CHAPTER 2

SEALING: AN OVERVIEW

2. SEALING DEFINITION

A seal is defined in a literal sense as “an instrument of stone, metal or other hard substance (sometimes set in a ring), on which is engraved some device or figure, and is used for making an impression on some soft substance, as clay or wax, affixed to a document or other object, in token of authenticity” (Edwards in Orr & Nuelsen 1974a:2708). A seal is also known as a signet containing a distinctive mark that represents the owner (Brand et al 2003:1455). Technically, the concept “seal” thus refers to two meanings. First, it refers to an instrument (such as a signet or ring [*annulus*]) that is used to imprint a desired mark once or more often on a suitable surface. Second, it refers to the imprinted stamp (σφραγίς), seal (δακτύλιον) or *sigillum*, the impression made by the instrument (Kittel 1971b: 939). As will be indicated, these differences of meaning in the concept of “seal” are important when it comes to analyzing and understanding the symbolic meaning and purpose of sealing in the biblical realm.

The majority of publications and studies on the archaeological evidence of seals have indicated that most seals are stamp or cylinder seals. These studies mostly focus on the stylistic or iconographic aspects of ancient seals. Very little, however, has been done to define the *function* of seals and the *practice* of sealing in the ancient world.

To address this shortfall in the study of seals, a discussion between Sibson, Porada and Nissen was held in Rome in July 1974 at the *Rencontre Assyriologique*, where the function of sealing was intensely discussed. During

this *rencontre* attention was also given to the various models of analysis that are used in the study of seals and sealing (Sibson 1977:5).[1]

From this discussion it became clear that the study of seals is related to two models of analysis (Adams, in Sibson 1977:1-4). These two models of analysis are:

- The exploring of subsets of seals or seal impressions in an attempt to specify different patterns of manufacture, ownership or use.
- A more contextual approach that seeks to establish the broad institutional setting within which some groups of seals were employed in a particular time period.[2]

As the evidence will indicate later, sealing was employed on letters, official documents, contracts (e.g., in the form of scrolls) and in tombs to denote, for example, property, ownership, authenticity or protection. Also, when the pottery or the material upon which the seal was applied hardened, an intact impression indicated that the particular object upon which the seal was marked had not been violated (Horn 1995:1073).

With regard to the practice of sealing, ample evidence exists that indicates that sealing was a common practice in antiquity. We now turn to a description of this practice, concentrating on sealing in the Ancient Near East (ANE), the Old Testament, Alexandrian Judaism, the Graeco-Roman world, Gnosticism, the New Testament and the Apostolic Fathers.

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[1] This symposium was attended by Assyriologists, archeologists, historians, anthropologists and art historians (Sibson 1977:5). The groundwork for the symposium was done over a period by Frankfort, Kantor, Landsberger and Gelb, and was attended by well-known scholars like Larsen and Rathje that concentrate on this field.

[2] Adams (in Sibson 1977:2) expresses the opinion that although these two approaches differ in some respect, they are usually linked in practice and are essentially complementary.

2.1 Sealing in the Ancient Near East

2.1.1 Sealing in Babylon, Assyria, and Egypt

Sealing was a common custom in antiquity and it was part of everyday life in Babylon. Almost every Babylonian carried a handmade stick seal. Anything could be set under a seal: a house (doors), jars, baskets, jugs (usually sealed on the handle), even intellectual possession (Brown 1966:773).

The cylinder seal is a major contribution to Mesopotamia glyptic art (Martin 1940:3), and one of the oldest forms of sealing that is known (Horn 1995:1072-1073).

Mesopotamian limestone cylinder seal and impression in worship of Shamash (Louvre)

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Cylinder_seal_Shamash_Louvre_AO9132.jpg)

Cylinders, says Martin, “originated during the Uruk period in the fourth millennium BCE and were used for more than three thousand years by the peoples of the Near East” (Martin 1940:3). Cylinder seals were most commonly engraved in

intaglio (an image incised into a surface) on a curved surface. These seals date before or at the evolving process in the invention of writing, and were utilized for many types of sealing purposes, including ownership (Martin 1940:3). According to Kist (2003:1), cylinder seals go back to the beginning of the Early Bronze Age, probably at the same time as the emergence of writing in the form of pictogram (the representation of a concept, object, activity, place, or event by illustration). Together with the earlier stamp seals these miniature cylinders are among the earliest-known movable objects employing recognizable and meaningful pictorial symbols for the communication of ideas and concepts (Kist 2003:1). Seals spread all over the Orient and discoveries attest to their existence in Babylon from 3000 BCE.

Stamp seal (hunting scene relief) in basalt found at Tell Halaf, dated 850–830 BCE

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Halafhunting.jpg)

The height of cylinder seals varied from 10 mm to 200 mm. The roll was usually 2 to 4 cm long. Figures and signs were cut into the sheath of the cylinder, usually taken from the mythological or cultic sphere. During the eighteenth dynasty (1500-1300 BCE) the cylinder was replaced by seal rings with engraved images

of scarabs. Seals sometimes also used a combination of words, figures, signs and letters (Brown 1966:939). Cylinders made by professional seal cutters seem to have appeared at the same time when fine vessels of stone became a renewed fashion (Porada, in Sibson 1977:7; see also Sibson 1997:11-12, note 1 and 2). Evidence from the archaeological sites of Jarmo and Umm Dabaghiyah indicates that fine stone vessels appeared in levels of the sixth millennium BCE (Braidwood & Howe, in Sibson 1977:11, note 1; see also Tobler 1950:82). In the late Uruk and Jamdat Nasr period (fourth millennium BCE) cylinder seals developed further, most probably as a result of more effective drilling techniques (Tobler 1950:82-83). At Tepe Gawra the tombs dated to level X (approximately contemporary with Uruk V, 3300 BCE) show that the craftsmen of this site "combined unusual skill and a highly developed sense of esthetic values with imported varieties of stone" (Tobler 1950:83).

There is not much evidence of seal cutter's workshops in Mesopotamia. We do have, however, some evidence from the tablets of Akalah (fifteenth to fourteenth century BCE) that "indicates that, like the smith, leather-worker, carpet weaver, and stonemason, the seal cutter had a workshop. This can be deduced from an Alakah text which names 16 carpenters, 3 stonemasons, 5 carpet weavers, 12 leather workers, 16 smiths and one seal cutter" (Porada, in Sibson 1977:7).

Of the techniques applied in ancient arts, the seal cutter's technique was perhaps the most difficult to perform.[3] The cost of a cylinder seal is described by Oppenheim's translation of the text of the basalt stela[4] in Istanbul:

[3] An Akkadian agreement indicates that a certain Hasdaj (a slave of the Persian king Cambyses) apprenticed a slave for a period of five years to learn the craft of the *purkullu* (Akkadian for seal cutter; see Oppenheim, in Sibson 1977:7-8, 12).

[4] The Tel Dan Stele is a black basalt stele erected by an Aramaean king in northernmost Israel, containing an Aramaic inscription to commemorate his victory over the ancient Hebrews. Although the name of the author does not seem to appear on the available fragments, it is most likely a king of neighboring Aram/Damascus. Language, time, and location make it plausible that the author was Hazael or his son, Bar Hadad II/III, who were kings of Damascus and enemies of the kingdom of Israel. The stele was discovered at Tel Dan, previously named Tell el-Qadi, a mound where a city once stood at the northern tip of Israel. Fragment A was discovered in 1993,

> Speculation should range from low-priced, mass-produced, carelessly carved pieces of ungainly stone to a cylinder described by Nabonidus as of "the costliest jasper, a stone (betting) a king, upon which Asurbanipal, King of Assyria, had improved by drawing upon it a picture of Sin – that his own name be remembered – and upon which he had written a eulogy of Sin and hung it around the neck of (the image) Sin, (this stone) whose exterior had been damaged in these days, during the destruction (wrought by) the enemy, (I restored/mounted and deposited) in Esagila, the temple which keeps the great gods alive, in order not to (permit an) interruption of the oracles given by him (Sin) (by means of this seal?).
>
> (Oppenheim, in Sibson 1977:7-8)

In Egypt, as in Babylonia, the cylinder was the earliest form used for sealing, but was gradually superseded by the scarab (beetle-shaped) as the prevailing type (Edwards in Orr and Nuelsen 1974a:2708). Scarabs as seals and amulets were exported from Egypt to all the countries of the ANE. Scarabs, in the form of roll seals, came in the form of knobs, cones and cube seals with primitive figures (mostly from the animal world). Signatures on papyrus show that the seals of the signatory witnesses had figures of the gods and heroes. Other figures commonly used in Egypt for seals were fish, doves, ships, swords, bows, or images of beloved ones. Many Egyptian seals simply picture the name of the owner or a sign related to him. Scrolls, books and letters were sealed by sealing the tie, which held them together. The process of sealing was to dry or bake the seal in an oven. There is no evidence of wax seals in Egypt—clay or loam was normally used (Kittel 1971b:940).

The next section deals with the three different families of seals in the ANE based on the motifs they bear, including Nimrod cultic and some other religious scenes in the ANE.

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and fragments B1 and B2, which fit together, were discovered in 1994. The inscription has been dated to the ninth or eighth century BCE. The eighth-century limit is determined by a destruction layer caused by a well-documented Assyrian conquest in 733/732 BCE. Since the destruction layer is above the layer in which the stele fragments were found, the destruction of the stele probably took place after the stele had been erected. Because of the destruction the stele broke into pieces, and some of these pieces were later used in a construction project at Tel Dan, presumably by Hebrew builders. It is difficult to discern how long before that Assyrian conquest these earlier events took place (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tel_Dan_Stele).

2.1.2 Seal motifs in the ANE

According to Collon (1995:67), it is possible to identify three major families of seals in the ANE based on the motifs they carry: animals on geometric patterns, cultic themes, and images of gods (Collon 1995:23).[5]

2.1.2.1 Animals on geometric patterns

Nimrod (referred to in Gn 10) is one of the cultic themes linked to the groups of animals and figurants in the different seal epochs of Mesopotamia. Nimrod, the "mighty hunter before the Lord" (Gn 10:9), is probably a reference to the Mesopotamian god Ninurta, who was the chief god of the city of Calah (now Nimrod), the capital of Assyria during the ninth century BCE. When Austen Layard excavated Nimrod in 1850 he found a group of reliefs of the temple of Ninurta, showing the god armed with thunderbolts pursuing a monstrous lion-griffin (Frankfort 1978:47-48, 223-252, 330-346). Collon notes the following about the history of the Nimrod seal:

> There is a remarkable bowl of the Halaf period from Arpachiyah in northern Iraq . . . which is painted on the interior with a bull facing a fenced enclosure guarded by a naked woman who clearly represents the concept of fertility. A hunter, armed with what is probably the earliest known representation of a composite bow with a tasseled quiver on his back, aims an arrow at a feline. Here he is doubtless protecting a bull from the attack of a predator. Lions and bulls appear ca. 2800 BCE on Proto Elamite seal impressions from south Western Iran. On seals and other contemporary artifacts from this area, animals are shown playing the role of men. Lions and bulls on the same seal alternate as the dominant creature. . . . On Mesopotamian seals these humanized Proto-Elamite bulls were transformed into the bull-man, who was human from the waist up but had bull's horns and hind-legs. The bull-man became man's chief ally in his protection of flocks and herds against predators. He is one of the few figures in the art of the ancient East who is almost invariably shown full-face whatever the period. . . . With the inclusion of the bull man, the contest scene was lifted from the realm of symbolic reality into the realm of symbolic fantasy, and the "priest king" did not survive the transition. He was replaced by a hero who is also usually shown full-face. . . . He is bearded, with an elaborately curled head-dress or hairstyle. Later, another protagonist was added to the contest scene:

[5] The interpretation of these motifs is a tricky issue. The animals arranged in Tête-bêche certainly seem to be of a purely decorative nature. The most common pair, the horned animal and the lion, do not interact with one another (the lion never attacks the horned animal [Collon 1995:23]).

> the human-headed bull. The frequent appearance of the hero and the bull-man on seals has often led to their identification with Gilgamesh and Enkidu, the celebrated heroes of one of the great epics of the ancient world.[6]
>
> (Collon 1995:23-26)

The type of contest scenes where seals show lions and lion griffins attacking seated goats and kneeling men (which depicts the pessimistic preoccupation with death in the age of Hammurabi), declined in popularity and eventually vanished from the repertoire (Collon 1995:31). These contest scenes on seals also dealt with the issue of protection against evil (Kist 2003:16).[7] In this regard, Kist (2003:17) is of the opinion that sealing in Mesopotamia also had to do with white magic:

> In Mesopotamia white magic is embedded in a religious and mythological framework that alleviates the basic tension between its mechanical operation and the prerogatives of divine. In the course of time the importance of magic increases, but due to its embedded nature the isolation of magical elements is not always obvious. Any stone had magical properties that concern the wellbeing of its bearer. As described by Collon the selection of stones by the seal cutter is determined in part by practical considerations, and in part by others which may well include an assessment of their magical properties. More positive results may be expected when Mesopotamian stone names have been matched with the actual stones. Many seals show diminutive elements disconnected from the main scene: animals (frogs, hedgehog, snake, scorpion, monkey), bow legged dwarf, heads (*lahmu, Huwawa, Pazuzu*), hands, mazes, rosettes, etc. In some cases, the value of an element can be established. The heads, for instance, are apotropaic, and the hands must be linked to the hand-shaped amulets prescribed in the ritual "for entering the palace," where they serve to support someone against the whims of authority. Lexical texts attest to the use of some elements as stone or metal

[6] Collon suggests that these two animals, lions and bulls, probably represented the emblems of two tribes, the nomads from the mountains and the sedentary plain dwellers who made up the population of this area. Regarding Gilgamesh Enkidu's identification with Nimrod, this is to be rejected, since the hero and bull-man appear together before the historical Gilgamesh ever reigned in Uruk (2650 BCE). Furthermore, the descriptions of Enkidu in the epic make it clear that he was human in shape, and representations on seals also show him as human (Collon 1987:853-858).

[7] As Collon (1995:23-26; 31), Kist is of the opinion that the most profiled protagonists are the naked hero with six curls and the bull-man. They have a long uninterrupted history from their first appearance early in the third millennium to their extinction with the end of Mesopotamic civilization (Kist 2003:16).

> pedants; they are mentioned in one breath with figurines of the supplicant lamassu goddess.[8]
>
> (Kist 2003:17)

The *Musée du Louvre* has different cylinder seals depicting various mythological and daily life scenes. One cylinder seal from Babylonia shows Marduk with his dragon.

Marduk and his dragon

(http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Cylinder_seals)

Among this cylinder seal collection we also have banquet scenes. An example of this is one made out of shell that comes from Mari, during the Early III Dynasty (2500-2400 BCE; see (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/ Category:Cylinder_seals).

[8] Apart from sealing, a state of purity was of crucial importance in order to maintain good relations with the divine world. Impurity was removed with water or vegetal elements, mainly parts of the date palm, transformed by incantations into otherworldly cleansing agents. In the Old Babylonian Period (2000-600 BCE) a purification priest carrying a bucket with holy water sometimes accompanied a suppliant to ensure his pure state (Kist 2003:17). A seal, bearing a presentation scene before the ascending sun god with his foot on a mountain and a monkey in front of him, being approached by a king in ceremonial robes carrying an animal offering beneath a sun-disc and crescent, followed by a priest holding a libation vessel and bucket, attests to the importance of purity (Kist 2003:199).

Banquet scene. Serpentine cylinder seal and impression, Neo-Assyrian Period, Louvre N8379

(http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Cylinder_seals)

As another example on the glyptic art, one Assyrian cylinder seal is representing Assur attacking a monster, while being cherished by a goddess.

Assur attacking a monster. Cylinder seal mythology from Louvre AO30255

(http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Cylinder_seals)

2.1.2.2 Cultic themes

The second main motif found on seals in the ANE is cultic themes. The worship of the sun god *Shamash* is represented by limestone cylinder seals from Mesopotamia. Coming from the same Uruk period, there is a cylinder seal picture on the next page (also made of limestone), which depicts a cattle herd at the

cowshed. We also find among these cylinder seals some erotic scenes (a composite seal made from burnt Chalcedony from the Achaemenid period in Susa (sixth and fourth centuries BCE) in which a man is shown with a trident symbolizing coitus and women symbolizing birth. Some cultic erotism scenes are also represented, as well as a cylinder seal with a harem motif. Also from the Achaemenid period there is a cult scene before the goddess or queen Anahita. One cylinder seal made from Halcedony consists of a scene from the temple of Ishtar in Mari from the Archaic Dynasties (2600 BCE), showing heroes fighting against animals. One cultic scene (on a cylinder seal made out of a shell, dating from the Early III Dynasty [2600-2340 BC] from Mesopotamia) shows five characters going toward a pyramid-shaped building on the top of which there is the god-ship.

Cylinder seal and impression of cattle herd at the cowshed. White limestone, Mesopotamia. Uruk Period (4100 BCE- 3000 BCE; Louvre Klq17)

(http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Cylinder_seals)

Cylinder seal with an erotic scene. Yellow marble, Armenid period (6^{th}-4^{th} centuries BCE from Susa, Louvre AOD126)

(http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Cylinder_seals)

Cylinder seal and impression on clay: battle between heroes and animals. Limestone, Early Dynastic III (2500-2400 BC, found in Mari; Louvre AO18359)

(http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Cylinder_seals)[9]

2.1.2.3 Images of gods

Connected to this cultic theme are seals and signets that have the image of the gods as their sign. Seals with the image of a god linked the holder and user of the seal with the deity and its benefits. On an Akkadian seal cylinder (dated 2700 BCE) the god is depicted on a chariot leading a winged lion. An Akkadian roll from 2500 BCE portrays Etana's ascension[10] (Dalley 1989:90, 130, 183-197; Kittel 1971b:942). These two examples are an indication of the magical effect that was attributed to seals, seal stones and rings. A ring bearing the image of a

[9] All the cylinder seals discussed in the above two paragraphs are located in the Department of Oriental Antiquities, *Pichelieu,* ground floor, room 1B and 1C at the *Louvre.* This collection also has cylinder seals from Cyprus that show various scenes. One cylinder seal (made of Hematite and dated in the Late Bronze [fourteenth century BCE]) shows signs of the Cypro-Minoan script and contains scenes depicting animal fights. Another cylinder seal (also made out of Hematite showing signs of Cypro-Minoan script) comes from a tomb at *Sindaim*, and depicts antelopes attacked by birds.

[10] Etana was an ancient, legendary Sumerian king of the city of Kish and was, according to the Sumerian king list, one of the kings who reigned after the Deluge. He is listed as the successor of "Arwium" the son of Mashda, king of Kish. He is also called Etana "the shepherd who ascended to heaven and consolidated all the foreign countries," and ruled for 1560 years (some copies read 635) before being succeeded by Balih, said to have ruled for 400 years. According to a Babylonian legend, Etana was desperate to have a child, until one day he helped an eagle from starving, who then took him up into the sky to find the plant of birth. This led to the birth of his son Balih. Three versions of this legend exist: (1) The Old Babylonian version that comes from Susa and Tell Harmai; (2) a Middle Assyrian version that comes from Assur; and (3), the standard version from Nineveh. An updated discussion (Jul 31, 2007) on Etana and other ANE Mesopotamic issues can be found at www.bibleorigins.net/ningishzida.html.

deity protected the bearer thereof, and the image on the seal was believed to have the same power ascribed to the deity. Scarabs had the significance of luck. Harpocrates, the Greek version of Horus the Child who fought the wicked Seth, was a popular protective deity and his image was common on seal rings. With his finger on his lips, Harpocrates (the god of silence) also was a popular emblem for a seal, symbolizing “to shut off” or the concealment of something (Kittel 1971g: 942-943).

The image of the gods on the signet cylinders and other seals of the kings Sennacherib and Esar-Haddon from Kouyunjik indicates their dual earthly and heavenly power given to them by the gods—a dual power that is shown on the seal by the inclusion of animals and stars (Edwards in Orr and Nuelsen 1974a:2708). Sealing in the ANE dealt with the promises of gods and goddesses to protect kings and empower them against evil. Finally, pessimistic preoccupation with death is also reflected in the seals during the age of Hammurabi.

2.1.3 Sealing usage in the ANE

2.1.3.1 Ownership and authority

Archeological evidence from the ANE indicates first of all the use of sealing to indicate ownership and authority. An example of this usage is given by Mason (www.rbmason.ca/seals.html); see also Fortin 1999:1-125). Impressions of the feet of children found at the site of Tel Meskene (the ancient Emar on the upper Euphrates) which date about 1200 BCE most probably refer to an incident where a father was obliged to sell his children, but the owner found them to young and left them with their parents until they were old enough. In the meantime, he kept an imprint of each child’s foot as proof of his deferred ownership, with the seals as proof of ownership.

An example of seals used in the ANE to denote authority is the Lapis lazuli-seal[11] found in Tell Asmar (Horn 1995:1073), a seal king Kirikiri gave to his son Bilalama as a symbol of authority. Horn (1995:1073) also describes a cuneiform tablet from Amurru, written in the Hittite language engraved in hieroglyphic. The seal is impressed in the middle of the tablet to indicate the ownership and the authenticity of the content of the tablet. Sealing in the ANE was a good alternative for those that could not write—the illiterate simply stamped their seal on a document (Cruden 1949:571).

2.1.3.2 Property and ancient economy

Among the crucial functions of sealing (using cylinder seals) was the role it played in the economic life of the ANE (Nissen, in Sibson 1977:15). Sealing functioned as an important mechanism to control the economy. Cylinder seals replaced stamped ones in a short period of time in both Khudeztan (Porada, in Sibson 1977:15, 20) and Babylonia (Brun, in Sibson 1977:15, 21). Nissen (in Sibson 1977:15), in following Hrouda (in Sibson 1977:15, 22), postulates two reasons for the change from stamped seals to the cylinder form: (1) Changes in the economical system, and (2) changes in the social system that required a change in the kind of seals being used. The need for a more detailed narration of important messages to the public arose, which could not be done on the small stamp seal surface. About this Nissen notes the following:

> From several approaches, I have concluded that the Late Uruk period (ca 3300 BCE) must have seen major changes in the economic system along with changes from a more kinship-oriented society to a stratified society, observable in the increase of the size of the economic units and the development of the organization of labor. These points seem to demand the assumption of a restructuring of the controlling mechanisms, since the loss of social control provided by the earlier kingship structure

[11] *Lapis lazuli* (sometimes abbreviated as *lapis*) is a semi-precious stone prized since antiquity for its intense blue color (Horn 1995:1073). In ancient Egypt lapis lazuli was a favorite stone for amulets and ornaments such as scarabs; it was also used by the Assyrians and Babylonians for seals. The ancient royal Sumerian tombs of Ur, located near the Euphrates River in lower Iraq, contains more than 6000 beautifully executed lapis lazuli statuettes of birds, deer, rodents, dishes, beads, and cylinder seals. These carved artifacts and seals undoubtedly came from material mined in Badakhshan in northern Afghanistan. Sumerian and Akkadian poetry often make reference to lapis lazuli as a gem befitting royal splendor.

> necessitated the introduction of more objective means of control. Looking at stamp seals and cylinder seals from this angle, we indeed find that cylinder seals provided a more effective control because the entire surface of an object could be sealed and thus protected from fraud and distortion, while the relatively small and restricted imprints of stamps seals could only partially secure the item.
>
> (Nissen, in Sibson 1977:15)

Sealing was also used in the shipment of goods. Shipments were sometimes loaded in standardized containers and then sealed with the seal of the city, which meant that the officials who checked the containers gave them an official sealing, thus attesting to its contents (Larsen, in Sibson 1977:95, 102).[12]

Claiming the god's protection in the practice of storing goods inside the temple courts is also attested by examples of storage seals in the Assur temple with the inscription: "Take the bundle of gold with my seal into the Assur temple and as the kumrum priest for the sack which is deposited together with the bundles under my seal. Inspect the sealing (on the sack) and break it, and then place the bundle of gold on the sack and then, seal the sack again and have my name indicated in the front of the sealing" (Larsen, in Sibson 1977:95:102).

2.1.3.3 Inviolability

Steinkeller (in Sibson 1977:41-53), referring to the distribution and function of seals in Ur-texts, mentions various functions of sealing. One function was safeguarding, associated with the technique of Bullae. This technique used clay, especially for the safeguarding of goods, which is considered the oldest and probably the most common application of seals in ancient Mesopotamia. Other sealing purposes were administrative in character, like the sealing of letter orders. The earliest examples of sealed letter orders appear in the Sargonic

[12] Some Old Assyrians who lived in Anatolia were merchants and the basis of their livelihood was a constant flowing traffic of goods and money. To protect their interests all shipments had to be sent under seal. Each caravan (consisting of donkeys loaded with tin and textiles) that left the capital city of Assur was checked by officials of the city who assessed the value of the shipment. Export-tax was computed as a percentage of the silver value of the consignment. The standardized containers more or less weighed 65 mines each (Larsen, in Sibson 1977:94-95).

Period (Steinkeller, in Sibson 1977:44, 50). Another function of sealing was the sealing of legal texts, loan documents, gift documents, hire documents and court records. The conquest of reigns was also recorded on cylinder seals, as well as funerary events (Steinkeller, in Sibson 1977:44-46).

Most Babylonians normally had their own seal. The seal was a constant reminder of their god's presence, and gave assurance in all transactions done. As described earlier, cylinder seals eventually replaced stamped seals. The cylinder seal had a wide circulation until the scarab cylinder shape began to spread in the ancient world. The fact that some seals had a composition of letters, symbols, gods, and the name of the seal bearer most probably indicates that the seal carried the cosmogony belief in the god's powers of ownership, protection, inviolability and authority with regard to a sealed document. Many also believed that seal cutters (like the shamans and their tattoos), that designed and cut seals and amulets, had connections with the gods.

2.1.3.4 Tattooing as protection and branding

Apart from sealing the practice of branding and tattooing was also known in the ANE. Branding was used among Syrians to denote property or loyalty to a certain god. The practice of tattooing was utilized in Egypt mostly for protection purposes. The tattooing practice also served to establish the Shaman's supernatural hierarchy as storytellers.

Before the finding of "Ötzi the Iceman"[13] it was supposed that the earliest forms of tattoos were several female mummies dated 2000 BCE. Fletcher, from the Museum of York, England, says "with the more recent discovery of the iceman from the area of the Italian-Austrian border in 1991 and his tattoo patterns, this

[13] Ötzi the Iceman is the modern name for a well-preserved natural mummy of a man from about 3300 BC. The mummy was found in 1991 in the Schnalstal glacier in the Ötztal Alps (on the border between Austria and Italy). The Iceman is Europe's oldest natural human mummy, and has approximately 57 carbon tattoos consisting of simple dots and lines on his lower spine, behind his left knee, and on his right ankle. It has been speculated that the tattoos may be related to acupuncture (see www.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_tattooing).

date has been push back a further thousand years, when the iceman was carbon-dated 5,200 years old" (www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/iceman.html?c=y&page=3); (www.smithsonianmag.com/history-archaeology/10023606.html). On the status of tattooing among Scythians and Thracians, Fletcher comments as follows:

> Tattoos served as amulets, status, symbol of love declaration, a sign of religious beliefs, adornments and form of punishment. Tattooing also expressed affiliation to supernatural powers. In 1948, a 2400 year old body of a Scythian male was discovered in ice in Siberia. His limbs and dorsum were covered in ornate tattoos of mythical animals. The same case happened with a woman founded in 1993 in Altai. Fletcher says that female mummies with tattoos figurines on their thighs were also found in Graeco-Roman burials at Akmin. Some excavators thought they were "lower class females" or "dancing girls". But females mummies been buried at Deir-el-Bahari (opposite modern Luxor) in an area associated with royal and elite burials has demonstrated they were "royal concubines", high status priestess named Amunet. Herodotus, among the Scythians and Thracians, considered tattoo as a mark of nobility and not to have them, was a testimony of low birth.[14]
>
> (www.smithsonianmag.com/history-archaeology/10023606.html)

In some primitive pagan societies storytellers normally praised their saga heroes that overcame the powers of nature. Following the telling of the saga, these *shamans* were then tattooed or marked by supernatural animals or even by divine spirits. Through these marks the storyteller received a name and passed to an exclusive hierarchy position. In these primitive societies the development of writing (literacy) expanded the tattoo as a sign of loyalty. It also became customary to insert a seal in the text of, for example, narratives. It was believed that the mark was spiritually transferred to anyone who accepted the message of such a narrative His genre, status, and age were then traced to priesthood heritage Shaman "Shaman are the intermediaries between the mortal world and the spirit world. These worlds are represented as the upper world of the sky, or spirit levels, and the lower worlds of Nature. Humankind, along with all its

[14] Figurine tattoos found on the thighs of female mummies served as amulets of protection during the very difficult time of pregnancy and birth. These tattoos, as permanent amulets, were believed to have therapeutic benefits ((see Fletcher, www.smithsonianmag.com/history-archaeology/10023606.html).

symbols and traditions, was the middle world. Because of their ability to enter altered states of consciousness, the shamans are able to enter the spirit world and return with visions. By interacting with the plant, mineral, animal, and spirit realms, shamans take on totemic patrons who help guide them through trial and tribulation. Shamans are the natural guardians, spiritual intermediaries, and mortal advisers to the inhabitants of the material world." (see shaman in list 24 www.listology.com/list/mmorpg-classes-long-list-part-2).

The Syrians also made use of tattooing (branding), in most cases to consecrate persons to their gods. Herodotus, in referring to the Syrians, declares: "The Syrians consecrated themselves to the gods Hadad and Atargatis by signs branded on the wrist or neck. Worshippers of other gods were given marks on other parts of their bodies" like some Ethiopian tribes that dedicated their children to Apollo by a mark on the knee-cap (see Kittel 1971g:660). According to Herodotus, a runaway slave received the mark of Hercules at a temple in Egypt, thus becoming a slave of Hercules, and because of this mark his former owner was forbidden to lay hands on him" (Kittel 1974g:660).

Sealing as a therapy and religious protection was also known in other parts of the world, such as in the Pre-Columbus cultures in South America. In 2004 in the locality of Chribaya, Perú, some Inca period mummies that showed a tattooed hand were found.

Following on the next page, there is a picture that shows this particular Chribaya mummy fingering tattoo characteristic. The tattoo probably indicated protection or allegiance to a certain deity or, as it happened in the ANE, it may have been indicating mere therapy reasons:

The tattooed hand of a Chribaya mummy (El Algorrobal Museum

http://smithsonianmag.com/history-archaeology/tattoo.html#?c=y&page=6)

Tattooing as a seal was practiced also in ancient Europe. It is possible that a tattoo in the arm of Ötzi the iceman was intended to assure him strength and accuracy with his bow and arrow as a hunter, or it may have been used as a means of protection.

A tattoo in Ötzi's left arm

(http://www.crystalinks.com/oetzi.html)

It is also likely that a tattoo on Ötzi's knee represented some kind of ritual.

Ötzi's tattooed knee

(www.tattoosymbol.com/timeline/timeline-2.html)

2.2 SEALING IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The practice of sealing in the Old Testament has many similarities with that of the practice in the ANE (e.g., ownership, protection, inviolability, authenticity, and authority), and at least eight Hebrew terms for sealing can be detected (of which some are used in a metaphoric or figurative mode). There is, however, no evidence in the Old Testament of branding, marking or tattooing words or symbols into the human flesh.

2.2.1 Concordance: Sealing in the Old Testament

There are about 47 references to sealing in the Old Testament. The substantive of the term "mark" appears seven times (Gn 4:15; 1 Sm 20:20; Job 7:20; 16:12; Lm 3:12; Ezr 9:4, 6), and mark is used 11 times as signet (Gn 38:12, 25; Ex 28:11, 21, 36; 39:6, 14, 30; Jr 22:24; Dn 6:17; Hg 2:23). The rest of the references to sealing occur in Deuteronomy 32:34; 1 Kings 21:8; Nehemiah 9:38; 10:1; Ezra 3:12; 8:8, 10; Job 9:7; 14:17; 33:16; 37:7; 38:14; 41:15; Canticles

4:12; 8:6; Isaiah 8:16; 29:11; Jeremiah 32:9, 10, 11, 14, 44; Ezekiel 28:12; and Daniel 6:17; 9:24 and 12:4, 9 (see Cruden 1965:416, 571).

2.2.2 Evidence of seals from Old Testament times

From archeological evidence we have at least two seals from the time of the Old Testament. The first seal evidence is from Jezebel (איובל), which could mean "unexalted" (1 Ki 16:31; 18:4, 13, 19; 19:1, 2; 21:5-; 2 Ki 9:7). She was daughter of Ethbaal, king of Zidonians, and queen of Ahab, king of Northern Israel. She was responsible for the persecution of Jehovah's prophets. This queen encouraged her husband to plot against Naboth's life to take away his vineyard. The king sealed the letters and also hired false witnesses to destroy Naboth's life. It is evident that Jezebel had a powerful and persuasive personality. She introduced indirectly the worship of Baal and Astarte in Judah.

The seal of Jezebel (ninth-eighth century BCE), Museum of Jerusalem

(http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite.jpg)

The second seal known from Old Testament times is a royal seal impression from the time of Hezekiah (חוקיה), the king that produced a religious reform in Judah (2 Chr 28:24; 29:3; 30:5-12, 18, 26).

Royal seal impression from the time of Hezekiah (716-687 BCE), Museum of Jerusalem

(http://www.ferrelljenkins.wordpress.com/category/archaeology/)

According to Karpel (Universiteit Utrecht), the seal of Jezebel (found in 1964 and pictured above) belonged to the biblical figure Queen Jezebel (Izebel), the Phoenician wife of King Ahab (1 Ki 16:31-2 Ki 9:37) who lived in the ninth-century BCE. The seal bears symbols that indicate it belonged to a woman, as well as symbols that designate a royal female owner. The seal is also exceptionally large compared to the seals commonly possessed by ordinary citizens (Korpel 2007 in www.uu.nl/EN/Current/Pages/AncientsealbelongedtoQueenJezebel.aspx).

2.2.3 The use of sealing in the Old Testament

In the Old Testament the word sealing is used figuratively (Is 8:1; Dn 12:4, 9) or stamped on important documents. The impression on an engraved ring or tool was a mark of authenticity. Seals normally were made out of stone or metal, indicated ownership and suggested security (Richards 1985:545). It had a cylinder or conic form. The picture or monogram normally included the name of

the owner as an indication of indisputable property (1 Ki 21:8; Es 8:8; Jr 32:9-14; see Horn 1995:1072).

Evidence of sealing in the Old Testament was found on the handles of three large clay jars excavated in Bet-Semes and Tell Beit Mirsim (perhaps Debir; see Horn 1995:1073), and reads as follows: "Property of Eliakim, steward of Jehoiakin."[15] A seal discovered in Lachis read more or less the same: "Belongs to Gedaliah, administrator of the house" (see Jr 40:9).

Israelites were acquainted with the use in Egypt where signets were set in rings (Edwards in Orr & Nuelsen 1974a:2708; see e.g., Gn 41:41-42 where Pharaoh gave Joseph his royal signet as a token of deputed authority). They were also familiar with the use of seals among the Persians and Medes (Es 3:12; 8:8, 10).

According to Edwards (in Orr & Nuelsen 1974a:2709), at least six uses of sealing can be inferred from the Old Testament:

- authenticity and authority of royal commands (1 Ki 21:8);
- formal ratification of a transaction or covenant (Jr 32:10-14);
- preservation of books in security (Jr 32:14);
- as a sign of deputed authority and power (Gn 41:42; see also 1 Macc 6:15);
- to prevent the entrance of an unauthorized person into a certain place (Dn 6:17); and
- an official mark of ownership (Job 38:14).

2.2.4 Hebrew terms for seals and the act of sealing

The Old Testament uses two different Hebrew terms for a seal: חותם (*hõthãm*) and אות (*'oth*). The Aramaic *'izk;a'* (signet ring) is also used on an interchangeable basis with *tabba'ath* (Pick 1977:396; Edwards in Orr and Nuelsen 1974a: 2708). The terms צלם (*Tselem*) and דמות (*Demût*) used in the

[15] According to Horn (1995:1073), "this could indicate that Nebuchadnezzar did not confiscate the totality of Jehoiakin's belongings, when the Jewish king was taken captive to Babylon."

Old Testament are translated as “image” and “likeness” respectively (Richards 1985:350). These two Hebrew words are normally translated by the Septuagint as εἰκών (image). For the act of sealing, five terms are used. Another Hebrew term related to seal is the word מופת (*m ōph ēth*), which is applied for a sign or mark in terms of “wonder.”

2.2.5 A description of the terms used in the Old Testament for seals and sealing

2.2.5.1 חותם (*hõthãm*)

The term חותם occurs 13 times in the Old Testament, and is translated by the Septuagint as σφραγίς, (Ex 35:22), which means seal or signet. Examples of this use of חותם are found in Exodus 28:15 and 36:21: The breastplate of the high priest (Ex 28:15) is adorned with 12 different precious stones set in gold, each having the name of one of the 12 tribes of Israel cut in it (Ex 36:21). In the LXX these stones are called γλύπαι σφραγίδα and the names of the 12 tribes are translated with ἔγγεγράμμενα εἰσφράγει. Royal seals have thus far not been found in Israel, but the seal of a king’s son, Gedaliah of Beth Sur (perhaps a son of Josiah at the end of the seventh century), has been found (Kittel 1971b:943-945).[16]

The term στίγμα has no corresponding concept in the Old Testament. The term, however, is indirectly present as a custom of expressing close attachment to a man or God by a mark on the body (Ex 21:6; Dt 15:16; Is 44:5). In the LXX the word (στίγματα) denotes the close relationship between man and God (Ex 28:36; Lv 19:28; Dt 14:1; Jr 16:6; see Kittel 1971b:661).

2.2.5.2 דמות (*Demût*)

Pratt (in Orr & Nuelsen 1974d:1986) says that טראמ in the Old Testament refers

[16] References in the Old Testament to ministerial seals are connected with the kings Uzziah and Jeroboam II (with or without the mentioning of the king’s name, eg, Jaazaniahu of 600 BCE and Mizpah [2 Ki 25:23] that is referred to as פקד- overseer). The use of the royal seal is mentioned in 1 Kings 21:8 when Jezebel sends letters to Ahab and seals them with her seal.

The word דמות is used in the Old Testament to explain something by referring to something else that is more or less the same as the thing being explained (Richards 1985:351). God makes it very clear that man cannot understand Him by comparing Him to a human being or person (Is 40:18). The nature of man, however, can be understood by comparing human beings with the Lord (Gn 1:26). It is in this regard that the word דמות is used. Sometimes the words צלם (*Tselem*) and דמות are used together to describe the human nature (Gn 1:26; 5:1, 3). According to Richards (1985:351), the use of these two words in the same context should be understood as a theological statement.[17]

2.2.5.3 אות (*'oth*)

The term אות is used in the Old Testament primarily for describing a sign. Pratt (in Orr and Nuelsen 1974:1985-1986), in discussing the mark of Cain (Gn 4:15), opines that it is impossible to tell the nature of the Cain's sign. According to Pratt (in Orr and Nuelsen 1974d:1985-1986, following Delitzsch), the rabbis were most probably mistaken in regarding it as a mark on Cain's body. Probably it was "a certain sign which protected him from vengeance" in that the continuance of his life was necessary for the preservation of the race (Pratt, in Orr and Nuelsen 1974d:1986). It is also possible that the mark was an external sign on Cain's body as a temporal protection of his life (Nichol and Cottrell in 1978a:254). De White (1985:64), on the other hand, sees אות in Genesis 4:15 as a token of the covenant God made with Cain that his life would be spared—it is a sign that the life of Cain and his descendants should be a manifestation of the complete work of sin in rational beings. In Ezekiel 20:12 and 20 *'oth* is used with reference to the Sabbath as a sign.

[17] "Man is a likeness-image of God. The creation story makes it clear that the likeness-image is not of physical form: material for creation was taken from the earth. It is the inner nature of human beings that reflects something vital in the nature of God. Thus, theologians agree that the likeness is rooted in all that is required to make a human being a person: in our intellectual, emotional, and moral likeness to God, who had revealed himself to us as a personal being" (Richards 1985:351).

2.2.5.4 טראמ (*mattara'*)

"an aim," hence a mark to shoot at. Jonathan arranged to shoot arrows at a mark as a sign for David (1 Sam 20:20). The term מטרא is also used by Job as he felt himself to be a target of sufferings to be endured (Job 16:12), and Jeremiah said that the Lord set him as a mark for the arrow (Lm 3:12).

2.2.5.5 מופת (*mopheth*)

According to Stuart (in Orr & Nuelsen 1974a:2789), מופת is used in the Old Testament (mainly in the Pentateuch and the prophets) to attest to the existence of the supersensible or the divine. The plagues of Egypt are "signs" of divine displeasure against the Egyptians (Ex 4:8 ff; Jos 24:17). In the same vein the rainbow after the flood (Gn 9:13), the Feast of the unleavened bread (Ex 13:3), the Sabbath (Ex 20:8-11), and the brazen serpent (Nm 21:9) are seen as "wonder signs" of the gracious God to mankind. In the Septuagint the word σημεῖον is used 125 times as translation for מופת. According to Kittel (1971b: 208-09), the word is associated with the Accadian *ittu* that is used to describe an "oracular sign" or "advice."

2.2.5.6 קעקע (*ka'aka'*)

The term קעקע is used in the Old Testament as "a stigma," a cut or a burn. Israelites were forbidden to follow the custom of other oriental and heathen nations in cutting, disfiguring or branding their bodies (Lv 19:28; see Pratt, in Orr and Nuelsen 1974d:1986). The specific prohibition "not to print any marks upon" themselves evidently has reference to the custom of tattooing[18] (www.ncl.ac.uk/press.office/press.release/item/1156851242).

The practice of tattooing was common among savage tribes and in vogue among both men and women of the lower orders in Arabia, Egypt, and other cultures.

[18] The word tattoo has two major derivations coming from two South Pacific Islands: (1) From the Polynesian dialect *Ta*, which means "striking something" and (2) from the Tahitian word *Tatau* which signifies "to mark something". In 1871 the British army, for example, used some coded letters that were branded on prisoners: D = deserter; bc = bad character; d = drunkard; v = vagabond and f = church brawler (www.ncl.ac.uk/press.office/press.release/item/1156851242).

This prohibition on tattooing most probably was intended to cultivate reverence for and a sense of the sacredness of the human body as God's creation.

2.2.5.7 צלם (*Tselem*)

Image in the Old Testament, according to Richards (1985:350), deals with important statements regarding the nature of man. צלם is defined as "image" or "representation" in reference to people. Five times in the Old Testament, specifically in Genesis 1:26-27; 5:1-3 and 9:6, it refers to mankind as God's image (Richards 1985:350-351).[19]

2.2.5.8 תו (*taw*)

The word תו also means mark, as is shown in Ezekiel 9:4 (which is dated in the second exile period (597 BCE); Buttrick 1956:56). Albright (1932:77-84) has discussed the stamped findings that belong to this period extensively. In Ezekiel (9:1-5) the divine government is confronted with a vision of the destruction of the wicked, and a mark (ת) is to be set upon the foreheads of the righteous at Jehovah*'s* command (Ez 9:4-6; see Ironside 1949:ii). The mark of Ezekiel 9:4 is transposed figuratively here. The Hebrew letter *ת,* according Stollorz (2005:123), is a symbol of the Cross. ת is used to indicate the Christ cross commitment and the resultant human transformation by grace, which is reflected in the believer's daily life. Sealing, then, also indicates God's character. According to Pratt (in Orr & Nuelsen 1974d:1986), we have a similar parallel in Exodus 12:22-23 where blood is sprinkled on the doorposts of the Israelites for their protection. ת also

[19]The conviction that Yahweh is not to be depicted in the form of an image is intrinsic to true Yahweh worship. Its basis is to be found in the commandment in Exodus 20:4 and Deuteronomy 21:14. A strong belief in the spiritual nature of Yahweh underlies the Mosaic Law (Kittel 1964g:381). The pictures of animals on the great curtain of the Jerusalem temple were not regarded as depictions of deities as one might think. They were merely artistic symbols. In the newly discovered synagogue mosaics of Ain-ed-Duk and Beth Alpha there is in the middle of the picture of the Zodiac a representation of the four-steeded chariot of the sun with the Helios as the driver. Even the Byzantine artists had no thought of depicting the sun-god; they were simply adopting the traditional form of representing the sun (Kittel 1964g:383).

appears in the book of Job for the mark made on a document (Job 31:35).[20] The letter ת is also used in Ezekiel 9:4 as a mark in the form of a cross:

> The seal is marked in all of those that are honoring the *o[voma* of God. They receive the *Taw* (= ת) the twenty-second and last letter in the *alef-beit.* It means "mark," "sign" or "cross," and it corresponds to *malchut* ("kingdom"). The Zohar states that this letter makes an impression on the "Ancient of Days" and is also as an impression of the seal of Creation. During the epoch of Ezekiel the ת was written in the form of X or T. Gesenius notes that this letter referred to "a sign" of ownership of property in the form of a cross brand on the thigh or the neck of horses and camels. In Ezekiel 9:4, God used this letter to mark his faithful in the vision given to the prophet."
>
> (www.biblewheel.com/Wheel/spokes/tav_seal.asp)

In Ezekiel 9:7-18 the grotesque pagan animal imagery engraved or painted in the Jerusalem temple is contrasted with the glorious message of God's sealing. Albright (1953:163-167; see also Buttrick 1956:107 on Ezk 8:10) sees in these pagan rites an Egyptian influence, recalling the serpent and animal figures in the *Book of the Dead* and late magical representations thereof.[21] Shea (1992:19-20) states that the selected individuals, who are marked by the angel with the letter ת as God's chosen people, represent the righteous remnant to be saved from the destruction of Judah. Historically, Shea continues, "the prophecy was fulfilled when Nebuchadnezzar's army besieged and conquered Jerusalem a few years after this vision was given."

In 1 Samuel 21:10 David fled to Achis, the king of Gath, and feigning madness, "scratched" on the doors of the gate. Commenting on 1 Samuel 21:10, the Critical Spanish Bible version from Bóver-Cantera explains that the original word in 1 Samuel 21:10, that is translated by the Spanish term "*signos*" ("scratched" in NKJV), is the letter ת (X, in the ancient Hebrew alphabet).

[20] The letter ת in the Phoenician alphabet and on the coins of the Maccabees sometimes had the form of a cross (**T**). In Oriental Synods it was used as a signature by bishops who could not write.
[21] Gaster (1961:40-323), referring to the rites of the pagan imagery of Ezekiel 7:14 and 8:7-13, suggests a hidden, frescoed cavern where the annual sacred marriage ceremony took place. As evidence of such ritual, Gaster mentions the presence of such a cave in the Ugaritic texts.

2.2.6 Sealing practices in the Old Testament

In the Old Testament sealing is used to demonstrate ownership and property, whereas to God or evil. In most cases God is the one who seals men and invites them to become His own (e.g., Gn 4:15; Ex 12:1-7; Ezk 9:1-4). The consequence of the sealing by God is anticipated by a personal decision based on and determined by a real and authentic relationship with God in order to accept the seal or deny the offer of voluntary relationship (e.g., Ezk 9:4). In the metaphoric or figurative mode in the use of sealing, some of the sealing attributes are described as being previously present in the life of the believer in order to receive the remaining blessings of being sealed. Such previous attributes that must be manifested in the believer are: (1) loyalty, which must be founded on faith and, (2) authenticity, which is part of the relationship principles for which the seal is applied for in the believer's life.

When the believer incorporates into his life the attributes of loyalty and authenticity he also receives other blessings like inviolability, possession, protection, salvation, ownership and authority (see Ex 12:1-28; Ezk 9:1-4)—the sealed ones in Ezekiel 9:1-4 would be the ones whose lives would be preserved through captivity when Nebuchadnezzar's troops destroy Jerusalem.

Sealing in the Old Testament is therefore expressed in terms of allegiance and permanent service such as a slave that wants to remain permanently in his master's house. In such a case the master himself performed the ceremony at the doorpost, and pierced the servant's ear with an awl (Ex 21:6; Dt 15:17). Because of the master's love and kindness, the slave decided (elected) voluntarily to remain in his master's house. This ceremony depicts the importance of free will in the concept of sealing in the Old Testament.

2.2.7 The figurative use of sealing in the Old Testament

The sealing or marking of animals, objects, and men in the Old Testament first and foremost indicated ownership (Neal, in Holbrook 1992a:255). People were often sealed by marks upon the body: A servant's ear, for example, was pierced

to show he belonged to his master forever. In Exodus 21:6 we have an example of sealing to indicate ownership. A servant wanted to remain in the house of his master because he loved him (Ex 21:1-6). The Hebrew word for love comes from אהב [*aheb*], which primarily means "to love." It has a secondary meaning of being a "friend." The fact that the servant loved his family and his master lead him being pierced in his ear with an awl. The term used in Exodus 21:6 for piercing is רצע [*ratsa*], which means "bore" (http://strongsnumbers.com/hebrew/7527.htm).

Another figurative symbol is circumcision, which was a mark indicating that Israel belonged to Yahweh (Gn 17:9-12). The high priest in the Israelite sanctuary wore a turban with a plate over his forehead engraved with the words "Holy to the Lord" (Ex 28:36-38). This reminded him of his special consecration to God. As such, sealing was experienced as a joy of being chosen by and marked for God as His possession (Is 44:5). The associated sealing term is כתב [*yich-tov*= will write]. The fact that God engraved Zion on the palms of His hands indeed was a joyous thought (Is 49:16; see Fitzer, in Kittel 1971g:939-953). The Hebrew words for "have inscribed" in 49:16 are יחקקת [*chakkotich*].

Sealing (σφραγίς in the LXX) also meant protection (Betz, in Kittel 1971b:657-664; Fitzer, in Kittel 1971b: 939-953). This understanding of sealing is as old as the mark, אות [*ovt* = a sign, a mark] of Cain (Gn 4:15). The blood of the Passover lamb sprinkled upon the doorposts of Israelite homes is another example of sealing as protection (Ex 12:12-13): the blood (mark) was a sign to the angel to pass those homes that had their doorposts sprinkled. Sealing as protection is also found in Ezekiel 9:4-5: the writer with an inkhorn sets a mark upon the faithful to protect them from death by the executioner (Betz in Kittel 1971b: 657-664).

Apart from ownership and protection, sealing in the Old Testament also meant loyalty (Maxwell 1989:379), security and revelation (Richards 1985:545), genuineness and authenticity (Hoeksema 1969:259), authority and inviolability (Horn 1995:1072), possession, preservation (Edwards, in Orr & Nuelsen

1974a:2708-2709), likeness (Richards, in Orr & Nuelsen 1974a:2708), and close relationship between God and man (Kittel 1971b:660). It is also associated with the Sabbath (Peth 2002:738-741; see Gn 4:15; 17:9-12; Ex 12:12-28; 21:6; 28:36; Lv 19:26; Dt 14:1; 15:17; 1 Sm 21:14; 1 Ki 21:8; Job 38:14; Is 8:16; Jr 16:6; 32:10-14; 38:14; Ezk 8:10; 9:1-4; 20:12, 20; Dn 12:4, 9).

2.2.8 Sealing and its legal pattern in the Old Testament

Sealing in the Old Testament reflects the legal patterns and daily life particularities regarding ownership, property and loyalty in early Israel. Jezebel, for example, sealed her letters thus showing her idolatrous authority, using it to destroy Naboth's life (1 Ki 21:8). After confessing their sins, the returned captives from Babylon wrote a covenant and placed a seal on the document showing their loyalty to God (Neh 9:38; 10:1). King Ahasuerus gave Haman his signet ring as an authorization to destroy the Jews (Es 3:10-13). Darius sealed the mouth of the den where Daniel was held captive with his own signet ring, and the rest of the lords did the same (Dn 6:17).

From the above two sections it is clear that a similarity in sealing usage in the Old Testament and in the ANE is attested (except for tattooing). Both geographical realms have a relationship in terms of authenticity, authority, inviolability, ownership, property, and protection. The section explains how the concept of sealing in the Alexandrian Judaism was heavily influenced by Philo's philosophy.

2.3 SEALING IN ALEXANDRIAN JUDAISM

The concept of sealing in Alexandrian Judaism was influenced by the metaphorical vocabulary of religious philosophy introduced by Philo (Mickelsen 1970:29). Philo combined Judaism and Platonic philosophy that especially influenced the thought of Ibn-Gabriol and Maimonides who lived among the Arabs and influenced western Europe in the beginning of the twelfth century CE (González 1971:236). Philo, because of his Hebrew heritage, considered the Old

Testament as superior to Greek philosophy (Froehlich 1984:7; Mickelsen 1970:29; E. Treiyer 1996:12). However, having a great admiration for Hellenistic thought, he tried to reconcile Greek philosophy (especially the thoughts of Plato) with reflection produced by the Hebrew world.[22]

Plato used the concept of sealing to characterize his doctrine of ideas (Kittel 1971b:946). Philo, on the other hand, used the term σφραγίς as a signature at the end of his letters, especially to justify his allegorical approach, vis-à-vis the typological form of interpretation.[23] For Philo the term σφραγίς meant "under lock and key" (Kittel 1971b:947), and the seal was a symbol for the power of God: the impression of a tiny seal can reproduce copies of very large things, and similarly a tiny representation with tiny letters reveals the ineffable beauties of the creation of the world written in the laws. As the seal makes innumerable copies while remaining unaltered, so is the power of God who gives form to the formless and shape to the indistinct without losing anything of their own eternal essence.

The presence of sealing in Alexandrian Judaism is also seen in the Greek word σημεῖον, Philo uses this word to denote the mark of Cain in Genesis 4:15 (Kittel 1971b:221-22), the processes which lead to insight or knowledge by way of perception (the stars in Gn 1:14). The word, however, is also used by Philo to denote laughing – γέλως - a – σημεῖον τῆς χαρᾶ, mathematical calculations, mental operations in the sense of "indication," "argument," and "proof, " as well as the introduction of evidence (Kittel 1971b:222).

[22] Like Aristobolus, Philo used the allegorical method of interpretation. He wanted to defend the Jewish faith against the pagan criticism by demonstrating that Moses had possessed all the talents of the Greeks. This line of thought is present in many of Philo's works (Martinez 1984:69-70). In his work titled *On the creation of the world*, Philo describes the way in which God created the world in Platonic terms (see also Plato's *Timeus*).

[23] Alexandria was the intellectual center of the allegoric method in antiquity (Martinez 1984:69-72). Clement of Alexandria and Origen used the allegorical method to defend themselves against the intellectual attacks of pagan writers like Celsius and Porphyrius who mocked the Scriptures as being trivial, absurd, and immoral.

In relation to allegorizing, σημεῖον is used by Philo to indicate that fundamentally all Scripture is an inexhaustible reservoir of σημεῖα . He also uses the word to refer to the divine or "wonders" (Kittel 1971b:222), especially when he refers to God's signs in Egypt (e.g., the miracle of the Red Sea crossing is denoted as σημεῖον τερατωδέστατον.

2.4 SEALING IN THE GRAECO-ROMAN WORLD

2.4.1 Sealing, religion, and witchcraft

In the Graeco-Roman world sealing was used in various contexts such as the military, religion, slavery, and in the protection of the inviolability of documents. Sealing was used lavishly for different magic purposes: to block a spell, to represent a god, to replace or alter the power of a seal that blocked a spell, to fake enchantments, and to link a personal seal with the seals of gods (Ankarloo 1999:21, 76, 154, 190, 235, 299). Guthrie (1951:270-274) has also noted the prevalence of magic in the Graeco-Roman world linked to the inscriptions of bindings in magic formulas: the terms καταδέσμο and καταδέσει, (literally "bindings") refer to curses, which were scribbled on tablets (often, though not always, of lead). These curses were left in tombs or buried in the ground where the spirits of the underworld, to whom they were commonly addressed, would be able to find and act on them.

Rome's conquests brought to its capital not only Greek art and culture, but also many new gods and creeds, a situation that resulted in a variety of new cults. These new gods also brought with them their worshippers, marks, and seals.

> The official beliefs and worship of the Greco-Roman world were more a part of civic stability and loyalty than of inner religious devotion. There was the worship of the Emperor, whose *Tychè,* good luck, was the cement that held the whole empire together. There were the superb Olympian deities, whom Homer had made a picturesque though not always admirable reality for the whole Hellenic world; and also those strange rustic deities still venerated at Rome, whose priesthoods were held as a mark of honor by members of the noblest families in the city. The papyri have now revealed to us the underworld of religion, the popular ideas and forms of worship, of which we

> knew a certain amount, but never so much until these pathetic evidences reaches us from the hands of very ordinary men.
>
> (Neill 1964:152)

Sealing in religious activities and witchcraft in the Graeco-Roman world provided the elements needed for ritual activities. The authentication of the animals chosen for rituals needed to be sealed before they were sacrificed. Roman religion was very strict on ritual details. In matters of witchcraft the Romans, as well as many other people, believed that seals protected them against spells and bewitching warnings. In a world considered full of demons and evil powers, sealing was a constant protection possibility.

2.4.2 Cultic motifs in Graeco-Roman jewelry

There is jewelry evidence from the Graeco-Roman period with relation to magic and cultic protection. This evidence is depicted in sealing rings that show interest in cultic protection (King 2003:99, 379).

The ring pictured below (most probably a Roman Intaglio ring from the Roman Republic period, i e, first to second CE) depicts the god Attis, often seen as representing the cycle of life, death, and rebirth (Frazer 2003: 261-317). The three faces on the ring are looking in different directions, a depiction often associated with the earth mother, the goddess Cybele. This deity was brought to Rome from Phrygia during the Carthaginian crisis and, during the settlement worship period in Roman temples, its service was conducted exclusively by Phrygian priests who announced Cybele as the mother and protector of the mountains and a locality protection spirit that was also known as the Magna Mother (Motz 1997:9, 103= 106, 163, 223).

In the background of this Roman intaglio ring, which is shown in the next page, it is possible to distinguish two handled urns with fluted tops. The ring most probably was one of the ritual objects used in the secret practices of the Phrygian cult. Due to metal corrosion, many of these ancient discovered intaglios have been re- inserted in modern handcrafted rings intended to resemble the original work.

Republic period depicting the god of vegetation called Attis (London).
The ring is set in a modern setting

(Stockhammer 2009, see www.georgianjewelry.com/items/show/10382.jpg)

Below is another interesting photo of a Roman ring from the Museum of Britain depicting the temple of this goddess at Palaepaphos, indicating a connection between magic and veneration in the cult to Aphrodite. The ring is dated between 150-250 CE. In this regard we also have bronze and silver coins issued between the emperors Augustus (27-14 BCE) and Phillip I (244-249 CE).

Gold Roman ring (dated between 150-250 CE) showing the temple of Aphrodite at the sanctuary of Palaepaphos, Cyprus

(www.bristishmuseum.org.ps337280-m.jpg**)**

2.4.3 Terms for sealing in the Graeco-Roman world

In the Graeco-Roman world seven terms can be identified that were used in connection with sealing practices: εἰκὼν, μώλωψ σημεῖον, σκοπός στίγμα σφραγίς, χάραγμα, and χαρακτήρ . These terms are also present in the New Testament epistles where they are used in an interchangeable manner.

2.4.3.1 εἰκών

The term is defined as “to be similar,” “to be like” or “to appear.” In the strict sense it is defined as “an artistic representation” (e.g., a painting, statue, or impression on a coin) and in Euripides it has the notion of “a reflection” or “apparition” (see Kittel 1964f:388). In a metaphorical sense it means “mental image” (τῆς ψυχῆς); (see Kittel 1964f:388). The term is used by Philo to describe the images of the emperor that was set up, for example, in Alexandria from 38 CE. The term is also used by Josephus (see Kittel 1964g:388) in his description of the events surrounding the καίσαρος εἰκόνες αἳ σημαῖαι καλουῦνται (military standards) in the temple that were resisted so passionately by the Jews that Pilate finally removed them from the temple.

2.4.3.2 μώλωψ (μωλωπίζω, μωλωπικός, μολύνω)

According to Schneider (in Kittel 1967g:829) there is an etymologic connection between μώλωψ and μολύνω . This connection is especially common in the Graeco-Roman world among physicians for “weal” or “welt.” In the LXX (see Gn 4:23; Ex 21:25) and Judith 9:13 the term is used in a figurative sense describing the overthrowing of enemies (Schneider, in Kittel 1967g:829).

2.4.3.3 σημεῖον (σῶμα, σημαίνω, σημειόω, ἄσημος, ἐπίσημος, εὔσημος, σύσσημον)

The linguistic and etymological data for this word is a development of *σῆμα* / Doric σᾶμα by way Ionic σημήϊον, Doric σᾶμηϊον and related constructs. It only occurs in the form of σῆμα in the early epic and σῆμα; σᾶμα did not disappear until

well into the Christian era. According to Kittel (1971b:202), σημεῖον does not occur in the earlier Greek epic. One therefore must begin with the older but equivalent σῆμα to understand the meaning of this term. In Homer the word denotes optical impressions, which suggest or make certain insights possible (Kittel 1971b:202). In *Homeric Hymns* II, 2.353, the lightning of Zeus seen at the beginning of the expedition against Troy is described as a faithful sign, ἐναίσιμα σήματα, and in *Homeric Hymns* II, 9.236 the word is used to describe a happy omen making known the favor of the god: Ζεὺς δέ σφι Κρονίδης ἐνδέξια σήματα φαινων ἀστράπτει. The word is sometimes also used in connection with disaster (παραισίσια σήματα,) (*Homeric Hymns* II, 4.381). In all these instances of σῆμα (always plural), the fact that the sign brings knowledge is underlined by its use with the active φαίνω. The word thus is clearly used in connection with revelation (Kittel 1971b:202).

2.4.3.4 σκοπός

In Graeco-Roman literature σκοπός is attested as early as in the works of Homerus, and denotes one who directs a watchful glance on something, for example an overseer (Kittel 1971b:413-414).

2.4.3.5 στίγμα (στιγμάτα)

The vocable στίγμα is derived from στίξω, which means “to prick,” “tattoo,” or “mark” with an instrument. The mark was burned on the body with a hot iron. It was also customary to burn cattle with the owner’s mark to make theft more difficult (in Kittel 1971b:658).

The term στίγμα was also used to brand malefactors. A man with such a brand was regarded as dishonored. Robbers of temples, slaves and aliens carried the στίγμα on their foreheads and hands. According to Suetonius (*The Twelve Caesars* IV, 27, 3), Caligula even had these shameful marks branded on the foreheads of honorable citizens condemned to forced labor in the construction of buildings and roads. Petronius links στίγμα to the marks carried by wrongdoers

(see Kittel 1971b:658). Only in 315 CE Constantine forbade the custom of marking a person on his or her face (Kittel 1971b:658).

2.4.3.6 σφραγίς (σφραγίξω, σφραγίδα, σφραγίδα, ἐσφραγίσθητε, σφραγίσιν, σφραγίσαντε, σφραγίσωμεν, σφραγίσεν)

In Graeco-Roman culture the term *σφράγις* had important legal significance. When stamped on possessions the seal indicated ownership and protected possessions against theft. When used for the sealing of a document, the seal authenticated the message and conveyed the authority of the person that sealed the document. The seal normally was a kind of signature that could be recognized by anyone. A sealed document was only to be opened by the addressee. For those in power, such as kings or governors, the seal served as a symbol of authority (Kittel 1971b:661).

In the Graeco-Roman world there is a combination of the cultic and the legal when the word is used for the marking of sacrifices declared suitable by the priest. The priest, called ἱερομοσφραγίτῆς καί τῆς θεμοσχοφραγίτης ,normally put a strip of papyrus around the horns of an animal, put sealing clay on it, and set the impress of his signet ring on it. He also had to send the sacrificing priest a written authentication of the cleanness of the beast (Kittel 1971b:943).

2.4.3.7 χαρακτήρ

In the Graeco-Roman world *χαρακτήρ* is used as a technical term, that is, “to inscribe” an image or impression. The word is derived from the noun χάραξ that means “to cut to a point” or “to sharpen.” The term was used for branding marks on camels around 147 CE (Kittel 1974d:418), or to describe the appearance of an embryo (Kittel 197f:419). Likewise, during the second century CE the word was used to refer to a “feature” on an inscription (Kittel 1974d:419). The term χαρακτήρ does not occur in the works of the pre-Socratics (Thucydides and Xenophon) and the Attic orators. It is found once in Aristophanes and twice in

Plato. From very early the word also denoted the "distinctiveness" of a language or manner of speaking (Kittel 1974d:418-419).

2.4.3.8 χάραγμα

This term is defined as an engraved, etched, branded or inscribed mark or sign. In Sophocles the term is linked to χαράσσω, and in Philo it denotes the bite of a snake (Kittel 1974d:658). In the genitive, the term can mean money (Kittel 1974j: 416).

2.4.4 Branding and sealing in the Roman army

The Roman army often branded (στίγμα) convicted soldiers by marking them on the hand (Kittel 1971b:659). Military recruits were also branded, usually with a tattooed abbreviation of the name of the reigning emperor (Wiedeman 1981:193-194). Within the Roman legions the cult of Mithra gained support among soldiers (Clauss 2000:100-131). The first literary evidence of this cult appears in the first century CE (*Carnutum in Penonia Superior*; see Clauss 2000:20-34). The soldiers that worshipped Mithra normally wore a seal ring or other emblems like an eagle standing or an arrow with a mark (Clauss 2000:100-115). Sometimes soldiers were initiated into the cult of Mithra by being sealed on their foreheads (Griffith 2009: http://eawc.evansville.edu/essays/Mithraism.htm).

2.4.5 Slavery and sealing in the Graeco-Roman world

The sealing of slaves is well attested in the Graeco-Roman world.[24] The many slaves throughout the Roman Empire required rigorous marking – documents that indicated the ownership of slaves were sealed, as well as slaves themselves

[24] All ancient societies were based on slavery (Stuart 2007:37-77). None, however, exploited slaves more thoroughly, squandered them so wantonly or depended on them as completely as the Romans did. The economy of Rome was sustained by slavery. During the first century CE the Roman fleet was captained by the emperor's slaves. Slaves also constituted the professional class of doctors, teachers, musicians, and artists (Barker, Lane & Ramsey 1969:211). The more trained and skilled slaves were, the better the price that could be obtained for them in the market. As an example we have a slave teacher being sold for 700 000 sesterces (Bouquet 1953:159). The sestertius or sesterce was an ancient Roman coin. During the Roman Republic it was a small silver coin, very rare, and issued only very occasionally. During the Roman Empire it was a large brass coin, with the value of one-quarter of a denarius.

(by being branded in their flesh).[25] The Romans often branded slaves (Kittel 1971b:659). The owners of slaves sometimes branded persistent runaway slaves on their foreheads, often with the letters *FUG* for *fugitivus* or fugitive (Kittel 1971b:659; Wiedemann 1981:193-194). Bouquet (1953:140-141) describes the different kinds of punishment for slaves (branding) as follows:

> [F]or slaves who offended there were a number of barbarous punishments. They might be obliged to work in chains, they were frequently beaten with sticks or scourged with a whip; sometimes they were hung up by their hands with weights tied to their feet, or suspended so that their toes only just touched the ground, with the result that they had to strain their feet painfully in order to get any support. A very common mode of punishment was to make them carry a forked structure of wood around the neck while working. This was rather like the Chinese board punishment, or the pillory, of which we hear as late as the time of Charles II. It was called a *furca*, and slaves were often flogged while bearing it. Crucifixion was specially an extreme punishment for slaves. A runway slave, and also a thief, might be branded on the forehead with indelible mark (στίγμα). Another punishment was to be sent to grind at the mill, which would be somewhat the equivalent of the old treadmill in convict prisons.
>
> (Bouquet 1953:140-41)

Besides the branding or marking of slaves, other forms of sealing included collars that were used to identify slaves (Glancy 2002:88). Sometimes slaves wore thick metal collars inscribed with mottos, marking the wearer as a slave. These metal collars are among the most startling artifacts surviving from the ancient world. Most slavery collars we have are post-Constantinian. Many of these collars bore Christian iconography written in κοινή, such as the Α, Ω and Ρ. Some have suggested that most known slave collars so far are probably those of Christian owners (Shawn 2001:51-78, 167-177; see also the compilation of Porter in http://homepage.usask.ca/~jrp638/CourseNotes/slavery.html

[25] Even though the Roman Empire lasted five centuries, only two hundred years can be considered the golden age of Rome (Horn 1995:1003). This golden age included Paul's time. By then, Rome had a population of about 800 000 to 1 600 000 inhabitants. Many of those were slaves. Vila (et al 1985:186), commenting on the social class order and population in Corinth, argues for a population of 700 000 to 800,000 in Corinth during the time of Paul. Of these population numbers, approximately 400 000 were slaves. The estimate of slave numbers in the Roman Empire in the first and second centuries varies among authors. Scheidel, for example, estimates the number of slaves in the Roman Empire before the mid-second century plague between 2 and 3 million in Italy alone (Scheidel; Princeton/Stanford Working Papers in Classics: 1-32). Corcoran (2006:4), in following Harris, Scheidel and Brunt, estimates that in Augustan Italy the total population was 7 million, including 3 million slaves.

owners (Shawn 2001:51-78, 167-177; see also the compilation of Porter in http://homepage.usask.ca/~jrp638/CourseNotes/slavery.html)

Slaves were often forced to wear bronze slave collars or bronze slave tablets bearing the name and address of the slave's owner, as well as instructions on how to return the slaves if they ran away, much like the dog tags of today (Ehrman 2007:317, 344-347). One such a collar discovered around the neck of a skeleton in Rome reads "if captured, return me to Apronicanus, minister in the imperial palace, for I am a fugitive slave" (see Ehrman 2000:316-318).

Glancy (2006:8) describes these engraved collars as mute reminders of the brutality of ancient slavery. Nonetheless, these collars ironically may have originated as an effort to humanize somewhat one of the most inhumane aspects of the institution of slavery, that is, the practice of tattooing or branding runaway slaves on the face, a practice that Constantine forbade in 315 CE.

2.4.6 Sealing of letters in ancient Rome

It was a common practice in the Roman Empire to authenticate letters by sealing and stamp procedures. According to Richards (2004:174), letters were authentication in three possible ways:

- the use of a seal (signet) pressed in clay;
- a summary of the letter's content in the author's own handwriting at the end of the letter; or
- a word of farewell in the author's own handwriting at the end of the letter.

The author normally did not sign a letter until the carrier was actually ready to depart for the very reason that some new news could arrive and necessitate changes in the letter (Richards 2004:174-180).

Forgeries of letters to damage someone's reputation or cause were common in ancient Rome.[1] In antiquity, the authenticity of a letter went hand in hand with its

[1]Richards (2004:174-180) suggests such a forgery most probably was done to Paul, as can be deducted from 2 Thessalonians 2:2.

handwriting and the letter's seal (in the case of the upper class). An autographed signature was the customary means of avoiding the problem of forgeries, if the recipient knew the writer's handwriting (Richards 2004:146). Proof of this custom is offered by Richards (2004:183). In a correspondence between a father and his son in the Alexandrian navy, the son wrote his father (in Latin) the following: "And if you are going to send anything, put an address on everything and describe the seal to me by letter, lest any exchange be made in route." Evidently it was not unheard of for a ship's crew to open packages, pilfer some contents, and then reseal the package and place another seal on it.
Cicero and Quintus were to inherit a portion of the state of a man named Felix. The filed copy of the will did not include them. Carelessly, Felix sealed (and thereby authenticated) an incorrect copy. Although apparently his slave (secretary) was to blame, Felix was responsible, and thus the older will stood uncontested (Richards 2004:183). Since most papyrus letters consisted of a single page (leaf), the page was folded accordion-style in a strip about an inch wide (much as children make a paper fan from a sheet of paper). Opening a sealed letter compromised it and made its contents suspect.

When ancients traveled to new places, they sought someone of status in the new location to facilitate the visit. Ideally, they asked an acquaintance of status from their hometown to write a recommendation letter. Travelers carried such letters with them as a way to introduce themselves and to gain assistance in their new location.[2]

The forgery of letters and seals was so common in ancient Rome that many of the wealthy used trustworthy slaves to deliver letters on their behalf. The Epicurean Papirus Paetus, for example, had set two slaves aside solely for carrying his letters (Richards 2004:176-181). Many examples attest to the existence of imperial letter carriers called the Roman Imperial Postal System (*cursus publicus*). There is also literary evidence of happenstance letter carriers

[2] Richards (2004:183-187) notes the following example: A Roman citizen by the name of Cicero sent a sealed letter or recommendation to be carried by the recommended person, Caecina, to be given to Furfanius. Cicero also provided Caecina with a copy of the recommendation letter so he would know what Cicero had written.

(family members, employees, friends, soldiers, businessmen and travelers). In most cases, private letter- carriers were used by the wealthy elite (Richards 2004:176-181).[3]

2.5 SEALING IN GNOSTICISM

In Christian Gnosticism novices were sealed with a hot iron on the lobe of the right ear, a sealing that represented the final baptism of fire mentioned by John the Baptist (Mt 3:11). Later, after becoming insiders, they had the sign of the cross or the name of Christ tattooed on their wrist or arms (Kittel 1971a:664). The Eucharist was also seen as a kind of seal. In the Acts of Thomas King Gunda and his brother Gad, after being converted, asked Thomas to seal them, since God knows his sheep by their seal (Kittel 1971b:952). The Gospel of Thomas 111 and the Acts of Thomas also refer to the marking of those who belong to God (Ehrman 2003:13, 57-63). It is unclear, however, if this marking refers to baptism (as a seal) or to chrism (anointing with oil; Cartlidge & Dungan 1994:34-38). In Gnosticism baptism was also understood as a seal, as can be deducted from 2 Clement 7:6; 8:6 and the Pastor of Hermas (IX, 6:16, 17:31; see also Ehrman 2003:188, 251-279). For Gnostics sealing was also seen as the mysterious means by which the Gnostic is protected when traversing through various zones and aeons (Kittel 1971b:952). Sealing is thus seen as a form of protection.

The term σημεῖον is also used in Gnosticism, and seems to bear no specific meaning. When it is used, the meaning thereof is not distinctively religious. The word occurs (Kittel 1971b:208) for example, in *Hermetica* (Corp Hem, 2; Nock-Fest I, 44-45) where σημεῖον means “constellation” (Corp. Hem., III.204, 41 ff in Kittel 1971b:207). Another use for the word σημεῖον is in the sense of “proof” or “example” (Kittel 1971b:207). It is also found in a magical third century CE prayer to the moon goddess in the sense of “form in which the nature of something expresses itself ” (Kittel 1971b:208). The word does not occur in the so-called Mithras Liturgy (Kittel 1971b:207).

[3] The people from Chloe (1 Cor 1:11) most probably were slaves sent to carry a letter from Corinth to Paul.

2.6 SEALING IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

2.6.1 A concordance of sealing in the New Testament

The word sealing (in its different grammatical forms) appears 32 times in the New Testament. Sealing as a noun is used 18 times (Mt 27:66; Jn 3:33; Rm 4:11; 1 Cor 9:2; 2 Tm 2:19; Rv 5:1, 2, 5, 9; 6:1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 12; 7:2; 8:1; 9:4; 20:3). As a gerund (action noun) it appears 12 times (Jn 6:27; Rm 15:28; 2 Cor 1:22; Eph 4:30; Rv 5:1; 7:3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8). As a verb it has two references (Rv 10:4; 22:10).

2.6.2 Roman military seal motifs derived from the prophecy of Jesus regarding the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE (Lk 21:20-21, 22).

This prediction is registered also in Matthew and Mark within other prophetic settings on the same arcane (Mt 24:15, 16; Mk 13:14). The Lukan record says Ὅταν δὲ ἴδητε κυλουμένην ὑπὸ στρατοπέδων Ἰερουσαλήμ, τότε γνῶτε ὅτι ἤγγικεν ἡ ἐρήμωσις αὐτῆς (στρατόπεδον = army; στρατοπέδαρχος = military commandant of a military camp).To attest the presence of Roman legions at that specific time in Jerusalem (Grualbo et al 1973:267) shows two seal fragments. One is just a seal fragment found in Jerusalem that belonged to the *Legio X Fretensis.* This Roman legion was the one that seized and destroyed Jerusalem (Grualbo 1973:111). A piece of that Roman legion seal is shown below.

Piece of the seal of the *Legio X Fretensis*

(Grualbo et al 1973: 267)

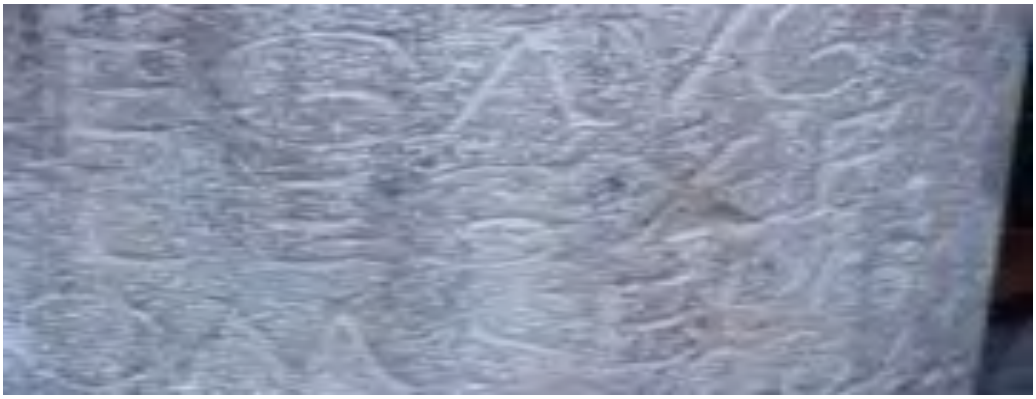
Another seal picture depicts a most complete seal device from the same *Legio X Fretensis.* It is written by Grualbo (1973:111) that legion soldiers enforced the public order during the Jewish feasts and they executed prisoners that were decreed by the Sanhedrin not without the execution ratification from the Roman Magister. The *Legio X Fretensis* operated from 41 BCE to after 410 CE. It was also known as the legion "of the strait." They had different mascot symbols such as bull, ship, Neptune and the boar (Geva 1984:247-249).

Below there is an example of thirteen pieces of a seal used for identification of the *Legio X Fretensis,* the same legion that destroyed Jerusalem in 70 CE and seized Masada.

Fragmented seal of the *Legio X Fretensis*

(Grualbo et al 1973:111)

The following interesting of the next page is also an engraved inscription of the *Legio X Fretensis* has been found in Jerusalem that depicts this legion.



Engraved writing of the *Legio X Fretensis*, found in Jerusalem

(www.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Legio_X_Fretensis)

2.6.3 Terms for sealing in the New Testament

The New Testament, as is the case in the Graeco-Roman world, uses seven terms for sealing: εἰκών, μώλωψ, σφράγις, στίγμα, χαράκτηρ, χαράγμα, σημεῖον, and σκόπός. Sometimes the meaning of these terms in the New Testament overlaps with their usage in the Graeco-Roman world, as will be indicated below.

2.6.3.1 εἰκών (εἰκόνα, εἰκόν, είκονι, εἰκόνοι)

The word appears 22 times in the New Testament. Twelve of these occurrences are found in the book of Revelation, which will be discussed in a later chapter. For the rest the vocable εικών (in its different tenses) occurs several times in the New Testament. As a nominative, εἰκών appears in Matthew 22:20, 1 Corinthians 11:7, 2 Corinthians 4:4, and Colossians 1:15. The genitive εἰκόνος is found in Romans 1:23 and 8:29. The case of accusative εἰκῶνα occurs in Luke 20:24; 1 Corinthians 15:49; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Colossians 3:10 and Hebrews 10:1. This term is used mostly to refer not only to the exterior image of an object, but also to its inside character—it presents the similarity (in terms of genuine likeness and equality) between the external copy of an object and the original (Kittel 1964f:388). The term is especially used in the New Testament to describe likeness between God and Christ.

In Colossians[4] 1:15 εἰκών is utilized to describe the image of Christ (εἰκὼν τοῦ Θεου), illuminating Christ's inner core and essence (Kittel 1964f:389) – the original (God) is present in the image (Christ).

In the Pauline writings, when εἰκὼν is related to anthropology, man is seen as still to be restored.[5] Those who possess the image of God will finally obtain it at the eschaton (1 Cor 15:45, 49). In Hebrews 10:1 this visible manifestation of His image is sharply distinguished from mere *σκία* (Kittel 1964f:395). The law only deals with the *σκία*, and not with the essence of things. In 2 Corinthians 4:4 Christ is also called the εἰκων τοῦ Θεοῦ, again with emphasis on the equality of the εἰκών with the original (Kittel 1964g:395).[6]

Εἰκὼν in the New Testament has to do with the half Sickle coin used as tax or tribute for the Temple to all Hebrew male from 20 years of age and on. Often, this

[4] There is not unanimity amongst scholars regarding the authorship of Colossians. On the basis of internal evidence (see Col 1:1; 2:1; 4:3-4, 7-8, 13, 18; 4:18) some argue for Pauline authorship, or that Timothy acted as secretary or amanuensis of Paul (see, e.g., Schweizer, in Brown 1990:876-887). Another argument that is put forward for Pauline authorship is Paul's reference to some of his co-workers (Col 4:7-18) that accompanied him on some of his missionary travels and thus clearly link Colossians to Pauline authorship: Tychicus (Col 4:7; see Eph 6:21), Onesimus (Col 4:9; see Phlm 10), Aristarchus (Col 4:10; see Ac 19:29; 20:4; 27:2), Mark (Col 4:10; see Phlm 24; Ac 15:36-40; 2 Tm 4:11), Epaphras, possibly a natural of Colossus (Col 4:12), Luke (Col 4:14; see Ac 16:10), and Demas (Col 4:14; see 2 Tm 4:10). Some scholars, like Brown (1990:870-876), have noted the parallel between the description of baptism in Romans 6:1-4 and Colossians 2:12 as a basis for Pauline authorship. There are, however, also arguments against Pauline authorship. Gnilka (in Brown 1990:877) suggests the epistle was composed around 70 CE, and Loshe (in Brown 1990:877) opts for 80 CE, in which case the letter was written by followers of Paul. Loshe, for example, regards Colossians as the product of a Pauline school tradition located in Ephesus (Loshe, in Brown 1990:877). Another argument against Paul's authorship is the occurrence of 48 words in Colossians not to be found in other letters of Paul (of which 33 occurs nowhere else in the New Testament; see Koester 2000:572-580). Werner (1975:565-565), on the basis of Colossians' "liturgical hymn-style," also has argued against Pauline authorship. The point of departure taken here is that Colossians, on the basis of the internal evidence listed above, is to be considered Pauline.

[5] Kittel (1964g 395) elaborates on the juxtaposition between δόξα and ὁμοίωμα εἰκόνος. He says that "in Ro 1:23, though with no particular emphasis, is read that men exchanged δόξα of the immortal God for the ὁμοίωμα εἰκόνος of mortal man, birds, four-footed beasts and serpents. Here, there is an opposition to the heathen cult of images. The distinctiveness of the expression lies in the juxtaposition of ⇒ ὁμοίωμα, which here means the copy, and εἰκὼν, which is the original copied, the thing itself and its form. They exchanged . . . for the copy of the figure of men and animals."

[6] In Philippians 2:6 Christ is described as ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ and ειναι ἴσα θεῷ (Phlp 2:6), which, according to Kittel (1964g:395), also emphasizes the similarity between the image and the original.

type of money was coined outside of Palestine and, therefore, they were engraved with human images as it happened with the Roman Sickle with Greek characters. To avoid that Jewish religious sacrilege, there were money- changers that exchanged the gentile coins for the Jewish ones before such money went to the Temple treasury. Grualbo (1973:1134) shows a half Sickle with a Caesar image and Greek characters on it.

(Grualbo 1973:143)

2.6.3.2 μώλωψ

Pratt (Pratt, in Orr & Nuelsen 1974g:1986, citing Sir 23:10 and 28:17 as examples) translates μώλωψ as “bruise.” The only use of μώλωψ in the New Testament is 1 Peter 2:24 (Schneider, in Kittel 1967g:829), where the word is used in the context of slavery—slaves that are beaten without reason should remember the voluntary substitution and bruising of the Messiah (Is 53:5). When a Christian slave is unjustly beaten he should remember that paradoxically the blows which the δοῦλος Christ suffered accomplished the world’s salvation. This does not justify unjust beating, but leaves the judgment thereof to God alone (1 Pet 1:23).

2.6.3.3 σημεῖον (σημεῖα)

In the New Testament σημεῖον occurs 73 times. There are 10 occurrences in Matthew; 7 in Mark; 23 in Luke (Lk 10 and Ac 13); 24 in John; 8 in the Pauline literature and 1 occurrence in Hebrews (the remaining six occurrences are from Revelation and will be discussed later). It is absent from Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, Philemon and the Pastorals. Nor does it occur in the Catholic letters (Kittel 1971b:229). Σημεῖα, which is a neuter plural accusative, is often used with τέρατα, an accusative neuter plural. Τέρα is very common in Greek and fairly common in the LXX, and occurs in the New Testament only in combination with the plural of σημεῖον (σημεῖα καὶ τέρατα; see, e g, Mt 24:24; Mk 13:22; Jn 4:48). According to Kittel (1971b: 231), the word σημεῖον is used in Luke 2:12 as an introduction to the declaration of the angel in which he adduces as a "sign" or "proof" of the truth of his message about the birth of the Messiah.

Σημεῖον is used in Luke 2:1-20 to describe the way in which the Messiah has found His first resting- place in a crib. In Matthew 26:48 the same word σημεῖον shows the sign φίλημα "a kiss" employed by Judas to betray Jesus (ὅ ἄν φιλήσω αὐτό ἐστιν; Kittel 1971b:231).

In the New Testament the concept of σημεῖον is also associated with two Messianic phrases. These phrases are: "the sign of Jonah" (Mt 12:39) and "the sign of the Son of Man" (Mt 24:30). (Kittel 1971b:232-233). These two expressions will be considered next.

2.6.3.3.1 τὸ σημῖον ᾽ Ιωνᾶ in Matthew 12:39

Kittel (1971b:233) says that one of the attempts to explain that saying is ᾽Ιωνᾶ as a genitive opposition and finds in τὸ σημεῖον. According to the context and also the meaning of σημεῖον it seems very probable that the saying characterizes Jonah as the one in whom God Himself (the future passive δοθήσεται) from δίδωμι, denoting God in Mt 12:39 and Lk 11:29, (Kittel 1971b:233), shows

Himself to be present with the prophet and at work through him and his call for repentance.

2.6.3.3.2 σημεῖον τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου in Matthew 24:30

Kittel (1971b:237) says that this New Testament portion proves to be complex and deals with a previous announcement of the *Parousia* and a last history act of conversion opportunity. In the Old Testament there are three verses that show the future fulfillment of the Messianic sign (Dn 7:13 and Zch 12:12, 14).

2.6.3.4 σκοπός

This word means something observed in the distance, hence this term could be described as a "goal." The Christian life was a goal experienced by the intensity of the Christian's spiritual ardor, as a stadium or racecourse of the Greeks, with runners stretching every nerve to reach the goal and win the prize. In Wisdom 5:21 "they fly to the mark" is from εὐστόχοι "with true aim" (Pratt, in Orr & Nuelsen in 1974d:1986). The word σκοπός is also *hapax legomena* in the New Testament. Its only presence is in Philippians 3:14 where it is used to refer to someone that is involved in a contest in the arena with a goal or looking for a mark (Kittel 1971b:413-414).

2.6.3.5 σφραγίς (σφραγίζω, σφραγίδα, σφραγίδα, σφράγίσαντε, ἐσφραγίσθητε, σφραγήσεται ,σφραγίσιν, σφραγισάμενον, σφραγίσωμεν, ἐσφράγισεν)

This term appears 24 times in the New Testament. In the book of Revelation sealing is parsed 31 times. These seal occurrences found in Revelation are going to be considered in a later chapter. In the rest of the New Testament the word appears in Matthew, Romans, 2 Corinthians, and Ephesians. In Matthew 27:66 σφραγίσαντες is an aorist participle. In Romans 15:28 and 2 Corinthians 1:22 σφραγισόμενος is also an aorist participle but middle nominative; however, in Romans 4:11 and 2 Timothy 2:19 σφραγίδα is parsed as an accusative. In 1 Corinthians 9:2 σφραγις is in the nominative. Regarding this last Corinthian Bible reference, Wigram (2002:715) says that in 2 Corinthians 11:10, The Received

Text reads φραγήσεται. This is the same parsed term that also appears in the best MSS and all the versions. The verb φραγήσεται in 2 Corinthians 11:10 is a future passive indicative. In Ephesians 1:13 and 4:30, ἐσφραγίσθητε, the present aorist passive is attested. When Paul writes to the believing community in Corinth he presents his apostleship as a valid seal (1 Cor 9:2). In Ephesians 1:13 the Paulinist uses this term to denote property. The believer is sealed by the Holy Spirit and becomes God's property. Here the author of Ephesians uses well-known commercial language as a figure of speech: the shipment has been accepted, payment has been made, and the owner's seal is stamped on the product to secure it with the presence of the Holy Spirit.

2.6.3.5.1 σφραγίς in Ephesians 4:30

In Ephesians 4:30 σφραγίς is referred to in the context of a warning not to distress or grieve the Spirit. The word he uses is λυπέιτε (second person plural, present imperative active), and means "pain," "grieve," or "injure." In the passive form it means "to be sad" or "to be distressed." The verb ἐσφραγίσθητε (second person plural, aorist indicative passive) can be translated by "sealed," "to secure with a seal," "marked with a seal," "to be set apart by seal," or "affixed to be true" (Alland, in http://www.olivetree.com). The metaphorical meaning of ἐσφραγίσθητε here suggests the factor of anticipation. The shipment has been sent, and Markus Barth (1974:547) adds that in verse 30 of the letter to the Ephesians the act of sealing shows that it has not yet been fully received.

2.6.3.5.2 σφραγίς and the Paulinist theory on Ephesians

Conservative Historicism believes Paul as the author of this epistle (Nichol & Cottrell 1990f:991-993). Current trends consider Ephesians authorship other wise. It is important to discuss briefly the Ephesians epistle under the non-Pauline and Paulinist theories. This discussion helps to grasp the current pros and cons arguments on the Pauline authenticity of this letter, which have been considered as such for long time. The Pauline metaphorical approach of σφραγίς proposed in this thesis for 2 Timothy 2:19 suggests one Pauline goal in his letters

to infuse in the believers practical life principles that Jesus lived by. Paul is emphatic with these applied lessons in the life of the church believers of Ephesus (Eph 1:4,5,13, 15, 2:1-9, 10; 3:14, 16; 4:17-32; 5:1-32; 6:1-9). Because practical theology is an important issue in Pauline letters, this testimonial connectivity in some of his epistles makes an interesting field to study such non-Pauline and Paulinist authorship approach for Ephesians. It is also appropriate to cite here the non-Pauline authorship position for Ephesians as another debating issue among scholars today. Hoehner (2002:19-20) points out that before 1972, the majority of scholars considered Ephesians as being Paul's. However, the same Hoehner (2002:19-22) declares that there are two time periods of thought change for this (1971-1981 and from 1981-2001) where scholars inclined to a Paulinist authorship rather than a Pauline authorship. Other scholars were influenced by an older theory developed by Evanson, an English clergyman from the nineteenth century who thought of Ephesians as being an Apocryphal writing. Evanson (Evanson 1805:314) argued that the internal evidence from Ephesians was too impersonal to be written by Paul who had spent more than two years with the Ephesians' church as is recorded in the book of Acts (19:9-10), (see Hoehner 2002:6). Another argument against a Pauline Ephesians authorship is that the letter does not have personal greetings. That implies that the author had no intimate connection with his readers (Evanson 1805:312-313 and Hoehner 2002:6). One more internal evidence for non-Pauline authorship on Ephesians is sustained in the many *hapax legomena* present in the letter and the unique combination of words, including also long sentences that are found nowhere else in Pauline literature (Evanson 1805:lxv-lxvi). This same argument is applied to the Pastorals for non-Pauline authorship. In the Pastorals the term εὐσέβεια (1 Tm 6:11) is found nowhere in the Pauline writings. The same situation goes for the other 175 *hapax legomena* which are present in the Pastorals (Guthrie in 1990:619) including ἁδραποδισται (1 Tm 1:10); ἀφθορίαν (Ti 2:7).[7] It is observed

[7]Lea (1991:535-559) points out, for instance, that the Pastorals contain historical allusions to Paul's life that cannot be placed within the book of Acts. Paul was with Timothy and left him in Ephesus to combat false teachers while he went to Macedonia (1 Tim 1:3). Similarly, he has left Titus in Crete (Ti 1:5). Paul also referred to Onesiphorus who had been seeking for him in Rome

by Lincoln (1990:lx) that the normal Pauline emphasis on the cross and death are all but missing in Ephesians and have been replaced by an emphasis on Christ resurrection exaltation and cosmic lordship.

Notwithstanding the previous Paulinist authorship arguments for Ephesians, pro-Pauline writing authors on Ephesians also postulate their reactions against the above Paulinist authorship on Ephesians. The external evidence from Church Fathers and ancient writers is a common way of introducing these Pauline group opinions on Ephesians. Stöckhardt (1952:3) sustains that Ireneaus viewed Ephesians as a letter classified as one of ὅμολογούμενα and, therefore Pauline. Marcion and Valentinus recognized Paul as the author of the Epistle (Hiebert 1954:256). The writings of the Apostolic Fathers also attested to Paul's authorship. The fact that Clemens Romanus, Ignatius of Ephesus, and Polycarp to Philippians seemed to have used the letter as a source from some of their own writings is attesting the Pauline origin of Ephesians. Regarding the absence of intimate connection within the letter to consider Ephesians Pauline, the internal evidence of the Epistle argues otherwise. The author asks for the Ephesians' prayers and set Tychicus forward as his representative (6:21, 22). These two elements suggest certain intimacy and friendship toward the Ephesians Church. We will turn to Tychicus shortly to sustain the pro-Pauline authorship. The author of the Epistle identifies himself using a personal connection with all the believers in Ephesus (1:3-12, 14, 19; 2:3-7, 10, 14-16, 18; 3:12, 20; 4:7, 13-15; 5:2; 6:12). He approaches them with friendship, calling himself "the very least of the saints" (3:8). Justifying the difference in writing style between Ephesians and the varieties of works of the same author, Stöckhardt (1952:8-9) says that it is common for authors to use certain words frequently in one setting and infrequently in another. One simple example for this is the usage of the

(2 Tm 1:16-17) and he is now prisoner (2 Tm 1:18, see also 2 Tim 4:16). However there are some answers for those apparent historical mistakes. Paul was released from his imprisonment (Acts 28), then he travelled back to the East and was later arrested and imprisoned in Rome again. Another argument against a different authorship for Pastoral and their historical misconnections with Acts is the fact that the writers did not tell in detail the whole historical process of the different Pauline journeys.

preposition ἐν. In Romans chapter one, this preposition appears 25 times but in Romans chapter six it only occurs five times. Discussing the apocryphal and pseudo graphical argument in Ephesians, Hoehner (2002:42) elaborates that the New Testament period has been twisted to fit the ideas of modern scholars. For instance Lea (1991:535-559 and Meade 1987:139-153) says Ephesians would have been known as pseudo graphical but was no less authoritative. The same Hoehner (2002:43) points out that Jewish tradition such as the Gospel of Thomas, the Apocalypse of Peter, and the Gospel of Peters (among others) were not considered as canonical because either they contained fake teachings or were known for being pseudonymous. The letter to Ephesians contains the author's statement for Pauline authenticity (Eph 1:1, 2).

Returning to the name of Tychicus in the letter to the Ephesians, Hoehner (2002:49) argues that if the letter is pseudonymous, the information of Tychicus and Paul's reason for sending him to the Ephesians would be idiotic (Eph 6:21-22). If Paul was dead, what would Tychicus say about how Paul was doing? The apostle Paul was a well-known figure, and if he was dead and someone claimed to have information on his well-being, no one would accept such a notion. Neither would a pseudonymous author be so naïve as to include such a reference. Adding to this previous statement Gempf (1992:10) declares that if it was his desire (the pseudonymous person) to fool his recipients into thinking the real Paul had written the letter, its pseudonymous works got into the Canon (Meade 2002:42).

After these brief Pauline/Paulinist authorship antecedents on Ephesians we turn now to the commentaries for sealing in Ephesians 4:30. In Ephesians 4:30 the author uses εσφραγίσθητε in the passive tense (and therefore suggests an already fulfilled process), it does not mean that this sealing cannot be lost. His use of λυπείτε emphasizes this possibility. As Dunn (1997:302) has indicated, the Paulinist wrote his letters using metaphoric language that related to various aspects of daily life in the first century. At the heart of all of those metaphors,

according to Dunn, was the consciousness of a radically new relationship with God determining the whole of life's course by the light of the imminent end.

The Paulinist never allowed the exciting newness of the "already" to silence the promise and warning of the "not yet:"

> [The Paulinist] never allows the tension between the two to slacken. This is sufficiently clear from his use of the same metaphors. For the most part, he prefers to speak of the believer as already justified (Rom 5:1); but in Galatians 5:5 he talks of righteousness as something still awaited and hoped for. In one sense believers already have redemption (Rm 3:24; Eph 1:7; Col 1:14); but in another way, they still await redemption, that is redemption of the body (Rom 8:23; Eph 1:14; 4:30). Salvation is essentially an eschatological good, something still awaited; wholeness belongs to the not yet (Rom 5:9; 13:11; 1 Thess 5:8), hence the striking use of the present tense of the verb in 1 Corinthians 1:18; 15:2; 2 Corinthians 2:15: believers are in the process of being saved.

(Dunn 1997:309

The Spirit is the key to the eschatological tension of the Christian experience (Dunn 1997:310, 443). The sealing in Ephesians 4:30 is therefore the anticipation of the eschatological fulfillment.

> The Spirit is the future good which has become present for the man of faith, that power of the "not yet" which has already begun to be realized in his present experience. The same author explains that Spirit is who makes us sons (πνεῦμα υἱοσθεσία) in anticipation with a view to full son ship at the eschaton (Rm 8:15, 23). As in the case of Jesus (Rm 8:3, 5; 16:2, 4), the Spirit is the powerful manifestation of the future rule of God in and through the present life in faith (Rm 14:17; 1 Cor 4:20). To experience the Spirit is to begin (but only begin) to enter upon the inheritance of son ship (Rm 8:15-17; 1 Cor 6:9-11; 15:42-50; Gl 4:1-7; 5:16-25; Eph 1:14; Tt 3:5-7).[8]

[8]According to De Vaux's (Dunn 1965:490) reference to Paul's use of the metaphors ἀπαρχή (first fruits) and ἀρραβών (first installment) supports his understanding of Paul's not yet fulfillment scheme. According to Behm int the use of ἀρραβών (in Kittel 1964c: 475), Moulton & Milligan are correct when they are of the opinion that in modern Greek ἡ ἀρραβῶνα is used for "engagement ring." In both metaphors, which are given as a part of the whole: in a transaction, ἀρραβών (money, clothes) as the total payment, the total harvest is made up of sheaves just like the one used as the ἀπαρχή. So, for Paul, the gift of the Spirit is the first part of redemption of the whole man, the beginning of the process which will end when the believers become a spiritual body, that is, when the man of faith enters into a mode of existence determined solely by the Spirit (the genitives ἀπαρχή and ἀρραβώνη πεῦματος are generally and correctly taken as genitives of opposition). For Dunn, the forward looking emphasis in both metaphors does not imply any

(Dunn 1997:311)

2.6.3.5.3 σφραγίς in John 6:27 and John 3:33

In John 6:27 ἐσφράγισεν (third person singular, aorist indicative active) refers to the confirmation (to certify) of the gift of everlasting life bestowed on believers by the Son of Man (Jesus). According to Brown (1966:156) it can be translated as "certified," and it can be argued that the usage here refers to the setting of a seal indicating approval in a legal document. In John 6:27 it is however most probably used in a Semitic way חותם (*hottam*). By accepting God's testimony, the believer has certified (set his seal of approval) that God is faithful (Brown 1966:261).

> Here God sets His seal on the Son, not so much by the way of approval, but more by way of consecration. The verb is in the aorist so that commentators think of a particular action, like the incarnation (Spicq) or the baptism (Bernard). Westcott suggests that this is a consecration to sacrifice. Others think of the Son as bearing the seal image of the Father (Col 1:15), even as He bears the divine name. It has also been proposed that this sealing of Jesus by the Father is contrasted to the crowd's attempt in verse 15 to make Jesus king.

(Brown 1966:261-262)

In John 3:33 the term is used in the sense of "confirmation" (Kittel 1971b: 943).

2.6.3.5.4 σφραγίς in Matthew 27:66

In Matthew 27:66 σφραγίσαντες, (an aorist participle active, masculine plural) σφραγίξω is used to refer to the sealing of the stone of Jesus' tomb by the Romans. Craig (2005 in www.leaderu.com/offices/billcraig/docs/guard.html) says the use of σφραγίξω here (Mt 27:66) has an apologetic purpose: the refutation of the allegation that the disciples had themselves stolen Jesus' body (see Mt 28:2, 11-15). Chinnock, in following Robertson (1974:239) and commenting on the seal of Jesus' tomb and the way in which the tomb was sealed, points to the fact that

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further giving of the Spirit, simply the increasing control of the believer by the one Spirit already given. However, Hamilton tries to safeguard his emphasis by translating ἀπαρχή with 'the first fruits of what the Spirit has to give' (Dunn 1963:32, note.2). According to Dunn, this is unnecessary since it suggests that the ἀπαρχή is something other than the Spirit.

the tomb most probably was sealed with a cord that stretched across the stone and sealed at each end as in Daniel 6:1 (“and a stone was brought and laid over the mouth, and the king sealed it with his own ring and with the signets of his nobles, so that nothing might be changed in regard to Daniel”). McDowell in his commentary regarding the way Romans secured the tomb, explains they secured the cords with wax and stamped it carefully with the seal of imperial Rome (McDowell 1993: 221, 228-231).

This was done to protect the stamp of the Romans. Jesus’ tomb was most probably sealed by shutting the entrance of the tomb with a 1½-ton boulder that was rolled by levers to secure the entrance. It was thus not possible to open the grave without breaking the seal, which was seen as a crime against the authority of the proprietor of the seal. Such crime was punished with crucifixion upside down. The term “guard” used in Matthew 28:11-15 refers to four Roman soldiers, although some argue that the guard consisted of 10 to 30 guards as well (McDowell 1993:228-31). The technical sealing procedure on the tomb of Christ was an authentic “stay back” sign that included in itself inviolability and property warning for anyone who attempted to tamper with the seal and open the grave for any reason. This sealing process at the sepulcher of Christ was applied in the presence of the Roman guards who were left in charge to guard the grave of Jesus. Such sealing technicality was done impressing the respective Roman seal on fresh clay. The seal impressed motif could include the military seal from the Roman Procurator or the Roman legion seal where the Roman guard belonged. The Roman procedure of authenticity, inviolability and ownership in the ancient Roman army is attested also by Vegitius during 395 CE. (Flavius Vegitius Renatus (Philips 1985:40-49; see also www.pvv.ntnu.no/~madsb/home/war/vegetius/)

2.6.3.5.5 δφραγίς in Romans 4:11

In Romans 4:11 σφραγίδα (noun: accusative, singular feminine) is used as a sign and seal of faith prior to baptism.

> This word was also applied to certain marks by which documents or contracts were authenticated or confirmed. The term was applied to the instrument by which the marks were done. The circumcision had the purpose of being an external mark that signified the ratification of the covenant made with Abraham and the confirmation of his previous experience of righteousness by faith. Therefore, the circumcision could not be considered as a reason why a man could be accepted by God and received the divine favor, because circumcision was only a sign and a seal for Abraham and his descendants, of the righteousness that comes from faith. The circumcision did not confer righteousness; it was only an external evidence of it. Something similar happens with the Christians: the rite of baptism doesn't give righteousness, but only is considered as a sign and seal of the faith and righteousness that is experienced prior to baptism.
>
> (Nichol and Cottrell1988c:511)

Green (1962:106) for his part, explains the sign of circumcision in Romans 4:11 as being an afterward acceptance and exterior act of righteousness done to Abraham many years after he was declared justified. Green (1962:106-107) justifies that statement saying that Abraham was declared just (applied righteousness) 25 years before he was circumcised. Cruden (1965:571) adds that symbolically sealing in circumcision is used as a seal that implies the doctrine of righteousness by faith. Green (1962:322), commenting on Ro 15:28, suggests that sealing is an internal, unseen spiritual act that is seen exteriorly when people are sealed with the fruits of the gospel (Gl 5:20-22) and those fruits are shown in people lives.

Signs (like seals) maintain an essential relationship between two kinds of reality which can be seen and which cannot be seen. As such, seals are a constant reminder that a relationship exists. They also serve as a visible confirmation of what is otherwise no more than an intangible hope. It is a visible confirmation of what God has promised. Consequently it not only reminds, it also establishes. It is therefore natural that words used for the rite which outwardly marked the Jew's inclusion in the heritage of Israel very early were applied to baptism—the rite by which the Christian's admission to a fuller inheritance was declared (Buttrick 1953:443).

2.6.3.5.6 σφραγίς in 1 Corinthians 9:2

Another way in which sealing is perceived in the New Testament is when Paul is defending his apostleship in a figurative mode among the people of the church of Corinth in 1 Corinthians 9:2. Buttrick (1953:98) says those who had not seen the blessings accompanying Paul's ministry might have some reason to doubt his apostleship. Paul insists in 1 Corinthians 9:2 that his converts to the Gospel of Christ are the seal of his apostolic commission εἰ ἄλλοις οὐκ εἰμὶ ἀπόστολος ἀλλά γε ὑμῖν εἰμ· ἡ γὰρ σφραγίς μου τῆς ἀποστολῆς ὑμεῖς ἐστε ἐν κυρίω . However, the same Buttrick (1953:290-291), when commenting on 2 Corinthians 1:22, leans toward the idea that in this previous Corinthian epistle Paul is making a reference to the baptism where the believer is marked by God's own and that believer is accepted under God's protection. That is the same way in which Ironside perceives the Pauline apostleship. As in Ironside (1979:250) wherever God sent Paul, "the Spirit of God confirmed the message he carried, convicted men of their sin, led them to definite faith in Christ, and gave them the assurance of forgiveness and justification, that afterward by a new life they mightily demonstrate the reality of the work that had taken place in their souls." He also adds that:

> At the time of baptism God gave the Christians the Holy Spirit as the earnest (KJV) or guarantee (RSV) of the full and final salvation, which the loyal believer might confidently expect. The term guarantee, used also in 2 Corinthians 5:5, was taken from commercial life. It meant the down payment by which the purchaser bound himself to complete the payment of the full price agreed upon. So God, in giving the Spirit at the start of the Christian life, has bound himself to give all the other blessings that belong to complete and permanent salvation (cf. Rm 8:32). Paul here implies that since he is thus established and supported by God, he cannot be charged with fickleness.

(Buttrick 1953:290-291)

2.6.3.5.7 σφραγίς in 2 Corinthians 1:22

Another interesting New Testament verse to consider within the context of sealing is found in 2 Corinthians 1:22. There are some writers, such as Ironside (1979:39-51), whose comments on this verse indicate that sealing is attached to

the operation of the Holy Spirit, who produces three building up steps in the Christian experience. These three growing steps are: 1) conviction, 2) sanctification, and 3) new birth through the word (1 Pet 1:23). For Ironside (1979:39-51) the Pauline statement "sealed us" in 2 Corinthians 1:22 is another way to express "ownership." The Revised Version translates "sealed" for "established" in this verse. The Spirit, who regenerates and who baptizes into the body of Christ, dwells in the Christian's life and gives certainty that Christians belong to God (Rm 8:9). So, in this respect seal is the "mark" that the believer belongs to Christ.

2.6.3.5.8 σφραγίς as baptism in Ephesians 1:13

Baptism has occupied an important part in the life of Christian converts. Whereas this rite might be practiced by aspersion or immersion, early Christians and other movements may be classified among the several baptismal currents that sprung up in and around the Jordan valley between 100 BCE and 300 CE. Some of these movements are known as the Qumran community, John the Baptist, Ebionites and several syncretistic groups by or for whom the *Sibylline Oracles* and the *Odes of Salomon* were composed. Barth (1974:133-145) explains that the *Odes of Salomon* was a collection of Gnosticizing hymns from the second century CE. or later. Pokorný (Barth 1974:138) is convinced that Christian baptism is opposed to the Gnostic imitation. Schlier (in Barth 1974:138) attributes to Ephesians a doctrine on baptism, which in many aspects closely resembles Gnostic ideas.

These and other religious associations set great importance on baptism. Some authors see the sealing as being the baptism itself. Barth (1974:95), referring to Ephesians 1:13, says that most commentators on this passage seem to agree that the term "sealing" is an image for baptism. Schlier (Barth 1974:133-137) also includes other Ephesians letter references (4:15-16; 2:21), justifying those references as being baptismal allusions in the letter to the Ephesians.

Barth (1974:139) says that evidence in literature for baptism as being sealing is not conclusive. The *Odes of Salomon, Shepherd of Hermas, II Clement* and *Pseudo Clementine Homiles* were written 100 years later than Ephesians. On the same page Barth insists that it is very dubious to consider Ephesians 1:1-6 as a liturgy of baptism, for instance. Barth (1974:140) concludes that there are various passages in the New Testament that may refer to baptism without using the very specific word baptism. There are also passages that speak of “baptism” and “baptizing” and have no direct reference to the baptism performed in the churches (Mk 1:8; 10:38-39; Lk 18:50 and, perhaps 1 Co 12:13).

According to Ephesians 1:14 and 4:30, the act of sealing is not an earnest call or assurance of the future inheritance, but is the Spirit Himself who guarantees the final liberation (Barth 1974:140). The gift and reception of the Spirit in Ephesians are especially eloquent in ascribing many functions to the Spirit. Through the Spirit: (1) God’s secret is revealed. (2) God’s wisdom is known. (3) There is a relationship that is given to the Judeo-Gentiles. (4) Strength is given to the inner man. (5) The unity of the congregation is established. (6) Numerous ministries are appointed. (7) The building and growing of the congregations continues. (8) The church members are inspired to converse in the language of hymns. (9) Consistency of prayer is assured (see Eph 1:17; 2:18; 3:5, 16; 4:7-16, 22-25; 6:1) (Barth 1974:140-142). In Ephesians 4:7, χάρις κατά τὸ μέτρον τῆς δωρεᾶς τοῦ Χριστοῦ is applied to Jesus who employs the same interchangeable Trinitarian unity work of bestowing gifts upon men (see Eph 4:8; 1 Cor 12:11).

Barth (1974:143) says this operation of the Spirit (Eph 1:19-20; 3:7, 20) is also described in other Pauline letters as having the same energy in the life of the Christian community (Gl 2:8; 3:5; 1 Cor 12:6-7, 11; Col 1:29). The central idea is to have been reborn, resuscitated with Christ. The baptism is only a designation formula.

It may be asked why should Paul use the term “sealing” in Ephesians 1:13 and in 2 Corinthians 1:22 if he meant only to say the same thing as in the other passages with less ambiguity in verbs that express “to give,” “to receive,” “to supply,” “to fill.” The possible connection between 2 Corinthians 1:22 and 3:2-3 provides an answer. While a “gift” may be handed out and received between two people in private, a “seal” instead, aims or presupposes an impact upon a third party. Sealing takes place in order to establish a public event, that is, to prove authority or authenticity for public benefit. Paul’s apostleship was challenged among the Corinthians. Unlike Jewish *sheluchim* (delegates from the Sanhedrin, a synagogue or a family) he could not produce letters, let alone a badge, proving his authority. His reply to the Corinthians was: “you’re yourselves a letter … that anybody could read and see, and is plain that you’re a letter from Christ …. written not with the ink but with the Spirit of the living God” (2 Cor 3:2-3). The reference to “seeing” and “reading” of this letter by “anybody” manifests the public purpose and function inherent also in the act of “sealing with the Spirit” (Barth 1974:141).

2.6.3.5.9 σφραγίς in 2 Timothy 2:19

In 2 Timothy 1:15; 2:17-18 and 4:10, 14 the author of 2 Timothy says to Timothy that his co-workers in Christ cannot be trusted—some have deserted him and are not faithful in proclaiming the gospel. The most cherished hopes in life could vanish. But God’s fundament is firm σφραγῖδα. Paul reminds Timothy that this fundament is the church. The word σφραγῖδα means “firm,” “solid,” or “stable.”

To be sealed with God’s approbation is the maximum of what man may aspire to achieve and aim for. To all human beings that are sealed, God promises the protection of angel legions and the consoling encouragement of His divine presence.

In the New Testament, sealing is also manifested in the figurative mode applied to the life of Christ exemplified by His followers in their daily lives. Christ’s

principles. His moral integrity was manifested in some degree in the life of His followers. For Paul, to be a slave of Jesus Christ (Rm 1:1; 1 Cor 4:1; Phlp 1:1; Tt 1:1) means to be marked by the figurative sealing concept of the *imitatio Christi.* That was the core of his biographic preaching (Witherington III 1994:4; Mosley 2000:34).

In the days of Paul, to live a Christian lifestyle, meant an open invitation to persecution and mocking because that contradicted the standards of state religion (Brown 1990:347-348). The sealing in the figurative mode during early Christianity meant a testimonial and practical behavior in terms of Christian values and His moral life teachings. Such behavior meant for the Christian Ἀποστήτω ἀπὸ ἀδικία˝ "to be far from iniquity" (2 Tm 2:19). Literally, it means to apostate, to keep away from wickedness. Such Christian behavior did promote an adverse reaction from pagan Roman society, especially when they were related to moral political pagan religious standards that were enforced by Rome. The imperial worship and the moral practices were against the seal of God for Christians (Ac 4:12; 5:29, 32; Rm 1:18-32; 1 Tm 2:5) which according Paul was to be apart from ἀδικία (Heb 2:19). This voluntary isolation from moral corruption and idolatry attracted upon Christians humiliation and eventually persecution. Evidently, to some degree, the Christian way of life was a signet of Christ-likeness.

Beside the figurative mode of sealing in their lives (*imitatio Christi*), the Roman government's and society's despise and rejection of Christianity was possibly motivated in part because Christians received anyone in their midst as an equal, slaves included. That shocked the fundaments of Rome itself, which was grounded in the slavery merchandise of millions of human beings. This system was justified by the political and religious system imported also from Greece and beyond. Athenians, for instance, believed that there were only two kinds of people: Αθήαῖοι and the rest of the world (Nichol and Cottrell 1978c:489). Deissmann (1965:7-9) says that the majority of the Christian community during

New Testament times was composed of the humble-origin class, slaves included. That shows the humble origin of the Christian faith. Jesus of Nazareth was a carpenter and the apostle a tentmaker whose words dispersed throughout his letters depict the humble origin of primitive Christian congregations in great towns of antiquity. Describing the low- and humble-class society origin of Christianity, Deissmann (1965:7-146) depicts an engraved door inscription from a synagogue at Corinth (Ac 18:4; 1 Cor 1:18-21), which possibly was a meeting place for Christians. This engraved lettering is dated from the Imperial period and it says ΓωΓ HEBP]—Hebrews synagogue. It was without ornament of any kind. This simplistic lettering possibly shows the humble origin of the Corinthian church, which was possibly based on Christian slaves. However, according to the book of Acts (Ac 8:27, 36-39; 17:34; 13:4-12) and the letter to the Philippians (Phlp 4:22), Jesus of Nazareth was a carpenter.

The truth taught that as springtime returns each year the tree sap rises upward from below may be correctly applied to Christians in the first century (1 Corinthians 1:26-31). The prophecy of Isaiah 53:1-12 anticipates in some respects the humble humanity of the Messiah and the hidden divinity of Christ occult within His mission. The simple meeting at Caesarea of Phillip (Mt 16:13-16), the parable of the mustard seed (Lk 13:19), and the wheat grain teaching (Jn 12:24) add more evidence about the humble origin and kenotic life of Christ that penetrated the origin of the Christian community in the first century. For Christians of the first century, the concept of sealing can be seen as an authenticity of commitment and surrender to Jesus' teachings and a sense of ownership that will last to the end, no matter how much Imperial persecution and societal rejection and mocking could be brought against them. They depicted in their lives three important metaphorical sealing applications, namely: authenticity, ownership and property.

In 2 Timothy 2:19 σφραγῖδα is also used in the sense of "inscription" and "trustworthiness": a life that turns from wickedness and lives by doing God's will.

In a certain sense, the use of σφραγίδα in 2 Timothy 2:19 thus also refers to property.

2.6.3.6 στίγμα (στίγματα)

In Galatians 6:17, στίγματα, (an accusative, feminine, singular) refers to a "brand" done by fire in the flesh of a slave or on other property with the name or the symbol that identified the owner. Also sometimes captives were branded in this manner, as well as soldiers (marked with their commander's name). Slaves of a temple or followers of a specific deity were also marked in this way to demonstrate their devotion (Nichol and Cottrell 1988e:988). With the expression τὰ στίγματα τοῦ Ιησοῦ (Gl 6:17) Paul refers here to his physical being through persecutions and sufferings (see 2 Cor 4:10; 11:24-27). Paul's opponents insisted on forcing the Gentile converts to accept the mark of the circumcision as a demonstration of their submission to Judaism. But Paul had on him the "τὰ στίγματα τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ˝ that indicated whose slave he was, and for him there was no other loyalty but to Christ. The "τὰ στίγματα˝ of Paul therefore can be seen as his consecration to Christ. As such, Paul's scars or marks testified to the inveterate hate of the Jews toward him (Gl 5:11 in Nichol and Cottrell 1988e:988). According to Ironside (1979:111-113), Paul's στίγματα also served as a testimony of how one should follow Christ: "Men could look at him and say: That is the way Christ would have us live. And so you and I are called upon to manifest the life of the Lord Jesus Christ."

2.6.3.7 χαρακτήρ

The term χαρακτήρ (Heb 1:3) a noun, masculine, singular, nominative is *hapax legomena* in the New Testament. The humiliated and exalted Christ is described as an impression of God—Christ is the reflection and image of God (Kittel 1974d: 421). In the LXX the term χαρακτήρ occurs three times. In Leviticus 13:28 it is used to refer to the "scar" that results from burning. In 4 Maccabees 15:4 the likeness between parents and children is called χαρακτήρ.

The character of the former has been impressed on the latter (Kittel 1974d: 420). The term is also found in the Apocrypha. In 2 Maccabeus 4:10 χαρακτήρ

(Ελλήικὸν χαρακτῆρα) it is employed for describing hell, culture, the abolishing of the laws of the fathers and the fathers and the introducing of customs contrary to the Law, such as the building of a gymnasium by Jason (Polybius 18:34, 7 in Kittel 1974f:420). It is also employed as “custom” and “practice.” It additionally denotes the distinctiveness of a language or manner of speaking (Kittel 1974d: 419).

2.6.3.8 χάραγμα (χαράγματα, χαράγματι)

The word χαράγματι (dative, singular, neuter in Acts 17:29) describes a stone engraved by art, literally “the sculpture of art and man’s device” (Wigram 2002:796). Kittel (1974d: 416-417) also registers that the word χαράγματι is used in a sense of handiwork. The word χάραγμα does not occur in LXX. Instead, we find the term Χαράσσω in the Maccabeus. There this vocable, χαράσσω, is employed to explain the marking of the Jews by Ptolomey IV Philopator with the ivy leaf of Dionysus to denote allegiance for this god (3 Macc 2:29).

The term σφραγίς and χάραγμα are also present in Revelation. The word σφραγίς occurs 31 times in the Apocalypse (5:1, 2, 5, 9; 6:2, 5, 7, 9; 7:2, 3; 8:1, 4 and 20:3, 10) and χάραγμα appears eight times in the same book (13:16, 17; 14:9, 11; 19:20 and 20:4). These vocables will be discussed in § 4.2.

2.7 SEALING IN THE APOSTOLIC FATHERS

In the Apostolic Fathers references to sealing are rare (Kittel 1971b:951). It is used only in 1 Clement 4:3. The author makes use of the story found in Numbers 17:16. Moses sealed 12 staffs or clubs representing the 12 heads of the tribes with their rings. In 2 Clement 7:6, the word “seal” is interpreted in the light of 1 Clement 8:6, “keep the flesh and seal inviolate.” In Clement 6:9 it is said of baptism that it should be kept pure and unspotted. A suggestion of sealing is represented by baptism when the two terms are used for describing the same thing. Yet, the antitheses of flesh and seal suggest rather the author takes the seal to represent the Holy Spirit (see Eph 1:13). In these passages Clement is

describing how converts go down into the water as dead men and rise up from the water alive (κακείνός ἐκηφυχθη ἥ σφραγίς αὕτη) (1 Clement 16:4). These passages are the earliest known evidence where baptism is clearly and unambiguously called a σφραγίς.

The most significant "seal" reference that declares the seal as being the water is found in the book of *Pastor of Hermas* 8: 2-3 and 9, 16:3-7 and 17:44 (Kittel 1971b:951-957). One particular comment states: "those who have received the seal of the Son of God," and "we are told plainly that the seal is the water (ἡ σφράγις οὖν ὕδωρ ἐστίν). The vocable σημεῖον, as such, is not present during the Apostolic Fathers period either in Hermae, Epistle of Diognetus, Polycarp or Ignatius. The use of σημεῖον in Barnabas 12:5 is outside the common framework at a first glance. Here the serpent, which Moses lifted up, is typologically referred to as Jesus. In Nm 21:8, God told Moses to set up the brazen serpent upon a sign ἐπὶ σημείου (Kittel 1971b:261).

By the time of the Christian Fathers the term became a synonym of prophecy (Shea, in Ouro 1998:326-342).[9]

2.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY

From the Uruk period in the ANE up to the New Testament and inclusive of Gnosticism, a similarity in the use of sealing can be traced. These sealing use similarities throughout such history periods were expressed in economy, politics, religion, and social order. Some of those applications in history were used for indicating authenticity, inviolability, ownership, and protection.

With regards to the meaning and applications of sealing it is important to remember the presence of the sealing instrument used to place those meaning applications. Those applications were placed on various kinds of sealing techniques and materials throughout the ANE and so on. The stamp and cylinder

[9] For a more detailed explanation of use of the apotelesmatic method in the prophecies of Daniel, see Ford (2007:10, 12-13, 17, 48, 65) and Blavatsky (2003:326).

seals were the first ones to be used for such purposes. The origin of stamp and cylinder seals dealt primarily with various objectives in mind, including illiteracy. In a world where so many people did not know how to read and write, sealing was also an appropriate way to solve that issue. It was a matter of one simple stamped seal as a signature. That process of stamping a seal was also important for economy, politics, religion, and social order applications.

As much in the Ancient Near East as in the New Testament world, the presence of property and ownership inviolability was crucial for ancient economy, where sometimes religion played a roll of authenticity in protecting seals. Shipments and cargo sometimes were stored in temples prior to their departure and the priests required an authentic proof of ownership and property from the enquirer in order to have access to the storing temple house where the product was seal protected and stored. The sealing was, in this particular, the technical element that united five honesty aspects involved in the act of storing the sealed contents in the temples and the careful attitude of priests in demanding a proof of transparency when people came to the sanctuaries asking to see or inspect their supposed property. In this sealing temple storing process, ownership, property, authenticity, inviolability, and protection were the five applicable figurative elements involved in this action.

In the cylinder seal, for instance, there was a chance of a little more writing area for writing or engraving the blessings from the gods that included protection against evil powers and also provided inviolability and genuineness. The contest scenes are observed in many seals, mainly that of kings fighting against evil powers in the form of mythical animals.

One of the most respected persons related to the art of seals in the ANE was the seal cutter. This was possibly because of a Kosmogonic tradition bestowed on him of a certain blessing from the gods and goddesses for which the seal cutter engraved their motifs and names. In the Babylonian market, the seal cutter work,

was important because he engraved the sealing motifs, which indicated ownership, protection, property and magical powers of preservation. The seal motifs were made in a variety of stones, according to the wealth the seal buyer needed.

Besides the engraved or etched seals, tattoos were also part of daily life in the Ancient Near East. In Egypt, they were like an omen or amulet for protection in the travail of baby delivery. The finding of Egyptian female mummies tattooed on their heaps confirms this protective approach on seals. Actually, because of the fear of demons and evil spirits anything could be sealed to propose security.

In the Old Testament the marking or branding is also present to denote ownership, property, and protection, and even as a symbol of salvation as well. The Passover in Exodus 12 evidences this fact when the Israelites are ordered to mark the doorposts of their homes with the Lamb's blood for salvation, protection, and ownership against the angel of destruction who brought the last plague upon Egypt. In a few Bible occurrences, the mark is also used to seal a person on their skin to show loyalty to a certain cause. Cain was marked by God Himself (Gn 4:15). By this act, Divinity let the world know of Cain's behavior and rebellion against God's principles. A different scenario is seen when a slave voluntarily decided to remain in their master's house. The master then branded the servant in the earlobe besides the door its post door (Ex 21:5-6; Dt 15:16-17).

With the exceptions of Genesis 4:15, where God marked Cain in the forehead, and Ezekiel 21:5-6 and Deuteronomy 15:16-17, where the earlobe piercing was allowed if the servant consented to remain in the master's house, God did not prescribe tattooing or branding Israelites bodies with signs (Lv 19:28).

A metaphoric scenario in the use of sealing is seen in Ezekiel 9:1-4, where the divine scribe uses the heavenly *taw* as a seal on the forehead of the faithful to

protect God's children from imminent judgment. These examples also show ownership, property, and protection.

One example of the figurative use of sealing is found in Ezekiel 9:1-4. The sealing in the passage is not a literal bodily or visible sealing. It deals within the mind. The godly attitude against sin and injustice (vs. 4) is shown by Isaiah (in 8:16), who intends to illustrate the same picture as Ezekiel 9:4. This aspect is also present when the prophet Ezekiel wrote about the law written in the heart of Judah (Ezk 36:25, 26). The sealing scenario described in Ezekiel 9:4, which was originally designed in an Old Testament geographic fulfillment for the returning of captives from the Babylonian exile, was also developed by Paul into a worldwide Christian application. This figurative use of sealing is climaxed in Pauline writings (Gl 4:19; 1 Cor 13:1-13; 2 Cor 3:1-3; Heb 10:15, 16) when the apostle is obviously transferring the meaning of the Decalogue written in stone to the intimate sealing experience of that same law written in the mind-heart of the believer, which is actually Christ transforming the human life.

The sealing in the New Testament recaptures the Old Testament sealing characteristics. Such attributes are inscribed in the mind-heart of the believer. It is not located in the body itself as a physical brand, but the body has the stamped seal of a living sacrifice of consecration and morality (Rm 13:1). The sealed Christian "product" is not stored in the chambers of a temple merely. Actually, it is a living and an open letter (2 Cor 3:1-4). The seal is marked within his life, wherever the Christian goes or whatever he experiences; sealing is a response of loyalty and faith, a growing process of experience toward Christ-likeness.

The concept of sealing is also present in the work of the Holy Spirit. He combines the believers' responses with the sealing attributes coming from the Old Testament but present now in Christ's life: ownership, protection, authenticity, property, loyalty, and obedience. It is a voluntary sealing because it is cored on

faith, friendship, and obedience on the believer's part. One interesting fact is that sealing in the OT sometimes is externally applied but with an internal reaction. Circumcision is a good example of such a premise. Circumcision shows an act of faith.

The letters engraved in the high priest's tiara "Holiness to Jehovah" (Ex 28:36; 39:30), indicated God's practical ideal for all Israel. The priesthood had to be a living example of sealing authenticity. Through the teaching of the Torah, this teaching must be reproduced in the life of Israel.

In the Graeco-Roman world it is possible to see a similar sealing pattern in different matters such as slavery, legal documents, and military activities where ownership, authenticity, protection, loyalty, obedience, and property were required and demanded. Likewise, tattooing, for instance, was included to show loyalty to a legion commander or emperor. The concern for authenticity in letters and shipment cargo, which happened during Babylonian times is seen equally in Hellenism and in the Roman world.

In the writings of some Latin authors, such as Seneca, external slavery sealing could not steal the inner mind of the servant, and Paul explains the importance of a Christian attitude between slaves and masters and vice-versa (Phil). The Roman branding and marking of slaves with cruel devices, such as collars, shows a cruel similitude also present in other ancient cultures and is rooted in money and selfishness. The sealing of slaves during the Graeco-Roman world shows that power and property are more important than human rights. Branding and marking in today's society also portrays slavery in ways such as social and moral depravity, including economic injustice. Those slavery symbols depict a certain reality that also echoes back to the sealing and branding characteristics of the Graeco-Roman slavery system.

In addition it is true that the Graeco-Roman world was a realm considered by their inhabitants as being full of demons, witchcraft, and spells. Magic in seals and animal sacrifices in the Graeco-Roman world were also intended to pacify gods and to ask for their protection. The presence of σημεῖον in the Homeric writings which were widely used in the Graeco-Roman learned society was applied mostly in an anthropological-religion sense.

The concept of sealing is vague and metaphorical in Alexandrian Judaism. Plato used the term to characterize the doctrine of his ideas. Philo, instead, uses "sealing" just to illustrate the constant and ever presence of God. It is the same seal tool reproducing multiple benefits in human beings. According to him, Gnosticism shows the sealing as being baptism itself. In the New Testament, sealing finds its climax in the symbol of its application.

Jesus shows the sealing aspect of authenticity. This authenticity is reflected and ἐσφράγεν "certified" (NKJV) in his ministry (Jn 3:33). In Romans 4:11, Paul shows another sealing aspect. He shows obedience or loyalty in the external evidence of the sealing through circumcision, mingled with the other part of such reality: Faith in Christ Jesus through baptism. In Corinthians 9:2, the same apostle discusses another important fact of the sealing: property. Christians belong not to Paul but to Christ. He only presents them as a seal of his apostleship conferred by Jesus Himself.

The term σημεῖον is an interesting word, which describes the wonders of God specially shown when He intervened with His sign wonders in Egypt. But the term is also abundantly used within the New Testament, where it is employed by the archangel telling the shepherds they will recognize the σημεῖον when they see the Messiah resting in a crib. It is also necessary to remember that such a word in the New Testament period is combined with the word τέσαρα throughout the different occurrences where the two terms are used.

The scars suffered by Paul (στίγματα in Gl 6:17) were introduced after the Gnosticism period as a sign of sainthood within Roman Catholicism. In this scenario, the στίγματα are shown temporarily in the palm of the hands, feet, side and more rarely on the temples or around the head of a few pious people. According to Roman Catholicism, certain chosen people will be sealed on a temporary basis with these particular open wound scars. For Paul, the scars are more than physical. They also represent the transformation of his character and life. Now he is able to stand for Christ and suffer for Him. Before he was a persecutor, now he is a slave.

In Ephesians 1:13 scholars look at two different approaches for the sealing of the Holy Spirit. One group sees the sealing as baptism and relates that experience to the different communities as Ebionites, Qumran, and Gnosticism who considered such a position. Another group of scholars considers the sealing of the Spirit in those Pauline passages as a reference to the work and operation of the Spirit through and in the life of the early Christian church. In Ephesians 4:30, the same Paul proposes two more metaphorical symbols on sealing: protection and inviolability for the day of Redemption. This assurance is already present but not yet fulfilled.

In 2 Timothy 2:19, the sealing captures, in a figurative statement, all of the previous sealing characteristics in one sentence expressed by the apostle: to be apart from ἀδικία. Sealing is property and ownership based on friendship and love. Those heavenly blessings given by the Spirit produce obedience and loyalty and a deep sense of belonging to Christ. Sealing in the NT is not an isolated mark. It means Christ's holistic rest and commitment, a character that is portrayed as a process of Christ-likeness in the life of believers.

The next chapter contains the various schools of interpretation by which the book of Revelation is studied and interpreted. The chapter will comment on the origin and approach on each school's method of interpretation.