

ENGLISH ABSTRACTS

THE CONCRETIZATION OF METAPHORS AND METAPHORIC LANGUAGE IN THE BIBLE

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One of the notable motives behind biblical commentary, both inner-biblical and extra-biblical, is the desire for concretization. This aspiration has many expressions, such as the titles of psalms that connect them with specific events in the life of David, such as Psalms 3, 34; names that are given to anonymous characters, such as Samson's mother, *Zlelponith* (BT *Baba Bathra* 91a); or in giving a concrete interpretation to an abstract term, such as 'terror', *eimah*, in Exodus 23:27, 'I will send forth My *terror* before you', which is interpreted in the next verse with *tzir'a*, I will send a *hornet* ahead of you (see also Deut 7:20; Josh 24:12).

The impulse to concretize is very apparent in interpreting metaphoric expressions. In many cases where a metaphor is concretized, a story is expanded. The metaphor for human suffering, 'sinking into slimy clay' (Ps 40:3 and 69:2, 15), inspired the description of Jeremiah who, having been thrown into a pit, begins to sink into the mud (Jer 38:6).

The metaphoric expression in the moral of Jotham's fable, 'may fire issue from Abimelech and consume the citizens of Shechem and Bethmillo ...' (Judg 9:20), becomes an entire scene that was added to the story of Abimelech, the burning of the tower of Shechem (*ibid.*, 46-49).

Occasionally a metaphor may also turn into a symbolic act. The common metaphor of putting an iron yoke on the neck of the enslaved, such as in Deuteronomy 28:48, and the breaking of the yoke, such as in Jer 2:20, inspired the symbolic acts of Jeremiah and Hananiah son of Azzur in Jeremiah 27-28.

Metaphor concretization, a widespread phenomenon in the Bible, continued into Second-Temple Period literature, the New Testament, and in the Midrash. We also find concretized metaphors in abundance in the world of ritual and Jewish art. For example, Micah 7:19, 'He will hurl all our sins into the depths of the sea', is acted out in the annual Rosh HaShanah ritual of *tashlikh*. Jewish art also gives concrete expression to biblical metaphors. The verse, 'the Israelites going out with a high hand' (Exod 14:8), is reflected in Sephardic Passover Haggadot with pictures of Israelites leaving Egypt with their hands raised.