 153 & 162). It is believed that Sirach probably knew and used the book of Qoheleth about 190 BCE (Krüger 2004:20).

<sup>333</sup> Hellenism refers to a complex phenomenon embracing political, socio-economic, cultural or religious aspects. It includes ‘education, philosophy, rhetoric, traditional religion, the newly emerging mystery religion, the Greek language, art and architecture, and a variety of political and social features’ (Perdue 2007:176).

<sup>334</sup> Drawing on his experience of what is profitable in life, Qoheleth concludes: ‘So I commend enjoyment, for there is nothing better for people under the sun than to eat, and drink, and enjoy themselves, for this will go with them in their toil through the days of life that God gives them under the sun’ (8:15). According to Qoheleth, life is best lived and enjoyed when it is available without concern for what is to come after the grave (Sweeney 2012:438).

<sup>335</sup> Proponents of the Persian context argue that the book has no word having a Greek derivation (Graecisms) comparing to many aramaisms such as פָּרְקִים (parks) that are loaned from the Persian. This is not strange since even Ben Sira and other Hebrew texts from Qumran lack Graecisms (Rudman 2001b:14). However, Qoheleth does contain a number of parallels in Hellenistic Greek. Among these words, one could enlist שָׁמַיְמָה = ὑπὸ τὸν ἥλιον (under the sun), לְהֵבֵל = nothingness/ephemerality. For more words, see Perdue, L G 2007. *Wisdom Literature: A Theological History*. London/Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, pp.177-178.

The *Letter of Aristeas*<sup>336</sup> can be cited as evidence for such a profitable time. The letter lists the natural and economic abundance of Palestine during this period:

Their country is plentifully wooded with numerous olive trees, and rich in cereal crops and pulse, and also in vines and honey. Date palms and other fruit trees are beyond reckoning among them. They have plentiful cattle of all varieties, and their pastures are lush ... For the country is adapted for commerce as well as agriculture and the city is rich in crafts and lacks none of the things imported by sea ... (Hadas 1951:147)

However, the opportunity of a more splendid life was reserved for a small group of people. In many cases, the peasants had to cope with marginal subsistence since the exportation and heavy taxation system served local officials only, and thus, created pressure on most of the rural populace (Lloyd 2003:410). Qoheleth's sceptical and ambiguous rhetoric serves as a critique of this socio-historical context.

### 5.2.2 The use of nature languages in Qoheleth

Qoheleth belongs to the five *Meggilloth*,<sup>337</sup> the five short scrolls designed to be read on Jewish festivals. Due to Qoheleth's earthly nature, the book was read during *Sukkot* (the Booths or Tabernacles festival)<sup>338</sup> which celebrated the conclusion of 'the fruit harvest and the onset of the rainy season in the seasonal cycle of the land of Israel' (Sweeney 2012:438). This is derived from many passages in the book, including Qoheleth 9:1 which states: 'Go, eat you bread with pleasure ... for God has already approved your works'. The essential question of the book is anthropocentric: 'What is

---

<sup>336</sup> Aristeas is supposed to be an official in Ptolemy II's court who was sent as an envoy to the high priest Eleazar to discuss matters related to seventy-two scholars to translate the Hebrew Torah into Greek (the Septuagint). The letter as a whole can be found in Hadas, M 1951. *Aristeas to Philocrates (Letter of Aristeas)*. New York: Harper. However, Hadas (1951:164) thinks that the depiction of the country in the letter envisages a remote and idealised Biblical Palestine that purposely seems to ignore contemporary reality. The letter is therefore attributed to an Alexandrian Jew about 130 BCE. Still, the letter implies the peaceful and economic life of Israel during the Ptolemaic period. Feldman recommends scholars to 'suspect but respect' the letter (tale) even if some of its features are fictive (1996:104), while Bickerman indicates that the letter alludes to the facts that the Ptolemies greatly valued the wine and olive oil of Palestine (1988:175).

<sup>337</sup> The five *Meggillot* refer to the five scrolls or five short books of the Kethuvim (Writings), namely Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Qoheleth and Esther which were read as part of the synagogue service during major Jewish festivals. Song of Songs was read during Passover; Ruth on Shavuoth; Lamentations on *Tisha be av*; Qoheleth on *Sukkot*; and Esther on *Purim* (for further details on the Five Scrolls (*Meggillot*), see Pearl, C 1996. *The Encyclopaedia of Jewish Life and Thought. Revised and Expanded from the Hebrew Editions*. Jerusalem: Carta, p.414.

<sup>338</sup> The festival *Sukkot* (Tabernacles or Booths) is named after the transitory life that Israel led at the concluding harvest and during the wilderness wanderings (Sweeney 2012:438).

the good for humans to do under the skies during the few days of their life?’ (Qoh 2:3).

Many modern scholars think that Qoheleth represents a ‘crisis’ in Israel’s wisdom tradition in that the book attacks the dogma of conventional wisdom, namely, God’s sense of justice, the romantic view of nature and the value of human life.<sup>339</sup> In this sense, the book as a whole creates various contradictions that state the problems rather than solving them, inferring that the readers must leave many of Qoheleth’s observations in tension<sup>340</sup> (Fox 1989:11).

For Qoheleth, the cosmology of conventional wisdom did not give appropriate responses to the issues he raised about discovering what is good in human experience as creation has itself many ambiguities (Perdue 1994:193). Qoheleth is, therefore, unable to draw on insights he perceived in nature to construct vital models compelling articulations of faith and ethical life. Unlike the traditions of Genesis, Psalms, Isaiah and Job claiming that nature displays order, creation in Qoheleth is characterised by *hebel*.

There is a plethora of scholarly translations of the word *hebel*; it is not within the scope of this thesis to explore them.<sup>341</sup> The book of Qoheleth contains over half of its uses in the Hebrew Bible.<sup>342</sup> The literal meaning of the word is ‘vapour’ or ‘breeze’ (Is 57:13). The NRSV rendered *hebel* as ‘vanity’, while Fox (1989:31) argued for an existentialist meaning of *hebel* as ‘absurdity’ before Longman III’s option of ‘meaningless’ (1998:32) and Krüger’s proposition of ‘futility’ (2004:42).

However, none of the propositions encompass the meaning of *hebel* in its various occurrences within Qoheleth. Aware of this, Whybray suggests ‘futility’, but ‘brevity’

---

<sup>339</sup> See Crenshaw, J L 1988. *Ecclesiastes*. London: SCM Press. (OTL), p.27; Perdue, L G 1994. *Wisdom and Creation: The Theology of Wisdom Literature*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, p.194; Anderson, W H U 1997. *Qoheleth and its Pessimistic Theology: Hermeneutical Struggles in Wisdom Literature*. Lewiston/Queenston/Lampeter: Mellen Biblical Press, p.58;

<sup>340</sup> That is why contemporary fundamentalists and evangelicals largely ignore the book except Qoheleth 3:1-2 that is used for funeral events (Sneed 2012:4).

<sup>341</sup> For the scholarly discussions of the meaning of *hebel*, see can be found in (see Fox, M V 1989. *Qoheleth and his Contradictions*. Sheffield: Almond. JSOTSup 71, p.30-31; Krüger, T 2004. *Qoheleth: A Commentary*. trans by Dean Jr, O C. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, p.42.

<sup>342</sup> See Qoheleth 1:1-12 (four times), 14; 2:1,11, 15, 17, 19, 21, 23, 26; 3:19; 4:4, 7, 8, 16; 5:6, 9; 6:2, 4, 9, 11, 12; 7:6, 15; 8:10, 14 (two times); 9:9 (two times); 11:8, 10; 12:8 (three times).

in 6:12; 9:9 and 10:10 respectively.<sup>343</sup> It seems that Ogden's translation of *hebel* as 'enigmatic' or 'ambiguous' would fit with the socio-historical and literary contexts of the book (1987:15). For Qoheleth, life is ambiguous or enigmatic: it is complex and manifold; no single natural phenomenon, either positive or negative, can fully explain it.

Therefore, nature in Qoheleth can neither be framed in Brown's words of 'the dying cosmos' (2010:177), nor in Whybray's thesis of the 'romantic cosmos of regularity' (1988:105), but both. In other words, it is not that only a positive (romantic) or a negative meaning of nature is intended, but that the reader needs to see both aspects as the true depiction of life (Wilson 1998:363). Qoheleth's cosmos is characterised by futility and regularity.

### **5.3 Water and water-related phenomena in Qoheleth 1:4-11**

#### **5.3.1 Introduction**

References to water-related phenomena are mainly found in verse 7. However, the analysis includes the passage as a whole, namely, Qoheleth 1:4-11 since verse 7 has meaning only in relation to the 'ambiguous' cosmological poetry of the text. Therefore, the section involves a literary analysis before an ecological interpretation is attempted.

#### **5.3.2 Literary considerations**

In this section, the researcher discusses the variants in the Masoretic text of Qoheleth 1:4-11, its artful ambiguity and issues of its literary delimitation.

##### **5.3.2.1 The Masoretic Text of Qoheleth 1:4-11**

The Masoretic Text does not present a text-critical problem, but its ambiguous syntax is a challenge to its interpretation. The bold numbers in the text, therefore, do not indicate a text-critical problem, but issues of ambiguity.

---

<sup>343</sup> See Whybray, R N 1982. Qoheleth, Preacher of Joy. *JSOT* 23, 87-98.

However, due to the ambiguity in the Hebrew text, a translation which has to choose one of the two possible meanings cannot do justice to the Hebrew text. In fact, the Hebrew text points to two possible meanings of nature or water as both purposeful (positive) and wearisome (negative). The issue will be discussed later in the analysis of the text. The analysis will be based on the following Hebrew text:

4 דָּוָר הַלֵּךְ וְדָוָר בָּא וְהָאָרֶץ לְעוֹלָם עֹמֶדֶת:

5 וְזָרַח הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ וּבָא הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ וְאֶל-מְקוֹמוֹ שׁוֹאֵף<sup>344</sup> זָוַרְחָהּ הוּא שָׁם:

6 הוֹלֵךְ אֶל-דָּרוֹם וְסוֹבֵב אֶל-צָפוֹן סוֹבֵב וְסוֹבֵב הוֹלֵךְ

הָרוּחַ וְעַל-סְבִיבָתוֹ שָׁב הָרוּחַ:

7 כָּל-הַנְּחָלִים הַלְכִים אֶל-הַיָּם וְהַיָּם אֵינְנוּ מִלָּא

אֶל-מְקוֹם שֶׁהַנְּחָלִים הַלְכִים שָׁם יָם שָׁבִים<sup>345</sup> לְלֶכֶת:

8 כָּל-הַדְּבָרִים<sup>346</sup> יִגְעִים<sup>347</sup> לֹא-יִוָּכַל אִישׁ לְדַבֵּר לֹא-תִשְׁבַּע

עֵינָי לְרֵאוֹת וְלֹא-תִמְלֵא אָזְנוֹ מִשְׁמֵעַ:

<sup>344</sup> The word שׁוֹאֵף is translated either as ‘to hurry’ (Longman III 1998:61) or ‘panting with eagerness’. The first is related to the fleeting and wearisomeness of nature compared to human life-span, while the second refers to the positive reading of the passage denoting that verse 4 is not the continuation of verse 3, but the beginning of nature cycle and is further illustrated in verses 5-7. The sun is understood in the second translation as acting purposefully (Whybray 1988:108).

<sup>345</sup> שָׁבִים לְלֶכֶת is ambiguous. The Hebrew word שׁוֹב followed by an infinitive may either have its literal sense of ‘return’, or may simply indicate the repetition of an action. Therefore, scholars are divided on rendering the sentence either as ‘to the place from which the rivers flow they return’ (Whybray 1988:108), or ‘to the place to which the rivers flow they continue to flow’ (Min 1991:226-30). In other words, the first translation implies the process whereby the water flowing into the sea returns to its source to resume its flow (circulating water system – positive/romantic reading), while the second militates for the pointless flow of the rivers in the same direction to the sea (negative reading). This study will consider both assumptions as part of the ambiguous meaning of the enigmatic status of the text. The whole meaning is that nature is characterised by both purposeful and goalless actions.

<sup>346</sup> The expression is rendered either as ‘all words’ (Krüger 2004:47) or ‘all things’ (Whybray 1988:107; Longman III 1998:60). The first translation is supported by the anthropological approach of the book and the fact that everywhere in the book דָּבָר always means ‘word’. The second translation estimates that this rendering is not conclusive since both ‘words’ and ‘things’ are equally possible as a translation of דְּבָרִים (see Brown *et al.* 1968:448ff). Whybray thinks that the translation decision must then depend mainly on the interpretation of the verse as a whole (1988:112).

<sup>347</sup> The word יִגְעִים is rendered as either ‘wearisome’ (Perdue 2007:193; Brown 2010:179) or ‘effective activity’ (Whybray 1988:107).

9 מֵהַנְּשִׁיחָהּ הִיא נְשִׁיחָהּ וּמֵהַשְּׂנֵעִשָׁהּ הִיא שְׂנֵעִשָׁהּ וְאִין

כָּל־חֲדָשֵׁתַחַת הַשָּׁמַיִם:

10 יֵשׁ דְּבָר וְשִׂאמֹר רְאֵה־זֶה חֲדָשׁ הִוא כְּבָר הָיָה

לְעֹלָמִים אֲשֶׁר הָיָה מִלְּפָנָיו:

11 אִין זְכָרוֹן לְרֵאשִׁינִים וְגַם לְאַחֲרֵינִים שְׂיֵהִיו לְא־יְהִיָּה

לְהֵם זְכָרוֹן עִם שְׂיֵהִיו לְאַחֲרֵנָה: פ

### 5.3.2.2 Artful ambiguity in Qoheleth 1:4-11<sup>348</sup>

Qoheleth 1:4-11 is part of the literary unit which starts in verse one of Qoheleth 1 and ends in verse eleven (i.e. Qoh 1:1-11). This unit has been read either as a description of the endless/pointless repetitions in nature (negative perspective) (Brown 2010:179; Samet 2014:93), or as about the regular and dependable cycles of nature inviting wonders (romantic perspective) (Whybray 1988:108). Although scholars tend to favour either a romantic or a negative reading, this chapter views both aspects as part of Qoheleth's enigma in respect of the fact that:

When an author [Qoheleth] truly leaves several alternatives open, we should refrain from foreclosing on any of them. Then we should treat the openness as a significant (and not merely symptomatic) datum of the text (Fox 1995:175).

This assumption is based on Good's annotations that the style, not the content of the unit, contains some artistic clues that can affect the meaning of the text. Good argues that in Qoheleth 1:2-11 'every expression appears to have more than one possible meaning' (1978:64-5). The text contains several expressions with a broad semantic range which makes the passage an ideal world of ambiguity (Wilson 1998:358). The whole problem originates in the translation of *הֶבֶל*, which is the main metaphor that encompasses the meaning of the whole book.

<sup>348</sup> This title is derived from Wilson's article, namely Wilson, L 1998. Artful Ambiguity in Ecclesiastes 1:1-11, in Schoors, A (ed), *Qoheleth in the Context of Wisdom*, 357-366. Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters.

Not only is there an unresolved debate about the meaning of הַכֹּל in verse 2, but also the grammatical style of the text poses the enigma whether the expression הַכֹּל is הַכֹּל refers to everything, including God and piety<sup>349</sup> or does it just refer to everything under the sun as introduced in verse 3? Verse 3 is particularly enigmatic. One may ask whether the rhetorical question implies a ‘no or yes’ answer. Others could see verse 2 as the earlier response or that the question does not to be answered. Does the word עָמַל in verse 3 refer to hard work, merely to any kind of labour, or even wealth that results from one’s work (Ps 105:44)? Stylistic ambiguities can be added.

When we turn to the main core of the text, verses 4-8, the situation is more enigmatic. Whybray argued that the text does not point to the futility of human life cycles, but rather to the regularity of life cycles exemplified in nature images in verses 4-7 (1988:108). By contrast, Murphy (1992:9), representing the majority of scholars, thinks that verses 4-7 are not a mere nature poem, but rather ‘epitomize the fruitless nature of human activity that is expressed in verse 8 and is reflected upon in verses 9-11’.

This world of ambiguity is the literary context in which the water-related phenomena of verse 7 occur. A re-reading of Qoheleth 1:4-11 reveals that both Whybray and Murphy’s assumptions about the text are possible. Ambiguity does not mean an infinite number of meanings, but ‘an indefinite number of subsets (different component “meanings”), some of them overlapping or with fuzzy partitions between them’ (Fox 1995:175). What is interesting in ambiguous texts is that no single meaning can claim to be the absolute truth of the passage.

Spangenberg has formerly argued that the book of Qoheleth is characterised by marks of irony and have the potential to mislead the reader as they point to two possible meanings<sup>350</sup> (1996:61). This is not more than what Good named as an enigmatic style.

---

<sup>349</sup> There are debates about the expression ‘under the sun’ as to know whether Qoheleth suggests to ‘leave God out of consideration’ or only that the expression means ‘on earth’ as opposed to ‘in heaven’ (for more details, see Kidner, D 1976. *A Time to Mourn, and a Time to Dance: Ecclesiastes and the Way of the World*. Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, p23ff; Farmer, K A 1991. *Who Knows What is Good? A Commentary on the Books Of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, pp.154ff.

<sup>350</sup> For Spangenberg, the Book of Qoheleth does not merely contain loose ironic statements but entirely reflects an ironic tone (1996:62). The reader of Qoheleth should therefore be aware of this ironic aspect of texts in front of him/her and act accordingly.

In irony or enigma, both readings are possible, and not only sequentially or as variants or alternatives, but even at the same moment of reading (Sharp 2004:46). Sometimes one has to combine both readings in order to have the full ‘meaning’ of the text. Alter states that failure to respect this indeterminacy and openness of the text would lead us:

To say whatever we wanted about it, and we would end up, tediously, talking only about ourselves, as certain contemporary critics are inclined to do (1990:237).

Thus, ironic/enigmatic texts pave the way for substantial freedom in the reader’s reconstruction of many potential unspoken meanings since definitive meaning of a real ironic text is almost not possible while definitive misunderstanding is also possible (Sharp 2004:46,48). By ‘definitive misunderstanding’, the researcher means the fact of standing for one reading and rejecting other possible voices of the text. In this sense, a re-reading of Qoheleth 1:4-11 through ecological lenses will hopefully show that this cosmological depiction of human life involves both romantic and negative aspects of nature, including water.

Spangenberg (1996:62) also pointed out that to recognise irony in Qoheleth one must also take seriously the context of specific statements. Drawing on Hoffmann’s thesis, that irony is determined more by context than phrases.<sup>351</sup> Spangenberg warned that when context is not seriously valued, one can easily be the victim of Qoheleth’s ironic statements and advice (1996:62). The context of Qoheleth will, thus, be considered in the ecological assessment of the text.

### **5.3.2.3 Delimitation of Qoheleth 1:4-11**

Qoheleth 1:4-11 belongs to the prelude of the whole book (Qoh 1:1-11) which together with Qoheleth 11:9-12:14 constitute the frame of the book that provide an inclusion that establishes the parameters for Qoheleth’s search (Perdue 2007:205). Both frames are poems on cosmology and anthropology, and are characterised by the repetition of the major leitmotif (all is *הֶבְרֵל*) at the opening (Qoh 1:2) and the end of the

---

<sup>351</sup> Hoffmann, Y 1983. Irony in the Book of Job. *Immanuel* 17, pp. 7-21 (see p.12).

book (Qoh 12:8). The life of the writer is, thus, framed within the dynamics and limits of these two edges, cosmos and humans.

After the introductory statement of the prelude (vv.2-3), the text of our focus is divided into two main sections: cosmology (vv.4-7) and anthropology (vv.8-11). These verses are interpreted either as about ‘regularity’ in creation that lasts forever versus human death or as wearisomeness of creation reflecting pointlessness in human life and toil.

An ecological re-reading of these verses (vv. 4-11), based on the meaning of *הַקָּבֶל* as enigmatic in the frames (Qoh 1:2 & 12:8) of the book, shows that both meanings of nature may be implied in the text. Nature is both purposeful (positive) and wearisome (negative) just as human life is complex and puzzling.

### **5.3.3 Ecological insights of Qoheleth 1:4-11<sup>352</sup>**

#### **5.3.3.1 Wearisomeness of nature (Murphy, Krüger, Perdue & Brown)**

The researcher examines first the wearisomeness of nature in general before pointing to the wearisomeness of water in particular in Qoheleth 1:4-11.

##### **5.3.3.1.1 Wearisomeness of nature in general**

This kind of reading firstly establishes a logical link between verses 3 and 4 in the sense that verse 4 views the fleeting of human life or life-span (*דור*) against the background of the permanent existence of the earth (*וְהָאָרֶץ לְעוֹלָם*) on which humans play their fleeting roles (Krüger 2004:49). The view that verse 4 is the continuation of verse 3 draws on the assumption that the Hebrew word *דור* in verse 4 denotes a human generation or life-span in contrast to the earth which is *עוֹלָם* (eternal).<sup>353</sup>

<sup>352</sup> Only two major interpretations of this text are accounted here. For other interpretations of the text from the medieval time until now, see Samet, N 2014. Qohelet 1,4 and the Structure of the Book’s Prologue. *ZAW* 126/1, 92-100 [see pp.94-98].

<sup>353</sup> Jerome has declared the irony of this verse in that: ‘what is more vain is that the earth, which was made for humans, stays but humans themselves, the lords of the earth, suddenly dissolve into the dust’ (Jerome quoted by Crenshaw 1988:63).

Both natural and human histories are condemned to repetition, much like the sun and the wind: ‘the past is the future’ (Brown 2010:180). This reading views Qoheleth 1:4-11 as expressing the futility of human life compared to pointless repetitions visible in nature (vv.5-7). Humans go and come in steady succession, reflecting both linear (historical) and cyclical time (repetitive) just as the sun rises and sets, the wind blows in circles and the rivers flow in unending courses to the sea (Perdue 2007:210).

For Qoheleth, the cyclical nature movement is a wearisome motion that knows no end, leads to no change and is meaningless (Min 1991:229). Just as humans go (הָלַךְ) and come (בָּא) (v.4), so the sun rises (בָּא) (v.5), the wind goes (הָלַךְ) (v.6) and the streams come (הִלָּכְתָּ, הִלָּכְתָּ) (v.7). The frequent use of the verbs שׁוּב (vv.6, 7) and סָבַב (3 times in verse 6) denotes endless repetition, while the repeated שׁוּב emphasises the sameness of end points and starting points (Barbour 2012:49). In this sense, Qoheleth concludes that there is nothing new under the sun (v.9).

In other words, like the endless movement of the three physical forces (sun, wind and water), humans fruitlessly search for meaning and insights. Brown has simply termed nature in Qoheleth a ‘dying cosmos’, ‘a world without pause and effect, a world without history... and future’ (2010:179). Qoheleth acknowledges that there is indeed activity in the universe, but it is devoid of *telos* (a goal) and filled with toil.

### 5.3.3.1.2 Wearisomeness of water (verse 7)

Qoheleth 1:7 has a double meaning; this depends on a negative or positive reading of the movement of nature in Qoheleth 1:4-11 as a whole. Proponents of the wearisomeness of nature in Qoheleth 1:4-11 prefer the following translation:

Qoh 1:7 All streams run to the sea, but the sea is not full; to the place to which the rivers flow they flow again and again’.<sup>354</sup>

This translation understands the verb שׁוּב as pointing to its meaning as ‘going’ not ‘to return’ as is shown in the ‘romantic reading’ of the text. In reading שׁוּב as a ceaseless

---

<sup>354</sup> For this translation, see Krüger, T 2004. *Qoheleth: A Commentary*. trans by Dean Jr, O C. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, p47; Brown, P W 2010. *The Seven Pillars of Creation: The Bible, Science, and the Ecology of Wonder*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p 179.

futile movement, Qoheleth depicts the waters of the earth as circling back to their point of origin, changing nothing (Longman III 1998:70). The movement of water in Qoheleth is devoid of any visible purpose in contrast to Psalm 104 where God is behind the life-giving waters (rains and streams) that revitalise the earth and its inhabitants (Perdue 2007:210).

Crenshaw expressed the opinion that the Dead Sea has informed the mention of the unfilled sea in Qoheleth 1:7a. The Jordan River regularly flows into the Dead Sea, but it never filled, although no rivers flow out of it (1988:65). The same is valid for humans whose eyes and ears are never satisfied, so is the sea never filled despite the constant flow of the rivers into it (v.8). Longman III thinks that many Hebrew words in verses 4-7, such as הִלְכִים (flow), מְקוֹם (place) and שָׁבִים (return), reflect the message of pointless nature circle repetitions in terms of ‘sameness in the midst of illusory change’ (1998:71).

### 5.3.3.2 Wonders of the regularity of nature (Whybray, Lohfink)

#### 5.3.3.2.1 Wonders of nature in general: romantic reading

This interpretation departs from removing any possible continuation between verse 3 and verse 4 in viewing verse 3 as an editorial addition which is rather connected with verse 2 to sum up the teaching of Qoheleth as a whole (Whybray 1988:106). In this sense, the meaning of דֹּר in verse 4 is much discussed. Rather than reading דֹּר as connoting ‘human life-span’ as it occurs in Semitic languages and the Old Testament, proponents of this reading link דֹּר with a more general sense such as duration, age or period.<sup>355</sup>

The meaning is thus connected with passages where the sense of דֹּר as human life is improbable. These are Isaiah 41:4 where YHWH calls the דְרוֹת from the beginning and Isaiah 51:9 in which עוֹלָמִים דְרוֹת refer to ‘unspecified periods’ (future or present). It is, therefore, believed that this idea of דֹּר as simply ‘period’ has informed Qoheleth 1:4.

<sup>355</sup> See Hamilton, V P 1997. דֹּר (generation), in VanGemenen, W A (ed), *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*, 930-931. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House. Hamilton argues that the emphasis of the word in the East Semitic areas is on ‘duration’ while in the West Semitic is on ‘generation’.

Therefore, Whybray reads the word עֹלָם in verse 4 as consisting of a succession of endlessly repeated cyclical processes in nature (דֹּר הַלֵּךְ וְדָר) which are illustrated in verses 5-7 (1988:106).

In other words, the word דֹּר does not contrast the ephemerality of humanity with the permanence of the earth, but the word דֹּר points to the cyclical movements of nature depicted in verses 5-8 (Ogden 1987:91f).<sup>356</sup> It is in this sense that verse 4 contains only verbs in the participial form (הֹלֵךְ, בָּא, & עֹמֵד) underlining the unchanging nature and regularity of these phenomena.<sup>357</sup>

Therefore, the activities of the sun (הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ) in verse 5, the wind (הַרִיחַ) in verse 6, and the water-related phenomena (הַנְּחָלִים, small rivers and הַיָּם, sea) in verse 7 are not seen as showing the futility of these nature phenomena, but the wonders of their controlled regularity. In other words, verses 5-7 depict not human futility, but ‘wonders of nature elements’ acting according to the ‘limitations imposed on them by their allotted natures and functions, which necessitate their constant cyclical repetition’ (Whybray 1988:105).

In this sense, יָגַעַם (v. 8), the word that sums up the cosmological part of the unit (vv. 4-7) is rendered not as ‘wearisome’, but as ‘labour’. While admitting that the word means wearisome in the other two places in the Old Testament,<sup>358</sup> romantic readings of the unit draw on the meaning of the root יָגַע as frequently connoting not weariness, but either labour<sup>359</sup> or the product of labour.<sup>360</sup> The notion of purposefulness of the effective activity of nature elements is thus supported as a strong possible meaning in Qoheleth 1:8. For Whybray, the literary and historical context of the passage suggests

<sup>356</sup> Fox agrees with this assumption but suggests the meaning of הָאָרֶץ not as the physical earth, but as ‘le monde’ rather than ‘la terre’ (in French) (Gn 6:11; 1 Ki 2:2; Ps 33:8 etc.). Fox concludes that the nature images in verses 4-8 do not show the disappearance of the objects in the cycle, but rather their inability to change anything. In other words, ‘the poem shows that the tireless, toilsome, movements of natural phenomena, of which mankind, taken as a whole, is one, do not really affect anything’ (see Fox, M V 1988b. Qohelet 1:4. *JSOT* 40, 109-110).

<sup>357</sup> The words דֹּר הַלֵּךְ וְדָר denote not ‘each human generation dies and it is replaced by another’, but controlled variations in nature supporting the permanent existence of the earth (Whybray 1988:106).

<sup>358</sup> Proverbs 25:18; 2 Samuel 17:2

<sup>359</sup> Genesis 31:42; Job 39:11, 16

<sup>360</sup> See Deuteronomy 28:33; Nehemiah 5:13; Job 10.3; Psalms 78:46; 109:11; Isaiah 45:14; Jeremiah 3:24; 20:5; Ezekiel 23:29; Hosea 12:8-9 etc.

the sense of all things being in constant activity that supports the permanent existence of earth (1988:107).

Therefore, verse 8 is understood as perfectly summarising the idea of regularity of the catalogue of the activities in nature depicted in verses 5-7. It emphasises the fabulous wonders of nature that leave humans in a situation of contemplation. It is as if verses 4-7 intend to leave humans speechless when they contemplate nature with their eyes and ears that are incapable of mastering its mysteries as stated: לֹא־יִוָּכַל אִישׁ לְדַבֵּר (no man is able to speak).<sup>361</sup> In other words, when observing the rhythms of the sun, wind and water, they remain beyond human understanding, and so leave one at a loss for words.<sup>362</sup>

Therefore, the verb שׁוֹאֵף in verse 5 relating to the ‘movement of the sun’ is positively meant in relation to its sense as ‘panting with eagerness and desire’ in Psalm 119:13 and Job 7:2. The direction changes of the wind depicted in verse 6, in contrast to the movement of the sun, are however admitted as purposeless, but Whybray softens that ‘it is not to this that Qoheleth is referring’. In relation to the NEV translation ‘it goes full circle’, Whybray affirmed that Qoheleth intends to mean that the ‘wind has its own fixed circuit and can be relied on to remain within it, always returning (sub) eventually to the direction from which it started’ (1988:108).

A consideration of how this perspective reads the movement of water in verse 7 in particular, follows.

### 5.3.3.2.2 Wonders of water in verse 7

As stated earlier in the textual notes, Qoheleth 1:7 has a double meaning depending on the translation of the word שָׁבִימ as either ‘return’ or ‘go’. A romantic reading of the text prefers the rendering ‘to return’ suggesting that water returns to the place from

<sup>361</sup> The Hebrew expression was meant in the previous reading as connoting weariness of things under the sun (Krüger 2004:47).

<sup>362</sup> See Whybray, R N 1988. Ecclesiastes 1:5-7 and the Wonders of Nature. *JSOT* 41, p.112 n.11

which it flows in order to flow afresh (circulating water system).<sup>363</sup> Then verse 7 can be translated as follows:

<sup>7</sup>All streams run to the sea, but the sea is not full; to the place from which the rivers flow they return.<sup>364</sup>

In other words, verse 7 is understood as describing a cyclical beneficent movement of water of the rivers that, having flowed into the sea, returns (שׁוֹבִימִם) to their source to repeat the natural process (Whybray 1988:49). In this sense, Lohfink (2003:40) adds that Qoheleth's poem 'praises the cosmos as glorious and eternal in this image of cyclic return'. Water is seen as positively circulating and providing life-giving water to places where it passes before flowing in the sea. Ibn Ezra states that the sea is not full because there is a mist (מַלְאָכָה) regularly rising from the sea to the sky (evaporation and precipitation<sup>365</sup>), which forms the clouds before falling down into rain to fertilise the land.<sup>366</sup> Qoheleth probably imagined the hydrological cycle as follows: the rivers flow to the sea; the sea is linked to the subterranean water, perhaps via channels; and the water below, in turn, provides water to the rivers (נִהְיָה) (Sumet 2014:99). This is an amazing hydrological cycle that invites for wonder.<sup>367</sup>

In the Bible, נִהְיָה often denotes a torrent or wadi which flows only intermittently and during part of the year.<sup>368</sup> Qoheleth 1:7 would then intend to refer to the repeated annual flow of the wadi. However, Whybray suggests that נִהְיָה does not always refer to an intermittent flow of water. For him, the use of the participle הֹלֵךְ here as the subject of הַנְּהַיִמִם suggests, as it is the case in previous verses, unending flowing rivers rather than wadi (Whybray 1988:112). Whybray has the support of Reymond declaring on Qoheleth 1:7 that:

<sup>363</sup> For more details on verse 7, see Min, Y J 1991. How Do the Rivers Flow? (Ecclesiastes 1:7). *BT* 42, 226-31.

<sup>364</sup> The main supporter of this translation is Whybray, R N 1988. Ecclesiastes 1:5-7 and the Wonders of Nature. *JSTOT* 41, p.108.

<sup>365</sup> Two biblical images may be linked with this verse as implying an awareness of evaporation and precipitation: the rain which returns to the sky after fulfilling its fertilising mission on earth in Isaiah 55:10; and the drawing up of water from the sea to be carried in the clouds in Job 36:27.

<sup>366</sup> See Ibn Ezra quoted by Whybray 1989. *Ecclesiastes*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, p. 42. Qoheleth's assumption that the sea is not full would therefore presuppose the case of the Dead Sea that constantly receives water from the Jordan River but is never full.

<sup>367</sup> This romantic depiction of a hydrological cycle is possible with LXX and the Vulgate. Qoheleth 1:7b in LXX reads: εἰς τόπον οὐ οἱ χεῖμαρροι πορεύονται ἐκεῖ αὐτοὶ ἐπιστρέφουσιν τοῦ πορευθῆναι. The researcher has literally translated this Greek as follows: *At the place where the river flows there it returns to flow again.*

<sup>368</sup> Numbers 34:5; Ezekiel 47:19; Numbers 21:4; Isaiah 34:9; 1 Kings 17:4 etc.

La continuité du mouvement de l'eau qui s'écoule a aussi servi de point de départ pour plusieurs comparaisons. Elle a permis à l'Ecclésiaste de montrer la vie dans ce qu'elle a de toujours identique à elle-même: tous les fleuves vont continuellement vers la mer sans que celle-ci se remplisse<sup>369</sup> (Reymond 1958:111).

Therefore, the romantic reading prefers this interpretation because its proponents regard verse 7 as continuing the cyclical process of nature understood in verses 4-6. It is believed that the introduction of another kind of phenomenon here would be unnatural and would weaken the force of the argument. Indeed, the repetition of a series of key words such as שׁוֹב, הֵלֵךְ or מְקוּם in these verses suggest these verses are intended to be bound in the same purposeful cyclical motion (Whybray 1988:109).

This reading is possibly reflected in *Aristeas*<sup>370</sup> letter that was probably written after the composition of the book of Qoheleth. The letter talks about the abundance of Palestine during the Ptolemaic period, with a specific focus on a natural circulating water system (Jordan River) providing fertility of much of the land before being emptied into the sea. A few words of the letter state the following:

The country enjoys everything in abundance, being well watered everywhere and possessing great security. Around it flows the river called Jordan, whose stream never fails... About the time of harvest the river rises, like the Nile, and irrigates much of the land. The stream empties into another river in the district of Ptolemais, and this flows into the sea (Hadas 1951:147)

Therefore, the mechanics of the return of water to its source has been seen as echoing the idea of evaporation or the underground rivers. The sea is not yet full because 'from it the water evaporates to form the clouds and ultimately resumes its flow into the mighty waters' (Broch 1982:19). This reading is possibly informed by Elihu's speech in Job 36:27-28 that was available during the composition of the book of Qoheleth.

---

<sup>369</sup> English translation: *The continuity of the movement of the flowing water has also served for a number of comparisons. It led Ecclesiastes to depict life in what it has as identical to itself: all the rivers continually go to sea, and the sea is not yet full.* (the researcher's translation).

<sup>370</sup> The letter of Aristeas is a treatise sent ostensibly by Aristeas to his brother Philocrates recounting his meeting with Eleazar, the High Priest in Jerusalem, the purpose of the expedition (including the translation of the Torah in Greek) and its circumstances (see Haghham, N 2005. *The Letter of Aristeas: A New Exodus Story?* *JSJ* 36/1, 1-20 [see pages 1-2]).

### 5.3.4 Critical conclusion and assessment

This conclusion concerns both ecological insights about nature in general, and water in particular in Qoheleth 1:4-11.

#### 5.3.4.1 Nature in general

Both the romantic (purposeful) and negative (goalless) ideas are inherent in the artful enigmatic and ambiguous features of the text. Either dissociating or linking verses 3 and 4 in order to determine the meaning of *דור*, the Hebrew word *דור* in verse 4 has both human and natural cycles in mind (Crenshaw 1988:62). Earth remains the same despite the constant cycles, either goal-directed or wearisome, of human generations and nature phenomena.

From the text's deliberate artful ambiguity, neither the wearisomeness of nature alone (negative) nor the romantic meaning of nature alone can be supported. The ambiguous status of the book does not present one single meaning of the text, but presents two or more possible meanings. The delayed identification of the subject in the first half of verse 6, for instance, leads one to think that verse 6 still speaks about the sun (v.5) whereas the focus has already shifted to the wind.<sup>371</sup>

Furthermore, the Hebrew verb *שׁוֹאֵף*, depicting the movement of the sun in verse 5, alternately occurs in the Old Testament both positively – panting with eagerness or desire (Ps 119:131; Job 7:2) and negatively – panting with weakness like a woman in labour (Is 42:14; Jr 14:6). The artful ambiguity of the Hebrew text presupposes that both aspects are true to life. The sun joyously panting across the sky depicts a positive aspect of life, while its toils across the sky in pointless movement refer to unsuccessful results in life. Both readings are inherent in the text, and opting for one instead of the other is being a victim of Qoheleth's enigmatic style.

---

<sup>371</sup> LXX has understood the first half of verse 6 to have the sun as its subject due to the delayed identification of the subject.

### 5.3.4.2 Water and water-related phenomena in verse 7

Romantic and negative aspects of water clearly feature in verse 7. The point that the sea does not get full despite the constant flow of rivers' streams into it, makes clear that the flowing of the rivers into the sea is a goal-directed process (positive), but lacks efficiency (negative) as the sea is not filled. The rivers, which like human generations are in constant movement (by the use of the verb *הִלָּךְ* in both verses 4 and 7), contrast with the sea as a stable point of reference (like the earth in verse 4) (Krüger 2004:30).

There are debates about the rendition of the flowing of the streams of *נְהַלִּים* in verse 7. Pessimistic readings prefer the usual meaning of *נְהַלִּים* as wadi flowing intermittently and during parts of the year (rainy seasons). However, other occurrences of *נְהַלִּים* show it as an overflowing stream or continuous water flow. This is the case in Amos 5:24 that recommends justice/righteousness flow continuously in the country as the streams of *נְהַלִּים* that result in greening the region (see also Ezekiel 47:1-10):

But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream (*כַּנְהַל אֵיתָן*) (Am 5:24) (NRSV).

In this sense, both meanings of the word are possible in the mind of Qoheleth. The romantic view – water returning to its source to flow afresh – echoes Psalm 104:10-16 where the purposeful movement of the streams provides life-giving water to the plants, beasts, birds and the earth. In accordance with the meaning of *נְהַלִּים* in Amos 5:24, verse 7 also infers the life-giving effects that an ever-flowing stream causes in greening the region where it flows. By contrast, if read as pointing to the wearisomeness of nature, verse 7 could possibly be linked with Job 12 where the use of water by God to destroy earth is claimed by Job as a pointless action.

It has to be observed that Qoheleth implies both aspects of water given the complexity of the matter he is describing; namely life. Nature is puzzling and enigmatic since, on the one hand, there are many regular, life-giving cycles in nature (positive), but on the other hand, there is much pointless repetition (negative) (Wilson 1998:362). The reason that neither humans nor rivers ever achieve a final goal despite regular activity

is given in verse 8: humans cannot successfully speak about life just as it is difficult to have a full understanding of nature forces, including the water-related phenomena.

This is in accordance with Qoheleth's intention of re-questioning wisdom tradition. It is possibly that just as in the book of Job,<sup>372</sup> Qoheleth asserts that the truth about the world order – that is sustained by *Ma'at* in Egypt, *Me* in Sumer and *הַכֶּתֶר* in Israel – is very complex to the point that its human perception is often confused and confusing. For Qoheleth, the wisdom of the world order is so complex and unfathomable that Sirach 24:28-29 stated:

<sup>28</sup> The first man did not know wisdom fully, nor will the last one fathom her.

<sup>29</sup> or her thoughts are more abundant than the sea, and her counsel deeper than the great abyss (NRSV).

Nature is both wearisome and purposeful which makes it an appropriate metaphor to depict the puzzling and enigmatic nature of human life in its complexity. Each reading alone fails to give justice to the historical context of the message of Qoheleth which is a world of opportunities and frustrations. Without denying that there is order (life-giving aspects) in the world (Ptolemaic/Hellenistic world), the use of ambiguity here shows that Qoheleth wants to teach that there is also confusion and pointlessness or life-threatening aspects in this order.<sup>373</sup> The ambiguous flow of water can be couched in the following statement:

Rivers come from a source, which may be remote, inaccessible or intimate; they flow incessantly, ever-changing and always the same; they bring life and are the economic base of inimical empires, and are consequently occasions of death, displacement and anguish, the constitutive trauma of the Hebrew Bible (Landy 2014:437).

Eco-theological explorations of Qoheleth 1:4-11 will be much rewarded if they take both aspects of water into consideration. The ambiguous style of Qoheleth 1:4-11 does not imply that the meaning of the text is uncertain; rather it teaches that the meaning is 'richer when it affirms two aspects which may be in tension with each other, but

---

<sup>372</sup> Job's friends held to a rigid doctrine of retribution to explain Job's suffering and veiled their eyes to see other truths about how God runs his world.

<sup>373</sup> Qoheleth encompasses the idea of life-giving order in Proverbs and the protest against the so-called order in Job. While Proverbs 8:22-31 affirms order in creation, namely the ordering of the waters, Job 12 sees chaos in the world where God uses life-threatening waters to destroy earth and its inhabitants.

which are both equally true to life' (Wilson 1998:364). Neither the life-giving potential of nature/water supported by the romantic focus of Whybray and Lohfink, nor the pessimistic (life-threatening) view of nature/water (Murphy, Perdue and Brown) alone give justice to the fullness of Qoheleth's reflection about the realities of life.

#### **5.3.4.3 Eco-theological retrieval of the text**

Anthropocentric perspectives on the text ignore the ecological significance of water in this text in favour of discourses about human matters. Our ecological awareness has led us to find that the text presents insightful ecological wisdom of water and water-related phenomena. There is a kind of ambiguous relationship between human life and nature/water in the artful ambiguity of Qoheleth 1:4-11. Human beings sometime do experience nature/water as pointless (particularly when it is acting against them), but at the same time nature/water acts purposefully – especially when it serves the created order.

The unfilled sea in verse 7 highlights this ambiguity. As indicated previously, the word שָׁבִים in verse 7 means both 'to return' implying cyclical life-giving movement of water – as in Psalm 105 – and 'to go' recalling the pointless movement of water which benefits neither humans nor other earth members. The interpretation of the movement of water as both wearisome and purposeful denotes water as an uneasy and puzzled entity that has puzzled realities similar to those of human life.

Therefore, the purposeful use of ambiguity in verse 7 underlines the intrinsic value of water acting on its own whether for human interest or not: the movement of water, either wearisome or positive, is to be understood as part of the created order just as the way of life is embedded with frustrations and order. The interpretation of movement of water as both wearisome and purposeful explains the experience of ambiguity and uneasiness linked with a position of human vulnerability or strength *vis-à-vis* realities of life. As in the natural world, so too in human life there is complexity. The next section points to the life-giving function of water in Qoheleth 2:4-6.

## 5.4 Water and water-related phenomena in Qoheleth 2:4-6

### 5.4.1 Introduction

Water occurs here in the context of Qoheleth's boasting about his private wealth. Generally, 'making pools to water the forest' and 'irrigation system of the garden and parks' are read as part of the measures of Qoheleth's pursuit of meaning in pleasure.<sup>374</sup> While agreeing with this interpretation, this chapter investigates whether Qoheleth's projects of irrigation systems and reservoirs of water presume the ecological relevance of water given the aridness of Palestine.

In this sense, this chapter critically investigates Qoheleth 2:4-6 in relation to other Ancient Near Eastern autobiographic inscriptions about parks, cisterns and reservoirs as well as biblical texts highlighting the garden theme and water supply.<sup>375</sup> Thereafter, the chapter focuses on the literary analysis of the text before its ecological retrieval.

### 5.4.2 The Masoretic Text of Qoheleth 2:4-6

4 הַגְדַּלְתִּי מַעֲשָׂי בְּבִיטִי לִי בָתִּים וְנִטְעַתִּי לִי כְּרָמִים:

5 עָשִׂיתִי לִי גִנּוֹת וּפְרָדֵסִים וְנִטְעַתִּי בָהֶם יֵעוּז כָּל-פְּרִי:

6 עָשִׂיתִי לִי בְּיַרְכּוֹת מַיִם לְהַשְׁקוֹת מֵהֶם יַעַר צוֹמֵחַ עֵצִים:

### 5.4.3 Translation of Qoheleth 2:4-6

This study opted for the translation suggested by the New Revised Standard Version (1989) as follows:

<sup>4</sup> I made great works; I built houses and planted vineyards for myself;

<sup>5</sup> I made myself gardens and parks, and planted in them all kinds of fruit trees.

<sup>6</sup> I made myself pools from which to water the forest of growing trees.

<sup>374</sup> Lee, E P 2005. *The Vitality of Enjoyment in Qoheleth's Theological Rhetoric*. New York: De Gruyter, p35-39; and Koh, Y V 2006. *Royal Autobiography in the Book of Qoheleth*. Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter.

<sup>375</sup> See Song 4:12-15 & Genesis 2:5-6; Song of Songs 8:11; Sirach 48:17 & 50:4-5; Nehemiah 3:15.

#### 5.4.4 Literary considerations

Qoheleth 2:4-11 belongs to the internal part<sup>376</sup> of the book that deals with the historical quest of the wise king to master life and to determine the good in human life (Perdue 2007:205). The good that Qoheleth discovers is the ironic and enigmatic *Carpe Diem*<sup>377</sup> situation. The larger literary context of the passage is Qoheleth 1:1-2:26, with its main concerns of the unfathomability of human life (Johnston 1976:15; Koh 2006:26).

Despite arguing that the ‘royal fiction’ is limited to Qoheleth 1:12-2:11,<sup>378</sup> Loader admitted that Qoheleth 1:12-2:26 is a logical literary unit enclosing the Qoheleth’s self-introduction, the announcement of his royal experiment, and their results.<sup>379</sup> The unit is framed by the claim that God is responsible for giving humans the grievous task that keeps them occupied (Qoh 1:13), and concludes with God giving human beings the possibility to enjoy it (Qoh 2:24-26).

The internal part encompasses the announcement of Qoheleth’s royal experiment in the pursuit of pleasure. In his search for what was good for mortals to do under the sun during the few days of their life, Qoheleth made great works, including constructing vineyards, gardens, parks, irrigation systems and reservoirs of water (2:4-6). Qoheleth declares also to have gained fabulous wealth in the form of slaves, flocks, silver, gold, provinces, singers and concubines (2:7-9), but deemed these as *hebel* and chasing of the wind (v.11).

Scholars have noticed significant similarities between the seven ‘great works’ (vv. 4-11) that Qoheleth achieved and the seven sections/days of creation in Genesis 1:2-2:4a. While God deemed ‘everything that he had made’ to be ‘very good’ (or pleasing) and rested on the seventh day ‘from all his work that he had done’ (Gn 1:31

---

<sup>376</sup> Rousseau (1981:213) argued that the internal part of the book covers seven major sections characterised by ironic *Carpe Diem* claims at their end: 1:12-2:26; 3:1-13; 3:14-22; 4:1-5:19; 6:1-8:15; 8:16-9:10; 9:11-11:10.

<sup>377</sup> The ironic *Carpe Diem* statements at the end of the sections are the following: 2:24-26; 3:12-13; 3:22; 5:17-19; 8:14-15; 9:7-10; 11:9-10.

<sup>378</sup> Loader (1979:19) argues that apart from Qoheleth 1:1, the royal fiction occurs nowhere else except in 1:12-2:11 (1979:19).

<sup>379</sup> See Loader’s schematic presentation of Qoheleth 1:12-2:16 in Loader, J A 1979. *Polar Structures in the Book of Qohelet*. Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, p35-39.

& 2:4a), Qoheleth assesses all that his ‘hands had done and the toil spent in doing it’ as *hebel* (Perdue 2007:215).

Therefore, if Qoheleth 2:4-11 suggests Genesis creation traditions, then Hertzberg is on the right track in affirming that the royal voice that mentions the making of gardens, parks, pools of water and irrigation of forest denotes that Qoheleth toiled to create the delights of the paradise of Genesis 2-3 (1963:87). The ecological potential of water and water-related phenomena in verses 4-6 are thus the same as in the texts reflecting the garden motif (Gn 2 & Can 4:12-15) and irrigation system (Neh 3:15). However, the difference here in Qoheleth 2 is that they are encompassed in the idea of *hebel*.

The following section analyses Qoheleth 2:4-6 in relation to the Near Eastern texts depicting royal autobiography and their ecological tenor in relation to water supply.

#### **5.4.5 Socio-literary analysis of Qoheleth 2:4-6**

##### **5.4.5.1 Qoheleth 2:4-6 versus Ancient Eastern inscriptions**

The recitation of a king’s ‘great works’ (achievements) is a major feature in royal inscriptions in the Ancient East. The list of great royal works includes the erecting of memorial statues, temples, the kings’ palaces, defence, civil works and the rebuilding of cities.<sup>380</sup> In this sense, the inscriptions often comprise the boasting of kings for deeds done on behalf of their people: economic wealth, peace in the land, the abundant harvest of crops and occasional mentions of livestock (Koh 2006:79).

Mesha’s inscription is particularly exciting as it presents interesting similarities with Qoheleth’s list. The inscription lists the repairing of parkland walls and the building of

---

<sup>380</sup> For the details of inscriptions, see Donner, H & W Röllig 1964 (eds). *Kanaanäische und Aramäische Inschriften*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz. Azatiwada’s inscription declares the abundant supply of grain and filled granaries, fine food, and new wine for his people (Donner & Röllig 1964:36, Inscr.26, Text A, Section I, lines 1, 6; Section II, lines 7-8; Section III, lines 7-9), while Hadad’s list mentions his realisation in terms of the richly cultivated land of barley, wheat, and garlic, as well as the abundant provision of food and drink for the people (Donner & Röllig 1964:215, Inscr.214, lines 5-7, 9). In the Kilamuwa inscription, the king boasts of securing livestock, gold and silver, and linen for his people (Donner & Röllig 1964:31, Inscr.24, lines 11-13), while Bar-Rakib’s memorial inscription to his father (Panammu) boasts of the economic and social well-being of the citizens during the days of his father’s rule, where everyone had plenty to eat and drink (Donner & Röllig 1964:223-224, Inscr.215, lines 8-9). Mesha’s inscription declares his realisation in terms of rebuilding the ruined cities and water supply (Donner & Röllig 1964:168-169, Inscr.181, lines 9, 21-24).

a water reservoir with an additional irrigation system (Donner & Röllig 1964:168-169, Inscr.181, lines 9 & 23). However, unlike Qoheleth, Mesha's projects are listed as part of Moab's efforts of renovation of the country after their supposed break from the Israelite dominion:

- 9 ...I rebuilt Baal-meon, and I made a reservoir in it ...  
 21 ...I have rebuilt Qarhōh, the parkland walls and the walls ...  
 22 of the acropolis, and I rebuilt its gates and repaired its towers, and  
 23 I repaired the king's residence, and I made retaining walls for the  
 reser[voir at the spr]ing inside  
 24 the town ... (see Donner & Röllig 1964:168-169, Inscr.181, lines 9  
 & 21-24).

In an agricultural society of the Ancient Near East, part of these building projects was also to 'make the land fruitful' and the creation of an irrigated pleasure-garden was often a sign of this (Green 2010:272). Qoheleth appears to have adopted this literary convention although there is a significant difference in content between the hyperbolic depiction of his achievements in Qoheleth 2:4-9 and his self-centred boasting and those found in the West Semitic inscriptions (Koh 2006:79).

While extra-biblical inscriptions (Azatiwada, Hadad, Kilamuwa & Mesha) boast of the good that they had done for their people in terms of securing peace and prosperity of the land, Qoheleth lists the extent of his private wealth and efforts in the pursuit of pleasure. Qoheleth boasted of building palaces 'for me' (לִי) just as the vineyards which he planted were לִי. The gardens and parks were created לִי, and the pools or reservoir of water/irrigation systems were לִי (vv.4-6). Qoheleth is not talking about public works, but projects for his 'self-pleasure' (Longman III 1998:217).

The self-pleasure approach is also found in the Tell Siran inscription,<sup>381</sup> which is a tribute to Amminadab, king of the Ammonites, and it presents syntactic similarities with Qoheleth 2:4-6 as illustrated in the following noteworthy quotation:

---

<sup>381</sup> The Tell Siran inscription was discovered in 1972 by a student excavation on the campus of the University of Jordan. This Ammonite bronze bottle inscription is generally dated during 600 BCE (see Tompson, H O & Zayadine, F 1973. The Tell Siran Inscription. *BASOR* 212, 5-11 (see p.9).

May the product of Amminadab, king of the Ammonites, the son of Hissil-'El, king of the Ammonites, the son of Amminadab, king of the Ammonites – the vineyard and the orchard and the park and <the> pools – give pleasure for many days and for years far off (Coote 1980:93).

While Mesha's inscription shows that the king provided or repaired irrigation systems for the sake of his people (Donner & Röllig 1964:169, Inscr.181, line 23), the Tell Siran script wishes that the orchards, parks and their pools of water bring everlasting pleasure only to the king. Like the Tell Siran inscription, Qoheleth's royal fiction boasts not for water systems in Israel,<sup>382</sup> but for personal irrigation pools in his private gardens and parks for the growing trees. The significance of the ego-approach of Qoheleth has to be understood as the caricature of Solomon.<sup>383</sup>

The critical portrayal of the text may also infer, in addition to Solomon, the Hellenistic rulers and their representatives in Judea, namely Tobia Joseph, an ego-centric man who based his happiness on his wealth and 'built his son Hyrcanus a palace with park and irrigation system' between 182 and 175 BCE (Krüger 2004:66). It is implied in the text that in his pursuit of making his own happiness, Qoheleth did not care about the happiness or unhappiness of the people who were 'used' to carry out 'great works' for his happiness (4:1-3).

The text is informative for contemporary readers in criticising current resource abuses, including water resources, to serve the happiness and interest of those in power or a small group of people. Water is seen with life-giving potential although it is used for the interest/happiness of one person to the detriment of a great number of people. Qoheleth concludes thus that at the end of his projects, he has still achieved no gain

---

<sup>382</sup> King and Stager (2001:210) inform that during the Iron Age, Israelite engineers made four significant urban water systems. The northern urban water system includes Gibeon, Hazor, Gezer, Arad, Meggido, while the southern water system includes Beth-Shemesh, Kadesh-Barnes and Tel Sheva and Meggido. For details of these water systems, see King, P J & Stager, L E 2001. *Life in Biblical Israel*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox (Library of Ancient Israel), p210-13.

<sup>383</sup> According to Old Testament traditions, Solomon is the wise king who acquired much wealth (1 Ki 4:21ff), many wives (1 Ki 11:1ff) and undertook many great works, including the building of the Temple and assurance of prosperity to his people (1 Ki 4:20,25). While 1 Kings 1:37,47 states that God made Solomon's throne great (לָוַן, *piel*), here Qoheleth makes his works great (לָוַן, *Hiphil* v.4). It should be noticed that Qoheleth's critical thesis led him to focus only on the caricature of Solomon's wealth. However, hydraulic engineers 2,000 years ago were significantly skilled and brought water from a collection of springs 15 miles south of Jerusalem to the Temple Mount. Thus, water could easily flow down through a series of pools, aqueducts and tunnels on its way to its destination in the cisterns and pools of Jerusalem, including the parks and gardens (see Shanks, H 1984. *Ancient Water Systems*. *BAR* 10/3, 49-54).

(v. 11), but *hebel* and striving after wind. Qoheleth's autobiography is, therefore, a criticism against the unbalanced distribution of resources, including the supply of water.

#### 5.4.5.2 The 'Eden water theme' in Qoheleth 2:4-6

In the royal experiment, Qoheleth puts wisdom and knowledge to the test by gathering wealth and a luxurious life. Among other things to please his heart, Qoheleth arranged luxurious parks and pleasure gardens with an abundance of water. Qoheleth boasted of having made for himself (לִי) vineyards, gardens and parks with every kind of tree as well as irrigation pools to provide the necessary water for the cultivation and growth.

Interesting statements about literary similarities between Qoheleth 2:4-6 and Genesis 1-2 have been made by scholars.<sup>384</sup> The mention of עֵץ כָּל-פְּרִי ('every kind of fruit trees') would remind the fertile earth of Genesis 1:11 yielding any kind of fruit trees (עֵץ פְּרִי). In so doing, Qoheleth not only poses as a king, but even as God trying to create a garden (גֶּן) and parks (פְּרָדֵסִים)<sup>385</sup> in a land where water is very scarce (Verheij 1991:114).

Furthermore, the word Eden in Genesis 2:8 refers to a well-watered land rather than a field as it is often proposed.<sup>386</sup> This interpretation is supported by the Tell Fakhariyah inscription<sup>387</sup> which is written in early Aramaic and Assyrian scripts. Its Aramaic text praises Hadad who *m'dn* the regions, or who provides an abundance of water (Hess 1991:32). The corresponding word of *m'dn* in the Assyrian version is *mut\ahÉhÉidu*

<sup>384</sup> The fact Qoheleth understands himself as the creator of his own happiness is shown by several words echoing Genesis 1-2. The expression 'I planted all kinds of fruit trees' (v.5) echoes Genesis 1:11; 2:8, while to irrigate recalls Genesis 2:6,10 etc. For further similarities, see Verheij, A 1991. Paradise Retried: On Qoheleth 2:4-6. *JSOT* 50, p.114.

<sup>385</sup> Qoheleth intentionally uses here the words גֶּן and פְּרָדֵסִים instead of גַּן. Although the biblical lexica do not significantly differentiate גֶּן and גַּן, the latter refers to a garden or park which was intended for enjoyment and pleasure, while the former can mean both a garden which was cultivated for producing fruits, nuts and vegetables and a place for enjoyment. The word פְּרָדֵסִים is a Persian loan which occurs only in three passages (Qoh 2:5; Song 4:13 & Neh 2:8) and has the same meaning as גֶּן. For more details, see Rütterswoden, U 1998. Erwägungen zur Alttestamentlichen Paradiesvorstellungen. *ThlZ* 123/12, 1153-1162 [see page 1155].

<sup>386</sup> Scholars link עֵדֶן with the Sumerian *edin*, which means plain or steppe. See Millard, A R 1984. The Etymology of Eden. *VT* 34, 103-106 (see p103-104).

<sup>387</sup> The Tell Fakhariyah (9<sup>th</sup> Century BCE) – the bilingual inscription in Assyrian and Aramaic discovered in 1979 in Syria – praising Hadad as the one who abundantly irrigates all the lands and controls the rivers. The translation of Tell Fakhariya can be found in Millard, A R & Bordreuil, P 1982. A Statue from Syria with Assyrian and Aramaic Inscriptions. *BA* 45, p.137.

referring to the abundant attractiveness of a royal ornament as assumed in Qoheleth 2:4-6 (Millard 1984:104). In this sense, the LXX has rendered the Hebrew words  $\text{גן}$   $\text{הגן}$  by  $\text{παραδεισος}$  in Genesis 2:15, a place of plentiful water.

In this sense, Qoheleth provided his man-made Eden (parks and gardens) with irrigation pools to ensure the necessary water for the growth of the fruit trees. The provision of water in royal gardens and parks is also attested in extra-biblical texts, namely during the Achaemenid period:

[p]lants gathered from all over the empire were planted in carefully planned gardens. Sections of the parks were laid out as lush woodlands, well supplied with water, forming orderly and fertile oases in the midst of barren landscapes. These forested sections also served as game reserves, stocked with animals (lions, tigers, bears), where kings and courtiers hunted, allowing the former to exhibit his physical prowess (Kuhrt 2010:272).

The construction of this kind of garden involved a number of measures of water supply including the lining and maintenance of water channels or aqueducts connected to the major basins or pools to ensure the regularity of water:

The channels and basins served both a practical irrigation function and an aesthetic function. Besides, they also modified the climate of the immediate surroundings (Stronach 1989:176).

Ironically, Qoheleth states that these pleasurable gardens and parks never brought him satisfaction. In this sense, it must be admitted that Qoheleth 2:4-6 can be read as ‘referring to a failed attempt on the part of Qoheleth at creating something like Paradise’ (Verheij 1991:115). While God saw everything that he had done was very good (Gn 1:31), Qoheleth 2:1 states:

Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had spent in doing it, and again, all was vanity [*hebel*] and a chasing after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun (NRSV).

This statement can also be likened to the Babylonian wisdom text known as the ‘Dialogue between a Master and his Servant’ that treats the issue of ‘what is good’, and reaches the conclusion that none of the human toils and enterprises has any real value (Greenstein 2007:56). Qoheleth is upset not by the enterprise itself – which he

did with pleasure (v. 10) – but the fact that it cannot help him to get the fullness of life. Although Qoheleth is not fully satisfied with the pleasures wealth allows, they are still the best that life has to offer (Fox 1989:68).

#### 5.4.6 Eco-theological significance of Qoheleth 2:4-6

Anthropocentric readings of Qoheleth 2:4-6 simply ignore the significance of water in this text in favour of reading the text as part of Solomon's luxury measure of pleasure. However, our ecological awareness has led us to find that water is seen with life-giving functions to enable the growing of the fruit trees in Qoheleth's gardens and parks. References to a fertile and well-irrigated garden here in Qoheleth and elsewhere remind the reader of the 'ambiguity' of this theme in the Ancient Near Eastern physical world where drought and adverse climatic conditions were familiar to some regions (Palestine and Syria) while fertility and abundant water supplies were typical of other regions (Egypt and Mesopotamia) (Jonker 2014:340).

The significance of water as a life-giving entity is underlined here. In a dry land like Palestine, water and trees are two visible signs of life and beauty. Ansari stated that in hot and dry places, gardens (i.e. water and plants) are symbols of freshness: 'they are examples of paradise on the earth' (1989:109). In the Ancient East, a garden was unthinkable without a source of water and regular irrigation of the trees. In this sense, various methods and hard-work were involved in distributing water from the main supply to various reservoirs for water storage – for insurance against drought – and were placed at the inlet of the irrigation system of various fields, including gardens and parks (Kang 1972:622).

Historically, the idea of the king creating a fertile garden out of barren land, bringing order out of chaos and thus, duplicating the divine paradise on earth, was a powerful statement in the Ancient East symbolising authority, fertility and legitimacy.<sup>388</sup> In the Ancient East, gardens, especially 'royal gardens', were mythically seen as a symbol of

---

<sup>388</sup> See Eliade, M 1975. *Myth, Dreams, and Mysteries: The Encounter Between Contemporary Faith and Archaic Realities*. New York: Harper & Row, pp. 59-72; see also Ansari, M, Taghvaei, A K & Nejad, H M 2008. Cultural Beliefs Regarding Persian Gardens with the Emphasis on Water and Trees. *African and Asian Studies* 7, 101-124 [see pages 122-123].

the city to the point that Jewish readings (Midrash) interpret the Garden of Eden as the depiction of the Promised Land.<sup>389</sup> That is why the portrayal of the Promised Land in Deuteronomy 11:8ff present similarities with the Garden of Eden in terms of water availability and land fertility<sup>390</sup> (von Rad 1966:85).

The Hebrew word פֶּרְדֵּסִים – a loanword from the Persian *paradaida* and the Greek παραδεισος – refers to specially watered parks and pleasure gardens (Can 4:13). In Qoheleth 2:4 it is supplemented by גִּנוֹת denoting the idea of ‘enclosure’ deriving from the root גָּנָה (to close), and suggests a private property (Van Paridon 2005:232). In the context of Qoheleth, פֶּרְדֵּסִים and גִּנוֹת denote not only a place for pleasure, but also an investment. In fact, the usage of the Greek word παραδεισος during the Ptolemaic period referred to an ecologically and economically productive orchard yielding every kind of fruit tree and botanical environment enabled by water availability (Rudman 2001:15).

Although Qoheleth realises that all his effort is *hebel*, the text nevertheless reflects the water management attitudes in the mind of the writer. One can read in the language of Qoheleth 2:5 the idea of making the arid land fruitful by proper water management. As a great king, Hezekiah also listed his achievements in terms of making pools and a conduit of water to the city (2 Ki 20:20; Sir 50:4-6) along with vineyards and gardens as well as the irrigation channel and reservoirs. In other words:

The botanical garden, filled with exotic trees and flowing streams, was the parade example of the king’s life-giving role as gardener, and visible proof that his wise rule brought fertility and fruitfulness to his whole land (Green 2010:273).

For Qoheleth, water management is seen as positive even though it is also part of *hebel*. Qoheleth complains not about the wealth, including his parks, gardens and their waters that is the means of pleasure, but the efforts he invested in acquiring it. Water is seen as having intrinsic worth by creating life in the desert. It becomes clear that the control of water and the ordering of water resources for irrigation and fertilisation

---

<sup>389</sup> See, Morris, P 1992. Exiled From Eden: Jewish Interpretations of Genesis, in Morris, P & Sawyer, D (ed), *A Walk in the Garden: Biblical, Iconographical and Literary Images of Eden*, 117-167. Sheffield: JSOT Press [see page 118).

<sup>390</sup> See Genesis 2:10-14 & Deuteronomy 11:7ff.

within the garden was an act of water management awareness. Qoheleth's measures of water irrigation testify to his awareness about water management and sanitation as the key for a fertile and delightful environment.

## 5.5 Water and water-related phenomena in Qoheleth 11:1-6

### 5.5.1 Introduction

There are various interpretations of this enigmatic passage of Qoheleth. Interpretations include an exhortation for liberality, an agricultural invitation to sow, an invitation for fishing, *carpe diem*, and an allusion to maritime trades.<sup>391</sup> The intention of this study is not to argue for or against any of these interpretations, but to scrutinise the underlying worldview that may have informed the use of water-related images in this ambiguous passage. The ideal is to attend to the language Qoheleth uses without moving quickly to what the text means (Barbour 2012:157).

Figurative and anthropocentric interpretations often fail to recognise that the nature images on the surface of Qoheleth 11:1-6 are what the author chooses to show us first and most clearly. In his excursus on Qoheleth 12, Fox points something out which is also valid for Qoheleth 11:1-6:

Rather than thinking of the imagery as an expendable outer garb, we should compare it to the visible surface of a painting. The imagery *is* the painting. We can discuss the painting's symbolism, emotive overtones, ideological message, and so on, but only as projections of the surface imagery, not as substitutes for it. To understand the poem we must first look carefully at the surface the author shows us (1988a:57).

Therefore, it is assumed that Qoheleth 11:1-6 echoes the agricultural context. This assumption draws on various considerations. Firstly, the book of Qoheleth was read during an agricultural festival, *Sukkot*. Secondly, a number of authors also think that Qoheleth 11:1 echoes both the *Hapy* hymn and the Egyptian practice of sowing by casting the seed from the boats during the Nile inundation so that when the waters

---

<sup>391</sup> For more details about interpretations of the text, see Lavoie, J J 2007. *Laisse Aller ton Pain sur les Surfaces des Eaux: Etudes de Qohélet 11:1-2*, in Berlejung, A & Van Hecke, P (eds), *The Language of Qoheleth in Its Context: Essays in Honour of Prof. A. Schoors on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday*, 73-89. Leuven: Peeters Publishers & Department of Oriental Studies.

retreat the grains in the alluvial soil spring up (Is 32:20) (Erman 2005:10). Third, verses 2-6 are directly about agricultural features.

In this sense, the present section includes the translation of the text, its analysis with regard to the extra-biblical texts (*Hapy* hymn) before the ecological analysis of the text.

### 5.5.2 The Masoretic Text of Qoheleth 11:1-6

It is necessary to discuss first the delimitations of the text. The most obvious feature in this unit is the change of the subject; it differs from the preceding section which is about the wise and the fool (10:8-20). Qoheleth 11:1 marks a certain commencement of another section branded by certain rhetorical and literary features that continue up to verse 6 (Ogden 1983:223). Qoheleth 11:1-6 draws on images in the natural world (sea, earth, clouds, rain, trees, winds ...) to shape human conduct. According to this unit, there are various volatilities and uncertainties in the natural world, especially the water-related phenomena that teach the limits of human knowledge.

With the exception of verse 5, Qoheleth 11:1-6 does not have major textual problems. The NRSV has rendered the whole verse (v. 5ab) as highlighting human ignorance on how ריח (breath or spirit) enters the body of an embryo. However, it seems that the first half of verse 5 (v. 5a) continues the wind idea of verse 4, but with the focus on human incapacity to master the 'way of the wind' just as humans ignore the mystery of life formation (v. 5b). This point of view is explained in the footnote on the Hebrew text below:

- 1 שֶׁלַח לַחֲמָה עַל־פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם כִּי־בָרַב הַיַּמִּים תִּמְצָאָנּוּ:
- 2 תּוֹנֵחַתְּלֵק לְשִׁבְעָה וְגַם לְשִׁמוּנָה כִּי לֹא תִדַע מֵה־יִהְיֶה רָעָה עַל־הָאָרֶץ:
- 3 אִם־יִמְלְאוּ הָעֵבִים גְּשֶׁם עַל־הָאָרֶץ יִרְיקוּ וְאִם־יִפּוֹל  
עַץ בַּדָּרוֹם וְאִם בַּצָּפוֹן מְקוֹם שִׁפּוֹל הָעֵץ שָׁם יְהוּא:
- 4 שִׁמֵּר רוּחַ לֹא יִזְרַע וְרֵאָה בְּעֵבִים לֹא יִקְצֹר:

5 כַּאֲשֶׁר אֵינָהּ יוֹדֵעַ מִה־דֶּרֶךְ הָרוּחַ כַּעֲצָמִים בְּבֶטֶן

הַמְּלֵאָה<sup>392</sup> כֹּכָה לֹא תִדְעֶנָּה מַעֲשֵׂה הָאֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה אֶת־הַכֹּל:

6 בַּבֹּקֶר זָרַע אֶת־זֵרְעֶךָ וְלָעֶרֶב אַל־תִּנְחַח יָדְךָ כִּי אֵינָהּ

יוֹדֵעַ אִי זֶה יִכְשֹׁר הַזֶּה־אוֹ־זֶה וְאִם־שְׁנֵיהֶם כְּאֶחָד טוֹבִים:

### 5.5.3 Translation

Except for verse 5, the following translation adopts the NRSV (1989). The reason for the disagreement is given in the footnote on verse 5 of the Hebrew text above. The translation can now be presented as follows:

<sup>1</sup> Send out your bread upon the waters, for after many days you will get it back.

<sup>2</sup> Divide your means seven ways, or even eight, for you do not know what disaster may happen on earth.

<sup>3</sup> When clouds are full, they empty rain on the earth; whether a tree falls to the south or to the north, in the place where the tree falls, there it will lie.

<sup>4</sup> Whoever observes the wind will not sow; and whoever regards the clouds will not reap.

<sup>5</sup> Just as you don't know the way of the wind or how bones grow in a pregnant woman's womb, so you don't know the work of God, the maker of everything.

<sup>6</sup> In the morning sow your seed, and at evening do not let your hands be idle; for you do not know which will prosper, this or that, or whether both alike will be good.

### 5.5.4 Literary considerations

There are underlying debates about the structural division of Qoheleth 11; however, it is not within the scope of this thesis to discuss these debates.<sup>393</sup> This study is in

<sup>392</sup> The phrase *הַמְּלֵאָה כַּעֲצָמִים בְּבֶטֶן הָרוּחַ מִה־דֶּרֶךְ הָרוּחַ* literally means 'the way of the wind like the bones in the womb get full (complete)? The NRSV has prefixed ב (B) instead of כ (k) to the word *עֲצָמִים* in order to justify the translation of the verse as about *רוּחַ* entering the embryo. This alteration is proposed by the editors of the BHS. The researcher agrees, however, with the *lectio difficilior* of the MT, which has been adopted by CJB and LSG. The point is that the NRSV translation breaks the idea of nature images that start in verse 1 and continue up to verse 6.

<sup>393</sup> See Loader, J A 1979. *Polar Structures in the Book of Qoheleth*. Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, p. 66-67.

agreement with Loader (1979:66) who is of the opinion verses 3-6 develop the theme of verses 1-2 in Qoheleth 11:1-6. The unit is framed by four imperatives: שְׁלַח (send out, v. 1), חָן (divide, v. 2), זָרַע (sow, v. 6a) and אַל־תִּבְנֶה ('do not slack off, v. 6b), all denoting agricultural thoughts (Lavoie 2007:77). The passage is clearly different from Qoheleth 11:7-12:7 which is much more apocalyptic.

Thus, the unit consists of five sections: verses 1-2; 3; 4; 5 and 6. Verses 1-2 and 6 frame the unit in terms of substantial exhortations, while the rest of the verses form the argument of the enigma. Several nature key-words are used to connect the sections to one another: עָבִים 'clouds' (vv.3 & 4), רוּחַ 'wind' (vv.4 & 5), זָרַע 'sow' (vv.4 & 6). The argument consists of highlighting human ignorance<sup>394</sup> *vis-à-vis* the variations of nature forces, mainly the water-related phenomena, which are potentially life-giving or life-threatening, especially in the Israelite agrarian context<sup>395</sup> (Hopkins 1985:214ff).

### 5.5.5 Ecological significance of water in Qoheleth 11:1-6

#### 5.5.5.1 Water ambivalence in Qoheleth 11:1-2

Loader (1979:66) states that Qoheleth 11:1-6 is about risk and assurance. The positive imperatives in verses 1-2 (send your bread ... divide your means and sow your seed) draw on the inscrutability of water in an agricultural context denoting that anything, either positive or negative can occur. Whether verses 1-2 refer to charity<sup>396</sup> or business,<sup>397</sup> the idea behind the text is about risk and assurance in an agrarian worldview.

The metaphor reinforces the idea of risk since לֶחֶם denotes something that is ready for consumption<sup>398</sup> (1 Sm 17:17). It is unpredictable whether bread upon the water will be

<sup>394</sup> 'You do not know' is stated differently: in verses 2 and 5a as לֹא תֵדָע, while verses 5b and 6 state יִדְעַי אֵיךָ.

<sup>395</sup> See the life-giving and life-threatening potential of nature variations for sowing in Hopkins, D C 1985. *The Highlands of Canaan: An Agricultural Life in the Early Iron Age*. Sheffield: JSOT Press/Almond Press (SWBA 3), pp.214-216.

<sup>396</sup> See Krüger, T 2004. *Qoheleth: A Commentary*. Trans. by Dean Jr, O C. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, p192. Whitwel, C 2009. The Variation of Nature in Ecclesiastes 11. *JSOT* 34/1, 81-98.

<sup>397</sup> Loader, J A 1979. *Polar Structures in the Book of Qohelet*. Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, p67; Hubbard, D A 1994. Principles of Financial Investment: Ecclesiastes 11:1-8, in Zuck, R B (ed), *Reflecting with Solomon: Selected Studies on the Book of Ecclesiastes*, 341-346. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books.

<sup>398</sup> Elsewhere in Qoheleth, bread (לֶחֶם) is positively perceived as means of sustenance and joy (9:7; 5:18; 8:15). Throwing bread upon waters is a metaphorical act denoting risk.

found or not, but one has to do it. The imperfect form of the verb in verse 1 suggests that ‘the bread in the ‘source domain’ may or may not be rediscovered’ (Whitwell 2009:87). The Complete Jewish Bible is correct in translating the second hemistich of verse 1 as: ‘eventually you will reap a return’.

Qoheleth 11:1 can, thus, possibly be linked to the Egyptian sage *Ankhsheshonqy*: ‘do a good deed and throw it in the water; when it dries you will find it’ (19.10). While it is difficult to establish which text is prior to the other, both texts are aphorisms and it is possible to use one to shed light upon the other (Whitwell 2009:87). As both texts are believed to have been written during the Ptolemaic period, the underlying idea behind the text could be the same.<sup>399</sup> The sage *Ankhsheshonqy* might have had in mind a water-related realm in which rediscovery was not easy to imagine, possibly the Nile.

Therefore, some have linked up verses 1-2 with the Egyptian Hapy hymn ‘consisting at sowing during the inundating Nile’ which is an act of risk (Crenshaw 1988:178). The hymn praises the personified inundating Nile River for its life-giving function in watering the land that gives the bread to sustain human beings. The hymn also warns that ‘whoever observes the wind will not sow, and whoever regards the clouds will not reap’ (Crenshaw 2005a:110). In this sense, Egyptians could take the risk of sowing by casting the seed from the boats during the Nile inundation so that when the waters retreat the grains in the alluvial soil spring up (Kedish 1988:187). Whether Qoheleth had such an idea in mind is not sure, but the link between both texts is patent.

It is, therefore, possible that the idea of finding bread after many days in Qoheleth 11:1 alludes to the period between the Egyptian *Akhet* season – beginning the new year, deriving its identity from the inundation so essential to the agricultural cycle – and the *Peret* season – the second season, signalling the forthcoming alluvial soil from the waters and the rise of vegetation from the newly replenished soil (Kedish 1988:187).

---

<sup>399</sup> Lichtheim argues that the handwriting of the *Ankhsheshonqy* is of late Ptolemaic date, while its composition may be earlier (1980:159, 174, 179).

### 5.5.5.2 Water volatility and the agrarian life (verses 3-4 & 6)

In verses 3-4 and 6, Qoheleth points to the two most important agricultural events of the year: the clouds and the wind whose variations may lead farmers to delay sowing and harvesting. In Palestine, the timeframe for sowing is between the coming of the rains and a time which just allows grain to develop fully before the next dry season.<sup>400</sup> However, Hopkins informed that sometimes the period of rain alternates with intervals of dry weather that makes it difficult to determine the beginning of the rainy season (1985:215).

The statement ‘when the clouds are full (אֲמִם יִמְלֵאוּ הָעֲבָיִם) it will rain’ testifies to the awareness the text has about the clouds as water-carriers. In Qoheleth 11:3-6, rain is the key-word and its relevance is emphasised by the fact that verses 3-4 are literally wrapped by ‘clouds’ and the agrarian ideas of sowing and reaping in verse 6.

The point is that upper-waters pass via the firmament (רָקִיעַ) into the clouds before being emptied on earth. In the Old Testament world, it was believed that there was a great reservoir of water above, which was held by the solid vault (רָקִיעַ) that has doors capable of opening or shutting as time requires.<sup>401</sup> If these doors were opened and the water allowed to descend directly on the earth without the intermediary of clouds, the effect was devastating, destructive and life-threatening (Sutcliffe 1953:102).

Therefore, water in the clouds was a sign of life-giving rain for the agricultural life if it occurred at expected times (see Dt 11:14). In this sense, Proverbs 16:15 compares the king’s mercy with the clouds that bring the spring rain. The Hebrew word מַשְׁקָיִם (v. 3a) refers to those heavy winter-rains that occur in October-November and are vital for farmers to make sowing decisions (King & Stager 2001:88). However, מַשְׁקָיִם is not seen as vital in Qoheleth 11:3-6, but a potential life-threatening rain as it is linked with the hesitation to reap.

<sup>400</sup> See King, P J & Stager, L E 2001. *Life in Biblical Israel*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox (Library of Ancient Israel), pp.68-89.

<sup>401</sup> See Genesis 7:11; 8:2 and Isaiah 24:18

In the Hellenistic era, the observation of the clouds, mainly in agriculture, served the purpose of forecasting of the weather (Krüger 2004:194). In this sense, it is normally understood that verse 3 says that one can predict the future by watching nature. This is the first impression that Qoheleth's irony gives, but quickly it emphasises the randomness of nature in verses 4-6. For Qoheleth, one may know things about the laws of nature (i.e. when the clouds are full they pour rain on earth, v.3), but one has no control of the event (one does not know when it will rain, v.4) and its outcomes (v.6). In other words, 'nature may give one the impression of predictability, but it is in fact not completely predictable' (Seow 1997:345).

Possibly, Qoheleth ironically questions the techniques that claim to predict the future, especially in agriculture, from the observation of nature (Krüger 2004:193). Qoheleth is not a monolithic thinker of nature as always predictable. He presents what is commonly known before concluding by an opposite statement. Qoheleth introduces the idea that no one can predict what things, whether good or bad, will occur (vv.1-2) and concludes with the same statement (v.6). Despite some sign of reliability, nature (water) is still a mystery, which makes it life-giver or life-threat.

That is why Qoheleth 11:3-6 featured among parts of the book that were read during *Sukkot* to address farmers who hesitated to take any risk for sowing/reaping, but were in search of perfect weather conditions.<sup>402</sup> The NJPS accurately translated verse 4: 'if one watches the wind, one will never sow; if one observes the cloud one will never reap'. Qoheleth is aware of the capricious rain weather pattern in Israel that causes life-giving or life-threatening effects. Hopkins (1985:215) explained:

The timing of the first rains is not constant. If the rainy season were to begin early, the farmer could plant early and risk the night frost in the hills, a lengthy rainfall pause before the heart of the rainy season, or a heavy spring rain that might beat down precociously tall stalks, hoping for a good harvest from a long growing season. If the rains began late, then the farmer would be forced to plant at a later than optimal time and would risk in a diminished season immature grains at harvest.

---

<sup>402</sup> See Sweeney, M A 2012. *TANAK: A Theological and Critical Introduction to the Jewish Bible*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, pp.438ff.

Therefore, for Qoheleth searching for the right time to sow/reap by contemplating the clouds is indeed responsible, but the right time could be missed as nature/water is sometimes unpredictable (Whitwell 2009:85). The text emphasises human incapacity to master all details of the natural world (v.5). In view of Qoheleth's basic idea of the inscrutability of the future, human actions will remain risky (Krüger 2004:194).

For Qoheleth 11:3-4, whether the rains began early, late or at the normal time, the volatility of the rainfall regime bears risk regardless of the moment chosen for planting. Possibly Qoheleth 11:6 alludes to the wisdom of Psalm 126:5-6:

<sup>5</sup>May those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy. <sup>6</sup> Those who go out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, carrying their sheaves.

Qoheleth's irony denotes that the clouds may or may not pour the  $\alpha\psi\lambda$  down on earth and thus, farmers sometimes have to take risky decisions. During the Ptolemaic period, Egyptians identified seasons for sowing or reaping based on the regularity of the Nile (Kedish 1988:186). In Palestine, however, the return of the rain was uncertain from year to year and it could occur too late, or too little, or even could fail to fall down at all (Levin 2014b:197). While major variations/deficiencies in nature were viewed as questions of the divine, Qoheleth attributes all to the unpredictability of nature which is inherently mysterious.<sup>403</sup>

Thus, the search for the right time or appropriate season will result in endless delaying of agricultural activities, and perhaps hedging against great errors occurring when one reaps/sows at the wrong time (Hubbard 1994:343). Water-related phenomena (clouds and rains) are, therefore, seen with life-giving and life-threatening potential which is attached to their unpredictable status.

---

<sup>403</sup> The text recalls Qoheleth 1:1-7 where nature events are also unpredictable and ambivalent. Contrary to Barbour (2012:161) arguing that Qoheleth 11:1-6 is goal-directed and linear in contrast to the cyclical world of Qoheleth 1:1-7, the present study sees both texts as conveying the unfathomability of nature events. There are indeed some goal-directed events (the clouds that are full pour rain on earth), but the intention of Qoheleth is not to repeat this 'common knowledge' but to challenge it by the idea of unpredictability and randomness of nature, which may act positively or negatively. The point is that nature does not always work according to human needs and expectations. The text reinforces the principle of eventuality/unpredictability of water that may cause life-giving or life-threatening results. For Qoheleth, for instance, Cartesian gauging of the possibility of rain due to the appearance of thick clouds can either make the farmer hurry the harvest prematurely or restrain and miss the right time.

### 5.5.5.3 Eco-theological wisdom of Qoheleth 11:1-6

Anthropocentric perspectives on the text are mainly attracted by the meaning of the text in terms of risk and assurance, and bypass the significance of the water-related metaphors that are used to convey this message. Just as in Qoheleth 1:4-11, water and water-related phenomena are here presented with the potential of ambivalence and unpredictability that may cause life or death.

Given that water is implied as having both life-threatening (risk) functions – since the expression *עַל־פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם* usually occurs with negative connotations<sup>404</sup> – and life-giving aspects – since bread upon the waters will be found after many days – verse 2 encourages measures of security regarding potential disasters. The idea of dividing the seed into seven/eight (v.2) parts denotes that a single sowing at what seemed the time would not be seen as guaranteeing success given the unpredictability of nature (water) appearing with the potential to cause life or threat.

It is, therefore, not incorrect that Crenshaw (2005a:110) has linked Qoheleth 11:1-2 with the ambivalent character of the Nile inundation. The Nile is life-threatening in its form of inundation, but it results in the fertility of the land and supply of sufficient water that will be stored in reservoirs for the dry season. The words *עַל־פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם* in Genesis 1:2b, for instance, usually refer to the life-threatening primeval deep, but at the same time they allude to the situation prior to the ‘fertility of the land’ because when they retreated the land yielded fruits.<sup>405</sup> Qoheleth 11:1-2 has both ideas in mind. The NEB has, thus, rendered the word bread (*לֶחֶם*) as ‘grain’ referring to any agricultural product.

Furthermore, while water in the clouds was a sign of life-giving water for the agricultural life if it occurred at the expected time (see Dt 11:14), *אֶשׁ* in Qoheleth 11:3-4 is not seen as vital rain, but a potential life-threatening rain as it is linked with the hesitation to reap. Fox advised that faithful readings of Qoheleth ‘at least, should try to describe the territory with all its bumps and clefts, for they are not mere flaws,

<sup>404</sup> See Genesis 1:2; Job 24:18

<sup>405</sup> Tsumura (1989:43) claims that the waters of Genesis 1:2 refer not to Earth’s chaos, but to its unproductivity prior to its final shape filled with life forms.

but the essence of the landscape' (1989:28). Qoheleth 11:1-6 is a clear proof of this statement. The irony gives the impression that it will surely rain (v. 3), but quickly emphasises the uncertainty of nature (v.4).

## 5.6 Conclusion

This chapter focused on the potential of water and water-related phenomena in three main texts: Qoheleth 1:4-11; 2:4-11 and 11:1-6. In the first text, the researcher realised that both the romantic and wearisome views of nature are in the mind of Qoheleth given the puzzling nature of the theme he wants to describe: life. We saw that in Qoheleth 1:4-11, the same word in the text can cover both positive aspects of nature (life-giving water in regular cycles) and apparent negative (pointless) aspects of nature, which are two realities of human activity (יְתָרוֹן).

In this sense, the romantic view of Qoheleth 1:7 – water returning to its source to flow afresh – echoes Psalm 104:10-16 where the purposeful gushing streams provide life-giving water for fauna, flora and the created-order. By contrast, read as pointing to the wearisomeness of nature, the movements of water in verse 7 could possibly be read as a waste and are, thus, parallel to Job 12 where the use of water by God to destroy the earth is claimed by Job as a pointless action.

As for Qoheleth 2:4-6, the researcher found that the text echoes the portrayal of the Garden of Eden in which water plays a life-giving role. One can read in the language of Qoheleth 2:5 the idea of making the arid land fruitful by means of the proper management of water even though this is done from an ego-centric perspective and interest. By ensuring his parks have water, Qoheleth poses as God in Genesis 2 by providing natural irrigation systems in the garden to provide the necessary water for cultivation (Gn 2:15). The text is highly anthropocentric suggesting that water can be in the service of life only if it is maintained and managed by human beings.

Finally, the enigmatic text of Qoheleth 11:1-6 suggests that water and water-related phenomena have the potential to cause life and death. The positive imperatives in verses 1-2 (send your bread ... divide your means and sow your seed) draw on the

inscrutability and unpredictability of water in an agricultural context by denoting that anything, either life-giving or life-threatening can occur. For Qoheleth 11:1-6, despite some signs of reliability, water remains a mystery capable of causing life or death, especially in the context of agrarian activities. Water is depicted as having intrinsic worth independent of human knowledge or skills. The next chapter concerns water and water-related phenomena in the deuterocanonical wisdom books.

## **CHAPTER SIX: WATER AND WATER-RELATED PHENOMENA IN THE DEUTERO-CANONICAL WISDOM BOOKS**

### **6.1 Introduction**

This chapter deals with the life-giving and life-threatening potential of water and water-related phenomena in the deutero-canonical wisdom books, namely the Wisdom of Jesus Son of Sirach (from here on Sirach) and the Wisdom of Solomon (from here on Wisdom). This study is limited to eco-theological perspectives on water and water-related phenomena in Sirach 24:23-34 and 43:13-26 as well as Wisdom 11:2-14. Wisdom 19:1-12 is also analysed to shed light on Wisdom 11:2-14 because it mirrors the theme of water used to rescue and to destroy in Wisdom 11:2-14.

Indeed, Sirach contains other texts about creation; namely Sirach 1:1-10; 16:26-30 and 39:12-35. However, none of these texts explicitly employs water or water-related phenomena. The reasons for the selection of texts are given in the introductory sections of each book below.

### **6.2 Water and water-related phenomena in Sirach 24:23-34 and 43:13-26**

#### **6.2.1 Introduction**

This section attempts an ecological interpretation of Sirach 24:23-34 and 43:13-26 respectively depicting water as a metaphor for the Torah/Wisdom and a real cosmic entity respectively. This selection is motivated by the fact that, firstly, both texts were used in the second chapter of this thesis as samples for the literature review. Secondly, they use water and water-related phenomena in two different ways: Sirach 24:23-29 uses water imageries as vehicles for the Torah whereas in Sirach 43:13-27, water and water-related phenomena are real cosmic entities. Thirdly, both texts explicitly deal with water and water-related phenomena contrary to scanty references about water in other texts (see Appendix A). Finally, as far as the researcher is aware, no eco-theological study has been done on the theme of water in these texts.

The analysis of these passages is carried out in terms of the problem statement of this thesis: firstly, they are not given enough attention in the study of water and water-related phenomena and secondly, they contain the potential of water and water-related phenomena to cause life or death. The analysis will draw intertextuality with other Old Testament books. Special attention is given to geographical and hydrological insights of the ancient world as well as the socio-historical features of the Hellenistic period that may enable the ecological retrieval of the texts.

## **6.2.2 Introduction to the book of Sirach**

### **6.2.2.1 The date and context of Sirach**

Sirach, also called Ecclesiasticus, is unique among the Old Testament Wisdom books by explicitly naming its author: Jesus Ben Sira. The book can be dated to approximately 180 BCE and was originally written in Hebrew in Jerusalem of the Hellenistic times (Rogers 1996:142). It seems that Ben Sira wrote or published his work before<sup>406</sup> the threats of Antiochus IV as the book contains no direct or indirect references to the sufferings of the pious Jews (Skehan & Di Lella 1987:10).

Sirach reacted to Hellenism, but not in an unduly critical way because the danger that Greek philosophy posed to traditional Judaism was not as great in Palestine as it was elsewhere. The researcher agrees with Di Lella (1976:141) that Ben Sira aimed not to offer a systematic polemic against Hellenism, but rather to convince Jews and some Gentiles that the inspired books of Israel and not intellectual literature of Hellenism are the fountains of true wisdom. This idea is clearly sounded in Sirach 24:23-34 in which the Torah is inundated with wisdom like the life-giving water of the six ANE vital rivers (Pishon, Tigris, Euphrates, the Jordan, Gihon and the Nile); and Sirach is portrayed as a rivulet channelling the water of Wisdom's streams into the garden and afar off.

---

<sup>406</sup> Ben Sira died before 175 BCE, the year of Antiochus IV's enthronement.

### 6.2.2.2 Texts and versions of Sirach

It is generally agreed that Sirach wrote his book in Hebrew sometime between 200 and 175 BCE in Jerusalem. This text, called HTI, was translated in Greek (GI) by Ben Sira's grandson while living in Alexandria. Between 50 BCE and 150 CE, HTI underwent expansion and alteration resulting in a variety of textual recensions.<sup>407</sup> The final product of this process is known as HTII. The Greek version (LXX) is the most reliable since it contains the entire book even though it exists in two major recensions: GI and GII<sup>408</sup> (Perdue 2007:235). Still, the Hebrew translations are preferred as they share the culture and language of the original manuscript (HTI).

The Hebrew text is kept in parts in six different, medieval, Cairo Genizah manuscripts (A, B, C, D, E & F), fragments from Qumran (2Q18; 11QPs<sup>a</sup>); 26 fragments including a lengthy and short section of Sirach 39:27-44:71 found at Masada (M).<sup>409</sup> The analysis of Sirach 24:23-34 is based on a reconstructed Hebrew text as proposed by Skehan (1979:374) and the NRSV (1989), while the interpretation of Sirach 43:13-26 relies on the Sirach Scroll from Masada containing Sirach 39:27-43:30 in Hebrew as presented by Yadin (1965). Still, the eco-theological exploration combines the insights of the LXX and those of the Hebrew language.

### 6.2.2.3 Literary structure of the book

Although the current book of Ben Sira is a fruit of later editors, its structure consists of three well-integrated and clear parts: Chapters 1-24; 25-43 and 44-51.<sup>410</sup> Each part of the book concludes with a poem or hymn: 24 (a psalm of wisdom praise), 41:15-43:33 (a hymn on creation), and 51:13-20 (a poem on Ben Sira's search for wisdom).

Curiously, Sirach 24:23-34 contains two units (verses 23-29 and 30-34) that conclude the initial poem (Sir 1-24) compared to the hymn of personified Wisdom (Pr 1-9), while Sirach 43:13-26 belongs to the final poem of the second part (Sir 42:15-43:33).

<sup>407</sup> See Rogers, J F 1996. Wisdom and Creation in Sirach 24. *JNSL* 22/2, 141-156 [see pages 142-3].

<sup>408</sup> GI refers to the short Greek version of Ben Sira's grandson based on the original Hebrew text (HTI) while GII refers to expanded Greek recensions based on HTII.

<sup>409</sup> It is agreed that the fragments found in Qumran and Masada are the oldest, and palaeographic scholars date them both to the first century BCE (Perdue 2007:235).

<sup>410</sup> See Collins, J J 1997. *Jewish Wisdom in the Hellenistic Age*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, pp.45-6.

Taken together, these poems (Sir 1-24 & 42:15-43:33) provide a literary inclusion for the two parts that set forth themes of wisdom and creation (Perdue 2007:234). Both Sirach 24:23-34 and 43:13-26 belong to the literary units that set forth the creation theology in the book of Sirach.

### **6.2.3 Water and water-related phenomena in Sirach 24:23-34**

#### **6.2.3.1 Introduction**

It should be observed that Sirach 24:23-34 contains two distinct literary units. The first, Sirach 24:23-25 presents the Torah and Wisdom in the metaphor of the six significant rivers of the Ancient Near East. The second, Sirach 24:30-34 portrays Ben Sira as a rivulet channelling Wisdom's life-giving water into the garden and further. These two units will be analysed separately even though the second continues the water imagery of the first.

#### **6.2.3.2 Position of Sirach 24:23-34 within Sirach 24**

Sirach 24 is a long poem about Wisdom's self-praise consisting of three distinct units. The first unit, Sirach 24:1-22, is a first-person Wisdom's speech rhetorically corresponding to Proverbs 8:22-31. The second, Sirach 24:23-29, is a six-line stanza where wisdom and Torah are equated and metaphorically likened to the life-giving water of the six rivers. The last section describes Ben Sira's role as a wisdom teacher metaphorically compared to a rivulet channelling Wisdom's water (Sir 24:30-34).

Sirach 24:23-29 is, therefore, the core part of Sirach 24 and is characterised by a third-person's speech introduced by verse 23 while the rest equates Wisdom with the Torah, which is abundant and life-giving like the waters of the six rivers (vv. 25-29). Furthermore, Sirach 24:30-34 is a kind of application of the insights of Sirach 24:23-29.

#### **6.2.3.3 The Hebrew text of Sirach 24:23-29**

The original Hebrew text (HTI) does not contain verse 24. It is believed that a pious Jew later added it in GII as follows:

Do not grow weary of striving with the Lord's help, but cling to him that he may reinforce you. The Lord Almighty alone is God, and apart from him there is no saviour.

Given that GII is a later Greek recension based on Hebrew translations (HTII) and that this pious statement breaks the rhetoric and literary patterns of the poem that is imbued with water-related images, Skehan & Di Lella (1987:329) signal it in a footnote while many modern translations (e.g. NRSV, TOB) ignore it. This study is in line with their option.

Therefore, the Hebrew text of Sirach 24:23-29 can be presented as follows:

	23 כל זאת ספר ברית עליון
מורשה קהלת יעקב	תורה צוה לנו משה
וכחדקל בימי אביב	25 המלאה כפישון חכמה
וכירדן בימי בציר	26 המציפה כפרת שכל
וכניחון בימי בציר	27 המשפיעה כיאור מוסר
ואף האחרון לא יחקרנה	28 לא כלה הראשון לדעתה
ועצתה מתהום רבה	29 כי מים עצמה מחשבתה

#### 6.2.3.4 Translation of Sirach 24:23-29

Except for verse 27b the researcher opted for the translation of the NRSV (1989). It seems that verse 27b in the NRSV is based on GI omitting *καὶ* (and) before Gihon in order to equate the Nile with Gihon as in Jeremiah 2:18. The Greek preposition *καὶ* is attested in GII and occurs in the above Hebrew text. The translation can be presented as follows:

<sup>23</sup> All this is the book of the covenant of the Most High God,  
the law that Moses commanded us  
as an inheritance for the congregations of Jacob.

<sup>25</sup> It overflows, like the Pishon, with wisdom,  
and like the Tigris at the time of the first fruits.

<sup>26</sup> It runs over, like the Euphrates, with understanding,  
and like the Jordan at harvest time.

<sup>27</sup> It pours forth instruction like the Nile<sup>411</sup>  
and<sup>412</sup> like the Gihon at the time of vintage.

<sup>28</sup> The first man did not know wisdom fully,  
nor will the last one fathom her.

<sup>29</sup> For her thoughts are more abundant than the sea,  
and her counsel deeper than the great abyss.

### 6.2.3.5 Literary structure of Sirach 24:23-29

The poem presents itself as a chiasmic structure as the following indicates. It should be observed that this is the researcher's own construction.

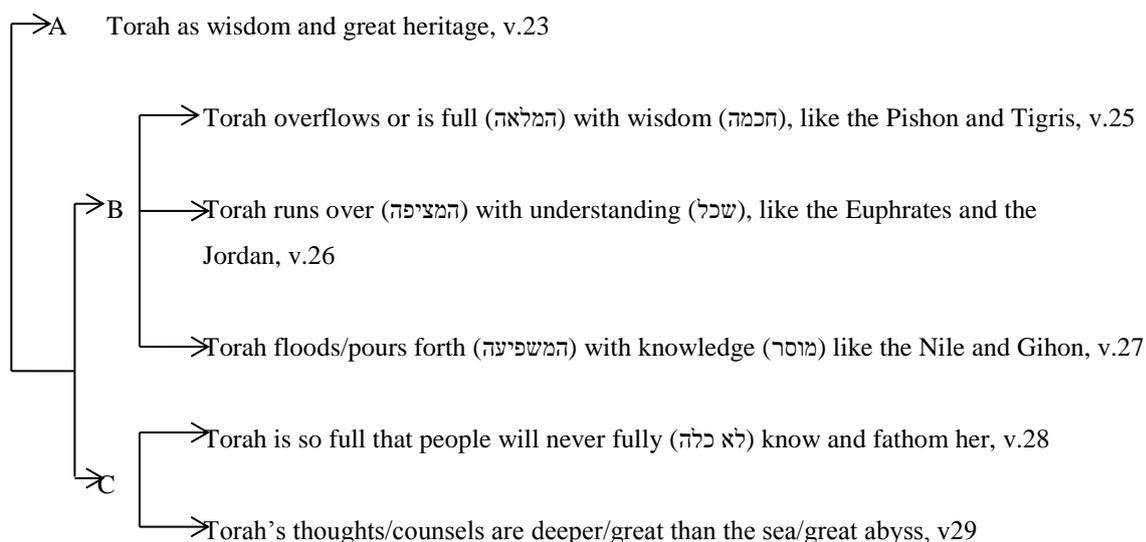


Figure 11: Literary structure of Sirach 24:23-29

Sirach 24:23-29 presents itself as an ABC structure. A contains the main subject, which is the Torah (v.23). B is made of three parallel verses (vv. 25-27) each containing two rivers and one agricultural season. B as a whole depicts the significance of the Torah's wisdom in terms of the life-giving water of the six rivers

<sup>411</sup> The Greek translation misunderstood the Hebrew word יאור as light instead of the Nile, combining thus the verb אאיר (for shining) used in verse 32b to underline the role of Sirach to send forth teachings to shine like the dawn. However, the Syriac Peshitta understood the Hebrew word יאור in verse 27a as the Nile.

<sup>412</sup> GI omits καὶ (and) in front of ὡς Γηων (as the Gihon) in order to mean that the Nile is synonymous with Gihon as LXX also did in Jeremiah 2:18. However, the Greek word καὶ occurs in GII translating the Hebrew ו before כגיהון (and as Gihon) in HTI, and thus giving a perfect balance to verses 25-27 in terms of one river in each of the six lines of verses 25-27 (Skehan & Di Lella 1987:337).

(Pishon, Tigris, Euphrates, Jordan, Nile and Gihon) that fertilise the land at specific times (the times of first fruits, harvest and vintage). In the Hebrew text, the syntactical patterns are organised in such a way that the beginnings (ה) and endings (בימי-) of lines in verses 25-27 almost carry identical resonance (Skehan 1979:379).

C conveys the idea of abundance of the Wisdom from the Torah which is more profound than the depths of the sea and greater than the abyss. That is why people never fully understood its insights for millenia. B and C are, therefore, the description of the vitality of the subject of A.

Sirach 24:23-29 has deliberately positioned the Pishon as the first one on the list and Gihon at the end of the list in order that the other two rivers (Nile and Jordan) appear as additional streams of the paradise (Sheppard 1980:69). The Nile and the Jordan are the two prominent rivers in the Semitic region, and for the Jewish author, they deserve a place among the cosmic rivers that canalise water from Eden toward the whole earth (Gn 2:10). Water is therefore a picture of life in most verses of Sirach 24:23-29.

### **6.2.3.6 Wisdom as life-giving water (verses 23-27)**

In this central point about the eco-theological analysis of Sirach 24:23-27, the focus is on the significance of the key-words (verbs, nouns and seasons) used to compare the Torah's wisdom with the life-giving water of the six mighty rivers. Thereafter, the eco-theological significance of water stated in verses 28-29 is retrieved.

#### **6.2.3.6.1 Brimful like Pishon and Tigris (verse 25)**

The Torah is said to be full (המלאה) of Wisdom (חכמה) like the Pishon and Tigris at the time of new crops, namely in spring when rivers are at their highest water level (Skehan & Di Lella 1987:336). The Hebrew word for the verb 'to be full' is מלא, while Wisdom is חכמה (see HTI, v.25). מלא is the same verb used in Genesis 1:28 when אלהים conferred the blessing of fullness and fertility on human beings. Thus, Sirach 24:25 testifies to the awareness of the abundance of the life-giving waters of the Pishon and Tigris that procure fertility at the time of new crops. This fullness is equated with the fertility that wisdom procures to her listeners.

Sirach 24:25-27 calls attention once again to Psalm 1 in which the Psalter contrasts the wicked with those who meditate on the Torah of God. In Psalm 1:3, the righteous are like trees planted by streams of water (על-פלגי מים) that yield their fruits in season and whose leaves do not wither. From the perspective of Sirach 24:25-27, this life-giving water is compared to the wisdom flowing from the Torah. Water is, therefore, viewed by Sirach as highly life-giving and as essential.

Pishon and Tigris are among the four rivers of Genesis 2:10-14 canalising water from Eden to fertilise the garden. The hydrological information of the Ancient East tells us that an irregularity in the flow of the Tigris can cause devastating floods in some years and disastrous droughts in others (Rasmussen 1989:66). In this sense, Sirach 24:25 puts the emphasis on ‘overflows with wisdom’ that pictures the life-giving function of the Tigris when it is brimful at the time of new crops.

#### **6.2.3.6.2 Running over like the Euphrates and the Jordan (verse 26)**

In Sirach 24:26, the poetry shifts from the idea of ‘fullness’ to that of ‘movement towards’. Here, the Torah is not only full with Wisdom (v.25a), but runs over like the Euphrates with understanding and like the Jordan at harvest time. The water-related images are crucial. Physically speaking, the Euphrates flows some 2,235 miles from East Central Turkey, through the north-eastern parts of Syria and the central areas of Iraq towards the Tigris, with which it forms the *Shatt-al-Arab* (Skehan & Di Lella 1987:336).

In Isaiah 3:7, the Euphrates is called הַנְּהָר, to mean the river *par excellence*. The words הַנְּהָר הַגָּדֹל (the great River) in Deuteronomy 1:7 highlights the same ideal. Jeremiah 51:36 names the Euphrates ‘the sea’ (יָם) imagining that only God can dry up its multiple fountains. This river made a big impression on the Israelites who were less used to large seas. In this sense, Isaiah 8:6 contrasts its mighty floods with the water of Shiloh that flows gently (טָלָה) without disastrous effects. In addition, the fact that Sargon II boasted about having crossed the Euphrates during its mighty inundation proves that people in the Ancient Near East feared the flooding of this river (Reymond 1958:87).

However, Sirach 24:26 softens the mighty ‘floods’ of the Euphrates with the Hebrew word שכל (understanding)<sup>413</sup> that is rendered in GI as σύνεσις (with understanding), providing them a positive role. Although the floods of the Euphrates are life-threatening in form, they result in the fertility of the land. This is what Sirach 24:26, in the researcher’s opinion, equates with ‘flowing with understanding’. In other words, the righteous will depend on the Torah for a responsible ethical life, just as life in the Euphrates and Jordan valleys was dependent upon the floods for irrigation to maintain physical life (Snaith 1974:125).

The Jordan River is the Palestinian’s own, best known and most vital river. Following the etymology proposed by Köhler (1939:62), Jordan is the junction of two Iranian words: *dan* (river) and *Jār* (year), and thus, the Jordan River is defined as the river that flows the whole year. Therefore, the Jordan valley attracted human settlements. It is in this sense that Loth chose the Jordan valley as his preferred settlement as it was irrigated everywhere (פְּלֵה מִשְׁקָה) similar to the garden of YHWH (בְּגִן־יְהוָה) and the land of Egypt (בְּאֶרֶץ־מִצְרַיִם) (Gn 13:10).

However, just as the Euphrates, it was not easy to cross the Jordan given its great rate of flow especially during its inundation with its rushing and violent waves. In this sense, 1 Chronicles 12:16 praises the army officers who crossed the Jordan during its flooding time. Still, due to the great floods of the Jordan, the vegetation abounds not only at its immediate sides, but also in the whole Jordan valley, contrasting, thus, with the dryness in the highlands (Reymond 1958:94). The valley was one of the rare places that could yield a great number of large trees for house building (2 Ki 6:2), thus, denoting the life-giving role of the floods to fertilise the area (Gradmann 1937:176).

The comparison in Sirach 24:26 of the Torah with the water of these two rivers, is less on the form of their flooding and more on their providence of life-giving water for the agricultural activities. The focus is not on the forms of the floods, but on what the floods bring to the land: fertility. The Hebrew syntax בְּיַמֵּי אֲבִיב (at harvest time) that is

---

<sup>413</sup> For meanings of שכל, see Strong, J 1999. *Strong’s Hebrew Dictionary*. Albany: Books for the Ages, p.718.

translated in Greek as ἐν ἡμέραις θερισμοῦ sufficiently underlines this argument. The word ἐν ἡμέραις means in its other biblical occurrences ‘a day appointed for a special purpose’.<sup>414</sup> In Sirach 24:26, the appointed day is ‘the harvest time’ benefiting from the inundations of the Euphrates and the Jordan just as the Torah’s listeners will benefit from the understanding, overflowing from it at ‘an appointed time’ of life.

### 6.2.3.6.3 Flooding like the Nile and Gihon (verse 27)

Sirach 24:27 says that Torah floods like the Nile with Knowledge and like the Gihon at the vintage time. In the LXX of Jeremiah 2:18, the Gihon is identified with the Nile. The same idea is in Sirach 24:27b in GI deliberately omitting καὶ (and) before ὡς Γηῶν (like the Gihon).<sup>415</sup> However, ו (and) occurs in the Hebrew text (HTII) and the Syriac Peshita. In contrast to GI, GII has καὶ before Gihon. Possibly, the original Hebrew text (HTI) contained ‘and’ before ‘like’ which gives a perfect balance of one river in each of the six lines of verses 25-27 (Skehan & Di Lella 1987:337).

The floods of the Nile were never seen as life-threatening because they always resulted in the fertility of the land. When the water retreated after the inundations, it left behind a marshy and fertile land ready for agriculture (Ex 2:3 & Is 19:6). The floods deposited rich black silt in its rise and thus, annually provided the Egyptians with fresh arable land and supplied the country with a great volume of water that could be distributed by canals and kept in reservoirs for later use (Ikram 2010:6).

The great volume of water from the Nile flood (about 700 million cubic metres a day) also aided agriculture by slowly washing the salt from the soil while the silt from the Nile delivered the raw material for the Egyptian ceramic industry and the mud bricks (Ikram 2010:7). The Nile inundation was so significant for ancient Egyptians that their year calendar was based on it.<sup>416</sup> Of course, people should keep their settlements beyond the flood plains, but the flood was always viewed as God’s providence for the

<sup>414</sup> See Luke 17:24; Acts 28:23; 1 Corinthians 4:3; Revelation 16:14 etc.

<sup>415</sup> Many scholars do agree with GI that the Gihon is the other appellation of the Nile here. Among them, Snaith, J G 1974. *Ecclesiasticus or the Wisdom of Jesus Son of Sirach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.125;

<sup>416</sup> The Egyptian calendar year was divided into three basic seasons: *Akhet* or inundation (June-October); *Peret* or coming forth/growing, when the land rose from the water and could be cultivated (October to mid-February); and *Shemu* or drought, when the crops ripened and were harvested (February-June) (Ikram 2010:8).

renewal and re-creation of the land.<sup>417</sup> For Egyptians, this god is the hermaphrodite god Hapy of the Nile inundations that give bread. Hapy was so important that his image was engraved on a pillar at Ramses II's temple at Abydos (Upper Egypt) as seen in the image below:



Figure 12: God Hapy offering a tray of abundant foods<sup>418</sup>

Sirach 24:27 clearly has this idea in mind. The life-giving water of the Nile inundation renewing and re-creating the land, and providing bread for the Egyptians is equated with knowledge flowing from the Torah to irrigate and nourish people's lives. The Nile 'floods with knowledge' (v.27a) means that the river rises at the right time (after a long dry season lasting from February to June) when the dry land actually longs to be hydrated, fertilised and nurtured.

Gihon has the same fertilising role. This Edenic river is mentioned in 2 Chronicles 32:2-4 as being blocked by the people of Jerusalem in order to prevent their enemies from having access to its life-giving water. In Psalm 110:7, the king drank from the brook (גִּיחֹן) – Gihon – by the road showing pride and victory over the enemy. Gihon is, thus, not simply life-refreshing, but also the medium of the divine assistance in the defence of Zion (Stordalen 2000:358). In this sense, Gihon did not only guarantee

<sup>417</sup> The Egyptians called the Nile *Hapi* when they made it into a god of human form since they have never solved the mystery of the origin of their river that renews and gives life to the land. See, Moret, A 1972. *The Nile and Egyptian Civilization*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, pp.28-30; also recently, Erman, A 2005. *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Collection of Poems, Narratives and Manuals of Instruction from the Third and Second Millennia BC*. London/New York/Bahrain: Kegan Paul, p.10ff.

<sup>418</sup> See Hillel, D 2006. *The Natural History of the Bible: An Environmental Exploration of the Hebrew Scriptures*. New York: Columbian University Press, p.34.

Jerusalem's water supply, but it is there where King Solomon was crowned (1 Ki 1:38).

Furthermore, the act of canalising the waters of Gihon to hydrate the city of David features among the great achievements of King Hezekiah (2 Chr 32:30). It is currently agreed that the Gihon source and stream provide the physical background for the Temple source and river in the vision of Ezekiel 47:1-12<sup>419</sup> where the river originates from the sanctuary and provides an evergreen flora all over its shores.

Thus, Sirach 24:27ab has two cultures in mind: Egypt and Israel. While the inundation of the Nile resulted in the fertility of the land of Egypt, in Israel the Gihon's flowing waters fertilised nearby vineyards and the city of Jerusalem (Perdue 2007:247). The abundant life-giving waters of these two rivers that enrich the land typify the life-giving power of Wisdom. Water is seen as intrinsically life-giving.

#### 6.2.3.7 Wisdom as deeper/greater than a sea/abyss (verses 28-29)

The use of the expressions, 'the first human' and 'the last human' implies that wisdom is beyond all human beings and their attempts to attain her (v.28) (Skehan & Di Lella 1987:337). Therefore, verse 29 compares wisdom to water that is 'deeper than the sea' and greater than the abyss. Strikingly, verse 29 presents a well-balanced chiasmic structure<sup>420</sup> as follows:

A	Her thoughts
B	Her counsels
A'	More abundant than the sea
B'	Deeper than the great abyss

Figure 13: Chiasmic structure of Sirach 24:29

<sup>419</sup> For the summary of the scholarly debates about Ezekiel 47:1-12, see Stordalen, T 2000. *Echoes of Eden: Genesis 2-3 and the Eden Garden in Biblical Hebrew Literature*. Leuven: Peeters, pp. 366-367.

<sup>420</sup> See Crenshaw, J L 1997. The Book of Sirach: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections, in Keck, L E (ed), *The New Interpreter's Bible: General Articles & Introduction, Commentary, & Reflections for Each Book of the Bible including The Apocryphal/Deutero-Canonical Books in Twelve Volumes*. Vol.5, 601-868. Nashville: Abingdon Press, p.758.

Sirach's use of these water entities to illustrate the inexhaustibility, vastness and unfathomability of Wisdom is ecologically insightful. The two Hebrew words for water, namely מים and תהום רבה are rendered in Greek as θάλασσα (sea) and ἀβύσσου μεγάλης (great abyss) referring to two mythological water entities that were feared by ancient people because of their vastness and pre-existence in the primeval times.

However, unlike Sirach 46:23-26, the text does not focus on the life-threatening potential of these water-related phenomena, but the comprehensiveness/universality that Wisdom possessed before being fixed in Israel (Sir 24:5-6). The point is that just as no one can contain the sea and the abyss, so none can master the full extent of the Torah's wisdom (Crenshaw 1997:758).

This universal dimension is pictured in terms of these cosmic waters. The mention of the names of rivers found in various places of the ANE suggests the universality of Wisdom. Sirach 24:28-29 underlines the ecological idea that there will always be something that we ignore about water just as it is so for Wisdom. Water is something bigger than us which we cannot fully control, but also without which we cannot live.

### **6.2.3.8 Sirach 24:23-29 as a metaphor for the Promised Land**

The naming of the six rivers in the texts denotes Ben Sira's Midrashic reading of the Old Testament traditions related to the Promised Land which is seen in terms of a well-watered paradise (Sheppard 1980:70). In Genesis 15:18, God promised a land 'from the river Egypt [Nile] to the great river Euphrates'. In Deuteronomy 11:8-15, the 'land beyond the Jordan' is depicted in terms of an irrigated land that is assured for Israel by obedience to the Torah. The Nile, Euphrates and Jordan are the great river boundaries of the Promised Land full of water (von Rad 1966:85).

This Torah, located within Israel (Sir 24:8), is equated with Wisdom in Sirach 24:23-29 and portrayed in terms of the six vital rivers (Sir 24:23-29). Through the naming of Pishon, Tigris, Gihon and Euphrates as well as the Nile and Jordan, Sirach 24:23-29 recalls an Eden-like Promised Land where the Torah abounds with wisdom (Sheppard 1980:71). The wealth of wisdom is likened to the great rivers that periodically

overflow with life-giving water to fertilise and sustain the land. Water, here, is a powerful ecological metaphor of fertility and abundance.

#### 6.2.4 Water and water-related phenomena in Sirach 24:30-34

##### 6.2.4.1 The Hebrew text of Sirach 24:30-34

The Hebrew text does not have verse 34. Unlike the NAB and Skehan (1979:376) who simply dropped it and presented it as verse 18 of Sirach 33, this study stays with the NRSV that presents verse 34 as the concluding statement of Wisdom praise in Sirach 24. Therefore, while verses 30-33 are presented in Hebrew, verse 34 occurs in Greek as follows<sup>421</sup>:

וכאמה יוצאת לנן	30 ואני כיובל מנהרה
וארוהערוונתי	31 אמרתי אשקה גנתי
ונהרי היה לים	ונהנה יובלי היה לנהר
והופעתיה עד למרחוק	32 עוד מוסר כשחר אאיר
והשארתי הלדר דרים	33 עוד לקח כנבואה אשפך

Sirach 24:34 in LXX: ἴδετε ὅτι οὐκ ἔμοι μόνῳ ἐκοπίασα  
ἀλλ' ἅπασιν τοῖς ἐκζητοῦσιν αὐτήν

##### 6.2.4.2 Translation of Sirach 24:30-34

<sup>30</sup> As for me, I was like a canal from a river,  
like a water channel into a garden.

<sup>31</sup> I said, "I will water my garden and drench my flower-beds."  
And lo, my canal became a river, and my river a sea.

<sup>32</sup> I will again make instruction shine forth like the dawn,  
and I will make it clear from far away.

<sup>33</sup> I will again pour out teaching like prophecy,

<sup>421</sup> The Hebrew text of Sirach 24:30-34 is a picture of the pdf format proposed by Skehan, P W 1979. Structure in Poems on Wisdom: Proverbs 8 and Sirach 24. *CBQ* 41/3, 365-379 [see page 375]. This explains the different Hebrew fonts from the previous Hebrew texts of the Masoretic text in this thesis.

and leave it to all future generations.

<sup>34</sup> Observe that I have not labored for myself alone,  
but for all who seek wisdom.

### 6.2.4.3 Literary structure of Sirach 24:30-34

- A I (Sirach) am like a canal to water my garden (vv.30-31a)  
 B My canal became a river, and my river a sea (v.31b)  
 A' I will spread forth instruction (water) afar off (vv.32-33)  
 B' I labored not for myself, but for all wisdom seekers (v.34)

Figure 14: Literary structure of Sirach 24:30-34

The above structure presents a chiasmic structure ABA'B'. AA' is an antithetical parallel in which the idea of A is contrasted by that of A'. In A, Sirach has in mind using the life-giving water of Wisdom for his own interest, but in A' he realises that the abundance of water should be shared with others. In this sense, BB' conveys the idea of a canal that became a mighty river and a sea and whose life-giving waters are available for all wisdom seekers.

### 6.2.4.4 The idea of abundance and sharing

Sirach 24:30-34 is concerned with the idea of fullness and sharing of the life-giving water that pictures the Torah's wisdom. Sirach proudly compares himself to a canal or a rivulet which has a spreading role just as the four cosmic rivers that originated from Eden to irrigate the garden in Genesis 2:10-13. In verses 30-31, Sirach has in mind at first to use the life-giving water to irrigate a small garden for his own interest – as in Qoheleth 2:4-6 – but suddenly his canal became a river and a sea suggesting a cosmic dimension of wisdom. In Genesis 2:10, the river that originated from Eden at first to water the garden, suddenly divides and becomes four branches (abundant) to water the whole land. Both texts underline the idea of abundance and water distribution.

In Sirach 24:30-34 the metaphor sheds light on the referent and vice versa. The text highlights the ecological idea that wisdom or water is not destined to be an individual's property. In this sense, Sirach's teaching is not viewed as a personal invention, but rather his wisdom is simply the Torah, of which he was the first to

benefit, and which has to be spread afar off for the benefit of others (vv.32-33) (Skehan & Di Lella 1987:337). This idea is emphasised in verse 34 where Sirach realised that his labour benefited all the seekers of wisdom. Whatever we do about water we must make sure that our actions will not undermine the free flow of water for other water users.

## **6.2.5 Eco-theological synthesis of Sirach 24:23-34**

### **6.2.5.1 Intrinsic worth of water**

Anthropocentrism is muffled in Sirach 24:23-29. The Torah is depicted as naturally flowing with worth just as the waters of the six rivers. The Earth Bible principle of purpose is also underlined as the rivers are presented to flow with wisdom at specific times. In this sense, Sirach 24:23-29 is a kind of Midrashic interpretation of Genesis 2:10-14 in which four rivers (Pishon, Gihon, Tigris and Euphrates) naturally canalise water from Eden to fertilise the whole earth.

In recalling Genesis 2:10-14, one could argue that Sirach 24:25-29 is informed by the idea of water management. The researcher agrees with Tsumura (2010:169) that the initial situation in Genesis 2 'is not a lack of water but a lack of adequate control of it'. The four rivers here in Sirach 24:25-27 (Pishon, Gihon, Tigris and Euphrates) are vehicles for the same idea of water management. Sirach claims that these rivers naturally and suitably rise and spread water all over the land like the Torah rises with wisdom to irrigate her listeners. However, currently dams prevent the free flow of water and are thus, a great issue with regard to water shortage.<sup>422</sup>

In this sense, the themes of fullness, irrigation and flooding occur in verses 25-27 as they are certainly part of the water process to make the land arable and fertile in order to supply food and drink to the earth members. The Torah, is therefore, depicted as following the same process in its role as nourisher of wisdom to its listeners. For Sirach, Torah is available all the time for those who want life. That is why during the

---

<sup>422</sup> It is currently shown that great dams provide non-pollutant energy, but their erections cause water shortages and pollution in the neighbourhoods. For more details, see Molle, F, Molinga, P P & Meizen-Dick, R 2008. Water, Politics and Development: Introducing Water Alternatives. *Water Alternatives* 1/1, 1-6.

early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Jews began to view the Bible as their most significant asset and heritage, as well as their greatest contribution to humankind (Shavit & Eran 2007:3).

The other two rivers, the Jordan and the Nile, point to essential water images for the people living in Canaan and Egypt respectively. The Nile is the source of fertility of the land and the economy of the country depends on it. The Jordan River is the best known river in Israel. The comparison of the Torah with the flooding of these two rivers meant a lot for the people who depended on these rivers to survive. Any attempt that could pollute/harm these rivers was viewed as a criminal and unforgivable act (Pr 25:26). The question may be posed: What are we doing with our rivers today?

By comparing the Torah to these rivers, the author invites his/her listeners to keep it and hold on to it tightly as it is a worthy inheritance and source of life. In their flooding time, all six rivers of Sirach 24:25-27 are metaphors for the abundance and fertility of life-giving streams of wisdom, understanding and knowledge poured out in the Torah (MacKenzie 1983:103). For Sirach, water is a symbol of life and it should be regarded as such and valued for its intrinsic worth.

### **6.2.5.2 The mystery of water**

Verses 28-29 underline the idea that there will always be something about water that is beyond human knowledge: it is deeper than the sea and greater than the abyss. The point is that the life-giving treasure of wisdom pre-existed and will remain forever just as these bodies of water were viewed as wider and perennial<sup>423</sup>. In this sense, Sirach 24:30-34 continues the water-related metaphor in terms of a garden irrigation. Sirach depicts himself as a gardener to water a garden, but later realised that the fullness of the life-giving water cannot be kept for oneself, but is a flood that requires to be shared with others.

This is an important ecological thought for contemporary attitudes towards water. The researcher will further discuss this in the implications of the study for modern readers in the conclusion of this thesis.

---

<sup>423</sup> See the researcher's analysis of Job 14:7-12 in the third chapter of this thesis.

## 6.2.6 Water and water-related phenomena in Sirach 43:13-26

### 6.2.6.1 Introduction

The passage is part of a large unit in Sirach which focuses on creation, namely 42:15-43:33. The selection of Sirach 43:13-26 for this study is based on two criteria. Firstly, it is the only passage in the unit about creation (42:15-43:33) that speaks about water. Secondly, contrary to the previous metaphorical passage (Sir 24:23-29), here water and water-related phenomena appear as a real cosmic entity. The researcher presents some literary considerations before dealing with the eco-theological significance of the text.

### 6.2.6.2 Literary considerations

#### 6.2.6.2.1 The Hebrew text of Sirach 43:13-26

The Hebrew text (the scroll from Masada containing chapters 39:27-43:30) of Sirach 43:13-26 is severely damaged from verse 20 to 30. The following image can illustrate this<sup>424</sup>:

---

<sup>424</sup> Reymond, E. The Book of Ben Sira (ספר בן סירא). Available Online From: <http://www.bensira.org/navigator.php?Manuscript=Masada&PageNum=6> (Accessed 25 June 2015). See also the book of Yadin, Y 1965. *The Ben Sira Scroll from Masada: With Introduction, Emendations and Commentary*. Jerusalem: The Israel Exploration Society, pp.32-33.

**Masada, Column VI**  
Transcription by Eric Reymond

	[ מרצף ]	כלי צבא נבלי מרום	VI:1
43:9	[ עדי משריק במרמון ]	תור שמים והוד כוכב	VI:2
43:10	ולא ישח באשמתם	בדבר אדני יעמד חק	VI:3
43:11	כי מאד נהדר הדרה	ראה קשת וברך עשיה	VI:4
43:12	[ יד אל נשתה בגבול ]	חול [ בכבודה	VI:5
43:13	ותנצח זיקות משפט	נערתו חן [ ה ברד	VI:6
43:14	ויעף עבים כעיט	למענו פרע אוצר	VI:7
43:15	ותגדע אבני ברד	גבורתו חזק ענן	VI:8
43:17a/16a	ובכחו יניף הרים	קול רעמו יחיל ארצו	VI:9
43:16b/17b	עלעול סופה וסערה	אמרתו תחרף תימן	VI:10
43:17c-d	ובארבה ישכן רדתו	כרשף יפרח שלנו	VI:11
43:18	וממטרו יתמיה לבב	תור לבנו יהג עינים	VI:12
43:19	ויצמח כסנה צצים	[ כפור כמלח ישפך ]	VI:13
43:20	וכרגב יקפיא מקור	[ צפון ישיב ]	VI:14
	[ ]	[ מד מים יקרן ]	VI:15
43:21	[ ]	[ ם מוחלף יטן ]	VI:16
43:22	[ ]	[ ]	VI:17
43:23	[ לאיים ]	[ ]	VI:18
43:24	[ לשמע אזנינו נשמתה ]	[ ]	VI:19
43:25	[ ומיין בן ] גבורת רהב	[ ]	VI:20
43:26	[ ]	[ ]	VI:21
43:27	[ ]	[ ]	VI:22
43:28	[ ]	[ ]	VI:23
43:29	[ ]	[ ]	VI:24
43:30	[ ש אל ]	[ ]	VI:25

Figure 15: The Hebrew text of Sirach 43:13-26

In this sense, the translation of Sirach 43:13-26 relies on the NRSV that reconstructed the entire Hebrew text with material from the LXX. Therefore, before proposing the English translation of the text, we should first present the reconstruction of the damaged Hebrew text of Sirach 43:13-26 by the LXX as follows:

#### 6.2.6.2.2 The LXX text of Sirach 43:13-26

<sup>13</sup> προστάγματι αὐτοῦ κατέσπευσεν χιόνα καὶ ταχύνει ἀστραπὰς κρίματος αὐτοῦ

<sup>14</sup> διὰ τοῦτο ἠνεώχθησαν θησαυροὶ καὶ ἐξέπησαν νεφέλαι ὡς πετεινά

<sup>15</sup> ἐν μεγαλείῳ αὐτοῦ ἴσχυσεν νεφέλας καὶ διεθρύβησαν λίθοι χαλάζης

<sup>16</sup> καὶ ἐν ὀπτασίᾳ αὐτοῦ σαλευθήσεται ὄρη ἐν θελήματι αὐτοῦ πνεύσεται νότος

<sup>17</sup> φωνὴ βροντῆς αὐτοῦ ὠνείδισεν γῆν καὶ καταγιγῆσεν βορέου καὶ συστροφὴ πνεύματος

<sup>18</sup> ὡς πετεινὰ καθιπτάμενα πάσσει χιόνα καὶ ὡς ἀκρὶς καταλύουσα ἢ κατάβασις αὐτῆς κάλλος λευκότητος αὐτῆς ἐκθαυμάσει ὀφθαλμός καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ ὑετοῦ αὐτῆς ἐκστήσεται καρδία <sup>19</sup> καὶ πάχνην ὡς ἄλλα ἐπὶ γῆς χέει καὶ παγεῖσα γίνεται σκολόπων ἄκρα

<sup>20</sup> ψυχρὸς ἄνεμος βορέης πνεύσει καὶ παγήσεται κρύσταλλος ἐφ' ὕδατος ἐπὶ πᾶσαν συναγωγὴν ὕδατος καταλύσει καὶ ὡς θώρακα ἐνδύσεται τὸ ὕδωρ

<sup>21</sup> καταφάγεται ὄρη καὶ ἔρημον ἐκκαύσει καὶ ἀποσβέσει χλόην ὡς πῦρ

<sup>22</sup> ἴασις πάντων κατὰ σπουδὴν ὁμίχλη δρόσος ἀπαντῶσα ἀπὸ καύσωνος ἰλαρώσει

<sup>23</sup> λογισμῶ αὐτοῦ ἐκόπασεν ἄβυσσον καὶ ἐφύτευσεν ἐν αὐτῇ νήσους

<sup>24</sup> οἱ πλείοντες τὴν θάλασσαν διηγούνται τὸν κίνδυνον αὐτῆς καὶ ἀκοαῖς ὠτίων ἡμῶν θαυμάζομεν

<sup>25</sup> καὶ ἐκεῖ τὰ παράδοξα καὶ θαυμάσια ἔργα ποικιλία παντὸς ζώου κτίσις κητῶν

<sup>26</sup> δι' αὐτὸν εὐοδοῖ ἄγγελος αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐν λόγῳ αὐτοῦ σύγκειται τὰ πάντα

### 6.2.6.2.3 Translation

This chapter opted for the NRSV. In fact, the NRSV has thoroughly reconstructed the verses that are lacking or damaged in the Hebrew version of Sirach (the scroll from Masada that contains chapters 39:27-43:30) with the variants in LXX and other textual witnesses as follows:

<sup>13</sup> By his command he sends the driving snow,  
and speeds the lightnings of his judgment.

<sup>14</sup> Therefore the storehouses are opened,  
and the clouds fly out like birds.

<sup>15</sup> In his majesty he gives the clouds their strength,  
and the hailstones are broken in pieces.

- <sup>16</sup> When he appears, the mountains shake.  
     At his will the south wind blows;
- <sup>17</sup> The voice of his thunder rebukes the earth;  
     so do the storm from the north and the whirlwind.  
     He scatters the snow like birds flying, down,  
     and its descent is like locusts alighting.
- <sup>18</sup> The eye is dazzled by the beauty of its whiteness,  
     and the mind is amazed as it falls.
- <sup>19</sup> He pours frost over the earth like salt,  
     and icicles form like pointed thorns.
- <sup>20</sup> The cold north wind blows,  
     and ice freezes on the water;  
     it settles on every pool of water,  
     and the water puts it on like a breastplate.
- <sup>21</sup> He consumes the mountains and burns up the wilderness,  
     and withers the tender grass like fire.
- <sup>22</sup> A mist quickly heals all things;  
     the falling dew gives refreshment from the heat.
- <sup>23</sup> By his plan he stilled the deep  
     and planted islands in it.
- <sup>24</sup> Those who sail the sea tell of its dangers,  
     and we marvel at what we hear.
- <sup>25</sup> In it are strange and marvelous creatures,  
     all kinds of living things, and huge sea-monsters.
- <sup>26</sup> Because of him each of his messengers succeeds,  
     and by his word all things hold together.

#### **6.2.6.2.4 Position of Sirach 43:13-26 in Sirach 42:15-43:33**

Sirach 42:15-43:33 is an architectural poem concerning God's glory in creation. This passage is divided into five sections, each focussing on an aspect of God's creation (Harrington 2005:59). The first section is an introductory poem praising God's work as 'full of his glory' that reflects his presence and purpose in creation (Sir 42:15-25). The next poem concerns God's glory reflected in the planets: the sun, the stars, the

rainbows, and particularly the moon's role to set signs for days and seasons (Sir 43:1-12).

Sirach 43:13-26, is the centre of the poem (Newsom 2003:229) highlighting God's power in employing water-related phenomena and weather phenomena: storm, cloud, dew, snow and frost for good or for harm. The imagery is both life-giving and life-threatening, but the assumption is that everything in creation fulfils God's purpose (see Job 37:12). Thus, the fourth section declares that God is 'the all' (43:27-31) before the fifth acknowledges the limits of human understanding (43:32-33) just as in Sirach 24:23-29.

The poem can be understood not merely as a display of wisdom, but also an arena of spiritual discipline that cultivates a sense of the presence of God through the contemplation of God's works (Newsom 2003:224). The works of God are desirable and sparkling (Sir 42:22). This sense of delight and joy deriving from contemplation is furthered in the depiction of water-related phenomena and weather phenomena in Sirach 43:13-26.

The order of creation, the complex complementarity it exhibits, and its purposiveness are all part of what inspires the sense of beauty and delight (43:26). In this sense, Migliore suggested that it might be appropriate to think of creation less as God's 'work' and more as the 'play' of God (1991:93).

#### **6.2.6.2.5 Literary structure of Sirach 43:13-26**

After depicting the wonders of the stars and the rainbow in verses 1-12, Sirach turns to various water-related phenomena in verses 13-26, which is the text of the present investigation. Verses 13-17b deal with warm weather as evidence of God's power, while verses 17c-20 describe cold weather bringing forth snow and ice. Verses 21-22 depict rainstorms and life-giving dew, while verses 23-26 deal with the waters of chaos: the deep and the sea-monsters.

The depiction of cosmological elements – the sky, sun, moon and rainbow (Sir 43:1-12) – are followed by water and water-related phenomena – rainclouds, hail, wind,

snow, frost, ice, rain and dew (Sir 43:13-22) – before dealing with the marvels of the deep (Sir 43:23-26). Newsom expressed the opinion that the poem concludes with the deep (Sir 43:25) as the topic of water is the leading character in the poem going from various forms of moisture falling upon the earth to the expanse of water in the sea (2003:224).

#### **6.2.6.2.6 Sirach 43:13-26 and Psalm 104**

Both Sirach 43:13-26 and Psalm 104 display a list of cosmic phenomena. What is striking in Sirach, however, is not the list itself, but the way in which it is developed. Psalm 104 makes use of a similar cosmological list, but it briefly depicts each element of creation. The merit of Sirach's poem is the lengthy, ecologically observed and brilliant portrayal of each natural phenomenon.

With regard to water-related phenomena, for instance, neither Job 38 nor Psalm 104 give a detailed depiction of the winter storm and its effects. Furthermore, Sirach tries to express the delight of the movement of snow in terms of flying like birds and settling like swarms of locusts denoting the purposefulness of this water-related phenomenon. The fine colour of frost is likened to salt poured out while the crystalline shapes it forms are equated to blossoms. Ice on ponds/pools is seen as a kind of breastplate. In an apparent delight in the description itself, Sirach responds with poetic richness and variety that contribute to highlight the beauty of the universe (Crenshaw 1997:834).

Unlike Job 37:17, which highlights the invincible life-threatening power of the sun, Ben Sira balances the image by concluding with a reference to the dripping clouds and dew restoring the parched mountains (Sir 43:22). Thus, one of the distinctive features of Sirach 43:13-26 is its detailed description of specific traits of water-related natural phenomena; attention that is lacking in Psalm 104 and even Job 38.

### 6.2.6.3 Significance of water in Sirach 43:13-26

#### 6.2.6.3.1 Destructive water and water-related phenomena (vv.13-17b)

The thunderstorm with its acolytes, namely lightning, winds, rain clouds and hail are depicted as having life-threatening potential to execute God's judgement of the world. The life-giving potential of water is also discerned in God's forceful unleashing of the 'storehouse of the clouds' that soar like vultures (*πετεινά* from the Hebrew word עֵיט birds of prey) which are naturally bloodthirsty birds (v. 14b). Contrary to Job 38:22 where the storehouse contains the snow (life-giving water) and hailstones (life-threatening water), here the storehouse is a depot of life-threatening hailstones only.

In Qoheleth 11:3 it is stated that when the clouds (עָבִים) are full (יִמְלֵא), they empty rain (יִשְׁקֵט) on the earth. In other words, עָבִים is naturally the carrier of life-giving rainwater that is sent down to fertilise the earth. However, in Sirach 43:15, God strengthens (*ίσχύω* from the Hebrew קָוַץ 'make hard') the clouds (*νέφέλη* or עָבִים in Hebrew) not to produce life-giving rainwater (as in Job 36:27 and Qoheleth 1:3), but shear off life-threatening hailstones. The idea is that the waters of the clouds are frozen and converted into a block of ice in the sky to be sent to earth as destructive hailstones.<sup>425</sup>

Water-related phenomena in this section are seen as highly life-threatening entities capable of sending woe on earth and making it writhe (43:16a/17a). God's mighty power makes the south wind blow as well as the whirlwind, hurricane and storm wind (43:17b). In various prophetic texts, these winds accompanied rainstorms and occurred in the context of God's anger and judgment.<sup>426</sup> Naturally, rainstorms alternated with south desert winds and tempests resulting in misfortunes of every kind in Israel (Hillel 2006:31). The water-related phenomena are here depicted with life-threatening potential.

<sup>425</sup> For more details about the life-threatening aspects of the hailstones, see our analysis of Job 36 and 38 within the third chapter of this thesis.

<sup>426</sup> Isaiah 29:6; 40:24; 41:16; Jeremiah 23:19; 30:33; Ezekiel 13:11.

### 6.2.6.3.2 Cool water and water-related phenomena, verses 17c-20

In contrast to the life-threatening water-related phenomena in verses 13-17b, which typify God's anger, God's snow is compared to flying birds (43:17c) and swarms of locusts (17d). The comparison is not so much on the essence of the flying creatures (especially the locusts), but on their beauty and orderly settling (see Pr 30:27). Therefore, Sirach 43:18 is impressed by the whiteness and wonders of the snow. Likewise, God pours frost out like salt; beautifully shining like blossoms on the thorns (v19). This is an interesting water imagery suggesting both threat and beauty.

All water-related phenomena depicted here typify beauty and delight. The Bible does have many ambiguities as to the role of frost. Some texts present frost as a life-threatening water-related phenomenon. Zechariah 14:6, for instance, portrays the day of the Lord as lacking the threat of frost weather<sup>427</sup> while Psalm 78:47 views frost as lethal, capable of destroying a sycamore. Other texts focus on the fragility of frost (Sir 3:15; Wis 5:14 & 16:29), while a few texts present it simply as God's messenger (Ps 148:8; Job 38:29).

However, other texts view frost as beautiful and lovely. In Exodus 16:14, when the dew evaporated, the Israelites saw a flaky substance which they deemed fine as frost on the ground. Sirach 43:19a belongs to this category of texts given the idea of delight and shining in verse 19b. Although Sirach is only interested in the shining of the frost, the latter is a natural watering of wild plants, especially the thorn bush (v. 19b) that uniquely depends on the life-giving water of the rain, dew, frost and snow.

The snow is for Sirach a positive element of creation. Just as frost, snow is a symbol of purity and freshness in the Bible. Psalm 51:7 compares the whiteness of the snow to the purity of heart. In Jeremiah 18:14, the permanence of the snow that brings freshness to Lebanon is contrasted with Israel abandoning YHWH who is the source of living water. In Wisdom of Solomon 16:16-29, manna is metaphorically described as snow and ice, and called 'food of angels' that resists the life-threatening fire.

---

<sup>427</sup> See also Jeremiah 36:30

It seems, thus, that the idea of snow flying like birds and settling down like swarms of locusts (Sir 43:17cd) implies the natural irrigation of the ground by the snow. Settling like swarms of locusts implies ‘a natural purpose’. Proverbs 30:27 depicts locusts as well-ordered fauna that purposefully settle into rank. Naturally, the locust outbreaks are linked with plagues and afflictions because locusts consume all the vegetation of the invaded land (see Joel 1:1-4). The distribution of the desert locust can cover a total area of 20 million square kilometres – 20 per cent of the earth’s surface (Simkins 1991:108).

It seems that Sirach 43:17d is less interested in theme of plague, and more in the beauty of the outbreaks of the locusts covering the earth like the refreshing snow. Probably Sirach 43:17d has the same idea as Isaiah 55:10 that portrays snow and rain as invading the earth from the sky and not returning (through evaporation) until they have fertilised the earth:

<sup>10</sup>For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there until they have watered the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, <sup>11</sup>so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it (Isaiah 55:10-11, NRSV).

Finally, Ben Sira delights in the blowing of the cold north wind (v. 20). It blows and freezes the ponds solid and clothes each pool with a breastplate. Sirach delights in the colourful sight of a frozen pond (v.20b). Previously in the analysis of Proverbs 25:23-26, the researcher argued that the cold north wind was a sign of rainless weather which was suitable for the ship-captains as it brought good visibility in the sky (Grave 1980:228). For the sea-voyagers, the north wind was, thus, welcome as life-giving weather. Here, Sirach 43:20 is impressed with the effect of the wind on the pool.

#### **6.2.6.3.3 The life-giving quality of dew (verses 21-22)**

Sirach then turns to the life-giving and restorative quality of dew. The dipping clouds and dew have the potential to bring to life the withering, burnt up and dried mountains (v.21). Like the rain during the rainfall regime in Palestine (October-November), dew was an important source of moisture during the dry season in Palestine (Tsumura

2010:173). Dew was thus considered as a divine blessing<sup>428</sup> and its lack as a curse.<sup>429</sup> The mention of dew restoring the withering mountains implies that Sirach 43:22 is aware of the fact that dew was a very significant source of moisture during the dry season in Palestine.<sup>430</sup>

What is interesting in Sirach and elsewhere in the Bible is that both rain and dew are valuable gifts from God. Therefore, in Genesis 27:28 the expression ‘dew of heaven’ occurs in relationship with ‘fatness of the earth’ in order to underline the life-giving potential of this water-related phenomenon that is a blessing for Jacob.<sup>431</sup> In Daniel 4:25, however, Nebuchadnezzar is cursed to live outside the human sphere and to bath in the ‘dew of the sky’ with wild animals. This text does not deny the life-giving potential of dew, but underlines the shame of a king eating wild grass that is yet to be nurtured by the dew of the sky.

#### **6.2.6.3.4 The abyss and sea under control (verses 23-26)**

The most interesting part of the poem is the depiction of the sea, the deep and the sea-monsters (רַהַב) in verses 23-26. In Job 26:12 and Psalm 89:9-10, Rahab is presented in parallel to the sea (יָם) which is, in turn, parallel to the deep (תְּהוֹמוֹת) in Job 28:14 and 38:16. Rahab, the sea and the deep denote chaos, antithesis of the created order in biblical traditions as depicted in Genesis 1:2; Job 40-41; Isaiah 51:9-10; Ezekiel 27:1 (Crenshaw 1997:834). Like Job 38:8-11, Sirach 43:25 presents the sea and the deep with life-threatening potential which is kept in check by God.

The phrase ‘those who go to the sea’ also occurs in Psalm 107:23 and relates to the extent and life-threatening aspects of the deep. The poem is informed by the daily livelihood of the Canaanite coastal and island people. The sea and seafaring were familiar to the people of Israel as their land runs from sea to sea – from the Great Sea (Mediterranean) in the west to the Lower Sea in the south. The Israelites could

<sup>428</sup> See Genesis 27:28; Deuteronomy 33:28; Job 29:9; Psalm 133:3; Proverbs 19:12; Hosea 14:6.

<sup>429</sup> See Genesis 27:39; 1 Samuel 17:1

<sup>430</sup> For more details about the ecological significance of dew, see our analysis of Job 38:28 in the third chapter of this thesis.

<sup>431</sup> For Genesis 27:39, life is very difficult away from dew of heaven.

experience foreign ships loading or unloading their cargoes, and enquiring about the maritime life.

The Israelites, by experience, observation or hearsay, knew of the vastness of the sea, its depths<sup>432</sup>, its wildness and remoteness, and often strange teeming creatures therein, including the mighty ones<sup>433</sup> (Berlyn 2009:73). In this pre-modern world, the Israelites named the latter sea monsters (Rahab, Leviathan, Taninin and Yam<sup>434</sup>) that were capable of lifting and lowering the waters as well as causing violent waves and winds. Therefore, when stilled, these deities of seas and rivers could provide calm seas, gentle winds and a safe passage. Otherwise, they could sweep the ship astray, smash it or even swallow it (Hillel 2006:33).

For Sirach, God's plan/word (λογισμός) keeps both the mighty waters and the sea monsters in check. God places the islands in the deep and fills its cosmic waters with a variety of living beings, including the sea monsters (v.25). As in Psalm 104, these water-related phenomena are not a threat to creation, but play a delightful role in creation. This refers to the notion that 'each element of creation functions according to its purpose' (Perdue 2007:256). The sea and Rahab, which in ancient myths typified chaos (cf. Ps 74:13-14) are portrayed as part of Yahweh's design (Gandiya 2012:116).

In Sirach 43, nothing in the sea or the sea itself can get out of the hand of God to turn creation into primeval chaos (Skehan & Di Lella 1987: 495). For Sirach 43:25, the sea is benign, teeming with God's countless creatures, stupendous, amazing, and has all kinds of life, including Rahab that, as in Psalm 104:25-26, were created not to be a threat but to play in the deep. However, Sirach goes beyond Psalm 104 by saying that each of the sea creatures, including Rahab, is called a 'messenger' (ἄγγελος) created to fulfil a particular role in creation (vv.25-26).

---

<sup>432</sup> See Ezekiel 28:2; Jonah 2:4

<sup>433</sup> See Genesis 1:20-21

<sup>434</sup> Rahab has come to be a generic term for arrogance and ineffectual noise and tumult (Ps 87:4; Is 30:7; 51:9-11; Job 26:11-14). It has nothing to do with Rahab of Jericho, from which it differs in spelling and gender. Here it is written רַהַב (pride) whereas in Joshua 6:17 it is רַחַב (wide or broad). Leviathan can be compared to the Hydra and Typhon of the Hellenistic mythology, a creature to be challenged in heroic combat. Taninin is rendered by modern translators as the generic monster while in modern Hebrew Taninin is used for crocodilians. However, in Lamentations 4:3, Taninin is a mammal capable of breastfeeding her young. Yam originally meant the mythical Yamm rather than the waters themselves, especially in the Canaanite myths (see Berlyn 2009:74-75 & 79).

#### 6.2.6.4 Eco-theological synthesis

In highlighting the sense of delight and beauty of water-related phenomena, Sirach affirms the intrinsic worth of nature suggesting wonders. Sirach 43:13-26 wants to show that even familiar water-related phenomena such as snow, ice, frost or dew when perceived as objects of wonder, 'are temporarily estranged, made new and surprising' (Newsom 2003:226). Sirach sees a world that has a place for humans, but is not designed primarily for their benefit. In Sirach 43:13-26, it is not a matter of 'utilitarianism', but of contemplating water-related phenomena for their own value.

Sirach 43:13-26 offers a rich, balanced reflection on elements of nature. The life-threatening heat of the sun is balanced by the healing power of the life-giving water of the dripping clouds and dew (vv.21-22). The threat of storm and hail is balanced by the wonders of the purposeful settling of snow and the benign view of the sea teeming with God's countless amazing creatures (vv. 13-20 & 23-26). Indubitably, the depiction of water-related phenomena in the poem of Sirach 43:13-26 is expressing 'the full depth and intricacy of the living world' (Wilson 2006:55).

As expressed in Psalm 104, chaotic waters are under God's control and have been ordered for life-serving purposes (vv.25-26). Still, Sirach is aware that these forces, while tamed, have not been abolished and they are a potential danger to the created order, especially for the sea-voyagers (v.24). However, for those disposed to see nothing but chaos in the world and the deeps, Sirach 43:13-26 invites them to look again with a wide-angle lens. When we look at the world through the eyes of Sirach 43:13-26, then chaos, in comparison to the goodness of the whole picture of the created order, is associated with wonders and miracles (McCann 2012:68).

In a non-utilitarian and non-anthropocentric perspective on nature, Sirach understood that even the deep and the sea-monsters that were symbols of threat against the created order are now God's messengers (*αγγελός*) (v. 26). All the listed cosmic elements of nature in Sirach 43:13-26 are the instruments of God's power to rule over the earth to punish and establish order on earth (Perdue 2007:256). Sirach is full of joy and delight in contemplating the wonders of these watery images.

The fact that Sirach looks at the cosmological beings in joy and praise has profound theological implications. Although the poem is not a theodicy in any rational sense of the word, it tries to avail an experience of the goodness of creation and of the God who is known through it (Newsom 2003:228). Sirach suggests that in a careful non-utilitarian contemplation of the beings of creation, including water, one can grasp the glory of their Creator. In other words, every experience of nature is also an experience of God (McCann 2012:68).

### **6.3 Water and water-related phenomena in Wisdom 11:2-14**

#### **6.3.1 Introduction**

The book of Wisdom of Solomon contains many texts on creation, including water and water-related phenomena (see Appendix A). This section involves an ecological interpretation of Wisdom 11:2-14 depicting water as a substance that has both life-giving and life-threatening potential.

Some of the reasons that motivated the researcher's selection of Wisdom 11:2-14 for analysis include the following. Firstly, the text features amongst the sample of the literature review in the second chapter of this thesis. Secondly, Wisdom 11:2-14 is one of the passages in the entire Bible that most clearly portrays water as potentially life-giving and life-threatening. Thirdly, many of the other texts in the book of Wisdom have a narrow focus underlining only a single aspect. This, for example, is the case with Wisdom 5:17-23 which focuses on the use of water to punish. Finally, as far as the researcher knows, no previous eco-theological study has been done on water and water-related phenomena in Wisdom 11:2-14.

The analysis of this text draws on the principle of intertextuality with other books of the Bible and the Earth Bible's principles of intrinsic worth and purpose. Special attention is given to the exodus traditions as these are at the background of Wisdom 11:2-19:22. Given that the book of Wisdom is contemporary to the writings of Philo of Alexandria, some of Philo's quotations are taken into account in the analysis of texts. The retrieval of ecological wisdom of water in these texts then follows.

## 6.3.2 Introduction to the book of Wisdom

### 6.3.2.1 The context and date of the book

The book is named after Solomon by inference from the unnamed author presenting himself as the ancient Israelite ruler (Wis 7:5; 8:21; 9:7-8). However, based on his fine knowledge of the Jewish history and Hellenistic culture, the author of the book was a rhetorician and teacher who obtained good education in both Greek and Jewish schools in Alexandria (Perdue 2007:286). It is believed that this Jewish sage lived and wrote the book in Alexandria during the early Roman period (30 BCE-40 CE) when many philosophies and religions were loosely bound together by Greek culture.<sup>435</sup>

The context for the composition of the book includes the following: Firstly, the tension between the Jews and Greeks in Alexandria under Roman rule is critical. In this sense, the book has many concerns for justice. Secondly, there was the attraction of Hellenistic culture, and especially Greek citizenship that offered full rights in all political, economic and cultural entities (Perdue 2007:286). This led some Jews to abandon their faith or to accommodate their tradition with Hellenistic culture and religion. Finally, the disapproval of the Greek state religion centred on the Olympian gods and the military Roman imperial control. Wisdom, the *Letter of Aristeas* and Philo rhetorically criticise Greek myths, polytheism and the adoration of beauty (Perdue 2007:286).

In a context of religious and social disintegration, Wisdom and many philosophical schools adopted a number of rhetorical features to teach their adherents how to live in the Hellenistic context. The aim of the book is to offer hope and consolation to the Alexandrian Jewish community who experience severe sorrow during the reign of Gaius Caligula (37-41CE) (Cheon 1997:13). Creation, including water, is used in this regard.

---

<sup>435</sup> See Kolarcik, M 1997. The Book of Wisdom, in Keck, L E (ed), *The New Interpreter's Bible (NIB): General Articles and Introduction, Commentary and Reflections for Each Book of the Bible including the Apocryphal/Deutero-canonical Books*. Vol.5, 435-600. Nashville: Abingdon Press, see page 439.

### 6.3.2.2 The literary structure of the book

From 1945, the literary shape of the Wisdom of Solomon was a matter of debate; however, discussion of the debates is not within the scope of this thesis.<sup>436</sup> A large number of biblical scholars have proposed that the book is structured in two main parts.<sup>437</sup> While the first part (1:1-11:1)<sup>438</sup> depicts the praise of Wisdom, the second presents God's care during the Exodus (11:2-19:22).

This literary shape of the book presents a coherent message containing a certain eco-theological perspective. While the first part shows Wisdom as the principle of order from Adam and throughout history (see Wis 10:1-21), the second part illustrates how, in wisdom, various cosmic domains act by blessing the Israelites and punishing the Egyptians during the exodus story. In other words, the book as a whole regards creation as the matrix within which both history and salvation can be understood (Collins 1977:128). Water and water-related phenomena are presented in the book as agents of hope for the Israelites and woe for the enemies of Israel (Wis 11:2-14). This was a great message of hope and comfort to the Jews who were facing great persecution during Gaius Caligula (37-41CE) (Cheon 1997:13).

The Jewish sage wrote his book in Greek. Reese pointed out 240 rhetorical features supporting Greek as the original language of the book (1970:26). In this sense, the exegesis makes use of the LXX for the analysis of the text. Still, the interpretation of certain Greek words recalls the Hebrew as the writer was Jewish in spirit: 'he is not an advanced Alexandrian like Philo, but an orthodox Jew' (Cregg 1909:xiv).

---

<sup>436</sup> Concerning the history of scholarship on the structure of the book of Wisdom of Solomon, see Kolarcik, M 1991. *The Ambiguity of Death in the Book of Wisdom 1-6: A Study of Literary Structure and Interpretation*. Rome: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, pp.1-28; see also Cheon, S 1997. *The Exodus Story in the Wisdom of Solomon: A Study in Biblical Interpretation*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press. (JSPSSup 23), p.12 note 8.

<sup>437</sup> See Winston, D 1979. *The Book of Wisdom of Solomon*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday, pp. 4-12; Cheon, S 1997. *The Exodus Story in the Wisdom of Solomon: A Study in Biblical Interpretation*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press. (JSPSSup 23), p. 13.

<sup>438</sup> In his analysis of the text and structure of the book of Wisdom, Skehan (1945:2) comments that it cannot be an accident that the main break in the twofold structure of the book comes in Wisdom 11:1, and that Wisdom 1:1-11:1 contain 560 stichoi, while Wisdom 11:2-19:22 contain 561. For him, there is an intentional choice of the number of stichoi that should be 560 in each half.

### 6.3.2.3 Creation in the book of Wisdom

The worldview of the Wisdom of Solomon is based on the belief that the human condition and destiny are all bound up with the structure of the universe (Collins 1977:128). Previously, it was believed in the Ancient Near East that the meaning of life is rooted in an inclusive cosmic order in which humans, society and gods participate (Cross 1973:112-114). This idea is present in all cosmogonies from Sumer to Egypt via Babylonia as well as the priestly creation account and the exodus event in the Pentateuch.

However, at the time of the Wisdom of Solomon, this conception was modified by the idea that nature is an ‘autonomous realm’ (Loew 1967:217). In this sense, Wisdom 5:19-23 observes that creation itself joins God in the battle against the wicked. In other words, creation is not instrumental as in the book of Job 37-38, but acts autonomously in accordance with certain laws of nature in partnership with God to protect Israel:

<sup>19</sup>He will take holiness as an invincible shield, <sup>20</sup>and sharpen stern wrath for a sword, and creation will join with him to fight against his frenzied foes. <sup>21</sup> Shafts of lightning will fly with true aim, and will leap from the clouds to the target, as from a well-drawn bow, <sup>22</sup>and hailstones full of wrath will be hurled as from a catapult; the water of the sea will rage against them, and rivers will relentlessly overwhelm them; <sup>23</sup>a mighty wind will rise against them, and like a tempest it will winnow them away. Lawlessness will lay waste the whole earth, and evildoing will overturn the thrones of rulers (Wisdom 5:19-23, NRSV).

Therefore, despite his statement that ‘all things are full of good’, the Greek thinker Thales spoke of water, not *Oceanus* or *Poseidos*, as the first principle of the cosmos (Collins 1977:130). The personified Wisdom in Proverbs 1-9 represents a kind of transitional stage between myth (Genesis & Exodus) and Logic (Wisdom books).<sup>439</sup> The *Ma’at* in Egypt and *הַכֶּמֶל* in Israel, for instance, both point to an underlying

---

<sup>439</sup> See Perdue’s substantial analysis of Wisdom and Theology in Proverbs 1-9, in Perdue, L G 2007. *Wisdom Literature: A Theological History*. London/Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, p. 48.

conception of an impersonal cosmic order that paves the way for the worldview of the book of Wisdom.<sup>440</sup>

The Wisdom of Solomon continues the Hebrew wisdom tradition, but its conception of the cosmic character is more scientific. In Wisdom, the physical world is given an autonomy that never appears in the earlier books. Nature fights for the righteous and engulfs the wicked (Wis 11:2-14 and 19:1-9; see also Wis 15:7 and 16:24). This idea appears also in other Old Testament texts, but is branded as miraculous (Jg 5:20; Jos 10:12). Goodrick (1913:251) stated that God's interventions or miracles are not viewed by Wisdom as a derangement of the structures of cosmos, but a re-arrangement of its harmony. In Wisdom, even miracles conform to regular natural laws, as shown in the depiction of water in Wisdom 11:2-14 and 19:1-9.

### 6.3.3 Literary analysis of Wisdom 11:2-14

#### 6.3.3.1 Midrash of the exodus story in Wisdom 11:2-19:22

A Midrash is a Jewish interpretative method that consists of taking a biblical tradition that happened in one context and making it relevant in a new one (Shavit & Eran 2007:4). In Wisdom 11:2-19:22, which is the immediate literary context of Wisdom 11:2-14, the Jewish rhetorician makes use of a Midrashic strategy consisting of five *syncries* contrasting the plight of the Israelites with that of the Egyptians (Wright 1967:168-169; Perdue 2007:295)<sup>441</sup>.

In agreement with Perdue (2007:295), it should be observed that Wisdom 11:2-5 is an introductory narrative of the theme of the *syncries*. The first *syncriesis* contrasts life-giving water from the rock with the plague of the Nile (Wis 11:6-14). The second *syncriesis* contrasts quails for the Israelites with the plague of little animals for

---

<sup>440</sup> Schmid further explains this idea showing that creation/nature in Israel is mostly interpreted in terms of the autonomous order, which is similar to the Egyptian *Ma'at* referring to justice and world order built by God into the structures of the universe. Therefore, wherever humans practise righteousness in the socio-political spheres, that act promotes the proper integration of social and cosmic orders. In the Old Testament, justice, politics and nature are interrelated as part of one comprehensive creation order; the unrighteousness of human beings results in adverse consequences against the entire creation (Schmid 1984:106).

<sup>441</sup> For a different view on the *syncries* of Wisdom 11-19, see Reese, J M 1965. Plan and Structure in the Book of Wisdom. *CBQ* 27/4, 391-399 [see pp.398-99]; Winston, D 1979. *The Book of Wisdom of Solomon*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday, pp. 10-11.

Egyptians (Wis 11:15-16:15). Thereafter, the third *syncretis* contrasts the rain of manna with the plague of storms (Wis 16:15-29) while the fourth contrasts the plague of darkness to the pillar of fire (Wis 17:1-18:4) before the fifth *syncretis* focuses on the tenth plague and the exodus (Wis 18:5-19:22). Wisdom 13:1-15:19 is a digression criticising pagan religions.<sup>442</sup>

A closer look at these *syncretises* reveals noteworthy insights for the present eco-theological investigation. The researcher notes that elements of nature, including water, act both in Israel's and Egypt's histories as life-giving and life-threatening respectively. It is as if the principle of life and death is inherent in the structures of the universe. In Wisdom 11:2-14 and 19:1-9, for instance, the same substance of water is depicted as being used to cause life and death.

Contrary to the military view of the book of Exodus, the Midrashic approach of the book of Wisdom of Solomon, especially in Wisdom 19:6, talks about the refashioning of nature. As shown later, the philosophical principle of interchangeability<sup>443</sup> has influenced the thought of Wisdom 11:2-19:22. Water was fashioned afresh to provide life-giving water to heal the cruel thirst of the Israelites (Wis 11:4), but it was also re-fashioned into a plague against the Egyptians (Wis 11:6-14 & 19:1-9). In other words:

The very sequence of events in his description follows the pattern of the creation narrative rather than the account of the liberation of the people as found in the book of Exodus. In this way, the book of Wisdom makes a unique contribution to biblical creation theology. Instead of moving from salvation to creation – as traditional Old Testament theology claims is the fundamental focus of the Bible – the wisdom of Solomon begins with creation and moves to salvation (Bergant 2000:144).

Therefore, the main question is whether the activity of creation in Wisdom 11:2-19:22, particularly that of the water-related phenomena in Wisdom 11:2-14 and 19:1-

---

<sup>442</sup> Reese earlier proposes seven *syncretises* instead of five. However, a close look at his arrangement shows that Reese divided some sections into two. For instance, Reese sliced the section about the plague of animals versus the blessing of quails (Wis 11:15-16:15) into two parts: one concerns the plight of strange animals (16:1-4) and the other (16:5-15) the poisonous animals. For more details, see Reese, J M 1965. Plan and Structure in the Book of Wisdom. *CBQ* 27/4, 391-399 [see pp. 398-99].

<sup>443</sup> According to this Greek principle, the elements of nature interchange and turn into one another completely. The mystery arises by alteration out of the same thing, becoming different at different times, and returning back to the same thing (see Kahn, C 1960. *Anaximander and the Origins of Greek Cosmology*. New York: Colombia University Press, pp.119-65).

9, determines the intrinsic worth of water that gives life and poses a threat, or if they are merely instruments with which to bless or punish humans (that is, a utilitarian view of nature). This question guides the analysis of Wisdom 11:2-14 and 19:1-9.

### 6.3.3.2 The LXX text of Wisdom 11:2-14

Scholars are not in unanimity as to the limits of the first *syncrisis*. Debates started with Reese (1965:392) who expressed the opinion that Wisdom 11:1-14 should be considered as a literary unit reading verse 1 as ‘their works prospered at the holy prophet’s hand’ instead of ‘Wisdom prospered their works by the hand of a holy prophet’. This view was adopted by Winston (1979:226) and reiterated by Cheon (1997:30). However, verse 1 would be a dissonant introduction to Wisdom 11-19 but would fit as a summary of the previous section (Wis 1:1-11:1).

Currently, the limits of the first *syncrisis* are seen either in Wisdom 11:2-14 with the inclusion being ἐδίψησαν (be thirsty) (v.4) and διψήσαντες (be thirsty) (v.14)<sup>444</sup> or in Wisdom 11:6-14 with the inclusion being δίψους (thirst) (v.8) and διψήσαντες (be thirsty) (v.14).<sup>445</sup> The latter position is preferred in this thesis as Wisdom 11:2-4 seems to be part not of a single *syncrisis*, but stands as an introduction to the theme of Wisdom 11:5 and together with Wisdom 11:5 introduces Wisdom 11:2-19:22 (Perdue 2007:295).

However, for the purpose of this study, the introductory narrative (verses 2-5) will be read together with the first *syncrisis* (verses 6-14) given the direct link between these two units. In other words, one cannot understand the first *syncrisis* if one ignores verses 2-5. That is why the literary unit of the study will be Wisdom 11:2-14 instead of Wisdom 11:6-14.

The LXX text of Wisdom 11:2-14 can be presented as follows:

<sup>2</sup> διώδουσσαν ἔρημον ἀοίκητον καὶ ἐν ἀβάτοις ἔπηξαν σκηνάς

<sup>3</sup> ἀντέστησαν πολεμίους καὶ ἐχθροὺς ἠμύναντο

<sup>444</sup> This is the position maintained in Reese, J M 1965. Plan and Structure in the Book of Wisdom. *CBQ* 27/4, 391-399 [see pp. 397-98].

<sup>445</sup> See Wright, A G 1967. The Structure of the Book of Wisdom. *Biblica* 48/2, 165-184 [see pp. 177].

- <sup>4</sup> ἐδίψησαν καὶ ἐπεκαλέσαντό σε καὶ ἐδόθη αὐτοῖς ἐκ πέτρας ἀκροτόμου ὕδωρ καὶ ἴαμα δίψης ἐκ λίθου σκληροῦ
- <sup>5</sup> δι' ὧν γὰρ ἐκολάσθησαν οἱ ἐχθροὶ αὐτῶν διὰ τούτων αὐτοὶ ἀποροῦντες εὐεργετήθησαν
- <sup>6</sup> ἀντὶ μὲν πηγῆς ἀενάου ποταμοῦ αἷματι λυθρώδει ταραχθέντος
- <sup>7</sup> εἰς ἔλεγχον νηπιοκτόνου διατάγματος ἔδωκας αὐτοῖς δαψιλῆς ὕδωρ ἀνελπίστως
- <sup>8</sup> δεῖξας διὰ τοῦ τότε δίψους πῶς τοὺς ὑπεναντίους ἐκόλασας
- <sup>9</sup> ὅτε γὰρ ἐπειράσθησαν καίπερ ἐν ἐλέει παιδευόμενοι ἔγνωσαν πῶς μετ' ὀργῆς κρινόμενοι ἀσεβεῖς ἐβασανίζοντο
- <sup>10</sup> τούτους μὲν γὰρ ὡς πατὴρ νοθετῶν ἐδοκίμασας ἐκείνους δὲ ὡς ἀπότομος βασιλεὺς καταδικάζων ἐξήτασας
- <sup>11</sup> καὶ ἀπόντες δὲ καὶ παρόντες ὁμοίως ἐτρύχοντο<sup>446</sup>
- <sup>12</sup> διπλῆ γὰρ αὐτοῦς ἔλαβεν λύπη καὶ στεναγμὸς μνημῶν τῶν παρελθόντων
- <sup>13</sup> ὅτε γὰρ ἤκουσαν διὰ τῶν ἰδίων κολάσεων εὐεργετημένους αὐτοῦς ἤσθοντο τοῦ κυρίου
- <sup>14</sup> ὃν γὰρ ἐν ἐκθέσει πάλαι ριφέντα ἀπεῖπον χλευάζοντες ἐπὶ τέλει τῶν ἐκβάσεων ἐθαύμασαν οὐχ ὅμοια δικαίοις διψήσαντες

### 6.3.3.3 Translation of Wisdom 11:2-14

The following translation is taken from the New Revised Standard Version (1989).

- <sup>2</sup> They journeyed through an uninhabited wilderness,  
and pitched their tents in untrodden places.
- <sup>3</sup> They withstood their enemies  
and fought off their foes.
- <sup>4</sup> When they were thirsty, they called upon you,

<sup>446</sup> The translation of this verse is critical. Skehan translates καὶ ἀπόντες δὲ καὶ παρόντες 'yes, both at home and abroad' arguing that the Greek word ἀπόντες relates to the Egyptians, while παρόντες implies the Israelites. Our translation agrees with Reider (1957:142) who thinks that both words apply to presence and absence of the Israelites in Egypt.

and water was given them out of flinty rock,  
 and from hard stone a remedy for their thirst.  
<sup>5</sup> For through the very things by which their enemies were punished,  
 they themselves received benefit in their need.  
<sup>6</sup> Instead of the fountain of an ever-flowing river,  
 stirred up and defiled with blood  
<sup>7</sup> in rebuke for the decree to kill the infants,  
 you gave them abundant water unexpectedly,  
<sup>8</sup> showing by their thirst at that time  
 how you punished their enemies.  
<sup>9</sup> For when they were tried, though they were being disciplined in mercy,  
 they learned how the ungodly were tormented when judged in wrath.  
<sup>10</sup> For you tested them as a parent does in warning,  
 but you examined the ungodly as a stern king does in condemnation.  
<sup>11</sup> Whether absent or present,  
 they were equally distressed,  
<sup>12</sup> for a twofold grief possessed them,  
 and a groaning at the memory of what had occurred.  
<sup>13</sup> For when they heard that through their own punishments the others were  
 being benefited,  
 they knew<sup>447</sup> it was the Lord's doing.  
<sup>14</sup> For though they had mockingly rejected him  
 who long before had been cast out and exposed,  
 at the end of the events they marveled at him,  
 when they felt thirst in a different way from the righteous.

---

<sup>447</sup> The aorist ἤσθοντο from the Greek word αἰσθάνομαι denotes perception (sensual, spiritual discernment or even intellectual understanding) (Delling 1964:187). It seems that Wisdom 11:13 recalls Exodus 7:5 that reads 'the Egyptians shall know (וַיֵּדְעוּ מִצְרַיִם) [γινώσκουσιν in LXX] that I am the Lord ...' The point is that God will make himself known through natural occurrences.

### 6.3.3.4 Ambivalence aspects of water in Wisdom 11:2-14

#### 6.3.3.4.1 Water used to bless and punish, verses 2-7

The Greek expressions πέτρας ἀκροτόμου (flinty rock) (Wis 11:4) render the Hebrew words מַיִם מִצֵּדָר (water from a rock) in Deuteronomy 8:15 in which water plays a vital role for the Israelites in an arid wilderness. The aridness of the desert is stated in the Greek word ἔρημον (desolate/empty) (Wis 11:2) which is the same word employed in the LXX text of Job 38:26 for the desolate and lifeless land that is revived by the rain. The same reviving ideal is reiterated here. The life-giving potential of water is depicted by the Greek word ἴαμα in Wisdom 11:4b that literally means ‘to heal/to remedy’. Water, as in Proverbs 25:25, is not simply a beverage but a medicine as it is said literally ‘to restore or to heal (ἴαμα) a cruel thirst (δίψης ... σκληροῦ)’.

Therefore, the first *syncretism* (Wis 11:6-14) begins with the Greek preposition ἀντὶ (instead of) comparing the life-giving water from a rock (v. 4) with the water of the Nile turned into blood (v. 6). In reaction to the Egyptian decree for shedding the blood of the Israelite male infants, the vital river of Egypt (the Nile) was turned into blood, thus, making life impossible in Egypt. However, when the Israelites were in the wilderness, they were given life-giving water to relieve their thirst.

In this sense, verses 6-7 state that water was simultaneously a life-giving substance for the Israelites and a source of great misery to the Egyptians (Cregg 1909:105). Verses 6-7 can thus be paraphrased as: when the Egyptians were troubled with clotted blood instead of a river’s ever-flowing fountain, you gave to the Israelites abundant water. As argued in the analysis of Job 14:7-12 in the third chapter of this thesis, the Nile was seen intrinsically as an ultimate source of life in various domains of Egypt. Philo explained that God decided to plague the Egyptians by water before anything else because they overestimated water and considered it (the Nile) as the source of all creative power (see Colson 1935:327. Philo on *De Vita Mosis* I:XII).

With his new knowledge of the Nile basin, Philo maintained that the bleeding of water extended to regional and even international pollution. Even though the plague

concerned Egypt, from Ethiopia to the sea (Mediterranean Sea), water turned into blood, and so also did the lakes, canals, wells, springs/fountains and all the existing water-supply of Egypt (Colson 1935:327. Philo on *De Vita Mosis* I:XII). Not only humans suffered the bleeding of the Nile, but innocent fishes also died as their only life-giving home had become a life-threatening entity. The question is how often do our behaviours turn our sources of water into life-threatening entities?

#### 6.3.3.4.2 Thirst as educative and retributive, verses 8-10

This section is a continuation of the above idea, but contrasts the aim of the Israelites' thirst with that of the Egyptians. Confident in his argument that the Israelites benefitted from the same substance that punished the Egyptians, the sage continues that the Israelites were allowed to thirst a little in order that they would clearly understand the sufferings the Egyptians endured when their source of water was turned into blood. The Jewish sage maintains that the aim of Israel thirsting was 'educative', but 'retributive' for the Egyptians (Cregg 1909:107).

In the desert, water is naturally scarce. Many times in the Bible, this scarcity has served as a cause for Israel to trust God, the provider of the rain water at the right time (Dt 11:11). However, in Egypt, water shortage is not natural, but according to Wisdom 11:6-10, is due to human matters. This contrast is explained in Deuteronomy 11:10-11 which ironically recognises the presence of water in Egypt<sup>448</sup> and the dryness of Canaan that depends on rain water:

<sup>10</sup> For the land that you are about to enter to occupy is not like the land of Egypt, from which you have come, where you sow your seed and irrigate by foot like a vegetable garden. <sup>11</sup> But the land that you are crossing over to occupy is a land of hills and valleys, watered by rain from the sky (NRSV).

In the wilderness, Israel thirsted because there was no water. God gave water if Israel was obedient (educative perspective) (Dt 11:11ff). In Egypt, the available Nile water that served for irrigation, industry and daily lives was polluted and its bad smell involved dire ecological issues all over the whole land of Egypt (punitive perspective)

---

<sup>448</sup> By making a lake of the fields, and thus producing the yearly crops, the Nile serves the purpose of the rainfall in Egypt (see Colson 1935:335. Philo on *De Vita Mosis* I:XII).

(see Ex 7:21). The question may be posed if the current water shortage is natural or caused by human issues?

#### **6.3.3.4.3 The mystery of water upon the Egyptians, verses 11-14**

The expression ἀπόντες ... παρόντες (absent ... present) introduces the mystery of water. The idea is that when Israel was in Egypt and the Nile was bleeding, the Egyptians suffered. Furthermore, in their pursuit of the fugitives (Israelites), they were overwhelmed in the sea (Reider 1957:142). Water was a medium of affliction for the Egyptians both in Egypt and outside, while it was a blessing for the Israelites.

This mystery of water caused great concerns for the Egyptians. They could not understand how water which had been life-threatening to them, had befriended the fleeing Israelites (Cregg 1909:108). A double pain for the Egyptians in verse 12 implies that the Egyptians suffered both at their own disaster of a bleeding Nile, and by the fact that the medium of their desolation, water, acted as a life-giving entity for the Israelites.

It means that the Egyptians heard the reports that the thirsty fugitives were saved from death by life-giving water flowing from the rock in the desert (v. 13). According to the Vulgate, the words εὐεργετημένους αὐτούς must be translated ‘were being benefited others’ implying that the Egyptians experienced sorrow to hear that Israel was being ‘continuously’ befriended by water.

#### **6.3.4 Other forms of water ambivalence in Wisdom 19:1-12**

##### **6.3.4.1 The LXX text of Wisdom 19:1-12**

<sup>1</sup> τοῖς δὲ ἀσεβέσιν μέχρι τέλους ἀνελεήμων θυμὸς ἐπέστη προήδει  
γὰρ αὐτῶν καὶ τὰ μέλλοντα

<sup>2</sup> ὅτι αὐτοὶ ἐπιτρέψαντες τοῦ ἀπιέναι καὶ μετὰ σπουδῆς  
προπέμψαντες αὐτοὺς διώξουσιν μεταμεληθέντες

<sup>3</sup> ἔτι γὰρ ἐν χερσὶν ἔχοντες τὰ πένθη καὶ προσοδυρόμενοι τάφοις νεκρῶν ἕτερον ἐπεσπάσαντο λογισμὸν ἀνοίας καὶ οὐς ἰκετεύοντες ἐξέβαλον τούτους ὡς φυγάδας ἐδίωκον

<sup>4</sup> εἶλκεν γὰρ αὐτοὺς ἡ ἀξία ἐπὶ τοῦτο τὸ πέρασ ἀνάγκη καὶ τῶν συμβεβηκότων ἀμνηστίαν ἐνέβαλεν ἵνα τὴν λείπουσαν ταῖς βασάνοις προσαναπληρώσωσιν κόλασιν

<sup>5</sup> καὶ ὁ μὲν λαός σου παράδοξον ὁδοιπορίαν πειράσῃ ἐκεῖνοι δὲ ξένον εὐρωσι θάνατον <sup>6</sup> ὅλη γὰρ ἡ κτίσις ἐν ἰδίῳ γένει πάλιν ἄνωθεν διετυποῦτο ὑπηρετοῦσα ταῖς σαῖς ἐπιταγαῖς ἵνα οἱ σοὶ παῖδες φυλαχθῶσιν ἀβλαβεῖς

<sup>7</sup> ἡ τὴν παρεμβολὴν σκιάζουσα νεφέλη ἐκ δὲ προῦφροστώτος ὕδατος ξηρᾶς ἀνάδυσις γῆς ἐθεωρήθη ἐξ ἐρυθρᾶς θαλάσσης ὁδὸς ἀνεμπόδιστος καὶ χλοηφόρον πεδίου ἐκ κλύδωνος βιαίου

<sup>8</sup> δι' οὗ πανεθνὴ διήλθον οἱ τῇ σῇ σκεπαζόμενοι χειρὶ θεωρήσαντες θαυμαστὰ τέρατα

<sup>9</sup> ὡς γὰρ ἵπποι ἐνεμήθησαν καὶ ὡς ἄμνοι διεσκίρτησαν αἰνοῦντές σε κύριε τὸν ῥυσάμενον αὐτούς

<sup>10</sup> ἐμέμνηντο γὰρ ἔτι τῶν ἐν τῇ παροικίᾳ αὐτῶν πῶς ἀντὶ μὲν γενέσεως ζώων ἐξήγαγεν ἡ γῆ σκινίπα ἀντὶ δὲ ἐνύδρων ἐξηρεύξατο ὁ ποταμὸς πλήθος βατράχων

<sup>11</sup> ἐφ' ὑστέρω δὲ εἶδον καὶ γένεσιν νέαν ὀρνέων ὅτε ἐπιθυμία προαχθέντες ἠτήσαντο ἐδέσματα τρυφῆς

<sup>12</sup> εἰς γὰρ παραμυθίαν ἐκ θαλάσσης ἀνέβη αὐτοῖς ὀρτυγομήτρα

#### 6.3.4.2 Translation of Wisdom 19:1-12

The following translation is taken from the New Revised Standard Version.

<sup>1</sup> But the ungodly were assailed to the end by pitiless anger, for God knew in advance even their future actions:

<sup>2</sup> how, though they themselves had permitted your people to depart and hastily sent them out,

they would change their minds and pursue them.

<sup>3</sup> For while they were still engaged in mourning,

and were lamenting at the graves of their dead,

they reached another foolish decision,

and pursued as fugitives those whom they had begged and compelled to leave.

<sup>4</sup> For the fate they deserved drew them on to this end,

and made them forget what had happened,

in order that they might fill up the punishment that their torments still lacked,

<sup>5</sup> and that your people might experience an incredible journey,

but they themselves might meet a strange death.

<sup>6</sup> For the whole creation in its nature was fashioned anew,

complying with your commands,

so that your children might be kept unharmed.

<sup>7</sup> The cloud was seen overshadowing the camp,

and dry land emerging where water had stood before,

an unhindered way out of the Red Sea,

and a grassy plain out of the raging waves,

<sup>8</sup> where those protected by your hand passed through as one nation,

after gazing on marvelous wonders.

<sup>9</sup> For they ranged like horses,

and leaped like lambs, praising you,

O Lord, who delivered them.

<sup>10</sup> For they still recalled the events of their sojourn,

how instead of producing animals the earth brought forth gnats,

and instead of fish the river spewed out vast numbers of frogs.

<sup>11</sup> Afterward they saw also a new kind of birds,

when desire led them to ask for luxurious food;

<sup>12</sup> for, to give them relief, quails came up from the sea.

### 6.3.4.3 The literary considerations

#### 6.3.4.4 Position of Wisdom 19:1-12 in Wisdom 11:2-19:22

Wisdom 19:1-12 is part of the fifth *syncretis* (Wis 18:5-19:22) within the Midrashic interpretation of the exodus event (11:2-19:22). Scholars are divided on the literary units of the fifth *syncretis*.<sup>449</sup> Still, there is a kind of unanimity about the content of Wisdom 19:1-9, the drowning of the Egyptians in the Red Sea, and the rescue of Israel through it. Wisdom 19:10-12 are termed as a retrospective review of God's wonders through which nature was refashioned for Israel. In this sense, the researcher agrees with Kolarcik suggesting that Wisdom 19:1-5 and 6-12 form a unit depicting the death and life by water (1997:593).

The *syncretis* as a whole focuses on the death of the Egyptian firstborns that leads to the exodus of Israel. However, the argument of the sage is less on the liberation of human beings, but more on the fact that the very things by which the Egyptians were punished brought blessing for Israel. In other words, in experiencing the extraordinary deliverance through the sea, the Israelites realised the way creation had continuously favoured them and punished the Egyptians (Kolarcik 1997:293).

In this sense, at the conclusion of the *syncretis*, the rhetorician explains that elements that comprise the forces of nature changed places with one another in the same fashion as on a harp the notes vary the nature of the rhythm, while each note remains the same (Wis 19:18-22). The land animals became water creatures and vice versa (Wis 19:19); fire was not quenched by water (Wis 19:20); water divided to rescue Israel and the dry land yielded vegetation, while the same water engulfed the Egyptians (Wis 19:4-6).

The whole idea is about the refashioning of the forces and creatures of nature (Wis 19:6). For Wisdom, the creator has this power of remodelling nature, but it is a

---

<sup>449</sup> There is no consensus on the repartition of the literary units of Wisdom 11:2-19:22. For some views, see Winston, D 1979. *The Book of Wisdom of Solomon*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday, pp.313-333. Kolarcik, M 1997. The Book of Wisdom, in Keck, L E (ed), *The New Interpreter's Bible (NIB): General Articles and Introduction, Commentary and Reflections for Each Book of the Bible including the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books*. Vol.5, 435-600. Nashville: Abingdon Press, p.450.

transformation that is in line with the nature of the physical constitution of creation (Perdue 2007:317). The Jewish author made use of the Greek philosophical principle of mutual interchange of elements to convey his argument.

#### **6.3.4.5 The use of the principle of interchangeability**

In his rhetoric, the Jewish author drew on the Greek philosophical principle of ‘mutual interchange of elements’ in order to minimise the notion of miracles prevailing in the book of Exodus (Winston 1971:193). According to Wisdom 19:6, transformation in nature is brought about by an inner mutation of the universe, prompted only by God’s command (Collins 1977:127). In their attempt to explicate divination and miracles, the stoics employed this theory of mutual interchange to show that the gods can intervene in the cosmos without violating its laws. According to this pre-Socratic theory:

Although the basic material substance of a thing remains the same, periodically an interchange of the elements of which it is composed occurs, resulting in an alteration in its individual combinations without a fundamental change in its substance (Bergant 2000:144).

In this sense, the rhetorician presents the exodus experience of the Pentateuch not as a liberation feat, but the transformation or even the re-shaping of creation, especially the water-related phenomena (Wis 19:6). The rhetorician explains that the transformation of nature occurs not by the miraculous intervention into the creation order, but rather by means of the principle of interchangeability of the basic physical elements in the order for the rescue of the righteous (Perdue 2007:317).

Therefore, Philo saw the dividing of the Red Sea as a natural fact. He commented that the south wind swept the water to enable the passage for Israel, but the north wind blew the water back and united the two sections of the sea to engulf the Egyptians (see Colson 1935:367 & 369. Philo on *De Vita Mosis* I:XXXII). Thus, having been re-fashioned, the Red Sea that was viewed in the prophetic books as a life-threatening entity that had to be defeated, astonishingly acts here naturally as a saving entity for the Israelites.

### 6.3.4.6 Alternating functions of water

Wisdom 19:1-12 repeats the same idea of water ambivalence in Wisdom 11:2-14, but here it is applied to the water of the Red Sea that was friendly to the Israelites and cruel to the Egyptians. As in Wisdom 16:25, there is nothing new that comes into being when a miracle occurs: it is only a transmutation of elements (Cregg 1909:182). This idea is implicitly narrated in 1 Peter 3:20 where the drowning of the wicked by water at the time of Noah is contrasted with saving of the ark by water which carried it on waves. The text narrates the mystery in a language of new creation paraphrasing the idea of Genesis 1 as follows:

<sup>6</sup> For the whole creation in its nature was fashioned anew, complying with your commands, so that your children might be kept unharmed. <sup>7</sup> The cloud was seen overshadowing the camp, and dry land emerging where water had stood before, an unhindered way out of the Red Sea, and a grassy plain out of the raging waves, <sup>8</sup> where those protected by your hand passed through as one nation, after gazing on marvellous wonders (Wisdom 19:6-8).

Contrary to Exodus 14:19 where the cloud is a pillar of darkness between two camps (the Israelites and the Egyptians), in Wisdom 19:7 the cloud overshadowing the camp (τὴν παρεμβολὴν σκιάζουσα νεφέλη) possibly recalls the darkness over the deep in Genesis 1:2 as the text evokes the idea of new creation (Winston 1979:325). The genitive preposition ἐκ<sup>450</sup> in verse 7 syntactically denotes the act of separation which is confirmed by the mention of the appearance of the dry land (ξηρᾶς ... γῆς) as if the land was engulfed in the waters of chaos. Philo says this is ‘a great mighty work of nature, the like of which none can remember to have been seen in the past’ (see Colson 1935:361. Philo on *De Vita Mosis* I:XXIX).

Thereafter, the bottom part of the sea is romantically depicted as a ‘grassy plain or green field (χλοηφόρον πεδίου) out of the raging waves (ἐκ κλύδωνος βιαίου)’ implying the fruitful land of Genesis 1:11-12 (Wis 19:7b). The text is now underlining the positive aspect of the water contrasted to the life-threatening function of the same water entity that overwhelmed the Egyptians (Wis 19:1-5).

<sup>450</sup> See the use of this Greek preposition in Mathew 2:15; 26:27; Marc 16:3; John 12:27; 17:15; Acts 17:33; Galatians 3:13; Revelation 14:13.

In Wisdom 19:10, the earth produced gnats and the river spewed forth frogs instead of fish against the Egyptians, while a new kind of bird (quails) came up from the sea to feed the Israelites (Wis 19:12). In spring, quails in the Mediterranean areas migrate in massive flocks to refresh themselves, and they are easily caught (Winston 1979:326). Possibly, Wisdom argues, it was a cloud of migrating quails that came down on the Hebrew camp. The fauna creation as recounted in Genesis 1:20-25 was fashioned afresh to feed Israel and punish Egypt (Kolarcik 1997:593). For Wisdom 19:1-12, the alternating function of water as life-giving and life-threatening entity accords with the order of nature (intrinsic worth), but in a transformed way.

#### **6.3.4.7 Eco-theological synthesis**

After a first look at Wisdom 11:2-14 and 19:1-12, it could be said that God is merely using elements of nature for blessings and curses as in Job 37:13. The anthropocentric view of nature is eloquent in the texts evaluating water and water-related phenomena for the roles they play for Israel and against Egyptians. It is as if anthropocentrism is used to gauge the worth of water and water-related phenomena. Humans are depicted as a type of separate and unconnected block of sole consumers of the wealth of nature.

In this sense, water would be seen as possessing only an instrumental and utilitarian value and are not really valuable in their own right<sup>451</sup> (Bergant 2000:147). Is it not for this reason Lynn White's famous article blamed the Biblical traditions as being responsible for ongoing ecological crises, and mainly, for the pollution of the waters of the earth?<sup>452</sup>

However, contrary to Elihu's speech in Job 37:13, it is emphatically stated in Wisdom 19:6 that when water or water-related phenomena rescued Israel or punish Egypt, they were really acting according to the created order (evoking thus the principle of intrinsic worth), and complying with God's commands. What is ecologically interesting is that nature was changed/transformed/fashioned anew due to

---

<sup>451</sup> See also Wisdom 5:19-23

<sup>452</sup> White, L 1967. The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis. *Science* 155, 1203-7.

circumstances that developed as a consequence of human behaviour. In the midst of a pre-industrial world, Wisdom has, however, set ideas that nature is a dynamic entity.

In its use of the Greek principle of interchangeability, Wisdom has brought a specific contribution to eco-theology. The life-giving water from the rock and the bleeding Nile (Wis 11:2-14) as well as the rescue of Israel and the sinking of Egyptians by the Red Sea (Wis 19:1-12) are not seen as miraculous events. Rather, Wisdom 11:2-14 and 19:19 state that water and water-related phenomena are acting according to the intrinsic natural order to provide for Israel and to punish Egypt. Nature had to be made afresh due to circumstances that developed as a consequence of human behaviour.

#### **6.4 Conclusion**

This chapter attempted to retrieve the ecological wisdom of water and water-related phenomena in the deuterocanonical books. The investigation found that these books abound with references and insights about water that eco-theological studies have missed in ignoring these books. The study selected four texts among many that contain references to water and water-related phenomena in Sirach and Wisdom of Solomon, namely Sirach 24:23-29; 46:13-26; and Wisdom 11:2-14 and 19:1-12.

The theme of Torah likened to six rivers in Sirach 24:23-29 regards water as a symbol of life since in their time of flooding, all six rivers of Sirach 24:25-26 represent abundance and fertility. In this sense, verses 30-34 continue the water metaphor in terms of a garden irrigation depicting Sirach as a gardener who realised that the fullness of the life-giving water cannot be individualised, but shared with others. Water is thus seen as intrinsically life-giving.

However, Sirach 46:13-26 is mostly dominated by the idea of beauty and delight. In this text, the author sees a world that is not exclusively designed for humans. In Sirach 43:13-26, it is not a matter of determining whether water is life-giving or life-threatening, which is a trait of 'utilitarianism', but an invitation to contemplate the water-related phenomena for their own sake. For Sirach 43:3-26, even the waters of chaos viewed in the global picture of the created order, become objects of wonder.

In Wisdom 11:2-14 and 19:1-12, water is used to bless Israel and punish Egypt. Despite their instrumental and anthropocentric view depicting humans as distinct consumers of the treasures of the earth, the texts strongly confirm the intrinsic worth of water. It is clearly expressed in Wisdom 19:6 that when water and water-related phenomena rescued Israel or punished Egypt, they were actually working according to certain laws of nature (evoking thus the principle of intrinsic worth).

Contrary to the exodus events in the book of Exodus, the use of the Greek principle of interchangeability aids Wisdom to minimise the miraculous intervention of God in the cosmos. In this sense, the life-giving water from the rock and the deadly bleeding Nile water (Wis 11:2-14) as well as the salvation of Israel and the drowning of Egyptians by the Red Sea (Wis 19:1-12) are not seen as miraculous events. Rather, Wisdom 11:2-14 and 19:19 suggest that water and water-related phenomena act according to the inherent natural order to cause life and death.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSIONS – ECO-THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY**

### **7.1 Introduction**

This chapter provides the logical outcomes of our investigations. It will consist of assessing the hypothesis of this study, the findings and the implications of the study for the way forward. The chapter also includes understanding how the Wisdom books can aid us to address current problems of water.

### **7.2 Returning to the working hypothesis**

To close our eco-theological study of the life-giving and life-threatening potential of water and water-related phenomena in the Old Testament wisdom books, we need to revisit its working hypothesis. The problem statement of this study featured two reductionist tendencies with regard to ecological interpretations of the Bible:

- A scarcity of scholarly interest in water and water-related phenomena in the Old Testament wisdom books,
- The portrayal of elements of nature in romantic, and therefore one-sided ways.

In an attempt to (partly) address this twofold problem statement, this study was guided by a twofold working hypothesis stating that the wisdom books contain a rich variety of water and water-related phenomena in general, and that an excessively romantic view of nature would not do justice to the biblical texts themselves. Through this twofold hypothesis, this study aimed to demonstrate that scholars who engage in ecological readings of biblical texts will be richly rewarded if they take less favoured texts, on the one hand, and regard nature in its complexity, on the other.

To test the validity of this double hypothesis, this study involved a careful gathering of more than six hundred verses containing references to water and water-related phenomena in the wisdom books from which were selected a number of representative texts for this study. The reasons for this selection were given in the introductory

sections of each chapter of this thesis. In addition to historical-critical and literary methodological strategies, this study was based on a particular eco-theological interpretative model, namely the Earth Bible principles of intrinsic worth, interconnectedness, purpose and voice as doctrinal constructs.

In the research, we have firstly explored, within the second chapter, the tendency of ignoring the wisdom books in the Old Testament and eco-theological studies about water, before underlining the romantic view of nature in many eco-theological studies about water and water-related phenomena. It has been noticed that scholars have even muted references about water in the wisdom texts. This state of things justified the need for an eco-theological exploration of water and water-related phenomena in these books, and paved the way for the exegetical chapters of this thesis.

However, the research neither defended the texts, nor resisted their anthropocentric or instrumental view of water as life-giving or life-threatening entity, but acknowledged the otherness of the texts and evaluated them in their own right. This reading stance has assisted to confirm the twofold hypotheses of this study in terms of the findings as set out in the following sections.

### **7.3 Substantial contributions to eco-theology**

#### **7.3.1 Abundancy of references to water and water-related phenomena in wisdom books**

In the course of this research, there was found no major monograph, essay or book that is solely focused on water and water-related phenomena in the Old Testament wisdom books. This is perhaps due to three reasons. Firstly, until recently, the Old Testament wisdom books were almost beyond of the attention of the Old Testament scholarship (Murphy 1969:289). Secondly, protestant scholars simply ignore the Deutero-canonical wisdom books as they are not part of the canonical structure of their interest. Finally, eco-theology is a very young field, and much needs to be done to cover the entire books of the Bible as well as exploring other eco-theological subjects.

The two appendices A and B at the end of this thesis are the proof of the abundance of passages related to water in the Old Testament wisdom books, which were overlooked by scholars in eco-theological studies. This study has substantially shown how these books abound with references to water and water-related phenomena that should attract the focus of eco-theological studies. Interestingly, the Deutero-canonical wisdom books overflow with much deeper ecological wisdom about water and water-related phenomena. Further studies on these books are likely to reveal distinguished eco-theological insights that could not be explored in this thesis because no single study can thoroughly investigate more than six hundred references to water and water-related phenomena occurring in the Old Testament wisdom books.

### **7.3.2 Insights about water and water-related phenomena in the wisdom books**

#### **7.3.2.1 Water and water-related phenomena in Job**

For obvious reasons that are given in the introductory section of the third chapter of this thesis, the researcher investigated the potential of water and water-related phenomena in Job 14:7-12; 36:26-37:13 and 38:22-38. In Job 14:7-12, water is good and life-giving. In the other texts, water has the potential of life and death. Possibly, the author of the book of Job found water images suitable for dealing with existential matters because without it life is impossible, but too much of it can harm life (Nõmmik 2014:297).

Therefore, it was observed in the metaphorical text of Job 14:7-12 that water is seen as intrinsically life-giving, capable of restoring a dead plant, while human death is equated with the vanishing of a vital water supply. In an absurd idea, Job 14:11-12 compares an irreversible situation of the drying up of the perennial water supplies (rivers) with the death of human beings.

The ecological idea behind Job 14:7-12 presumes the intrinsic value and life-giving function of water. This is stated either in its power to revive the flora realm (vv.7-9) or in comparing human death with the vanishing of bodies of water that were considered as a permanent and perennial source of life (vv.10-12). In its recalling of Isaiah 19:5-

10 concerning the drying of the Nile and its life-threatening effects on humans, plants and animals and the land, the simile of Job 14:7-12 is a kind of perception of the intrinsic worth of water and an invitation to restrain from activities that can undermine its life-giving potential.

The speech of Elihu in Job 36:26-37:13 is dominated by features of anthropocentrism as water is used as an instrument to cause abundant food only for humans (Job 36:28) or to punish or bless humans (Job 37:12). Still, the careful analysis of the text revealed the intrinsic value of water that is beyond human control and exists in intimacy with God who can use it for particular reasons. The water-related phenomenon such as the sea in Job 36:26-37:13 is not exposed as a created body, but as a pre-existing entity and God's partner with the potential to cause life or death (the Earth Bible principle of purpose).

It is also interesting to find that in Elihu's speech, some water-related phenomena have a voice. Job 37:2, for instance, shows how the voice of God is identical to the voice of a rainstorm. For Elihu, Job does not need an encounter with God's word, but with the power of God voiced through this water-related phenomenon. How many times have we listened to the voice of nature when it reacts against our anthropocentric use of its resources? Have we listened to the voice of our lakes, rivers and seas when they are overwhelmed by various plastics and pollutants with which we (humans) litter them?

Significant ecological insights are shown in Job 38:22-38 decentring human beings. All the water-related phenomena depicted here are viewed for their intrinsic value, purpose and interconnectedness. The principles of intrinsic worth and purpose are emphasised in the fact that hail and snow are not only kept in treasuries, but also designed to be used during specific 'times'. In contrast to Elihu's speech (36:26-37:13), the target of the rain in Job 38:22-38 is not just the fruitful land worked to feed people, but the wilderness which is transformed into a fertile land. The rain is not viewed as being useful for humans, but for its own value falling on a remote land that lacks human presence.

The principle of purpose is also highlighted in Job 38:33 that earth and sky are linked by ‘laws’ written in the sky that exercise their rule over the earth, especially in relation to rain provision on earth. In this sense, the water-related phenomena are also presented in interconnectedness with other nature elements (planets, cock and ibis). Finally, Job 38:34-38 presents the clouds as water-carriers. What is interesting is that the text shows the rainstorm as a subject that can hear and answer ‘Here we are’ (הִנְנֵנוּ) just as humans did in relation to God’s call (e.g. 1 Sam 3:10; Is 6:8).

This proves that the Old Testament wisdom books contain ecological insights about water that scholars have missed for years. The fact that some water-related phenomena respond as subjects is specific to the book of Job. The analysis has found a number of *hapax legomena*, namely the ‘storehouse’ of snow and hail; the unending course of the rain to the land empty of human life in contrast to its falling in drops to inhabited land of humans in Genesis 2:4b-6; the topic of punishing and blessing by the same water-related phenomenon (Job 37:13), which explicitly appears again, as far as the researcher knows, only in the book of Wisdom (Wis 11:2-14 & 19:1-9).

### **7.3.2.2 Water and water-related phenomena in Proverbs**

For reasons that are given in the introductory section of the fourth chapter of this thesis, we investigated the life-giving and life-threatening potential of water and water-related phenomena in three metaphorical texts (Pr 5:15-20; 9:13-18 & 25:23-26) and two texts that present water in its real cosmic sense (Pr 3:19-20 & 8:22-31). In the ecological wisdom that can be discerned in the worldview of the similes of Proverbs 5:15-20 and 9:13-18 is water management, while Proverbs 25:23-26 present water as a life-giving and life-threatening entity.

In Proverbs 5:15-20, the depiction of one’s wife as a private well and a private cistern denotes the idea of water management and the intrinsic worth of water considering the hard work that was involved in the drilling and maintenance of a private well or cistern (Pr 5:15). The text is informed by the intrinsic worth of water regardless of the androcentric and anthropocentric view of nature in the text. The wife’s ‘water’ framing the text (vv. 15 & 18b-20) implies the life-giving power attached to the well-

managed water in private containers: the home life in the ancient Palestine depended on them.

Ecologically speaking, there is wordplay between human made (cistern) and natural sources of water (cistern). The text implies that life-giving water is both a natural gift and fruit of human efforts. The text teaches that the husband will experience no water shortage no matter the season on condition that water (wife) as a natural gift (God's gift) be valued for its (her) own intrinsic worth, and maintained in reliable containers. The idea recalls verse 19 instructing the husband to be intoxicated by his wife's water (breasts) 'all the time' (בְּכָל־עֵת) and 'always' (תָּמִיד).

The identification of the husband's sexuality with the fountains and springs of water that must not be spread on the streets and squares recalls also a careful management of this precious natural resource. The ecological insight behind the text is that adultery will lead, inter alia, to impotence (Pr 15:16-17) just as wrong attitudes towards water resources will lead, inter alia, to water depletion. It is now proven that water is a finite resource that has no substitute if it depletes (Van As *et al.* 2012:124). That is why, the modern Israeli Water Authority declares that 'every person is entitled to use water, as long as that use does not cause the salination or depletion of the water resource.'<sup>453</sup>

Proverbs 9:13-18 completes the idea of Proverbs 15:15-20. For Proverbs 9:13-18, the stolen water is sweet, but leads to Sheol. Theft and illegal appropriation of water in an arid land has probably informed the use of the water metaphor in this erotic poem. The fact that the words 'stolen water is sweet' are put in the mouth of Woman Folly and linked with Sheol, implies that the sage intends to discourage this kind of behaviour as it would certainly undermine the wellbeing of the society. Sheol is connected with the life-threatening quality of water. Ecologically speaking, fraud regarding water should be discouraged as it would result in the leaking aqueducts and water dissipation.

Proverbs 25:23-26 highlight the life-giving and life-threatening potential of water in terms of its intrinsic value and unpredictability respectively. The cold north wind is

---

<sup>453</sup> See Israeli Water Law and Water Authorities. Available online from: [http://www.sviva.gov.il/bin/en.jsp?enPage=e\\_BlankPage&enDisplay=view&enDispWhat=Object&enDispWho=Articles^12419&enZone=wat\\_law](http://www.sviva.gov.il/bin/en.jsp?enPage=e_BlankPage&enDisplay=view&enDispWhat=Object&enDispWho=Articles^12419&enZone=wat_law) (Accessed 14 May 2012).

seen as an agent of life-threatening rain whose effects are similar to those of slanderous speech (v.23). The Israelites expected the west, not the north wind, to bring rain (Lk 12:4). The מַשְׁקַיִם (rains), which bring life-giving water when falling at the right time, are seen here as a life-threatening entity because they are hidden in the north wind, and probably would cause the failure of crops. That is why in verse 24 the man prefers being exposed to bad weather rather than being exposed to unexpected bad speech, namely that may come from his wife.

However, Proverbs 25:25 equates the life-giving water revitalising the weary person with the spiritual remedy for a person weary from anxiety about the well-being of a situation in a distant land, while a polluted spring is equated with the righteous person that has become wicked. In an ancient world where news travelled upsettingly slowly and in a desert with scarce remote oases, the metaphor is ecologically meaningful. Polluting an oasis was seen by the Bedouins as a wicked act incurring of the death penalty. The text is teaching us that water is not merely a beverage but also a medication (v.25) and any littering behaviour is simply an act of wickedness.

The two other texts, namely Proverbs 8:22-31 and 3:19-20, present water as a cosmic entity presented with both life-giving and life-threatening potential. Proverbs 8:22-31 declares that the created order is made by Wisdom, but the life-threatening waters are also part of it. By God's Wisdom the תְּהוֹמוֹת can burst forth life-giving water, whereas verses 27-29 deal with several limitations of תְּהוֹמוֹת in order to shape, secure, establish, support and stabilise the earth since the unbound תְּהוֹמוֹת is a lurking danger against the created order.

In Proverbs 3:19-20, God is presented as the perfect architect, sinking the pillars of the earth in the תְּהוֹמוֹת (waters of chaos) in order to establish the earth as an arena of life that can survive the threatening pressure of the watery chaos. Contrary to Genesis 7:11 using the verb בָּקַעַע to describe the beginning of a disastrous flood, Proverbs 3:20a attributes a positive aspect to the cosmic deluge by underlining the restorative and life-giving function the water for the earth's sake (Brown 1999:276). When everything is bound into limits, the earth is a bastion of life. One would conclude that some of the

current tsunamis result from contemporary technological behaviours breaking geological limits of the waters.

### 7.3.2.3 Water and water-related phenomena in Qoheleth

For reasons that are given in the introductory section of the fifth chapter of this thesis, the researcher investigated the life-giving and life-threatening potential of water and water-related phenomena in Qoheleth 1:4-11; 2:4-6 and 11:1-6. The water-related phenomena in these texts of Qoheleth present themselves with the quality of ambiguity and unpredictability providing them with the potential to cause life or death. Anthropocentric readings have ignored the ecological significance of water and water-related phenomena in these passages.

There is a kind of ambiguous relationship between human life and nature/water in the artful ambiguity of Qoheleth 1:4-11. Human beings sometimes do experience nature as pointless – particularly when it is not serving their interest – but at the same time nature/water acts purposefully – in the service of the created order. The interpretation of the movement of water in Qoheleth 1:7 as both wearisome and purposeful denotes water as an uneasy and puzzled entity involving unpredictable realities (romantic and life-threatening) similar to those happening in human life. The purposeful use of ambiguity in verse 7 underlines the intrinsic value of water acting on its own whether for human interest or not.

In Qoheleth 2:4-6, water is regarded as essentially a life-giving entity. This text echoes the water of life in the Garden of Eden and appeals for water management. Anthropocentric readings of Qoheleth 2:4-6 simply ignore the ecological significance of water in this text in favour of debates about Solomon's luxurious measure of pleasure. In an arid land, the creation of a well-watered garden was seen as an act of authority and fertility for a land of frequent droughts. It becomes clear that the control of water and the ordering of water resources for irrigation and fertilisation within the garden was an act of water management awareness.

Although Qoheleth realises that all his effort is *hebel*, the text nevertheless reflects the water management attitudes in the mind of the writer. One can read in the language of

Qoheleth 2:5 the idea of making the arid land fruitful by proper water management. As a great king, Hezekiah also listed his achievements in terms of making pools and conduits of water to the city (2 Ki 20:20; Sir 50:4-6) along with vineyards and gardens as well as the irrigation aqueducts and reservoirs.

For Qoheleth, water management is seen as positive even though it is also part of *hebel*. Qoheleth complains not about the wealth, including his parks, gardens and their waters, that is the means of pleasure, but the efforts he invested in acquiring it. Water is seen as having intrinsic worth of creating life in the desert. Qoheleth's measures of water irrigation testify to his awareness of water management and sanitation as the key to making the environment fruitful and delightful.

Finally, Qoheleth 11:1-6 was also ignored by anthropocentric perspectives that were instead attracted by the meaning of the text in terms of risk and assurance, and ignored the significance of the water-related images that are used to convey this message. Just as in Qoheleth 1:4-11, water is presented here with ambivalent potential to cause life or death.

Given that water is implied as having both life-threatening (risk) functions – since the words *עַל־פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם* usually occur with negative connotations<sup>454</sup> – and life-giving roles – since bread upon the waters will at least be found later – verse 2 encourages measures of security regarding potential disasters. The idea of dividing the seed into seven/eight parts (v. 2) denotes that a single sowing at what seemed the time would not be seen as guaranteeing success given the unpredictability of nature (water) appearing with the potential to cause life or threat.

It is, therefore, not unreasonable that Crenshaw (2005a:110) has linked Qoheleth 11:1-2 with the ambivalent character of the Nile inundation. The Nile is life-threatening in its form of inundation, but it results in the fertility of the land and the supply of sufficient water to survive the dry season. The words *עַל־פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם* in Genesis 1:2b, for instance, usually refer to the life-threatening primeval deep, but at the same time they

---

<sup>454</sup> See Genesis 1:2; Job 24:18



dry season lasting from February to June) when the land actually longs to be hydrated, fertilised and nurtured.

In this sense, verse 28-29 depicts water as an unfathomable entity of life that should not be individualised. That is why Sirach depicts himself in verses 30-34 as a gardener finding that the fullness of the life-giving water cannot be kept for oneself, but is a flood that requires to be shared with others. This is an important ecological thought for modern uses of water. It will be later discussed in the implication of this text for today's readers.

In addition, Sirach 43:13-26 appeals for delight that is beyond an anthropocentric view of nature/water. In highlighting the sense of delight and beauty of water, Sirach wants to show that when perceived as subjects of wonder, even familiar water-related phenomena, such as snow, ice/frost or dew look new and surprising. Sirach sees a world that has a place for humans but is not primarily and exclusively designed for their benefit. In Sirach 43:13-26, it is not a matter of 'utilitarianism', but of contemplating water and water-related phenomena for their own value as subjects not objects.

The book of Wisdom of Solomon highlights significant ecological wisdom of water in terms of their ambivalent character to cause simultaneously life and death. Both Wisdom 11:2-14 and 19:1-12 present water as benefiting the Israelites while threatening the Egyptians at the same time.

At the first look of Wisdom 11:2-14 and 19:1-12, one could deduce that God is merely using elements of creation for blessing and cursing as in Job 37:13. The anthropocentric view of nature is eloquent in the texts evaluating water and water-phenomena for the roles they play for Israel and against Egyptians. It is as if anthropocentrism is used to gauge the worth of water and water-related phenomena. Humans are depicted as a kind of a separate and unconnected block of sole consumers of the wealth of nature (Bergant 2000:147).

However, it is strikingly stated in Wisdom 19:6 that when water-related phenomena rescued Israel or punished Egypt, they were really acting according to certain laws of

nature (evoking thus the principle of intrinsic worth), and complying with God's commands. In its use of the Greek principle of interchangeability, Wisdom has brought a specific contribution to eco-theology. The syncretism of life-giving water from the rock versus the bleeding Nile (Wis 11:2-14) on the one hand, and the antithesis of the rescue of Israel versus the drowning of the Egyptians by the Red Sea (Wis 19:1-12) on the other hand, are not seen as miraculous events, but part of the potential of water to cause life and death. In other words, both texts assert that the principle of life and death is inherent in water.

### **7.3.3 Critical comparison and assessment**

All five Old Testament wisdom books contain significant material regarding the life-giving and life-threatening potential of water and water-related phenomena. Some texts were only concerned with the intrinsic worth of water as life-giving (e.g. Job 14:7-12, Qoh 2:4-6 and Sir 24:23-29) while others depicted water with the potential to cause life and death (Job 36:26-37:13; Wis 11:2-14; Wis 19:1-12). Other texts, in addition to the view of water as a life-giving and life-threatening entity, point to mysterious dimensions of water as an unfathomable and unpredictable entity (Job 38:22-38; Qoh 1:4-11; Qoh 11:1-6; Pr 25:23-24; Sir 24:28-29). In other words, water stands for order and chaos, life and death, fertility and misfortune, threat and benefit, raging and calm as well as permanence and evanescence depending on the context in which it occurs.

In this sense, Proverbs 5:15-20 and 9:13-18 appeal for proper management of water. These wisdom poems ecologically imply that human efforts and skills are petitioned to keep water clean and suitable for consumption. It is also implied in Proverbs 5:16-17 that even the natural sources of water, such as springs and fountains, can be depleted due to wrong human attitudes.

However, Proverbs 5:15-20, especially verse 15, bears elements of anthropocentrism underlining the importance of human beings to make water clean in terms of drilling and maintaining private wells and cisterns. Still, this idea is balanced by the rise of the springs and fountains in verses 16-17, which are natural life-giving waters, but which

must not be wasted on public areas. In one way or another, humans are at the centre of the discussion: they must ensure reliable water infrastructures (wells and cisterns) and restrain from activities that can weaken or reduce natural water supplies (springs and fountains). In this sense, Sirach 43:13-26 appeals only for delight and contemplation of the wonders reflected by the water-related phenomena.

The speech of Elihu in Job 36:26-37:13 is interesting in the depiction of how God makes the rain. It is as if the hydrological cycle is presented from a theological perspective. Elihu knows that the rain results from a process of drawing water from the sea before this is carried by the clouds and falls down resulting in the fertility of the land and abundant food for human beings (Job 36:28). The principles of interconnectedness and purpose are respected although the reflection is heavily anthropocentric in the sense that the rain is designed to feed only humans.

God's speech in Job 38 rectifies Elihu's speech in two things: the rain is not created – it is part of the regular cycle of nature – and humans are not the exclusive recipients of the rain. Job 38:25-27 describes the delivery of water on earth in torrents even on the land which is apparently useless for humans. Contrary to the instrumental use of water to bless and punish in Elihu's speech, water has intrinsic worth in Job 38:22-38. The rain, for instance, falls anywhere regardless of human interest. The snow and hail are also not created, but kept in storehouses for use in specific times (Job 38:22-24). The water-related phenomena also have 'voice'; they can say 'here we are' not to a human voice, but to God's command (Job 38:34-35). This idea is stressed in the book of Wisdom of Solomon in which it is balanced by the principle of mutual interchange of elements from Greek philosophy.

In the researcher's view, the book of Wisdom of Solomon is ecologically significant in terms of the life-giving and life-threatening potential of water and water-related phenomena. Indeed, the view of water as both life-giving and life-threatening appears in other books as well. However, elsewhere it is pictured as a miraculous or divine intervention in the world. In Wisdom, water and water-related phenomena comply with the natural laws established by God to rescue the righteous (life-giving) and punish the wicked (life-threatening).

## **7.4 Ecological implications of the study for today**

### **7.4.1 Introduction**

Having conducted an exegetical exploration of water in various wisdom texts, the researcher is now faced with the challenge of how the ecological insights of these texts can be applied to contemporary problems of water. The question is whether the message of these traditions can be revelatory for today's readers if we comply with Gadamer's insights of the world 'in front of' the text.

We should explain first that one has to be careful not to criticise the current world on the basis of the views and principles of the ancient world. However, as we are open to the revelatory potential of the biblical texts without being captive to their limitations, we are obliged to connect with these ancient texts. Moltmann (1985:xi) argued that: 'the earth crisis challenges us to read the Bible afresh ...'

We should argue that people of the ancient world, like some African traditions, had a more holistic view of nature than ours (Bergant 2000:146). The reason is that they were directly reliant on the natural world, which acted either in their favour as a life-giving entity or against them as a life-threatening sphere. Therefore, motivated by our ecological awareness of contemporary water problems in the present world, we should scrutinise whether some insights of the wisdom books can be used to partly address the issue of water in the present world.

### **7.4.2 Implications of texts of the book of Job**

The simile of Job 14:11-12 and its echo in Isaiah 19:5-10 have significant implications with regard to contemporary issues of water. In sub-Saharan Africa where the drying of great lakes and desertification are threatening life on the continent, the simile of Job 14:7-12 teaches the awareness of the life-giving potential of water, the relevance of a reliable water supply and the depletion of water reserves.

Yet, the current problems regarding desertification may largely be attributed to human activity rather than to the divine fiat as in Job 14:11-12. However, Job 14:11 is virtually imbued with the awareness of the possibility of withering of water reserves.

Job 14:11-12 also points to the modern idea that there is no substitute for water when it compares the drying of a sea or river with human death. The simile can, thus, be used to teach about the relevance of a reliable water supply and an invitation to resign from activities that may weaken water supplies.

Elihu's speech in Job 36:26-37:13 contains too much ecological insight for modern people. The text is highly anthropocentric since humans are the unique beneficiaries of the rain in Job 36:27-28. The theological perspective of Job 37:13 rephrases that God uses water for curse or for blessing. The rain, snow and ice are designed to accomplish God's purpose on the face of the habitable world (Job 37:1-12).

God's speech in Job 38:22-38 decentres human beings. For Job, humans do not control water. Water has intrinsic worth. The text invites us, humans, to restrain from viewing nature as if it were uniquely made for us. When the rain falls in the wilderness, it is not a waste as Job would claim, but part of the cosmic order. Other earth members in this remote place have the right to benefit from the rain as well. Everything has purpose: the snow and hail, for instance, are not only kept in treasuries, but also designed to be used during specific 'times'. To reinforce their intrinsic worth, these water-related phenomena are also called in Psalm 148:8 to celebrate 'their' Lord.

### **7.4.3 Implications of texts of Proverbs**

Proverbs 5:15-20 and 9:13-18 appeal for proper water management that our world and Africa have undermined. It should be noted that Africa is the second driest area in the world despite holding great water supplies, and millions of Africans still suffer from water scarcity<sup>456</sup> and water-related diseases.<sup>457</sup> Shortages are often due not to an absolute lack of water, but mainly to issues relating to uneven distribution or

---

<sup>456</sup> On 22 March 2011 – the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) released a report that an estimated 50 million people in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) – or three quarters of the population – have no access to safe drinking water although the country holds over half of Africa's water reserves. United Nations Environmental Program (2011). 50 million people lack clean water to drink in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Available from: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=37850&Cr=dr+congo&Cr1> (Accessed 22 March 2012).

<sup>457</sup> See WWF. The Facts of Water in Africa. Available online from [www.panda.org/livingwaters](http://www.panda.org/livingwaters) (Accessed 14 December 2013).

management and poor maintenance checks of existing supplies that could be improved. Pointing to the necessity of good water management in South Africa, Rivonia Naidu-Hoffmeester declares:

The mismatch between water supply and water demand, the theft of water resources, a deteriorating infrastructure, the loss of essential skills, a strangling educational pipeline, management failure, and deterioration in the quality of water, are all potential threats and key concerns [causing water scarcity in the country].<sup>458</sup>

Proverbs 5:15-20 implies three facts about water: first, water should be kept clean; second, water should not be used for wrong purpose or simply wasted; third, not all water is safe for consumption. These ideas could be applied at several levels. First, at a personal level, there is a need to develop these attitudes in our homes. Second, there is a call to African governments to provide clean water and proper sanitation to their peoples in accordance with the seventh goal of the 2015 Millennium Development Goals. Many political crises in Africa have caused sudden water shortages and even broken down the sanitation and water provision systems.<sup>459</sup> Third, it is the responsibility of the church and human rights organisations to lobby in this regard. The management of water resources is crucial for today's world as it is reflected in this wisdom poem of the ancient world.

Furthermore, the unexpectedness of the water-related phenomena that causes great damage in Proverbs 25:23-26 has significant ecological wisdom for our time. Due to global ecological crises, nature is currently acting in unexpected ways resulting in horrible effects against plants, animals and humans. Various unexpected cyclones, typhoons and tsunamis cause disastrous floods that result in diseases and debris flow. Scientists confirm the evidence that, unless our conduct changes, life on earth will

---

<sup>458</sup> See Naidu-Hoffmeester, R 2014. South Africa's Water Resource Under Immense Pressure, available from [www.unisa.ac.za/news&media.htm](http://www.unisa.ac.za/news&media.htm) (Accessed 16 April 2014).

<sup>459</sup> The DRC is the clear example of the effects of political instability on water sanitation. See United Nation Environmental Program (2011). Water-rich DR Congo, 50 million people lack clean water to drink. Available from: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=37850&Cr=dr+congo&Cr1> (accessed 22/03/2012).

increasingly be threatened by unpredicted rising sea-levels, food shortages, flood refugees, extreme weather/heat, emergent diseases and species extinction.<sup>460</sup>

Did the author of Proverbs 25:23-24 experience unpredicted natural events at his time? The answer is affirmative since the author is trying to criticise his contemporary people's attitudes on the basis of unexpected natural events (north wind bringing rain) he/she assumes his/her readers might have once experienced. Proverbs 25:23-24 calls for behaviour change otherwise the worst from water and water-related phenomena will unexpectedly threaten life on earth.

Finally, the intrinsic value of water as a life-giving entity that is presented not just as a beverage but also as a medication in Proverbs 25:25 to heal a weary person encourages us to avoid littering as this kind of disrespect is linked with the wicked in Proverbs 25:26.

#### **7.4.4 Implications of texts in Qoheleth**

Qoheleth 1:4-11 aims to teach that although humans do not comprehend things in nature or if nature is acting against us, this does not mean that there is no regularity and purpose in the natural world. Regularity and pointlessness are words of humans in relation to the movement of water. However, both perceptions are true and part of the natural order.

Without being anachronistic, Qoheleth 2:4-6 can be used to critique the contemporary ego-centric appropriation of the resources. We noted earlier that Qoheleth adopted the Ancient Near Eastern literary style of boasting over the great achievements of a king to make the land arable pictured by the creation of gardens, pools and reservoirs of water. However, Qoheleth made proper management of water – pools and irrigation systems – not for his people, but for himself. In other words, Qoheleth is not interested in the management of public works, but projects for his 'self-pleasure' (Longman II 1998:217). Interestingly, Qoheleth concludes that that all this was *hebel*.

---

<sup>460</sup> See GICOC 2012. Climate Change Online: <http://find.galegroup.com/gic/start.do?prodId=GIC> (Accessed 31 August 2012).

The text is indicative for contemporary readers in criticising current resource abuses, including water resources, to serve the happiness and interest of those in power or a small group of people. Water is seen with life-giving aspects/functions although it is used for the interest/happiness of one person to the detriment of many. By concluding with the words of deception in terms of ‘all is *hebel* and chasing after wind’ (v. 11), Qoheleth invites another view of wealth distribution. Qoheleth’s autobiography is, therefore, a criticism against the unbalanced distribution of resources, including the supply of water. Is this not a lesson for our leaders to think in terms of assuring the interest of their people rather than being ego-centric in the distribution of resources?

Qoheleth 11 implicates the unpredictability of nature. For Qoheleth 11:1-6, despite some signs of reliability, water remains a mystery capable of causing life or death, especially in the context of agrarian activities. Water has intrinsic worth independent from human knowledge or involvement. Once more, this text, like Job 38, decentres human beings by underlining their incapacity to master water.

#### **7.4.5 Implications of texts in Sirach**

For Sirach 24:23-34, water is life and is naturally in movement to fertilise the land. It should be regarded as such and valued for its intrinsic worth. The ‘movement towards’ that is reflected in the text is currently harnessed by the erection of dams<sup>461</sup> that results in the lessening of the quantity of water and, thus, undermining the growth of biodiversity in the neighbourhoods. When the Nile flooded, for instance, it was life-threatening – as people had to keep their settlements beyond the flood plains – but it was always viewed as God’s providence for the renewal and re-creation of the land. Can current tsunami be viewed as part of the renewal of God’s creation that human beings are threatening and polluting?

---

<sup>461</sup> Dams were usually viewed as the best means of providing abundant and cheap non-polluting electrical power, water for irrigation, domestic and industrial use as well as controlling flood and drought. However, it has been recently proved that there are harmful impacts of dams: diminution of the rate of flow of a river, salination and waterlogging in irrigated areas, environmental refugees, contamination of water sources and destruction of many wetlands and other aquatic ecosystems. For more details, see Molle, F, Molinga, P P & Meinzen-Dick, R 2008. Water, Politics and Development: Introducing Water Alternatives. *Water Alternatives* 1/1, 1-6.

In addition, for Sirach, the streams of the six rivers that bring life-giving water to the land must not be individualised. Wisdom is deeper than the sea and deeper than an abyss (vv.28-29). In this sense, the unfathomable entity of water, just as wisdom, is expected to be a community property (v.28). That is why Ben Sirach depicts himself in verses 30-34 as a gardener finding that the fullness of the life-giving water cannot be kept for oneself, but needs to flood and be shared with others. This is a significant ecological thought for modern users of water.

Guebert has argued that the real contemporary issue with regard to the water supply is usually not so much an absolute lack of water as the lack of human willingness and wisdom to distribute water consistently for the benefits of others (2010:144). An African proverb advises that *Amaghetsi syaliyak' omututu*<sup>462</sup> (Nobody can individualise water: it is a common good)<sup>463</sup>. Another one adds that *Amishi garhishi wa ndi*<sup>464</sup> (Nobody can be excluded from water access) (Kagaracu 1976:32). Both Sirach 24:25-27 and these African wisdoms underline the idea of 'spontaneity' in sharing water as this is the basic element of life.

Water should flow, not be individualised. The image is furthered in Revelation 22:1-2 where the river of life freely flows from the throne of God, producing along its course trees and fruit for the healing of people. The insights of Sirach 24:23-29 give further awareness about what it means to practise theology in the contemporary world in which our rivers are becoming waters of death (Haar 2012:120).

In Wisdom 11:2-14, water is simultaneously acting as a life-giving and life-threatening agent. This is not regarded as a miraculous event, but part of the natural potential/quality of water. What is interesting for modern people is the comment of Philo. With his new knowledge of the Nile basin, Philo commented that the bleeding of the Nile was a regional water crisis (Colson 1935:327. Philo on *De Vita Mosis* I:XII). Although the plague concerned Egypt, from Ethiopia to the sea (Mediterranean Sea), water turned into blood, and so also did the lakes, canals, wells, springs and all

---

<sup>462</sup> This proverb is from the Nande People, the main ethnic group in North Kivu Province of the DRC.

<sup>463</sup> Tatsopa is a wise man considered by the Nande people as their living library. The researcher interviewed him on 12 May 2013 at Goma, DRC.

<sup>464</sup> This proverb is from BASHI people, the main ethnic group in the South Kivu Province of the DRC.

the existing water-supply of Egypt This also resulted in the death of biodiversity: humans and fishes suffered from the plague (see Ex 7:17-21).

The Earth Bible Project would resist this text because nature is innocently suffering from God and humans' affairs. This study suggests instead that the text reminds humans that they are not allowed to do whatever they want with regard to water in their region. Some national water supplies serve also for regional safety. The pollution of water can cause great water crises in the neighbourhood and threaten the life of the biodiversity.

### **7.5 Remaining questions for further research**

The abundance of texts that contain references to water and water-related phenomena in the Old Testament wisdom books invites studies that can aid in retrieving additional significant ecological wisdom based on water and water-related phenomena occurring in these books that could not be explored in this thesis. Given that these books are often ignored in biblical studies about water and water-related phenomena, it could be better to launch a scholarly volume that will regularly publish studies about nature in the Old Testament wisdom books.

Another study could also compare water in the Old Testament wisdom books and African wisdom material containing references to water and water-related phenomena. The result could be utilised in raising ecological awareness in African societies while taking their traditional wisdom seriously.

### **7.6 Difficulties and limitations of the study**

The main difficulty in conducting this study was the rarity of publications about water in the Old Testament wisdom books. This study was mostly a kind of a reconstructive attempt of tiny and fragmentary information loosely spread elsewhere. This study is only one step towards great ecological insights that the wisdom books offer about water.

The limitations of this study were of both hermeneutical and practical nature. As to the hermeneutical limitation, this study confronted the hiatus between our world and the ancient ones in which the Old Testament wisdom books were composed. Some of the information in these texts are indeed in line with contemporary issues. Job 14:7-12 regards water as intrinsically life-giving and its vanishing is a great loss, while in Job 38 water has the potential to cause life and death.

However, other information cannot apply to today's scientific world. Even when the researcher tried to apply the findings for today's readers, he had to be careful not to be anachronistic. The hydrological process that is attributed to God in Elihu's speech (Job 36:26-28), for instance, is now viewed as a natural fact. In addition, although we used the modern term 'natural laws' for the acting of the water-related phenomena in Wisdom 11:2-14, we know that this term is absent in the ancient world. Still, the idea of the text denotes the autonomous movements of nature.

In this sense, the researcher is not arguing for the literal application of all the ideas about water in the Old Testament wisdom books. Rather, it is argued that the Old Testament wisdom literature's insights about water can provide both inspiration and concrete resources for re-imagining new models for this planet that can move us beyond the anthropocentric thinking that is responsible for current crises, including water shortage, management and even tsunamis.

Concerning the practical limitation, this research could not undertake the analysis of the eco-theological insights about water in all the texts of the Old Testament wisdom books where water and water-related phenomena occur. This study was based on a selection of specific texts on water in the Old Testament wisdom books. In this case, this study invites biblical scholars to turn to wisdom books for the study of water for additional ecological wisdom about water in those books.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abrahams, R D & Babcock, B A 1994. The Literary Use of Proverbs, in Mieder, W (ed), *Wise Words: Essays on the Proverbs*, 415-438. New York/London: Garland Publishing.
- Aitken, K T 1995. Beware the Seductress: Proverbs 5, in Zuck, R B (ed), *Learning from the Sages: Selected Studies on the Book of Proverbs*, 213-218. Grand Rapids: Baker Books.
- Albright, W F 1918. The Etymology of Še'ôl. *AJSL* 34, 209-210.
- Alford, C F 2009. *After the Holocaust: The Book of Job, Primo Levi, and the Path to Affliction*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Alter, R 1990. *The Pleasures of Reading in an Ideological Age*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Amery, C 1971. *Das Ende der Vorsehung. Die gnadenlosen Folgen des Christentums*. Hamburg: Verlag Reinbek.
- Amnesty International 2009. *Troubled Waters – Palestinians denied fair access to water: Israel-Occupied Palestinian Territories*. London: Amnesty International Publications.
- Anderson, B W 1962. Water, in Buttrick, G A (ed), *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, 806-810. Vol. 4. New York/Nashville: Abingdon Press.
- Anderson, W H U 1997. *Qoheleth and its Pessimistic Theology: Hermeneutical Struggles in Wisdom Literature*. Lewiston/Queenston/Lampeter: Mellen Biblical Press. (MBPS 54)
- Ansari, M 1989. *Principles of Islamic Traditional Architectural Design*. Tehran: Tarbiat Modares University Press.
- Ansari, M, Taghvaei, A K & Nejad, H M 2008. Cultural Beliefs Regarding Persian Gardens with the Emphasis on Water and Trees. *African and Asian Studies* 7, 101-124.
- Ansberry, C B 2011. *Be Wise, my Son, and Make my Heart Glad: An Exploration of the Courtly Nature of the Book of Proverbs*. Berlin: De Gruyter.

- Anthonioz, S 2009. *L'eau, Enjeux Politiques et Théologiques, de Sumer à la Bible*. Leiden/Boston: Brill.
- Ayre, C 2011. Water: More Than a Symbol, in Habel, N C & Trudinger, P (eds), *Water: A Matter of Life and Death*, 49-62. Adelaide: ATF Theology. (*Interface Journal*: Vol. 14/1).
- Balentine, S E 2006. *Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary: Job*. Macon: Smyth & Helwys.
- Balogh, C 2011. *The Stele of YHWH in Egypt: The Prophecies of Isaiah 18-20 Concerning Egypt and Kush*. Leiden/Boston: Brill.
- Baly, D 1957. *The Geography of the Bible: A Study in Historical Geography*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Bagnall, R S 1976. *The Administration of the Ptolemaic Possessions outside Egypt*. Leiden: Brill. (Columbia Studies in the Classical Tradition 4).
- Barbour, J 2012. *The Story of Israel in the Book of Qoheleth: Ecclesiastes as Cultural Memory*. Oxford: Oxford Academic Press. (OTM).
- Barton, J 1998. Historical Critical Approaches, in Barton, J (ed), *The Cambridge Companion to Biblical Interpretation*, 9-19. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Batto, B F 1983. The Reed Sea: Requiescat in Pace. *JBL* 102/1, 27-35.
- Bauckham, R J 2010. *The Bible and Ecology: Rediscovering the Community of Creation*. Waco: Baylor University Press.
- Ben Zvi, E 2014. Thinking of Water in Late Persian/Early Hellenistic Judah: An Exploration, in Ben Zvi, E & Levin, C (eds), *Thinking of Water in the Early Second Temple Period*, 11-28. Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter.
- Ben Zvi, E & Levin, C 2014 (eds). *Thinking of Water in the Early Second Temple Period*. Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter.
- Bergant, D 2000. The Wisdom of Solomon, in Habel, N C (ed), *Reading from the Perspective of Earth*, 138-150. Sheffield/Cleveland: Sheffield Academic Press/Pilgrim Press.
- Berlyn, P 2009. Down to the Sea in Ships. *JBC* 37/3, 73-79.

- Berlin, A 2008. *The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism (Revised & Expanded)*. Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans.
- Bickerman, E 1988. *The Jews in the Greek Age*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Bimson, J 2012. Has the Rain a Father? A Biblical Theology of Water. *EMJ* 42, 1-9.
- Boer, R [s. a.]. *Keeping it Literal: The Economy of the Song of Songs*. Available online from: <http://jhsonline.org/cocoon/jhs/a067.html> (Accessed 26 August 2013).
- Bowses, D R 1975. Water, in Tenny, M C (ed), *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*. Vol. 5, 902-906. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.
- Brenner, A 1981. God's Answer to Job. *VT* 31/2, 130-137.
- Broch, Y I 1982. *Kohelet: The Book of Ecclesiastes in Hebrew and English with a Talmudic-Midrashic Commentary*. Jerusalem/New York: Feldheim.
- Brown, F, Briggs, C & Driver, S 1968. *Hebrew and English Lexicon on the Old Testament*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Brown, W P 1999. *The Ethos of the Cosmos: The Genesis of Moral Imagination in the Bible*. Grand Rapids/Cambridge: W B Eerdmans.
- Brown, W P 2000. *Ecclesiastes: Interpretation. A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*. Louisville: John Knox Press.
- Brown, W P 2006. Deep Calls to Deep: Retrieving the Liturgical Voice of the Many Waters. Available online from: [http://www.sbl-site.org/meetings/Congresses\\_Abstracts.aspx?MeetingId=5](http://www.sbl-site.org/meetings/Congresses_Abstracts.aspx?MeetingId=5) (Accessed 26 June 2013).
- Brown, W P 2010. *The Seven Pillars of Creation: The Bible, Science, and the Ecology of Wonder*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bryce, G E 1972. Another Wisdom-“Book” in Proverbs. *JBL* 91, 145-157.
- Burns, J B 2001. Is the Ibis Yet Wise? A Reconstruction of Job 38:36. *Proceedings EGL & MWBS* 21, 131-136.
- Buttenwieser, M 1922. *The Book of Job*. New York: Macmillan.

- Buttrick, G A 1962. The Editor's Preface, in Buttrick, G A (ed), *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*. Vol. 1, xvii-xxiii. New York/ Nashville: Abingdon Press.
- Cadwallader, A 2011. 'Give the Girl a Drink': Reading John 4 from a Dry Parched Land, in Habel, N C & Trudinger, P (eds), *Water: A Matter of life and Death*, 95-110. Adelaide: ATF. (*Interface Journal*, Vol. 14/1).
- Caleb, S M 2007. The Use of Water as a Metaphor and Symbol in Biblical Theology: An Exploration, in John, V J (ed), *Water Struggle*, 69-79. Kolkata: Bishop's College.
- Cassuto, U 1961, 1944 [orig.]. *From Adam to Noah (Part I): A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*. Jerusalem: Magnes.
- Cervantes-Ortiz, L 2011. Reading the Bible and Reading Life: Everyday Life Approaches to Wisdom Literature from Latin America. *CTJ*/46, 278-288.
- Chase, S 2013. *Job*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press. (Belief: A Theological Commentary of the Bible).
- Ched, M 2012. Everything Will Live Where the River Goes. *Sojourners Magazine* 41/4, 33-35.
- Cheon, S 1997. *The Exodus Story in the Wisdom of Solomon: A Study in Biblical Interpretation*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press. (JSPSSup 23).
- Chisholm Jr, R B 2000. "Drink Water from Your Own Cistern": A Literary Study of Proverbs 5:15-23. *BS* 157, 397-409.
- Clifford, R J 1971. The Tent of El and the Israelite Tent of Meeting. *CBQ* 33, 221-227.
- Clifford, R J 1992. The Theology of Creation in Proverbs 8:22-31, in Clifford, R J & Collins J J (eds), *Creation in the Biblical Traditions*, 85-96. Washington: CBAA. (CBQMS 24).
- Clifford, R J 1994. *Creation Accounts in the Ancient Near East and in the Bible*. Washington, DC: CBAA (CBQMS 26).
- Clifford, R J 1997. Introduction to Wisdom Literature, in Keck, L E (ed), *The New Interpreter's Bible: General Articles & Introduction, Commentary, &*

- Reflections for Each Book of the Bible including the Apocryphal/Deutero-Canonical Books in Twelve Volumes*. Vol. 5, 1-16. Nashville: Abingdon Press.
- Clifford, R J 1999. *Proverbs: A Commentary*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press.
- Clines, D J A 1989. *Job 1-20*. Dallas: Word Books, (WBC).
- Clines, D J A 2006. *Job 21-37*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, (WBC).
- Clines, D J A 2011. *Job 38-42*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, (WBC 18B).
- Coleridge, S T 1912. This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison, in Coleridge, E H (ed) *The Complete Poetical Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, Vol. 1, 178-181. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Collins, J J 1977. Cosmos and Salvation: Jewish Wisdom and Apocalyptic in the Hellenistic Age. *History of Religions* 17/2, 121-42.
- Collins, J J 1997. *Jewish Wisdom in the Hellenistic Age*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox.
- Colson, F H 1935. Philo, Moses I and II (*De Vita Mosis*), in Colson, F H (ed), *Philo in Ten Volumes and Two Supplementary Volumes*. Philo VI, 274-596. London: William Heinemann.
- Conradie, E 2004. Towards an Ecological Biblical Hermeneutics: A Review Essay on the Earth Bible Project. *Scriptura* 85, 123-135.
- Conradie, E 2006. *Christianity and Ecological Theology: Resources for Further Research*. Stellenbosch: Sun Press. (Study Guides in Religion and Theology 1).
- Conradie, E 2010. What on Earth is an Ecological Hermeneutics? Some Broad Parameters, in Horrell, D G, Hunt, C & Southgate, C (eds), *Ecological Hermeneutics: Biblical, Historical and Theological Perspectives*, 295-313. New York: T&T Clark.
- Cook, J 1994. אִשָּׁה זָרָה (Proverbs 1-9 Septuagint): A Metaphor for Foreign Wisdom? *ZAW* 106, 454-476.
- Cook, J 1997. *The Septuagint of Proverbs Jewish and/or Hellenistic Proverbs: Concerning the Hellenistic Colouring of LXX Proverbs*. Leiden: Brill.
- Coote, R B 1980. The Tell Siran Bottle Inscription. *BASOR* 240, 93.

- Cox, D 1981. Structure and Function of the Final Challenge: Job 20–31. *PIBA* 5, 55–71.
- Cross, F M 1973. *The Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Cregg, J A F 1909. *The Wisdom of Solomon: In the Revised Version with Introduction and Notes*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Creegan, N H 2004. Theological Foundations of the Ecological Crisis. *Stimulus* 12/4, 30-36.
- Crenshaw, J L 1976. Prolegomenon, in Crenshaw, J L (ed), *Studies in Ancient Israelite Wisdom, 1-60*. New York: Ktav.
- Crenshaw, J L 1988. *Ecclesiastes*. London: SCM Press. (OTL).
- Crenshaw, J L 1990. Questions, Dictons et Épreuves Impossibles, in Gilbert, M (ed), *La Sagesse de l'Ancien Testament : Nouvelle Édition Mise à Jour*, 96-111. Leuven: Leuven University Press.
- Crenshaw, J L 1994. Nothing New Under the Sun: Ecclesiastes 1:4-11, in Zuck, R B (ed), *Reflecting with Solomon: Selected Studies on the Book of Ecclesiastes*, 241-248. Grand Rapids: Baker House.
- Crenshaw, J L 1995. *Urgent Advice and Probing Questions: Collected Writings on the Old Testament*. Macon: Mercer University Press.
- Crenshaw, J L 1997. The Book of Sirach: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections, in Keck, L E (ed), *The New Interpreter's Bible: General Articles & Introduction, Commentary, & Reflections for Each Book of the Bible including The Apocryphal/Deutero-Canonical Books in Twelve Volumes*. Vol. 5, 601-868. Nashville: Abingdon Press.
- Crenshaw, J L 1998. *Old Testament Wisdom: An Introduction (revised and enlarged)*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press.
- Crenshaw, J L 2005a. A Proverb in the Mouth of a Fool, in Troxel, R, Friebel, K G & Magary, D R (eds), *Seeking the Wisdom of the Ancient: Essays Offered to Honour Michael V. Fox on the Occasion of his Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, 103-116. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns.

- Crenshaw, J L 2005b. *Defending God: Biblical Responses to the Problem of Evil*. New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Crenshaw, J L 2011. *Reading Job: A Literary and Theological Commentary*. Macon: Smyth & Helwys.
- Cross, F M 1955. Oldest Manuscripts from Qumran. *JBL* 74/3, 147-172.
- Currid, J D 1997. *Ancient Egypt and the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books.
- Dahood, M 1963. Zacharia 9:1, 'Ēn 'Ādām. *CBQ* 25, 123-124.
- Dahood, M 1981. Eblaite Ḫ-du and Hebrew ʾĒd, "Rain Cloud". *CBQ* 43, 534-538.
- Dalman, G 1928. *Arbeit und Sitte in Palästina*. Vol. 1. Gütersloh: Bertelsmann.
- Daly-Denton, M M 2011. To Hear What Water Is Saying to the Churches, in Habel, N C & Trudinger, P (eds), *Water: A Matter of Life and Death*, 111-125. Adelaide: ATF Theology. (*Interface Journal*: Vol. 14/1).
- Davis, E F 2000. *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press.
- Delitzsch, F 1950. *Biblical Commentary on the Proverbs of Solomon*. (Trans. by Easton, M G). Vol. 2. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Delitzsch, F 1968. *Commentary on Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes*. (Trans. by Easton, M G). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Dell, K J 2006. *The Book of Proverbs in Social and Theological Context*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Delling, G 1964. αἰσθάνομαι, αἰσθησις, αἰσθητήριον, in Kittel, G (ed), *Theological Dictionary of The Old Testament* (Trans. by Bromiley, G Y). Vol. 1, 187-188. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing.
- Deutschmann, B 2009. Water Lines: Towards a Creational View of Water. *Zadok Perspectives* 102, 15-19.
- Deutschmann, B 2011. Abraham, Isaac and the Problem of Water, in Habel, N C & Trudinger, P (eds), *Water: A Matter of life and Death*, 63-72. Adelaide: ATF. (*Interface Journal*: Vol. 14/1).
- De Saignac, J 1954. Proverbs. *VT* 4, 429-432.
- Dhorme, E 1967. *A Commentary on the Book of Job*. (Trans. by Knight, H). London: Thomas Nelson.

- Diewert, D A 1991. *The Composition of the Elihu Speeches: Poetic and Structural Analysis*. Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Toronto, Toronto.
- Di Lella, A A 1976. *Conservative and Progressive Theology: Sirach and Wisdom*, in Crenshaw, J L (ed). *Studies in Ancient Israelite Wisdom*, 401-416. New York: KTAV Publishing House.
- Domeris, W R 1995. *Shame and Honour in Proverbs: Wise Women and Foolish Men*. *OTE* 8, 86-102.
- Donner, H & Röllig, W 1964 (eds). *Kanaanäische und Aramäische Inschriften*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- Driver, G R 1956. *Two Astronomical Passages in the Old Testament*. *JTS* 7, 1-11.
- Edelstein, G & Gibson, S 1982. *Ancient Jerusalem's Rural Food Basket*. *BAR* 8/1, 46-54.
- Eidevall, G 1996. *Grapes in the Desert: Metaphors, Models, and Themes in Hosea 4-14*. Stockholm: Almqvit & Wiksell International.
- Eliade, M 1975. *Myth, Dreams, and Mysteries: The Encounter Between Contemporary Faith and Archaic Realities*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Elvey, A 2011. *Partnering the Waters in Luke 8:22-25*, in Habel, N C & Trudinger, P (eds), *Water: A Matter of life and Death*, 81-34. Adelaide: ATF. (*Interface Journal*: Vol. 14/1).
- Elwell, W A 1988 (ed). *Baker Encyclopaedia of the Bible*, 2132-34. Vol. 2. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.
- Elliger, K & Rudolph, W 1997 (eds). *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, ediz. 5. Amended by A Schenker. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft.
- Emerton, J L 1966. *Spring and Torrent in Psalm lxxiv:15*. *VTSup* 15: 122-133.
- Erman, A 2005. *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Collection of Poems, Narratives and Manuals of Instruction from the Third and Second Millenia BC*. London/New York/Bahrain: Kegan Paul.
- Exum, J C 2005. *Song of Songs*. Louisville: John Knox Press.
- Fabry, H-J 1997. מַיִם (Mayim), in Botterweck, G J, Ringgren, H & Fabry, H-J (eds), *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (Trans. by Stott, D W), Vol. 8, 265-288. Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans.

- Farmer, K A 1991. *Who Knows What is Good? A Commentary on the Books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Fejo, W A 2000. The Voice of the Earth: An Indigenous Reading of Genesis 9, in Habel, N C & Wurst, S (eds), *The Earth Story in Genesis*, 140-146. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.
- Feldman, L H 1996. *Studies in Hellenistic Judaism*. Leiden: Brill. (Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums 30).
- Feliks, J 1971. Agriculture in the Land of Israel, in *Encyclopedia Judaica*. Vol. 2, 382-398.
- Fontaine, C R 1994. Proverb Performance in the Hebrew Bible, in Mieder, W (ed), *Wise Words: Essays on the Proverbs*, 393-414. New York/London: Garland Publishing.
- Fontaine, C R 2005. Visual Metaphors and Proverbs 5:15-20: Some Archaeological Reflections on Gendered Iconography, in Troxel, R, Friebel, K G & Magary, D R (eds), *Seeking the Wisdom of the Ancient: Essays Offered to Honour Michael V. Fox on the Occasion of his Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, 185-202. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns.
- Foser, J 2012. A Polluted Spring. Available Online from: <http://yourshot.nationalgeographic.com/photos/3530357/> (Accessed 11 August 2014).
- Fox, M V 1981 Job 38 and God's Rhetoric. *Semeia* 19, 53-61.
- Fox, M V 1988a. Aging and Death in Qohelet 12. *JSOT* 42, 55-77.
- Fox, M V 1988b. Qohelet 1:4. *JSOT* 40, 109-110.
- Fox, M V 1989. *Qoheleth and his Contradictions*. Sheffield: Almond. (JSOTSup 71).
- Fox, M V 1995. The Use of Indeterminacy. *Semeia* 71, 173-192.
- Fox, M V 2000. *Proverbs 1-9: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. New York: Doubleday. (The Anchor Bible).
- Fov, M V 2012. Joseph and Wisdom, in Evans, C A, Lohr, J N & Petersen, D L (eds), *The Book of Genesis: Composition, Reception and Interpretation*, 231-262. Leiden/Boston: Brill.

- Fowler, R 1981. *Literature As Social Discourse: The Practice of Linguistic Criticism*. London: Batsford Academic and Educational Ltd.
- Frevel, C 2013. Telling the Secrets of Wisdom: The Use of Psalm 104 in the Book of Job, in Dell, K & Kynes, W (eds), *Reading Job Intertextually*, 157-168. New York: Bloomsbury.
- Frymer-Kensky, T S 1987. Biblical Cosmology, in O'Connor, M P & Freedman, D N (eds), *Backgrounds for the Bible*, 231-240. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns.
- Futato, M D 1998. Because it had Rained: A study of Gen 2:5-7 with Implications for Gen 2:4-25 and Gen 1:1-2:3. *WTJ* 60, 1-21.
- Gadamer, H G 1975. *Truth and Method*. New York: Seabury.
- Gandiya, V C 2012. Storm-Theophany and the Portrayal of Yahweh as Creator-King in Psalm 104 and in Prophetic and Wisdom Literature. *Journal of the Interdenominational Theological Center* 38/1-2, 107-132.
- Gardner, A 2000. Ecojustice: A Study of Genesis 6:11-13, in Habel, N C & Wurst, S (eds), *The Earth Story in Genesis*, 117-130. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.
- Gerstenberger, S E 2012. Water in the Old Testament, in Lefebvre, S & Wacker, M T (eds), *Water Marks Our Life*, 36-47. London: SCM Press (*Concilium* 2012/5, IJT).
- GICOC 2012. Climate Change Online:  
<http://find.galegroup.com/gic/start.do?prodId=GIC> (Accessed 31 August 2012).
- Gilead, M & Rosenan, N 1954. Ten Years of Dew Observation in Israel. *IEJ* 4/2, 120-123.
- Good, E M 1978. The Unfilled Sea: Style and Meaning in Ecclesiastes 1:2-11, in Gammie, J G, Brueggeman, W A, Humphreys, W L & Ward, J M (eds), *Israelite Wisdom: Theological and Literary Essays in Honour of Samuel Terrien*, 59-73. Missoula: Scholars Press.
- Goodrick, A T S 1913. *The Book of Wisdom*. London: Rivingstons.
- Goody, G J 1977. *The Domestication of the Savage Mind*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Gordis, R 1965. *The Book of God and Man: A Study of Job*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Gradmann, R 1937. Pälastinas Urlandschaft. *ZDPV* 54, 161-185.
- Grave, C 1980. The Etymology of Northwest Semitic Sapanu. *UF* 12, 221-229.
- Green, D 2010. When the Gardener Returns: An Ecological Perspective on Adam's Dominion, in Toly, N J & Block, D I (eds), *Keeping God's Earth: The Global Environment in Biblical Perspective*, 267-275. Downers Grove/Nottingham: InterVarsity Press/Appolos.
- Greenstein, E L 2007. Sages with a Sense of Humor: The Babylonian Dialogue Between a Master and His Servant and the Book of Qohelet, in Clifford, R J (ed), *Wisdom Literature in Mesopotamia and Israel*, 55-66. Atlanta: SBL.
- Grisanti, M A 1997. מַיִם (mayim), in VanGemeren, W A (ed), *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*, 929-934. Vol. 2. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House.
- Grünfeld, J 1992. Étude Critique: Kittay's Theory of Metaphor. *Science et Esprit*, 44/1, 83-89.
- Guebert, M 2010. Water for Life: Global Freshwater Resources, in Toly, N J & Block, D I (eds), *Keeping God's Earth: The Global Environment in Biblical Perspective*, 143-164. Downers Grove/Nottingham: InterVarsity Press/Appolos.
- Gunkel, H 2006. *Creation and Chaos in the Primeval Era and the Eschaton: A Religion-Historical Study of Genesis 1 and Revelation 12*. (Trans. by Whitney, K W). Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans.
- Haar, S 2012. Reflections on the Global Water Crisis in Dialogue with Revelation 17: Harlot, Hegemony and H<sub>2</sub>O. *LTJ* 46/2, 119-135.
- Habel, N C 1985. *Job: A Commentary*. London: SCM Press. (OTL).
- Habel, N C 1995. *The Land is Mine: Six Biblical Land Ideologies*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.
- Habel, N C 2000a. Geophany: The Earth Story in Genesis 1, in Habel, N C & Wurst, S (eds), *The Earth story in Genesis*, 34-48. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press. (Earth Bible 2).

- Habel, N C 2001a. Earth First: Inverse Cosmology in Job, in Habel, N C & Wurst, S (eds), *The Earth Story in Wisdom Traditions*, 65-77. Sheffield/Cleveland: Sheffield Academic Press/Pilgrim Press.
- Habel, N C 2001b. Is the Wild Ox Willing to Serve You? Challenging the Mandate to Dominate, in Habel, N C & Wurst, S (eds), *The Earth Story in Wisdom Traditions*, 179-189. Sheffield/Cleveland: Sheffield Academic Press/Pilgrim Press.
- Habel, N C 2001c (ed). *The Earth Story in the Psalms and the Prophets*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.
- Habel, N C 2008. Introducing Ecological Hermeneutics, in Habel, N C & Trudinger, P (eds), *Exploring Ecological Hermeneutics*, 1-8. Atlanta: SBL.
- Habel, NC 2009. *An Inconvenient Text: Is a Green Reading of the Bible Possible?* Hindmarsh: ATF Press.
- Habel, N C 2011a. Introduction: Water a Matter of Life and Death, in Habel, N C & Trudinger, P (eds), *Water: A Matter of Life and Death* 1-8. Adelaide: ATF Theology. (*Interface Journal*: Vol. 14/1).
- Habel, N C 2011b. *The Birth, the Curse and the Greening of Earth: An Ecological Reading of Genesis 1-11*. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press. (The Earth Bible Commentary Series 1).
- Habel, N C & The Earth Bible Team 2001. Where is the Voice of Earth in Wisdom Literature? in Habel, N C & Wurst, S (eds), *The Earth Story in Wisdom Traditions*, 23-34. Sheffield/Cleveland: Sheffield Academic Press/Pilgrim Press.
- Habel, N C & Trudinger, P 2011 (eds). *Water: A Matter of Life and Death*. Adelaide: ATF Theology. (*Interface Journal*: Vol. 14/1).
- Habel, N C & Wurst, S 2001 (eds), *The Earth Story in Wisdom Traditions*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.
- Habermas, J 2003. Glauben und Wissen. Friedenspreisrede 2001, in *Zwölf Essays 1980-2001*, 249-62. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag.
- Hadas, M 1951. *Aristeas to Philocrates (Letter of Aristeas)*. New York: Harper.
- Hagham, N 2005. The Letter of Aristeas: A New Exodus Story? *JSJ* 36/1, 1-20.

- Hamilton, R W 1962. Waterworks, in Buttrick, G A (ed), *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, 811-816. Vol. 4. New York/Nashville: Abingdon Press.
- Hamilton, V P 1997. דֹּר (generation), in VanGemeren, W A (ed), *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*, 930-931. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House.
- Harrington, D J 2005. *Jesus Ben Sira of Jerusalem: A Biblical Guide to Living Wisely*. Collegeville: Liturgical Press.
- Harris, R L 1961. The Meaning of the Word Sheol as Shown by Parallels in Poetic Text. *BETS* 4/4, 129-135.
- Haupt, P 1917. The Original Meaning of Sheol. *JBL* 36/3-4, 258.
- Heidel, A 1963. *The Babylonian Genesis*. Chicago: Phoenix Book.
- Hembrom, T 2007. Significance of Water in the Old Testament, in John, V J (ed), *Water Struggle*, 49-56. Kolkata: Bishop's College.
- Hertzberg, H W 1963. *Der Prediger*. Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn.
- Hess, R S 1991. "Eden." *Bible Review*, 28-33.
- Hiebert, T 1996. *The Yahwist Landscape*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Hillel, D 2006. *The Natural History of the Bible: An Environmental Exploration of the Hebrew Scriptures*. New York: Columbian University Press.
- Hirschberg, J W 1935. Job 38:1. *REJ* 99, 130-132.
- Hobgood-Oster, L 2000. 'For Out of that Well the Flocks were Watered': Stories of Wells in Genesis, in Habel, N C & Wurst, S (eds), *The Earth Story in Genesis*, 187-199. Sheffield/Cleveland: Sheffield Academic Press/Pilgrim Press.
- Hoffmann, Y 1983. Irony in the Book of Job. *Immanuel* 17, 7-21.
- Holland, G 1992. Paul's Root Metaphor: Slavery. *Proceedings* 12, 185-194.
- Hopkins, D C 1985. *The Highlands of Canaan: An Agricultural Life in the Early Iron Age*. Sheffield: JSOT Press/Almond Press (SWBA 3).
- Horne, M P 2003. *Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary: Proverbs-Ecclesiastes*. Macon, Georgia: Smyth & Helwys.

- Horrell, D G 2010a. Introduction, in Horrell, D G, Hunt, C, Southgate, C & Stavrakopoulou, F (eds), *Ecological Hermeneutics: Biblical, Historical and Theological Perspectives*, 1-11. New York: T & T Clark.
- Horrell, D G 2010b. *The Bible and the Environment: Towards a Critical Ecological Biblical Theology*. London: Equinox.
- Hubbard, D A 1989. *The Communicator's Commentary: Proverbs*. Dallas: Word Books.
- Hubbard, D A 1994. Principles of Financial Investment: Ecclesiastes 11:1-8, in Zuck, R B (ed), *Reflecting with Solomon: Selected Studies on the Book of Ecclesiastes*, 341-346. Grand Rapids: Baker Books.
- Hurvitz, A 1974. The Date of the Prose Tale of Job Linguistically Recognised. *HTR* 67, 17-34.
- Israeli Water Law and Water Authorities of 1959. Available online from: [http://www.sviva.gov.il/bin/en.jsp?enPage=e\\_BlankPage&enDisplay=view&enDispWhat=Object&enDispWho=Articals^l2419&enZone=wat\\_law](http://www.sviva.gov.il/bin/en.jsp?enPage=e_BlankPage&enDisplay=view&enDispWhat=Object&enDispWho=Articals^l2419&enZone=wat_law) (Accessed 14 May 2012).
- Issar, A S 1990. *Water Shall Flow from the Rock: Hydrogeology and Climate in the Land of the Bible*. Berlin/Heidelberg: Springer-Verlag.
- Jaussen, J A 1924. Le Coq et la Pluie dans la Tradition Palestinienne. *RB* 33, 574-582.
- Jenney, T P 2000. Water, in Freedman, D N (ed), *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, 1367-69. Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans.
- Johnson, A R 1950. Jonah 2:3-10: A Study in Cultic Phantasy, in Rowley, H H (ed), *Studies in Old Testament Prophecy*, 82-102. Edinburgh: T&T Clark.
- Johnston, P 1994. The Underworld and the Dead in the Old Testament. *Tyndale Bulletin* 45/2, 415-419.
- Johnston, R K 1976. Confession of a Workaholic: A Reappraisal of Qoheleth. *CBQ* 38, 14-28.
- Johnston, B R 2012. Preface, in Johnston, B R (ed), *Water, Cultural Diversity, and Global Environmental Change: Emerging Trends, Sustainable Futures?* xi-xxi. London: UNESCO.
- Jones, T J 1928. *Quelle, Brunnen und Cisternen im Alte Testament*. Leipsig: Pfeiffer.

- Jonker, L 2014. Manasseh in Paradise? The Influence of ANE Palace Garden Imagery in LXX 2 Chronicles 33:20, in Ben Zvi, E & Levin, C (eds), *Thinking of Water in the Early Second Temple Period*, 339-358. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Ikram, S 2010. *Ancient Egypt: An Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kagaracu, N 1976. *Emigani Bali Bantu: Proverbes et Maximes des Bashi*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Bukavu: Libreza.
- Kahn, C 1960. *Anaximander and the Origins of Greek Cosmology*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Kaiser, W C 1980. מָטָר (rain), מַיִם (water), in Harris, R L, Archer, G L, Waltke, B K (eds), *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*. Vol. 1, 500-503. Chicago: Moody Press.
- Kang, S T 1972. Irrigation in Ancient Mesopotamia. *AWRA* 8/3, 619-624.
- Karmon, Y 1971. *Israel: A Regional Geography*. London: Wiley-Interscience.
- Kaufman, Y 1972. *The Religion of Israel* (Trans. by Greenberg, M). New York: Schocken Books.
- Kavusa, K J 2013. *Humans and Ecosystems in the Priestly Creation Account: An Ecological Interpretation of Genesis 1:1-2:4a*. Saarbrücken: Lambert Academic Press.
- Kee, M S 2012. A Study on the Dual Form of Mayim, Water. *JBQ* 40/3, 183-187.
- Kedish, G E 1988. Seasonality and the Name of the Nile. *JARCE* 25, 1985-194.
- Kidner, D 1976. *A Time to Mourn, and a Time to Dance: Ecclesiastes and the Way of the World*. Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press.
- King, P J & Stager, L E 2001. *Life in Biblical Israel*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox (Library of Ancient Israel).
- Kissane, E J 1939. *The Book of Job*. Dublin: Browne & Nolan.
- Klingbell, G A 2006. Water, in Sakenfeld, K D (ed), *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*. Vol. 5, 818-821. Nashville: Abingdon Press.
- Klopper, F 2002a. Oë in Die Wildernis. Die Religiöse Funksie Van Fonteine en Putte in Die Hebreuse Bybel. 'n Godsdienshistoriese Studie. Unpublished DLitt & Phil Thesis. University of South Africa, Pretoria.

- Klopper, F 2002b. The Rhetoric of Conflicting Metaphors: A Fountain Desired in the Song of Songs but Abhorred in Leviticus. *OTE* 15/3, 675-686.
- Klopper, F 2005. Aspects of Creation: The Water in the Wilderness motif in the Psalms and the Prophets. *OTE* 18/2, 253-264.
- Knight, D A 1985. Cosmogony and Order in the Hebrew Tradition, in Lovin, R W & Reynolds, F E (eds), *Cosmogony and Ethical Order*, 133-157. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Koh, Y V 2006. *Royal Autobiography in the Book of Qoheleth*. Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter.
- Köhlenberger III, J R 1991. *The NRSV Concordance Unabridged: Including the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House.
- Köhler, L 1939. Lexikologisch-geographisches: Der Jordan. *ZDPV* 62, 115-120.
- Kolarcik, M 1991. *The Ambiguity of Death in the Book of Wisdom 1-6: A Study of Literary Structure and Interpretation*. Rome: Pontificio Istituto Biblico.
- Kolarcik, M 1997. The Book of Wisdom, in Keck, L E (ed), *The New Interpreter's Bible (NIB): General Articles and Introduction, Commentary and Reflections for Each Book of the Bible including the Apocryphal/Deutero-canonical Books*. Vol. 5, 435-600. Nashville: Abingdon Press.
- Krikmann, AA 1974. *On Denotative Indefiniteness of Proverbs: Remarks on Proverb Semantics* 1. Tallin: Academy of Sciences of the Estonian SSR, Institute of Language and Literature
- Kruger, P A 1987. Promiscuity or Marriage Fidelity? A Note on Proverbs 5:15-18. *JNSL* 13, 61-68.
- Krüger, T 2004. *Qoheleth: A Commentary*. (Trans. by Dean Jr, O C). Minneapolis: Fortress Press.
- Kuhrt, A 2010. *The Persian Empire: A Corpus of Sources from Achaemenid Period*. London: Routledge.
- Lacocque, A 2007. The Deconstruction of Job's Fundamentalism. *JBL* 126/1, 83-97.
- Landy, F 2014. Fluvial Fantasies, in Ben Zvi, E & Levin, C (eds), *Thinking of Water in the Early Second Temple Period*, 436-455. Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter.

- Lauha, A 1955. Die Krise des Religiösen Glaubens bei Kohelet, in Noth, M & Thomas, D W (eds), *Wisdom in Israel and in the Ancient Near East*, 183-191. Leiden: Brill (SVT 3).
- Lavoie, J J 2007. Laisse Aller ton Pain sur la Surface des Eaux: Etudes de Qohélet 11:1-2, in Berlejung, A & Van Hecke, P (eds), *The Language of Qoheleth in Its Context: Essays in Honour of Prof. A. Schoors on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday*, 75-89. Leuven: Peeters Publishers & Department of Oriental Studies.
- Leal, R 2005. Negativity towards Wilderness in the Biblical Record. *Ecotheology*10/3, 368-375.
- Lee, E P 2005. *The Vitality of Enjoyment in Qohelet's Theological Rhetoric*. New York: De Gruyter.
- Lee, N C 2002. *The Singers of Lamentations: Cities under Siege, from Ur to Jerusalem to Sarajevo*. Leiden/Boston/Köln: Brill.
- Letourneau, P 2012. 'Give Me this Water...' The Water of Life in John's Gospel, in Lefebvre, S & Wacker, M T (eds), *Water Marks Our Life*, 58-67. (*Concilium* 2012/5). London: SCM Press (IJT).
- Levin, C 2014a. Introduction, in Ben Zvi, E & Levin, C (eds), *Thinking of Water in the Early Second Temple Period*, 1-11. Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter.
- Levin, C 2014b. Drought and Locust Plague in Joel 1-2, in Ben Zvi, E & Levin, C (eds), *Thinking of Water in the Early Second Temple Period*, 197-228. Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter.
- Lichtheim, M 1973. *Ancient Egyptian Literature* (Vol. 1), Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Lichtheim, M 1979. Observations on Papyrus Insinger, in Hornung, E & Keel, O (eds), *Studien zu Altägyptischen Lebenslehren*, 283-305. Freiburg: Universitätsverlag. (Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 28).
- Lichtheim, M 1980. *Ancient Egyptian Literature*. Vol.3. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Lloyd. A B 2003. The Ptolemaic Period (332–30 BCE), in Shaw, I (ed), *The Oxford History of the Ancient Egypt*, 388–413. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Loader, J A 1979. *Polar Structures in the Book of Qohelet*. Berlin/New York: De Gruyter.
- Loader, J A 1987. Image and Order: Old Testament Perspectives on the Ecological Crisis, in Vorster, W S (ed), *Are We Killing God's Earth? Ecology and Theology: Proceedings of the Eleventh Symposium of The Institute for Theological Research (UNISA) held at the University of South Africa in Pretoria on 2 and 3 September 1987*, 6-29. Pretoria: University of South Africa.
- Loew, C 1967. *Myth, Sacred History and Philosophy*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Brothers.
- Lohfink, N 2003. *Qohelet: A Continental Commentary*. (Trans. by McEvenue, S) Minneapolis: Fortress Press.
- Longman III, T 1998. *The Book of Ecclesiastes*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmann.
- Longman III, T 2006. *Proverbs*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic.
- Longman III, T 2012. *Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms: Job*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic.
- Lord, J L 2012. Texts in Context: The River Flows. *Word & World* 32/1, 63-70.
- Luc, A 2000. Storm and the Message of Job. *JSOT* 87, 111-123.
- Lucas, E 2003. *Exploring the Old Testament: The Psalms and Wisdom Literature*. (Vol. 3). London: SPCK.
- Macauley, D 2010. *Elemental Philosophy: Earth, Air, Fire, and Water as Environmental Ideas*. New York: State University of New York Press.
- MacKenzie, S J 1983. *Sirach*. Wilmington: Michael Glazier. (Old Testament Message 19).
- Makdisi, K 2011. Water Politics, in Mulvaney, D & Rubbins, P (eds), *Green Politics: An A-to-Z Guide*, 429-31. Los Angeles: SAGE. (Green Society).
- Malbim, M L 1973. *The Commentary of Rabbi Meir Leibush Malbim on the Book of Proverbs*. Jerusalem: Feldeim.
- Manser, M H 2007. *The Facts on File Dictionary of Proverbs: Meaning and Origins of More than 1,700 Popular Sayings*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. New York: Facts on File. (FOFLLL).

- Marlow, H 2007. The Lament over the River Nile – Isaiah xix:5-10 in its Wider Context. *VT* 229-242.
- Martin-Achard, R 1956. *De la Mort à la Résurrection*. Neuchâtel: Delachaux et Niestlé.
- May, H G 1955. Some Cosmic Connotations of Mayim Rabbîm, “Many Waters”. *JBL* 74/1, 9-21.
- McCarter, P K 1973. The River Ordeal in Israelite Literature. *HTR* 66/4, 403-412.
- McCann, C J 2012. Between Text and Sermon Psalm 104. *Interpretation: A journal of Bible and Theology* 66/1, 67-69.
- McKane, W 1970. *Proverbs: A New Approach*. London: SCM Press (OTL).
- Mckusick, J M 2010. *Green Writing: Romanticism and Ecology*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Meganck, R A 2012. Foreword: The Water-Culture-Environment Nexus: Practical Lessons from the Field, in Johnston, B R (ed), *Water, Cultural Diversity, and Global Environmental Change: Emerging Trends, Sustainable Futures?* v-ix. London: UNESCO.
- Merrill, E H 1994. *A Historical Survey of the Old Testament*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.
- Metzger, B M 1991 (ed). *The NRSV Exhaustive Concordance: Completed and Unabridged*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.
- Meyer, E E 2011. Respect for Animal Life in the Book of Leviticus: How Green were the Priestly Authors? *OTE* 24/1, 142-158.
- Migliore, D 1991. *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Millard, A R 1984. The Etymology of Eden. *VT* 34, 103-106.
- Millard, A R & Bordreuil, P 1982. A Statue from Syria with Assyrian and Aramaic Inscriptions. *BA* 45, 135-141.
- Min, Y J 1991. How Do the Rivers Flow (Ecclesiastes 1:7). *BT* 42, 226-231.
- Molle, F, Molinga, P P & Meinzen-Dick, R 2008. Water, Politics and Development: Introducing Water Alternatives. *Water Alternatives* 1/1, 1-6.

- Moret, A 1972. *The Nile and Egyptian Civilization*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Moltmann, J 1985. *God in Creation: An Ecological Doctrine of Creation*. London: SCM.
- Morgan, R A & Smith, J L 2013. Premodern Streams of Thought in Twenty-First-Century Water Management. *Radical History Review* 116, 105-129.
- Morris, P 1992. Exiled From Eden: Jewish Interpretations of Genesis, in Morris, P & Sawyer, D (eds), *A Walk in the Garden: Biblical, Iconographical and Literary Images of Eden*, 117-167. Sheffield: JSOT Press.
- Moughtin-Mumby, S 2008. *Sexual and Marital Metaphors in Hosea, Jeremiah, Isaiah and Ezekiel*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Muilenberg, J 1954. A Qoheleth Scroll from Qumran. *BASOR* 135, 20-28.
- Murphy, R E 1969. The Interpretation of Old Testament Wisdom Literature. *Interpretation* 23, 289-301.
- Murphy, R E 1990. *The Tree of Life: An Exploration of Biblical Wisdom Literature*. 3<sup>rd</sup> edn. Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans.
- Murphy, R E 1992. *Ecclesiastes*. Waco, Texas: Word (WBC 23A).
- Naidu-Hoffmeester, R 2014. South Africa's Water Resource Under Immense Pressure. Available Online from [www.unisa.ac.za/news&media.htm](http://www.unisa.ac.za/news&media.htm) (Accessed 16 April 2014).
- Newsom, C A 1997. The Book of Job, in Keck, L E (ed), *The New Interpreter's Bible (NIB): General Articles and Introduction, Commentary and Reflections for Each Book of the Bible including the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books in Twelve Volumes*. Vol. IV, 317-638. Nashville: Abingdon Press.
- Newsom, C A 2003. *The Book of Job: A Contest of Moral Imaginations*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Nõmmik, U 2014. Thinking of Water in the Book of Job: A Fluvial Introduction to the Job Literature, in Ben Zvi, E & Levin, C (eds), *Thinking of Water in the Early Second Temple Period*, 279-298. Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter.
- Obermann, J 1938. Wind, Water, and Light in an Archaic Inscription from Sichem. *JBL* 57/3, 239-253.

- Ogden, G S 1983. Qoheleth XI:1-6. *VT* 33/2, 222-230.
- Ogden, G S 1987. *Qoheleth*. Sheffield: JSOT Press.
- Olley, J 2000. Mixed Blessing for Animals: The Contrasts of Genesis 9, in Habel, N C & Wurst, S (eds), *The Earth Story in Genesis*, 130-139. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.
- Orni, E, & Efrat, E 1973. *Geography of Israel*. 3rd edn. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Socosociety.
- Patai, R 1939. The Control of Rain in Ancient Palestine: A Study in Comparative Religion. *HUCA* 14, 251-286.
- Patrick, D 2001. Divine Creative Power and the Decentring of Creation: The Subtext of the Lord's Addresses to Job, in Habel, N C & Wurst, S (eds), *The Earth Story in Wisdom Traditions*, 103-115. Sheffield/Cleveland: Sheffield Academic Press/Pilgrim Press.
- Pearl, C 1996. *The Encyclopaedia of Jewish Life and Thought. Revised and Expanded from the Hebrew Editions*. Jerusalem: Carta.
- Pedersen, J 1940. *Israel, its Life and Culture (parts I-II)*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Perdue, L G 1994. *Wisdom and Creation: The Theology of Wisdom Literature*. Nashville: Abingdon Press.
- Perdue, L G 2000. *Proverbs: Interpretation. A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*. Louisville: John Knox Press.
- Perdue, L G 2007. *Wisdom Literature: A Theological History*. London/Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press.
- Perez, C 2012. Rainstorm or Lightning. Available online from: <http://yourshot.nationalgeographic.com/photos/3896718/> (Accessed 11 August 2014).
- Perry, T A 1993a. *Dialogue with Kohelet: The Book of Ecclesiastes, Translation and Commentary*. Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Perry, T A 1993b. *Wisdom Literature and the Structure of Proverbs*. Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press.

- Person, R & Stroede, P 2011. The Story of Jonah as Retold by the Sea, in Habel, N C & Trudinger, P (eds), *Water: A Matter of life and Death*, 73-80. Adelaide: ATF. (*Interface Journal*, Vol. 14/1).
- Peters, J P 1914. The Cock in the Old Testament. *JBL* 33/2, 152-156.
- Petrova, R 2003. Comparing proverbs as cultural texts, in Mieder, W (ed), *Proverbium: Yearbook of International Proverb Scholarship*. Vol. 20, 331-344.
- Pope, M H 1973. *Job*. New York: Doubleday.
- Prinsloo, G T M 2003. Historical reality and mythological metaphor in Psalm 124. *OTE* 18/3: 790-810.
- Propp, W H 1987. *Water in the Wilderness: A Biblical Motif and its Mythological Background*. Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press. (HSM 40).
- Pulpit's Commentary on Proverbs 25. Available online from: <http://biblehub.com/commentaries/pulpit/proverbs/25.htm> (Accessed 11 August 2014).
- Rahlf, A 1979 (ed). *Septuaginta*. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft.
- Rasmussen, C 1989. *The Zondervan NIV Atlas of the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House.
- Reese, J M 1965. Plan and Structure in the Book of Wisdom. *CBQ* 27/4, 391-399.
- Reese, J M 1970. *Hellenistic Influence on the Book of Wisdom and Its Consequences*. Rome: Biblical Institute Press.
- Reese, J M 1990. Can Paul Ricoeur's Method Contribute to Interpreting the Book of Wisdom? in Gilbert, M (ed), *La Sagesse de l'Ancien Testament : Nouvelle Édition Mise à Jour*, 384-396. Leuven: Leuven University Press.
- Reider, J 1957. *The Book of Wisdom*. New York: Harper & Brothers.
- Resane, T 2010. The Theological Responses to the Socio-Economic Activities that Undermine Water as a Resource. *HTS* 66/1, 1-7.
- Reymond, E. The Book of Ben Sira (ספר בן סירא). Available Online From: <http://www.bensira.org/navigator.php?Manuscript=Masada&PageNum=6> (Accessed 25 June 2015).
- Reymond, P 1958. *L'eau, sa Vie et sa Signification dans l'Ancien Testament*. Leiden: Brill. (VTSup VI).

- Richard, J 2005. Water, Justice and Community Building – An Old Testament Perspective, in Mathew, S P & Martin, C P (eds), *Waters of Life and Death: Ethical and Theological Responses to Contemporary Water Crises*, 214-240. Chennai: UELCI/SPCK.
- Ricoeur, P 1974. Philosophy and Religious Language. *JR* 54, 71-85.
- Ricoeur, P 1975. Biblical Hermeneutics. *Semeia* 4, 29-145.
- Ricoeur, P 1976. *Interpretation Theory: The Surplus of Meaning*. Fort Worth: Texas Christian Press.
- Roberts, J J M 1977. Job and the Israelite Religious Tradition. *ZAW* 89, 107-114.
- Rogers, J F 1996. Wisdom and Creation in Sirach 24. *JNSL* 22/2, 141-156.
- Rogland, M 2010. Interpreting תַּיִם in Genesis 2:5-6: Neglected Rabbinic and Intertextual Evidence. *JSOT* 34, 379-392.
- Ross, M M 2007. Water for Life, Water of Life and Water as Life: Meaning and Symbol in Theology, in John, V J (ed), *Water Struggle*, 80-101. Kolkata: Bishop's College.
- Rousseau, F 1981. Structure de Qohelet 1:4-11 et le Plan du Livre. *VT* 31/2, 200-217.
- Rudman, D 2001a. The Use of Water Imagery in Descriptions of Sheol. *ZAW* 113, 240-244.
- Rudman, D 2001b. *Determinism in the Book of Ecclesiastes*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press. JSOTSup.
- Rudman, D 2003. Water for impurity or water of impurity? The red cow of Numbers 19 revisited. *OTE* 16/1, 73-78.
- Rüterswoden, U 1998. Erwägungen zur Alttestamentlichen Paradiesvorstellungen. *ThlZ* 123/12, 1153-1162.
- Samet, N 2014. Qohelet 1,4 and the Structure of the Book's Prologue. *ZAW* 126/1, 92-100.
- Sachs, G 2006. Why Shamayim as Sky. *JBQ* 34/2, 130.
- Samuel, J 2005. Towards a Biblical Understanding of Water, in Mathew, S P & Martin, C P (eds), *Waters of Life and Death: Ethical and Theological Responses to Contemporary Water Crises*, 207-213. Chennai: UELCI/SPCK.

- Sandelin, K G 1986. *Wisdom as Nourisher: A Study of an Old Testament Theme, its Development within Early Judaism and its Impact on Early Christianity*. Abo: ÅboAkademi. (AAA, series A. Vol 64/3).
- Sandars, N 1972. *The Epic of Gilgamesh*. Baltimore, Maryland: Penguin Books.
- Schifferdecker, K 2008. *Out of the Whirlwind: Creation Theology in the Book of Job*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press (Harvard Theological Studies 61).
- Schmid, H H 1984. Creation, Righteousness, and Salvation: Creation Theology as the Broad Horizon of Biblical Theology, in Anderson, B W (ed), *Creation in the Old Testament*, 102-117. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.
- Shanks, H 1984. Ancient Water Systems. *BAR* 10/3, 49-54.
- Schökel, L A & Díaz, J L 1983. *Job: Commentario Teológico Y Literario*. Madrid: Cristiandad.
- Scott, R B Y 1965. *Proverbs. Ecclesiastes*. Garden City: Doubleday.
- Seow, C L 1997. *Ecclesiastes: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. New Haven/London: Yale University Press. (AYB).
- Sharp, C J 2004. Ironic Representation, Authorial Voice, and Meaning in Qohelet. *Biblical Interpretation* 12/1, 37-68.
- Shavit, Y & Eran, M 2007. *The Hebrew Bible Reborn: From Scripture to the Book of Books* (Tran. by Naor, C). Berlin/New York: De Gruyter (Studia Judaica 38).
- Sheppard, G T 1980. *Wisdom as A Hermeneutical Construct: A Study in the Sapientializing of the Old Testament*. Berlin/New York: De Gruyter.
- Simkins, R 1991. *Yahweh's Activity in History and Nature in the Book of Joel*. Lewiston/Queenston/Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press. (ANETS 10).
- Singgih, E G 2012. An Alternative Creation Belief: An Interpretation of Job 36:26-37:13, in Van Der Borgh, E & Van Geest, P (eds), *Strangers and Pilgrims on Earth: Essays in Honour of Abraham Van de Beek*, 683-695. Leiden/Boston: Brill. (Studies in Reformed Theology, 22).
- Sinnott, A M 2001. Job 12: Cosmic Devastation and Social Turmoil, in Habel, N C & Wurst, S (eds), *The Earth Story in Wisdom Traditions*, 78-91. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press. (The Earth Bible 3).
- Skehan, P W 1945. The Text and Structure of the Book of Wisdom. *Traditio* 3, 1-12.

- Skehan, P W 1946. Proverbs 5:15-19 and 6:20-24. *CBQ* 8/3, 290-297.
- Skehan, P W 1979. Structure in Poems on Wisdom: Proverbs 8 and Sirach 24. *CBQ* 41/3, 365-379.
- Skehan, P & Di Lella, A A 1987. *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*. New Haven/London, Yale University Press (The Anchor Yale Bible).
- Snaith, J G 1974. *Ecclesiasticus or the Wisdom of Jesus Son of Sirach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sneed, M R 2012. *The Politics of Pessimism in Ecclesiastes: A Social-Science Perspective*. Atlanta: SBL.
- Sparks, K L 2007. Enuma Elish and Priestly Mimesis: Elite Emulation in Nascent Judaism. *JBL* 126/4, 625-648.
- Spangenberg, I J J 1996. Irony in the Book of Qoheleth. *JSOT* 72, 57-69.
- Springs in the Bible. Available online from:  
[http://www.biblehistory.com/links.php?cat=39&sub=793&cat\\_name=Manners+%26+Customs&subcat\\_name=Springs+%26+Fountains](http://www.biblehistory.com/links.php?cat=39&sub=793&cat_name=Manners+%26+Customs&subcat_name=Springs+%26+Fountains) (Accessed 11 August 2014).
- Stolen water is sweet: Online Pulpit's commentary on Proverbs 9:17. Available from:  
<http://biblehub.com/commentaries/pulpit/proverbs/9.htm> (Accessed 07 July 2014).
- Stordalen, T 2000. *Echoes of Eden: Genesis 2-3 and the Eden Garden in Biblical Hebrew Literature*. Leuven: Peeters.
- Strong, J 1999. *Strong's Hebrew Dictionary*. Albany: Books for the Ages.
- Stronach, D 1989. The Persian Gardens. Available online from:  
[www.heritageinstitute.com/zoroastriannism/garden/index.htm#overview](http://www.heritageinstitute.com/zoroastriannism/garden/index.htm#overview)  
 (Accessed 10 May 2015).
- Sutcliffe, E F 1953. The Clouds as Water-Carriers in Hebrew Thought. *VT* 3/1, 99-103.
- Sylva, D 2012. The Rising נהרות of Psalm 93: The Chaotic Order. *JSOT* 36/4, 471-482.
- Sweeney, M A 2012. *TANAK: A Theological and Critical Introduction to the Jewish Bible*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.

- Tcherikover, V A 1972. Hellenistic Palestine, in Abraham, S (ed), *The Hellenistic Age*, 53–144. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press. (World History of the Jewish People 7).
- Terblanche, M D 2004. An Abundance of Living Waters: The Intertextual Relationship Between Zechariah 14:8 and Ezekiel 47:1-12. *OTE* 17/1, 120-129.
- The Earth Bible Team 2000. Guiding Ecojustice Principles, in Habel, N C (ed), *Reading From the Perspective of Earth*, 38-53. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.
- Tompson, H O & Zayadine, F 1973. The Tell Siran Inscription. *BASOR* 212, 5-11.
- Towner, W S 1997. The Book of Ecclesiastes, in Keck, L E (ed), *The New Interpreter's Bible (NIB): General Articles and Introduction, Commentary and Reflections for Each Book of the Bible including the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books in Twelve Volumes*. Vol. V, 265-360. Nashville: Abingdon Press.
- Toy, C H 1977. *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Proverbs*. Edinburgh: T & T Clark.
- Tsumura, D T 1989. *The Earth and the Waters in Genesis 1 and 2: A Linguistic Investigation*. Sheffield: JSOT Press. (JSOTSup 83).
- Tsumura, D T 2000. Water, in Alexander, T D & Rosner, B S (eds), *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, 840-41. Leicester/ Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press.
- Tsumura, D T 2010. A Biblical Theology of Water: Plenty, Food and Drought in the Created Order, in Toly, N J & D I Block (eds), *Keeping God's Earth: The Global Environment in Biblical Perspective*, 165-184. Downers Grove/Nottingham: InterVarsity Press/Appolos.
- Tucker, G M 1997. Rain on A Land Where No-One Lives: The Hebrew Bible on the Environment. *JBL* 116/1, 3-17.
- Tur-Sinai, N H 1967. *The Book of Job*. Jerusalem: Kiriath Sepher.
- UNESCO. Water issues. Available Online from:  
[http://www.unesco.org/water/water\\_links/Water\\_Issues/](http://www.unesco.org/water/water_links/Water_Issues/) (Accessed 6 June 2013).

- United Nations Environmental Program (2011). 50 million people lack clean water to drink in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Available from: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=37850&Cr=dr+congo&Cr1> (Accessed 22 March 2012).
- Vall, G 1995. From Whose Womb Did the Ice Come Forth? Procreation Images in Job 38:28-29. *CBQ* 57, 504-513.
- Van As, J, Du Preez, J, Brown, L & Smit, N 2012. *The Story of Life and the Environment: An African Perspective*. Cape Town: Struik Nature.
- Van der Ploeg, J P M 1953. Prov. 25:23. *VT* 3/1, 189-191.
- Van der Toorn, K 2007. *Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Van Dyk, P J 2001. *A Brief History of Creation*. Pretoria: UNISA Press.
- Van Dyk, P J 2009. Challenges in the Search for an Ecotheology. *OTE* 22/1, 186-204.
- Van Hecke, P 2011. *From Linguistics to Hermeneutics: A Functional and Cognitive Approach to Job 12-14*. Leiden: Brill (SSN 55).
- Van Heerden, S W 2005. Norman Habel se Interpretasie van Genesis 1:1-2:4a binne die Raamwerk van die Earth Bible Project. *OTE* 18/2, 371-393.
- Van Heerden, S W 2009. Taking Stock of Old Testament Scholarship on Environmental Issues in South Africa: The Main Contributions and Challenges. *OTE* 22/3, 695-718.
- Van Heerden, S W 2014. Ecological Interpretations of the Jonah Narrative – Have They Succeeded in Overcoming Anthropocentrism. *Journal for Semitics* 23/1, 114-134.
- Van Leeuwen, R C 1988. Context and Meaning in Proverbs 25-27. Atlanta: Scholar Press. (SBL Diss. 96).
- Van Leeuwen, R C 1997. The Book of Proverbs, in Keck, L E (ed), *The New Interpreter's Bible (NIB): General Articles and Introduction, Commentary and Reflections for Each Book of the Bible including the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books in Twelve Volumes*. Vol. 5, 17-264. Nashville: Abingdon Press.

- Van Paridon, S 2005. *The Song of Songs: A Philological Analysis of the Hebrew Book* שִׁיר הַשִּׁירִים. Louvain/Paris/Dudley: Peeters. (Ancient Near Eastern Studies Supplement 17).
- Van Seters, J 2011. Myth and History and the Problem of Origins, in *Changing Perspectives I: Studies in the History, Literature and Religion of Biblical Israel*, 270-283. London: Equinox.
- Van Wolde, E 1998. Facing the Earth: Primeval History in a New Perspective, in Davies, P R & Clines, D J A (eds), *The World of Genesis. Persons, Places, Perspectives*, 22-47. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.
- Wawter, B 1980. Proverbs 8:22: Wisdom and Creation. *JBL* 99/2, 205-216.
- Verheij, A 1991. Paradise Retried: On Qohelet 2:4-6. *JSOT* 50, 113-115.
- von Rad, G 1966. *Deuteronomy*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press.
- von Rad, G 1972. *Wisdom in Israel*. (Trans. by Martin, J D). London: SCM Press.
- von Rad, G 1984. The Theological Problem of the Old Testament Doctrine of creation, in *The Problem of The Hexateuch and Other Essays*, 131-143. (Trans. by Dicken, E W T). London: SCM Press.
- Walls, R C 1957. Wash, Water & Unclean: Water, Drink, Fountain, Sea & Wash, in Richardson, A (ed), *A Theological Word Book*, 279-281. London: SCM Press.
- Walter, E 2008 (ed). *The Cambridge Advanced Learners' Dictionary*. 3<sup>rd</sup> edn. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Waltke, B K 2004. *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1-15*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. (NICOT).
- Waltke, B K 2005. *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 15-31*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans. (NICOT).
- Waltke, B K & O'Connor, M 1990. *An introduction to the Hebrew Syntax*. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns.
- Waters, L J 1999. The Authenticity of the Elihu Speeches in Job 32-37. *BS* 156, 28-41.
- Watson, R S 2005. *Chaos Uncreated: A Reassessment of the Theme of 'Chaos' in the Hebrew Bible*. Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter.

- Weeks, S 2007. *Instruction and Imagery in Proverbs 1-9*. Oxford: Oxford Scholarship Online (DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199291540.001.0001).
- Wenham, G J 1987. *Genesis 1-15*. Waco, Texas: Word (WBC 1).
- Westermann, C 1981. *The Structure of the Book of Job*. Philadelphia: Fortress.
- White, L 1967. The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis. *Science* 155, 1203-7.
- Whitwell, C 2009. The Variation of Nature in Ecclesiastes 11. *JSOT* 34/1, 81-98.
- Whybray, R N 1982. Qoheleth, Preacher of Joy. *JSOT* 23, 87-98.
- Whybray, R N 1988. Ecclesiastes 1:5-7 and the Wonders of Nature. *JSOT* 41, 105-112.
- Whybray, R N 1989. *Ecclesiastes*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Whybray, R N 1994a. Ecclesiastes 1:5-7 and the Wonders of Nature, in Zuck, R B (ed), *Reflecting with Solomon: Selected Studies on the Book of Ecclesiastes*, 233-240. Grand Rapids: Baker House.
- Whybray, R N 1994b. *The Composition of the Book of Proverbs*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press (JSOTSup 168).
- Willis, J T 1987. Alternating (ABA'B') Parallelism in the Old Testament, in Follis, E R (ed), *Directions in Biblical Hebrew Poetry*, 49-76. Sheffield: JSOT Press.
- Wilson, E O 2006. *Creation: An Appeal to Save Life on Earth*. New York: Norton & Co.
- Wilson, G H 2007. *Job: New International Biblical Commentary*. Peabody: Hendrickson.
- Wilson, L 1998. Artful Ambiguity in Ecclesiastes 1:1-11, in Schoors, A (ed), *Qoheleth in the Context of Wisdom*, 357-366. Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters.
- Winston, D 1971. The Book of Wisdom's Theory of Cosmogony. *History of Religions*. 11/22, 185-202.
- Winston, D 1979. *The Book of Wisdom of Solomon*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday.
- Wisdom, T 1987. The Message of Elihu: Job 32-37. *Biblical Viewpoint* 21, 27-35.
- Wittenberg, G 2007. Plant and Animal Rights – An Absurd Idea or Ecological Necessity: Perspective from the Hebrew Torah, in *Resistance Theology in the*

- Old Testament*, 157-171. Collected Essays by G Wittenberg. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications.
- Wittenberg, G 2010. In Search of the Right Metaphor: A Response to Peet van Dyk's 'Challenges in the Search for an Ecotheology.' Part One: Metaphor and Dominion. *OTE* 23/2, 427-453.
- Woods, F E 1994. *Water and Storm Polemics Against Baalism in the Deuteronomistic History*. Frankfurt am Main/Berlin/Wien/Paris: Peter Lang (AUS).
- World Bank, 2004. *Water Resources Sector Strategy: Strategic Directions for World Bank Engagement*. Washington: The World Bank.
- Wright, A G 1967. The Structure of the Book of Wisdom. *Biblica* 48/2, 165-184.
- WWF. The Facts of Water in Africa. Available Online from:  
[www.panda.org/livingwaters](http://www.panda.org/livingwaters) (Accessed 14 December 2013).
- Yadin, Y 1965. *The Ben Sira Scroll from Masada: With Introduction, Emendations and Commentary*. Jerusalem: The Israel Exploration Society.
- Yee, G A 1989. 'I Have Perfumed my Bed with Myrrh': the Foreign Woman ('iššā zārâ) in Proverbs 1-9. *JSOT* 43, 53-68.
- Yohannes, O 2008. *Water Resources and Inter-Riparian Relationship in the Nile Basin: The Search for an Integrative Discourse*. Albany: State University of New York.

## APPENDIX A: REFERENCES TO WATER AND WATER-RELATED PHENOMENA IN THE OLD TESTAMENT WISDOM BOOKS<sup>465</sup>

### 1. WATER(S)

**Job 3:24** For my sighing comes like my bread, and my groanings are poured out like **waters**.

**Job 5:10** He gives **rain** on the earth and sends **waters** on the fields;

**Job 8:11** "Can papyrus grow where there is no marsh? Can reeds flourish where there is no water?"

**Job 11:16** You will forget your misery; you will remember it as **waters** that have passed away.

**Job 12:15** If he withholds the **waters**, they dry up; if he sends them out, they overwhelm the land.

**Job 14:11** As **waters** fail from a lake, and a **river** wastes away and **dries up**,....

**Job 14:9** yet at the scent of **water** it will bud and put forth branches like a young plant.

**Job 14:19** the **waters** wear away the stones; the torrents wash away the soil of the earth; so you destroy the hope of mortals.

**Job 15:16** how much less one who is abominable and corrupt, one who drinks iniquity like water!

**Job 22:7** You have given no **water** to the weary to drink, and you have withheld bread from the hungry.

**Job 22:11** or darkness so that you cannot see; a flood of water covers you.

**Job 24:18** Swift are they on the face of the **waters**; their portion in the land is cursed; no treader turns toward their vineyards.

**Job 24:19** **Drought** and heat snatch away the snow **waters**; so does **Sheol** those who have sinned.

**Job 26:5** The shades below tremble, the **waters** and their inhabitants.

**Job 26:8** He binds up the **waters** in his thick **clouds**, and the cloud is not torn open by them.

**Job 26:10** He has described a circle on the face of the waters, at the boundary between light and darkness

**Job 27:20** Terrors overtake them like a flood; in the night a whirlwind carries them off.

---

<sup>465</sup> These references might not be exhaustive.

**Job 28:4** They open shafts in a valley away from human habitation; they are forgotten by travelers, they sway suspended, remote from people.

**Job 28:25** When he gave to the wind its weight, and apportioned out the waters by measure;

**Job 29:19** my roots spread out to the waters, with the dew all night on my branches;

**Job 30:14** As through a wide breach they come; amid the crash they roll on.

**Job 34:7** Who is there like Job, who drinks up scoffing like water,

**Job 36:27** For he draws up the drops of water; he distills his mist in rain,

**Job 37:10** By the breath of God ice is given, and the broad waters are frozen fast.

**Job 38:25** Who has cut a channel for the torrents of rain, and a way for the thunderbolt,

**Job 38:30** The waters become hard like stone, and the face of the deep is frozen.

**Job 38:34** Can you lift up your voice to the clouds, so that a flood of waters may cover you?

**Proverbs 5:15** Drink water from your own cistern, flowing water from your own well.

**Proverbs 5:16** Should your springs be scattered abroad, streams of water in the streets?

**Proverbs 8:24** When there were no depths I was brought forth, when there were no springs abounding with water.

**Proverbs 8:29** when he assigned to the sea its limit, so that the waters might not transgress his command, when he marked out the foundations of the earth,

**Proverbs 9:17** "Stolen water is sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant."

**Proverbs 11:25** A generous person will be enriched, and one who gives water will get water.

**Proverbs 17:14** The beginning of strife is like letting out water; so stop before the quarrel breaks out.

**Proverbs 18:4** The words of the mouth are deep waters; the fountain of wisdom is a gushing stream.

**Proverbs 20:5** The purposes in the human mind are like deep water, but the intelligent will draw them out.

**Proverbs 21:1** The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD; he turns it wherever he will.

**Proverbs 25:21** If your enemies are hungry, give them bread to eat; and if they are thirsty, give them water to drink;

**Proverbs 25:25** Like cold water to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country.

**Proverbs 27:19** Just as water reflects the face, so one human heart reflects another.

**Proverbs 30:4** Who has ascended to heaven and come down? Who has gathered the wind in the hollow of the hand? Who has wrapped up the waters in a garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is the person's name? And what is the name of the person's child? Surely you know!

**Proverbs 30:16** Sheol, the barren womb, the earth ever thirsty for water, and the fire that never says, "Enough."

**Ecclesiastes 2:6** I made myself pools from which to water the forest of growing trees.

**Ecclesiastes 11:1** Send out your bread upon the waters, for after many days you will get it back.

**Wisdom 5:10** like a **ship** that sails through the billowy **water**, and when it has passed no trace can be found, no track of its keel in the **waves**;

**Wisdom 5:22** and hailstones full of wrath will be hurled as from a catapult; the water of the sea will rage against them, and rivers will relentlessly overwhelm them;

**Wisdom 10:18** She brought them over the Red Sea, and led them through deep **waters**;

**Wisdom 11:4** When they were thirsty, they called upon you, and water was given them out of flinty rock, and from hard stone a remedy for their **thirst**.

**Wisdom 11:7** in rebuke for the decree to kill the infants, you gave them abundant **water** unexpectedly,

**Wisdom 13:2** but they supposed that either fire or wind or swift air, or the circle of the stars, or turbulent water, or the luminaries of heaven were the gods that rule the world.

**Wisdom 16:17** For – most incredible of all – in **water**, which quenches all things, the fire had still greater effect, for the universe defends the righteous.

**Wisdom 16:19** and at another time even in the midst of water it burned more intensely than fire, to destroy the crops of the unrighteous land.

**Wisdom 16:29** for the hope of an ungrateful person will melt like wintry frost, and flow away like waste water.

**Wisdom 17:18** Whether there came a whistling wind, or a melodious sound of birds in wide-spreading branches, or the rhythm of violently rushing water,

**Wisdom 19:7** The cloud was seen overshadowing the camp, and dry land emerging where water had stood before, an unhindered way out of the Red Sea, and a grassy plain out of the raging waves,

**Wisdom 19:19** For land animals were transformed into water creatures, and creatures that swim moved over to the land.

**Wisdom 19:20** Fire even in water retained its normal power, and water forgot its fire-quenching nature.

**Sirach 39:17** No one can say, 'What is this?' or 'Why is that?'— for at the appointed time all such questions will be answered. At his word the waters stood in a heap, and the reservoirs of water at the word of his mouth.

**Sirach 3:30** As water extinguishes a blazing fire, so almsgiving atones for sin.

**Sirach 15:3** She will feed him with the bread of learning, and give him the water of wisdom to drink.

**Sirach 15:16** He has placed before you fire and water; stretch out your hand for whichever you choose.

**Sirach 18:10** Like a drop of water from the sea and a grain of sand, so are a few years among the days of eternity.

**Sirach 24:14** I grew tall like a palm tree in En-gedi, and like rosebushes in Jericho; like a fair olive tree in the field, and like a plane tree beside water I grew tall.

**Sirach 24:30** As for me, I was like a canal from a river, like a water channel into a garden.

**Sirach 24:31** I said, "I will water my garden and drench my flower-beds." And lo, my canal became a river, and my river a sea.

**Sirach 25:25** Allow no outlet to water, and no boldness of speech to an evil wife.

**Sirach 26:12** As a thirsty traveler opens his mouth and drinks from any water near him, so she will sit in front of every tent peg and open her quiver to the arrow.

**Sirach 29:21** The necessities of life are water, bread, and clothing, and also a house to assure privacy.

**Sirach 38:5** Was not water made sweet with a tree in order that its power might be known?

**Sirach 39:13** Listen to me, my faithful children, and blossom like a rose growing by a stream of water.

**Sirach 39:26** The basic necessities of human life are water and fire and iron and salt and wheat flour and milk and honey, the blood of the grape and oil and clothing.

**Sirach 40:16** The reeds by any water or river bank are plucked up before any grass;

**Sirach 43:20** The cold north wind blows, and ice freezes on the water; it settles on every pool of water, and the water puts it on like a breastplate.

**Sirach 48:17** Hezekiah fortified his city, and brought water into its midst; he tunneled the rock with iron tools, and built cisterns for the water.

**Sirach 50:3** In his days a water cistern was dug, a reservoir like the sea in circumference.

**Sirach 50:8** like roses in the days of first fruits, like lilies by a spring of water, like a green shoot on Lebanon on a summer day;

## 2. THE DEEP

**Proverbs 8:27** When he established the heavens, I was there, when he drew a circle on the face of the deep,

**Proverbs 8:28** when he made firm the skies above, when he established the fountains of the deep,

**Proverbs 18:4** The words of the mouth are deep waters; the fountain of wisdom is a gushing stream.

**Sirach 43:23** By his plan he stilled the **deep** and planted islands in it.

## 3. THE SEA/OCEAN

**Job 3:8** Let those curse it who curse the Sea, those who are skilled to rouse up Leviathan.

**Job 6:3** For then it would be heavier than the sand of the sea; therefore my words have been rash.

**Job 7:12** Am I the Sea, or the Dragon, that you set a guard over me?

**Job 9:8** who alone stretched out the heavens and trampled the **waves** of the **Sea**;

**Job 11:9** Its measure is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea.

**Job 12:8** ask the plants of the earth, and they will teach you; and the **fish** of the **sea** will declare to you.

**Job 26:12** By his power he stilled the **Sea**; by his understanding he struck down **Rahab**.

**Job 28:14** The **deep** says, 'It is not in me,' and the **sea** says, 'It is not with me.'

**Job 36:30** See, he scatters his lightning around him and covers the roots of the **sea**.

**Job 38:8** Or who shut in the sea with doors when it burst out from the womb?

**Job 38:16** Have you entered into the springs of the **sea**, or walked in the recesses of the **deep**?

**Job 41:31** It makes the deep boil like a pot; it makes the sea like a pot of ointment.

**Proverbs 8:29** when he assigned to the sea its limit, so that the waters might not transgress his command, when he marked out the foundations of the earth,

**Proverbs 23:34** You will be like one who lies down in the midst of the sea, like one who lies on the top of a mast.

**Ecclesiastes 1:7** All streams run to the sea, but the sea is not full; to the place where the streams flow, there they continue to flow.

**Wisdom 5:22** and hailstones full of wrath will be hurled as from a catapult; the **water** of the **sea** will rage against them, and **rivers** will relentlessly overwhelm them;

**Wisdom 10:18** She brought them over the **Red Sea**, and led them through **deep waters**;

**Wisdom 10:19** but she drowned their enemies, and cast them up from the depth of the sea.

**Wisdom 14:3** but it is your providence, O Father, that steers its course, because you have given it a path in the sea, and a safe way through the waves,

**Wisdom 14:4** showing that you can save from every danger, so that even a person who lacks skill may put to sea.

**Wisdom 19:7** The cloud was seen overshadowing the camp, and dry land emerging where water had stood before, an unhindered way out of the Red Sea, and a grassy plain out of the raging waves,

**Wisdom 19:12** for, to give them relief, quails came up from the sea.

**Sirach 1:2** The sand of the sea, the drops of rain, and the days of eternity-- who can count them?

**Sirach 24:6** Over waves of the sea, over all the earth, and over every people and nation I have held sway.

**Sirach 24:29** For her thoughts are more abundant than the sea, and her counsel deeper than the great abyss.

**Sirach 24:31** I said, "I will water my garden and drench my flower-beds." And lo, my canal became a river, and my river a sea.

**Sirach 29:18** Being surety has ruined many who were prosperous, and has tossed them about like waves of the sea; it has driven the influential into exile, and they have wandered among foreign nations.

**Sirach 43:24** Those who sail the sea tell of its dangers, and we marvel at what we hear.

**Sirach 44:21** Therefore the Lord assured him with an oath that the nations would be blessed through his offspring; that he would make him as numerous as the dust of the earth, and exalt his offspring like the stars, and give them an inheritance from sea to sea and from the Euphrates to the ends of the earth.

**Sirach 50:3** In his days a water cistern was dug, a reservoir like the sea in circumference.

#### 4. WAVES/SHIP

**Wisdom 5:10** like a **ship** that sails through the billowy **water**, and when it has passed no trace can be found, no track of its keel in the **waves**;

**Wisdom 14:1** Again, one preparing to sail and about to voyage over **raging waves** calls upon a piece of wood more fragile than the **ship** that carries him.

**Wisdom 14:3** but it is your providence, O Father, that steers its course, because you have given it a path in the **sea**, and a safe way through the **waves**,

**Wisdom 19:7** The **cloud** was seen overshadowing the camp, and **dry land** emerging where **water** had stood before, an unhindered way out of the **Red Sea**, and a grassy plain out of the **raging waves**,

**Sirach 24:6** Over **waves of the sea**, over all the earth, and over every people and nation I have held sway.

**Sirach 29:18** Being surety has ruined many who were prosperous, and has tossed them about **like waves of the sea**; it has driven the influential into exile, and they have wandered among foreign nations.

## 5. STREAM

**Proverbs 5:16** Should your springs be scattered abroad, **streams of water** in the streets?

**Proverbs 18:4** The words of the mouth are **deep waters**; the fountain of wisdom is a gushing **stream**.

**Proverbs 21:1** The king's heart is a **stream of water** in the hand of the LORD; he turns it wherever he will.

**Ecclesiastes 1:7** All **streams** run to the sea, but the sea is not full; to the place where the **streams** flow, there they continue to flow.

**Sirach 39:13** Listen to me, my faithful children, and blossom like a rose growing by a **stream of water**.

## 6. RIVERS

**Job 14:11** As **waters** fail from a **lake**, and a **river** wastes away and **dries up**,

**Job 20:17** They will not look on the rivers, the streams flowing with honey and curds.

**Job 28:11** The sources of the rivers they probe; hidden things they bring to light.

**Job 33:18** to spare their souls from the Pit, their lives from traversing the **River**.

**Job 40:23** Even if the river is turbulent, it is not frightened; it is confident though Jordan rushes against its mouth.

**Wisdom 11:6** Instead of the **fountain** of an **ever-flowing river**, stirred up and defiled with blood

**Wisdom 19:10** For they still recalled the events of their sojourn, how instead of producing animals the earth brought forth gnats, and instead of **fish the river** spewed out vast numbers of frogs.

**Wisdom 5:22** and hailstones full of wrath will be hurled as from a catapult; the water of the sea will rage against them, and rivers will relentlessly overwhelm them;

**Sirach 4:26** Do not be ashamed to confess your sins, and do not try to stop the current of a river.

**Sirach 24:30** As for me, I was like a canal from a river, like a water channel into a garden.

**Sirach 24:31** I said, "I will water my garden and drench my flower-beds." And lo, my canal became a river, and my **river a sea**.

**Sirach 39:22** "His blessing covers the dry land like a **river**, and drenches it like a flood.

**Sirach 40:13** The wealth of the unjust will dry up like a **river**, and crash like a loud clap of thunder in a storm.

**Sirach 40:16** The reeds by any water or **river bank** are plucked up before any grass;

## 7. FOUNTAIN

**Proverbs 5:18** Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth,

**Proverbs 8:28** when he made firm the skies above, when he established the fountains of the deep,

**Proverbs 10:11** The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life, but the mouth of the wicked conceals violence.

**Proverbs 13:14** The teaching of the wise is a fountain of life, so that one may avoid the snares of death.

**Proverbs 14:27** The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, so that one may avoid the snares of death.

**Proverbs 16:22** Wisdom is a fountain of life to one who has it, but folly is the punishment of fools.

**Proverbs 18:4** The words of the mouth are deep waters; the fountain of wisdom is a gushing stream.

**Proverbs 25:26** Like a muddied spring or a polluted fountain are the righteous who give way before the wicked.

**Ecclesiastes 12:6** before the silver cord is snapped, and the golden bowl is broken, and the pitcher is broken at the **fountain**, and the wheel broken at the **cistern**,

**Wisdom 11:6** Instead of the fountain of an ever-flowing river, stirred up and defiled with blood

## 8. WELL/CISTERN

**Proverbs 5:15** Drink water from your own cistern, flowing water from your own **well**.

**Proverbs 23:27** For a prostitute is a deep pit; an adulteress is a narrow well.

**Ecclesiastes 12:6** before the silver cord is snapped, and the golden bowl is broken, and the pitcher is broken at the fountain, and the wheel broken at the cistern,

**Sirach 50:3** In his days a water cistern was dug, a reservoir like the sea in circumference.

## 9. RAIN

**Job 5:10** He gives rain on the earth and sends waters on the fields;

**Job 20:23** To fill their belly to the full God will send his fierce anger into them, and rain it upon them as their food.

**Job 24:8** They are wet with the rain of the mountains, and cling to the rock for want of shelter.

**Job 28:26** when he made a decree for the rain, and a way for the thunderbolt;

**Job 29:23** They waited for me as for the rain; they opened their mouths as for the spring rain.

**Job 36:27** For he draws up the drops of water; he distills his mist in rain,

**Job 37:6** For to the snow he says, 'Fall on the earth'; and the shower of rain, his heavy shower of rain,

**Job 38:25** "Who has cut a channel for the torrents of rain, and a way for the thunderbolt,

**Job 38:26** to bring rain on a land where no one lives, on the desert, which is empty of human life,

**Job 38:28** "Has the rain a father, or who has begotten the drops of dew?"

**Proverbs 16:15** In the light of a king's face there is life, and his favor is like the clouds that bring the spring rain.

**Proverbs 19:13** A stupid child is ruin to a father, and a wife's quarreling is a continual dripping of rain.

**Proverbs 25:14** Like clouds and wind without rain is one who boasts of a gift never given.

**Proverbs 25:23** The north wind produces rain, and a backbiting tongue, angry looks.

**Proverbs 26:1** Like snow in summer or rain in harvest, so honor is not fitting for a fool.

**Proverbs 28:3** A ruler who oppresses the poor is a beating rain that leaves no food.

**Ecclesiastes 11:3** When clouds are full, they empty rain on the earth; whether a tree falls to the south or to the north, in the place where the tree falls, there it will lie.

**Ecclesiastes 12:2** before the sun and the light and the moon and the stars are darkened and the clouds return with the rain;

**Wisdom 16:22** Snow and ice withstood fire without melting, so that they might know that the crops of their enemies were being destroyed by the fire that blazed in the hail and flashed in the showers of rain;

**Wisdom 16:16** for the ungodly, refusing to know you, were flogged by the strength of your arm, pursued by unusual **rains and hail and relentless storms**, and utterly consumed by fire.

**Sirach 1:2** The sand of the sea, the drops of rain, and the days of eternity-- who can count them?

**Sirach 35:26** His mercy is as welcome in time of distress as clouds of rain in time of drought.

## 10. STORMS

**Job 21:18** How often are they like straw before the wind, and like chaff that the storm carries away?

**Job 30:22** You lift me up on the wind, you make me ride on it, and you toss me about in the roar of the storm.

**Proverbs 1:27** when panic strikes you like a storm, and your calamity comes like a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you.

**Proverbs 3:25** Do not be afraid of sudden panic, or of the storm that strikes the wicked;

**Wisdom 5:14** Because the hope of the ungodly is like thistle-down carried by the wind, and like a light frost driven away by a storm; it is dispersed like smoke before the wind, and it passes like the remembrance of a guest who stays but a day.

**Wisdom 16:16** for the ungodly, refusing to know you, were flogged by the strength of your arm, pursued by unusual rains and hail and relentless **storms**, and utterly consumed by fire.

**Sirach 33:2** The wise will not hate the law, but the one who is hypocritical about it is like a boat in a storm.

**Sirach 40:13** The wealth of the unjust will dry up like a river, and crash like a loud clap of thunder in a storm.

**Sirach 43:17** The voice of his thunder rebukes the earth; so do the storm from the north and the whirlwind. He scatters the snow like birds flying down, and its descent is like locusts alighting.

## 11. SNOW

**Job 6:16** that run dark with **ice**, turbid with melting **snow**.

**Job 24:19** Drought and heat snatch away the snow waters; so does Sheol those who have sinned.

**Job 37:6** For to the snow he says, 'Fall on the earth'; and the shower of rain, his heavy shower of rain,

**Job 38:22** "Have you entered the storehouses of the snow, or have you seen the storehouses of the hail,

**Proverbs 25:13** Like the cold of snow in the time of harvest are faithful messengers to those who send them; they refresh the spirit of their masters.

**Proverbs 26:1** Like snow in summer or rain in harvest, so honor is not fitting for a fool.

**Wisdom 16:22** Snow and ice withstood fire without melting, so that they might know that the crops of their enemies were being destroyed by the fire that blazed in the hail and flashed in the showers of rain;

**Sirach 43:13** By his command he sends the driving snow and speeds the lightnings of his judgment.

**Sirach 43:17** The voice of his thunder rebukes the earth; so do the storm from the north and the whirlwind. He scatters the snow like birds flying down, and its descent is like locusts alighting.

## 12. HAIL

**Job 38:22** "Have you entered the storehouses of the snow, or have you seen the storehouses of the hail,

**Wisdom 16:16** for the ungodly, refusing to know you, were flogged by the strength of your arm, pursued by unusual rains and hail and relentless storms, and utterly consumed by fire.

**Wisdom 16:22** Snow and ice withstood fire without melting, so that they might know that the crops of their enemies were being destroyed by the fire that blazed in the hail and flashed in the showers of rain;

**Sirach 39:29** Fire and hail and famine and pestilence, all these have been created for vengeance;

## 13. ICE

**Job 6:16** that run dark with ice, turbid with melting snow.

**Job 37:10** By the breath of God ice is given, and the broad waters are frozen fast.

**Job 38:29** From whose womb did the ice come forth, and who has given birth to the hoarfrost of heaven?

**Wisdom 16:22** Snow and ice withstood fire without melting, so that they might know that the crops of their enemies were being destroyed by the fire that blazed in the hail and flashed in the showers of rain;

**Sirach 43:20** The cold north wind blows, and ice freezes on the water; it settles on every pool of water, and the water puts it on like a breastplate.

## 14. DEW

**Job 29:19** my roots spread out to the waters, with the dew all night on my branches;

**Job 29:22** After I spoke they did not speak again, and my word dropped upon them like dew.

**Job 38:28** "Has the rain a father, or who has begotten the drops of dew?"

**Proverbs 3:20** by his knowledge the deeps broke open, and the clouds drop down the dew.

**Proverbs 19:12** A king's anger is like the growling of a lion, but his favor is like dew on the grass.

**Wisdom 11:22** Because the whole world before you is like a speck that tips the scales, and like a drop of morning dew that falls on the ground.

**Sirach 18:16** Does not the dew give relief from the scorching heat? So a word is better than a gift.

**Sirach 43:22** A mist quickly heals all things; the falling dew gives refreshment from the heat.

#### 15. MIST

**Job 36:27** For he draws up the drops of water; he distills his mist in rain,

**Wisdom 2:4** Our name will be forgotten in time, and no one will remember our works; our life will pass away like the traces of a cloud, and be scattered like mist that is chased by the rays of the sun and overcome by its heat.

**Sirach 24:3** "I came forth from the mouth of the Most High, and covered the earth like a mist.

**Sirach 43:22** A mist quickly heals all things; the falling dew gives refreshment from the heat.

#### 16. DRINK

**Job 1:4** His sons used to go and hold feasts in one another's houses in turn; and they would send and invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them.

**Job 21:20** Let their own eyes see their destruction, and let them drink of the wrath of the Almighty.

**Job 22:7** You have given no water to the weary to drink, and you have withheld bread from the hungry

**Proverbs 4:17** For they eat the bread of wickedness and drink the wine of violence.

**Proverbs 5:15** Drink water from your own cistern, flowing water from your own well.

**Proverbs 9:5** "Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine I have mixed.

**Proverbs 20:1** Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise.

**Proverbs 23:7** for like a hair in the throat, so are they. "Eat and drink!" they say to you; but they do not mean it.

**Proverbs 23:35** "They struck me," you will say, "but I was not hurt; they beat me, but I did not feel it. When shall I awake? I will seek another drink."

**Proverbs 25:21** If your enemies are hungry, give them bread to eat; and if they are thirsty, give them water to drink;

**Proverbs 31:4** It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine, or for rulers to desire strong drink;

**Proverbs 31:5** or else they will drink and forget what has been decreed, and will pervert the rights of all the afflicted.

**Proverbs 31:6** Give strong drink to one who is perishing, and wine to those in bitter distress;

**Proverbs 31:7** let them drink and forget their poverty, and remember their misery no more.

**Ecclesiastes 2:24** There is nothing better for mortals than to eat and drink, and find enjoyment in their toil. This also, I saw, is from the hand of God;

**Ecclesiastes 3:13** moreover, it is God's gift that all should eat and drink and take pleasure in all their toil.

**Ecclesiastes 5:18** This is what I have seen to be good: it is fitting to eat and drink and find enjoyment in all the toil with which one toils under the sun the few days of the life God gives us; for this is our lot.

**Ecclesiastes 8:15** So I commend enjoyment, for there is nothing better for people under the sun than to eat, and drink, and enjoy themselves, for this will go with them in their toil through the days of life that God gives them under the sun.

**Ecclesiastes 9:7** Go, eat your bread with enjoyment, and drink your wine with a merry heart; for God has long ago approved what you do.

**Sirach 9:10** Do not abandon old friends, for new ones cannot equal them. A new friend is like new wine; when it has aged, you can drink it with pleasure.

**Sirach 15:3** She will feed him with the bread of learning, and give him the water of wisdom to drink.

**Sirach 24:21** Those who eat of me will hunger for more, and those who drink of me will thirst for more.

**Sirach 29:25** you will play the host and provide drink without being thanked, and besides this you will hear rude words like these:

**Sirach 50:15** he held out his hand for the cup and poured a drink offering of the blood of the grape; he poured it out at the foot of the altar, a pleasing odor to the Most High, the king of all.

### 17. MOISTURE

**Job 37:11** He loads the thick cloud with moisture; the clouds scatter his lightning.

**Job 21:24** his loins full of milk and the marrow of his bones **moist**.

### 18. LAKE/ evaporate

**Job 14:11** As **waters** fail from a **lake**, and a **river wastes away and dries up**,

### 19. MARSH

**Job 8:11** "Can papyrus grow where there is no marsh? Can reeds flourish where there is no water?"

**Job 40:21** Under the lotus plants it lies, in the covert of the reeds and in the marsh.

### 20. WASH

**Job 9:30** If I **wash** myself with soap and cleanse my hands with lye,

**Job 14:19** the **waters** wear away the stones; the **torrents wash** away the soil of the earth; so you destroy the hope of mortals.

### 21. FLOOD/DELUGE

**Job 22:11** or darkness so that you cannot see; a flood of water covers you.

**Job 22:16** They were snatched away before their time; their foundation was washed away by a flood.

**Job 27:20** Terrors overtake them like a flood; in the night a whirlwind carries them off.

**Job 38:34** "Can you lift up your voice to the clouds, so that a flood of waters may cover you?"

**Wisdom 18:5** When they had resolved to kill the infants of your holy ones, and one child had been abandoned and rescued, you in punishment took away a multitude of their children; and you destroyed them all together by a mighty flood.

**Sirach 21:13** The knowledge of the wise will increase like a flood, and their counsel like a life-giving spring.

**Sirach 39:22** "His blessing covers the dry land like a river, and drenches it like a flood.

**Sirach 40:10** All these were created for the wicked, and on their account the flood came.

**Sirach 44:17** Noah was found perfect and righteous; in the time of wrath he kept the race alive; therefore a remnant was left on the earth when the flood came.

**Sirach 44:18** Everlasting covenants were made with him that all flesh should never again be blotted out by a flood.

**22. WET**

**Job 24:8** They are wet with the rain of the mountains, and cling to the rock for want of shelter.

**23. PLUNGE**

**Job 9:31** yet you will plunge me into filth, and my own clothes will abhor me.

**24. DRENCH**

**Sirach 24:31** I said, "I will water my garden and drench my flower-beds." And lo, my canal became a river, and my river a sea.

**Sirach 39:22** "His blessing covers the **dry land** like a river, and **drenches** it like a **flood**."

**25. POOL**

**Sirach 43:20** The cold north wind blows, and ice freezes on the water; it settles on every pool of water, and the water puts it on like a breastplate.

**26. LEVIATHAN**

**Job 3:8** Let those curse it who curse the Sea, those who are skilled to rouse up Leviathan.

**Job 41:1** "Can you draw out Leviathan with a fishhook, or press down its tongue with a cord?"

**27. RAHAB**

**Job 9:13** "God will not turn back his anger; the helpers of Rahab bowed beneath him."

**Job 26:12** By his power he stilled the Sea; by his understanding he struck down Rahab.

**28. BEHEMOTH**

**Job 40:15** "Look at Behemoth, which I made just as I made you; it eats grass like an ox."

**29. DROUGHT**

**Job 24:19** Drought and heat snatch away the snow waters; so does Sheol those who have sinned.

**30. DRY LAND**

**Job 12:15** If he withholds the waters, they dry up; if he sends them out, they overwhelm the land.

**Wisdom 19:7** The cloud was seen overshadowing the camp, and dry land emerging where water had stood before, an unhindered way out of the Red Sea, and a grassy plain out of the raging waves,

**Sirach 39:22** "His blessing covers the **dry land** like a river, and **drenches** it like a **flood**."

**Job 13:25** Will you frighten a windblown leaf and pursue **dry** chaff?"

**Job 18:16** Their roots **dry** up beneath, and their branches wither above.

**Job 30:3** Through want and hard hunger they gnaw the dry and desolate ground,

**Proverbs 17:1** Better is a dry morsel with quiet than a house full of feasting with strife.

**Wisdom 4:19** because he will dash them speechless to the ground, and shake them from the foundations; they will be left utterly dry and barren, and they will suffer anguish, and the memory of them will perish.

**Wisdom 19:7** The cloud was seen overshadowing the camp, and dry land emerging where water had stood before, an unhindered way out of the Red Sea, and a grassy plain out of the raging waves,

**Sirach 39:22** "His blessing covers the dry land like a river, and drenches it like a flood.

**Sirach 40:13** The wealth of the unjust will dry up like a river, and crash like a loud clap of thunder in a storm.

**Job 14:11** As waters fail from a lake, and a river wastes away and dries up,

**Proverbs 17:22** A cheerful heart is a good medicine, but a downcast spirit dries up the bones.

### 31. FISH

**Job 12:8** ask the plants of the earth, and they will teach you; and the fish of the sea will declare to you.

**Ecclesiastes 9:12** For no one can anticipate the time of disaster. Like fish taken in a cruel net, and like birds caught in a snare, so mortals are snared at a time of calamity, when it suddenly falls upon them.

**Wisdom 19:10** For they still recalled the events of their sojourn, how instead of producing animals the earth brought forth gnats, and instead of fish the river spewed out vast numbers of frogs.

### 32. JORDAN

**Job 40:23** Even if the river is turbulent, it is not frightened; it is confident though Jordan rushes against its mouth.

**Sirach 24:26** It runs over, like the Euphrates, with understanding, and like the Jordan at harvest time.

### 33. EUPHRATES

**Sirach 44:21** Therefore the Lord assured him with an oath that the nations would be blessed through his offspring; that he would make him as numerous as the dust of the earth, and exalt his offspring like the stars, and give them an inheritance from sea to sea and from the Euphrates to the ends of the earth.

### 34. WATER CREATURES

**Wisdom 19:19** For land animals were transformed into water creatures, and creatures that swim moved over to the land.

**35. FLOW/FLOWING/OVERFLOWING**

**Proverbs 4:23** Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it **flow** the springs of life.

**Ecclesiastes 1:7** All streams run to the sea, but the sea is not full; to the place where the streams **flow**, there they continue to **flow**.

**Wisdom 16:29** for the hope of an ungrateful person will melt like wintry frost, and flow away like waste water.

**Job 20:17** They will not look on the rivers, the streams **flowing** with honey and curds.

**Proverbs 5:15** Drink water from your own cistern, **flowing** water from your own well.

**Sirach 46:8** And these two alone were spared out of six hundred thousand infantry, to lead the people into their inheritance, the land **flowing** with milk and honey.

**Sirach 47:14** How wise you were when you were young! You **overflowed** like the **Nile** with understanding.

**36. THIRSTY**

**Job 5:5** The hungry eat their harvest, and they take it even out of the thorns; and the thirsty pant after their wealth.

**Wisdom 11:4** When they were thirsty, they called upon you, and water was given them out of flinty rock, and from hard stone a remedy for their thirst.

## **APPENDIX B: REFERENCES TO THE LIFE-GIVING AND LIFE-THREATENING POTENTIAL OF WATER AND WATER-RELATED PHENOMENA**

It should be noted that this selection is the researcher's own classification and might not be exhaustive and comprehensive regarding all wisdom texts containing water and water-related phenomena with life-giving or life-threatening potential in the Old Testament wisdom books.

1. References to water and water-related phenomena with life-giving potential:
  - Humans and the rest of nature are dependent on water: Job 8:11; 14:7-12; Proverbs 25:13;
  - Sirach 24:23-29 depicts the dependence on water in terms of the six Ancient Near Eastern rivers compared to the wisdom flowing from the Torah.
  - Proverbs 5:15-20; Sirach 29:21 and 26:12 concern human dependence on water.
2. References to water and water-related phenomena with life-threatening potential:
  - God's use of water: Job 12:15 contains the notion of God using water to destroy earth, while Job 38:22-24, Wisdom 10:18-19; 16:16; 18:5; Sirach 39:28-29 concern God's use of water for the destruction or judgment of the wicked.
  - Humans are affected by water: Job 29:19; 24:18-20; Wisdom 5:22-23 and Proverbs 9:13-18 portray the threats related to water.
3. Water and water-related phenomena as life-giving and life-threatening:
  - While God is involved in the use of water to harm or heal in Job 38:22-38 and Sirach 39:22-23, in Wisdom 11:6-14 and 19:1-9 water follows natural laws to fight for the righteous and punish the wicked.
  - Qoheleth 1:4-11 and 11:1-6 bear elements of unpredictability of water that makes it a vehicle of life or death. The same is visible in Proverbs 25:23-26.
  - Job 36:26-37:13 contains the notion of God's use of water for good and harm, while Sirach 43:13-26 appeals for wonder and contemplation of water-related phenomena.
4. Water management and responsible use of water:
  - Qoheleth 2:4-6; Proverbs 5:15-20; Sirach 48:17 and 50:3-5 deal with infrastructures related to water.
  - God's management of water: Job 28:25-26; 38:8-11; 38:16-17; Proverbs 3:19-20; 8:22-31 and Sirach 39:17-21 show God establishing order/limit to the waters.
  - Qoheleth 11:1-6 and Proverbs 21:1 portray the agricultural use of water.
  - Sirach 38:4-5 assumes water treatment to make it safe for consumption.

- Water as a human right is implied in Job 22:7; Proverbs 11:25; 25:21 and Sirach 39:26 contain the notion of liberality in relation to water.