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# Muti rituals and the biblical portrayal of child sacrifice

by

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# Summary

The question addressed by this study would be to ask where there is any semantic overlap in the way in which on the one hand child sacrifices functioned in the OT and on the other hand how *muti* rituals function in contemporary South Africa. Do these different rituals function similarly, or not? In answering this question, this study will first provide a literature overview of how *muti* murders are described in academic literature and show the complexities of trying to understand African religion and culture. This is achieved by looking at the concept of *muti* rituals, its meaning, targeted victims (who are usually women and children) and development in history, from sacrifice in war times to sacrifice for material gain. In this section works from cultural anthropology are used to help form a clearer picture of what *muti* rituals are and how they function within society.

The study then moves to how the practice of child sacrifice is portrayed in texts such as Genesis 22:1-19 (the binding of Isaac) and Judges 11:29-40 (Jephthah's vow). Although many scholars chose to separate the sacrifices of Genesis 22 and Judges 11, this study will show that they should be read together since they share the common theme of burnt-offering. In the comparison it will become clear that both Abraham and Jephthah are fathers of an only child; their child is the single most precious thing they possess. Moreover, both accounts are of an etiological nature. The fact that both narratives are in the canon should be seen as an indication of the important contribution that they make to the theme of sacrifice.

In a more general chapter, the concepts of sacrifice and offering are outlined and are both acknowledged as a form of worship. This is followed by an overview of the different types of sacrifices as outlined in the Levitical literature and their different occurrences, focusing on the burnt-offering. Rituals are therefore understood as a communicating and clarifying social reality and establishing it. These patterns are understood with the use of a Mesopotamian inscription about "The death of Gilgamesh" which shows that warfare and killing were necessary to maintain and establish order, prosperity and peace.

A comparison between *muti* rituals and child sacrifice yields more differences than similarities. One of the major similarities is that a blessing is bestowed on the offerer, be it success in business, victory in war or the acquisition of land. The motif of sacrificing one for the greater good seems to be at play. The main difference between *muti* rituals and child sacrifice is that in *muti* rituals, the sacrifice is dedicated to ancestors while in child sacrifice they are dedicated to Yahweh. In *muti* rituals, the victim does not need to be related to the offerer but in both these texts; the victim is the only child, a special possession of the father.

I declare that the dissertation/thesis, which I hereby submit for the degree MTh (Old Testament) at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other tertiary institution.

Hata

# Key terms

*Muti* rituals

*Muti* murders

African religion and science

*Intelezi*

Cultural anthropology

Sacrifice

Offering

Burnt-offering

Child sacrifice and

*Molech*

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

## 1.1 Motivation for the study

This critical survey of *muti* rituals and child sacrifice will be helpful in understanding why humans inflict so much pain on each other, all in the name of religion. With regard to child sacrifice in the Old Testament (OT), this study will follow those scholars who argue that it did happen in Ancient Israel and that it happened in the name of Yahweh (Noort 2002:11; Stavrakopoulou 2004:283). It will also become clear that most of the authors and redactors of the OT were embarrassed by this practice which led to their condemnation of the practice. Yet we have enough textual evidence to argue that it happened. The biblical readers believe that Abraham and Jephthah became such great heroes because they kept their word to Yahweh and that Yahweh was moved by their obedience.

If we move from the Ancient Israel to contemporary South(ern) Africa, it is clear that with every passing minute, more and more children's lives are at danger, because of the belief that their body parts mixed with *muti* are a guarantor of success and luck. We should be aware that people read differently and try to find new reading strategies when reading violent texts or texts that might incite violence.

## 1.2 Research question

The OT is the most loved and read collection of books in Africa, because it has close cultural and religious similarities with traditional African culture and ethnic religions (cf. Holter 2000:42-43; Boshoff 2002:263-264; and Mojola 2016:1 of 7). It is for this reason that it becomes imperative to understand *muti* rituals and child sacrifice in its original contexts. The question addressed by this study would be to ask; are there any semantic overlap(s) in the way in which on the one hand child sacrifices functioned in the OT and on the other hand how *muti* rituals function in contemporary South Africa? Do these different rituals function similarly, or not?



### 1.3 Hypothesis

The process of highlighting the possible similarities and differences between the two traditions, both living in different forms will prove to be very challenging. It can be argued that due to the different sources for these traditions, pointing out similarities from a literal reading will be a great challenge. It can also be argued that the Southern African understanding of rituals is an interpretation of the biblical narrative, since we have even older written sources for biblical texts.

This study will test the validity of the following working hypothesis: Crucial similarities, but also differences exist between a) texts in the Hebrew Bible that portray child sacrifice and *muti* rituals, and b) the two main texts in the Hebrew Bible that portray child sacrifice.

Although there might be more similarities between the two traditions (i.e. child sacrifice and *muti* rituals), other possible outcomes might be that the study could yield different outcomes if more biblical texts are used and more so, if *muti* rituals are studied before the influence of or after colonialization. Another reason could be the understanding of the deity and how the divine relates to the people could be an expected difference. This point can be interpreted as a very strong argument against a comparative study between the two rituals. Another outcome might be that *muti* rituals are an Africanised story of the OT.

### 1.4 Research aims

The principal aims of this research study are:

- To analyse the historical context of *muti* rituals and its development in recent years;
- To examine the biblical portrayal of child sacrifice;
- To analyse two of the biblical texts (Gen. 22:1-19 and Judg. 11:30-39) that are associated with child sacrifice;
- To examine the relationship between *muti* murders and child sacrifice in South Africa and Africa at large.

## 1.5 Methodology

With regards to *muti* rituals/murders, this study will provide a literature study of the studies done by missiologists and anthropologists on *muti* rituals/murders where the following aspects will be discussed:

- Defining of *muti* rituals;
- Historical context of *muti* rituals;
- Victim target and
- The atrocities in the SA media.

With regard to the biblical understanding of sacrifice, this study will focus on:

- Definition of sacrifice and offering;
- Biblical overview of sacrifice;
- The place of sacrifice and
- The rhetoric of sacrifice.

With regard to the two biblical texts, this study will focus on work done from a historical-critical perspective/diachronic perspective. Most of the work will probably be more redactional critical, but other historical methods might also feature. This study will focus on:

- The exegesis of Genesis 22:1-9 and Judges 11:30-39;
- The biblical portrayal of child sacrifice; and
- Final remarks.

The important terminology for this chapter will be:

*Synchronic and diachronic readings*: these are reading methods concerned with historical change; thus diachronic study of a text is interested in the stages by which the text came into being (from the literary unit that point to the oral stages), while synchronic study of a text is interested in the reproduction of all the parts of a text by offering an exegetical-literary analysis in its present form (Barton 2003: xiii, xv, 14; Gertz, Berlejung, Schmid and Witte 2012:31-41).

*Historical critical method:* An approach to the study of biblical literature that foregrounds concerning the “historicity” of the biblical text, and strives to place the biblical literature within the historical context(s) of its production (Barton 2003:9-10; Sherman 2007:830; Gertz, et al. 2012:32-39). The term is often used as an umbrella term for different historical-critical methods and thus becomes synonym of “diachronic studies”. This approach will be helpful in interrogating the biblical text as a historical document that is influenced by and is responsive to historical events. As a sub-discipline of exegesis, it cannot and will not be separated from other exegetical methods. Thus, by understanding the text’s context and development, it will be more probable to trace its reception throughout the Christian tradition. Since both these traditions are still “living traditions” the reception and possible similarities and differences will be helpful in understanding these developments.

*Redaction criticism:* it could simply be defined as the study of how the OT documents were edited. However, ancient editing and authorship differ from modern practice (Stone 2009:752-753).

## Chapter 2: *Muti* rituals

### 2.1 Introduction

South Africa like any other multicultural society faces a lot of challenges when its different cultures, Western and African traditional, have to co-exist, with one of the most significant challenges being the tension between the modern world and traditionalism (Geldenuys 2016:24). In everyday talk, “African science is engaged alongside the miracles of the Holy Scripture and the magic of what is usually referred to as western or White science in its ability to transform the world in mysterious ways” (Ashforth 2008:216; cf. Thorpe 1991:116). In his psychological approach, Freud stated that religious rituals and beliefs were seen as homologous with neurotic symptoms. Religious practices were thus interpreted as expressions of unconscious psychological forces (Petrus 2006:143). Durkheim, a sociologist, argued that religion exists to encourage social solidarity where the collective worship of a deity symbolizes the worship of society (Petrus 2006:143). According to Geertz (1973:114), the “definition of religion in social work literature often refers to as a set of beliefs, ethics, rituals, and practices, systematically organized around a doctrine or dogma and shared by a group of people” (see. James 2014:7). Geertz (1973:114) goes on to argue that, “in religious ritual(s) (consecrated behaviour expressed in dramatic ceremony), the members experience a symbolic amalgamation of ethos and worldview” (cf. Hodge 2001:1: see, James 2014:12) and “by participating in the ritual attain their faith as they portray it” (James 2014:12). From this understanding it can be deduced that what people want and feel they should be doing joins with their picture of how the world actually is and in return this shapes their spiritual consciousness (Geertz 1973:114).

In Africa, and the world at large, one of the ways to express religion is through rituals. Following Thorpe (1991:104) unity and diversity are both characteristic of African religion. Religion is for African people coextensive with being human and follows a life-affirming, life sustaining pattern. In many religious communities, people usually read the Bible together in groups; West (1999:143) offers us a particular mode of

reading biblical texts in contextual bible study groups. This study is not suggesting this mode as a method.

From African Contextual Bible Study groups and the work of Holter (2000:43), the Old Testament (OT) appears to be the most loved and read collection of books in South Africa, and Africa at large; this is due to the shared “cultural and religious” resemblances “with traditional African culture and ethnic religions”. Scholars like Holter (2000:42-43) have gone on to argue that western anthropologists, missionaries and other expatriates encountering Africa have likened with living in Old Testament times, this is also felt by many Africans themselves, especially those who have some personal experience with traditional Africa. In agreement, Mojola (2016:3 of 7), argues that this began when pioneer African readers were in possession of the OT texts in African languages. The pioneer African readers were thus confronted with unexpected “similarities between many of the stories from the OT and stories of their own cultures, between many OT religious practices and institutions and those of their own” (Mojola 2016:3 of 7). This however is not unique to Africa and can be experienced elsewhere. In addition, there was as Mojola (2016:3 of 7) pens, “a resonance and intuitive recognition of the familiar in the other”. This offers good grounds to ask if there are any overlaps in the way in which on the one hand child sacrifices functioned in the OT and on the other hand how *muti* rituals function in contemporary Africa. Do these different rituals function similarly, or not? It is worth noting that “very little academic literature is available on the subject” of *muti* rituals (Scholtz, Phillips and Knobel 1997:117), because it is not regarded as a politically correct topic, and as a result of persistent rumours linking eminent individuals with events of this kind (Labuschagne 2004:192; Vincent 2017:46).

It must also be noted that because African religions, like other religions, are human institutions, they have been subject to distortion, decay and degeneration over the centuries. During the past two hundred years, especially, they have been greatly modified by the major world religions with which they have come into contact with. Consequently it is not always easy to tell exactly what the African people believed before their encounter with the Western world (Thorpe 1991:104). In this introduction,

the study has shown that there are indeed some cultural overlaps between the world of the OT and that of the African people. These similarities will serve as a basis for answering the question posed by this study. In the remaining part of this chapter, this study will move on defining cultural and social anthropology, motivating why this study chooses to use the lenses of cultural anthropology to understand *muti* rituals. The works of Barfield (1997) and Winick (1972) will serve as the two primary sources for this study, because it is a more recent rendering of the older more primary texts.

## 2.2 Anthropology defined

In this study when reference is made to anthropology, cultural anthropology is implied. This subfield can be described as that branch of anthropology focusing on the study of human cultures as complex systems, social systems, economic systems, religious systems, norms and value systems as well as the interaction between the systems. It also focuses on the importance of understanding the socio-cultural context of a society as a means of making sense of the way of life of societies. Therefore, cultural anthropology is that subfield of anthropology that is closest to the social sciences (Petrus 2008:140). According to Winick (1972:29), cultural anthropology can be defined as “the study of the behaviours of man which are learned, including among others the social, linguistic, technical, and familial”. Cultural anthropology was thus understood as the study of man and his works, which was at times used interchangeably with social anthropology, which is more of an American understanding of anthropology (Winick 1972:29). For Barfield (1997:17) cultural and social anthropology are separate intellectual traditions:

The use of the term “cultural” and “social” to draw the distinction became more common in the 1930’s, but the divergence arose earlier, most directly from the differences between the studies advocated by Franz Boas (1858-1942).

Recently, the division between these two approaches has not been that clear cut anymore and thus scholars have decided to renounce this distinction. For others, the difference still remains important, “at least as a shorthand way of characterising ethnographic styles” (Barfield 1997:17). Barfield (1997:17) argues that cultural anthropology is generally applied to “ethnographic works that are holistic in spirit, oriented to the ways in which culture affects individual experience or aim to provide a

rounded view of the knowledge, customs, and institutions of a people”. On the other hand, social anthropology was understood as “a term applied to the ethnographic works that attempt to isolate a particular system of social relations- such as those that comprise domestic life, economy, law, politics, or religion- give analytical priority to the organisational bases of social life, and attend to cultural phenomena as somewhat secondary to the main issues of social scientific inquiry” (Barfield 1997:17).

The genealogies of these two traditions seem to reflect their country of origin. Social anthropology has British roots e.g. Durkheim (1858-1917) amongst others and cultural anthropology has its roots in the German historical geographers such John Wesley Powell (1834-1902) who are both later philosophers (Barfield 1997:18). Cultural anthropology is thus made up of a diffuse term, which Frank Boas (1896-1940) himself did not place his studies on “The Methods of Ethnology” under this heading, but under anthropology (Winthrop 1991:3-6; Barfield 1997:18). The goal of anthropology was thus totally understood as “all periods and ages cultural experience and to search for humblest fragment in relation to that totality” (Winthrop 1991:6). Therefore, the relationship between cultural and social anthropology has some interesting asymmetries (Winthrop 1991:6). Following Barfield (1997:18) social anthropologists have often characterised cultural anthropology as a different field of inquiry, but cultural anthropologists have usually depicted social anthropology as a specialisation within cultural anthropology. British social anthropologists, in Murdock’s view, fractionate their descriptions and analyses of social systems (Barfield 1997:18).

Murdock is said to have charged that the British concentrated exclusively on kinship and subjects directly related thereto, marriage, government and ignored such major aspects of culture as technology, child training, and even language (Becker 1954: 103-104; Barfield 1997:18).

Murdock rightly observed that British anthropologists operated from a narrow ethnographic base, rarely venturing outside of sub-Saharan Africa for field studies, and more rarely still testing their generalisations against the broader ethnographic record (Barfield 1997:18). It is for these reasons that Barfield (1997:18) reminds us that Murdock lashed social anthropology for ignoring history and psychology.

Firth, a counterpart to Murdock, offered a rather nuanced reply, as he is said to have agreed with Murdock that the British anthropology was hardly distinguishable in scope from theoretical sociology, but added that Murdock's expressions of surprise on that scope- following 30 years in which Malinowski, Radcliffe-Brown, Max Gluckman (1911-1975) had argued nothing less- represented either judicial ignorance or magical fright (Barfield 1997:19). In Firth's view, the study of culture and the analyses of structure are complementary, and British social anthropology had proven sufficiently capacious for both (Petrus 2008:40). British anthropologists who characterised cultural anthropology as failing to rise to an appropriate level of abstraction were unnecessarily censorious (Barfield 1997:19). According to Barfield (1997:19), cultural anthropology since the 1960's has absorbed some of the analysis of kinship and political order developed within social anthropology but had tended to dismiss sharply the larger project of social anthropology on the grounds that it was founded on the static structural functional models, false assumptions about the nature of kinship, and illusions about social integration (Barfield 1997:19). Cultural anthropology in the Boaisan tradition, thus aims to comprehend the entirety of human cultural life. Social anthropology focuses on the organisational bases of human societies. In practice, some cultural anthropologists also give analytical priority to social structure, and some social anthropologists in pursuing analyses of social systems, comprehend a great deal of cultural life (Winick 1972:29; Barfield 1997:19).

According to Barfield (1997:20), social anthropology drew from other intellectual sources as well. The connection to the moral philosophers and political economists of the eighteenth century best explains its distinct intellectual preoccupations: "the effort to discover the nature of social units on all scales, up to society itself, and the institutions through which social units internally differentiate, sustain themselves over time, reproduce, and, in general effect the creation of social order" (Barfield 1997:20). Cultural anthropology, which has roots in German historicist philosophy and American pragmatism, "has sought to explore the variety of human experience and examine that variety in relation to a range of historical, psychological, ecological, and other comparative frameworks" (Barfield 1997:20). In a broader sense, cultural anthropology is a continuation of the intellectual impulse of observant travellers and writers of natural



histories since the Renaissance to describe the world as it appears to be. Barfield (1997:20) mentions that Boas' supposition that observation is prior to theory have fallen into considerable disfavour in the recent decades, even among the inheritors of the cultural anthropological tradition, but it accounts for most of the vigour of that tradition, which has combined close attention to ethnographic detail with open exploration of novel ideas. Cultural anthropologists after Boas often adopted theoretical programmes that were in no particular way "Boasian", except for the assumption that the task is somehow to understand culture, and the theory must prove itself by that criterion (Winthrop 1991:3-6). Barfield (1997:20) mentions that it is difficult for cultural anthropologists to build on one another's work other than by emulating one another's techniques. Additional complications added include Marxist and other historical materialist approaches, feminist theory, semiotics, radical historicism, and the related movements for reflexive and postmodern ethnography. Barfield (1997:21) sums up his argument by stating that the tradition of cultural anthropology has proven more susceptible to this challenge, and indeed, even the term "cultural anthropology" has been partially appropriated by advocates of an approach that is admittedly antiscientific. Now that the anthropological field has been outlined, this study will move on to discussing African patterns in both religion and culture, making use of the soci-scientific approach will help us to frame *muti* rituals well within academia. This study focuses on the African context, looking at how Africans view religion and the value they place to it, throughout the last two hundred years.

### 2.3 The African pattern

This study argues that there is no one cultural area or group that can be considered normative for the whole African continent, no such norm exists. The religious practices and beliefs throughout this continent developed in independent cultures often separated from each other by great distances or other geographical barriers (Thorpe 1991:104-105). We must also keep in mind that African religious traditions were handed down orally from generation to generation; we therefore have no records to examine (Thorpe 1991:107). The few scriptures we have consist of symbolic art or dance forms and practices which have been observed and interpreted, often by outsiders of a different

religious persuasion. For African people, religion is not an option but a necessity because it provides them with ways of dealing with the “mysterious realities in their immediate environment- natural forces, ancestral spirits and powers felt to be functioning through the social institutions of the tribe or community” (Thorpe 1991:107; Vincent 2017:45). In agreement with Thorpe (1991:107), African Traditional Religion always relates, in an organic and vital way, to the world in which it exists. African people therefore relate closely to their natural environment and seek to establish harmony with it, with some calling themselves children of the earth or soil to symbolise this relationship. What most scholars, such as Vincent (2017:45) regard as disrupting this harmony is evil and are to be eradicated. This leads us to the controversial understanding of ancestors and their veneration. This study understands “Ancestors and other spirit mediators are the custodians of the community and its continuing well-being” (Vincent 2017:45). They function to permit this desirable balance to be maintained. Their visibility representatives are the traditional diviners and healers who are specially selected for the task of mediation between the spiritual and physical world (Thorpe 1991:107). Therefore, rituals, rites, sacrifices and prayers are the means by which a harmonious relationship is maintained between the visible and the invisible African community.

Since Christianity is regarded as a monotheistic religion, African religions can be regarded as polytheistic or in some instances as pantheist. According to Thorpe (1991:108) it can be correctly stated that “African Traditional Religions incorporates both theism and Spiritism in its belief in both a Supreme Being and a general world of spiritual powers”. It is simply more firmly established that prior to the arrival of outside influence West African peoples believed in a Supreme Being whose attributes appear to be closely with those of the Supreme Being in Semitic religions (Thorpe 1991:110). Throughout Africa the milieus in which religious concepts are born and nurtured is that of the tribe or group to which individuals belong. So the community is important to religion, that it has become a part of the traditional African creed. “Without the group, the individual would not exist; but likewise, the group would be null and void without its individual members” (Thorpe 1991:110). The community was also understood as the arena where acknowledgement, forgiveness and reconciliation could take place, all this

was done to maintain the order and most importantly the balance within the group. The implication of this statement would be that no one individual would be allowable to disrupt the whole community (Thorpe 1991:110; Meiring 2005:721).

Recent findings seem to indicate that pain is a relative concept which differs among people (Meiring 2005:721). It can therefore probably be said that within the African context pain is a predominately physical and individualistic, but rather physical with strong social dimensions (Thorpe 1991:111). Pain is felt when relationships are disturbed; when problems are encountered in the socioeconomic and political sphere (Meiring 2005:728). This truth is borne out by an increase in the number of people who consult diviners and traditional healers as well as those who join Indigenous Churches during times of socioeconomic and political stress. The supreme value for Africans is life or the force to live strongly (Thorpe 1991:112). This vital force is preserved and strengthened by prayers, sacrifices, rituals, wisdom and proper conduct. African religions are presented as tending to see the jealousy of people as the source of disruptive evil in the human world (Thorpe 1991:112, 114; Meiring 2005:728). Thorpe (1991:114) calls such people sorcerers or witches. Many African groups believe that witchcraft is inherited, passed down the female line from one generation to the next. Mbiti, a Kenyan Christian Philosopher, characterized those who have departed the visible world as the living-dead; a phrase that Thorpe (1991:115) believes encapsulates the essence of African belief about those who have been parted from the community by death. Africans believe that all people should be enabled to live a normal life-that is they should grow up, marry, bear children and eventually depart this life for a spiritual realm, whence they will protect and direct their earthly relatives (Thorpe 1991:115). In return, they must be remembered by those still living physically (Thorpe 1991:115).

It is also believed that when evil attacks a community a cause is sought by having recourse to the spirit realm. Divination establishes the cause, after which an acceptable remedy is prescribed. This remedy may take on the “form of a ritualized observance such as offering a sacrifice, or of medicines which have symbolic as well as therapeutic value” (Thorpe 1991:116). For Thorpe (1991:116) the remedies sometimes seem to move out of the sphere of religion into that of magic, this is a point that will be discussed

later on in the chapter. It also seems probable that prophetic figures arose who were not in support of the day's status quo but called the people to a new kind of life. Rituals often take the form of dramatic presentation among African people, by means of objectifying their inner fears such as misfortune or death, enabling them to deal with a more meaningful and constructive way (Thorpe 1991:121). Rituals therefore help people to structure and thus give meaning to human life (Pongratz-Leisten 2007:9). This will be discussed further in the fourth chapter- sacrifice in the OT. Individuals need this structure lest their lives become totally aimless (Thorpe 1991:121). When structure break down, psychological disasters loom, it is within this context, as some scholars have argued, that “*muti* murder comes to be understood as driven by the logic that the sacrifice of one human being has the power to save the greater good of the community” (Ngubane 1986:196; Vincent 2017:46). What is particularly “African” about this idea remains to be established. It seems to be a logic which is universally compelling and is, after all, also “the central driving narrative of Christianity” (Vincent 2017:51; see. Scholts 1997:122). Even now, “historical and older anthropological accounts present *muti* murders as arising in the context of a community seeking help from a traditional healer for some misfortune that has befallen it communally” (Ngubane 1986:196; Vincent 2017:51). This motive of the greater good held sounds persuasive, but Ngubane (1986:196-197) still continued to argue that “ritual murder should not be termed ‘murder’ given that it involves sacrifice of one member of a community for the greater good of that community”. She therefore equates *muti* murder with abortion (Ngubane 1986:197; Vincent 2017: 46; see also. Scholts1997:122). All these terms she equates *muti* murder to are indeed sensitive topics both from a Western and African understanding.

#### 2.4 *Muti* rituals

In this section, the study will be moving on to define all *muti* related terms, and the problems of definitions. It will then move on to give an overview of the historical context and look at a few reported cases which will shed more to our understanding of *muti* rituals.

### 2.4.1. Terminology

It is not surprising that *muti* rituals have been on the rise again, since 2010. According to Altered Dimensions (2013) “the phenomenon is widely acknowledged to occur in Southern Africa where it is estimated that from 50%-90% of the population believe in magic and witchcraft”. According to Ashforth (2008:212) and Minnaar (2015:46) “the term *muthi* (*muti* in IsiXhosa transliterations) derives from the IsiZulu word “*umuthi*”, with the root *-thi*, which means or signifies “tree” and is usually translated in English as medicine or poison, with the inoffensive “herbs” used in equivocal instances” (cf. Vincent 2017:43). For Ashforth (2008:212) “*muthi* refers to substances designed by persons possessing secret knowledge to achieve either positive ends of healing, involving cleansing, strengthening, and protecting persons from evil forces, or negative ends of witchcraft, bringing illness, misfortune, and death to others or illicit wealth and power to the witch”. Ashforth (2008:212) goes on to argue that the “distinction between healing and its antithesis, witchcraft, is an essentially moral one, based on interpretations of the motives of persons deploying *muthi* and the ends to which these forces are directed” (cf. Ngubane 1986:194). Ashforth (2008:212) continues:

Witches seeking to cause harm work with *muthi* as poison: healing seeking well-being work with *muthi* as medicine... Though directed towards health and well-being, a general condition of bodily health, spiritual ease, and social harmony referred to as *impilo* (in IsiZulu) the *muthi* of healers also brings death... When a healer sets out to cure a person affiliated by witchcraft, he or she will typically promise that their *muthi* will return the evil forces deployed by the witch to their source, thereby killing the witch.

Such violence is legitimated in the name of self-defence (Ashforth 2008:213). From this point onwards, we will make use of the IsiXhosa transliteration of *umuthi*, *muti*.

Now that the term *muti* has been defined, the study will move on to, *muti ritual*, sometimes referred to as *muti murder*, which is associated with sorcery, the kind of witchcraft that involves the use of medicine to cause harm. It is based on the belief that medicine made from human body parts is more potent than those made from animals or plants (Petrus 2008:145; Minnaar 2015:46). Since the word *muti* refers to herbs, it

would be incorrect of us to assume that the word *muti* refers or is related to crime. Traditional healers commonly use secret recipes of “natural herbs or animal fats” which can be accessed over-the-counter in pharmaceuticals; no prescription is needed for this (Labuschagne 2004:193; Ashforth 2008:214). The growing motive for the use of human body parts is according to Scholtz et al. (1997:117) the belief and acknowledgement that they are more potent than “the usual ingredients or methods used by the traditional healer as they contain the person’s life essence”. The typical or “usual ingredients include, but are not limited to; roots, herbs, other plant material, animal parts and seawater” (see Scholtz et al. 1997:117). “Many also find uses for a range of industrial chemicals such as mercury, chromium, potassium permanganate, copper sulphate, and other colourful metal salts, a practice that has contributed to making South Africa, a toxicologist’s goldmine” (Ashforth 2008:214-215). The reliance on old recipes to alleviate misfortune is never enough since many misfortunes that are caused or still remain to be caused are new, calling for new and improved recipes (Ashforth 2008:215). Therefore, the use of human body parts becomes part of a quest for a much stronger concoction (see Scholtz et al. 1997:117). The purpose is according to Labuschagne (2004:192-193), usually “to improve an individual’s or a community’s circumstances and is usually advocated by a traditional healer after having been consulted by a client, and a third party carries out the actual murder”. This means that the traditional healer as an expert of *muti* is never directly involved in the murders, but gives instructions on how the parts are to be harvested. It would thus be irresponsible of us to assume that “all sangomas (traditional healers) as a rule make use of human body parts as one of the ingredients in their medicines” (Labuschagne 2004:193), but those that use body parts have a hit man specialist, so nothing leads back to them (Vincent 2017:43). It is worth mentioning that there are some cases where the sangoma executes the killing themselves but it is uncommon. “The ‘order’ will include not only specifications as to which particular body part or parts are required – testicles for virility purposes, fat from the breasts or abdomen for luck, tongues to smooth the path to a lover’s heart – but the very specific manner in which they are to be collected” (Vincent 2017:43; also Labuschagne 2004:193). The use of human body parts for medicinal purposes is reported to be based in the belief that “it is possible to appropriate the life force of one person through its

literal consumption by another” (Labuschagne 2004:193). It is for these reasons that a victim is chosen carefully because “it is not just any person’s penis that can cure male infertility, but that of a man with several healthy children” (Vincent 2017:43). Strangers or enemies are seldom the target of *muti* murders but there are cases where they are targeted because they cannot find someone who meets these requirements (Vincent 2017:43). These strangers are usually picked up at hitch-hiking points under the pretence of helping them.

According to “the report of the Select Committee on Social Services” of August 1998, the report recognized the following categories of healers (Select Committee on Social Service 1998:6; Ashforth 2008:229):

- *Inyanga* (herbalist or traditional doctor). This is usually a person who uses herbal and other medical preparations for treating disease.
- *Sangoma* (diviners). They are trained to communicate with and utilize the powers of ancestors in diagnosing a disease or mishap.
- Traditional birth attendants (*Ababelekisi*). They are usually elderly women who have been midwives for years and are highly respected for their obstetric expertise.
- Traditional surgeons (*iingcibi*). They are usually trained men with experience in conducting traditional circumcision.

According to Ashforth (2008:228-229), differentiating between “inyangas as herbalists” and “sangomas as diviners” has proven to be problematic. What we have in this report is a “model of functional differentiation of professions and modes of training that is thoroughly western and modernist in conception and that ignores the possibility of unseen evil forces acting in both the etiology and the treatment of disease” (Ashforth 2008:229). It is the *Inyanga* or *Sangoma* that consults the ancestors to enquire about the “cause of the problem” and what treatment to “prescribe” (Labuschagne 2004:193). When death and human body parts are part of the prescription, “the victim must be alive when the body parts are removed as this increases the ‘power’ of the *muti* because the body parts then retain the person’s life essence” (Labuschagne 2004:193; Minnaar 2015:46). “The death of the victim is usually reported as occurring after the injuries have been inflicted whilst removing the body parts” (Labuschagne 2004:193). This is

usually erroneously defined by anthropologists as contagious magic (Altered Dimensions 2013). The *inyangas* that perform these rituals are viewed by other *inyangas* as smearing their profession, a disgrace to their profession (Ngubane 1986:195).

Another term which is associated with *muti* murders is, sacrificial murder, also known as ritual homicide (Perlmutter 2004:139). The latter is regarded as one of the most common examples of the relationship between Satanism (referring to Theistic/Atheistic) and crime. “The concept ‘sacrifice’ originates from the Latin *sacrificium*, which means to ‘make holy’, and connotes an act of religious significance” (Perlmutter 2004:11; Petrus 2008:143). When violence is perpetrated against a human being or animal in this context, it is viewed as a justifiable violence or sacred violence in which the victim, whether animal or human, is viewed as a sacrifice to a higher being (Petrus 2008:143). In various African cultures in South Africa, animal sacrifice is still an acceptable practice when honouring ancestral spirits, as is seen, for example, in the “*ukubuyisa*” or bringing-back ritual among the Xhosa. In this ritual a deceased’s soul is returned from the underworld to join the ranks of the ancestors of his kin (Petrus 2008:143; see Olivier 1981 or Pauw 1994). In Satanist context, the most commonly sought sacrificial victims tend to be human beings who are ritually killed not only as a sacrifice to Satan, but also to imbue their life-force to the members of the group. According to Petrus (2008:143) Satanism in the South African context can be defined as “...an organized anti-Biblical, anti-Christian cult that is consciously focused and directed towards the worship and service of Satan as a personal and supernatural being, and in which all cult members are expected to participate” (cf. Jonker 1991:30). “According to Jonker (1991:46-51), in the 1980s and 1990s, when Satanism-related crime was at its height in South Africa, three types of Satanist groupings were identified, namely the Brotherhood, the Order of Darkness and the ordinary disciples. It seemed that these groupings specifically targeted the South African youth” (Petrus 2008:143). He also identified various reasons why the youth were regarded as the main target for Satanist cults (see Jonker 1991:52-56).



According to Petrus (2008:145) “*muti* murder, unlike psychic witchcraft, provides police and courts with more physical evidence of the crime, as there is clear evidence, in most cases, of evil or harmful intent”. Owing to this intent, in African communities, *muti* murder is associated with sorcery, the kind of witchcraft that involves the use of medicines to cause harm. It is based on the belief that traditional medicines made from a mixed of herbs and human body parts are more potent than those made from animals or plants only. The success of police investigations of these crimes depends on various factors. The primary form of evidence, the body of the murder victim, is only helpful if it gets discovered shortly after the murder. The degree of decomposition of the corpse could and in most cases does have an effect on the interpretation of the circumstances surrounding the death of the victim-cause of death and crime scene (Petrus 2008:145). The result of this often poses problems for the police since victims of *muti* murder are usually missing persons whose remains may only be found a few days or weeks later when the decomposition process has started (Petrus 2008:145). An added problem is that the members of the communities where such murders have occurred may be threatened into withholding information from the police, out of fear for their own safety. Problems regarding its definition also extend to the phenomenon of *muti* murders (Petrus 2008:145).

In some cases, *muti* murder is referred to as “ritual murder” (Petrus 2007:126; Petrus 2008:145). This is inaccurate since it assumes that the victim’s killing and harvesting of body parts are conducted in a ritualized context. This is not the case since any ritual that may occur using *muti* made from the victim, may only occur sometime after the murder itself has taken place. According to Petrus (2008:145) the South African Police Services (SAPS) refers to *muti* murder as “occult-related crime”. In the “SAPS Objectives of the Investigation and Prevention of Occult-Related Crime by the General Detectives” (Petrus 2008:145), “occult-related crime is defined as ... any human conduct that constitutes any legally recognized crime, the modus operandi of which relates to ...any belief ...in the occult, witchcraft, Satanism ...Included in the scope of occult-related crime are ritual *muti*/medicine murders...” (Comaroff and Comaroff 2004:515, 530, 531). The mistaken association of *muti* murder with Satanist-ritual homicide is perhaps due to resemblances in the technique of these crimes, were there is

substantive evidence that the victim's body has been mutilated, with key body parts missing from the body (Petrus 2008:145). There also seems to be a preference for "the head, tongue and genitalia of the victim in both instances" (Petrus 2008:145). However, "there are important differences between these two types of murder" (Petrus 2008:145). For Petrus (2008:145), in ritual homicide involving Satanism "there is evidence of ritual activity, suggested by the crime scene context where satanic symbols or markers may suggest the existence of a ritual space". In this space there may be evidence of a sacrificial murder as suggested perhaps by the presence of an altar of some kind, as well as the mutilated corpses of animals (see Garrett 2004; Perlmutter 2004:138-139; see also Jonker 1991:53). These murders are ritualized because the act of killing itself forms part of the ritual. *Muti* murders are different since there is usually no evidence of ritual activity (Petrus 2008:145). These murders are also usually associated with an African context, while Satanist-ritual homicide is predominantly found in a white European context (see Faure 2003; Petrus 2008:145).

#### *2.4.2 Problems of definition*

Many scholars like Bergen (2005:50) and Meyer (2013:3) have all agreed that we encounter a methodological problem, when it comes to the definition of rituals. The phenomenon of ritualistic crime on the other hand is a complex issue for scholars and more especially for law enforcement practitioners due to the differing views about whether it exists or not, and, more specifically, on how to define what ritualistic crime is (Petrus 2007:121). What may be regarded as a ritualistic crime in one context may be regarded as an acceptable expression of belief in another. The difficulty of definition lies in the connection between the term "ritual" or "ritualistic" and the concept of religion, which involves belief in a supernatural power (Petrus 2008:141). Conventional anthropological studies have long included the study of religion and ritual in human societies (see, for example, Leslie 1960; Lehmann & Myers 1985). However, within the context of ritualistic crime, mainline anthropological perspectives are insufficient, because they exclude the criminological and religious aspect of rituals (Petrus 2008:141). A more applied perspective, as well as an incorporation of a criminological perspective is required. Ritualistic crime therefore represents not only a matter of

anthropological concern because of the issues of ritual and belief, but is also a matter of criminological concern as a result of the issue of crime. The complexity involved in defining ritualistic crime reveals the need for a combined anthropological and criminological approach. According to Petrus (2008:141), scholars like Garret (2004:63) have defined ritualistic crime as "...any criminal activity that has a ritual attached to it". Perlmutter (2004:3) on the other hand views ritualistic crime as:

...most often attributed to practitioners of occult ideologies such as Satanism, Palo Mayombe, Brujeria, etc...[R]itualistic crime is defined as any act of violence characterized by a series of repeated physical, sexual and/or psychological actions/assaults combined with a systematic use of symbols, ceremonies and/or machinations. Crimes entailing ritual violence are generally referred to as cult or occult crime.

Both these definitions of ritualistic crime are criminological in nature as they stress the link between ritual activity and crime. However, they do not indicate that definitions of ritualistic crime can vary from one cultural context to another. Consequently, Petrus (2008:141) thinks that there is a danger of generalizing what constitutes ritualistic crime and the associated misguided assumption that these generalizations are universally applicable, regardless of context. This overgeneralization Petrus (2008:141), argues can lead to the erroneous and ethnocentric stereotypes that characterize perceptions of certain religious belief systems. From his perspective, a further problem in the definition of ritualistic crime is the "use of various synonyms that create confusion in this regard, as well as open it to stereotypical assumptions" (Petrus 2008:141). The problem of using synonyms is that they could be "misleading, since their accuracy depends on the context" (Petrus 2008:141). Not all crimes that could be categorized as ritualistic involve secret rituals, as is suggested by the term "occult" which means "secret" or "hidden" (Petrus 2008:141). Such crimes may also not necessarily involve elements usually associated with Satanist beliefs and practices. A combined anthropological and criminological approach is therefore required in order to develop culturally specific definitions that take local contexts into account. This aspect is crucial as it could impact on how law enforcers go about investigating these types of crimes. This information

becomes important to this study because it shows that rituals are not just an anthropological and religious phenomenon, but can be deemed as criminological, since *muti* rituals are regarded as *muti* murders. It is however, not the scope of this study to look at rituals from a criminological perspective, but on the other hand does not underscore it. The purpose of this section was to show how complex the issue of *muti* rituals is even in secular studies.

## 2.5 Historical context

As stated above, *muti* rituals/murders are not a new phenomenon in South Africa, “Several scholars have argued that, since the 1990s, in various regions throughout South Africa, there has been an escalation in incidents of witch killings and *muti* or medicine murders, particularly in rural African communities” (Petrus 2008:139). In this part of the study, case reports and media atrocities will be introduced to paint a brighter picture of this chapter’s inquiry. Records trace the practice, which has strong roots in Lesotho, back to the late 1800s (Staff reporter 2004:2 of 2). The practice was rife among Basotho (BoRamotse) headmen and chiefs (*Magoshi*) who were appointed paramount chiefs of the king. They believed they had to strengthen themselves with potent magic in order to wield power over their subjects (Staff reporter 2004:2 of 2). Elders at Moletjie acknowledge that there are individuals who believe human parts make *muti* stronger, but they say this is not common practice in their village. “In our culture we do not believe human parts can be used for *muti* to either bring luck or cure anyone. We actually believe that a corpse is dirty. That is why when we come from a funeral we wash our hands before we eat”, said Motlatla to the Staff reporter (2004:2of 2). According to Altered Dimensions (2013) “body parts from dead bodies work fine for their purpose but the best *muti* medicine ingredients are taken from body parts that are harvested while the victim is alive”. The resulting medicine is usually rubbed on the skin or put on an open wound which is a result of blade cutting (they usually make small cuts on the hands, feet, forehead and the back of the neck) or is usually ingested depending on the traditional healer’s instructions (Altered Dimensions 2013). “In cases where body parts from the deceased are needed, they are often obtained illegally from

area hospitals or stolen by grave robbers from corpse that they remove from fresh graves” (Altered Dimensions 2013).

Minnaar (2015:47) penned that the belief in the power of the spirits and spiritual medicine to protect the community are strongly embedded in rural tribal communities, because of the belief that there is only a “limited amount of luck in a society” (cf. Bhootra and Weiss 2006:255-259). Ngubane (1986:196) as also quoted by Turrell (2009:21) said that “*muti* murder is a final stage of evil, because normally, evil was removed by casting it on a scapegoat animal”. According to Turrell (2009:22):

The bellowing of the animal as it was slaughtered is believed to have opened up contact between the living and the dead. Its body was a ritual offering to the ancestors. Then the protection of the ancestors was restored by the sacrifice of the animal. But there were at times some instances where the evil to be removed and the good to be obtained were so great that the use of animals was not enough and only a human would do. At was this point that the human ritual killing was obligatory for the acquisition of extraordinary. And extraordinary power was required to win competitive advantages chiefly rivalries over people and land. This was one of the many reasons why *muti* murders were closely associated with chiefly politics, still these murders were exceptional in pre-colonial polities and were only committed in the face of an extremely serious challenge to chiefly power. So whenever a *muti* murder occurred the pre-colonial authorities feared that this was the signal for another rebellion.

In times of war, strong "war medicine" (also known as *intelezi*) would be concocted (Labuschagne 2004:194; Africa Geographic 2016). “*Intelezi* is a certain plant that is used for protection against lightning strikes and misfortune caused by witchcraft, as lightning is regarded as a symbol of witchcraft” (Africa Geographic 2016). *Intelezi* is also used as an emetic to remove a curse. “The word is derived from the noun *Buthelazi*, meaning slipperiness, referring to the ability of the medicine to make the user ‘slippery’ or get out of trouble” (Africa Geographic 2016). Using such plant or animal ingredients, the logical progression was to advance the making use of the most powerful medicine of all, namely using human body parts in their preparation. Initially, the body parts of

tribal enemies were used; this may have included eating the heart of a killed enemy for bravery (Minnaar 2015:47; Africa Geographic 2016).

For Ngubane (1986:195) the Sesotho and the SiSwati speaking people claimed to have learned the practice of *muti* killing from the Zulu people in Natal. The Swati murders were reported as always being family or non-family groups. In family groups, the victim was usually a family member of the community and a relative of one or more of the murderers, while in non-family groups it was just a stranger who was offered for by the one looking for some advantage in business (Geldenhuis 2016:28). Labuschagne (2004:197) later discovered that in the non-family group, the ones offered were never strangers and as a result of the secret nature of this crime, the victim was never buried. Ngubane (1986:196) rightly made the point that ritual murder is upsetting to those of us who believe in the right to life; Turrell (2009:24) notes the same observation arguing that Ngubane saw it as neither an act of immoral wickedness nor of cruelty. Community and sacrifice seem to be the important points even with the loss and corruption in traditional patterns, what has remained is that the victim should never be a stranger to his murderers (Turrell 2009:24). As soon as strangers became victims the internal logic of the ritual was greatly undermined, because a victim needed to have certain qualities, luck or fertility. The type of *muti* used is usually associated with the action desired, e.g. a foot for movement, a hand for an occupation or business (the hand might be buried at the entrance to a client's shop facing upwards, in a gesture of "calling customers in"), brains for cleverness, an eye for insight, etc. As has been noted, most traditional medicines are made from herbs and plants but the link with the human body, particularly in matters related to sexuality, has always been strong with the use of the "*Kigelia Africana's*" which is commonly known as a sausage tree (Vincent 2017:44). The *Kigelia Africana's* fruit has been recorded as growing up to a meter long, resembling a large human penis, with its deep red flower resembling the vaginal shape (cf. Vincent 2017:44). With such characteristics, the tree has been used by traditional healers to help young women become more virile, enhance their breast size and to treat syphilis, etc. (Vincent 2017:44). "If a plant resembling human parts can be considered this efficacious, so much more so the body parts themselves" (Vincent 2017:44).

In a state reported case, one butcher is reported to have obtained a human hand which he used to slap his butchery meat with, in order to evoke the spirits to call customers to his business (Vincent 2017:44). In a separate incident, it was reported that another way of ensuring business growth and survival was to bury a human skull on the business premises, e.g. it was found that in most farms body parts were buried to ensure great harvest as a remedy for the collapsing business; “if the business is not doing well, get a boy’s or a girl’s head – someone who has a future – and your business will have a future too” (Ngubane 1986:197). This comes as a shock since many headless bodies emerge from time to time, some in shallow graves, hidden in bushes, or even floating in rivers. Comaroff and Comaroff (2004:515) thus coined the term occult economies as the deployment which is a real or imagined magical means for material ends (see also Vincent 2017:44). These above mentioned scholars offer detailed accounts about the occult in Africa in the form of animism which “embodies a set of normative convictions about moral order, social value and material equity with explanations in the face of human misfortune” (Comaroff and Comaroff 2004:530). Vincent (2004:44) takes this up with the argument that *muti* murder is but one component of this interrelated belief system, together with other magical phenomena such as zombies and pyramid schemes.

## 2.6 Victim targets: the atrocities in the South African media

As has been hinted above, the victims are selected because they fulfil the required criteria for the necessary body parts needed (Labuschagne 2004:196; Seale 2006:1 of 2). It is for this reason that the victims need to be healthy. In many instances it is the children, women and elderly people that are targeted for these rituals, this view is supported by the recent media developments, where it has been shown that an increasing number of albino people of both sexes are being butchered for their body parts (cf. Labuschagne 2004:196 and Thandazile Mpunzi’s funeral, 2015). In some cases, the victim knows and has a personal relationship with the perpetrator, but it can also be that the victim does not have any connection with the perpetrator (Labuschagne 2004:196; cf. Ngubane 1986:197; Hosken 2010:1 of 1). Scholtz et al. (1997:122) have “case details where a father who was a traditional healer used his infant son for *muti* purposes”. Among certain indigenous cultures, any form of success, whether it is political success,

establishing successful business or even scholastic achievements “is attributed to the supernatural and not to the individual's own efforts” (Hamrin-Dahl 2014:57; cf. Seale 2006:2 of 2; Minnaar 2015:48). “In a 2001 case in which a 20-year old mother, Nombovumo Mvinjana, had her facial skin removed with a scalpel and her genitalia, breasts, hands and feet cut off, probably while still alive, among the eight accused were her husband and her uncle (East Cape News, 2001). Unlike human sacrifice where death is the express purpose of the act, in *muti*-related killings, death is an anticipated and accepted by-product of the garnering of human organs but it is not the main aim. Indeed it is often preferred that the victim remain alive during the process. When body parts, including internal organs, are removed while the victim is still alive it is believed that the power of the resultant medicine will be greatly enhanced” (Vincent 2017:43).

According to Hamrin-Dahl (2014:57) it is common for people to believe that, to obtain personal success, one needs to make use of magic *muti*. Over time, these beliefs have come to be perverted and may now refer to individual personal beliefs held by users that its use would enhance their own "luck", success or protection. In other words, they relate to personal gain or greed. “The strength of the medicine to be used is further enhanced if the victim is young and virile and if the parts are removed while the victim is still alive”, since this assures the potency of the medicine, this seems to have also been believed by Jews in and post biblical times (Hamrin-Dahl 2014:57; see also Seale 2006:1 of 2). In addition, due to its secretive nature, *muti* murder victims' bodies are often never found (Minnaar 2015:48). This secretive characteristic makes the selling of human body parts a very lucrative business. Depending on the body part usage and intended end result, prices can range from R5 000 to as high as R25 000, these are “underground” operations (Seale 2006:1 of 2). Thus, there will always be unscrupulous *inyangas/sangomas* who have been corrupted of their healer principles and who will be prepared to supply clients-at the right price-with such types of *muti* (Ngubane 1986:195).

*Kwamhlabuyalingana* (a land that is flat neither with hills, mountains or valleys) is an area in KwaZulu Natal (KZN) that stretches for about 70 km. Poverty is commonplace here with people living in dilapidated houses, still cooking outside on the ground using



three legged pots and wood. Poor families rely on child grants. Apart from the grinding poverty, *Kwamhlabuyalingana* is also remarkable for the *mutis* its *inyangas* and *sangomas* concoct (Mbanjwa 2005:1 of 2). People from across the province come to consult the area's famous *muti*-men and pay thousands of Rands for the concoctions they believe will help them find wealth, a job, or perhaps luck in love (Mbanjwa 2005:1 of 2). Residents of the area are also said to use the *mutis* brewed by their *Inyangas* or *Sangomas*- typically from roots, herbs, animal oils, bones and skin. The people of *Kwamhlabuyalingana* have for years witnessed the power of *Muti*, said Thulani Ngcobo, an *Induna* (*advisor* and right-hand-man to the chief). Lately the people of KZN have come face to face with the darker side of the lucrative *muti*-making business. This comes after the mutilated body of Nompilo Nxumalo, 9, was found with the tongue, private parts, right leg, hand and ribs severed. The police suspected that the child was killed for *muti*. The girl's killing has left a void in the Nxumalo family; it has also spread fear in the community causing people to question the healers they have been putting their faith in for generations. The police are also convinced that some traditional healers are misleading people into believing that human body parts make certain *mutis* stronger (Mbanjwa 2005:1 of 2). The suspect in this gruesome killing is Nompilo's aunt. According to Mbanjwa (2005:2 of 2) the boy who had witnessed the killing was allegedly given R50 to keep quiet, days later, the boy led the searching community and police to Nompilo's corpse. "She was all bones when we found her. We could only recognize the skirt she was wearing that day" said Nxumalo (Mbanjwa 2005:2 of 2). Ngcobo, the local *induna* is reported to have said that the lengths people here go to, to get what they want from the same *Inyangas* and *Sangomas* they turned to in search of that girl is worrying. Despite what happened to Nompilo, the Nxumalo family still believe in the power of the traditional healers and some people want to clear the name of legitimate healers in the area (Mbanjwa 2005:2 of 2).

*Muti* rituals, involving human body parts are not an accepted practice for most traditional healers. "Genuine *Inyangas* and *Sangomas* would never harm another human being" said Swazi Mhlongo, the President of the KZN Traditional Healers Council. According to Dr Labuschagne as penned by Mbanjwa (2005:2 of 2), as an estimate, there are 50-300 people who are killed in *muti* related crimes each year. They also

usually occur in Limpopo, KZN, North-West, and Mpumalanga. Among *muti* using communities, human body parts were believed to be the most powerful ingredient available, the more powerful the *muti* needed to be, the more likely it could involve human body parts (Mbanjwa 2005:2 of 2). As a solution, Mbanjwa (2005:2 of 2) recommends that the public needs to be educated about the murderous use of body parts for healing and to be encouraged to speak out more often.

In another incident that was reported in November 2006, Seale (2006:2 of 2) confirmed that the police arrested two men in connection with the killing of Phineas Dikotla (26) and slicing off his genitals in a village near Polokwane. According to Seale (2006:1 of 2) some ritual killers target hitch-hikers on secluded routes. Mashuda Mundzelele, from Limpopo boarded their car; “his assailants doused him with pepper spray and dragged him into nearby bushes” (Seale 2006:1 of 1). One of the accomplices, an old woman, started throwing bones, sniffing which parts of the body to start cutting of first. “He is not crying, let’s cut off his tongue at once” shouted one of the men as his accomplice was busy slicing their victim’s hand (Seale 2006:1 of 2; Vincent 2017:44). Although still dizzy from the pepper spray, the unbearable pain from pliers pulling his tongue spurred Mundzelele into action. With all of his might, he kicked his assailant hard in the genitals, pushing him into a stream, before dashing to safety (Seale 2006:1 of 2). Although this was an obviously traumatic experience, Mundzelele was fortunate enough to have survived, others have not been so lucky. Families battle to come to terms with the manner in which their loved ones died—by gruesomely having their lips, tongues, nipples and private parts sliced off and/or eyes gouged out while still alive (Seale 2006:1 of 2). The problem is compounded by economic factors, with some people hired as hit-men to carry out the actual killing on behalf of the traditional healers.

For many South Africans, it is common knowledge that “*muti* has been used as part of a subculture of traditional African beliefs for centuries” (Labuschagne 2004:192). This, Labuschagne (2004:192) says, is because many people consider human body parts to be “exceptionally more powerful than the ordinary ingredients of herbs mixed with from plants and animal parts” (see Seale 2006:2 of 2). Although rural areas tend to have a high number of *muti* related crimes, instances of this scourge have occurred in urban

places like Soweto, a township that is south of Johannesburg (Seale 2006:2 of 2). Labuschagne (2004:192) says “*muti* murders are difficult to investigate because of the belief that certain high-ranking politicians, business people and other civil servants participate in such activities”. Some police officials may fear reprisals from traditional healers, leaving the media and civil society as the sole organs to fight it. “Many Africans believe in and fear the power of human-organ *muti* to an extent that even when they oppose its use; it is still difficult to get witnesses to testify” (Seale 2006:2 of 2). In the year 2000, “the government set up a commission of inquiry into witchcraft, violence and ritual witness after a spate of deaths in Soweto in which boys aged between 1- 6 were kidnapped and murdered” (Vincent 2017:43). The post-mortem revealed that the boy’s genitals and thumbs were cut off and their eyes gouged out (Vincent 2017:43). They also found out that 80% of the SA population consult a *sangomas* (Seale 2006:2 of 2). Some of the persistent myths that are believed to lead people to commit ritual murders are (Altered Dimensions 2013):

- Brains are used to impart political power and business success
- Genitals, breasts and placentas are said to ward off infertility and bring good luck, with the genitals of young boys and virgin girls being especially highly prized as “uncontaminated” by sexual activity and thereafter more potent.
- Blood are said to boost vitality.
- For shopkeepers, arms are thought to be the main source to attract customers and make business thrive.
- The tongue is linked with the power of oratory.

According to Seale (2006:2 of 2), in July 2006, “a 40-year-old man was arrested following the discovery of a half-naked, mutilated body of a 30-year-old Shonisani Thinandavha in the Nulodi mountains outside Thohoyandou”. Her right palm, upper lip, left ear and her nipples had been cut off.

In a different incident, the South African Church Council (SACC) and the Traditional Healers Association (THO) have been alarmed by the court appearance of two church leaders and two *sangomas* on *muti*-murder charges (Hlatshwayo and Dzebu 2006:1 of 1). According to Dean Alunamutwe Randitsheni of the SACC in Vhembe, if these men

who claim to be men of God were to be found guilty, the courts should send them to jail for the rest of their lives (Hlatshwayo and Dzebu 2006:1 of 1). Bishop, J Tanzwani, who heads the Holiness Apostolic Church in Thohoyandou, as well as his two co-accused sangomas M Phosa (54) and S Dzebu (31), “were not asked to plead to murder, attempted murder or robbery when they appeared in court” (Hlatshwayo and Dzebu 2006:1 of 1). It is unfortunate that not everyone who is accused of such crime has been convicted. There is reason to believe that not all ritual homicides have resulted even in prosecution (Ngubane 1986:195).

In August 2006, “the police found the mutilated body of a 49-year-old man in a river in Giyani” (Seale 2006:2 of 2). The man, from Nhlaneki village, had his genitals chopped off. “On the same day, police in Bushbuckridge found the headless body of a woman in her 20’s” (Seale 2006:2 of 2). Three weeks before this, residents of Ngwenani village outside Thohoyandou found the mutilated body of an unidentified woman in bushes near a mountain (Seale 2006:2 of 2).

In the year 2007 the Journeyman Pictures website posted a video that told of a story of a mother who had lost her son to *muti* rituals. The video starts by highlighting that those who kill people instead of animals are called “*abathakathi*” (witches) and that up to 300 people a year are killed in *muti* rituals each year. Selona Chokoe found her son Sello who was herding donkeys, with his tiny body butchered, his hands, genital and parts of the brain were gone. The mother gives all the details of her son’s death, saying that Sello died of the pain. An *Inyanga* and businessmen were arrested but could not be convicted because there was not enough evidence to link them to the crime scene. Many police officers do not want to get in investigations that include *Inyangas* and/or sangomas out of fear of their own lives.

According to a staff reporter at Pretoria News (2010:1 of 1), “the Minister for Women, Children and Persons with Disabilities (Mayende-Sibiya)” told delegates at an indaba on the practice that, even in the recent past, *muti* murders had not received the necessary attention in society. She continued to say that “we need to strengthen or reform existing legislation to provide better protection for victims of such crimes and to adequately punish the perpetrators through the criminal and civil justice systems” (Pretoria News

2010:1 of 1). She went onto add “that murder and extraction of body parts to be used for *muti* purposes was a difficult crime to address because it was riddled with myth and beliefs, these myths and beliefs have not been studied sufficiently to enable those outside this belief system to understand what drives a person to commit such horror crimes against mostly children and women” (Shonisani 2010:1 of 1). Shonisani (2010:1 of 1) also alluded to the fact that the biggest problem in dealing with the problem was the lack of information and research on the subject. Another problem would be that reporting these cases to the Police is also a challenge because many were reported as just murder which meant it was difficult to track the extent and trend or pattern of these crime (Staff reporter (2010:1 of 1)).

As noted by Mitchley (2014) who was greatly influenced by *The Citizen* (2014):

Captain Zwane said the police received a tip off that there was a dead body at a church in Ncotshane area on Saturday afternoon. Upon arrival at the church premises the members opened a plastic bag which was containing body parts of a human being. The police suspect that the victim was a three- year- old boy who was reported missing on July, 2. The police are still searching for the remains of the body and cannot confirm if the murder was *muti* related but have not ruled the possibility out. After hearing this, members of the community burned down the church and pastor’s house (15 community members were arrested for public violence).

According to Mkhize (2014:1 of 1), after centuries of being called “*inkawu* (monkeys)”, living in fear of falling victim to ritual murder for their body parts to be use as *muti*, and mounting discrimination, the Albinism Society of South Africa (ASSA) has had enough. “How can anyone in the 21<sup>st</sup> century still believe that an Albino’s blood will give them luck?” Mazibuko asked lamenting what she said were the senseless violations people with albinism endured (Mkhize 2014:1 of 1). It is still shocking that there was a lost child in Kwazulu-Natal (KZN) in 2011, but that was swept under the carpet...How many of these incidents are happening? Can we rule out trafficking for parts? Yet no one is saying anything? According to the ASSA society, a majority of people with albinism are subjected on a daily basis to name-calling and exclusion, which impinges

on their rights to equality and dignity, often leaving deep emotional scars (Mkhize 2014:1 of 1). For Vincent (2017:45) this kind of murder only shocks people who want to be shocked. If we have to go back into history, we will see that these deeds have been happening, and will persist, as long as the perpetrators continue to believe in it as a religion (Vincent 2017:43). South Africa is a secular state which means all religions are recognized and one cannot believe in a certain religion without following all the rituals required.

According to Geldenhuys (2016:29), in August 2015, a 20-year-old albino girl was murdered for *muti* purposes by three youths and a 65-year-old traditional healer. There is a myth that using the body parts of albino people for *muti* will either bring luck or will cure Aids (News24). Vusi Khumalo and News24 reported from the Funeral of Thandazile Mpunzi that she was buried with some of her body parts still missing and that her death has shown bad light on Pastors, Bishops, and Traditional healers. Her body parts were ordered by a Bishop. Pastors and Traditional healers have condemned such behaviour. According to News24:

We need to educate the community that people living with albinism are not a commodity and people should stop using them for *muti* purposes. The chairperson of “Albinism Society of SA in KZN, Maxwell Thabethe said while he was happy that Mpunzi’s body was found, but he was dismayed at the brutality. He also added that “what saddens him is that a man of God is said to have participated in the act. This man influenced young people to take the life of another human being. There is still a lot of discrimination against albinos both in rural and urban areas. In most areas there are still false beliefs such that if they add body parts of an albino, it will make them more powerful.

Another story is that of, the eNCA news channel, which they posted, titled “Child living with Albinism in KZN escapes death” and they say that the Manguzi community is grappling with how best to protect people affected by albinism. A traditional healer recently blew the whistle, after he was approached by a woman who wanted to sell him a child, living with the condition. This woman is now held by the police and the child

has been sent to live with relatives, this does not guarantee the safety of the child. (eNCA).

2016- Vusi Khumalo wrote that there is a myth that *muti* made with the body parts of people living with albinism, can make them very wealthy. Local government is working with traditional healers, to put an end to this practice. “This is after a 20- year old woman living with albinism was killed in uMhlabuyalingana area—known as the home of traditional medicine—last year (2015)” (eNCA). These albino’s children are offered for not less than R100 000 and not all of them are found on time (Vincent 2017:45; <http://www.enca.com/south-africa/stop-killing-us-for-our-body-parts-albinism-society>)

One of the albino activists said:

There is a lot of energy worldwide to protect the rhino; we expect the same if not more energy to protect people with albinism. If they are being hunted like the rhino, how much coverage do they get, [one rhino killed in Malawi or in SA the while world will know about it](#). But people with albinism their story is not told aggressively enough as we hear stories about the rhino. (eNCA).

At the time of this report, they were still waiting for the government to comment on this issue.

Many South African citizens have lodged complaints that the police don’t respond to calls and many lament that if the police had gone to look for their children, they could have still been found alive (Bevan 2006:1 of 1). In connection with the death of Connie Ncube, “it was after a report of her death had appeared on the local newspaper that the police launched a full investigation and eventually identified a suspect- a neighbour with links to traditional healers who has been caught” (Bevan 2006:1 of 1). “Disquiet at the lack of police response has grown since it emerged that SA’s occult-related crimes unit; set up in 1993 to investigate *muti* killings has been disbanded” (Bevan 2006:1 of 1).

The “Human Rights League investigated the *muti* murder in 2010 in a study titled “*Trafficking Body Parts in Mozambique and South Africa*” one of the interview samples included in the report was of a case in Bloemspruit where a woman who wanted to

become pregnant, went to a sangoma who provided her with a magical belt to wear, dangling from the belt were children's fingers and penises" (Altered Dimensions 2013). According to Altered Dimension (2013) "she was made to drink a concoction she believed contained human blood and fat and she was given a piece of flesh which she believed to be a human organ, perhaps a heart. She sliced small pieces from the flesh each night and fried them on a stove" (Altered Dimensions 2013). Vincent (2017:44) argues that it is these harvested body parts that are usually cooked together with medicinal plant matter to be consumed or "carried by the person who aims to benefit from its powers or have the mixture secretly smeared onto the body, clothing or included in the food of the person who is its target, such as a reluctant or abusive lover" (Vincent 2017:46). "The use of human body matter in the production of traditional medicine does not always involve killing. For instance, a living person's nail clippings or hair cuttings may secretly be collected by say, a jealous lover or a neighbour or family member bearing a grudge, and used in potions targeted at that person" (Vincent 2017:46). In a 1998 case "a Limpopo Province tuberculosis patient disappeared from his hospital bed and was later found dead near the doctors' quarters; his scrotum had been removed and his penis skinned" (Vincent 2017:46). The police suspected that the killers came from within the hospital given a tight security regime preventing casual access to the premises (wa-Afrika, 1998:1; Vincent 2017:46).

## 2.7 Findings

In this chapter, the study started by outlining the similarities between the world of the OT and that of the African people. These similarities served as a starting point to compare the practice of *muti* rituals and child sacrifice. The study also stressed the importance of using cultural anthropology to unpack the socio-cultural context of African religion, focusing on the importance and place of religion within the African context. In dealing with and trying to understand life, rituals proved to be most helpful in helping people to structure and give meaning to their lives. The study then introduced the term *muti* and outlined its uses and discovered that the use of *muti* in combination with other chemicals, such as mercury was common. It was with the rise of new diseases and misfortunes that led some traditional healers to resort to finding new remedies and



concocting stronger concoctions that gave rise to the belief and use of human body parts, since they contain the life essence. It was also emphasised that the majority of the traditional healers are not in support of this practice because it goes against their calling as healers.

The practice of *muti* rituals is not a new practice, it was practiced by kings and chiefs in past to gain strength and favour in times of wars, the sacrificed person was sacrificed for the greater good of the community. The study also showed that the heart of the enemy was usually eaten for bravery, during warfare. In the more recent times, *muti* murders are no longer a sign of war, they have been so perverted that they are now performed to enhance ones luck and success, with some using body parts of strangers, undermining the practice even more. From reading the newspaper reports, it has become clear that these rituals are now driven by economic factors; the selling of human body parts has indeed become a lucrative business. The second observation is that these cases are more common among the poor communities, who are willing and desperate to leave the poverty circle even if it means that someone has to die for that dream to be realised. A third observation is that men are the usual perpetrators of such crimes, when women are involved, they are usually unwilling participants. This is not true for every case. One important theme in *muti* rituals is that the victim has to be alive when the body parts are being harvested as this is believed to increase the potency of the mixed *muti*.

A comparison between *muti* rituals and child sacrifice will not be complete until we survey the biblical portrayal of child sacrifice. The study will do this by looking at the two known and loved books of Genesis 22:1-19 and Judges 11:29-40.

# Chapter 3: Genesis 22:1-19 and Judges 11:29-40

## 3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter will be to survey the contents of Genesis 22:1-19 and Judges 11:29-40. Scholars like Logan (2009:666) would agree that the notion of child sacrifice is a hard concept to digest especially if we have to take in account the possibility that Yahweh could have wanted it and could select the victim himself. This study acknowledges that we are handicapped in our interpretation not just by the biblical author's ambiguity but by the fact that we are not native speakers of classical Hebrew, and thus not nearly so well attuned as his ancient audience to both these stories nuances of speech and allusions (Logan 2009:667). The concepts of ritual and sacrifice which can also be found in *muti* rituals make us ask ourselves: how do we as biblical readers deal with these texts found in the Bible? In an attempt to answer this question the study will start by first looking at the place of Genesis in the Pentateuch. This will be done by offering a brief overview of the Documentary Hypothesis, then narrowing down to chapter 22, and how it fits into the broader structure, it's possible dating and by providing a verse-by-verse analysis of Genesis 22. Once that has been achieved, we will look at the meaning of child sacrifice as understood by the author(s) of this section of the book and lastly argue that the book of Genesis was against child sacrifice. When dealing with the book of Judges, a similar pattern will be followed. The study will look at the broader period of the Judges and how the character of Jephthah fits into the broader story. This will be achieved by doing a verse-by-verse analysis and concluding that the daughter's response shows that she was not submitting to her father but was affirming their mutual legal obligation to submit themselves to God (Logan 2009:681). We as twenty-first-century readers must be willing to put aside our modern sensibilities and try to enter, as best as we can a worldview very different from ours and thus difficult to conceive.

In the following chapter, this study will further discuss the different problems that are posed by the theme of Genesis 22 and Judges 11: that of human/ child sacrifice together with the redemption by means of the substituted sacrifice of an animal. Bauks (2007:65-

67) summarised the views of commentators who tend to present one of three positions in response to this problem:

- Some exegetes assume that human sacrifice is unacceptable and therefore inadmissible on anthropological and religious grounds. They affirm that child sacrifice does not occur in the Bible. As a result, passages that deal with the practice are perceived simply as a polemic against foreign cults. However, since Genesis 22 contains no polemic, it has to be considered as a case apart, which requires an alternative explanation. Texts like Judges 11 contain a polemic against the character of an individual. Rashi presented an alternative solution by commenting that The Holy One, Blessed be his name, certainly did not seek that, commanding instead that he climb up the mountain in order to give Isaac the appearance of an offering to God (Bauks 2007:66). Once he had made him climb [the mountain], he instructed him: Now take him down.
- Others consider human sacrifice to have been a real characteristic of Syro-Palestinian culture, of which traces remain in the Bible. For example, Roland de Vaux (Bauks 2007:66) considers such references to be of relatively late date. He alludes to 2 Kings 16:3 and 21:6 as examples of the sacrifice to the god *Molech* that is condemned in Leviticus, Deuteronomy and the prophetic literature. Once again, however, this approach sheds little light on the role played by Genesis 22. It is suggested simply that Genesis 22 offers an etiological form of substitution or redemption of the first-born (cf. Exod. 13:13b; 34:20b).
- Certain exegetes attempt to follow the second reading metaphorically. They accord to the account in Genesis 22 the nature of an exception, by which the testing of Abraham employs the motif of child sacrifice to demonstrate the patriarch's profound and exceptional faith. In this way, Genesis 22 does not deal with human sacrifice as such, but rather centres on the divine promise by which Abraham will become a great nation. This approach reduces the theme of Genesis 22 to a simple test, by suppressing the crucial aspect of the human sacrifice required and then prevented by God.

In the first point, Bauks (2007:66) argues that there is no polemic in Genesis 22, this study disagrees with that statement because the polemic is against the practice itself and

as a solution Genesis 22 advocates for animal sacrifice as a substitute for child sacrifice (see Exod. 22:28; 34:20 which the study believes serves as the background of Gen 22). It will become clear that the majority of scholars associate Yahweh with child sacrifice, both explicitly—such as the Aqedah, the story of Jephthah’s daughter, the firstborn laws, Ezekiel’s “devastating” assertion, and the Jericho sacrifices and implicitly, such as the Levitical prohibition of 20:3 and Jeremiah’s overly insistent denials (Stavrakopoulou 2004:205). In addition, Noort (2002:8) sees these texts as “an indication that child sacrifice was part of the service to Yahweh which he had ordered”.

## 3.2 The binding of Isaac

### *3.2.1 Historical background of the book of Genesis*

One could agree with Brueggemann (1982:185) and MacDonald & Briggs (2012:180) that Genesis 22:1-24 has certainly been among the most popular narratives of the Hebrew Bible, and is until today used in very different contexts as a symbol of religious fanaticism, but also in more ironical contexts (also Römer 2012:3). It poses acute questions about the nature of faith and the way of God with his faithful creature. Levenson (2012:1) highlights that the Abraham story is found in the biblical books of Genesis 12-25. Millard (2012:37) and Levenson (2012:1) understand these stories as showing how Jews believed God interacted with man thus making this a simple story of a man called by God with much expected from him without any preparation for this command. This drama was derived from the question; “how will a man whose wife has never been able to conceive a child ever beget the great nation that is at the centre of the promise” (Levenson 2012:1). For Levenson (2012: 1) when at last Abraham gains a son, it is unfortunately not through his wife Sarah but by an Egyptian slave (Hagar) “who served as a surrogate mother to her mistress”. This plan of Abraham is later sidelined by God in verses 16-17 (Moberly 2009:185 and Kunin 1996:323). Moberly (2009:185) and later Levenson (2012:2) also reports that the second half of the story focuses on the relationship of the two sons and their mothers. “Since Sarah’s son is the promised offspring and suddenly without warning God commands Abraham to sacrifice this child, the son he loves on whom he has staked his life, as a burnt offering on an as-yet-unspecified mountain in a distant land” (Moberly 2009:185). “Abraham obeys

God's will and at the last minute, God interrupts the sacrifice, having determined that Abraham obeys even when that means acting against his own self-interest and parental love, Isaac survives" (Fretheim 1994:499). Alexandra (2002:144) mentions that three prominent themes can be seen in the Abraham narrative; the theme of seed, land and blessing.

### 3.2.2 *Composition*

The book of Genesis stands at the head of the canon. According to Bowie (1952:439), Genesis means "beginning". This title is said to come from "the Vulgate from the Septuagint, where it is dependent on the Hebrew superscription—simply the first word of the text, *'bereshit'* 'In the beginning'" (Bowie 1952:439). The range of the narrative in Genesis is breath-taking, "moving from cosmos to family, from the order of the world to reconciled brothers, from the seven days of the creation of the universe to the seventy descendants of Jacob entering the land of their sojourn" (Fretheim 1994:321; Noort 2002:4). As a result, it stands as a challenge to the interpreter. The canonical placement makes it clear that God's redemptive work does not take place in a vacuum or in isolation but takes place in a context that has been shaped by God's creative work (Fretheim 1994:321). Therefore, redemption can never be understood as *ex nihilo* without denigrating God's gifts given in creation (Fretheim 1994:321). The book of Genesis has been seen as a composite work, consisting primarily of three interwoven sources (Yahwistic (J), Elohist (E) and Priestly (P)), with some texts attributed to other traditions (Fretheim 1994:322). Genesis thus grew over time, with these sources gradually brought together by redactors over five hundred years or more, from the united monarchy to the post-exilic era. According to Brueggemann (1982:2) it is likely that theological and kerygmatic interests come more into play, so that finally "one must speak of the essential testimonial character of the material, a witness to the complex interrelationships of divine action and human response".

### 3.2.3 *The formation of the Pentateuch and the Documentary Hypothesis*

According to the definition that is common amongst scholars such as Whybray (1995:1), Briggs & Lohr (2012:1), Guinan (1990:14), Fretheim (1996:19), Blenkinsopp (1990:31), the term Pentateuch is said to be the first five books of the Old Testament,

which are; Genesis, Exodus, Deuteronomy, Numbers and Leviticus respectively, which they attest have been experienced since early times as the first of the three major divisions of the Old Testament: (1) Pentateuch, (2) Former and Latter Prophets and (3) writings. Therefore, the Pentateuch has been highly affected by both the Jews and Christians as is believed to confine the beginning and most important place in their scriptures, and is traditionally considered to be composed by Moses (Fretheim 1994:308). Whybray (1995:1) supports this statement by referring to Exodus 33:11 and Deuteronomy 34:10 which attest that Moses was God's authoritative spokesman. From what we have gathered thus far, we like Sailhamer (2009:22) can testify that the actual work of composition was complex. For Fretheim (1994:309) it was by the early eighteenth century that evidence for the use of sources was becoming more and more apparent. Repetitions, parallel versions of the same event, and notable differences in language and point of view seemed to render this conclusion inevitable. The first to exploit the occurrence of divine names-Elohim and Yahweh- as a means for distinguishing between sources was Witte and Astruc (cf. Whybray 1995:13; Ska 2006:106).

Sailhamer (2009:22-23) believes that the author started with two kinds of written sources; (1) "the story of the primeval history or the story of the patriarchs" (Gen. 12-50) which probably already existed in the written form when they were used to make the Pentateuch. (2) He also seems to have had a collection of several smaller written records. Some of these were assumed to be in narrative form and others in poetic. He is also reported to have had several collections of written laws, which Blenkinsopp (1992:4-5) claims to date from a time after the monarchy had passed from the scene. A minority opinion proposed by Geddes in the late eighteenth century and developed by Vater, rejected the hypothesis of two continuous parallel sources in favour of a much greater number of quite disparate blocks of material that were combined long after the time of Moses to form the Pentateuch- the Fragment hypothesis (Fretheim 1994:309; Whybray 1995:14; Collins 2004:33; and Ska 2006:103). Another alternative assumed that a single base narrative was subsequently filled out with additional material- the Supplementary hypothesis. It was during the period of political and cultural upheaval, the most important contribution to understanding the formation of the Pentateuch was

that of De Wette. His study of Chronicles persuaded him that the legal and cultic systems that the author of Chronicles presumes to have been in place since Mosaic times (Ska 2006:106). The greater part of the legal and cultic material in the Pentateuch, therefore, belongs to the early history of Judaism rather than to that of Israel (Fretheim 1994:309). The second and decisive proposal, already implicit in the results obtained by de Wette at the beginning of the century, was that this new discovered Priestly source was to be located at the end, not the beginning, of the process of formation (Fretheim 1994:310; Ska 2006:103). The way was thus cleared for the definite formulation of the sources in chronological order J, E, D, and P (Fretheim 1994:310; cf. Collins 2004:31, Propp 2006:737).

These four sources as set out by Wellhausen became the critical orthodoxy, though opposed by scholars of more conservative ecclesiastical affiliation (Blenkinsopp 1992:10). The requirements of a fairly high level of consistency in terminology, style, and theme had already led to the division of an originally unitary E source into P and E, and it was not long before the source E itself suffered the same division (Fretheim 1994:310). Later, Baentsch identified as many as seven strands for P, each with its own redactional history. A challenge of a different nature emerged from the work of Gunkel, who also accepted Wellhausen's construct (Whybray 1995:17). Gunkel brought a comparative study of the genres to bear on the narrative material of Genesis, concentrating on the smallest literary units, their oral prehistory, and the social situations that generated them (Blenkinsopp 1992:5; Fretheim 1994:311). Von Rad built upon Gunkel's work on the oral tradition and used it as a foundation for a comprehensive theory of the development of the pentateuchal tradition (Blenkinsopp 1992:16; Fretheim 1994:311; Whybray 1995:17-18; Collins 2004:33-34). Von Rad's high evaluation of the Yahwist as a literary and religious genius was very influential, especially during the "biblical theology movement", especially in the two years following World War II and residually down to the present (Fretheim 1994:311). Fretheim (1994:311) observes that books and articles began to appear on kerygma, or the theology, of the Yahwist. Noth's acceptance of the documentary hypothesis was fairly laconic, since he maintained that the essential lines of narrative tradition had been present from the beginning, whether in oral or written form remain unclear (Collins

2004:33). His main point was that the combination of the five themes, originating in different segments of what later became Israel, went hand in hand with the consolidation of these diverse groups into the Israelite tribal federation of the pre-monarchic period (Fretheim 1994:312).

In the more recent developments, while there have always been those who rejected the documentary hypothesis outright, and those who were critical of some aspects of it, it is only in the last two decades that Wellhausen's construct can be said to be serious and possibly terminal crisis (Fretheim 1994:312; Whybray 1995:13). Doubts about the early dating of J have coalesced to the point where such an early date can no longer be taken for granted (Collins 2004:35). Another development threatening to undermine the existing paradigm involves the contribution of Deuteronomic authors of the narrative in the first four books of the Bible (e.g. Gen. 15; Exod. 19-34) (cf. Fretheim 1994:313). An even more radical attack on the documentary hypothesis, and the historical-critical methods emerged by its advocates, has come in recent years from a quite different direction, that of literary-critical theory. The emergence as Fretheim (1994:313) pens of the New Criticism in the twenties and thirties of the last century marked a decisive turning away from the historical, philological, and referential approach to literature with an emphasis on the circumstances of the production and first reception of texts, the psychology and intention of the author, and the like. Proponents of this theory include scholars like Empson and Barthes. Similar in some respect is the approach that since the 1970s has come to be known as "canonical criticism". Both the new critical and the canonical approaches concentrate on the final form of the text, but with the difference that the latter has an explicitly theological agenda (e.g. Childs). With respect to the Pentateuch, Childs seeks to show how the five books are related thematically and how the final editorial stage was based on a reading of the Pentateuch as a whole (Fretheim 1994:314).

Genesis 22 is therefore a classical example of a mixture of both J and E (cf. Dozeman 2009:33). Recent scholars have now refrained from referring to the separate J, E, D and P sources but chose to refer to Priestly (P) and pre and post-Priestly (non-P) sources (grouping J, E and D together) (Baden 2010:491-492). The reason for this move was



that P was believed to have existed as an independent source before it was interwoven with other non-P literature as we now have it in the Pentateuch (Dozeman 2009:34, 41). The separation of P from other sources was done by separating the law from the narrative and by identifying on the narrative as P. This caused more interpreters to question the separation of law and narrative, arguing instead for a mixture of literary genres in the P source (Dozeman 2009:34-35). The present structure of the Pentateuch as we now have it is a result of a P author, who is both using P traditions and combining literature, in which case the P History is a supplement of the Non-P History and a significant influence in creating the present structure of the Pentateuch. The implication of his hypothesis is that P literature in the Pentateuch/Hexateuch is not an independent source, but a supplement to a prior Non-P History, a position advocated by a number of recent interpreters (Dozeman 2009:33; Propp 2006:737). The P History for Dozeman (2009:51) continues the theme of creation (Gen 1) and covenant (Gen 9,17) from Genesis and progresses from the revelation and construction of the tabernacle (Exod. 25-31, 35-40) to the ordination of the priesthood and formation of the Tabernacle cult in Leviticus and the establishment of the wilderness camp in Numbers 1-10 (at Mount Sinai).

This implies that Genesis 22 is no longer referred to as a mixture of J and E but as a non-P text (Baden 2010:492). This study chooses to use J and E because it still finds the “Wellhausen” source critical approach as important, especially since the question of which deity requires child sacrifice still stands unanswered at this point. It is the careful interpretation of the individual sources, therefore, that will provide us with insight into the social, cultural, and religious circumstances of Israel’s monarchical, exilic, and postexilic periods, the time when the sources were written (Dozeman 2009:32; Propp 2006:707). The above mentioned serves as the background of understanding the book of Genesis within the Pentateuch and highlight its importance within the canon. This is the prerequisite for engaging in a valuable dialogue with the text (Noort 2002:2).

#### *3.2.4 The audience and author(s) of Genesis*

According to Fretheim (1994:327) Genesis was written by people of faith who were concerned to speak or reflect on a word of God to other persons of faith. It is thus the

voice of faith that resounds through these texts. Fretheim (1994:327) goes further to pen that Genesis was written in different stages of transmission all concerned with the possible problems of the audience in view. Linking who these first readers were is still a challenge because this story is not a “precise” historical account but it is clear that it was written to certain people in specific places and times. Fretheim (1994:327) makes it clear that the most basic shaping of Genesis occurred during the exile, this he bases on the fact that the creation language in this book was prominent during this era (Isaiah 40-55, which relates Israel’s future to the universal purpose of God). It is in both narrative and genealogy that Fretheim (1994:327) argues the author to be addressing sharp issues of communal identity. We cannot prove if these men and women that Genesis writes about are historical or not, but these narratives do “carry some authentic memories of Israel’s pre-exodus heritage” (Fretheim 1994:327). These exiles used different forms of names to refer to God such as El/ Yahweh who most referred to as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The use of this triad meant that for them God was a personal God who was with this family in history.

### *3.2.5 The patriarch Abraham*

The book of Genesis presents Abraham as a tent dweller after he left Haran (Millard 1992:38). Therefore the question of his existence becomes irrelevant because these stories that are portrayed by his show how “generations of Jews believed that God worked in a man’s life, setting a pattern, and it is that belief, hallowed by the experience of many others which is enshrined in them” (Millard 1992:37). In order for us to get a clear sense of the character of Abraham, the narrative of Genesis 15 becomes important, because it serves as the first encounter with Abram, later called Abraham, and sacrifice. Scholars like Römer (2012:11) tend to agree to the late dating of Genesis 15 (late Persian to early Hellenistic period), and this leads to varied opinions over whether it basically comprises the work of one author, results from a complex history of redactors, or pre-or-postdates the priestly account of Yahweh’s covenant with Abraham in Genesis 17. In Genesis 15, Abraham is presented as a royal figure (Millard 1992:35). In verse 1, Yahweh promises him great reward and presents himself as Abram’s shield (Römer 2012:11). Abram’s royalty is reinforced by the divine exhortation: “do not be afraid”,

which parallels Assyrian and Babylonian salvation oracles given to the king. Abram appears also as the first David. For Römer (2012:11), Yahweh's unconditional promise to Abraham anticipates his conditional promise to David in 2 Samuel 17. This transfer of ideology to Abraham's ethics occurs also in Genesis 17, probably reflecting a kind of democratization of royal ideology. The Torah agrees with the idea that Israel does not need a king since it has Moses, and, it appears, Abraham (Römer 2012:12). Millard (1992:39) mentions that Abraham had a similar religious language as those who were around him, with animal sacrifice, altars, and gifts to his God, but he never joined Canaanite cults. This serves as an apologetic for the sacrificial language found in texts that reveal his identity and place within the larger tale. Commentators also point to Abraham as being presented as an anti-Ahaz (cf. Millard 1992:37). The emphasis on his faith (v. 6) is the opposite of kin Ahaz, whom the prophet Isaiah accuses of lacking in faith (Isaiah 7:9). Contrary to Ahaz, Abraham trusts the divine promise. He also surpasses Moses according to this statement (Millard 1992:37). Moses and Aaron are indeed accused of lacking in faith: "And the Lord said to Moses and Aaron: because you did not believe in me". In contrast, Römer (2012:13) mentions that Abraham's faith not only surpasses that of Ahaz' faith but also the faith of Moses and Aaron and he appears in this chapter as indeed the "father of faith".

Genesis 15:6 shows that Abraham counted Yahweh's promises as an act of divine justice and righteousness. This understanding is presupposed by Nehemiah 9 (Millard 1992:36). It seems that the author of Nehemiah 9 wrote shortly after Genesis 15, it is Yahweh's behaviour towards Abraham that is considered righteous. This is according to Römer (2012:14) the sense proposed by Jewish commentators such as Ramban who declares: what would be correct in my judgement is that it is said that the righteous is the Holy One. This statement is attested to by Psalms 5:8 and 22:32. If this understanding is right Römer (2012:14) advocates that Genesis 15 has nothing to do with justification by faith, Abraham is simply nothing without Yahweh's righteousness because God has given him a promise of offspring. This he bases on verse 7 that clearly refers to Yahweh.

Scholars like Millard (1992:37) also agree that Abraham was not a historical figure and that questions about his historicity were not proving to be fruitful in understanding his character as portrayed in the biblical books. This study will thus focus on the character portrayed in the Abraham cycle.

### *3.2.6 Introduction to the story of Isaac in context*

The narratives of Genesis 22 and that of Genesis 28 are mainly E stories, but they mention Yahweh. It is possible that different forms of the story were spliced together (Collins 2004:31). According to Römer (2012:6) Genesis 20 repeats a theme of Genesis 12:10-20 in which Abraham, who is sojourning in the territory of a Palestine king, presents his wife as his sister. This for Römer (2012:6) sets up a situation in which the king may take her into his harem. But unlike Genesis 12, God appears to the pagan king in a dream and tells him not to touch Sarah, so that her integrity is preserved. Following this threat, Genesis 21:1-7 finally reports the birth story of Isaac, the son that God promised to Abraham from the very beginning (see Bauks 2007:70). Immediately after Isaac's birth, Abraham loses his first son Ishmael, as Sarah demands the expulsion of Hagar and Ishmael. In addition, Genesis 12:18-20 can indeed be understood as a prologue to Genesis 22 (Noort 2002:3). The reasons for this statement could be that "both texts contain interesting parallels: the boy's life is threatened (in 21 by Sarah and in 22 by God)" (Bauks 2007:7). Noort sees a link between the Hagar and Ishmael narrative with that of Isaac, he argues that "the threatening death at the desert (21:15) is a counterpart of the threatening of death on the altar (22:10)". In both these cases, Noort (2002:5) argues that "the promise-bearing son is involved, both death situations are initiated by Elohim (21:12 and 22:1, 2)". God gives an order and Abraham obeys it (21:12-14; 22:1-3); the boy is saved by divine intervention from heaven (21:17 and 22:11, 15); but this retrieval does not bring back the son to the father (21:12 and 22:19) (Bauks 2007:70; Römer 2012:6-7). Römer (2012:7) advocates that between the story of the loss of Ishmael and the sacrifice of Isaac we find another narrative which takes up the theme of Abraham's sojourn in the territory of the Philistine king Abimelech in chapter 20 (Noort 2002:4). It is after a dispute over the use of water wells that Abraham becomes the "founder" of Beer-Sheba, a place to which he returns after the sacrifice in

22:19. In Genesis 21, the promise appears to have been fulfilled through the birth of Isaac (Bauks 2007:70). Noort (2002:4) stresses that chapter 21 has a double ending which serves as link to 22, “Verse 34, stresses Abraham’s sojourn in the Land of the Philistines while verse 33 is the natural ending of chapter 21 and the direct link to Genesis 22”. Genesis 22 thus “presents a great moment of testing which portrays the threat overshadowing a promise now partially fulfilled” (Bauks 2007:70-71). It is at this stage that Noort (2002:4) concludes that “Abraham lives in Beer-Sheba” and that the promise, and everything it represents, seems to be on the brink of collapse (see. Bauks 2007:71).

Many historical-critical scholars have attributed chapters 20, 21 and 22 to the Elohist or the Elohist document because of the clear preference for the use of “Elohim” for God (Römer 2012:7). For Römer (2012:7), at first glance the story can hardly be labelled Elohist because the divine name Yahweh appears in verses 11, 14, and 15-16. Noort (2002:5) warns against following Jacob (1934) who argued that the Elohim in verse 1 should be interpreted as a member of the divine council. Noort (2002:5) argues that “the opposition between the human sacrifice asked by Yahweh in 22:1 and the rescuing in 22:11 are connected with the non-Yahwistic land of the Philistines of the added verse 34—already suggests that this call promises something ill”. With respect to verses 15-16, it is generally accepted that these verses belong to a late addition to the text (15-18). The second speech of the angel, for Römer (2012:7) seems like a patchwork of divine promises and comes too late for denouement and its language contrasts with the sober style of the previous narrative. It seems probable that these verses are an interpretation of the narrative in light of the Deuteronomistic theology, that Abraham is rewarded because of his obedience.

Verse 11, is for Römer (2012:8) clearly part of the original narrative and the Masoretic reading of Yahweh is clearly presupposed by the LXX with “*kurios*”. Papyrus 961 does however in this verse presuppose an “angel of God” (Elohim), as does the Syriac translation, the Peshitta. In verse 14, the Peshitta also contains the tetragrammaton: “And Abraham called the name of that place Yahweh will see”. Römer (2012:8) states that we do however find one attestation for “Elohim” in the first part of verse 14, in a

small fragment from Qumran (4QgenExod<sup>a</sup>) there is evidence that this manuscript contained Elohim instead of Yahweh. Therefore, in the case verse 14a would match perfectly with Abraham's statement in verse 8. When Isaac asks him about the victim for the holocaust, Abraham answers: "God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering". This for Römer is unfortunate because the Qumran fragment does not preserve the second half of this verse. He offers us with another possibility that argues that the second half of verse 14 did not belong to the original narrative, because of the contradiction between the place (*maqom*) in the first half of the verse and the "mountain" in the second half. Römer highlights that the place was already mentioned in verse 3 and 4, and probably already alluded to the only place where sacrifices should be offered to Yahweh (Deuteronomy 12), which is Jerusalem according to the Judean reception. This, as a result, causes more questions of how one should explain this original use of Elohim. If here was no "Elohistic" or Elohistic document, the only explanation offered by Römer (2012:9) is that these chapters presuppose altogether the priestly texts of the books of Genesis and Exodus. The priestly authors clearly have the idea that the "real" name of the god of Israel has been revealed only since after the time of the exodus, as is stated in Exodus 6:2-3.

As it has been advocated by scholars such as Van Seters (1973:15-18) and Bauks (2007:68), Genesis 22:1-14a, 19 have been seen as the basic text and thus sees verses 14b-18 as a parenthesis. The narrative elements within our verses may be resumed as follows: the theme of Abraham's trust in God, that of child sacrifice, and the concept of the holy place. The mention of promise functions as an allusion to Genesis 12:1-8, a passage with which Genesis 22 has important parallels. The emphasis of this passage for Noort (2002:4) is to indicate that the promise lies not on the land but on "the real heir Isaac". Therefore, the promise made in Genesis 12:3 becomes taken up into Genesis 22:18 where Isaac becomes the new origin of blessing. Abraham leaves for a land, which God will show him, accompanied by Lot his adopted son. This departure is not simply the beginning of an itinerary; it represents at the same time a complete reversal of his nomadic life (Bauks 2007:69). In leaving his family and tribe, Abraham gives himself and his family over in trust to the providence of God. In so doing, Bauks (2007:69) argues that he finds himself in opposition to the rules of nomadic life, which encourage

the formation of networks with surrounding families. Abraham leaves Syria for a far-off land. In other words, he sacrifices the past. In addition, this study observes a similar pattern in Genesis 22. Abraham receives a second command to depart. This time accompanied by his own son Isaac and two servants he leaves for a specific destination—Moriah—in order to offer a sacrifice to God (Bauks 2007:69). For Noort (2002:6) “the relations between Genesis 21 and 22 is the linking the list of tribes in Abraham’s Mesopotamian family in 22:20-24 with the return from Moriah in 22:19”. Once more, he finds himself in an existentially overwhelming situation (Bauks 2007:69). Up to this point, everything seems to be accounted for, except the sacrifice itself. Isaac asks about it, surprised that there is no animal to sacrifice. Abraham’s reply has a double reference, since, grammatically, *beny*, “my son,” can “represent either a vocative or a complement whose purpose is to clarify the object of the sacrifice”, hence: “it is you, my son” (Bauks 2007:70). It still remains clear that in verses 9–10 we see that Abraham understands the sacrifice to be that of Isaac. Isaac himself does not react, in all probability because he suspects nothing, a reading confirmed by the remainder of the account. Thus, the text presents a situation that appears unpalatable to the reader of today: Abraham chooses (once again) to obey God, and is even ready to sacrifice his own son as the ultimate test of his faith.

### *3.2.7 Dealing with the deity*

According to Römer (2012:9) before moving on to address the question of why the original Elohim-text was altered into a mixed text by the insertion of passages using a tetragrammaton, we have to pay attention to a particularity of the Elohistic text in Genesis 22, which remains unacknowledged in most English translations and commentaries. The Hebrew has “ha-Elohim,” meaning “the God,” and the same holds true for verses 3 and 9. This lexeme appears frequently in texts from the late Persian and early Hellenistic period, and especially in the book of Qoheleth. “In the book of Qoheleth, *ha-elohim* is used to denote a god that dwells far away from humans and appears to be incomprehensible” (Römer 2012:9). This study is of the opinion that the same is true for Genesis 22. For Römer (2012:9) the term used only by the narrator and not Abraham may deliberately denote what Luther called the dark side of God. The

study will advocate for a similar point made by Römer that a translation “the deity” will be effective in distinguishing between ha-elohim and elohim.

This subtle distinction Römer (2012:10) argues was perhaps also the reason why later redactors inserted the Tetragrammaton into the narrative. By doing so they constructed a scenario in which a deity asks that human sacrifice be offered to the god of Israel, who does not want this kind of offering. The god who asks Abraham to sacrifice his son (even if he only wants to “test” him) is called “ha-elohim” (the deity). Abraham first says that “elohim” will provide himself a victim (v. 8). Finally, the human sacrifice is stopped by the messenger of Yahweh (v. 11). After that the redactor of verse 14b affirms that Yahweh is the real name of the God that his audience should worship. Therefore, Genesis 22 can be read as a transition from human to animal sacrifice, from ha-elohim to Yahweh. But the narrator concludes the story in verse 19 with “So Abraham returned to his young men.” No word is said about Isaac. Does this mean that in the oldest tradition behind this text, Isaac had indeed been immolated, as some commentators have suggested? This for Römer is probably not the case. The end of the story hints at the necessary separation between Abraham and Isaac. Henceforth Isaac apparently lives without his father, since in the chapters that follow Abraham and his sons never again appear together. Only on the occasion of their father’s funeral do both sons return to him. The redactor by adding verses 15-18, insists on Abraham’s obedience that is rewarded by the divine promise.

### 3.2.8 Verse-by-verse analysis of Genesis 22:1-19

Genesis 22:1-19 (BHS 2.0)	English (New International Version)
<p>1 וַיְהִי אַחֲרֵי הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה וְהָאֱלֹהִים נִסָּה אֶת־אַבְרָהָם וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אַבְרָהָם וַיֹּאמֶר הִנְנִי:</p>	<p><b>1</b>Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, “Abraham!”</p> <p>“Here I am,” he replied.</p>
<p>2 וַיֹּאמֶר קַח־נָא אֶת־בְּנֶךָ אֶת־יְחִידְךָ אֲשֶׁר־אַהַבְתָּ אֶת־יְצִחָק וְלֹד־לָךְ אֶל־אֶרֶץ הַמֹּרְיָה וְהַעֲלֵהוּ שָׁם לְעֹלָה עַל אֶתֶד הַהָרִים אֲשֶׁר אֹמַר אֵלֶיךָ:</p>	<p><b>2</b>Then God said, “Take your son, your only son, whom you love—Isaac—and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you.”</p>
<p>3 וַיִּשְׁבֹּם אַבְרָהָם בַּבֹּקֶר וַיַּחְבֹּשׁ אֶת־חַמְלֹו וַיִּקַּח אֶת־שְׁנֵי נַעֲרָיו אִתּוֹ וְאֶת יְצִחָק בְּנֵו וַיִּבְקַע עֵצִי עֹלָה וַיִּקַּם וַיֵּלֶךְ אֶל־הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר־אָמַר־לּוֹ הָאֱלֹהִים:</p>	<p><b>3</b>Early the next morning Abraham got up and loaded his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about. <b>4</b>On the third</p>



4 ביום השלישי וישא אברהם את־עיניו וירא את־  
המקום מרחק:  
5 ויאמר אברהם אל־נעריו שבו־לכם פה עם־החמור  
ואני והנער נלכה עד־כה ונשתחוה ונשובה אליכם:  
6 ויקח אברהם את־עצי העלה וישם על־יצחק בנו  
ויקח בידו את־האש ואת־המזבחת וילכו שניהם יחדו:  
7 ויאמר יצחק אל־אברהם אביו ויאמר אבי ויאמר  
הנני בני ויאמר הנה האש והעצים ואיה השה לעלה:  
8 ויאמר אברהם אלהים יראה־לו השה לעלה בני  
וילכו שניהם יחדו:  
9 ויבאו אל־המקום אשר אמר־לו האלהים ויבן שם  
אברהם את־המזבח ויערף את־העצים ויעקל את־  
יצחק בנו וישם אתו על־המזבח ממעל לעצים:  
10 וישלח אברהם את־ידו ויקח את־המזבחת לשחט  
את־בנו:  
11 ויקרא אליו מלאך יהוה מן־השמים ויאמר אברהם  
אברהם ויאמר הנני:  
12 ויאמר אל־תשלח ידך אל־הנער ואל־תעש לו  
מאומה כי עתה ידעתי כי־ירא אלהים אתה ולא  
חשכת את־בנך את־יחידך ממני:  
13 וישא אברהם את־עיניו וירא והנה־איל אחר נאחו  
בסבב בקרניו וילך אברהם ויקח את־האיל ויעלהו  
לעלה תחת בנו:  
14 ויקרא אברהם שם־המקום ההוא יהוה יראה  
אשר יאמר היום בהר יהוה יראה:  
15 ויקרא מלאך יהוה אל־אברהם שנית מן־השמים:  
16 ויאמר בי נשבעתי נא־יהוה כי יען אשר עשית  
את־הדבר הזה ולא חשכת את־בנך את־יחידך:  
17 כי־ברוך אברכה והרבה ארבה את־זרעך ככוכבי  
השמים וכחול אשר על־שפת הים וירש זרעך את  
שער איביו:  
18 והתברכו בזרעך כל גויי הארץ לקב אשר שמעת  
בקלי:  
19 וישב אברהם אל־נעריו ויקמו וילכו יחדו אל־באר  
שבע וישב אברהם בבאר שבע: פ

day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the  
distance. 5He said to his servants “Stay here with  
the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We  
will worship and then we will come back to you.”

6Abraham took the wood for the burnt  
offering and placed it on his son, Isaac, and he  
himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two  
of them went on together, 7Isaac spoke up and  
said to his father Abraham, “Father?”

“Yes, my son?” Abraham replied.

“The fire and wood are here,” Isaac said, “but  
where is the lamb for the burnt offering?”

8Abraham answered, “God himself will  
provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.”  
And the two of them went on together.

9When they reached the place God had told  
him about, Abraham built an altar there and  
arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac  
and laid him on the altar, on top of the  
wood. 10Then he reached out his hand and took  
the knife to slay his son. 11But the angel of  
the LORD called out to him from heaven,  
“Abraham! Abraham!”

“Here I am,” he replied.

12“Do not lay a hand on the boy,” he said.  
“Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you  
fear God, because you have not withheld from  
me your son, your only son.”

13Abraham looked up and there in a thicket  
he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over  
and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt  
offering instead of his son. 14So Abraham called  
that place The LORD Will Provide. And to this day  
it is said, “On the mountain of the LORD it will be  
provided.”

15The angel of the LORD called to Abraham  
from heaven a second time 16and said, “I swear  
by myself, declares the LORD, that because you  
have done this and have not withheld your son,  
your only son, 17I will surely bless you and make  
your descendants as numerous as the stars in  
the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your  
descendants will take possession of the cities of  
their enemies, 18and through your offspring all  
nations on earth will be blessed because you  
have obeyed me.”

	19Then Abraham returned to his servants, and they set off together for Beersheba. And Abraham stayed in Beersheba.
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Verse 1: In agreement with Schmid (2008:272), the Hebrew stories, known as prose texts, do not begin with “and” prefixed to a noun, it thus is clear for him that Genesis 22 is a continuation of its preceding context. Nothing in the preceding narratives could have prepared the reader for a request of this nature (Sailhamer 1992:177). Abraham’s “here I am”, connotes readiness, attentiveness, and responsiveness. Abraham is telling God about something far more momentous than his location. For Brueggemann (1982:187-188) that is all we know of Abraham’s location and God is the tester and at the end will be the provider (Levenson 2012:67; Arnold 2009:202).

Verse 2: According to Fretheim (1994:495) the wording of this verse closely parallels God’s first address to Abraham in Genesis 12:1 (“take”, “go”, “place I shall show you”), along with Abraham’s silent, but faithful response. With Abraham’s silence, the reader is forced to read their own thoughts and feelings into those of Abraham (Sailhamer 1992:177). It is clear that Abraham is to give up someone he loves, we must keep in mind that in biblical Hebrew the word “love” can also refer to something more social and legal in character. Arnold (2009:203) says that the term “only son” conveys the idea of sole descendent, or only begotten child. “Ishmael and his mother have now been removed from the household”, all that Abraham has been promised from his call and commission in Genesis 12 rests on Isaac and ironically it is the same Isaac that he must sacrifice (Alexandra 2002:152). What God has asked of Abraham is not only an inexpressibly painful act of sacrifice, but is also an act of self-sacrifice (Levenson 2012:69). Fretheim (1994:499) argues that the child is a pawn in the hands of two adults who need to work out an issue between them. Rabbi Bachya ben Asher says that if Abraham had a hundred bodies, it would have been possible for him to give them all up for the sake of Isaac, but this trial was not like any other, and nature cannot bear it, nor the imagination conceive it (Levenson 2012:69).

It is for this reason that scholars believe that the parallels in Genesis 22:2 and Genesis 12:1 suggests that in the Aqedah God has in a sense made Abraham revert to the state in which he stood when he began his journey—alone with God, attentive to an unexpected and mysterious divine command, and prepared to leave home even for a

destination that is as yet unspecified (Levenson 2012:69; Sternberg 1994:119; and Fretheim 1994:495). Scholars have argued that sacrifices usually have a function; the gift sacrifice for one expresses the worshipper's desire to present something to the Lord as a token of love and reverence (Levenson 2012:69; Fretheim 1994:495). Even in his later writings, Levenson (2012:70) still maintains the view that, biblical tradition, like continuing, abundantly testifies to the notion that the firstborn male belongs to God and must be offered back to his rightful owner, an idea that, interestingly, long survives not only the abolition of child sacrifice but also the loss of the temple and thus of all categories of sacrifice. Redemption of the firstborn, donation to the sanctuary were all substitutes for a sacrifice but as Abraham obediently sets out on his journey none of these substitutes are in evidence.

Verse 3: "The next morning" (as translated from the Hebrew in the NIV), scholars suggest that God's command may have come to Abraham in a dream/vision of the sort we see in the case of King Abimelech two chapters earlier in 20:3 (Levenson 2012:70), up to this point, the text says nothing about Abraham's emotional state (Fretheim 1994:495 and Arnold 2009:205). Schmid (2008:272) notes that the wording found in this verse and verse 13 echoes the wording of 13:14.

Verses 4: "Seeing" Levenson (2012:71) argues is a theme that vertebrate throughout this little narrative. Here Abraham sees the place for the sacrifice. Soon he will tell Isaac that "God will see to the sheep for his burnt offering" (v. 8). And in verse 14 we shall hear again the language of verse 4 but in a different object of seeing: "Abraham looked up and saw a ram, caught in the thicket by its thorns" (NIV). Many allusions have been made to the Akedah, these include; Ben Sira 44:20 (second century CE writing), 1 Maccabees 2:52 (third century CE) and Hebrews 11:17-19 (fourth century CE). "As the New Testament writer sees the matter, the patriarchs had faith that even were he to slaughter his beloved son, God would still restore him from the dead, just as the writer believed God had done with his beloved son, resurrecting the executed Jesus" (Levenson 2012:72). He goes further to pen that the Akedah serves as the parade example of the extraordinary depth of his faith; *faith* however, is not mentioned in Genesis 22.

Verse 5: It has been argued by Levenson (2012:73-74) that prostration may have been a common accompaniment to sacrifice, and perhaps that is the role it plays here, but we should also acknowledge the fact that Abraham's words to his servants expresses neither faith in God's promise concerning Isaac nor his own intention to supplicate God to save his son from the slaughter's knife (Levenson 2012:73-74). Another possible reason could be that Abraham is simply misleading his servants, throwing them off his trail, as it were. According to some Jewish traditions Isaac is an adult at the time of the Aqedah, Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra assigns Isaac a lower age, arguing that Abraham "hid the secret from him" because if he had told him the truth, "he probably would have fled". If so, Isaac should also think that he and his father will ascend the mountain only for the purpose of prostrating themselves, returning uneventfully soon afterwards.

Verse 6: Abraham's placing the wood that will incinerate Isaac on the prospective victim himself makes for an enormously powerful image (Levenson 2012:75). In Genesis 21:14 Abraham sends Hagar and Ishmael away, creating a geographical distance between Isaac and Ishmael (Kunin 1996:323). Hagar thus carries on her own shoulder the skin of water that symbolizes her son's death by dehydration and also carries on her shoulder the little boy himself, the victim of Abraham, Sarah and God's plan (Noort 2002:3). Whereas Ishmael's ostensibly impending death would be from natural cause, Isaac's death will be at his own father's hand and the direct command of God (Levinson 2012:75).

Verse 7: Abraham's "here I am" once again shows us that he is ready, as attentive, as responsive to his beloved son as he is to God. This is also the first time that Abraham offers a full answer and is also the first time that Isaac speaks (Fretheim 1994:496) while Levenson (2012: 76) highlights that Isaac's question omits mention of the knife.

Verse 8: Abraham's reply anticipates both the outcome of the story and the name giving in verse 14 to the otherwise unknown site (Levenson 2012:77; Sailhamer 1992:178). "Not only does Abraham articulate his faith, he throws the ball back into God's court" (Levenson 2012:78). "Abraham's trust in God had become Isaac's trust...they are both attuned to that intention and trust it" (Fretheim 1994:496). The Talmud suggests that Abraham's prophetic gifts came to the foreground in this statement, and that he knew

he would not have to carry out the command, while medieval Jewish sources claim that Isaac was killed and resurrected from the ashes of the altar (Arnold 2009:205-206).

Verse 9: the pace of the story now picks up, with six verbs in one short compound sentence; things are rapidly coming to a head. In verse 10 the action slows down again and we see Abraham stretching out his arm before he takes the slaughter's knife in hand. According to the book of Leviticus, the slaughter occurs before the placement of the wood (Lev. 1:3-13) as pointed out by Arnold (2009:204). Scholars have been asking why Abraham binds Isaac, Levenson (2012:79) suggests that the son was not a knowing and willing participant in the sacrifice, or perhaps that this was standard procedure in the sacrificial slaughter of human offerings. Bauks (2007:70) argues that:

Verses 9–10 make it clear that Abraham understands the sacrifice to be that of Isaac. Isaac himself does not react, in all probability because he suspects nothing, a reading confirmed by the remainder of the account. Thus, the text presents a situation that appears unpalatable to the reader of today: Abraham chooses (once again) to obey God, and is even ready to sacrifice his own son as the ultimate test of his faith.

Verse 11: Scholars like Fretheim (1994:497) have rightly mentioned that angels appear on earth and not in the heavens. This makes it all more striking that the beginning of verse 11 is almost identical to that of Genesis 21:17, in which the angel announces to Hagar from the heavens that having heard Ishmael's cry, God will rescue her dying son (Levenson 2012:79).

Verse 12: This verse leaves no doubt in our minds that God has acquired new information that he did not have before the test; this means that the test is real for God as it is for Abraham (Levenson 2012:80; Fretheim 1994:497).

Verses 13-14: By reading these verses, a sacrifice seems necessary, even if not expressly commanded. If not Isaac, then it must be another (Fretheim 1994:498). Like Hagar's well in Genesis 21:19, perhaps it was there all along or not. It is evident that God neither commands nor commends the offering of the ram, and in the narrator's view, the continuing significance of the event lies not in the sacrificial victim, but in the site on

which it is said to have been offered and in a saying associated with that location (Levenson 2012:82-83).

Verses 15-18: Brueggemann (1982:186) argues that these verses are regarded as a secondary addition in which God takes his first oath to fulfil his outstanding promises to Abraham, in effect laying the divine life on the line, outing the very divine self behind the promise (Levenson 2012:84; Fretheim 1994:498). Roop says that “God took the risk that Abraham would respond and Abraham took the risk that God will provide” (Fretheim 1994:497). In verse 18 the narrative turns slowly to Isaac, the heir to the covenant promises (Arnold 2009:209).

Verse 19: Isaac does not return with Abraham to Beersheba, of all the existing theories, one theory that tries to explain Isaac’s absence in this verse could be that the Akedah ends where it begins, with Abraham and not with Isaac, in this story he is not the focus thus his return requires no special mention, but it is worth noting that in the original story Isaac was sacrificed and this explains his absence (Sailhamer 1992:179). The second encounter with the angel is to be understood as having occurred on the same occasion as the first (Sailhamer 1992:179). He goes further to state that the writer of Genesis 22 chose to separate the account of the renewed covenant (22:16-18) from the narrative of Abraham’s test (22:1-15) to show that the renewal of “God’s original promise to Abraham was not based on Abraham’s specific actions in carrying out the test, but rather on the faith and obedience of Abraham which showed itself throughout the test” (Sailhamer 1992:179).

Verses 20-24: The genealogy of Abraham’s brother helps to release the tension that has built up, but also picks on the theme of the Akedah itself (Levenson 2012:87). With regard to verse 20, Sternberg (1994:120) argues that it is not clear how long after the sacrifice of Isaac news about Abraham’s brother’s family reached him, but in the time span of Genesis, it is likely to have been years rather than weeks. This makes sense if we presume that Nahor’s children were born before Isaac. Verse 23 mentions one female descendant of Nahor, Rebekah, who will be Isaac’s wife and the second matriarch in Israel who also will pass her test two chapters from now on. For Fretheim (1994:501) the author encloses this section with 22:20-25:18 having to do with

concluding events in Abraham's journey, with genealogies. Both these stories share a common focus: the preparation for the future of the family, as that involves both land and prosperity. As with Jacob, Nahor has twelve sons; their names later become associated with tribes and places (Sailhamer 1992:1790). Sternberg (1994:119) is not sure if this genealogy is J, but he does think that it is one of the earlier parts of the Abraham cycle that originally concluded with 21:1-7; 22:20-24; 25:1-8. The purpose of this genealogy, Sailhamer (1992:179) argues is to introduce into the flow of the narrative the source of the future bride of Isaac and to show that she was from the lineage of Milcah and not of her concubine.

### *3.2.9 Relevance of the text*

In agreement with Römer (2012:14), Genesis 22 and 15 highlight Abraham's faith in different intriguing ways. It is quite possible that the author of Genesis 15 already presupposes Genesis 22 when he writes his famous statement in Genesis 15:6. It seems probable that Genesis 22 in its original version was perhaps an "Elohistic" text avoiding the divine name Yahweh. One however, finds a difference in the Hebrew text between the use of ha-elohim and elohim that the translations rarely reflect but which nonetheless bears a specific meaning in the Hebrew text, namely that ha-elohim refers to the "*deus absconditus*" and should therefore be rendered such (Römer 2012:14). In its final form, Genesis 22 offers a subtle word-play with divine names, showing that Yahweh is the god, who wants no part in human sacrifice. Genesis 15 tries to highlight the importance of Abraham for nascent Judaism (Römer 2012:15). According to Genesis 15, Israel's first and "ecumenical" ancestor is as important as Moses, and in some aspects surpasses him. Like Moses, Abraham is informed about the identity of Israel's God, but contrary to Moses, the land that is promised to him does not need to be conquered by annihilating the nations. Abraham's faith surpasses that of Moses, and with Genesis 15:6 Abraham's brilliant career in later Christianity and in Islam is inaugurated (Noort 2002:4). This career does not, however, necessarily comprise the Christian idea of justification by faith (Römer 2012:15).

According to Stavrakopoulou (2004:192) foundation myths define the nature of "Israel" purely in terms of her role as Yahweh's chosen people. It is thus striking that a

prominent motif of both myths is the role of Yahweh as child sacrifice. This is powerfully illustrated in the Aqedah, in which Yahweh says to Abraham. Genesis 22:16-18

*<sup>16</sup> and said, "By myself I have sworn, says the Lord: Because you have done this, and have not withheld your son, your only son, <sup>17</sup> I will indeed bless you, and I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of their enemies, <sup>18</sup> and by your offspring shall all the nations of the earth gain blessing for themselves, because you have obeyed my voice. (NRSV).*

It is thus within this explicit context that Yahweh blesses Abraham. Scholars like Moberly (1988:307-308, 314) have understood the Aqedah (Gen. 22:1-19) as a polemic directed against child sacrifice, functioning aetiologically to legitimate the substitute of animal for human sacrifice, demonstrated in the substitution of a ram for Isaac (vv. 13-14), however, this is for Stavrakopoulou (2004:192) a misinterpretation of the narrative. The story begins with a deity specifically commanding Abraham to sacrifice his son to him. With regard to Levenson's earlier works Stavrakopoulou (2004:192) understand him as follows:

Genesis 22:1-19 is frighteningly unequivocal about Yahweh's ordering of a father to offer up his son as a sacrifice, it is passing strange to condemn child sacrifice through a narrative in which a father is richly rewarded for his willingness to carry out that very practice. Abraham is not commanded to sacrifice the ram, but he is commanded to sacrifice his son; Abraham does not receive Yahweh's blessing of descendants because he slays the animal, rather, he is blessed precisely because he is willing to sacrifice Isaac to Yahweh.

Many scholars would agree that the biblical story is primarily concerned to portray Abraham as the paradigm of faithfulness to Yahweh, the sacrifice of the firstborn to Yahweh may underlie this tradition. According to the sacrificial laws, the first-born child is identified as the one that opens the womb (see Exod. 13:2, 12, 15; 34:19; Num. 3:11; 18:13-18 and 18:15; Stavrakopoulou 2004:193). Exodus 13:15 implies that a father may have more than one firstborn, however, the Deuteronomic law (Deut. 21:15-



17) does not mention the firstborn but instead makes it plain that there can only be one firstborn son who is defined in relation to the father, not the mother (cf. Noort 2002:9). The implications of this are thus striking, because the deuteronomic laws are primarily concerned with the firstborn focus upon the fertility of the mother. It is the status of the firstborn as the chosen one, Yahweh's portion that lies behind the narrative of the Aqedah. Though Isaac is not described as Abraham's firstborn, he is the first child of Sarah (Gen. 16:1; 17:19; 21:1-12) and as such his special status and high value as firstborn is evident within the Aqedah in the repeated reference to Isaac as Abraham's "only-begotten" child (Stavrakopoulou 2004:194). Some scholars thus think that the story eventually functions as a critique of child sacrifice, this is true and in the modern-day context it could be used to critique *muti* murders.

In addition, Genesis 22 does not assist in explaining a single function for the firstborn sacrifice especially with regards to expiation, for not only does it promote in the narrative form what the legislative texts are stating—that firstborn children should be ransomed. The text simply represents the sacrifice of Isaac as a burnt offering (Tatlock 2011:36). Therefore, it is only at the climax of the story that the narrator informs the audience that a ram would serve as the sacrificial victim in Isaac's stead. After surveying the text of Genesis 22 we can conclude that the narrator and text seem to know of sacrifices to a deity, Yahweh. This however, does not mean that the book of Genesis or the OT as a whole advocates this practice. In its unique way, the story tries to problematize this practice which was always linked to the sanctuary in its context (Römer 2012:5). Now that the study has shown that Genesis 22 is against child sacrifice, the study will now turn to Jephthah's vow that is found in the book of Judges 11:29-40. In this section the study will look at the nature of this vow within its context and offer a verse-by-verse analysis.

### 3.3 Jephthah's daughter

In this section, this study will be looking at Jephthah's rash vow, but before we do that we should keep it at the back of our minds that the vow story is very comparable with some non-Israelite vow stories. Some scholars believe that "it has clear parallel versions of the tale of Agamemnon's daughter Iphigeneia in which when his ships face contrary

winds or are becalmed he makes a vow which leads to the sacrifice, or narrowly averted sacrifice, of his daughter” (Robinson 2004:333). Such parallels remind us that texts like Judges 11 were not uncommon in the ancient world (Robinson 2004:334). Many scholars could attest that the idea of human sacrifice to Yahweh has been very difficult to accept, this is evident in some scholar’s suggestions that instead of being killed was consigned to permanent virginity, “living out her life either in her father’s house or in some sort of Hebrew convent” (Logan 2009:666). “This solution has the advantage of exonerating Jephthah of the act of killing his daughter, but founders on lack of evidence for such an institution or evidence of the Hebrew word “*olah*” in Judges 11:31 referred to anything other than a wholly consumed burnt offering” (Logan 2009:666). One of the aims of this section will be to establish the vow’s context in order to understand the whole Jephthah narrative. Many scholars choose to place this narrative in Pre-exilic Israel (Logan 2009:668).

### *3.3.1 Historical background of the book of Judges*

According to Longman & Dillard (2006:135) the book of Judges belongs to the second part of the Hebrew Bible known as the Former Prophets. It is the second book of that division, following the book of Joshua. It occupies the same position in the Septuagint, the Vulgate, and the English Bibles. However, in the latter it is reckoned with the so-called historical books. Many scholars agree that the name Judges is derived directly from the Vulgate title, Liber Judicum, which in turn goes back to the Septuagint KPITAI “judges” (McKenzie 2010:59). The Hebrew designation is “*shopetim*” (judges) derived from the verbal root, “*shopet*” (judge) (Myers 1953:677; Soggin 1981:1; McKenzie 2010:59). “Othniel (3:10), Deborah (4:4), Tola (10:2), Jair (10:3), Jephthah (12:7), Ibzan (12:8-9), Elon (12:11), Abdon (12:13-14), and Samson (15:20-16:31)” (Myers 1953:677) are said to have exercised the role of a “*shopet*” in Israel. Myers (1953:677; also Soggin 1981:4) mentions that Jephthah was not called a “*shopet*” but a “*qacin*” (a military leader). For Soggin (1981:2) these two meanings are also attested in Ugarit (Aisteitner no. 2921, UT no. 202), while the second appears predominantly in the West Semitic of Mari (AHw III, 1172: *shopet*). So far, there is no evidence of the root from Ebla (oral communication by G. Pettinato, on the basis of vocabularies), but

we find the term *dayyanum/sapitum* for a high official in the royal palace (Soggin1981:2).

In his study, Soggin (1981:3) has found evidence of another title for judges invested in military leadership: “saviour” or “liberator”. For him it is therefore probable that the earliest phrase of the book was that of a “book of saviours” in which heroic or picturesque actions of the people in question were described on the basis of ancient traditions (Soggin 1981:3). Myers (1953: 678) on the other hand, acknowledges that it cannot be determined with certainty whether the judges attained their position by reason of their military prowess or by their possession of wisdom, which brought people to them for judgement. But, their gift in one realm may easily have won them priority in the other (Myers 1953:678):

It is only Deborah (4:4-5) and Samuel (1 Sam. 7:15-17) who are specifically credited with making case decisions, though it is hard to believe that the others, with the possible exception of Samson, did not do so.

Soggin (1981:3) pens that the major judges are often presented in the text as charismatics, those whom the “spirit of Yahweh” had come upon them. This shows us that in “biblical historiography their power came to be seen as an exceptional measure reserved for periods of extreme danger and thus justified by the state of emergency” (Soggin 1981:3). At least in the view of the texts, this led to a centralization of power, albeit purely temporary and provisional, to the detriment of the traditional independence of the tribes of Israel (Soggin 1981:3; McKenzie 2010:67).

### *3.3.2 Composition*

For Römer (2007:46), the book of Judges is made up of a series of more or less independent stories, each one which centres in a prominent figure. It must be remembered that Judges does not include all the history or stories of the period with which it purports to deal: that period continues at least as far as 1 Samuel 12, and may even have contained the original story of Ruth (cf. McKenzie 2010:12).

### 3.3.3 *The Deuteronomistic History*

Noth, believes that the author of the Deuteronomistic history was an individual living in the Babylonian exile around 562 or shortly thereafter because that was the date of the last event in 2 Kings 25:27-30 (McKenzie 2010:14). According to Logan (2009:684) the author, as evidenced by his literary skill and broad knowledge of biblical texts, must have been a well-educated individual, likely a member of the upper-class intelligentsia. He also had access to a library that included, at minimum, J, E, and materials, the Gideon/Abimelech narratives, and Davidic source material now incorporated into the Deuteronomistic History. Based on the favourable comparison to David, Logan (2009:684) infers that he was a southerner. He may have been a priest, but if he was, he was not a member of any of the priestly groups responsible for the legal corpus: one gets the impression in this story that the author is using the priests own code against them. How else does one explain the use of Leviticus 27:29 to condone a form of sacrifice that elsewhere is so virulently condemned? Thus, this study advocates that it is more probable that he was a member of the Jerusalem court. While he might have been a royal historiographer, he could not have been the Deuteronomist, not unless he edited his own work. Therefore a Josianic *terminus ad quem* is most likely (Logan 2009:684). Because the author references both northern and southern texts, the reign of Hezekiah appears to be a *terminus a quo* since this would seem the earliest time a joint collection would have been available. Therefore, the likely time of writing falls within a one-hundred-year window, roughly 715 to 622 B.C.E., that is, the reigns of Hezekiah, Manasseh, Amon, and perhaps the early, non-Deuteronomistic portion of Josiah's reign (Logan 2009:684; McKenzie 2010:14,65). Thus, the spotlight falls on Manasseh, whose reign is remembered for its reversion to traditional Israelite forms of worship. If Deuteronomistic polemic does not overstate, Manasseh was responsible for rebuilding the rural "*bamot*" and reintroducing Baal worship and worship of the host of heaven in the Jerusalem temple, as well as reinstating divination and ancestor worship, also considered traditional Yahwist practice. Clearly a member of the intelligentsia, here a defence of human sacrifice makes more sense, especially if de Vaux is correct and Manasseh actually sacrificed his son (Logan 2009:685).

With regard to human sacrifice, Logan (2009:685) asks, why is it that the author did nothing to soften its obvious import? Why, moreover, does he include Jephthah by name in the distinguished ranks of deliverers whom he has Samuel praise in 1 Samuel 12:7-15? Römer's (2007:48) solution is to remand the story of the sacrifice to a postexilic redactor, but literary analysis does not support this avenue of escape. So if the Deuteronomist inherited the story, why did he let it stand unchanged? We will never know the answer with certainty, but Logan (2009:685) suggests additional possibilities to those ordinarily offered in a case such as this. Yes, it is possible that the Deuteronomist had too much "respect" for tradition. Or perhaps his criteria for judgeship did not include what we moderns require of our heroes: moral virtue. The Deuteronomist and the author of this story knew each other. It could be that as the Deuteronomist read the author's argument, thought it over, and perhaps even discussed it with him, the Deuteronomist became persuaded to leave the story unaltered (Logan 2009:685).

### *3.3.4 The audience and author of the narrative*

According to Logan (2009:668) the Jephthah narrative is something rare in the Hebrew Bible, written with a voice of an actual spokesman for the traditional Yahwistic view. This study believes the author of the Jephthah narrative to be a highly educated, well-read, and gifted writer who wrote this story for a theologically heterogeneous audience. The most probable readers would be the mid-seventh century BCE Jerusalem audience that might have included Ezekiel's and Jeremiah's parents, Manasseh and his children, and perhaps even the Deuteronomist himself (cf. Römer 2007:46). Logan (2009:675) is of the opinion that the audience comprised of all levels of Israelite society, including both illiterate members, who would have heard the story read, and literate members, who would have read it themselves. From the reading of Judges 11:29-40, Logan (2009:675) argues that the audience would have heard the story in the following way:

Jephthah, head of the Gilead state, makes a war vow to his high god Yahweh that in exchange for victory, he will sacrifice who/whatever comes first out of his house when he comes back. Yahweh gives Jephthah victory, and his daughter, his precious only child, is first to come out. Therefore, Jephthah sacrifices her to

Yahweh because as head of the Gilead state he must keep his vow, and in an annual four-day custom Israelite women recount her story.

This shows that the ancient audience heard Jephthah's story quite differently than we do today, one of the reasons for this could be that our ears have not been tuned to a culture that makes wartime vows with its deity in order to guarantee success. But to this Western Semitic audience, it was perfectly reasonable that Jephthah, in his capacity as leader, would make a war vow to his high god, and that the war vow would produce the intended effect (Logan 2009:676). Furthermore, to this audience it was equally obvious that Jephthah should fulfil his end of the deal by offering his deity that most precious of offerings that tradition said he deserves. To these people, Jephthah was acting as a Western Semitic leader was expected to, once having made a vow to his god (Logan 2009:676). Logan (2009:676) is of the opinion that the ancient Israelites understood that Gilead's need was urgent. The Ammonites, they have been told, had been brutally oppressive for eighteen years and were now threatening complete annexation. Secondly, they find out Jephthah's victory was overwhelming, so overwhelming that it had reclaimed for Gilead all its territory. In short, Jephthah had obviously vowed the right vow because God had responded so spectacularly. For Logan (2009:677) less obvious is the fact that this audience would have recognised Jephthah's vow as a traditional Israelite war custom, not some strange foreign practice. The treaty between Joshua and Yahweh at Jericho would, according to Logan (2009:677) have instantly come to mind, as would Gideon's oaths at Succoth and Penuel, Saul's at Michmash, and Israel's vow at Arad. She argues that to a people brought up with these traditions and with war theology in which God determines every military outcome, Jephthah's vow making would have struck a resonant chord (McKenzie 2010:64).

According to this audience, Yahweh would have deserved payment. Imbued with a cultural heritage that encourages the making of personal vows and enjoined by religious authority always to pay them up, it is inconceivable that these people would have thought any other way. Furthermore, they would have expected Yahweh's payment to be commensurate with what he had provided. The memories of Mesha of Moab, Ahaz and Manasseh would have evoked recollections of the offerings that the kings had made

to repay Yahweh when he gave them success (Robinson 2004:338; Logan 2009:677). This would mean that Jephthah's offering was obvious. To the Israelites who believed that their God appreciated the massacre of an enemy population in his name, who recognised the sacrifice of firstborn children as legitimate offerings, and who were receptive to a metaphor portraying Yahweh as someone who would light an enemy's funeral pyre as a sacrifice to himself, would not have seemed reasonable that the deity would be appreciative of an offer to choose his victim? (Logan 2009:678).

### *3.3.5 Dealing with the Deity*

According to Logan (2009:670) the classical definition is that it is a conditional prayer, it is a deal in which the vow maker promises the deity something the deity would have like to have in exchange for something the vow maker wants. As the biblical record confirms, vow making was commonly practiced in Israel, and Israelites were expected never to waver on the deal, such examples can be found in Genesis 28:20-22 (Jacob pledges a shrine and a tithe in exchange for a safe return from his journey) and 1 Samuel 15:7-9 (Hannah promises to consecrate her son to religious service if Yahweh will let her become pregnant). As these texts make clear, throughout its history and at every social level, the Hebrew people were encouraged making vows to Yahweh and once Yahweh had done his part, quickly to pay up. For Logan (2009:670) what is most pertinent here is Israel's attitude toward vow making during warfare. In all the relevant examples, she argues that only one of them expressly identifies the agreement as a vow, and one does not name Yahweh specifically, all underscore the seriousness of wartime pledges and the encumbrances that deals with the deity placed on those who made (Logan 2009:670). This works in a similar as that in *muti* rituals, as has been shown in the historical context of *muti* rituals, most of these sacrifices happened in the times of war. The king would ask the ancestors for victory and return sacrifice what was requested from him, it could be an animal or a young virgin. Other examples that can be offered are in Joshua 6-7 and Numbers 21:1-3. In both these texts, they deal with "*herem*", which was called the ban and was one of the features in Israelite warfare that involved the total destruction of a defeated enemy population and in some instances all or most of its wealth (Logan 2009:671). "Except for the Jephthah narrative, no biblical

text unequivocally states that a human being was sacrificed to Yahweh” (Logan 2009:672).

Modern scholars are arguing that pre-exilic Yahwism included groups who not only viewed such sacrifice as authentically Yahwist but also considered it a form of worship highly “pleasing to Yahweh” (Freedman 1992:878). Others tend to cite Isaiah 30:30-33 in which Yahweh’s prophesied destruction of the Assyrian army is likened to child sacrifice-by Yahweh- to Yahweh at the Jerusalem Tophet. The first is *herem* which “can be viewed as a sacrificial payment in the currency of human life for Yahweh’s assistance on the battlefield” (Logan 2009:672). The second is Ezekiel’s assertion that despite what reformists like Jeremiah said, Yahweh had actually commanded human sacrifice to himself, although since the exile had to condemn it (Ezek 20:26; Logan 2009:672). For Logan (2009:673) the extent to which human sacrifice was practised by the ancient Israelites is unclear. Based on the biblical and extra-biblical evidence, the most likely setting would have been one in which the need was deemed most urgent, and to which the logical response would have been to offer what one valued most. In this context, the sacrifice of a royal scion to Yahweh at a time of national crisis is entirely plausible, and the story of Jephthah’s daughter dealing with a head of state who sacrificed his daughter to save his people- falls comfortably within this tradition (Logan 2009:673). But on to Jephthah’s story itself.

### *3.3.6 The period of the judges*

In the last century, American and European scholars have been showing great interest in matching the narratives of the book of Judges and Joshua with actual historical origins of the Israelites in the land (Niditch 2008:6). According to Niditch (2008:6) the Bible only leaves us with two versions, one in Joshua 10:40-42; 11:23; 18:1-13, which she argues, “suggests that the Israelites swept into the land in an unbeatable military wave in which all enemies fell before Joshua and the Israelites, portrayed as a unified, successful force, aided by the divine warrior and assorted miracles” and the other in Judges 13:1-7; 15:63; 16:10; 17:12, where she argues that it “offers a more halting and disjunctive portrayal of the Israelites’ early presence in the land, describing successes and failures in establishing themselves”. She goes on to argue that “Judges includes



both alternating periods of subjugation and of subjugating and a more tribal accounting, as Israelites groups are seen in various geographic locations, north to south, living side by side with non-Israelites who have not been rooted out". In an attempt to reconstruct this period, scholars have come up with different models which include but are not limited to: the infiltration model, conquest model, peasant revolution model, and the pioneer settlement model (Niditch 2008:6-8). It is also important to highlight that not all scholars are of the opinion that the earliest period of the judges can be reconstructed (Brettler 2002:4). Others seem to "downplay historical questions or ignore them altogether, finding the meaning of a text in the reader's response" or treating biblical works as a literary whole to be appreciated (Niditch 2008:8).

According to Myers (1953:682), we can deduce that the book covers in a general way the period from Gilgal to the time of Eli and Samuel. The Deuteronomistic section deals with the period from Othniel to Philistine menace reflected in the Samson tales (Römer 2007:7). Myers (1953:685) further argues that the prime factor in the growing national unity was the religion of Yahweh, the God of Israel. The various national and tribal lists and the tribal relationships themselves show that the Israelites were a heterogeneous group held together only by a more or less common experience and by their devotion to Yahweh. It was an age in which treachery played a large role, as may be understood from the act of Ehud, who by a clever ruse slew Eglon and then glorified in his deed (Myers 1953:685; McKenzie 2010:59). It also seems that sexual morality was low, as it perhaps suggested by the fact that Jephthah was a son of a harlot, and Samson's visit to the harlot of Gaza. The rape of the Levite's concubine (chap. 19) is a further indication of the same tendency among certain groups. Power politics was indulged in, as is shown by the manoeuvres of Abimelech and Gaal (chap. 9), there was forceful removal of the property of other (chap. 18), and there were inter-tribal jealousy and feuding, and petty thievery. In short, it seems probable that there was hardly an immorality or evil committed in the period of the judges that is not prevalent today (Myers 1953:685).

### *3.3.7 The introduction to the story of Jephthah*

The long story of Jephthah is introduced by an extended discourse on the religious significance of the preceding and following episodes described in Judges. Jephthah is first introduced to us in Judges 10:6-12:7. Judges 10:6 is a broad statement describing the political situation in western Palestine in the period of the judges. While the first part is Deuteronomic in character, the fact does not detract from its authenticity (Elliot 1953:762; Longman & Dillard 2006:141). The nations around Israel were a constant threat to her political and religious life (cf. Levenson 2012:137). The list of nations in (2:11-19) is representative of those with which the Israelites had some difficulty at one time or another. Verses 7-8a, are intended as a kind of preface to the Philistine oppression in the age of Samson and the Ammonite oppression recounted in chapters 11-12 (Elliot 1953:762). According to Elliot (1953:762) the Israelites were haunted by their course of life with the resultant conviction of sin for defection from the Lord (10:10). Hence they cried out to the Lord for deliverance. It was a case of following their own inclinations until the disaster struck, when they called upon the Lord whom they had so easily forsaken (Elliot 1953:762-763). According to Soggin (1981:205) and Longman & Dillard (2006:141), it will not escape the notice of the attentive reader that Yahweh has now left the scene, which distinguishes the other accounts is missing from between the introduction/Dtr prologue 10:6-16, and the beginning of the account 10:17 (Robinson 2004:331). Elliot (1953:763) reminds the people that they have deserted the Lord, they are now to cry to the gods, to whom they have chosen and it was when they put away the foreign gods, the Lord had compassion on them because he could not endure further oppression of his people. For Elliot (1953:764) following the theological discourse in chapter 10, there is the editorial introduction to the story of the Ammonite forces was assembled in Gilead while the Israelites encamped at Mizpah (Robinson 2004:340). The query of the people, the leaders of Gilead is rather strange in view of 11:29. The successful leader will be rewarded with the permanent office as leader over all the inhabitants of Gilead.

### *3.3.8 The character of Jephthah*

The character of Jephthah has been condemned and evaluated on a continuum of opinion from church fathers, rabbinic tradition and modern exegetes. Jephthah is viewed as a “cold hearted scoundrel to faithless fool” (Logan 2009:665), but is this really who and how Jephthah was? From reading 11:1-3, we can tell who Jephthah was and describe the strange position in which the man about to be called a leader of the Israelites found himself (Robinson 2004:332). He was a mighty warrior, a charismatic adventurer. He was a Gileadite and the child of a harlot. This gives us the problem of Jephthah’s origin, his illegitimate birth made him suspect from any point of view (Soggin 1981:207). Gilead is the name of a district later personified in the P section of Numbers chapters 26-27; 36 and 1 Chronicles chapters 2 and 7 among others. For Elliot (1953:764) it was because Jephthah was a bastard that he could not participate in the inheritance of legitimate children and was driven away from home. Soggin (1981:207) argues that this came through a basically political act, which involved the responsible elements of the community, those who were later to enter into negotiations with him. That explains why he stayed in Tob, and with worthless fellows lived the life of an adventurer (Logan 2009:673). Tob may be et-Taiyibeh, about fifteen miles east of Ramoth-gilead (Elliot 1953:764). Logan (2009:677) is puzzled as to how a character whom is portrayed as vocally gifted in every other part of the Judges narrative should do so badly here in Judges 11, viewed by some scholars as a schemer, “a character whom the author depicts as David’s positive kingly attributes, most particularly his legendary skill with the words” (Robertson 2004:320). This interpretation as a result does not square with a character whom the author ends up burying with high minor judge honours and whom 1 Samuel and Hebrews rate among Israel’s greats (Logan 2009:677).

From 11:4-11, in the Jephthah narrative the situation seems to be substantially different. Jephthah does not receive any designation or divine vocation at a single moment (Soggin 1981:206). This happens after laborious negotiations with the elders of Gilead. We see that a crisis often brings about peculiar reversals of policy and it does so here. The man who was hitherto undesirable was now sought out on account of his leadership

qualities and on account of the distress of Israel. The question Jephthah put to the elders of Gilead must have been humiliating to them (Elliot 1953:765). They had banished him and hence had no claim on his service. However, their insistence overcame his reluctance and he consented to the proposition. The transaction involved not merely temporary leadership for the sole purpose of fighting Ammon, but permanent leadership of the clans of Gilead (Logan 2009:673). The agreement of Jephthah to the request of the elders of Gilead was solemnly concluded by calling the Lord as a witness to the transaction (Elliot 1953:765). The oath was affirmed before the Lord at Mizpah (the local high place, to make it more binding). In this ensuing negotiations, Jephthah bargains for and obtains the “headship” of Gilead, in a manner not unlike David obtained the crown of Israel (Robinson 2004:332; Logan 2009:673). And, like David, Jephthah seals the deal with his people “before Yahweh”, that is, by oath in Yahweh’s name, at a proper Yahweh shrine. For Logan (2009:674) Jephthah has done everything right-exactly like David when he assumed Israel’s throne-and he is now ready to assume his duties as “head” of Gilead. Yahweh providing, Gilead will now regain its turf.

In verses 12-28, Soggin (1981:211) highlights that many scholars have recognized this text as being a long interpolation and that only verse 12 and 28 can belong to the original tradition; in fact it is by means strange that Jephthah should have tried to prevent a war throughout his timely treaties. Burney affirms that these verses formed part of the original story in which Jephthah was regarded as delivering Israel out of Ammonites rather than from the Moabites (Elliot 1953:767). Soggin (1981:207) agrees and concludes that another discordant element in the Jephthah story is the chronology, it seems to be typical of the “minor” judges, with a real figure instead of a stereotype of the kind that appears with the “major” judges; also 12:8 presents the second list of “minor” judges in explicit, direct succession to Jephthah. Secondly, Soggin (1981:207) argues that Jephthah is the only figure from the “minor” judges of whom it is explicitly said outside the Dtr redactional framework that he was a judge, we now know that there was never a Deuteronomistic redactor. Thirdly, Soggin (1981:207) concludes by saying that the Jephthah narrative need not originally have belonged to the “book of saviours” and encourages us to ask what Noth asked, whether, Jephthah was not in fact a minor judge whom the redaction later wanted to turn into a major judge, into a saviour,

bestowing on him the spirit and making him fight in the holy wars. This study also agrees that it seems most probable that this was the intention of the redactor. This unfortunately did not succeed, as scholars still find it difficult to see him as a charismatic leader (Soggin 1981:207). The story describes in detail Jephthah's argument against the right of Ammon to the land it had invaded. The king of Ammon based his claim on prior possession asserting that the land had been taken from his people by the Israelites on coming from Egypt. Thus, just as Israel owed the possession of conquered territory to the Lord, Moab held possession of its domain by support of Chemosh, its god. The reference to Chemosh here, instead of Milcom, is indicative of the confusion of religion in the northern Moab and southern Gilead when that region was controlled by the Ammonites in the seventh century BCE (Elliot 1953:768).

### 3.3.8 Verse-by-verse analysis of Judges 11:29-40

Hebrew (BHS)	English(New International Version)
<p>29 וַתְּהִי עַל־יַפְתָּח רוּחַ יְהוָה וַיַּעֲבֹר אֶת־הַגִּלְעָד וְאֶת־מְנַשֶּׁה וַיַּעֲבֹר אֶת־מִצְפָּה גִלְעָד וּמִמְצַפָּה גִלְעָד עָבַר בְּנֵי עַמּוֹן:</p> <p>30 וַיְדַר יַפְתָּח נְדָר לַיהוָה וַיֹּאמֶר אִם־נָתַן תַּתֵּן אֶת־בְּנֵי עַמּוֹן בְּיָדִי:</p> <p>31 וְהָיָה הַיּוֹצֵא אֲשֶׁר יֵצֵא מִדֹּלְתִי בֵּיתִי לִקְרָאתִי בְּשׁוּבִי בְּשָׁלוֹם מִבְּנֵי עַמּוֹן וְהָיָה לַיהוָה וְהֵעֲלִיתָהוּ עֹלָה: פ</p> <p>32 וַיַּעֲבֹר יַפְתָּח אֶל־בְּנֵי עַמּוֹן לְהַלְחֵם בָּם וַיִּתְּנֵם יְהוָה בְּיָדוֹ:</p> <p>33 וַיָּכֶם מֵעֲרוֹעֵר וְעַד־בּוֹאֵד מִנִּית עֲשָׂרִים עִיר וְעַד אָבֶל כְּרָמִים מִכָּה גְדוֹלָה מְאֹד וַיִּכְנְעוּ בְּנֵי עַמּוֹן מִפְּנֵי בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: פ</p> <p>34 וַיָּבֵא יַפְתָּח הַמְצַפָּה אֶל־בֵּיתוֹ וְהָנָה בְתוּלָה יֵצֵאת לִקְרָאתוֹ בְּתַפְּסִים וּבְמַחְלֹת וְרַק הִיא יְחִידָה אֵין־לָהּ מִמְּנוּ בֵן אֲוִיבָת:</p> <p>35 וַיְהִי כִּרְאוּתוֹ אוֹתָהּ וַיִּקְרַע אֶת־בְּגָדָיו וַיֹּאמֶר אַהֵה בְתִילִי הִכְרַעַתְנִי וְאֵת הַיִּתְּ בְּעַכְרִי וְאֲנֹכִי פְּצִיתִי־פִי אֶל־יְהוָה וְלֹא אוּכַל לָשׁוּב:</p>	<p><b>29</b>Then the Spirit of the LORD came on Jephthah. He crossed Gilead and Manasseh, passed through Mizpah of Gilead, and from there he advanced against the Ammonites. <b>30</b>And Jephthah made a vow to the LORD: "If you give the Ammonites into my hands, <b>31</b>whatever comes out of the door of my house to meet me when I return in triumph from the Ammonites will be the LORD's, and I will sacrifice it as a burnt offering."</p> <p><b>32</b>Then Jephthah went over to fight the Ammonites, and the LORD gave them into his hands. <b>33</b>He devastated twenty towns from Aroer to the vicinity of Minnith, as far as Abel Keramim. Thus Israel subdued Ammon.</p> <p><b>34</b>When Jephthah returned to his home in Mizpah, who should come out to meet him but his daughter, dancing to the sound of timbrels! She was an only child. Except for her he had neither son nor daughter. <b>35</b>When he saw her, he tore his clothes and cried, "Oh no, my daughter! You have brought me down and I am devastated. I have made a vow to the LORD that I cannot break."</p> <p><b>36</b>"My father," she replied, "you have given your word to the LORD. Do to me just as you promised, now that the LORD has</p>

<p>36 וַתֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אֲבִי פְּצִיטָהּ אֶת־פִּיךָ אֶל־יְהוָה עֲשֵׂה לִּי כַּאֲשֶׁר יֵצֵא מִפִּיךָ אֶחָרִי אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה לְךָ יְהוָה נִקְמוֹת מֵאִיבֶיךָ מִבְּנֵי עַמּוֹן:</p> <p>37 וַתֹּאמֶר אֶל־אֲבִיהָ יַעֲשֵׂה לִּי הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה הַרְפָּה מִמְּנֵי שָׁנִים חֲדָשִׁים וְאֶלְכָה וְיִרְדְּתִי עַל־הַהָרִים וְאֶבְכֶּה עַל־בְּתוּלִי אֲנֹכִי וְרַעִיתִי:</p> <p>38 וַיֹּאמֶר לָכִי וַיִּשְׁלַח אוֹתָהּ שְׁנֵי חֲדָשִׁים וַתֵּלֶךְ הִיא וְרַעוּתֶיהָ וַתִּבְתְּלוּ עַל־הַהָרִים:</p> <p>39 וַיְהִי מִקֵּץ שְׁנַיִם חֲדָשִׁים וַתָּשָׁב אֶל־אֲבִיהָ וַיַּעַשׂ לָהּ אֶת־נִדְרוֹ אֲשֶׁר נָדָר וְהִיא לֹא־יָדְעָה אִישׁ וַתְּהִי־חַק בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל:</p> <p>40 מִיָּמִים   יְמִימָה תִּלְכְּנָה בָּנוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל לְתַנּוֹת לְבַת־יַפְתָּח הַגִּלְעָדִי אַרְבַּעַת יָמִים בַּשָּׁנָה: ס</p>	<p>avenged you of your enemies, the Ammonites. <b>37</b>But grant me this one request,” she said. “Give me two months to roam the hills and weep with my friends, because I will never marry.”</p> <p><b>38</b>“You may go,” he said. And he let her go for two months. She and her friends went into the hills and wept because she would never marry. <b>39</b>After the two months, she returned to her father, and he did to her as he had vowed. And she was a virgin.</p> <p>From this comes the Israelite tradition <b>40</b>that each year the young women of Israel go out for four days to commemorate the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite.</p>
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Verses 29-31: Verse 29 does not agree with 10:17. It is an attempt to catch the thread of the narrative interrupted at verse 12. It is only at this stage of the narrative that Jephthah receives the “spirit of the Lord” and pronounces a vow which then has such tragic consequences (v. 30) (Soggin 1981:206). For Niditch (2008:133), in Judges and in the case of Jephthah and Samson, the descent of the spirit prepares the hero for battle. It is thus worth noting that the other judges come from other occupations, at least in those instances in which we have information in this respect, and are therefore not professionals; Jephthah, on the other hand, is chosen precisely because he is a professional and so that he can continue to be one. In this scene the figure of David, who is also compelled to flee and is also involved with a band of people who go out on raids, who is also elected because of his capacity as a soldier and also because he is a skilled politician (Soggin 1981:206). Inspired by the Lord, Jephthah called for the forces of Gilead in preparation for an attack upon Ammon (Soggin 1981:206). The movement of the judge through Gilead and Manasseh and the return to Mizpah is not easy to trace. The clause “he passed on to the Ammonites” is explained in verse 32. Ordinarily we should expect the vow of the leader to follow verse 11. The vow 11:30 is another piece of war preparation, as in Numbers 21:2-3, “the warrior promises a sacrifice of some sort

to God in exchange for victory in battle” (Niditch 2008:133). The language of the vow (11:30) thus suggests that Jephthah had a human sacrifice in mind (Elliot 1953:769; Noort 2002:13). This is attested by the “war ideology of the ban by which whole populations and towns are destroyed as a “whole burnt-offering” to Yahweh” (see Deuteronomy 13:16), this is for Niditch (2008:133) integrally related to an ideology of sacrifice. This Soggin (1981:215) argues is a real human sacrifice, without the possibility of it being something else, for example a domestic animal, as might seem to be implied, although by a formula ambiguous today. We find another conditional vow in 1 Samuel 1:11, but without a fatal outcome, given that it provides only for the dedication of the son, so that it cannot be said that the sacrifice in question was part of a conditional vow. “The purpose behind the vow appears to have been that since great things were expected of the Lord, the best at ones command must be given to him” (Soggin 1981:215).

It is striking that Yahweh has not yet appeared to Jephthah, directly or indirectly. Nor has the narrator given us any indication of whether or not Yahweh approves of Jephthah as a man who has been called and appointed by men, not as far as we know by Yahweh (Webb 2012:327). All this now changes by the words “the spirit of Yahweh came upon Jephthah.” This is the same expression used in relation to Gideon in 6:34, and at last leaves us with no doubt that God has chosen to use Jephthah, too, to deliver Israel (Butler 2009:286; Spronk 2011:307). It also implies that whatever follows is a consequence of the spirit coming upon him, whether or not Jephthah himself is aware of it. It is at this point that Jephthah utters his famous vow (Tatlock 2011:37). This vow has two conditions and a set of related promises. The phrase “when I return with victory from the Ammonites” (NETS) is the same language that Gideon used when vowing to punish the men of Peniel (8:9) and that Jacob formulated at Bethel (Gen 28:21). Therefore, this verse is placed as a link to the story of the struggle with Ephraim (12:1-6) which was added to the history of Jephthah. In trying to deal with the problems that arise from reference, it could be argued that the Deuteronomistic redactor also had a predecessor. Jephthah’s vow is a natural wish, given the many traditions of leaders not coming back home from campaign for example Saul, Ahab, and Josiah, but given the promise Jephthah will make, this extra request will prove lugubrious and grotesque

(Sasson 2014:438). “God comes to battle on God’s own terms, not on Jephthah’s, and certainly not as a result of Jephthah’s wheedling vow” (Butler 2009:287).

Looking at the vow of Absalom, Hannah and Jacob, Jephthah’s promise would be full if it stopped by him saying, “whoever comes to meet him will be God’s and will bear sign of such a dedication” (Tatlock 2011:37). But Jephthah says “I will have him offered as a burnt victim”. The anticipated victim is identified as male (Samson 2014:438). The implication of this statement does indeed introduce a high degree of tension, because we as readers know that Jephthah does not have a son. At this point, the story shows us Jephthah’s approach to the saving of Israel, as mentioned in verse 7-11, out of the concern to maintain his new-found control of Israel (Boling 1975:208). It is strange to find Jephthah so unsure of the outcome after his apparently confident appeal to Yahweh the Judge. Here we have the first time that Jephthah has addressed Yahweh directly. The vow takes us deeper into Jephthah’s psyche and shows us a man still haunted by his past. Publicly he has argued that Israel is the innocent party and expressed confidence that God’s judgment will be their favour; privately he remembers that he himself has been the innocent party in a dispute and found his rights disregarded by those who should have protected him (11:1-3,7) (Webb 2012:328). Jephthah has everything to lose if the battle goes against him, and the circle of rejection will begin again. If Yahweh rejects Jephthah, so too will his people. “Yahweh’s spirit has already come upon him; the divine Judge has already decided to save Israel by his hand” (Webb 2012:328). But this information that has been given to us, Jephthah shows no awareness of it (Webb 2012:328). Jephthah has become God’s instrument without knowing it, but this vow puts all the occupants of Jephthah’s house at risk. “Jephthah’s vow can also be seen as a challenge to the divine, an attempt to dictate Yahweh’s future actions or it may be another demonstration of his shrewd and calculating nature, another attempt to manipulate circumstances to his own advantage” (Butler 2009:287). One thing remains certain, Jephthah is neither praised nor judged for making this rash vow (Soggin 1981:215; Robinson 2004:339).

Verses 32-34: We learn from this passage that Jephthah had a home in Mizpah, the seat of Yahweh’s shrine, indicating that he had fully assumed the functions assigned him by



Gilead's elders by the time he completed his victories (Sasson 2014:438). This for Soggin (1981:214) does not seem to be the house that he driven out of (cf. 11:2) We see that Jephthah's daughter leaps into the story totally unannounced, her entry sharpened by a presentation. In biblical lore, when individuals are slated to play a role in a developing narrative, they are generally introduced earlier, if only to identify them by name (Robinson 2004:341). For example Rebecca is cited long before God chooses her as a wife for Isaac's bride (Gen 22:23). Jephthah's daughter, however, makes her debut like a supernova, without a single hint characterized by pronominal references; "his daughter", "his house" and "to meet him" etc. (Spronk 2011:312). Jephthah got what he wanted, but now he must pay for it; his victory over the Ammonites brings him, to the door of his house (Webb 2012:330). It is also only after the war that Jephthah realizes that he loves her more than he had before. She knows not what she does, comes out to meet him, to celebrate a joyful occasion in the traditional way, glad that her father had returned safely. She comes out alone, and it is her solitariness which is emphasized (Webb 2012:332). Ordinarily there might have been great rejoicing, but not so in this case. Instead there was anxiety and sorrow, for Jephthah had made a rash vow which seemed proper at the time it was made (Elliot 1953:770). In ancient Israel, it was a common biblical motif for women as musical celebrants of their men's victory like in the "songs" of Miriam and Deborah (Niditch 2008:134). This could mean that Jephthah was aware that his daughter would come out to meet him. Spronk (2011:303-304) suggests that by going out to meet her father, she forced him to "condemn her" to stay unmarried and without children. This was seen by her as a positive outcome, because it secures her independence and enabled her to profit from the wealth of her father. Many scholars like McMann commend Jephthah for being a man of his word (Butler 2009:291).

Verses 35-36: Jephthah's response to the tragedy is shock, no sooner does he spot his daughter than the immensity of the self-inflicted catastrophe strikes him (Sasson 2014:439). Elsewhere in scripture, tearing of one's clothing is a mourning act, but it is also associated with frustration when facing an unfurling tragedy. But it is his shriek that conveys the depth of agony "Ahah". In Joshua 7:7 the "Ahah" was directed to God, although Jephthah seems to be directing his words to "my daughter", he is addressing

the god who has done him wrong (cf. Sasson 2014:440; see Webb 2012:332). The blame he will soon lay on his daughter can equally be meant for God. For the daughter, who might have been stunned by her father's reaction, Jephthah has a reproach and an explanation. Niditch (2008:134) argues that verse 35 indicates that Jephthah is either a fool or a conscious practitioner of human sacrifice, like the Moabite king in 2 Kings 3:26-27. From the views of Webb (2012:332) and Sasson (2014:440), Niditch (2008:134) argues that the narrative itself does not view verse 35 as an accusation, Jephthah is a hero who is caught up in the agonistic divine spirit, making a not untypical war vow, one that he fully comprehends on a mundane and tragic level only in the wake of the war. Sasson (2014:440) offers a reproach that has two phases; first, she has brought him to his knees, giving the sense of a forced submission, the second phase being about generating the trouble or torment that harms others. Jephthah's own explanation for the reaction is missing, but we notice, too, that he neither cites his vow nor labels it as such. Moreover, by stating that "I cannot turn back", he comes closest to disclosing that a vow was at stake (Elliot 1953:771). This seems to imply that Jephthah is also lamenting his incapacity to step back, from his home perhaps, rather than in pulling back his vow (Sasson 2014:440; Webb 2012:332). In verse 36, the daughter is still nameless, and she opens on a vocative "my father", that must have certainly torn a hole in Jephthah's heart (Niditch 2008:135). She disregards the double-dosed onus Jephthah has set on her, she uses her father's words, and she avoids demanding to know what is at stake. Yet, it tells us much about her knowledge of her father that she grasps at once that he had bargained something precious for his victory (Sasson 2014:440). The daughter reasons that her father must do what he intended and she also balances between what the father must do and what God have done. Niditch (2008:134) believes that in the hands of a different author, such vows can be abrogated, e.g. Saul and Jonathan in 1 Samuel 14:45. In this case the daughter must be sacrificed because the narrative is about a special sort of sacrifice (Niditch 2008:134).

Verses 37-38: We will never know whether or how long his daughter waited for an answer, perhaps hoping for some comfort or reassurance. But Jephthah is no longer into opening his mouth. For the daughter it must now be clear that something terrifying is awaiting her, but the narrative is not yet revealing whether she is fully aware of what

her father has bartered (Sasson 2014:441). Why two months and not three months? Another puzzler is the sequence of activities the daughter wants to accomplish (Robinson 2004:335, 343). “*Grant me two months, so that I may go and wander on the mountains, and bewail my virginity, my companions and I.*” (NRSV). Sasson (2014:442) raises an important issue of whether the movement on the mountains is at stake here at all; the daughter may simply be asking for a time of privacy with her confidants. In verse 38, there seems to be a connection between the wailing and the mountain where it occurred, although it is easy for us to romanticize such a setting (Sasson 2014:442). Who the companions are, is not clear. We are not told why these young women would want to join the daughter, but they could belong to the same age group, hence sharing the same experience as they enter puberty (see Walls 1992:77-79). They may also be attached to her because of her father’s status. Jephthah answers “go”, as if dismissing a servant, this shows that he is still in full authority and is the last time he speaks in this episode (Sasson 2014:442; Webb 2012:333). For Niditch (2008:134) her sacrifice confirms the relationship between Jephthah, the hero and God, the deity.

Verses 39-40: When the daughter returns at the end of her two months, Jephthah fulfils his vow. The verbs used to describe this suggest a very physical act (Sasson 2014:442). It is at this point after her immolation, that we learn that “she herself had not known a man” (11:39) (Webb 2012:333). Given her father’s resolve, it doesn’t much matter whether this titbit is circumstantial (what she was at death) or consequential (how she died as a virgin) (Sasson 2014:449). The postscript of these verses firmly shifts the focus of our sympathy on the father for making his vow, toward the daughter who is also the victim (Webb 2012:334). She is now viewed as the oppressed party or as some scholars would argue viewed as a girl who succeeds in manipulating her father in order to secure for herself independence (Spronk 2011:303). The daughter’s fate establishes a law among the Israelites wherein the “Israelites virgins are required to spend four days a year quoting the story of Jephthah’s daughter” (Butler 2009:292). Interestingly the last verse of chapter 11 identifies Jephthah as a “Gileadite”, what his brothers refused to accept and what caused the elders originally to hate him becomes in the end the identity of Jephthah (Butler 2009:293). Through all of this Yahweh remained silent. In this respect, there is a terrible contrast between Genesis 22 and Judges 11 both feature

a father faced with the prospect of sacrificing an “only child” (Robinson 2004:341). In Abraham’s case the obligation is divinely imposed; Jephthah incurs the obligation through his own voluntary act, and a substitute is not provided (Robinson 2004:343).

In Genesis there is a voice from heaven, but in Judges the heaven is silent (Webb 2012:335). We see that Jephthah was left to reap the consequences of his folly, and his daughter, like a lamb caught in a thicket, paid for it with her life. Although it can be labelled as wishful thinking, it can still be argued that the daughter of Jephthah was not killed but sentenced to a life of celibacy (Reis 2002:105-106). Life passages such as these are marked in the myth and rituals of many cultures, thus a tale of war helps to shape Israelites concepts of their foundation in the land also becomes the origin myths that establishes a life-shaping ritual for young women and their families (Niditch 2008:134). For Logan (2009:682) the important exegetical question, however, is not what the "custom" was, but why the author chose to relay it. Clearly, he is referring to something that was actually practiced in his day and was expecting the audience to be acquainted with it as well. Herein, Logan (2009:682) suggests, lays its significance. The author reminds the audience of the "custom"- and is relying on familiarity with it-in order to authenticate his story: "You all know about Jephthah and his daughter," he says, "you all know my story is true, because every year our women retell it in a custom' held in her honour." As a result, because the audience knew the story, it already knew the gender of the victim. The victim, therefore, could not have been anyone/thing other than who/what the women's story said (Logan 2009:682). Of significance, then, is not the gender of the sacrifice but the requirement to perform it. To put the matter even more succinctly: if the "customs" story had said the victim was a boy, then the Judges narrative would have been about the sacrifice of Jephthah’s son. In addition, because the audience already knew the story, the daughter had to die. Even if the author had preferred a different outcome-perpetual virginity, for example, or ransom-he could not have ended his story any differently than what the "customs" story said. This, Logan (2009:683) believes, is why the author developed his legal argument to defend Jephthah’s act. He wanted to explain irrefutably to his heterogeneous audience-in particular to those educated members who would have disagreed-why the sacrifice had to be (Logan 2009:683).

From the above, Jephthah seems to have been a responsible man calculating and particularly skilled at negotiations (Soggin 1981:216). For Elliot (1953:771) it seems that vows were not binding in Israel, though Jephthah's vow was a thoughtless one, he was under sacred obligation to carry it out. And although it cost him his daughter, he carried out his side of the obligation as he understood it (Elliot 1953:771). The story was thus not only a vivid portrayal of events, but one told with great skill and imagination. The words "he did with her according to his vow" give us "no details of the ghastly scene of human sacrifice, as is done by Aeschylus in the sacrifice of Iphigenia" (Elliot 1953:771-772). This sacrifice happens at an unknown location. In the account of the sacrifice of Jephthah's daughter we would have an instance of the historization of a myth, a practice, which, as is well known, is widespread in the Old Testament.

As the analysis above shows, Jephthah was wrong to make that vow in the first place, not only was it unnecessary, but it was effectively a bribe, and therefore a denial of his bold, public expression of confidence in Yahweh (Webb 2012:336). This was thus seen as an abomination, and even incurs God's judgment rather than secure his help. So there is no question that Jephthah did wrong in making the vow. It is true that when reading this story as part of the OT as a whole, the role of Yahweh becomes problematic, but it can also mean that Genesis 22 and Judges 11 show an increase in the people's sins (Spronk 2011:306-307). Scholars are still arguing that it could be possible that this story stems from a later period and was influenced by similar motives in the Hellenistic atmosphere. It is for this reason that, as an alternative to Genesis 22, it would have been added to the history of Jephthah to emphasize the different outcome of the story thus represent Jephthah as a negative counterpart to Abraham (Spronk 2011:308-309).

Apart from the question whether Jephthah's actions were morally correct, the text indicates that in the confrontation with his daughter, Jephthah is losing control. The declining role of Yahweh appears to be parallel to the noted tendency of Jephthah's losing control. (Spronk 2011:314)

This study is of the opinion that this text shows without a doubt that Jephthah suffered for making this vow, and that we should "be careful of what we ask for because we just might get it", and be forced to deal with the consequences. Instead of wanting to be in control, we must also rest assured that once God has spoken, he shall do it. These are the points that local communities should be made aware and help save lives.

### *3.3.9. Judges and child sacrifice*

We will now turn to the discussion of the portrayal of child sacrifice in the Hebrew Bible, Judges 11:29-40. This story also functions as a critique of child sacrifice. It is significant that the label only-begotten child is also applied to Jephthah's daughter, who is sacrificed by her father to Yahweh in fulfilment of a vow (Judg. 11:29-40). The narrator is seen by Stavrakopoulou (2004:194) as being keen to emphasize that her high status is Jephthah's only-begotten child: "She was his only-begotten child; apart from her he had no son or daughter" (v. 34b), another feature common to both stories is that only-begotten is to be offered up to Yahweh as a burnt offering (Gen. 22:2, 6, 8; Judg. 11:32), just as Mesha offered up his firstborn as a burned offering in 2 Kings 2:37. It thus becomes evident that the verb associated with child sacrifice (עלה) (burnt-offering) is employed three times to describe Jephthah's movements immediately before he makes his vow.

For Stavrakopoulou (2004:195), given the fact that both Abraham and Jephthah are consistently portrayed as heroic figures faithful to Yahweh, it is highly noteworthy that in neither story is the practice of child sacrifice censured, or even commented upon, by the narrator. Both the Aqedah and the story of Jephthah's daughter present the sacrifice of a child to Yahweh as an action bringing divine blessing. Moreover, this blessing appears to be bound up with fertility, for Genesis 22:1-19 and Judges 11:29-40 portray the only-begotten child as a symbol of potential fertility (Stavrakopoulou 2004:195; cf. Arnold 2009:201). This is obvious in the example of Isaac, because Abraham is willing to sacrifice his son; Yahweh will bless him with a multitude of descendants, a blessing made possible in both bestowing and realization through Isaac. Thus Jephthah's daughter is, like Isaac, a clear symbol of potential fertility, without them, it is clear that the promise of land and progeny are meaningless. The sacrificial laws emphasize that

the firstborn is the first to open the womb rather than the father's rightful heir, this seems to cohere with the biblical depiction of the first-fruits as the best portion of the harvest belonging to Yahweh, and Yahweh's claim that "whatever is the first to open the womb among the Israelites, of animals and humans is mine" (Exod. 13:2). Thus the firstborn child is Yahweh's by right, perhaps prompting qualification of the firstborn law to allow for the redemption of the child in order to keep his life. In this myth of Israel's origins, Yahweh's act of deliverance demonstrates that the people have been chosen by Yahweh, who thus has an absolute claim upon their firstborn (Stavrakopoulou 2004:197). The power of the story lies in its straightforwardness, in the few crucial literary strokes, and in its reliance upon the powerful appeal to the imagination of the reader to supply details (Elliot 1953:772). In agreement with Niditch (2008:133) it seems probable that both the authors of Judges 11 and Genesis 22 understood that life is God's to bestow or take back. Later in the tradition, martyrdom comes to be understood as efficacious because on some level God accepts human sacrifice. Implicit in the war vows in Numbers 21:2-3 and Judges 11:30 are threads in the deep mythological understanding of the way life works.

One thing that is missing from this chapter is God's standing point with regards to child sacrifice. Jephthah's actions are comprehensible as Logan (2009:667) notes only on the assumption that his daughter could lawfully be sacrificed as an "olah" burned offering to Yahweh. What is most baffling is that the author seems neutral on the subject on human sacrifice. The author according to Logan (2009:667) does not seem to condemn nor approve the practice, preferring it seems to wrap him in ambiguity. Sacrificing one's child may have been one of the necessary things to be done within the office of king and leader (Logan 2009:670). Alternatively, owing such a sacrifice, provided the deity indeed averted the crisis, might have been an equally viable option (Logan 2009:670).

In Judges 12:1-7, we find the scene after Jephthah has defeated Ammon and has made his sacrifice, he is accosted by representatives of the preeminent and powerful tribe of Ephraim, who accuse him of deliberately excluding their army from participating in the battle (Logan 2009:674). In a wonderful example of underdog trickerism, no doubt taken from remembrances of ancient tribal taunts, "forty-five Ephraimite contingents

are put to the sword and Gilead's autonomy is sustained" (Logan 2009:675). His house thus preserved for a second time, Jephthah governs for six years, and when he dies, he is accorded the burial rights of a respected Israelite judge (Logan 2009:675), Robinson (2004:344) contradicts this view by stating that the Leviticus Rabbah argues that Jephthah was punished for his oath and as a result had his limbs fell of, limb after limb and was buried in many places, in the cities of Gilead. To answer the question posed by Logan (2009:678), would it not have seemed reasonable that the deity would be appreciative of an offer to choose his victim, Logan finds Genesis 22 useful. Many scholars have commonly agreed that the author's use of the Hebrew "only child" to describe Jephthah's daughter is a direct allusion to Isaac in Abraham's sacrifice (Gen 22:2, 12, 16). The text bristles with redundancies, as though the author has surrounded the word in neon lights to make sure the audience makes the connection:

Judges 11:34b and Genesis 22:2:

**Judges 11:34b (BHS SESB 2.0)**

34 וַיָּבֵא יִפְתָּח הַמְצִפָּה אֶל־בֵּיתוֹ וְהִנֵּה בַתּוֹ יֹצֵאת לַקְּרָאתוֹ בְּתַפְּסִים וּבַמַּחְלוֹת וְרַק הִיא יְחִידָה אֵינְלוּ מִמֶּנּוּ בֶן אִוֶּבֶת:

**Genesis 2:2 (BHS SESB 2.0)**

2 וַיֹּאמֶר קַח־נָא אֶת־בְּנֶדְךָ אֶת־יְחִידֶךָ אֲשֶׁר־אַהַבְתָּ אֶת־יִצְחָק וְלֹד־לְךָ אֶל־אֶרֶץ הַמִּרְיָה וְהַעֲלֵהוּ שָׁם לְעֹלָה עַל אֶחָד הַהָרִים אֲשֶׁר אָמַר אֱלֹהִים:

The traditional interpretation of Genesis 22 is that the story condemns human sacrifice. If this (Gen. 22) is the case, however, the point is not explicitly made. What is said is that God's command was a test of Abraham's obedience (Gen. 22:1, 18), to which Abraham responded unquestioningly even though—the text makes this very clear—he dearly loved his son (Gen. 22:2). It is only when the knife is set to plunge that we are told that God, convinced of Abraham's devotion, averts his hand. This, Logan (2009:678) suggests, was the understanding evoked when the ancient audience heard the word. The parallels to Jephthah's story are striking: both men are Israelite leaders and fathers facing an "olah" sacrifice of a beloved only child (Logan 2009:678). The essential difference between them, however, is that, unlike Abraham, Jephthah is not offered the option of a ram (see Robinson 2004:336). Jephthah was not taken off guard,



trapped, so to speak, by a hastily made, poorly worded, ill-conceived vow. Like everyone else, he knew what offering was expected. Imagine his anguish when he found out that God would not let him off the hook, the emotional evisceration he experienced as he ripped open his clothes in the traditional sign of grief and came face to face with the reality of what would be his ultimate test. In contrast to his outward display, Jephthah's speech comes across as positively wooden, so flat that it has been interpreted as prima facie evidence of callous disregard for his daughter (Logan 2009:678). However, Jephthah's seeming lack of emotion is actually an inability to capture in English wordplay that Logan (2009:679) believes is key to the speech's interpretation. Logan (2009:679) is of the opinion that the Israelite audience would have instantly connected its use here with other stories in which the word describes the terrible anger of Yahweh and the disaster it brings when an agreement with him has been breached.

This is the "disaster" Saul experienced when, because of Jonathans breach, Yahweh withheld his oracle (1 Sam. 14:29). The assonance would have reverberated throughout Jephthah's lament- a constant reminder of the serious consequences of not keeping a war vow, and a serious portent of what would happen if Jephthah did not keep his. Jephthah does not blame his daughter; he names her as the source of his own personal disaster. What Jephthah recognized, the author says, was that the payment God required for delivering his nation was the terrible private tragedy of his own daughter's death. For Logan (2009:680), what the Israelite certainly recognized is something easy for us to miss: that it is a reformulation of a priestly statute commanding all Israelites scrupulously to honour their vows. Numbers 30:3 (BHS) and 30:2 (NIV) says "*when a man makes a vow to the LORD or takes an oath to obligate himself by a pledge, he must not break his word but must do everything he said*" (NIV). It seems probable that the author directs his readers to Numbers. With this Priestly knowledge, the daughter "was not submitting to her father, but she was affirming their mutual obligation to submit themselves to God" (Logan 2009:681). To the ancient reader, the message was obvious; Jephthah performed the sacrifice in strict conformance of the law, and thus he did for her his vow that he had vowed (Judg. 11:39).

However, some scholars like Tribble (1984:65-92) have been understood to be puzzled by the reference (into my hand, in Judg. 11:30) because the payments promised by Israel and Jephthah seem two unrelated things. There is a connection, however—and one of great significance—because it answers the question (no doubt posed by legally astute members of the audience) "Why, if Leviticus 27:1-8 permits redemption, did not Jephthah just pay God off?" Saul's army bought off Jonathan. Why could Jephthah not have done the same? The answer, the author responds, lies in the fundamental meaning of "*herem*" (Logan 2009:682). Jephthah's and Israel's vows are the same, because they both involve the devotion of human lives in sacrifice to Yahweh. Thus, like the Arad war vow, Jephthah's war vow comes under the Priestly laws governing "*herem*". Jephthah's daughter could not be ransomed because she now, as the apodosis makes clear, "belongs to Yahweh" (compare 11:31b to, e.g., Lev. 27:28). Thus, Leviticus 27:29 applies: "Any human being who has been put under herem cannot be redeemed, but must be put to death".

From the above, it becomes clear in both rituals, the offeror sacrifices to a deity. These sacrifices serve as a means to draw the deity's attention and bring about a desired outcome. For *muti* rituals, these sacrifices are done to gain success, luck and protection and while in the story of Genesis 22, the deity is the one commanding Abraham to sacrifice his son and he is richly blessed for his willingness to carry out the practice. It seems that in both practices, the victim is known to the offeror and is specifically chosen because they meet all the sacrifice requirements.

### 3.4 Findings

Scholars like Logan (2009:668) have tried to argue that it is important to do this because to understand these authors is to better appreciate a significant but not well understood group that participated in that remarkable seventh-century BCE (Judg. 11 and Gen. 22) debate that laid the foundation for what has become our Judeo-Christian tradition. Although many people like to separate the events of Genesis 22 with that of Judges 11, this study has tried to show that there are indeed some similarities between Genesis 22 and Judges 11; these become more visible when the stories are placed parallel to each other. Scholars like Exum (1993:131-145); later taken on by (Brenner 2002:21-43) and

expanded by Bauks (2007:73-75) have been pivotal in highlighting the following points: Firstly, the sacrifice of Jephthah's daughter, performed by her father himself, is the consequence of a vow taken in the context of a war (Judg. 11:30) (Exum 1993:131). This vow does not specify the victim; the choice of victim is due to chance (v. 34); the text ends with a simple statement concerning the realization of the vow (v. 39). Bauks (2007:73) adds on to this by arguing that it is an allusion to Qohelet 5:3-4.

Secondly, the daughter of Jephthah accepts the role to which her father's vow has condemned her (v. 36). She asks simply for a delay of two months in order to "bewail her virginity" (v. 37), that is, in fact, that she will not have any descendants before she is sacrificed. Her posterity will be assured thanks to the insertion into the worship calendar of a festival in her memory (vv. 39b-40) (cf. Exum 1993:140).

Thirdly, at no point in this account does God intervene, a fact that leads Römer (2007:49) to the following interpretation: God is silent in the face of human aberrations, preferring to place human beings before the consequences of their own cruelty. Bauks (2007:74) disagrees with this view. For Römer (2007:46) this is an important point of divergence from Genesis 22. Alternatively, the fact that it is the daughter of Jephthah who comes out of the house could imply a divine act of providence: in this way, God is seen to have accepted the vow of Jephthah and has now chosen to put it to the test (Bauks 2007:73). Certainly the privileged relationship that Jephthah enjoyed with God is underlined by the expression employed in verse 29a: "the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jephthah." (Bauks 2007:73).

Genesis 22 and Judges 11 also contrast each other in the following ways, this section also draws on the works of Bauks (2007:74-75):

- The sacrifice is not the result of a vow made by a protagonist who finds himself in a situation of distress; rather it is a simple command (a 'test') of God. Thus, it is God himself who provokes the dilemma. In Judges 11 it is Jephthah who is testing God, by attempting to ensure his victory by his vow.
- Right up to the moment of the sacrifice itself, Isaac does not appear to be aware of the real situation. His reaction is not mentioned in any passage (except perhaps

in v. 19). Hence, the action takes place between Abraham and God. Jephthah's daughter is conscious of her father's intent.

- Divine intervention causes the sacrifice to take on another form, God himself choosing a substitute in order to redeem Isaac. Consequently, God acts finally in accordance with his promise of Genesis 12, which is repeated in oracular form in Genesis 22:14. The nature of the sacrifice in Judges 11 is doubtful: is it literal or figurative, an act of mourning or human sacrifice?
- Abraham's son has a name, but the daughter of Jephthah is not named.
- Isaac comes from a good family, the father of the daughter is born illegitimately, and her mother is never mentioned.
- Abraham passes God's test of faith and will have descendants, Jephthah's lack of faith embarrasses descendants.
- The theological commentary characterizes the story as a test of the patriarchs' faith.

This study finds the common theme to both texts as that of child sacrifice in the form of a burnt-offering "*olah*" (Judg. 11:31; Gen. 22:2). Genesis 22's narrative framework explicitly implies that "Abraham understands that Isaac will be the object of the sacrifice, an indication at the very least that the existence of such a practice was well known" (Niditch 2009:134). As for Jephthah in Judges 11, his vow (v. 30) clearly "demonstrates that he believes human sacrifice to be an acceptable practice in certain extreme situations" (Logan 2009:673). Therefore, both Abraham and Jephthah are fathers of "an only child: their child is the single most precious thing they possess, a fact that explains both the mourning of Jephthah (Judg. 11:35) and the indecision of Abraham" (Logan 2009:675). Moreover, both accounts are of an etiological nature. The fact that both narratives are in the canon should be seen as an indication to "the relative importance attributed to the theme of child sacrifice" (Bauks 2007:75). Because "the accounts do not specify which god is the object of the child sacrifice, we have to suggest that they were offered to the God of Israel, Yahweh, rather than referring to a pagan ritual" (Bauks 2007:75). More detail will follow in the next chapter that deals with sacrifice in the OT.

In comparison to *muti* rituals, this study has shown that there are indeed some differences and similarities between *muti* rituals and child sacrifice. Firstly, the biblical sacrifice is a ritualised killing because the murder forms part of the ritual. In *muti* rituals are not ritualised since there is usually no evidence of ritual killing on the crime scene. Secondly, it appeared as though both sacrifices were offered to a deity or deities, but in *muti* rituals, from an African understanding of religion and culture it seems probable that these sacrifices were being offered to ancestors who understood as being subordinate to God and serve as mediators between God and the people (Mbiti 1989:84, cited by Beyers and Mphahlele 2009:38). Thirdly, the practice of *muti* murders is often times distinct, with the victim's body found mutilated and discovered in the bushes near a river (Bevan 2006:1 of 1). In the biblical texts, the victim is wholly burnt as a sacrifice (Marshall et al. 1996:1035). The victim in both rituals is to be without blemish, and should meet all the requirements for the sacrifice. Fourthly, both rituals see sacrifice as a communion between God/ gods and the living and stress the importance of commensality in the treatment and cooking/burning of the sacrifice (Hasu 2009:198). "Traditionally, the sacrificial lamb must be alive when the body parts are cut off. He must also cry, as this increases the power of the *muti*" (Seale 2005:1 of 2). Fifthly, with regard to biblical rituals/ child sacrifice, Abraham is ready to sacrifice his own son, this is at times the case for *muti* rituals, but the victim need not be related to the one performing or requesting the sacrifice (see Mbanjwa 2005:1 of 1; Bevan 2006:1 of 1; and Hosken 2010: 1 of 1). Finally, a blessing of continuity is bestowed on the offerer, as luck in business or fertility (the victim is sacrificed to propitiate a deity). Most business men continue with their now successful businesses, Abraham and Jephthah also become prominent and well known, even to later biblical texts. More is still yet to be discovered, which leads to the importance of the next chapter.

# Chapter 4: Sacrifice in the Old Testament

## 4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, this study will start by offering an overview of the term sacrifice, looking at the problems that arise in definitions, the development of the terminology, the basic understanding of the burnt offering, and finally look at biblical sacrifice in the Jewish and Christian tradition. According to Rainey (1980:194) “religious ritual was a major expression of ancient Israel, this approach as a religious phenomenon was usually based on some nineteenth century concept of cultural progress” (cf. Pongratz-Leisten 2007:3 who makes a similar point). The Bible does affirm that “sacrificial practices go back to the “dawn” of civilisation” (Rainey 1980:195).

## 4.2 Defining sacrifice and offering

Is there a difference between sacrifice and offering? According to Anderson (1992:873-874) offering can be defined as “the more general category of gift or obligation, while sacrifice is a specialisation of this category which entails a more specific means of delivery to the deity” (Janzen 2004:1). The Hebrew Bible is quoted by many scholars to have “two basic terms for offering: “*mincha*” (in the non-P material) meaning gift and “*qorban*” (in the P material) which means to bring near (Marshall, Millard, Packer and Wiseman 1996:1035). The basic term for sacrifice is “*zabach*” which means to slaughter”. Anderson (1992:871) rightly notes that “the concept of sacrifice is at the root of Christian and Jewish traditions”. The term sacrifice is a form of worship in which the instructions are given in the books of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers, sacrifices were brought to Yahweh as gifts (Rattray 1996:1223). Anderson (1992:871) on the other side argues that sacrificial worship was never God’s desire for human kind; he achieves this by stating that the laws were given to Moses because the people needed them to counteract the dominant “contemporary paganism”. With regard to animal sacrifices, the blood was sprinkled on all corners of the altar or smeared on the horns, this distinguished sacrifice from just a mere slaughter (Rattray 1996:1223; Marshall et al. 1996:1038-1039). “Cattle, sheep, goats, doves and pigeons were the only kind of

animal sacrifice that could be offered to god, while vegetable offerings included wheat, barley, wine, olive oil, and frankincense” (Rattray 1996:1223).

From what we know about animal sacrifice, Anderson (1992:871) was much more concerned with finding out why animal sacrifice served to reflect the bond between god and humanity. The question for Anderson was could not this bond be expressed in another form of sacrifice. The sacrificial animal on the other hand had to be without blemish, meaning that it was not to be sick, injured or castrated. This was important because the animal came to serve as a mediator between god and humanity. For Robert Smith (1889) in Anderson (1992:871) “sacrifice began as an act of slaying the totemic animal that represented both the tribe and God...experiencing a communion between God and the tribe; thus the life of the tribe was sustained” (cf. Pongratz-Leisten 2007:6-7). This comment Janzen (2004:1) believes applies to some limited extent to the ancient rabbis, who were certainly perspicacious in their attempts to systematize the ritual- the mishnaic tractate, for example, includes details on how to conduct all of the biblical sacrifices. Yet for the rabbis sacrifice held more than simply a puzzle to unlock in pilpuls; rather, it was a ritual that was meaningful or relevant on at least an eschatological level. For Janzen (2004:1) the rabbis suggest other cultic and even quotidian activities as replacements for sacrifice in the interim, and some claimed that bringing joy to a married couple is equivalent to making a thanksgiving sacrifice, that prayer was instituted to replace the daily temple sacrifice and is more efficacious than sacrifice, or that God accounts devotion to the study of the Torah precisely the same as burnt offerings. Sacrifice may be clearly meaningful for the future, but its ambiguous place in the present in of the temple leaves a gap that other activities must fill (Janzen 2004:1). This attests that “the primary goal of sacrifice was communal and mystical” and was only with the influence of power and cultural development that sacrifice came to be “thought of as a gift to a god” (Anderson 1992:871).

Marshall et al. (1996:1035) acknowledge that there is no general OT term for sacrifice, besides “*qorban*” (that which is brought near), which is practically confined to the Levitical literature (cf. Rainey 1980:195). The other frequently used term which will be discussed further in this study is “*olah*” (wholly burnt-offering) (Marshall et al.

1996:1035). In other words, “even the most ancient examples of sacrifice are depicted by means of nomenclature rooted in a highly developed, well organised sacerdotal framework” (Rainey 1980:195). According to Rainey (1980:195) we have no reasons to doubt that the Israelites could have known and practiced in a sophisticated order of sacrifice. They had in their possession instructions on how to conduct rituals including the “implements, materials, actions, prayers and incarnation to be performed-prescriptive ritual” (Rainey 1980:195). Written sources that tell us about the types of sacrifices, instructions and how they are to be followed is called a “descriptive ritual” (Anderson 1992:876; Pongratz-Leisten 2007:7). The narrator of the Judges 11:29-40 tries to be sympathetic towards his protagonist but all the while retained a critical perspective on the problems of public and private life (Boling 1975:210). In doing so, the narrator goes into considerable detail to stress that the rite was performed according to regulation (Rainey 1980:195). Other parts of the ancient world have produced such texts e.g. Mesopotamia, North Syria, and Ugaritic (cf. Rainey 1980:195-198). According to Rattray (1996:1223) the burnt-offering was the commonest, general offering, being offered twice a day either for atonement or for thanksgiving, the purpose in each was to win God’s favour. Even in the time of the Judges, this type of worship continued to be practiced, the priests and temple were known, and the animal which was sacrificed belonged to God (Rattray 1996:1225).

One other model of understanding sacrifice was that it served as food to the gods “the aroma of the burnt-offerings is said to be a ‘sweet savour to Yahweh’...no account of the fact is made that the term or phrase are freely introduced into all genres of Israel’s literature in all periods” (Anderson 1992:872). From the second temple times, sacrifice had become manifold as a textual enterprise. During this era, “the study of the sacrificial system began to develop a level of significance independent, though not inseparable, from cultic practice” (Anderson 1992:873). This process resulted in the production of many sacrificial documents in the Jubilees, Temple Scroll and the Mishnah. Because of the importance of blood in the Israelite religion, this term for animal slaughter assumed the technical meaning of sacrifice, which is still being used to this day (Anderson 1992:873). For Janzen (2004:2) sacrifice in the Hebrew Bible could be best described from the viewpoint of Christian theology as being a matter solely of historical interest.



In the New Testament period, the author of the book of Hebrews acknowledges that sacrifice is offered on behalf of sin, but also claims that the death of the Messiah is a final sacrifice that ends the practice once and for all (7:27; 9:12-14). Later Christian theologians continued this line of thought: Tertullian argued that Christ was the sacrifice offered for the sins of all, and in the fourth century Athanasius wrote that Christ fulfilled the biblical sacrificial system and he was a sacrifice that removed sin. Some of these early writer, Janzen (2004:2) argues emphasised that God had through the prophets, ordered an end to sacrifice and in the third century Pseudo-Clement claimed that God had abolished sacrifice and replaced it with baptism. Narratives of biblical had little relevance in such a scheme except as historical relics, important insofar as they prefigure the true sacrifice of Christ which renders them unnecessary (Janzen 2004:2). Many anthropologists would agree that in order for us to understand rituals, we need to understand their cultural or historical contexts (Janzen 2004:3).

#### 4.3 Types of sacrifices

In the Levitical literature, five types of sacrifices/offerings are outlined. The first one is the burnt-offering, "*olah*" which is the most famous and general sacrifice in this type of literature (Anderson 1992:875). It is offered as a "thanksgiving or atonement with the purpose to win God's favour" (Rattray 1996:1223). The whole sacrifice is burnt of the altar so its smoke goes up towards the heavenly realm, where the god smelled it (Anderson 1992:877). This is one of the reasons why this study pointed out that Jephthah and Abraham's sacrifices were a burnt-offering because they both won God's favour. The animal offered was to be male; in the case of Jephthah this proves not to be true. The second type of offering was the peace-offering "*selamim*" which "was brought when one wished to eat some meat" (Rattray 1996:1223). The sex of the animal was not of importance and this sacrifice was enjoyed by both the priests (who kept the right thigh) and the one bringing the sacrifice had a maximum of two days to eat it. The peace offering was further subdivided into free-will (could be finished on the following day) and thanksgiving offering (had to be finished on the same day) and votive offering which included the ordination offering (Anderson 1992:878-879). The third type of offering is known as the sin-offering "*hattat*", this would be in term of an animal, for

atonement or the purification of the temple (Rattray 1996:1223). They types of animals used in these sacrifice shows that the texts are aware of the social and economic status of the offender (Anderson 1992:875, 879-880; Marshall et al. 1996:1041). “The high priest or community as a whole offered a bull; a ruler offered a male goat, while a lay person brought a female. The ritual also varied; when the community had transgressed, the sanctuary itself was defiled; it was cleansed by sprinkling some of the bull’s blood in front of the sanctuary veil and smearing it on the horns of the incense altar” (Rattray 1996:1223; Marshall et al. 1996:1042). For the much more poor people, a non-costly type of offering was arranged (Anderson 1992:879). The fourth type of offering was the guilt-offering “*asam*” which was more private and could be likened to the cleansing sacrifice of a leper or an impure Nazirite, the guilt offering was a male lamb (Anderson 1992:880-881; Rattray 1996:1224). The fifth type of offering was the “cereal-offering which was a vegetable counterpart” of burnt-offering which could not be sweetened or leavened. When this type of offering was offered by “a poor person as a substitute for an animal”, the flour had to be dry without any incense or oil. “The sole exception was the priests offering which had to be fully burnt since a priest could not profit from his own offering” (Lev. 6:23). The types of animals used were domestic animals, even though there were wild animals that were according to the law found Deuteronomy 14:5 fit for consumption, these animals could not be used in sacrifices Anderson 1992:875). From a reading of Levine (1965), Anderson (1992:876) summarised Levine’s thesis by saying that sacrificial instructions can still be divided into two types; descriptive (describing what transpired at a specific cultic occasion) and prescriptive texts (legislating what must be brought for a certain ritual). “The results of this form critical distinction between descriptive and prescriptive lists is also important for understanding the meaning of the OT sacrifice” (Anderson 1992:877).

#### 4.4 The rhetoric of ritual: ritual and sacrifice

The goal of this chapter will be to argue that ritual sacrifice, like all social acts, can only be understood within their contexts (Janzen 2004:12; Pongratz-Leisten 2007:8). And can be understood as an act that a social group performs together-to that is at least performed on behalf of a society- it only makes sense that a ritual would reflect social

necessities (Janzen 2004:9). Janzen (2004:9) argues that various societies employ rituals in order to communicate their views of the ordering of the world and the moral actions that such views necessitate. In a community which believes that God has ordered existence such as that kings have a divine right to rule over nobles, and nobles over peasants, ritual will express this metaphysic as well as the moral necessity to maintain this social structure (Janzen 2004:10). It is for Janzen (2004:10) unsurprising that most rituals are extremely formal in structure, and not prone to variation. Thus, as participants in ritual become part of this mode of communication, they can only speak and sing and act according to a very strict set of parameters. This orderliness of ritual makes the order of the social group, whose message it conveys, appear natural and inviolable. Moreover, Janzen (2004:11) argues that it makes any questioning of ritual communication unlikely. According to Henninger (1987:545) sacrifice differs from other kinds of cultic activities because it involves more than simply words and gestures. Janzen (2004:11) argues that this argument is disingenuous, because sacrifice does include more than just words and gesture, but so do other rituals such as circumcisions and baptism and Passover meals and pilgrimages. Every ritual has something that makes it distinctive, or else we would not distinguish it (Janzen 2004:12). This is a truism, however, and even though we might mark out aspects of given ritual acts that would place them in the category of sacrifice, this does not make sacrifice a special kind of ritual any more than the specific features of other rituals make them special kinds of rituals.

Durkheim (1965) as engaged by Janzen (2004:12) laid out a powerful and widely followed argument for the function of ritual, but one that ignored the variety of contexts in which it is found. He argued that in religion humans made society into God, and that religion and ritual indirectly express fealty to society as they directly express it to a god, the social construction who allegedly existed independently of society. A divinity wrote Durkheim, is a being when humans see as superior to them and society is a body that, like a god, gives us “the sensation of a perpetual dependence” (Janzen 2004:12). Like a deity, society requires that we give up our desire in order to serve social interest, and society is the object of venerable respect. Thus, concluded Durkheim, social pressure manifests itself in spiritual ways, which is to say that humans confuse social demand with divine ones. They feel social pressure as an external force on which they depend,

and transmogrify such feelings into conception of the divine (Janzen 2004:12). Rituals for Durkheim therefore, bring society together as they manifest within each individual the feeling of dependence and strength gained from membership and participation in the social group. He also argues that rituals can in fact promote social unity and bring disparate members of a society together, but that is not all rituals do. They can actually mask conflict within a particular society and hide the social disunity that exists (Janzen 2004:13).

Janzen (2004:17) argues that “societies need to reproduce themselves, to make certain that they do not die out that they continue from one generation to the next”. In social groups that have open and loose social structures, where people constantly with neighbours and where the formalities of social intercourse are relatively unimportant, rituals rarely work to enforce group unity. This then, according to Janzen (2004:18) leaves us with an important lesson for “the study of sacrifice in the writings of Hebrew Bible”, and it also raises the problem of determining context. Scholars who study ancient societies do not have the luxury of ethnologists who can live among the members of the societies of the study. Janzen (2004:21) notes a few scholars who described rituals as communicating and clarifying social reality, as well as actually establishing it. This is seen when individuals participate in ritual they give a public notice of their intent to adhere to the social morality that ritual puts on display. Rituals demand a moral response from its participants, and it places them fully into social roles which they must either fully accept or fully leave (Janzen 2004:21).

Janzen (2004:33) makes a great observation that “because rituals do not all do the same thing, they do not all have the same goal nor the same structure nor the same order, nor the same context. The structure and symbols rituals employ depend upon the social message that they are trying to convey”. The social meaning of rituals can change over time, and this is precisely why we need to know much about the context of rituals as we can if we are to rightly interpret. He concludes by arguing that “ritual is a powerful social tool, and it is powerful precisely because it is able to communicate without serious resistance”. In ritual, as in many things that people do, we find habit, repetition,

and formality that allows participants to involve themselves without terribly much thought.

Pongratz-Leisten (2007:10-12) argues that “human sacrifice, not only involves the killing of a person or the use of the human blood, flesh, or bones for ritual purposes; the victim must also be offered to a deity. The distinction of this type of sacrifice obviously lies in the material involved. Other offerings would be animal sacrifice, vegetal offering, drink-offering, blood offering, etc”. The basic intentions of the sacrifice, the communicative and the distancing intention, is helpful for distinguishing between sacrifice in the cultic context of ritual interaction between humans and gods, which in analogy to human interaction primarily conveys the idea of gift giving or sharing of a meal (communicatory intention), and ritual killing in order to eliminate illness, sin or other harmful effects (distancing intention)” (Pongratz-Leisten 2007:10). “A distancing intention also applies to sacrifices to ward off divine wrath” (Pongratz-Leisten 2007:11). In the ancient Near East “sacrifice”, the consumption of the sacrifice, consequently, “remains restricted to a specific group within the elite, with ritual experts performing the cult and other groups running the economics of the temple. All these individuals got their share of the offering” (Pongratz-Leisten 2007:12).

#### 4.5 Patterns of ritual killing in the ANE

Woolley, the excavator of Ur is said to have interpreted the death of the retainers and their burial with the kings and queens of Early Dynastic Ur as human sacrifice, postulating that Ur kings were divine (Pongratz-Leisten 2007:12). This Pollock argues this inclusion of retainers in the burials of kings and queens was an extreme form of display of the power of individuals (Pongratz-Leisten 2007:13). The description in the Sumerian tale, “The Death of Gilgamesh” provides us with evidence that refers to the concept of afterlife where the privileged lifestyle for the deceased king had to be maintained in order to guarantee the continuity of his status when in the after-life (Pongratz-Leisten 2007:13). Warfare and consequently, killings are necessary to establish and maintain the political order with it, peace and prosperity. Creation, therefore, still remains part of the present and is not restricted to the cosmological narratives about the beginning. This concept according to Pongratz-Leisten (2007:14)

is evident in the royal inscriptions as well as in the myths of the “battle of the gods such as Enuma Elish, when Marduk does kill the monster Tiamat but does not annihilate her” (Pongratz –Leisten 2006:14). The aspect of transformation through killing also applies to the slaying of a god in order to create humankind in the mythical narratives (Pongratz-Leisten 2007:14). According to Pongratz-Leisten (2007:14) this motif is not known in the Sumerian creation accounts and is only introduced with the Old Babylonia version of Atrahasis in the first half of the second millennium BCE. Killing in the Mesopotamia was primarily part of a concept of order and not ethical considerations (Pongratz-Leisten 2007:19). Therefore the act of killing is transformed into a ritualised action after the model of the hunting rituals (Pongratz-Leisten 2007:21).

The ritual of a substitute king according to Pongratz-Leisten (2007:21) is likewise first into this concept of order because it aims at re-establishing the harmonic relationship between the king and the gods. It is evidenced extensively in the correspondence of the Sargonid kings Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal in the seventh century as well as the ritual texts and must be categorised as ritual killing to dispose of an infected *materia magica*. For Pongratz-Leisten (2007:22) the ritual of the substitute king belongs to the category of eliminatory rites in which a living or dead animal, and in its specific case a human being had to assimilate the elements or events threatening the real king and take them down to the Netherworld. In order to prevent his death the king temporarily abdicates his throne for a surrogate who having ruled his predetermined period, is put to death, after which the king re-ascends his throne and continues ruling as if nothing had happened (Pongratz-Leisten 2007:22). As soon as the need was established the chief exorcist not the king himself would choose a suitable substitute, a prisoner of war, a criminal condemned to death, a political enemy of the king or a gardener, a person whose life would have deserved death anyway or did not matter (Pongratz 2007:22). After the substitute king had fulfilled his duty he had to die. To secure the safety of the legitimate king all the regal requisites used by the substitute king such as the royal table, throne, weapon and sceptre had to be burnt. The substitute king serves as a carrier of impurity as do animals or puppets in other elimination rituals. The ritual of the substitute king, which is also attested in Hittite context, clearly belongs into the category of eliminatory rites (Pongratz-Leisten 2007:22).

It is with no doubt that the scapegoat ritual presents us with a special form of a substitute, for Pongratz-Leisten (2007:22-23), two components become interesting. One is the transferal of the impurity by laying hands on the ram and the other is the collective component: the substitute acts on behalf of a group or community. Both components are present in the Hittite ritual and reappear in Leviticus 16. A third feature is that the substitute might also be human. The “scapegoat ritual” also known as *apopompe* in Greek likewise belongs to the eliminatory rites but is distinct insofar as it involves the rite of laying the hands on the ram to transfer the pollution onto the substitute, and then the scapegoat is sent into the enemy land or across the border of the city. Pongratz-Leisten (2007:23) notes that the evidence for the scapegoat ritual texts was attested around a thousand years later from Ugarit, on the Mediterranean coast, as well as from Bogazköy, the capital of the Hittite empire, both within a military context (Pongratz-Leisten 2007:24).

#### 4.6 The study of sacrifice in Biblical studies

According to Anderson (1992:882) the study of the Israelite sacrificial system has received a lot of attention in the pseudepigraphical books such as the books of the Jubilee, Temple scrolls, Josephus, Philo and other writings from the Hellenistic sources. It seems probable that these sacrifices operated in the sphere of the grace covenant and is unfortunate that no sacrifice is available for the breach of the covenant (Marshall et al. 1996:1042). “The most extensive development is to be found in the rabbinic literature beginning with the foundational statement, Mishnah, the contemporaneous supplementary material of the Tosefta, and culminating in the Palestinian and Babylonian Talmuds, the massive rabbinic contemporaries on the Mishnah” (Anderson 1992:882; Noort 2002:12). These materials are rejected by Biblical scholars because they believe that this material is a later composition from the Second temple that simply reflects biblical narratives from the First temple period. For Anderson (1992:883) “Philo’s writings on the biblical sacrificial system can teach us a lot about Philo and Alexandrian Judaism, but precious little about biblical sacrifice”. On a similar note “the Temple scroll can teach us a lot about the sect at Qumran and its sectarian outlook, but very little about the nature of biblical sacrifice” (Anderson 1992:883). It is

uncomfortable to many that these statements contain some truth but as Anderson (1992:883) has noted “there is a wide gap between Hellenistic philosophical circles in Alexandria and the ritual of blood sacrifice practiced in Solomon’s Temple in Jerusalem, behind this emphasis is the mistaken notion that biblical sacrifice is, in its truest form, the historically reconstructed entity of critical scholarship and archaeology” (Anderson 1992:883). “Perhaps what is biblical about biblical sacrifice is not only the historical *realia* presumed in the present canonical form of the texts themselves, it was indeed this very same canonical form that presented itself to the earliest interpreters of the Bible” (Anderson 1992:883). From this understanding Marshall et al. (1996:1043) pointed out that there was no value in sacrifice because the cult was corrupted. It was thus “the rabbis who transformed the sacrificial system from the physical to the exegetical reality” (Anderson 1992:885)

In this study of sacrifice in the field of biblical studies, we like Janzen (2004:69) will simply survey some or all these theories and draw no conclusion as to which might truly encompass the meaning of every sacrifice ever offered. Janzen (2004:70) also argues that individual sacrifices are so dense in meaning that no one theory will explain all occurrences of the ritual in the Hebrew Bible. So when biblical scholars attempt to locate meaning of biblical sacrifice, they may appeal to a universal theory which claims that all sacrifices do or mean one thing to the social body, or they may study a single kind of sacrifice in an attempt to discover what meaning the biblical authors attributed to it and how it reflected their worldviews, or they may make a more general claim for the meaning of sacrifice in ancient Israel.

In the New Testament, we also have so many opinions about the death of Jesus. Many theological notions as expressed by Berquist (1994:108) typically view Jesus as willingly accepting death in order to be obedient to God. God, in this view required the death or sacrifice of someone to account of human sin. God’s hatred of sin requires God to lash out against sinners; the only way to save humanity is for God to redirect that anger against another target (Berquist 1994:109). This line of interpretation bases itself on a number of NT texts that use language of sacrifice to describe and evaluate Jesus’ death. Paul emphasises Jesus’ sacrifice, not Jesus’ death. Sacrifice is always intentional



activity, and Paul strengthens this notion by asserting that God put Jesus forward as a sacrifice. The only method that God knew to save humanity was to kill Jesus or at least that is the way that God chose (Berquist 1994:109). Jesus death does not prove anything about Jesus, but something about God, it proves Gods love, that ait is not a natural state for God, but only the result of focusing anger elsewhere. As with the story of Jephthah and his unnamed daughter and Isaac, obedience that results in death deserves questioning, if death is God’s will, then it also raises serious doubts about the nature of God.

#### 4.7 Findings

Abraham is said to have offered a burnt-offering in Genesis 22 but Jacob offered “sacrifices” in Genesis 31:54. From the summary offered by Rainey (1980:209) it becomes clear that the Israelites “offered sacrifices at various places e.g. Boschim (Judg. 2:1-5) and Ophrah (6:24-26). The human sacrifice of Jephthah’s daughter (11:30-40) was hardly normative, instead it is pointed out as evidence of Israel’s low spiritual state at the time”. Even family sacrifices were commonplace (16:2-5) (Rainey 1980:209). As a conclusion, OT sacrifice must be one which from the very beginning admits that human actions are influenced by divine actions. In the course of the discussion the following patterns in the religious thinking and practice of ancient Near Eastern communities have been found that might have contributed to the idea of this type of human sacrifice (Pongratz-Leisten 2007:31-32):

##### *Killing as Transformation Intended to Re-establish the Cosmic Order:*

1. In mythical narratives and royal inscriptions: killing to re-establish the cosmic order (Tiamat to build the cosmos; killing of the enemy king).
2. In mythical narratives: killing of a god to provide the substance for the creation of humankind.

##### *The Substitute with a Distancing Function:*

3. The substitute in eliminatory rites (puppet, wax figurines or animal).
4. The substitute king in times of eclipse.
5. The scapegoat ritual in times of plagues to transfer the impurity onto an animal.

*The Offering with Communicative Function*

6. Any kind of dedicatory offering in the cult to feed, to communicate with or appease the deity.

*Legal Context*

7. Idea of redemption and substitute

*Mythical context*

8. Idea of ransom given for the life of a deity

The crucial difference between the Old Testament Theology and Mesopotamian tradition is that in Mesopotamia there is no direct connection between sacrifice and purification rites which consequently also implies that there is no sacrifice to atone for the sin or sacrifice to atone for the guilt (Pongratz-Leisten 2007:32).

# Chapter 5: Biblical portrayal of child sacrifice

## 5.1 Introduction

According to Levenson (1993:18) the precise relationship of this practice of the sacrifice of the first-born son to the cult of *Molech* remains in need of clarification. In this chapter, the study will be looking at the overview of the biblical portrayal of child sacrifice. This will be achieved by firstly defining the term *Molech* and understanding how first-born sacrifice worked in the Ancient Israel and advocate that indeed children were being sacrificed to Yahweh. It is worth noting as observed by Hattingh & Meyer (2016:501) that any discussion on human sacrifice in the Hebrew Bible at some point touches on *Molech*. The biblical denunciations of the rites of Tophet speak of people burning their sons and daughters in fire and make no reference to order of birth, whereas the law of the first-born involves the elder son (Levenson 1993:18). Stavrakopoulou (2004:214) takes the stories of Genesis 22:1-19 and Judges 11:29-40 as the two primary texts. This she does by looking at the terminology used and how it has been translated throughout the biblical tradition (Stavrakopoulou 2004:148).

## 5.2 Sacrifice to *Molech*

According to Levenson (1993:8), if as tradition long maintained, *Molech* is the name of the god worshipped through child sacrifice, then it clear that giving every first-born son to him would be mutually exclusive of the donation of the same victim to Yahweh (Noort 2002:9). Stavrakopoulou (2004:149) states that there are only eight occurrences of the word “*Molech*” in the Masoretic Text (MT) and that it is to be understood as a noun that functions as the name or title of a god (Lev. 18:21; 20:2,3,4,5; 1 Kings 23:10; Jer 32:35; see. Noort 2002:8). From Leviticus 18:21, there is a strong debate about the meaning of *mlk*. Does it refer to a kind of sacrifice, or is it a name of a deity? (Römer 2012:5). Levenson (1993:18) highlights that the ancient view that *Molech* was a god was dealt with severely in 1935, when Eissfeldt utilised Punic inscriptions to argue that the term is actually the name of a type of sacrifice, so that to “give” (*natan*) or to “hand over” (*herib*) a child to *Molech* means to donate him or her for immolation (see Levenson 1993:46; Stavrakopoulou 2004:150; Hattingh & Meyer 2016:502). Those

who cite Eissfeldt tend to cite Geiger's dysphemism theory as support for a deity whose name originally derived from the title "*Melek*" (Stavrakopoulou 2004:151). Other scholars have however, found Eissfeldt's interpretation of *Molech* appealing yet very problematic, with some trying to view *mlk* as sacrificial offering as a loan word lying behind the biblical references, but a loan word which has been misunderstood by the Hebrew Bible. This view is deemed appealing because it allows the understanding of *mlk* as a technical sacrificial term to stand, thereby preventing the contextual parallel between Punic *mlk* and biblical *Molech* from becoming a mere coincidence, whilst maintaining the traditional rendering of *Molech* as a divine name (Stavrakopoulou 2004:239). For Stavrakopoulou (2004:149) the issue then becomes more complicated in attempting to establish whether the pre-Masoretic, consonantal versions of the biblical texts understood the term "*Mlk*" as the name or title of a god. Römer (2012:5) on the other hand suggests a somewhat provocative solution, arguing that an original *melech* (king) was transformed into *Molech* (vowels for shame). Melech always appears as a title for Yahweh, and there were apparently human sacrifices that were offered, in "extreme situations", to *Yahweh-Melech* (Stavrakopoulou 2004:150). Levenson (1993:18) seems to account for the evidence better.

In Biblical Hebrew, one does not "give" or "hand over" an offering to a sacrifice, but to a god, and when Leviticus 20:5 forbids Israel to "whore after" *Molech*, this for Levenson (1993:18-19), is the language for apostasy to another god, not the language of improper worship of Yahweh. The word *Molech* appears three times in the verses preceding Leviticus 20:5 and verse 3 demonstrates, that *Molech* was understood as a type of sacrifice (Tatlock 2011:35, 38). "Any of the people of Israel, or the aliens who reside in Israel, who give any of their offspring as a *Molech*-offering shall be put to death" (Stavrakopoulou 2004:151). Although the MT understands the term to be the name of a deity distinct from Yahweh, it is unclear whether this was the original understanding of the term within the earliest history of some of the extra-biblical texts. Though many scholars such as Levenson (1993:19) analyse the evidence for this deity, it still seems to denote a type of sacrifice in Punic. The best conclusion is that the biblical *Molech* was a chthonic deity honoured through the sacrifice of little boys and girls. Therefore, the interdiction in Leviticus 18:21 only makes sense if one understands that

through the sacrifice to *Molech*, Yahweh's name is profaned, that means that offering sacrifices to him as Yahweh-*Melech* means profaning his name. It still remains uncertain as to whether these verses referred to a god, be it Yahweh or "*Molech*", or a type of sacrifice. Stavrakopoulou (2004:151) argues that there are indications that some of those who have had a hand in the shaping and transmission of the biblical material have deliberately sought to interpret the term as the name of a foreign god (Stavrakopoulou 2004:151).

According to Levenson (1993:19) an archaeologist excavating at Pozo Moro, found the remains of a stone tower that he dates to 500-490 BCE. This archaeologist seemed fairly certain that the cultural ambience of the Pozo Moro tower is closely related to that of the Punic that is neo-Phoenician (Noort 2002:10). Colonies located across the Mediterranean coast due north of biblical Israel, was the home of the Phoenicians states with which the kingdom of Israel and Judah had been nearly continuous interaction (cf. Stavrakopoulou 2004:239). For Levenson (1993:20), this interaction was not only commercial but also political and religious: Ahab, king of Israel, for example married Jezebel, daughter of the king of the Phoenician city-state Tyre (cf. Levenson 1993:20-21). Other evidence can be used to support of Stavrakopoulou's understanding of these sacrifices that they were probably presented to Yahweh. This view can be supported by the rediscovery in modern times of the Phoenician language which is probably the nearest thing there was to biblical Hebrew, and along with the commercial, political, and religious interaction the biblical contexts suggest that "Tophet" is the biblical name of a site at which children were burned as sacrifice. Yet Stavrakopoulou (2004:153) warns of the dangers of drawing conclusions regarding its etymology. Jeremiah 7 and 16, rename this place as "the valley of slaughter". Therefore, this offers an understanding that the *Molech*-practice is a ritual in which children, both sons and daughters, were sacrificed in fire in a cultic place known as Tophet in the valley of Ben Hinnom (Noort 2002:9). The primary emphasis of the biblical portrayal of this cult of child sacrifice thus falls upon the idea that it is a foreign practice. This, Stavrakopoulou (2004:154) believes is the perspective of Leviticus, which paints the "*Molech*" ritual as a defiling practice of the foreigners which leads to exile (18:21, 24), and as a practice which results in socio-religious expulsion from the community (20:2-5), and by

implication, from the land (20:22-24). In contrast, some scholars would “argue that these mute remains in Leviticus suggest that the children had died of natural causes and that the Urn testify to the Carthaginian funerary practices rather than to a cult of child sacrifice” (Levenson 1993:21). Archaeologists “counter that the actual contents of the urns tell a different and more horrific story, for in them they found usually not one but two children, one a new-born and the other of two to four years of age” (Levenson 1993:21; cf. Noort 2002:9). The core of their argument is that it is unlikely that a disease would attack “two youngest children from the same family in such a regular fashion” (Levenson 1993:21). Another argument against the funerary interpretation of the urn unearthed at Carthage is the nature of the inscriptions found on stelae there, more than a few of which deals with vows to gods made by the offerors. The key term is “*mlk ‘mr*” (the offering of a sheep), about which much controversy has escalated (Levenson 1993:22; Noort 2002:9-10). The practice of occasionally substituting a sheep for a child continued in the Punic world well into the Common Era, about 200 CE (Levenson 1993:22).

When the archaeologists dug up more urns in an area called the Tophet, they found charred bones of animals, this for them was prove enough that “the burned animals were intended as substitute sacrifices for children” (Levenson 1993:21). This substitution sounds familiar after this study’s inquiry on the discussion of Yahweh’s claim upon the first-born son in the Hebrew Bible (cf. Gen. 22:13; Exod. 12-13; Levenson 1993:21, 45). In Carthage, it seemed that “at any period, the lamb or kid could take the place of the child, but at no period was the parent obligated to make the substitute” (Levenson 1993:21):

This is striking because the situation in Genesis 22, where Abraham is allowed to sacrifice the ram instead of Isaac, but never commanded to do so. As late as Talmudic times, Jewish scholars could hold a very different view, imagining Abraham disappointed at the revocation of the command to sacrifice his beloved son and begging God to see parts of the ram’s anatomy as if it were the corresponding parts of Isaac.

In the same light, it can be imagined that Carthaginian fathers, thought they might have an option for a ram, would have proceeded with the sacrifice of his children, not out of hatred for them, but from the opposite motivation, that Levenson (1993:22) interprets as the desire to present the god with the most precious possible offering, just as we see in the example of Jephthah and Abraham. And so we should not be surprised that these archaeologists found that the substitution of the animal for the child declined over the periods in which they studied the Carthaginian Tophet (cf. Levenson 1993:22; Stavrakopoulou 2004:240).

It is striking however, that words about seeing predominate the narrative of the binding of Isaac. Abraham sees the site of the sacrifice from afar, then he announces to Isaac that “God will see to the sheep for his burnt offering” (v. 8), and indeed, later sees the ram caught in the thicket, so that he “named that Adonia-Yireh, whence the present saying, One the mount of the Lord there is vision” (v. 14). In agreement with Levenson (1993:23) though these etymologies are not scientific, they may well reflect the understanding of Moriah in Genesis 22. The very name of the land in which Abraham offers his sacrifice reflects the theme of vision that runs throughout the narrative. Abraham then built an altar at Shechem. Balaam reverses this order and builds “seven altars and sacrifices a bull and a ram on each in hope of provoking a theophany”, a hope soon realised (Numbers 23:1-4) (cf. Levenson 1993:23).

In the book of Jeremiah, however, we find Yahweh’s condemnation of the *Molech* practice which occurs within the explicit context of the Babylonian invasion and conquest (32:28-35) and a similar example can be found in the book of Deuteronomy 18:9-12. The implication of all these texts for Stavrakopoulou (2004:154) thus becomes plain: “if the Israelites imitate the practices of the nations, they too will be cast out of the land”. This cause-effect schema of land dispossession, which is central to the biblical ideology of separateness, is deliberately and emphatically demonstrated throughout the history of Israel and Judah set out in Kings, particularly 2 Kings 17 and 21, which details the exile-inducing cult crimes of the Northern Kingdom and king Manasseh, respectively. It becomes worth noting that the biblical portrayal of *Molech* practice as a foreign ritual is also evident elsewhere within the book of Kings. In a

condensed account of the cultic behaviour of these peoples (2 Kings 17:25-34), the Sepharvites are singled out in verse 31 as burning their children or sons “in the fire to the gods of Sepharvaim”, called Adrammelek and Anammelek (Stavrakopoulou 2004:154). In the next section, the study will move on to talk about sacrifice to other deities.

### 5.3 Sacrifice to other Deities, Dung-Gods, Demons, and the Dead

Scholars would agree that there are strong indications that traditions concerning other forms of child sacrifice were known and employed by the biblical writers (Hattingh & Meyer 2016:503). Jeremiah 19:4-6 seek to condemn child sacrifice as a foreign practice, and in doing so, employ language and details reminiscent of 32:35, and elsewhere associated with the “*Molech*” practice. The recipient of the sacrifices is named as Ba’al rather than “*Molech*” (Stavrakopoulou 2004:158). Heider, one of the scholars consulted by Stavrakopoulou (2004:159) observes this discrepancy particularly comparing this text with 32:35 in which the cult place of the fiery sacrifice is also described as the “high places of Ba’al in the valley of Ben Hinnom”, but here the MT names “*Molech*” as the divine recipient deity of the sacrifice. The confusion concerning the identity of the recipient deity is heightened further by the preceding verse, in which burning offerings to other gods seems to parallel the burning of children for Ba’al (Stavrakopoulou 2004:159). It would thus appear that there is considerable confusion in Jeremiah 19:4-6 concerning the identity of the gods to whom these sacrifices are offered. Heider then comes to the conclusion that *Molech* was the name of a god and not a sacrificial term as Eissfeldt had suggested (Hattingh & Meyer 2016:503). Jeremiah 7:31 also seems to infer that the sacrifice of children may have been understood as a practice dedicated to Yahweh, as the claim “which I did not command, nor did it come into my mind” might suggest, a statement repeated in 19:5 and 32:35. In Stavrakopoulou’s (2004:160-161) discussion of earlier scholars, Smelik remarks in favour of Heider, such a defensive claim is understandable only if it were that Yahweh had commanded this practice.

In view of these observations, it would thus appear that attempts in the book of Jeremiah to portray child sacrifice as a foreign practice are not as convincing as they may initially appear. (Stavrakopoulou 2004:161)



The graphic blood imagery is powerful and dominant metaphor in Ezekiel, most usually describing social and political crimes (Stavropoulou 2004:162). In chapters 16 and 23, the imagery symbolizes cultic deviance, and as such it appears within the context of child sacrifice but in chapter 16 it brings to the fore the characterization of child sacrifice as a defiling practice. Stavropoulou (2004:163) believes that it is most clearly spelt in Jeremiah 23:37-39 and argues that the metaphor is informed by the claim that the sacrificed children are Yahweh's own offspring, borne to him by his wives Oholah (Samaria) and Oholibah (Jerusalem), the wives' religious crimes are rendered not simply as prostitution (as in 16:20-21), but as adultery (23:37). She further argues that the interrelation of child sacrifice, blood, and adultery in chapter 16 and 23 is probably founded upon the perception that all three threaten the perpetuation of the bloodline, a key ideological concern evident throughout the Hebrew Bible, and of particular importance within the exilic setting of the book of Ezekiel (Stavropoulou 2004:164).

Turning to Psalm 106:34-39, the language of child sacrifice employed is explicit, for Stavropoulou (2004:166). The word Tophet is twice used for the practice (vv. 37 and 38), while the lethal nature of the ritual is given a heavy emphasis in the repetitious references to "blood" in verse 38. Yet the blood imagery also serves another purpose, for it seems to represent the cultic defilement, which contaminates both the land (v. 38) and the people themselves (v. 39). In Ezekiel 16:20 the word Tophet is used, similarly emphasizing the polluting nature of child sacrifice, however, the use of blood imagery here is made more complex by the inclusion of the biblical expression "innocent blood". This phrase Stavropoulou (2004:166) believes carries ethical connotations, for it tends to refer to the blood of a person wrongfully or violently killed or oppressed within a social or political context, and as such, it implies correlated biblical notion that the shedder of innocent blood incurs bloodguilt, which in turn demands vengeance and expiation. As tempting as it might be to locate the practice of child sacrifice at the Jerusalem Temple, the verbal sequence suggests that the transgressors immolated their sons prior to worshipping at the central shrine. The defilement of the temple resulted not from the practice of child sacrifice therein, but from the contamination of innocent blood which accompanied the worshippers when they entered the sanctuary (Tatlock 2011:38). In Psalm 106, child sacrifice is not only portrayed as a foreign cult crime, but

as social crime, carrying with it serious theological consequences for the wider community, as is made plain in the charge the people became unclean (v. 39) and came under foreign oppression (vs. 30-42) and were exiled (vs. 46-47) as a result (Stavrakopoulou 2004:167; Tatlock 2011:38). It also seems that the book of Jeremiah seeks to align child sacrifice and social transgression, for in 19:4-5 it is claimed that the people of Judah and Jerusalem have “filled this place with innocent blood and have kept building the high places of Baal to burn their sins in the fire” (Stavrakopoulou 2004:167). The phrase “innocent blood” is most usually associated with illegal and violent killing or oppression, but there is some debate concerning the appropriate interpretation of the phrase, for it is uncertain as to whether it refers to the cultic site of child sacrifice or a distant location, and hence a separate, social crime. The majority of the commentators appear to favour the latter opinion, with many allowing for the possibility that Tophet is intended here. Like the poet of Psalm 106, the writer of Jeremiah 19 is said to view the cult crime of child sacrifice as prompting both foreign domination (military oppression in 19:7) and social disaster (cannibalism in 19:9).

An important text contributing to the portrayal of child sacrifice is Isaiah 57:3-13, a lengthy but problematic poem which for Stavrakopoulou (2004:170) is primarily due to its difficult vocabulary-condemning the practice. It is clear to Stavrakopoulou (2004:176) that the book of Jeremiah’s over-emphatic denial that Yahweh ever commanded the sacrifice of children is futile in that despite the fact that all of these texts seek to portray child sacrifice as a foreign practice, they all speak of Yahweh’s people performing these sacrifices. The only biblical text which succeeds in portraying child sacrifice as a foreign practice occurs at the end of a narrative describing the Israelites, Judahite and Edomite war against Moab in 2 Kings 3:26-27 which describes King Mesha of Moab sacrificing his firstborn son (Levenson 1993:24). For Stavrakopoulou (2004:177) it is precisely because the practitioner is clearly foreign that the text may be seen to depict the sacrifice as a foreign ritual.

#### 5.4 Child sacrifice as Yahweh practice—the firstborn sacrifice

Even if it is accepted that there was legitimate child sacrifice in early Israel and that the status of Israel as God’s first-born son is a matter of high import in the Hebrew Bible,

it could still be argued but not to Israel after Jerusalem and Ezekiel waged war on child sacrifice about the turn of the sixth century BCE (Levenson 1993:43). Despite its repeated attempts to portray child sacrifice as a foreign practice alien to “Israel” and Yahweh, the Hebrew Bible contains a considerable volume of material that directly associates Yahweh with the sacrifice of children. In other biblical texts, not only is Yahweh clearly accepting the offerings, he is also portrayed as demanding these sacrifices (Stavrakopoulou 2004:179; see Bauks 2007:70). Bauks (2007:70) argues that “such a demand can only be understood within the framework of culture, which attempts to make sense of the experience of an infinite God by allowing him to” make infinite demands on man. The best-known biblical texts concerning child sacrifice are those with the donation of the firstborn of Yahweh, such as Genesis 22 among others (Tatlock 2011:37). For Finsterbusch (2007:87-88) one major source of “dispute is whether in the law in the Book of the Covenant can be understood as prescribing the sacrifice of the human first-born. One question which becomes central to the understanding of the laws of the first-born has not been satisfactorily settled, what exactly is meant by first-born”. The special status of the firstborn child is the theme which is echoed throughout the Hebrew Bible, with the human firstborn seen in a similar manner to that in which the animal firstborn was seen: as a potential sacrificial offering to Yahweh (Stavrakopoulou 2004:179). “Almost no consideration has been given to how the first-born sacrifices should be interpreted in a sense of a theory of sacrifice” (Finsterbusch 2007:88). It seems probable “that the first-born child would be an especially valuable sin offering in a specific situation” (Finsterbusch 2007:88).

Viewed from this perspective, Bauks (2007:71) argues that “the sacrifice of one’s own child represents the most significant sacrifice imaginable”. Such a sacrifice is superior even to the sacrifice of self, since the child symbolizes the continuity of a life limited by death. By means of his descendants, an individual is able to gain a kind of immortality. This is precisely the dimension that we see in Genesis 22. However, the account goes beyond the infinite demands made by God, for it appears at the same time that through his command God is destroying the very foundations of his work up to this point. The entire history of salvation would be lost with the sacrifice of Isaac, who is after all the progenitor of Israel (Finsterbusch 2007:90). Bauks (2007:71) notes that the

end of verse 5, in which Abraham tells the two servants to wait for the two of them “so that we may worship and then return to you,” does not simply imply an indecision concerning what will happen, a “white lie.” He rather points to elements of an indistinct trust in God, that God does not really desire the sacrifice of Isaac. Bauks (2007:71) concludes: It is thus possible to state that his obedience puts God himself to the test. However, if we focus too quickly on the substitution of a ram as a burnt offering in place of the son, we will be too easily satisfied. We will overlook the tension inherent in the account, a tension created precisely by the insertion of the theme of child sacrifice in the text. It is far too simple to side-line the theme of child sacrifice, since it is in this very practice, which seems so cruel to us, that the infinite requirements of the divine command and the infinite obedience of the human response are played out in the reality of lived experience. This is true of Genesis 22, as indeed it is of the whole account of Abraham’s dealings with God. It is my thesis that the divine command to Abraham to sacrifice his own son is neither simply a rhetorical device nor a profound misunderstanding on the part of Abraham. In Bauks’ (2007:71-72) opinion, the theme of child sacrifice in this text implies a theological reflection concerning the infinite within God, without which no explanation of the narrative paradox is possible. Before we explore further this theological reflection, it is appropriate to examine the contexts in which the theme appears elsewhere in the Bible.

Other texts which are considered to be most striking are those of Judges 11 and Exodus 22:28-29 which claim that both human and animal firstborn are to be donated to Yahweh and is loaded with sacrificial implications. We see that both animals and humans are distinguished but not differentiated (Stavropoulou 2004:180). Stavropoulou (2004:180) refers to Fishbane who comments that there is no textual reason for assimilating Exodus 22:28-29 to those articulations of the law where redemption by compensation is envisaged and specified (also Tatlock 2011:36). These verses are noted by Finsterbusch (2007:91) as the “oldest preserved law referring to first-born in the Book of the Covenant”. This for Stavropoulou (2004:181) may suggest that it reflects a law demanding the sacrifice of firstborn to Yahweh. Finsterbusch (2007:91) goes further to attest that the generalized statement that all firstborns, human and animals are to be donated to Yahweh is not made explicit, though it

is clear that the human and animal firstborn are to be treated exactly the same way. This is sharply defined in Exodus 13:1-2, in which Yahweh says to Moses, “consecrate to me the firstborn, whatever is the first-birth of every womb among the Israelites, of human and animal, is mine” (Finsterbusch 2007:100). In this text we see that Yahweh demands the donation of human and animal firstborn and adds that the human child is to be redeemed or rescued (Tatlock 2011:36). However, the manner in which this redemption is to be achieved is not specified and this is curious for Stavrakopoulou (2004:181) given that both the texts instruct that the firstborn of a donkey is to be redeemed either with a sheep or by having its neck broken. Finsterbusch (2007:92) argues that it is the Israelite males who are addressed here and that it is not explicitly instructed what to do should the first-born be a girl, which she believes would not apply. Finsterbusch (2007:93) mentions that the noun “*bekhor*” which in many cases is translated as “male first-born that is the first child of a woman or a man, if it is a son”. But no such specification is made for the redemption of the human firstborn (Tatlock 2011:38). Verses 15-16 specify that the human firstborn and the firstborn of unclean animals are to be redeemed financially. This stands in contrast to Numbers 3:12-12 and 8:16-19, which do not employ the term that is translated as firstborn, but do claim that Yahweh has “taken the Levites in place of all human firstborn” (Tatlock 2011:38).

Stavrakopoulou (2004:182) and Finsterbusch (2007:93-95) discern two literary layers in Exodus 22:28-29, arguing that the unqualified law of the firstborn is a formulation older than the qualified law and proposes that it would appear that verse 29a is a secondary extension to this text, and that the phrase “Seven days he will remain with his mother...on the eighth you will give him to me” actually refers back to the human firstborn in verse 28b (Levenson 1993:44). Finsterbusch (2007:94) argues that the singular pronoun in verse 29a are entirely appropriate in referring to the animal firstborn, for it is the firstborn animal of each oxen and sheep which is the subject of the legislation, not the oxen and sheep themselves. Moreover, Stavrakopoulou (2004:183) states that underlying Fishbane’s proposal appears to be an assumption that an unqualified law specifying the dedication of the human and animal firstborn to Yahweh would necessarily be an older formulation than regulations allowing for the redemption of the human firstborn. As Van Seters suggests, the biblical law dealing

with the dedication of the human and animal firstborn, and the possibility of their redemption, may reflect distinct traditions; it may also be that some of Fishbane's "extended" laws reflect a process of textual harmonization, rather than secondary theological correction. Finsterbusch (2007:94) alludes to the story of Hannah, looking at the meaning of "*natan*" as referring to dedicating, such as Hannah gave "her son, Samuel to Eli the Priest" (1 Samuel 1:11), as well as redeeming of the first-born of Israel by the Levites. In spite of these observations, Stavrakopoulou (2004:183) still opines that the language of the biblical material is ambiguous, and open to a variety of interpretations, as the use of "dedicate" or "consecrate", in Exodus 13:2 illustrates (Cf. Levenson 1993:44; Propp 2006:262-272).

For Stavrakopoulou (2004:100) Numbers 18:15-18 declares that "every firstborn of all kinds which is offered to Yahweh, human and animal, will be yours; however, you must surely redeem the human male" (Stavrakopoulou (2004:183). In other words, verse 15 "lays down that every first-born of the womb of human and animal, which the Israelites offer to Yahweh, shall belong to Aaron or the Aaronic priests" (Finsterbusch 2007:100). From a point of source criticism, these verses cannot be considered as homogenous. It is thus possible that the term "firstborn" in some of the texts might be taken in an optional sense, just as it appears to be in Exodus 13:13 and 34:20, in which allowance is made for alternative means of dealing with "the firstborn of a donkey; the firstborn of a donkey you may redeem for a sheep, or if you will not redeem it, you shall break its neck" (34:20) (Stavrakopoulou 2004:183). Therefore, the law formulated in the scope of P (Priestly source of the Pentateuch) "presupposes that there was again a functioning temple cult" (Noort 2002:9).

Exodus 12-13, thus provides definitive proof of the failure of the sort of sacrificial reform represented by the Holiness Code, Deuteronomy, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel: even though the practice of sacrificing the first-born son was no longer acceptable, the accompanying myth survived and continued to influence the nature of religious practice (Levenson 1993:45). "Numbers 18:15-18 leaves open what occasions the first-born of human and animal or their substitutes are to be presented to Yahweh" (Finsterbusch 2007:102). It has not been noticed that these documents "also share the omission of any

reference to the slaying of the Egyptian first-born and the apotropaic effect of the blood of the paschal lamb daubed on the doorposts and lintels of the Israelites houses on the night of the first Passover” (Finsterbusch 2007:102). This for Levenson (1993:44-45) suggests that the “revolution” in which these sources participated aimed not simply at the substitution of animals for the first-born sons, but at the elimination of the very idea that God has a special claim upon the first-born son that had to be honoured in the cult. It is “after all an aspect that recalls *Molech* and the monster on the Pozo Moro Tower more than the gracious and delivering God of the exodus”, and yet the very homage of this dark side of the Deity (Levenson 1993:46).

It seems apparent that there were some people in Israel or Judah who were convinced of the premise that Yahweh desired human sacrifice and in order to counter that position, the author of Ezekiel asserts that Yahweh gave those orders as a punishment (Finsterbusch 2007:90; Römer 2012:6). For Stavropoulou (2004:185) Ezekiel makes no mention of redemption provisions, yet it does offer the closest expression of an ethical condemnation of child sacrifice in the Hebrew Bible. The text undermines the presentation of child sacrifice elsewhere in the book, for whilst the practice is presented in a negative light, Yahweh remains the deity demanding the sacrifice of children, accordingly these verses conflict with the portrayal of the practice of the ritual performed in honour of the foreign “dung-gods” in Ezekiel 16:20-21,36; 20:31; 23:37-39, these verses for Levenson (1993:43) suggest that the gift of the first-born was no better than the presentation of children to *Molech* (Levenson 1993:46). This uncompromising prophetic opposition is almost clearly related to the position of Deuteronomy, which is usually dated to the end of the seventh century (Levenson 1993:43). Moreover, this stands in sharp contrast to Jeremiah 7:31; 19:5 and 32:35, in which the notion that Yahweh commanded child sacrifice is repeatedly rejected (Levenson 1993:43). Römer (2012:6) argues that Genesis 22 functions in a similar way with Ezekiel 20, God only asked Abraham to sacrifice his son to test him, since the sacrifice turned out to be that of an animal. As a result, Ezekiel 20 and Genesis 22 are texts from the late Babylonian or early Persian period that tried, in the context of nascent Judaism, to eradicate the idea that Yahweh would need child sacrifice (Römer 2012:6).

Therefore, the sacrifice of the first-born or of the substitute is understood in all the laws of the Torah without doubt as an offering to Yahweh and at the same time, the text does not indicate that the offerings have the function of influencing Yahweh, for example to make him gracious or forgiving (Finsterbusch 2007: 92, 97). Also, the texts reveal no indication that the sacrifices are an expression of thankfulness or reverence to God as the giver of life (Finsterbusch 2007: 107). But more and more scholars are saying that the sacrifice of children or first-born probably did happen at some stage in ancient Israel. “Hence, Ezekiel 20 offers the possibility that bad, deadly laws was connected with child sacrifice are promulgated by Yahweh himself, this conclusion is rejected by Deuteronomistic Jeremiah” (Noort 2002:8). Levenson (1993:46) comments that the three-fold denial that Yahweh ever commanded the practice of child sacrifice suggests that the prophet doth too much. In P theology, it seems that the Passover was not only “a story of Yahweh’s victory over Pharaoh”, but is also a story of Yahweh’s victory over himself, and it stands as a continual reminder of just how narrow that victory was: but for the blood of the lamb, the Israelites would have suffered the same catastrophe as the Egyptians (Levenson 1993:46). Therefore it suffices to conclude that these texts do reflect the view that parents did sacrifice their children to Yahweh (Stavrakopoulou 2004:189).

### 5.5 Yahweh and child sacrifice

From reading Isaiah 30:27-30, the focus upon Yahweh’s lips, tongue and breath, set in direct relation to a consuming fire seems to allude to Yahweh’s devouring of the sacrifice, recalling Ezekiel 16:20-21 and 23:37, which refers to the recipient deity eating sacrificed children. For scholars like Day and Heider the imaging of Assyria as the sacrificial victim of Yahweh’s “Tophet” creates a powerful polemic against the might of Assyria, here portrayed as a helpless baby (Stavrakopoulou 2004:203). It would appear that the Hebrew Bible is brimming with reference to child sacrifice, many of which this rite negatively as a “foreign” practice outlawed by Yahweh. However, having examined these texts, it has become clear that the majority associate Yahweh with child sacrifice, both explicitly—such as Aqedah, the story of Jephthah’s daughter, the firstborn laws, Ezekiel’s “devastating” assertion, and the Jericho sacrifices and



implicitly, such as the Levitical prohibition of 20:3 and Jeremiah's overly insistent denials (Stavrakopoulou 2004:205).

## 5.6 Saddy as a God of child sacrifice

According to Levenson (1993:32) Philo of Byblos identified the deity who sacrificed his only begotten son, with the god El (E source). In the texts discovered at ancient Ugarit, along the Syrian coast, El appears as the father of the gods, the "Creator of Creatures" and "father of man" an angelic patriarch who is the "Eternal King" and a figure of boundless wisdom. Though we find nothing in the Ugaritic texts of *yadid*, we do see El defined as the father of Baal. Noort (2002:10) adds that the Ugaritic *mlk* does not appear in the offering lists and that it did not receive any offerings at all. "*Mlk* must have disappeared at the beginning of the first millennium" The biblical stories that tell of the origins of the people of God themselves should reflect an old Canaanite myth will surprise only those who fail to recognise the continuities of El and Yahweh, God of Israel (Levenson 1993:34). "El Shaddai is rarely if ever used in the Bible as the proper name of a non-Israelite, Canaanite deity in the full consciousness of a distinction between El and Yahweh, god of Israel" (Levenson 1993:34). Instead El Shaddai in biblical tradition is often used simply as an alternative name of Yahweh. To say that El lives on in the God of Israel is to understate the import of the monotheizing and historicizing trends in biblical religion. But to say that he is in radical discontinuity with the biblical Deity is to miss the affinities of this side of El with important features of biblical law and narrative (Levenson 1993:34). Stavrakopoulou (2004:281) agrees that the god El Saddy is inextricably bound up with the ancestors of Israel, and is explicitly identified with Yahweh in Exodus 6:2-3: "I am Yahweh. I appear to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as El Saddy, but by my name Yahweh I did not make myself known to them". Significantly, it is "El Saddy" who establishes the covenant with the great ancestor Abram in Genesis 17 at the very heart of this narrative is the covenant of circumcision between "El Saddy" and the newly named Abraham, which results in the blessing of perpetual fertility for Abraham and his descendants. The close affiliation of child sacrifice and circumcision in the Hebrew Bible, described is in view in Genesis 17, as the blessing within this circumcision narrative foreshadows the divine blessing

prompted by Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son in Genesis 22 (Stavrakopoulou 2004:282). Furthermore, the location of El Sadday at the centre of this covenant of circumcision implicitly associates this god with both child sacrifices, an association attested of the "sadday" in Psalm 106 and the *sdyn* of the Deir 'Alla text. The stories of Genesis 17 and 22 are for Stavrakopoulou (2004:282) suggestive of the important role of the ancestors within biblical and non-biblical texts explored here. Her main argument is that the Deir 'Alla texts describe the sacrifice of a child, in an attempt to avert the earthly darkness decreed by the *sdyn*. It is also increasingly agreed that the biblical term "sadday" are to be identified with the *sdyn* of Deir 'Alla. From the above it is thus also important to note that this section does not fully disguise the relationship between the tradition of child sacrifice that the biblical ideology has with the sacrifice of children to the Sadday-god(s) (Stavrakopoulou 2004:282).

### 5.7 Child sacrifice in Judah

The lack of direct archaeological evidence for the practice in Judah renders the investigation dependent upon a careful, critical reading of the biblical texts in light of the non-biblical evidence (Stavrakopoulou 2004:283). "Though the Hebrew Bible portrays child sacrifice as a foreign practice, several texts indicate that it was a native element of Judahite deity-worship" (Noort 2002:11). As many as three possible cults of child sacrifice may be located within the Hebrew Bible: the sacrifice of the firstborn to Yahweh; the fiery *mlk* sacrifice of children to "Yahweh in Jerusalem; and the sacrifice of children to the Sydn" (Stavrakopoulou 2004:283).

Of the three possible causes of child sacrifice tentatively identified within this discussion; the firstborn sacrifice is the most difficult to divorce from the biblical texts, given that is difficult to locate within archaeological record. In seeking to discern a more precise historical context for these biblical texts relating to the sacrifice of the firstborn, many scholars maintain the conventional view that the sacrifice of the human firstborn was an ancient practice gradually usurped by the sacrifice of an animal as a substitute. Those supporting this interpretation tend to assign Exodus 22:28-29 to a very early period within the religious history of Yahweh-worship, describing it as an archaic precept preserved at an early stage within the so-called Covenant code, which itself

tends to be given a correspondingly ancient provenance (Stavrakopoulou 2004:284). Römer (2012:5) points out, it may be that the sacrifice of the firstborn animals did not replace the sacrifice of the human victim, but rather co-existed alongside the sacrifice of the human firstborn, just as appears to have been to the case in the Phoenician and Punic world's (also Noort 2002:10; Stavrakopoulou 2004:284). This interpretation of the laws of the firstborn animal counters the conventional criticism of those unable to comprehend the possibility of the firstborn sacrifice could be carried out during the monarchic and early post-monarchic period of Yahweh-worship, a point of view exemplified by de Vaux, who asserts, "that it would indeed be absurd to suppose that there could have been in Israel or among any other people, at any moment of their history", a constant general law, compelling the suppression of the firstborn, who are the hope of the race (Stavrakopoulou 2004:285). Stavrakopoulou (2004:285) thinks that De Vaux is correct in suggesting that the common and widespread sacrifice of the human or animal firstborn would give families the option of sacrificing either a firstborn child or an animal, presumably depending upon the circumstances of the extended family. The close biblical association of circumcision and the firstborn sacrifice are also suggestive of a fertility context for the sacrifice, as argued above. Thus although the biblical texts cannot offer historically accurate information about the purpose of the firstborn sacrifice, it is possible that it was bound up with the hope of continued fertility. As Ackerman has shown in Stavrakopoulou (2004:286) the Hebrew Bible resonates with stories attributing human fertility and infertility to Yahweh. Stavrakopoulou (2004:286) argues that the idea that if Yahweh fills the womb, then Yahweh has a particular claim on what comes forth. Though admittedly speculative, it is possible that some parents sacrificed their firstborn child to Yahweh in the hope that the deity would accept their most precious offering and bless them with further children (Levenson 1993:22). It is for Stavrakopoulou (2004:287) the threat of domestic crisis or military emergency is frequently offered as an alternative and more reliable interpretation accounting for the sacrifice of the firstborn. The biblical story of King Mesha's sacrifice of his firstborn son and heir to stave military defeat (2 Kings 3:26-27) complies with this interpretation. Yet the historical reliability of this story is to be seriously doubted, given its very nature as a biblical text. However, an Egyptian relief probably dating to the

reign of Merneptah may, according to Stavrakopoulou (2004:287) depict the sacrifice of child sacrifice during the siege of Ashkelon. The relief depicts the besieged inhabitants of the town holding their arms aloft to the sky. A bearded figure raises with his left hand an incense burner, his open-palmed right hand held up in a pose intriguingly reminiscent of the Hand motif associated with child sacrifice in the Phoenician and Punic world's (Stavrakopoulou 2004:288). Stavrakopoulou (2004:288) continues to pen that the *mlk* sacrifice offers a wealth of archaeological, inscriptional and iconographic data combines to reveal fairly detailed picture of this practice: young children, usually babies, were burned in fire as a sacrifice to the primary deities of the community; their remains were collected in an urn and buried in a sacred precinct, the burial place often marked with a stela, inscribed with iconographic motifs or a public declaration (Noort 2002:12). This detailed picture also allows for the probability that Judahite people of the monarchic and post-monarchic periods at least knew something of the practice (Stavrakopoulou 2004:288).

Stavrakopoulou (2004:289) in attempting to determine the function of the *mlk* sacrifice in Judah, the only evidence is that offered by the biblical texts and the Phoenician and Punic material. There is however, a tendency among scholars to suggest that this type of sacrifice was offered as a response to a military crisis. This view Stavrakopoulou (2004:289) argues is clearly influenced by classical and patristic accounts of the Phoenician practice as an emergency cult. The view is further encouraged by the biblical association of this sacrifice with Ahaz (2 Kings 16:3) and Manasseh (21:6), leading to the speculative conclusion that the threat of military destruction during their reigns, in the form of the so-called Syro-Ephraimite war (Ahaz) aftermath of the Assyrian subjugation of Judah (Manasseh), prompted kings to sacrifice their sons. However, there is no textual evidence to support the notion that the Judahite *mlk* sacrifice was an emergency cult practiced in times of military threat or national crisis. Rather, the biblical text does not offer any explanation as to the purpose of the sacrifice. Levenson, in Stavrakopoulou (2004:291) argues that the Hebrew epithet translated as “beloved” is applied to Benjamin because he is the precious young son of his father’s old age, just as Isaac (Gen. 22:2) and Joseph (Gen. 37:3;44:20) are the favourites because they are the sons of their father’s old age. In this sense then, the high socio-religious value of the

beloved son is not necessarily strikingly dependent upon his status as a firstborn of either his mother or father. By God asking Abraham for his only son, Isaac is problematic because Abraham had two sons, Isaac and Ishmael. The singling out of Isaac can be explained by the context offered in chapters 20-22, offered above in chapter 3. However, Levenson demonstrates that their “only-begotten” and “beloved” could be equated. The overwhelming association of the *mlk* practice with the Jerusalem cult of Yahweh throughout the Hebrew Bible, in spite of biblical attempts to instance Yahweh from all forms of child sacrifice, is highly suggestive of the cult’s historical existence within the royal cult in monarchic Judah (Stavropoulou 2004:293). The reigns of Ahaz and Manasseh account of the destruction of the “Tophet” in the story of Josiah’s reform (23:10) also implies that the practice was understood to be part of the royal cult. In seeking to discern the likely function of the *mlk* sacrifice in Judah, Stavropoulou (2004:194), finds it plausible to describe that practice as a royal sacrifice offered by the king within the royal Yahweh cult of Jerusalem. A further cult of child sacrifice which was probably known in Judah is that of the sacrifice to the Saddy god(s).

From the summary of Stavropoulou it becomes clear that the only problem is that these texts are not placed in the canon to create social problems, but are there to challenge certain traditions that were previously deemed as normal. It asks its reader how far they are willing to go to obtain what is pleasing to them and to guard our tongues because they can get us into trouble. The other difference is that in these Ancient Near East sacrifices, people used their own children and thus never had a target victim who fitted certain skin requirements. Thus, their claim that God chooses the victim remains questionable.

## Chapter 6: Final remarks

This study started by outlining the similarities between the world of the OT and that of the African people, which served as good grounds to conduct a comparison between the ritual nature of the two contexts. It was expected that many similarities would emerge since the world of the OT shared many common grounds with the world of the Africans, at least those who are still in contact with the African religions and cultures.

In chapter 2, it was shown that the main motive of *muti* rituals is the desire to gain favour and to a great extent create harmony with the community and environment. In the past, *muti* rituals were only performed to gain favour and strengthen by the kings, chiefs and warriors in preparation for war. In more recent time, the motive has moved on to be great wealth, so much that one is willing to even kill, directly or indirectly, to realise this goal sooner. Anyone can become a victim; it just depends on the perpetrators victim profile. It was also discovered that the perpetrators are mostly men from a poor financial background, wanting to get out of the poor state. In chapter 3, the study showed that Abraham understood Isaac to be the object of the sacrifice that was demanded by Yahweh and that Jephthah's vow serves as proof that he believed human sacrifice to be an acceptable sacrifice. Both Abraham the Patriarch and Jephthah the Judge have to sacrifice their only child as the law requires. In Jephthah's case, the sacrifice was a result of the vow he made when asking for God's favour to win the battle; he is the one who tests God. In Genesis 22, Isaac is in the dark as to what will happen to him; this is a conversation that takes between Abraham and God.

In chapter 4, it was shown that the primary goal of sacrifice has always been communal and mystical and was only with the influence of power and cultural development that sacrifice came to be thought of as a gift to god (Anderson 1992:871). It was also highlighted that within the OT there are five types of sacrifices as outlined in the Levitical materials; burnt-offering, sin-offering, guilt-offering, peace-offering and cereal offering, this study focus on the burnt-offering. It was also established that the social meaning of rituals can change over time, and is precisely why we need to know much about the context of rituals as we can if we are to rightly interpret them. In chapter

5, this study argued that what Abraham and Jephthah did was not an unusual thing since it was common for fathers to proceed with the sacrifice of his child from a place of offering to a deity, offering the most precious possession they have. Although prophets such as Jeremiah and Ezekiel went on to speak against this practice saying that those who offer their children in this manner will be cast from the land, people still continued doing the practices that they were familiar with.

This study has indeed answered the posed question by showing that there are some differences and similarities between *muti* rituals and the biblical portrayal of child sacrifice. The first difference is that in biblical sacrifices, the sacrifices are offered to a deity while in *muti* rituals they are offered to the ancestors who serve as mediators between God and the offeror (Beyers and Mphahlele 2009:38). *Inyangas* and *sangomas* as diviners assist in this regard since they can communicate with the ancestors. Secondly, the practice of *muti* murders is often times distinct, with the victim's body found mutilated and discovered in the bushes near a river (Bevan 2006:1 of 1), in biblical texts and tradition, the remains of the sacrifice are found on an altar or inside a tomb. Thirdly, Abraham is presented as being ready to sacrifice his own son, this is at times the case for *muti* rituals, but the victim needs not be related to the one performing or requesting the sacrifice (see Mbanjwa 2005:1 of 1; Bevan 2006:1 of 1; and Hosken 2010: 1 of 1). The one to be sacrificed is chosen based on them meeting the set requirements; blood relation is not always one of them.

The similarities would be that both rituals see sacrifice as a communion between God (Yahweh) /the ancestors and the living and stress the importance of commensality in the treatment and cooking/burning of the sacrifice (Hasu 2009:198). Secondly, the victim in both rituals is to be without blemish, and should meet all the requirements for the sacrifice; in Genesis 22 Isaac just like the victims in *muti* rituals is not aware that he is the chosen victim until the last minute. Thirdly, a blessing of continuity is bestowed on the offerer, as luck in business, fertility, or the possession of land. The victim is sacrificed to propitiate a deity or ancestor. Finally, in *muti* rituals "the sacrificial lamb must be alive when the body parts are cut off. He must also cry, as this increases the power of the *muti*" (Seale 2005:1 of 2). From Genesis 22 it also seems probable that

there was a belief that the offered sacrifice had to be alive when it was sacrificed. If this were not the case, Abraham would have killed Isaac first before offering him to Yahweh.



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