POSSIBLE ALLUSIONS TO ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN SOLAR MYTHOLOGY IN QOHELET

A COMPREHENSIVE ENQUIRY

BY

JACOBUS WILHELM GERICKE

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE DOCTOR OF LITERATURE (DLITT) IN SEMITIC LANGUAGES AT THE DEPARTMENT OF ANCIENT LANGUAGES IN THE FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

SUPERVISOR: PROFESSOR G.T.M. PRINSLOO

PRETORIA

OCTOBER 2002
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Countless individuals have crossed my path and have contributed in some way to the development of my academic career. Unfortunately, not everyone can be given recognition here. While I am grateful to everyone, I dedicate this study to the following people:

My father, George. You were always willing to encourage and assist me in my attempts to come to terms with this phenomenon we call “life”. Without your love and support I would never have made it this far. Thank you for everything.

My mother, Ezette. Thank you for all those little things one fails to appreciate until they are no longer available. Thank you for all you have done to make this journey through life a little more bearable.

My supervisor, Professor Gert Prinsloo. Thank you for being there, for caring, for listening, for guidance and for allowing me to study under your supervision. Thank you for making my final years as an (official) student of yours a memory that I shall always cherish. The last nine years (since BA !!) have been long and both of us have had our share of obstacles to overcome. I am honoured and thankful to have shared them with you. For what it is worth, your love for the Old Testament and Semitics have terminally infected me. The withdrawal symptoms have started already.

Professor James Crenshaw. Though we have never met, I have been a “fan” of your publications since I was first introduced to OT wisdom literature during undergraduate studies. The way your own personal spirituality is expressed amidst your impeccable research has been a great source of inspiration for me. I for one shall think of you as the foremost scholar in the field of OT wisdom during the 20th century. Gratitude is mixed with awe and maybe a little jealousy. Thank you for finding the time to act as an external when I am sure you could have declined for very good reasons. I hope you won’t be disappointed.

Professor (Sakkie) Spangenberg. Thank you for agreeing to act as an external. Your expertise on Qohelet has impressed me since I first became acquainted with studies on this fascinating OT text. For what it’s worth, your contributions in educating the general public on the findings of biblical criticism are much appreciated.

My fellow students, Bennie du Toit and Gerda de Villiers. Good luck with your own dissertations.

God, the Creator. Thank you, for the gift of life.
CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS........................................................................................................1

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

1.1 IDENTIFICATION OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM: ..........................................................3
  1.1.1 Repetition and significance of the sun imagery in Qohelet.................................3
  1.1.2 The problem of ambiguity.......................................................................................8

1.2 TRADITIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE FUNCTION OF THE PHRASE "הֵATH הָשָׁמֶשׁ"
  IN QOHELET..................................................................................................................9
  1.2.1 Introduction............................................................................................................9
  1.2.2 The conservative interpretation: restrictive and apologetical........................10
  1.2.3 The critical interpretation: inclusive and geographical / existential..............10

1.3 PROBLEMS WITH POPULAR CONTEMPORARY INTERPRETATIONS OF THE
  PHRASE "הֵATH הָשָׁמֶשׁ" IN QOHELET.............................................................................10
  1.3.1 The conservative interpretation.............................................................................10
  1.3.2 The critical interpretation......................................................................................11
  1.3.3 Summary of the research problem........................................................................11

1.4 THE HYPOTHESIS..........................................................................................................12

1.5 METHODOLOGY...........................................................................................................12

1.6 OBJECTIVES................................................................................................................13

1.7 FINAL INTRODUCTORY REMARKS...........................................................................13

PART I
CHAPTER 2
METATEXTUAL JUSTIFICATION I

2.1 OBSERVATIONS ON THE LACK OF CONSENSUS REGARDING SOME BASIC
  INTERPRETATIVE ISSUES IN QOHELET.........................................................................15
  2.1.1 Authorship.............................................................................................................15
  2.1.2 Location................................................................................................................17
CHAPTER 3

INTRATEXTUAL JUSTIFICATION I

3.1 INTRODUCTION ........................................................................................................ 37

3.2 THE FREQUENCY OF S.I. IN QOHELET ................................................................. 37
   3.2.1 Introduction ............................................................................................................. 37
   3.2.2 The distribution of Q.S.I. ...................................................................................... 38
   3.2.3 A concordance of Q.S.I. ......................................................................................... 38

3.3 IMPLICIT SUN IMAGERY (I.S.I.) .................................................................................. 43

3.4 POSSIBLE FUNCTIONS OF REPETITION AS MANIFESTED IN Q.S.I. ................... 45
   3.4.1 To remind .................................................................................................................. 46
   3.4.2 To emphasise ............................................................................................................. 46
   3.4.3 To include ................................................................................................................ 46
   3.4.4 To focus attention ..................................................................................................... 46
   3.4.5 To indicate significance ............................................................................................ 46
   3.4.6 To establish themes / motifs .................................................................................... 47
   3.4.7 To designate ambiguity ............................................................................................ 47
   3.4.8 To imply allusion ..................................................................................................... 48
   3.4.9 To signal wordplay .................................................................................................. 48
   3.4.10 To provide qualification .......................................................................................... 49
   3.4.11 To assist in contextualisation .................................................................................. 49
   3.4.12 To elucidate other literary devices .......................................................................... 49
   3.4.13 To link main topics and disparate ideas ................................................................. 50
   3.4.14 To facilitate structural markers .............................................................................. 50
3.5 THE RELATION OF Q.S.I. TO IMPORTANT THEMES IN THE BOOK

3.5.1 Introduction ........................................................................... 50
3.5.2 The intratextual relation ......................................................... 51
3.5.3 The intertextual relation ......................................................... 52

3.6 THE RELATION OF Q.S.I. TO THE CLAIM THAT ALL IS "..."... 53

3.7 THE RELATION OF Q.S.I. TO THE STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK ... 54

3.8 THE REFERENCE AND MEANING OF THE PHRASE “..."... 55

3.8.1 Alleged parallels to the phrase “...” ...................................... 55
3.8.1.1 Parallels to “...” in Qohelet ............................................. 55
3.8.1.2 Alleged parallels to the phrase “...” elsewhere in the Old Testament ........................................ 56
3.8.1.3 Alleged extra Biblical parallels to the phrase “...” ............... 57
3.8.1.4 Alleged parallels to “...” in contemporary speech ............... 58

3.8.2 Unconsidered alternative referential possibilities to Q.S.I. ....... 59
3.8.2.1 The problem of possible ambiguity .................................. 59

3.11 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS ........................................ 61

CHAPTER 4

METATEXTUAL JUSTIFICATION II

4.1 PURPOSE OF THIS CHAPTER ................................................ 63
4.2 READING THE OT TODAY ..................................................... 63
4.3 THE PROBLEM OF COMMON KNOWLEDGE ............................ 64
4.4 REFERENTIAL POSSIBILITIES ............................................. 65
4.5 BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE ............................................. 66
4.6 ASSOCIATIVE MEANING ..................................................... 66
4.7 RECOGNISING ALLUSIONS ................................................ 67
4.8 RECOGNISING POLEMICS ................................................ 67
4.9 RECOGNISING AMBIGUITY ............................................... 68
4.10 POSSIBLE IMPLICATIONS OF THESE METATEXTUAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE INTERPRETATION OF Q.S.I. ... 68
4.11 CONCLUSION: THE LEGITIMACY OF EXPLORING ALTERNATIVE REFERENTIAL POSSIBILITIES FOR Q.S.I. .............................................................. 71

CHAPTER 5
INTERTEXTUAL JUSTIFICATION I

5.1 INTRODUCTION ..................................................................................................................... 72

5.2 QOHELET AND THE ANE BACKGROUND – ANOTHER CONTROVERSIAL ISSUE ........................................................................................................ 72

5.3 POSSIBLE MESOPOTAMIAN INFLUENCE ........................................................................ 73
  5.3.1 Mesopotamian solar mythology .................................................................................. 73

5.4 POSSIBLE EGYPTIAN INFLUENCE .............................................................................. 76
  5.4.1 Egyptian solar mythology ......................................................................................... 76

5.5 POSSIBLE GREEK INFLUENCE.................................................................................. 80
  5.5.1 Greek solar mythology ............................................................................................. 82

5.6 SUN WORSHIP IN PERSIA ......................................................................................... 84

5.7 SUN WORSHIP IN CANAAN ....................................................................................... 86

5.8 SOLAR MYTHOLOGY AND WISDOM – UNRECOGNISED COMMON INTERESTS ............................................................................................ 88

5.9 SOLAR MYTHOLOGY VS. SOLAR SYMBOLISM ................................................................. 91

5.10 THE QUESTION OF INTENTIONALITY ....................................................................... 92

5.11 CONCLUSIONS ............................................................................................................... 94

CHAPTER 6
INTERTEXTUAL JUSTIFICATION II

6.1 INTRODUCTION ..................................................................................................................... 96

6.2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE INDICATIVE OF OT PEOPLE'S FAMILIARITY WITH SOLAR MYTHOLOGY ................................................................. 98
  6.2.1 Physical artefacts ....................................................................................................... 99
  6.2.2 The solar orientation of cultic structures .................................................................. 99
6.2.3 Yahwistic personal names with possible solar elements from epigraphic sources

6.3 BIBLICAL EVIDENCE INDICATIVE OF OT PEOPLE'S FAMILIARITY WITH SOLAR MYTHOLOGY

6.3.1 Personal names with solar elements

6.3.2 Place names with solar elements

6.3.3 A discussion of selected texts possibly indicative of solar elements

6.3.3.1 Genesis 1:3-5, 14-18 The sun, creation and time

6.3.3.2 Exodus 20:2 The first commandment and sun worship

6.3.3.3 Deuteronomy 4:19 A prohibition against sun worship

6.3.3.4 Deuteronomy 17:3 The death penalty for sun worship

6.3.3.5 Joshua 10:12-14 Joshua addressing the sun god?

6.3.3.6 Judges 1:33-35 Living amongst sun worshipers

6.3.3.7 2 Samuel 12:11-12 The all-seeing sun who demands justice

6.3.3.8 1 Kings 8 Solomon and solar theology

6.3.3.9 2 Kings 23:12 Sun worship during the latter days of the Judean monarchy

6.3.3.10 Jeremiah 8:1-3 More polemics against sun worship

6.3.3.11 Ezekiel 8:16-18 Mesopotamian solar mythology in the cult of Yahweh

6.3.3.12 Malachi 3:20 The sun of righteousness with healing in its wings

6.3.3.13 Psalm 19 The sun and the law

6.3.3.14 Scholars' recognition of allusions to solar mythology in Ecclesiastes 1:5

6.3.3.15 Other solar elements in the Old Testament

6.4 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

PART 1 SUMMARY

PART 2
CHAPTER 7
INTRATEXTUAL JUSTIFICATION II

7.1 INTRODUCTION

7.2 A SELECTION OF THEMES COMBINED WITH Q.S.I. WHICH POSSIBLY ALLUDE TO ANE SOLAR MYTHOLOGY / SYMBOLISM

7.2.1 The motto and thematic statement of the book in 1:2 – 3
7.2.2 References to “והרדת השמש” apart from the phrase “והרדת השמש” .................................. 149
  7.2.2.1 והרדת השמש in 1: 5. ................................................................. 149
  7.2.2.2 והרדת השמש in 6: 5. ................................................................. 150
  7.2.2.3 והרדת השמש in 7: 11. ................................................................. 152
  7.2.2.4 והרדת השמש in 11: 7. ................................................................. 153
  7.2.2.5 והרדת השמש in 12: 2. ................................................................. 154
7.2.3 The denial of justice “והרדת השמש” ............................................... 154
7.2.4 Denial of the possibility of divination and esoteric knowledge of the cosmic order “והרדת השמש” ......................................................... 158
7.2.5 Royal wisdom, dissatisfaction and folly “והרדת השמש” ................. 162
7.2.6 Death and the destruction of life “והרדת השמש” .......................... 167
7.2.7 “האלים” and “השמים” - Polemics and syncretism in Qohelet’s theology ................................................. 169
7.2.8 A “vapour” ... והרדת השמש - the pinnacle of absurdity .................. 175
7.2.9 “דבל” as pejorative term for idols and idolatry - is this polemical sense of the concept in some indirect sense included in Qohelet’s use of ‘דבל? ................................................................. 178
7.2.10 “Shepherding the wind” and the incompetent “Shepherd” ............... 179
7.2.11 Appointed times “והרדת השמש” ................................................. 181
7.2.12 Evil (עון), “והרדת השמש” ............................................................. 184
7.2.13 To “see” everything “והרדת השמש” ........................................... 188
7.2.14 Other possible allusions to solar mythology .................................... 190
   7.2.14.1 “Tolling” “והרדת השמש” ....................................................... 190
   7.2.14.2 Breaking oaths “והרדת השמש” .............................................. 192
   7.2.14.3 The “lord of wings” .................................................................. 192
   7.2.14.4 Snake charming ........................................................................ 193
   7.2.14.5 The “one shepherd” .................................................................. 194
   7.2.14.6 Races, battles, sages and wise men .......................................... 195
   7.2.14.7 Mourning and funerary rites .................................................... 195
   7.2.14.8 The dead lion .......................................................................... 196
   7.2.14.9 Winter, the collapse of the cosmic and social order and the death of the sun god ................................. 197
   7.2.14.10 Numerological oddities possibly alluding to solar mythology .................. 203

7.3 POSSIBLE FUNCTIONS OF Q.S.I............................................................................. 204
   7.3.1 Function 1: Ambiguity and allusion ................................................. 204
   7.3.2 Function 2: Polemics ....................................................................... 204
   7.3.3 Function 3: Irony ............................................................................ 205
   7.3.4 Function 4: Deconstruction ............................................................. 206
   7.3.5 Function 5: Syncretism ................................................................... 206

7.4 THE STRUCTURAL RELATION OF Q.S.I. TO INTRATEXTUAL AND INTERTEXTUAL THEMES POSSIBLY ALLUDING TO SOLAR MYTHOLOGY ..................... 207

7.5 A CRITICAL EVALUATION OF THE ARGUMENTS PRESENTED IN THIS CHAPTER .............................................................................................................. 208
CHAPTER 8
POSSIBLE METATEXTUAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 INTRODUCTION

8.2 SPECULATION ON SOME HISTORICAL ISSUES
  8.2.1 The Solomon connection
  8.2.2 The real author
  8.2.3 The date of origin

8.3 THE GENRE OF THE BOOK

8.4 THE CULTIC SETTING

8.5 THE ANE BACKGROUND

8.6 THE MESSAGE OF THE BOOK

8.7 THE HEURISTIC VALUE OF THE HYPOTHESIS

8.8 ANTICIPATING POSSIBLE OBJECTIONS AGAINST THE HYPOTHESIS AND
  THE ARGUMENTS USED TO JUSTIFY IT

8.9 CONCLUSION
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 3.1 ........................................................................................................ 44
Figure 3.2 ........................................................................................................ 47
Figure 3.3 ........................................................................................................ 48
Figure 3.4 ........................................................................................................ 57
Figure 3.5 ........................................................................................................ 60
Figure 4.1 ........................................................................................................ 70
Figure 5.1 ........................................................................................................ 74
Figure 5.2 ........................................................................................................ 78
Figure 5.3 ........................................................................................................ 79
Figure 5.4 ........................................................................................................ 87
Figure 5.5 ........................................................................................................ 92
Figure 6.1 ........................................................................................................ 97
Figure 6.2 ...................................................................................................... 104
Figure 6.3 ...................................................................................................... 119
Figure 6.4 ...................................................................................................... 133
Figure 7.1 ...................................................................................................... 150
Figure 7.2 ...................................................................................................... 157
Figure 7.3 ...................................................................................................... 161
Figure 7.4 ...................................................................................................... 166
Figure 7.5 ...................................................................................................... 171
Figure 7.6 ...................................................................................................... 193
Figure 7.7 ...................................................................................................... 195
Figure 7.8 ...................................................................................................... 197
Figure 8.1 ...................................................................................................... 216
**LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABC</td>
<td>Anchor Bible Commentary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABD</td>
<td>Anchor Bible Dictionary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AEL</td>
<td>Ancient Egyptian Literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANE</td>
<td>Ancient Near East.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANET</td>
<td>Ancient Near Eastern Texts, Pritchard (ed) [1955]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANRW</td>
<td>Aufstieg und Niedergang des romischen Welt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AOAT</td>
<td>Alter Orient und Altes Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATANT</td>
<td>Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AV</td>
<td>Authorised Version</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA</td>
<td>Biblical Aramaic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BARev</td>
<td>Biblical Archaeology Review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BASOR</td>
<td>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BBCOT</td>
<td>Bible Background Commentary of the Old Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BHS</td>
<td>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia 1978</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BH</td>
<td>Biblical Hebrew</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BZAW</td>
<td>Beihefte zur Zeitschrift fur die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBQ</td>
<td>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DDDOT</td>
<td>Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Old Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DG</td>
<td>Dictionary of the Gods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DM</td>
<td>Dictionary of Mythology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EA</td>
<td>EI - Amarna (followed by tablet number)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EAEHL</td>
<td>Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land; M Avi Yonah and E Stern (ed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ER</td>
<td>Encyclopedia of Religion. M Eliade (ed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GKC</td>
<td>Genesius Hebrew Grammar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HBD</td>
<td>Harper's Bible Dictionary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HTR</td>
<td>Harvard Theological Review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HUCA</td>
<td>Hebrew Union College Annual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IB</td>
<td>Interpreter's Bible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICC</td>
<td>International Critical Commentary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDB</td>
<td>International Dictionary of the Bible GA Butrick (ed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDBSup</td>
<td>IDB Supplementary volume</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISBE</td>
<td>International Standard Bible Encyclopedia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JAOS</td>
<td>Journal of the American Oriental Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JARCE</td>
<td>Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JBL</td>
<td>Journal of Biblical Literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JEA</td>
<td>Journal of Egyptian Archaeology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JETS</td>
<td>Journal of Evangelical Theological Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JNES</td>
<td>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JNSL</td>
<td>Journal of North West Semitic Languages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JPSV</td>
<td>Jewish Publication Society Version</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JSOT</td>
<td>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JSOTSSup</td>
<td>JSOT Supplementary volume</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JSS</td>
<td>Journal of Semitic Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KAR</td>
<td>Keilschrifttexte aus Assurs religiosen Inhalts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KTU</td>
<td>Die keilalphabetischen Texte aus Ugarit. M Dietrich, O Loretz and J Sammartin (eds)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LA</td>
<td>Lexicon der Agyptologie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LXX</td>
<td>Septuaginta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MT</td>
<td>Masoretic Text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAB</td>
<td>New American Bible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAV</td>
<td>Nuwe Afrikaanse Vertaling (1983)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NICOT</td>
<td>New International Commentary on the Old Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NIV</td>
<td>New International Version</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OLP</td>
<td>Orientalia lovaniensia periodica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTL</td>
<td>Old Testament Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSV</td>
<td>Revised Standard Version</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tg.</td>
<td>Targum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TDOT</td>
<td>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VT</td>
<td>Vetus Testamentum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WBC</td>
<td>World Biblical Commentary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZAW</td>
<td>Zeitschrift fur die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>