THE PROMISED LAND: HERMENEUTICAL AND THEOLOGICAL APPROACH. CONTEMPORARY ECOTHEOLOGICAL READINGS

A dissertation submitted for the degree of the Master of Theology

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Preface

The present work is a part of the requirements for a Masters program in the School of Pastoral and Social Theology of the Faculty of Theology at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. The work is presented to the Department of the Biblical Studies, Patristics and Christian Literature.

My interest in ecotheology had emerged a couple of years ago, when the use of bread in the Divine Liturgy became a focus of my theological interest. Trying to investigate the connection between the use of bread as a human product made of wheat, as a sample of God’s creation, and the biblical hymns celebrating God’s creation, I was drawn strongly to the field of Biblical Studies. The present work is a result of that interest.

Foremost, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my advisor Professor Athanasios Paparnakis for the continuous support of my Masters study and research, for his patience, motivation, enthusiasm, and immense knowledge. His guidance and dedication helped me throughout the time of my research and writing of this thesis.

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I thank my committee members. Their dedication and work that I have witnessed as a student, demonstrated to me their deep and thorough dedication for biblical theology.

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“καὶ εἶδεν ὁ θεὸς τὰ πάντα ὅσα ἐποίησεν καὶ ἴδοὺ καλὰ λίαν”

Genesis 1:31
Introduction

The 20th century has brought an expansion of technology and the idea of a better life, but it has also brought a concern for the environment. Orthodox Christianity, among others, has been trying to bring light onto this concern from its own understanding of the world and life in general. Although Christianity has been accused for causing the ecological catastrophe with its doctrine about humans' role in creation, we believe that the perspective of Christianity can bring a new and fresh light on the problem of ecology. Having in mind that the Bible is not an ecological handbook with the solutions for environmental problems, it is our stand that the Bible does offer essential values for humans and for the creation. Those values, which have been identified by the Orthodox Church and are now the core of its faith, need to be reassessed with regard to humans' exploitation of the creation. In this study we will use the concept of the 'promised land', a 'land flowing with milk and honey' as an example of a biblical concept which can contribute to the field of biblical ecotheological hermeneutics.

The expression 'Promised Land' as such does not exist in the Masoretic text or in the text of the Septuagint, but there is a concept of the land which God promised to Israel along with its descendants. This concept of the Promised Land can be found throughout the library of the books of the Old Testament. It is represented in the Pentateuch, Joshua, Judges, 1-4 Kings, 1-2 Chronicles, the Prophetic books and the book of Psalms, and it appears as a concept of life and expectation of ancient Israel.

The Promised Land, as a geographical territory and/or as a theological concept, differs throughout different periods of the history of ancient Israel. Each set of texts that is referring to a certain period of the history of Israel consists of books and texts, the origins of which do not necessarily date from the very same period to which the books refer. The books are often found to be written in a much later period with interpolations, adaptations and redactions, which took place over an extended period of time. With regard to this, different scholarly results which have been presented so far are often in dispute with one another.

Having in mind all the major developments in the field of biblical research, we are aware that choosing a certain methodology with reference to a particular scholar's results is an imperative, although some scholars tend to find it unnecessary. Because our approach is primarily theological, we will use the results of historical critical scholarship, but we will not
apply this method upon the work itself. The work will keep its focus on the theological thread of the land of promise, with reference to historical critical achievements and results and having in mind different arguments and approaches by scholars.

The first section of the work – Land as a promise in the History of the Israelites – examines the meaning of the Promised Land in different biblical accounts through different historical critical opinions. The biblical tradition that is closely connected to the Promised Land stems from Abraham and continues up to the times of Ezra and Nehemiah. Biblical historical criticism, on the other hand, along with biblical archeology, philology, history and sociology, have presented us with biblical text as a material which was written, rewritten, edited and redacted on many occasions over a long period of time. This often means that the particular text originates from the period other than the one the tradition ascribed to it, which sheds a new light on its interpretation. In this section, we will examine the texts related to the Promised Land, through the lense of biblical criticism.

The second section of the work – The Promised Land as a Sacral Reality of the Covenant Relationship - examines the theme of the Promised Land theologically. The Promised Land will be examined as the sacral reality Israel received as an inheritance, a reality which involves the concepts of holy space and holy time. The holy life was meant to be lived by remaining faithful to the covenant and through the implementation of covenantal laws, which regulate Israel's life. The sanctification of the time is expressed through observance of the holy days. The sanctification of the space is expressed through ritual, social and economic regulations.

The third section of the work – The Promised Land – The Ecotheological Approach – examines the history of ecotheology and ecotheological hermeneutics. It presents the major ecotheological hermeneutical trends of the contemporary time. The chapter discusses the ecological significance of the Promised Land concept in the Old Testament, as well as the challenges of attempting to read these textual units ecotheologically. The results of the research made in the first two chapters are being examined through an ecotheological lense and in the context of the Orthodox tradition.

The biblical versions used in this work area) the text of the Septuagint edited by Alfred Rahlf in 1935 and b) an electronic edition of the second printing of A New English Translation of the Septuagint – NETS, including corrections and emendations, as published by Oxford University Press in 2009. The textual units which deal with the etymological
analysis and the textual units in which the text of the Septuagint differs from the Masoretic text refer to the Hebrew Masoretic according to the Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia.
1 The Land as a Promise in the History of the Israelites

The expression ‘Promised Land’, as such, does not appear in the Old Testament. On the other hand, the expression “to the land flowing with milk and honey/ εἰς γῆν ρέουσαν γάλα καὶ μέλι” (for example: Exod 3:8; 3:17; 13:5; 33:3; Lev 20:24; Num 13:27) is frequent, and refers to the Promised Land in which the descendants of Abraham are to be settled. Waldemar Janzen explains that the common English designations ‘Promised Land’ and ‘Holy Land’, although indeed expressing central theological concerns of the Old Testament, are not characteristic for the Old Testament. The Hebrew language does not have words for ‘promise’ or ‘to promise’. Where they appear in English, they render the common Hebrew term for ‘to speak’ or ‘to say’, for example: “the land that he mentioned to them/τὴν γῆν ἤν εἶπεν αὐτοῖς” (Deut 9:28).  

The Promised Land refers to the land God promised to Abraham: “To your offspring I will give this land.”/ τῷ σπέρματί σου δόσω τὴν γῆν ταύτην” (Gen 12:7), and renewed to Isaac: “For to you and to your offspring I will give all this land, and I will establish my oath that I swore to your father Abraam/σοι γὰρ καὶ τῷ σπέρματί σου δόσω πᾶσαν τὴν γῆν ταύτην καὶ στήσω τὸν ὅρκον μου ἐν ἡμοῖς Ἀβραὰμ τῷ πατρί σου” (Gen 26:3) and to Jacob: “as for the land which you are sleeping on, I will give it to you and to your offspring/ἡ γῆ ὑφ’ ἡς σὺ καθεύδας ἐπὶ αὐτής σοι δόσω αὐτήν καὶ τῷ σπέρματί σου” (Gen 28:13). It is the land to which God took the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob after delivering them from Egypt: “And I said, “I will bring you up from the affliction of the Egyptians (...) into a land flowing with milk and honey.” /καὶ ἐπον ἀναβηβάσω ύμᾶς ἐκ τῆς κακώσεως τῶν Αἰγυπτίων (...) εἰς γῆν ρέουσαν γάλα καὶ μέλι” (Exod 3:17).

The biblical theology of the Old Testament has made significant contributions in identifying the central theme of the Old Testament. There have been several attempts in defining the underlying structure or the central theme in the theology of the Old Testament. 

3 Barr proposed five best examples of such attempts: Köhler, Eichrodt, Vriezen, von Rad and Childs and offered the review of each approach. See: Ibid., 27.
Walter Brueggemann considers the topic of the land to be “the central theme of biblical faith” and argues the importance of such an approach of biblical theology in the second half of the 20th century, having in mind the problem of place and space of the given time.⁴

Similarly, Janzen argues that the theme of the land is undoubtedly ubiquitous throughout the texts of the Old Testament, and that it could be, along with the covenant, taken as the central motif of the Old Testament.⁵

Speaking of the central theme of the Old Testament, Walther Eichrodt argues that it is covenantal. Whether it is explicitly stated, or understood, all the narratives and events described are taking place in the context of this realm:

“...the covenant-union between Yahweh and Israel is an original element in all sources, despite their being in part in very fragmentary form. Indeed this is still true even of those passages where the word berit has disappeared altogether.”⁶

On the other hand, Johannes Behm and Gottfried Quell consider that viewing the covenant as a common denominator in the history of Israel by some prominent scholars is overrated, since “we cannot be sure whether the author views the theory as a binding dogma or gives it his general approval”.⁷

Some prominent scholars have pointed out that the themes of the Promised Land as God’s land, may be parts of separate traditions. In such case, the theme of the Promised Land was introduced into the Pentateuch corpus through the J source. The theme of Yahweh’s land, according to this scholarly view, which appears in the texts that refer to the cult and legal materials, could be either connected with the belief of the Canaanites that each land belongs to its own god or with the early Yahwistic origin. In either case, the concept of Yahweh as the owner of the land is an integral part of biblical faith that God rules and owns the entire world, Canaan being its part (Exod 19:5). The implication of such theology is that

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⁵Janzen, “Land,” 146.
the Israelites, i.e. all humans, are strangers and sojourners in God's land and/or earth (Lev 25:23; 1 Chr 29:15).  

In order to examine the meaning of the Promised Land, we will present a brief etymological analysis of the terms in use in Greek Septuagint and in Hebrew Masoretic text.

1.1 The Promise

Where the English text uses the word ‘promise’, both the Septuagint and the Masoretic Text use various words which suggest the ‘word of God’, but do not refer specifically to God's promise. The English word ‘promise’ is usually the translation of the Greek word ἐπαγγελία and/or the Hebrew word dabar.

Julius Schniewind and Gerhard Friedrich argue that in the Old Testament the very term for ‘promise’ has no preliminary history. It is suggested that sometimes the use of ἐπαγγελλία in the Septuagint is due to misunderstanding of the Hebrew text.

The term ἐπαγγέλλω, ἐπαγγελλία in ancient Greek appears with the meanings: to indicate, to declare, to order, to offer to do something, to promise, to vow or to accept the offer. It had been used in public declarations by the state, technical legal use, in the sense of liturgy, i.e. public service, in sacral meaning and proclamation of festivals. In religious use, it was always (except in one example) a reference to a man's promises to a god but not vice versa.

According to Liddell-Scott-Jones, the Greek ἐπαγγελία, Ἡ, means command, summons, announcement, notice, notification, offer, promise, profession, undertaking, indication, canvassing and subject of a treatise. According to James Strong, the Greek ἐπαγγελία, ας, Ἡ,

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8 Janzen, “Land,” 147.
can mean a summons, message or promise,¹³ and Hebrew *dabar* can mean to answer, appoint, bid, command, commune, declare, destroy or give. It is usually rendered as ‘to speak’ or ‘to say’, but it appears in many more meanings, among which is also a rendering of ‘promise’.¹⁴

### 1.2 The Land

The two Hebrew words for the land: *adamah* and *erets* are translated usually by the Septuagint as *γῆ*. Liddell-Scott-Jones gives the following meanings for *γῆ, ἡ*, as earth - including land and sea, earth as an element, land, country, the earth or ground as tilled, estate or farm.¹⁵ According to Strong, *adamah* can be a country, earth, ground or land,¹⁶ while *erets* can mean earth, land, common, country, field, ground, land, nations or way,¹⁷ and the meaning of *γῆ, γῆς, ἡ* is the earth, country, ground, land or world.¹⁸

In spite of their frequent translation into English, by the word 'land', terms *adamah* and *erets* are rarely synonyms, and according to some scholars, they never are. 'Land' is usually a translation of *erets* when it refers to two realms: a specific geographic region or the territory which belongs to specific people. 'Earth' is usually a rendition of *erets* when it refers to the entire realm of human habitation, i.e. the entire earth. The plural of *erets* is compatible with this usage, but relatively infrequent, though in some instances the translation of *erets* as 'land' or 'earth' depends on complex exegetical decisions. In most of the instances where land is referred to as a territory belonging to specific people, the land in question is identified in some way as promised to, claimed or possessed by Israel or a part of Israel, although the explicit designation 'land of Israel' is rare. In some occasions, genitive combinations or adjectival phrases give specific characteristics to the extent and quality of the land. Often, land locates a group of people. Occasionally, it can be personified.¹⁹

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¹⁴Ibid., 1696.
¹⁵Liddell et al., “The Online Liddell-Scott-Jones (LSJ),” 347.
¹⁸Ibid., 1093.
The Hebrew term *erets* is mostly translated into English by 'land', also by 'earth', 'ground', 'country' and also by several less frequent terms. It combines the meaning of the 'earth', in the cosmic sense, as the antithesis to 'heaven', the meaning of the 'land' as the antithesis to 'sea' and the meaning of 'ground' and 'land' as a sovereign territory; sometimes it can mean 'underworld' or 'hades'. It is not easy to determine whether it refers to 'earth' or 'land' at the given instance, but the more precise meaning can be defined by a genitive, a possessive suffix, or a relative clause (for example: in Isa 13:5 it is not clear whether the enemies will destroy the whole earth or the whole land).

The Hebrew term *adamah*, which the Septuagint almost always translates as γῆ, is frequently translated in English by 'land', also by 'ground', 'earth', 'soil' or 'country'. The term is derived either from the root with the meaning 'to be red', so it is said to mean 'red land', 'red earth' or from the root meaning 'he has joined', 'he has added' i.e. representing a layer. Again, the precise meaning can be defined by studying the etymology and the context in the text it appears. It can refer to the substance, cultivated land, property or dwelling place.

*Erets* includes fertile land and wilderness – *midbar*. *Adamah* designates agricultural land that sustains population and is a contrast to *midbar* – wilderness. It is usually owned by a person, household or a group, and God's ultimate ownership is assumed and expressed: “on the land of God/ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς τοῦ θεοῦ” (Isa 14:2). Israel owns it as God's gift “bless your people Israel and the land that you gave them/ εἰλὸγησον τὸν λαὸν σου τὸν Ισραήλ καὶ τὴν γῆν ἣν ἔδωκας αὐτοῖς (Deut 26:15).

The expression 'land of Israel' - 'land' coming from the root for *adamah* - is peculiar to the prophet Ezekiel (16 times), which could be his expression of nonpolitical land expectations. The usual reference is to the portion of Israel or subgroups of Israel. With respect to this, both *adamah* and *erets* are key terms for Old Testament theology of the land.

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24 Ibid., 90–94.
26 Ibid.
Apart from the terms discussed above, there is another Hebrew word - *tebel*, translated by the Septuagint as γῆ or οἰκουμένη. The English translation is usually 'world' or 'earth'.

Liddell-Scott-Jones renders οἰκουμένη, ἡ, as an inhabited region, Greek world, the inhabited world, our world, worlds, the whole world, the Roman world or the world to come. According to Strong, *tebel* means world, and the meaning for οἰκουμένη, ης, ἡ is the inhabited earth, earth or world.

The etymology of the word *tebelis* obscure and remains an open question. The primary meaning of the word is '(dry) land', mostly with the emphasis on permanence and solidity. The various occurrences of the word reveal tension between *erets* and *midbar* - desert, wilderness. It belongs to the lexical field of cosmology and creation theology and can mean 'cosmos'. It appears more often in the Psalms, and it does not appear in the Pentateuch.

Basically, it denotes floating earth with the suggestion that it is an inhabited world and elsewhere the cosmos, universe. Othmar Keel explains this as follows:

"...The translation „dry (or) habitable land“ is too narrow: tēbēl refers to the solid earth of ancient Near Eastern cosmology, whether bipartite (heaven and earth), tripartite (heaven, earth, sea), or even quadripartite (heaven, earth, waters above, waters below [including the netherworld]), often depicted visually, especially in Egypt."

The Septuagint translates *tebel* as γῆ or οἰκουμένη, but never as κόσμος which originally was used to denote order or ornament and only later had acquired a new meaning.

Most of the contexts in which ‘land’ appears refer to the land Israel claims. It is the land which is anticipated: “the whole land before you/πᾶσα ἡ γῆ ἐναντίον σοῦ” (Gen 13:9), highly desirable and praiseworthy (Deut 8:7-10), “a land flowing with milk and honey/εἰς γῆν...

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27 Liddell et al., “The Online Liddell-Scott-Jones (LSJ),” 1205.
29 Ibid., 3625.
31 Ibid., 558.
32 Ibid., 559.
33 Othmar Keel (Symbolism of the Biblical World, 15-56) in: Ibid.
The concept of the ‘promised land’ in the life of ancient Israelites was not the same as that of contemporary man. The etymology of the words in use points out to this difference.

1.3 The Promise of the Land to Abraham

Israel's claim to Canaan was based on God's promises to Abraham (Gen 12:7). The God worshipped by the people of Israel was primarily the God of Abraham (e.g. Exod 3:6, 15; 4:1; 3Kgs 18:36; Ps 46:10). The Israelites' belief and references to Abraham as their ancestor to whom God promised the land was attested by each book of the Pentateuch after Genesis (Exod 2:24; 33:1, etc.; Lev 26:42; Num 32:11; Deut 1:8; etc.), the historical books (Josh 24:2, 3; 4 Kgs 13:23; 1 Chr 16:16-18; 2 Chr 20:7; 30:6; Neh 9:7,8), Psalm 104 as well as the prophets of the latter days of the Judean Monarchy (Isa 41:8; 51:2; 63:16; Jer 33:26; Ezek 33:24; Mic 7:20).

The biblical account of Abraham presents him as living in the period of the Late Bronze Age. Scholarly opinion on the authenticity and antiquity of patriarchal stories is seriously divided. Some prominent scholars argued that Abraham is not a historical person, but rather a figure of a tradition being either a shadow of Israel’s prehistory or a purely literary creation. Other scholars see the patriarchal stories as the fabrication of later times. These various opinions, such as that of Thompson or Van Seter, place the origin of patriarchal stories from

40 Millard presents the basics of scholarly debate about Abraham as a person and his historicity in: Millard, “Abraham (person),” 37–39.
the period of the Monarchy to the fourth century. Some other scholars, such as Nahum Sarna, believe that patriarchal stories preserve authentic memories of an earlier historic situation. According to Sarna, if that material was a fabrication of some later time, it remains unclear why it is not in accord with the beliefs of that later time. Similarly extreme positions are present in the field of archaeology, as well as those of Albright, Thompson, Van Seters.⁴¹

For example, George Mendenhall and Gary Herion state that the basic biblical tradition about Abraham comes from the period from the United Monarchy and that there are no traces of it in the biblical sources from the period before the Monarchy, such as Genesis 49, Exodus 15, Numbers 23-24, Deuteronomy 32-33, in which it is Jacob (Israel) and not Abraham, who is the common ancestor. ⁴²

Because biblical tradition presents Abraham as the ancestor of the ancient Israel, who was promised the land and the offspring, our references to the Promised Land will start with Abraham.

### 1.3.1 The Land Promised to Abraham

Genesis 12:1-3 is a call to Abraham to leave the land of his ancestors and go to the land God promises to give him and his descendants. “Go forth from your country and from your kindred and from your father’s house to the land that I will show you. ἐξελθε ἐκ τῆς γῆς σου καὶ ἐκ τῆς συγγενείας σου καὶ ἐκ τοῦ οίκου τοῦ πατρός σου εἰς τὴν γῆν ἣν ἂν σοι δείξω” (Gen 12:1). Abraham is called to believe, and if he believes he will inherit the land and a number of descendants.

The idea of the Promised Land is a matter of discussion among the scholars. Some scholars, like Alt, argue that the patriarchal religion in seminomadic groups was characterized by the faith in the land promise granted by the God of the Father in their own time and in a limited context. Others, like Clements and von Rad, consider that the historical nucleus of

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the land promise is in the ancient covenant with the El-deity at Mamre, who was the owner of
the territory and made a promise to Abraham and his offspring, which was extended to all of
Judah and to all Israel and the whole land of Canaan through David. Subsequently this theme
became dominant in the Hexateuch and the fulfillment of that promise was advanced to
Joshua's conquest and the era of the United Monarchy.43

Abraham was promised descendants, blessing and the land, if he will go from Haran
“to the land that I will show you/εἰς τὴν γῆν ἣν ἂν σοι δείξομαι“ (Gen 12:1-3). This unknown
land is later identified as Canaan (Gen 12:6-7).44

1.3.2 The Land as a Part of God’s Covenant with Abraham

God's call to Abraham was sealed with the covenant. The Abrahamic Covenant refers
to the account recorded in Genesis 15; 17:1-16. These texts bring the testimony of God
fashioning the covenant with Abraham, in which God obligates himself to Abraham and his
descendants to provide them with place, people and blessing. The covenant is initialized by
God, and Abraham was called to believe. Abraham believed in God's promise and was
reassured of the covenant.

In both of the biblical accounts (Gen 15:7-20 - J source and Gen 17:1-8 - P
source), God's covenant with Abraham includes God's promise of the land and offspring and
is an everlasting covenant (Gen 17:7; 9:16). The promises to Abraham not only refer to Israel
but also to all nations (Gen 12:3; Ps 71:17), as patriarchs were shown to bring blessing to the
nations around them.45

What is known as the Abrahamic Covenant is seen by some scholars as a charter from
the period of the United Monarchy and not as a covenant. Mendenhall and Herion, when
speaking about the Abrahamic Covenant, use quotation marks and place it under the category
of the Divine Charter. They argue that it is, along with the Davidic Charter, part of an
ideological matrix and that it seems that they both come from the same source, which is

44Ibid. Friedman, “Torah (Pentateuch),” 36.
connected to the old Canaanite tradition of Jebusite Jerusalem. According to this standpoint, God's promise of the land to Abraham in Genesis 15:18-21 was a religious legitimizing of the Davidic empire. Genesis 17 is, thus, an illustration of the final adaptation of Abrahamic tradition, in which the ritual of circumcision became a marker, which designates the recipient of the promise. This is why the late Hebrew term berith in post biblical Jewish tradition will mean both circumcision and the covenant at the same time.46

Just the same, the possibility of monotheism, at the time of Abraham, is a matter of dispute. The Bible presents the monotheism of Israel as beginning with Abraham. Christine Hayes, for example, argues that it is most likely that the monotheism in Israel began much later, as a minority movement which grew over the centuries, and was then projected back into Israel's history by the final editors of the Bible. Hayes explains that around the eighth century and continuing for several centuries, the Israelite community's literate circles gave a monotheistic framework to the nation's ancient stories and traditions. This way, they projected their monotheistic world view onto the nation's most ancient ancestors.47

The ritual of the covenant is described in the story of Genesis 15, also known as the 'covenant of the pieces'. It describes the establishment of the covenant between God and Abraham in which God, and God only, obliges himself to keep the covenant. This covenant is formalized through a ritual ceremony. The verb used is karath—'to cut a covenant' (Gen 15:18).

Many ANE48 historians and scholars pointed out to the parallel between the biblical covenant and the ANE covenants. In the ANE texts, there are two main types of the covenant: the suzerainty and the parity covenant. The suzerainty covenant is the type of a covenant in which a superior party, a suzerain, dictates the terms, usually of a political treaty, to an inferior party, which must obey. Such arrangement serves, most of all, the interest of the suzerain. In a parity covenant there are two equal parties in a treaty. According to this analogy, God appears as a suzerain who grants the land. This oath is ratified by an ancient

48Although the ANE treaties structure has been extracted and the comparison of these with the particular Old Testament covenants was made, which has shown the extraordinary similarity, with regard to these similarities and their validity and historical significance there is still no consensus among scholars. More about the treaties: William G. Dever, “Israel, History of: Archaeology and the Israelite ‘Conquest,’” ed. David Noel Freedman, The Anchor Bible Dictionary (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 653–656.
ritual. In such a ritual, both parties would pass between the split carcasses of the animal sacrificed, which meant that they agree to suffer the same fate as that animal, if they break the covenant.49

In the biblical account, however, Abraham cuts the animals, but only God passes between the two halves. Hayes points out the striking aspect of the unilateral character of this covenant, in which only God is obligated to fulfill his promise. This is completely reversed from what would be expected in a suzerain-vassal treaty.50

In Genesis 17, along with the promises of the land and descendants, there is another new promise – a line of kings will come from Abraham. This time there are obligations for Abraham and his offspring – as a sign of the covenant all males are to be circumcised. Scholars attribute this story to the P source, since the emphasis is on the themes that were important to the Priestly writer. God promises a line of kings coming forth from Abraham, and as a sign of the perpetual covenant, Abraham and his male descendants are to be circumcised. It will be the sign of God’s eternal covenant with Abraham and his seed.51

God's promise to Abraham that his descendants will possess the land took place in the center of that land in Shechem (Gen 12:1-9). In Genesis 13:14-17, God renewed the promise to Abraham and his descendants, who will own the land. Again, in Genesis 15 and in the account of the covenant making, God promises to Abraham that his childless condition will end and his descendants will occupy the land. In Genesis 17, thirteen years later God repeats his promise to Abraham about the land possession and changes his name from Abram to Abraham and Sarai to Sarah52. When God asked Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac, he repeated the promise of the offspring that will „possess the cities of their adversaries/κληρονομήσει τὸ σπέρμα σου τὰς πόλεις τῶν ὑπεναντίων“ (Gen 22:17). When Sarah was dying, Abraham bought from a Hittite of Hebron a cave with adjoining land for her burial (Gen 23). Later when he died, he was buried next to her (Gen 25:7-10).53 This piece of land and his son Isaac are all that Abraham will live to see of God's promise.

The promises given by God to Abraham are the foundation for Israel's claim of the land of Canaan (for example: Exod 3:6, 15; 3 Kgs 18:36; Ps 46:10). Abraham took care that

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49Hayes, “Open Yale Courses | Introduction to the Old Testament (Hebrew Bible) | Lecture 6 - Biblical Narrative.”
50Ibid.
51Ibid.
52LXT: Αβρααμ to Αβρααμ and Σαρα to Σαρα; NETS: Abram to Abraam and Sara to Sarra.
53Millard, “Abraham (person),” 37.
his son married someone from his relatives in Haran, probably because the local people were unacceptable to God (Gen 24:3; 15:16). He marked the places sacred to him as an intention to stay in the land (Gen 12:6; 13:18; 21:33). When it comes to the ownership of the land, he owned only one piece of land, the cave of Machpelah (Gen 23).  

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were sojourners in the land (Gen 17:8; 23:4; 26:3; 28:4; 35:27; 36:7; 37:1; Exod 6:4), even though the promise of possessing the land is repeated to Abraham and his descendants: (Genesis 13:15; 15:7, 18; 17:8; 22:17; 26:3; 28:4, 13; 35:12; 48:4; 50:24; Exodus 3:8; 6:4–8; 13:5; 32:13; 33:1; Numbers 10:29; 14:23; 32:11; Deuteronomy 6:18, 23; 8:1; 9:5, 28; 10:11; 11:8–9, 21; 26:3, 15; 28:11; 31:7, 20; 34:4; Joshua 1:6; 5:6; Judges 2:1). The cave of Machpelah, with the field around it, remained a sign of the fulfillment of God's promise and their permanent possession in Canaan (Gen 23).

1.4 The Land Promise in the Exodus from Egypt

In an attempt to contextualize the story of Exodus, based on the biblical text, Egyptian documents and archaeological findings, the most plausible time would be the 13th century BCE.

At the opening of the book of Exodus, the land promised to the patriarchs was still a promise, and the people of Israel were enslaved in Egypt. God chose Moses to lead the Israelites from the land of Egypt into the Promised Land (Exod 3:7-8; 6:2-8).

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54Ibid., 39.
1.5 The Land Promise in the Sinai Covenant

There has been much of a debate among scholars on whether the biblical account of the Sinai/Mosaic Covenant appeared a) at the beginning of Israel’s history on the basis of Suzerainty Treaty forms in the late Bronze Age, or b) if it appeared in the time of the Monarchy as an adaptation of Loyalty Oaths from the Iron Age. Furthermore, the English word ‘covenant’ is a rendering of the Septuagint term διαθήκη and Hebrew berith, the meaning of which will be explained as it appears in the Biblical text, with the brief reference to the ANE tradition.

1.5.1 The Etymology of the Covenant

The word covenant or testament has become a common English translation of the Biblical Hebrew term berith and the Greek Septuagint term διαθήκη.60

Liddell-Scott-Jones renders διαθήκη, ἡ as disposition of property by will, testament, mystic deposits on which the common weal depended, and the name of an eyesalve, compact, covenant or disposition.61 For διαθήκη, ης, ἡ, Strong gives the meaning which is connected with a contract and can be rendered as testament, will or covenant,62 and for berith it is confederacy, confederate, covenant, league, and it derives from barah in the sense of cutting.63

According to Behm and Quell, the meaning of the Hebrew term berith, which the Septuagint translates in most of the cases as διαθήκη, is a real etymological problem. Still, the usual rendering of the word is covenant which is not:

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59 Mendenhall and Herion, “Covenant,” 1716.
60 Behm and Quell, “Διαθήκη,” 126. Also, Girdlestone, Synonyms of the Old Testament, 213–214..
Girdlestone gives Syriac and Arabic renderings for ‘covenant’ and gives an example of Spanish translator De Reyna who came into a conclusion that none of the existing words in his language are not really rendering the Hebrew meaning of it.
62 Strong, New Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance, 1242.
63 Ibid., 1285.
“really a translation but a paraphrase. Hence we must use it with caution if we are to penetrate to the heart of the matter, as presented in the statements of such widely divergent character.”

Different phenomena, underlying the use of the term berith, can roughly be explained as ‘treaties’, ‘loyalty oaths’ and ‘charters’, 

whereas the term διαθήκη which the Septuagint uses, refers to ‘last will and testament’, ‘ordinance’ or ‘disposition’.

Furthermore, Behm and Quell argue that the very term ‘covenant’ in the Old Testament appears in two forms: in cases which represent a regulated form of fellowship between God and man and in cases which are half-legal and half-sacral forms of fellowship between man and man (there is also a number of cases in which the term is used poetically and metaphorically). The covenants made by God with the Israelites are considered to be of both theological and legal nature.

1.5.2 The Sinai Covenant

The period of origin of the Sinai Covenant is a matter of disagreement among scholars. The disagreement with regard to the covenant is centered on one major point: whether the concept of the covenant in the history of the Israelite people, as preserved in the biblical text, originates from the premonarchic period (ca. 1200-1000 BC) or if it is a pious fabrication of the later period of the Monarchy.

Mendenhall and Herion argue against the standpoint that the text was later fabrication, with no connection to the LBA treaties and that the Decalogue has no relation to the covenant traditions. On the contrary, they claim that the LB Suzerainty Treaties are represented or reflected in the biblical traditions of the Sinai Covenant, but they do bear marks of later writers who reworked them from the perspective of the monarchical period.

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65 Mendenhall and Herion, “Covenant,” 1716.
67 Ibid., 110.
68 Mendenhall and Herion debate against this standpoint: Mendenhall and Herion, “Covenant,” 1185–1191.
69 Ibid., 1185.
The Mosaic or Sinai Covenant (Exod 19-24) refers to the event that took place between Yahweh and the Israelites (Exod 12:38; Num 11:4), who fled from Egypt, as described in Exodus 19-24. It took place at Mount Sinai under the leadership of Moses, hence it’s name. The historical reconstruction of the exodus from Egypt and the establishment of the covenant at Sinai is quite difficult. There is a large number of scholars who argue that the Exodus and Sinai traditions have been part of one tradition from the beginning and many others who think differently. For example, there is a scholarly opinion that the Sinai complex is historically distinct from the Exodus-Kadesh complex. ‘The short historical creed’ (e.g. Deut 26:5-9; 6:20-24; Josh 24:2-13) is a different tradition from the Sinai material. ‘The short historical creed’ describes the actions of God on behalf of Israel. The Sinai material includes theophany, covenant and law. According to this scholarly view, these two traditions were, for the first time, combined in J source at the time of David and Solomon. In addition to this, the historical creed also consisted of different independent traditions, which were combined during the tribal period. The discussion on the subject continues. With regard to the socio-political realm, the particular influence has had the theory that the Mosaic Covenant was understood on the model of the Suzerainty Treaty from its beginning. This theory, again, was criticized since the Suzerainty Treaty pattern is clearest in the deutoronomic literature, which is of later time.

The account of Exodus 19-24 has three main elements: Yahweh’s action, Israel’s response and Israel’s obligation. While fleeing from Egyptians, the Israelites were unexpectedly given a new life by Yahweh, and after roaming through the wilderness they came to Sinai, where they had another experience of Yahweh – a theophany.

Yahweh had delivered Israel from the Egyptians, led them through the wilderness and appeared to them at Mount Sinai. The people of Israel recognised and realised this special care by Yahweh, and as an expression of this realisation they sealed a covenant. According to Exodus 24, the sealing ceremonies consisted of two ritual actions: a blood ritual (Exod 24:6-8) and a meal ritual (Exod 24:11,5). Moses sprinkled blood on the altar, which represented Yahweh, and on the people, which symbolically showed they share the same blood, i.e. the same life. The meal ritual was a common form of covenant sealing, and the sharing of meals

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71Ibid., 906.
72Ibid.
generally was an expression of belonging and of community in the ancient world. Both rituals were meant to express the core meaning of the covenant: a relationship of life and peace between Yahweh and Israel.\footnote{Ibid., 906–907.}

The covenant was concluded through two actions: verbal consent (Exod 19:8; 24:3; Josh 24:24) and a sacrificing of an animal, the blood of which was thrown on an altar and upon the people (Exod 24:5-8), which was a form of a self-curse. This ritual ceremony of the covenant ratification represented the people’s pledging of their lives, as a guarantee to the obedience. Later, such a ceremony will be replaced by a ritual form of circumcision, which was the sign of membership to the community.\footnote{Mendenhall and Herion, “Covenant,” 1187.}

Before the rituals were performed, there was a recitation of Yahweh’s words and ordinances to which the people promised obedience. According to some scholars, the word ‘covenant’ which is problematic to translate, should in fact be translated ‘obligation’. That obligation was not something imposed from the outside, but was rather a natural consequence or the outcome of the covenant. Israel was gifted a new life, and a new relationship with Yahweh meant new behaviour. This new behaviour involved two areas: the one with Yahweh and the one with others. Being freed from slavery, they now belonged to Yahweh and are his special possession, which involves a new way of life (Exod 19:4-6). More important than the freedom from slavery was the freedom of being able to serve Yahweh (Exod 4:23; 5:1,3; 7:16, 26; 8:16; 9:1, 13; 10:3). The first covenant obligation for Israel was to worship Yahweh only (Exod 20:2-3), which implies that the basic sin was idolatry. Regarding the relationship to others, i.e. the social dimension of the covenant, the way Israel treated each other, especially the poor, the oppressed and the alien would be a sign of their devotion to Yahweh. Once freed by Yahweh from the oppression in Egypt - ‘because you were once strangers (aliens) in the land of Egypt’- it would be now contradictory if Israel themselves became the oppressors. Thus, a frequent motive in the covenant law is against oppression of the weak (e.g., Exod 22:21; 23:9; Lev 19:34; Deut 15:1-11). These two aspects – the relationship with Yahweh and the relationship with the community – are intrinsically connected and inseparable. For Israel, failing to live out its commitment meant jeopardizing the covenant.\footnote{Guinan, “Mosaic Covenant,” 907.}
1.5.3 The Land Promised in the Sinai Covenant

The goal of the covenant was entry into the land, but the more proximate goal of the deliverance was “so that they might serve me/ίνα μοι λατρεώση” (Exod 4:23). After the deliverance from Egypt, Yahweh took the Israelites to Sinai first to establish a covenant. This was supposed to both prepare them for and call them into a whole different life style, value system and reality. True life under the covenant meant to worship Yahweh and care for one’s neighbour.76

The morality of the covenant is first of all one of response and one of dialogue, and not only, as was often emphasised, the one of extrinsic legalism and minimalism. Israel is called to respond to the gifts and blessings of salvation, which come from Yahweh: to obey, to listen to the word, to worship and serve Yahweh (e.g. Deut 10:12). It is of dialogue because just as Yahweh loves Israel, is faithful to the covenant, is righteous and just, so also is Israel to be. Life, peace and justice are the sum of the covenant, and these are all terms of relationship. Thus, it is more appropriate to see it in interpersonal terms, than in legal ones. Yahweh did not only deliver Israel from Egypt and led them to Canaan; there was yet another scope – to serve Yahweh (Exod 4:23).77

“...In Egypt, Israel was the oppressed, Egypt, the oppressor. As history attests, what often happens when the oppressed are freed is that they eventually become oppressors in turn. The slave becomes the taskmaster. The root problem is that they both share a basic set of values; they disagree only on the present arrangement of things. If Israel, newly freed from Egypt, went directly into Canaan and assumed power there, why would they be any different? They went first to Sinai and to covenant. Covenant with Yahweh, a God who frees from oppression, called them to a whole different view of reality, a new set of values, and a totally different style of life.”78

Worshipping the true God and having concern for others was the main goal of the Sinai covenant. Failing to do either provided the framework and categories for the evaluation and critique of Israel’s behaviour towards Yahweh and the community. This was the role of the

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76Ibid.
77Ibid., 908.
78Ibid.
prophets. After the covenant-making between Yahweh and Israel at the Sinai Mountain, Israel truly became Yahweh’s people and was about to be taken to the land promised to them through Abraham, to live in it and worship their God.

1.6 The Land Promise in the Wilderness

When the Israelites were promised the land flowing with milk and honey, they were to put all their trust in Yahweh. It was a trust in fulfillment of the promise given to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob indicating that God will now lead them into that land. Yahweh demanded from Moses to take the people out of their Egyptian bondage. Yahweh remembered his promise to the patriarchs and wanted to bring his people into the land of promise.

However, Israel did not go straight from Egypt to the land of promise. They were roaming in the wilderness for forty years (Exod 16:35), because of their faithlessness and murmuring in the desert (Num 14; 26:63-65; 32:6-15; Deut 2:14-15). They wandered for forty years in the wilderness, until the generation which murmured and rebelled had died.

While Israel was in the wilderness, God was continuously present with the Israelites preserving them. This resulted with the conclusion of the covenant between God and the Israelites, where they received the covenant laws they were supposed to keep. Many of these laws regulate the life of the Israelites in the land of promise, which is called God's own property (Lev 25:23).

The wilderness account is found in the books of Exodus, Numbers and Leviticus.

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79 Ibid.
80 Janzen, “Land,” 147. For example, Joshua 5:6: „For Israel had gone about in the wilderness of Madbaritis for forty-two years, wherefore most of their warriors who had come out of the land of Egypt were uncircumcised, those who disobeyed God’s ordinances, concerning whom he also determined that they would not see the land that the Lord had sworn to their forefathers to give to us, a land flowing with milk and honey.״
81 Ibid.
1.7 The Settlement in the Promised Land

Modern scholars' theories regarding the settlement of Israel in Canaan are several: a) there is a model of 'conquest' which is adopted by Albright and his school in America and by Yadin and some Israeli scholars, b) a model of a gradual process of peaceful infiltration and settlement, proposed by Alt and the German school in 1920s and c) a model of emergence of Israel as a nation from the Canaanite population through the peasants' revolt, introduced originally by Mendenhall in the 1960s and elaborated by Gottwald.\(^{84}\) In this work, we will discuss the conquest and borders of the land, as found in the biblical text.

Genesis 15:18-21\(^{85}\) gives the borders of the land God promised to Abraham. The source critics dated this J source using the following information: the boundaries of the land in this account are the River of Egypt, the Nile and the Euphrates - these were the borders of the Kingdom of Israel in the time of David and Solomon, which is the beginning of the 10th century. Based on that, the writer was from the 10th century and justified the possession of that land by Israel, seeing it as a fulfillment given to Israel’s ancestors. It seems to reflect the interests of the Southern Kingdom, which is why the source critics believe it to have been written in Judea.\(^{86}\)

References to the boundaries of the Promised Land appear also in Joshua 1:4, Numbers 34:1-12 and Ezekiel 47:13-20.

Later, the land will be often described as everything from Dan to Beersheba: „from Dan and up to Bersabee/ἀπὸ Δαν καὶ ἐως Βηρσαβεε” (Judg 20:1; 1 Kgs 3:20; 2 Kgs 3:10; 83

\(^{83}\) The book of Leviticus has been formed through a long period of time with many additions and editing and is considered that it derives from the priestly circles. Lester L. Grabbe, “Leviticus,” in The Oxford Bible Commentary (ed. John Barton and John Muddiman; Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 92–93.

\(^{84}\) Dever, “Israel, History of: Archaeology and the Israelite ‘Conquest,’” 546. Dever discusses each model with its strengths and weaknesses and presents historical, archaeological and sociological contributions to the understanding of the emergence of Israel in Canaan: Ibid. 545-558. Also: Janzen, “Land,” 148.

\(^{85}\) „To your offspring I will give this land from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates: the Kenites and the Kenezites and the Kedmonites and the Chettites and the Pherezites and the Rhaphain and the Amorrites and the Cananites and the Heuites and the Gergesites and the Iebousites.”/ τῷ σπέρματί σου δόσω τὴν γῆν τἀυτήν ἀπὸ τοῦ ποταμοῦ Ἀγάπτου ἕως τοῦ ποταμοῦ τοῦ μεγάλου ποταμοῦ Εὐφράτου τοὺς Καιναΐους καὶ τοὺς Κενεζίους καὶ τοὺς Κεδμονίους καὶ τοὺς Χέττας καὶ τοὺς Χερεζίους καὶ τοὺς Ραφαίους καὶ τοὺς Αμορραίους καὶ τοὺς Χαναναίους καὶ τοὺς Ευαίους καὶ τοὺς Γεργεσίους καὶ τοὺς Ιεβουσίους.” Gen 15:18-21.

Walter Kaiser argues that the southern border of the River Egypt has been wrongly judged by many as to the Nile, where it is more accurate to place it at the Wadi el-‘Arish, which reaches the Mediterranean Sea about 90 miles east of the Suez Canal and about fifty miles south-west of Gaza (Num 34:2, 5; Ezek 47:14, 19; 48:28). In accordance with this are the following references: the brook of the Arabah (Am 6:14), end of the Dead Sea (Num 34:3-5), Mount Halak (Josh 11:17), the Wilderness of Zin (Num 13:21), Arabah (Deut 1:7), Negeb (Deut 34:1-3) and Shihor opposite Egypt (Josh 13:3-5; 1 Chron 13:5). The western border was the sea of the Philistines, i.e. the Great Sea (Num 34:6; Josh 1:4; Ezek 47:20; 48:28) or the Mediterranean Sea. The eastern border was the eastern shore of the Sea of Kinnereth, the Jordan River, and the Dead Sea (Num 34:7-12). The northern border is problematic. The great river of the river Euphrates (Gen 15:18; Deut 1:7; Josh 1:4) or simply the river (Exod 23:31), could be the river running through the valley between Lebanon and Syria. In modern Arabic it is called Nahr el-Kebir, 'the great river'. The plain of Labwah toward Hamath or Labwah Hamath (Num13:21; Num 34:8; Josh 13:3-5; 3 Kgs 8:65; 4 Kgs 14:25; 1 Chron 13:5; Am 6:14; Ezek 47:15; 48:1-28) has been identified as the modern city of Labwah in Lebanon. Added to this site are Mount Hor (or Mount Akkar) and the towns of Zedad, Ziphron, Hazer Ainon (Num 34:3-9; Ezek 47:15-19; 48:1-2, 28) and Riblah (Ezek 6:14). These places bear names similar to some names of Arabic places today, like Riblah, Sadad, Qousseir (=Hazer) and Qaryatein (Hazer Spring).

There are two accounts about the conquest of the land. These accounts take place on the borders of the Promised Land: Numbers 34.1-12 and Deuteronomy 11:24. These two accounts are reflected elsewhere, throughout the biblical text. According to Numbers 34:1-12 the land extends from the Brook of Egypt to the Entrance of Hamath and from the Jordan/Dead Sea to the Mediterranean Sea. Transjordanian territory is not included here. Crossing the Jordan was considered the beginning of the acquisition of the land, as reflected in many passages (Deut 12:10; Josh 5:10-12). In contrast to Canaan which is called God's

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87 Hebrew Text 1 Kings 5:5.
89 Ibid., 303–305.
The center of the Promised Land was the region of West Jordan: from Dan to Beersheba (Judg 20:1) including or excluding the Mediterranean region. Generally, East of the Jordan region, excluding Edom, Moaba and Ammon, was also included. Also, all the land up to the Euphrates was included, too (Deut 1:6-8; 11:24; Josh 1:3-4).\(^91\)

According to Deuteronomy 11:24, the land includes everything East of Jordan and West of Jordan, from the river Euphrates to the western sea. Deuteronomy 2 made a promise of the land East of the Jordan territory, with the exception of the territories of Moab and Ammon. According to this account, Israel's occupation begins with the crossing of the Arnon. In connection to this account, the settlement in Transjordania is not problematic (Deut 3:12-20; Josh 13:8-12).\(^92\)

Later documents will present less defined conceptions of the land. Jeremiah assumes it to be the West Jordan area, and the Deuteronomistic additions to Jeremiah reflect the area of Judah, the lost southern territories of the Shephelah, the hill country and the Negeb. The post-exilic era will describe the land with the terms 'Judah and Jerusalem' (Ezra 4:6). Such freedom, with regard to the land territory, is an indication of the concept of the land closely connected with the inner identity of Israel, rather than geography.\(^93\)

The designation of the land found most frequently in the Old Testament is a reminder that originally it did not belong to Israel: the ‘land of Canaan/the Canaanites’ (Gen 12:5; 23:3; Deut 1:7; 11:30; 32:49). Also, this point is made frequently in the formulaic listing of the initial owners of the land in Exodus 3:17\(^94\). The earliest sources of the Pentateuch already contain the listing, but there are echoes of it elsewhere, too, and outside of the Pentateuch, up to the time of Ezra (Ezra 9:1) and Nehemiah (Neh 9:8). In most cases, there are six peoples referred to as the original owners, generally the ones in Exodus 3:17. This list never became a

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90 Janzen, “Land,” 145. According to Weinfeld this account presents older tradition and is based on the old Egyptian tradition of Canaan province: Ibid.
91 Ibid., 146.
92 Ibid., 145–146. Weinfeld argues that this map emerges from the Davidic-Solomon era: Ibid.
93 Ibid., 146.
94 “And I said, ‘I will bring you up from the affliction of the Egyptians into the land of the Chananites and Chettites and Heuites and Amorrites and Pherezites and Gergesites and Iebousites, into a land flowing with milk and honey.’” /καὶ ἔξω τῶν Αἰγυπτίων ἐπικαταστήσωμαι ἐν τῇ γῆς τῶν Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χαναναίων καὶ Χα

static formula. There were variations with regard to the nations listed and in their order, and it ranged from three members (Exod 23:28) to ten (Gen 15:19). This can be seen as the evidence of continuous reflection in Israel, with regard to the fact that it was not Israel, but other nations, that owned the land originally. The previous ownership can be expressed with reference to one nation only the Canaanites (Josh 17:16), and sometimes the Amorites.\(^{95}\)

The two and a half tribes that settled in Transjordania seem to be out of the territory of the Promised Land (Josh 22:24-25; Num 32:32; 35:14). It was probably a temporary occupation. These territories east of Jordan, as well as the Negeb, did not belong to the land of promise.\(^{96}\)

According to the biblical tradition, the conquest of the land promised by Yahweh is described in the Book of Joshua. When accepted as historical account, it is dated in the 13th century BCE.\(^{97}\)

Some scholars date the book to the exilic or post-exilic period, with few if any ancient sources. The most influential modern scholarship view is that it belongs to the so-called Deuteronomistic school, which composed the corpus Deuteronomy- 4Kings over the period of time, from King Josiah to the exile.\(^{98}\)

The conquest is the central theme of the Book of Joshua, which can be divided into four sections: entry into the land (1:1-5:12), the conquest of the land (5:13-12:24), division of the land among the tribes (13:1-21:45) and serving Yahweh in the land (22:1-24:33). It is the continuation of the narrative of the land promise (Exod 3:8), spying the land and failure (Num 13-14), the conquest of Transjordan (Num 21); the guidance and the ark (Num 10:33-6), Moses and Joshua (Exod 17:8-13), Joshua and Caleb (Num 14:6-10), Joshua and Eleazar divide the land (Num 34:17) and the paragraph about the cities of refuge and for the Levites (Num 35).\(^{99}\)

The tribes of Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh had already settled in Transjordania (Num 32; Deut 3:12-21), which was not part of the Promised Land (Num 32:29-39). They were required to participate in the conquest of Canaan (Josh 1:1-

\(^{95}\)Janzen, “Land,” 144.
\(^{98}\)Ibid.
\(^{99}\)Ibid., 158.
Deuteronomy sees the conquest starting with the Transjordanian occupation. The spies were sent to Jericho to find out what they could about the land (Josh 2:1-24). Israel crossed the Jordan by a miraculous parting of the waters and entered the land performing circumcision and celebrating the Passover (Josh 3:1-5:15). With the instruction of an angel, Joshua and the army conquered Jericho (Josh 5:13-6:27). The attempt to take over Ai (Josh 7:1-26) at first failed, and then it was subsequently conquered (Josh 8:1-29). Joshua renewed the covenant at Mount Gerizim (Josh 9:2). The Israelites made the alliance with the Gibeonites (Josh 9:1-27) and followed the conquest of south-central (Josh 10:1-43) and north Canaan (Josh 11:1-23), with the conclusion culminating in the conquest of the whole land (Josh 12:1-24). Joshua is here reminded by God that there is still a great deal of land to be conquered (Josh 13:1-6) and is instructed by God to distribute the territories to the Israelite tribes (Josh 13:1-19:51), as well as make allotment for the cities of refuge and Levitical Cities (20:1-21:43).\(^{101}\)

The conquest of the Promised Land under the leadership of Joshua is interpreted differently, within the Book of Joshua. In this book (Josh 11:16; 11:23) we read that Joshua conquered the whole land, and it was free from war. But elsewhere (Josh 13:1) God reminds Joshua that there is still a large part of the land that needs to be conquered, and the Book of Judges opens with the Israelites' question to God about who is going to lead them against the Canaanites (Judg 1:1). The failure to conquer the entire land will be explained, as being due to their disobedience toward God.

### 1.8 The Israelites in the Promised Land

#### 1.8.1 The Period of the Judges in the Promised Land

The scholarly interpretation of the Book of Judges is often performed parallelly with the Book of Joshua. Taken historically, it takes place after the conquest under Joshua, and before the time of the Monarchy. Where the Book of Joshua presents the conquest of the Promised Land as linear, unstoppable and totalistic, the Book of Judges presents the situation

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100 Hebrew Text Joshua 8:30-35.
of constant fighting over the land. The opening of the book says how Israelites are confused about who is going to lead them against the Canaanites, now that Joshua has died (Judg 1:1) and gives the list of the nations still remaining in the land: Philistines, Canaanites, Sidonians, Hivites (Judg 3:3; also 3:1-8; 3:12-14; 4:1-3; 6:1-7, 25-28; 8:33-35; 9:6; 10:6-16).

The judges were military leaders raised by God in times of hardship and oppression. The land promised to Israel is not entirely in Israel's possession, and it is the result of Israel's disobedience to Yahweh and idolatry illustrated by the repetition of „there was no king in Israel/νὐθῆλβαζηἰε" and „a man would do what was right in his own eyes/ἀλὴξηὑζὲολοθζαικνῖο αὐὴν ὑπενίεη― (Judg 17:6; 21:25) and „the sons of Israel did what was evil before the Lord/ἐπνίεζαλνἱπνὶΗζξαεὶ ὑὸπνλεξὸλἐλώπηνθπξίνπ― (Judg 2:11; 3:2; 4:1; 6:1; 10:6; 13:1).

The relation of The Book of Judges to history is complex. Theories proposed in an attempt to explain the settlement of Israel in Canaan are the conquest model, the infiltration model, the liberation model, and the pioneer settlement model.Regarding the date of the book, it is usually ascribed to the Deuteronomistic school in the time of King Josiah and the 7th century reforms in Judea.

The Book of Judges opens with descriptions of the Israelites' military progress and the lack of it in Canaan (Judg 1:1-36). The pattern is that the Israelites fall into disobedience and idolatry, God allows the foreign oppression, the people repent and ask for a leader and God sends a judge. Thus, Othniel (Judg 3:7-11) is raised against King Chousarsathom of Syria-of-River, Ehud (Judg 3:12-30) against the Moabites, Shamgar (Judg 3:31) against the Philistines, Deborah and Barak against Jabin, the King of Canaan (Judg 4:1-24) and Gideon against the Midianites (Judg 6:1-8:35). Here is the account of Abimelech who proclaimed himself king at Shechem killing his 70 half-brothers (Judg 9:1-57). The judges Tola and Jair are briefly mentioned (Judg 10:1-5). Jephthah is raised against the Phillistines and the Ammonites (Judg 11), and his success causes the intertribal war between the Ephraimites and the Jephthah Gileadite forces (Judg 12:1-7). Judges Ibzan, Elon and Abdon are briefly mentioned (Judg 12:8-15). Samson is raised to fight the Philistines (Judg 13:1-105

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104 Niditch, “Judges,” 176-177. Niditch elaborates on each model. The models are also presented in the footnote 102.
105 Ibid., 177.
The book closes with the civil war, where all Israelites (for the first time) gather together and almost cause the extinction of the tribe of Benjamin (Judg 19-21).¹⁰⁶

When the Book of Judges closes, the land promised to Israel is only partly occupied by Israel, and the Israelites are presented as constantly falling into idolatry and covenant breaking.

### 1.8.2 The Period of the Monarchy in the Promised Land

The period of the Monarchy is described through the books 1-4 Kings and 1-2 Chronicles. The Books 1-4 Kings are generally attributed to the Deuteronomistic history, being consisted of older and different corpuses.¹⁰⁷ The Deuteronomistic history tells the story of the fall of Israel and Judah, due to their infidelity to God (4 Kgs 17:7-23; 21:10-15).

The final redaction of the Deuteronomistic history: Joshua - 4 Kings evaluates Israel's performance in the land and God's response to it.¹⁰⁸ The book of Joshua presents the holy war through which God gives the land to the Israelites (Josh 1-12), and based on God's command the land is distributed among the tribes (Josh 13-22). The book of Judges presents the situation with yet unconquered Canaanite enclaves (Judg 1:19-35; 3:1-6) and the constant threat of the loss of the land due to Israel's unfaithfulness. When Israel repents, God raises a leader for them, and this story repeats. At the closure of the book, Israel is in a state of lawlessness and decay (Judg 17-21). The result of this is the formation of a kingdom which reaches its peak with David and Solomon (2 Kgs 2 – 3 Kgs 11), which gets divided into two Kingdoms – Israel and Judah (3 Kgs 12). These two kingdoms are eventually destroyed, Israel in 722 BCE by the Assyrians and Judah in 587 BCE by the Babylonians.¹⁰⁹

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¹⁰⁹Ibid.
The outline of the books 1-2 Kings consists of the narrative about the prophet Samuel and the ascension of the first Israelite king to the throne – Saul, and his successor David. The books of 3-4 Kings give the narrative about King Solomon, the division of the Kingdom into the North and South after his death and the succession of the kings in both Kingdoms, until the fall of the Northern Kingdom of Israel in 722 BCE and the fall of the Southern Kingdom of Judah in 587 BCE.

According to Weinfeld, the boundaries of the Promised Land presented in Deuteronomy 11:24 are from the expansive era of David and Solomon and are finalized in the era of King Josiah. Such a perspective is presupposed or reflected in Gen 15:18; Exod 23:31; Ps 71:8; 79:12; 88:26; Josh 1:4; Deut 1:7; Zech 9:10.\footnote{Ibid., 146.}

The books of 1-2 Chronicles also tell the story about the Monarchy, but with the temple of Jerusalem as its primary concern. Later kings are given more or less space depending on their loyalty to the temple, which is why the Northern Kingdom rulers are not mentioned in the books of Chronicles.\footnote{Leslie J. Hoppe, “Israel, History of: Monarchic Period,” ed. David Noel Freedman, The Anchor Bible Dictionary (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 558.} It was probably written in the late Persian period or early Ptolemaic times.\footnote{H.P. Mantys, “1 and 2 Chronicles,” in The Oxford Bible Commentary (ed. John Barton and John Muddiman; Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 267.}

The main idea of the narrative in the books about the period of the Monarchy in the history of ancient Israel(1 Kings-2 Chronicles) is to present how the seizure and loss of the land is in consequence to the covenant provisions and the faithfulness and disobedience of the people and kings towards Yahweh.

The post-exilic period refers to the situation in which the Israelites return to their land. After Persia conquered and reconstituted the area as the province of Yehud, which includes Jerusalem, they allowed the Israelites to come back and live there.\footnote{Christine Hayes, “Open Yale Courses | Introduction to the Old Testament (Hebrew Bible) | Lecture 13 - The Deuteronomistic History: Prophets and Kings (1 and 2 Samuel),” May 9, 2012, n.p. [cited 3 July 2014]. Online: http://oyc.yale.edu/religious-studies/rlst-145/lecture-13.} The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah are illustrations of the situation in Jerusalem, after the exile.
1.8.2.1 King David

King David is presented as a king who rose to power from humble and difficult circumstances. He seized Jerusalem and made it his capital; he unified the nation and his empire was from Egypt to Mesopotamia. He reigned for forty years (ca. 1010-970 BCE). David was the king par excellence, and he will be the standard for all later kings and a messianic symbol.\(^{114}\)

2 Kings 8:1-18 gives the list of David's conquests and his military success, which resulted in the empire. The catalogue of victories like that in 2 Kings 5:17-25, being arranged thematically rather than chronologically, list the supremacy over the Philistines, Moabites, Aram, Arameans (2 Kgs 10:1-19) and Edom. All David's victories are attributed to Yahweh (2 Kgs 8:6,14).\(^{115}\) 2 Kings, chapters 8,10 and 12 describe David's military activities and conquests.

It is important to note that King David erected an altar on a threshing floor sold to him by Araunah who was a Jebusite, i.e. non-Israelite (2 Kgs 24:16-25 = 1 Chr 21:15-27), which will become the site of Solomon's temple (1 Chr 22:1; 2 Chr 3:1). It is the place where the angel of pestilence had stopped. This also suggests that David made provisions for the temple his son would build.\(^{116}\)

2 Kings 7, gives the account of the Davidic Covenant, in which God promises to King David to preserve his dynasty forever.

Scholarly opinion about the Davidic Covenant is that it was a political construct for the justification of the kingship and the Davidic line. According to such opinion, the obligations regulated by the Mosaic Covenant had undergone changes when Israelites changed their tribal community life for a monarchy. This resulted in political reorganisation, but also in a religious crisis (1 Kgs 8:6-8).\(^{117}\)

Mendenhall and Herion argue that covenants associated with David and Abraham (as well as covenants of Josiah and Nehemiah) are politically motivated traditions. This means

\(^{115}\)Jones, “1 and 2 Samuel,” 219–220.
\(^{117}\)Guinan, “Davidic Covenant,” 70.
that these covenants exercised a suppression of suzerainty tradition coming from the period before the Monarchy. They argue that the political ambitions of Jerusalem were not equally welcomed in both Israel and Judea nor were they welcomed with the same readiness in Jerusalem, in comparison with rural areas. Thus, it is to be expected to have Sinai tradition more preserved in the countryside where, with the exception of intrusions of the kings’ tax collectors, life must have been very much like that of the early Iron Age. This argument they support with two important points. Firstly, most of the biblical narratives referring to covenant traditions came to us mediated through the minds and pens of Jerusalem educated scribes, identified by scholars as J, D, P, DH ‘Early Source’, ‘Late Source’, etc. On the other hand, the reflections of ancient village people are rarely preserved (being considered unsophisticated and backward by the religious officials). Secondly, which they find surprising, is that the Bible preserves testimonies of certain ‘prophetic individuals’, who in a good number (with the exception of Isaiah), came from rural areas, e.g. Tekoa, Moresheth, Anathoth. These prophets faced significant oppression from the ‘establishment’ officials. If this is the case, the Iron Age oracles of Amos, Micah, Jeremiah and even Isaiah, unlike those of Jerusalem educated scribes, preserve traces of the old Sinai Suzerainty Treaty.

Michael Guinan explains that during the Monarchy period a new idea of a covenant developed: a special covenant between Yahweh and David. Guinan further explains that the Prophet Nathan's so-called oracle (2 Kgs 7:8-16) is considered to be the charter of the Davidic Covenant closely related toPsalm 88. David had an intention of building a temple for Yahweh, and so the prophet Nathan came to him with a message from God. In this oracle, Guinan argues, several points are noteworthy. 1) A point of continuity with the older tradition is the fact that the oracle was delivered through the prophet, an authoritative deliverer of God's message. 2) The source of David's authority is Yahweh only, who had established a covenant at Sinai with his people (2 Kgs 7:8-12). 3) David wanted to build a house for Yahweh, but Yahweh will rather build a house for David (the Hebrew word beth can refer to both building and a family). Yahweh promises to David land and the dynasty (2 Kgs 7:12-16). 4) The king is indeed raised up above a common person in his relationship to God. The usage of 'father-son' imagery can be compared to that of the ANE kingship (2 Kgs 7:14; Ps 2:7-8; 88:27-28), but in the biblical text the king is not divine. 5) The king is under Yahweh's

118 Mendenhall and Herion, “Covenant,” 1185.
119 Striking parallels in the form and vocabulary have been made between the Davidic Covenant and 'covenants of royal grant' attested in the Hittite and Syro-Palestinian areas. The latter were gifts (often land and dynasty) bestowed by a king upon loyal individuals: Guinan, “Davidic Covenant,” 69.
authority and is expected to obey the covenant, the failure of which implies punishment (2 Kgs 7:14; Ps 88:31-33). 6) The covenant is eternal and it cannot be broken by failure (2 Kgs 7:15-16; Ps 88:4-5, 21-22, 29-30, 34-38). In conclusion, Yahweh is committed to David and his dynasty, and his promise is rooted in his faithfulness (Ps 88:3). A punishment is a consequence for sin, but the last word belongs to Yahweh.

Scholars have put a strong emphasis on the reflection of ANE kingship, which as an institution was strongly associated with a religious mythology, in the Davidic tradition:

„When the Israelites took over the political form of kingship, a real danger existed that they would take over the mythology along with it. They would then truly be 'a nation like all the rest' (1 Sam 8:5, 20).“

For example, Guinan discusses two additional aspects of the Davidic Covenant that are considered to be of importance, but are not explicitly stated in 2 Kings 7. First, the stability of David's throne is rooted in the order of creation (Ps 88:37-38), and therefore his activity is related to cosmic stability. Second (coming out from the first one), the king has a responsibility in regard to justice and peace. The names connected with Jerusalem and the Monarchy are often derived from the roots of these two Hebrew words – justice and peace. Psalm 71 is a summary of Davidic royal theology: the king's justice derives from God; his rule is rooted in the cosmos and also affects the fertility of the soil; he is related to other nations around, and for them he is a source of blessing; he is the protector of the poor and the helpless.

In the manner of such an interpretation, the close connection is made between the Davidic Covenant and the three important ideas – Zion, creation and wisdom. These three themes have their own independent history, but just the same, the Davidic king who is the representative of Yahweh, becomes a guardian of cosmic and social order (justice and peace) by ruling wisely. This is called by some scholars, such as Westermann a theology of blessing within the Bible. David wanted to build a house (temple) for God, but God told him that he will instead build a house (dynasty) for David. Thus, there is a strong connection between the traditions about David, Zion and the temple. Zion became a sacred mountain where heaven and earth meet, a place which Yahweh chose for his dwelling. The next is the connection with creation: the Davidic king has a role which derives from Yahweh and is focused on

\[\text{\[120\]Ibid., 70.} \]
\[\text{\[121\]Ibid.} \]
\[\text{\[122\]Ibid., 69.} \]
\[\text{\[123\]Ibid., 70–71.} \]
Israel, but his horizon is much wider – all the people and creation are involved. Just as did Yahweh subdue forces of chaos and destruction (Ps 88:1-15), so does the annointed king take part in bringing an order into the universe (Ps 88:26). It was common in the ANE world to connect the king with wisdom. Wisdom was especially ascribed to King Solomon (e.g., 3 Kgs 3:4-15).\textsuperscript{124}

Such scholarly opinion notes that the Davidic Covenant, with its roots in Jerusalem's court and temple, influenced the pentateuchal traditions. These are known as J and P sources. The primeval history with its cosmic context and Israel in it is represented only by these two sources - J and P. The humans share God's royal dominion and are described in royal terms. The J source stories of primeval history share a similar development: human sin, punishment as a consequence, with the last word belonging to Yahweh who is gracious – all of this being the patterns of the Davidic Covenant (2 Kgs 7:14-15). This gives new meaning to the covenant with Abraham in both J and P which is promissory, entails the promise of land and offspring and is everlasting. The blessings to Abraham not only involve Israel, but all other nations as well, and these are the nations which had been subdued by David (2 Kgs 8).\textsuperscript{125}

The Davidic Covenant, when compared to the Mosaic Covenant, has completely different features. The Mosaic Covenant is made with all the people and requires obedience; God is known through historical experience. The Davidic Covenant is a result of God's faithful promise, is unconditional and God is known through creation. There is no suggestion anywhere in the text that the Davidic Covenant is meant to replace or upgrade the Mosaic Covenant, which remains the basic covenant that gives Israel its distinct identity. David is expected to be faithful to the covenant commandments, especially those which deal with justice (2 Kgs 7:14; Ps 88:32-33). However, the covenant with David is a development made in certain Jerusalem circles. It is best to see them complementary, rather than contradictory. Deuteronomy (developing regulations of Mosaic Covenant) accepts kingship, but emphasizes that the king is one of the people (Deut 18:14-20) while the Davidic covenant preserves a high perspective of kingship, but raises all Israel and all humans to it. The Mosaic Covenant emphasizes the historical and moral context of life; people have obligations towards their

\textsuperscript{124}Ibid., 71.
\textsuperscript{125}Ibid.
covenant, while the Davidic Covenant stresses the divine commitment, that although Israel sins, God's promises remain forever.\textsuperscript{126}

In accordance with this scholarly opinion, the Davidic empire was established by military force, and Yahweh's promise of the land, described in Genesis 15:18-21, was the religious legitimizing of the Davidic empire. Most of the land from Genesis 15:18-21 has never been Israelite.\textsuperscript{127}

\subsection*{1.8.2.2 The Prophets}

While the prophets were in direct relationship with the covenant, that relationship is not always clear. Some scholars argued that the prophets were continuing the role of Moses as the mediator, while others saw prophets in the light of the analogy of treaties. All of the suggestions were either modified or criticized by other scholars. It is clear that the root to the prophets’ message was their rootedness in the traditions and obligations of a covenant and their obligation to appeal to this common memory in Israel, once the people fell into false worship, due to temptations of the culture around them.\textsuperscript{128} Still, there are two dimensions of prophetic ministry that ought to be emphasized. Firstly, the presence of the prophetic indictment in the form of a covenant lawsuit (\textit{rib}) for covenant failure is evident. Secondly, the punishments they threaten come from treaty curses for breaking the covenant.\textsuperscript{129}

The pre-Monarchic covenant tradition is considered to be in close connection with the LB treaties. There were certain procedures through which a suzerain was to declare that the covenant was broken and, therefore, vassal was to be the subject of the curses. With connection to this is a procedural form often used in prophetic statements: the indictment, lawsuit (\textit{rib}). Deuteronomy 32 (even though the date of it is much debated whether it is from the 11\textsuperscript{th} century or later) preserves probably the earliest account of such procedure. It gives the account of historical process interpreted theologically with all elements of the old Suzerainty Treaty. It begins with an appeal to witnesses - heaven and earth – to hear the

\begin{footnotes}
\item[126] Ibid.
\item[127] Mendenhall and Herion, “Covenant,” 1194.
\end{footnotes}
case; it gives a listing of the previous favours granted to the ‘defendant’ – vassal, by God; it
gives a description of ‘the defendant’s’ later violation of obligation and announces the
punishment.\textsuperscript{130} It is considered to be a well-known form by the time it was used by Isaiah (Isa
1) and Micah (Mic 6:1-8), towards the end of the 8\textsuperscript{th} century.\textsuperscript{131}

The righteous worship is in close connection with the correct communal behaviour.\textsuperscript{132}
Guinan argues that attempts of certain scholars to separate these two are inadequate.\textsuperscript{133}

The expression ‘new covenant’ appears once in the Old Testament, in the book of the
prophet Jeremiah 38:31\textsuperscript{134}. According to Jack Lundbom it:

\begin{quote}
\textquote{denotes the basis on which a future relationship between God and his people will rest following the collapse of the Mosaic covenant and Israel’s loss of nationhood in 587 BC.}\textsuperscript{135}
\end{quote}

It will be a new relationship created by God and is forseen in other terms by Jeremiah,
but also by Ezekiel, Second Isaiah and Malachi. The new covenant is the core of
eschatological hope, and it includes a new act of salvation, a new Zion and a new Davidic
king. The eschatological hope is found in Jeremiah 37-38\textsuperscript{136} which is called the Book of
Comfort, and its earlier edition has four brief eschatological statements. The prophecy about
the new covenant in Jeremiah 38:31-34 is one of them. They have specific rhetorical structure
connected to the eschatological nature of the statements „behold, days are coming/ιδο\, ἡμέρα ἔρχεται“ (Jer 38:27, 31, 38; cf. 37:3), which indicates both continuity and
discontinuity with the past (38:23, 39 ‘once more’ and 38:29, 34, 40 ‘no longer’),
discontinuity being emphasized in the passages about the new covenant. The Torah as the

\begin{footnotes}
\item[130] Mendenhall and Herion, “Covenant,” 1185.
\item[133] Guinan gives example of Napier’s text in IDB 3: 901–903 where Napier argues that the prophets
rejected cult and promoted social justice and of José Porfirio Miranda, \textit{Marx and the Bible: A Critique of the
Philosophy of Oppression} (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1974), 58., who argues that the prophets taught - do
justice first, then worship.
\item[134] “Behold, days are coming, quoth the Lord, and I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel
and the house of Iouda.ιδο... ἡμέρα ἔρχεται φησίν κύριος καὶ διαθήσομαι τῷ οίκῳ Ἰσραήλ καὶ τῷ οίκῳ Ιουδα
διαθήκην κυνήγην” Jer 38:31.\textit{The Hebrew Text Jeremiah 31:31}.
\item[136] The Hebrew Text Jeremiah 30-31.
\end{footnotes}
Law, is not terminated; it continues to exist but now Yahweh promises to write the Torah on the human heart.

There are two major questions with regard to the concept of the new covenant: whether the new covenant is actually 'new' and whether the Mosaic Covenant continues to exist. According to some scholars, like Zimmerli, the new covenant aborts the Mosaic Covenant. According to some others, like von Rad, the old covenant was broken but the revelation it contained was not abolished, and the new covenant neither alters it nor expands it.

It is certain that no one before Jeremiah considered that there is such an abyss between the old and the new covenant. The new covenant is nothing like a renewed Mosaic Covenant, such as those in the plains of Moab (Deut 5:2-3; 28:69), at Shechem (Josh 24) or in Jerusalem during King Josiah's reform (4Kgs 23). On the contrary, it will be something more, a new beginning in the relationship between God and humans grounded in a new act of divine grace, which is forgiveness of sins (Jer 38:34; cf. Ezek 36:25-28). The forgiveness of sins played no role in the Mosaic Covenant. The basis of it was the deliverance from Egypt, as the act of divine grace (Exod 20:2; Deut 5:6). In Deuteronomy the people were to obey the covenant, if they wanted to have a life; if they disobeyed the covenant they would have suffered the consequences of which the most serious would be the loss of the land. There are no provisions in Deuteronomy for restoration of the divine-human relationship once the covenant is broken and the curses have fallen (Deut 1-28), nor does it concern itself with disobedience like the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel do, as it can be seen in the Deuteronomic text of Joshua 24:19-20: "Whenever you forsake the Lord and serve other gods, then he will come upon you and do you harm and consume you, instead of having done you good.”

The Holiness Code in Leviticus 26, being a theology of a later time, gives provisions for the forgiveness of sins, and after that God says he will start again with Israel on the foundation of his covenant with Abraham (Isaac and Jacob) and his remembrance of the land (Lev 26:40-45). The Mosaic Covenant was written on stone tablets (Exod 24:12; 31:18 and

139 Ibid., 1089.
140 Ibid.
throughout the book) and according to Deuteronomy the Torah was supposed to find its way to a human heart (Deut 6:6; 11:18). In the new covenant, Yahweh's Torah will be written on a human heart. Even if the Torah was supposed to eventually discover the heart of man, the heart is deceitful and layered with evil (Deut 10:16; 11:16; Jer 4:4); „The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond: it is graven upon the table of their heart, and upon the horns of your altars“ (Jer 17:1).141 People have no ability within themselves to make their relationship with God right again (e.g. Jer 2:25; 13:23).142

Thus, Jeremiah says that Yahweh will give Israel a (new) heart (Jer 24:7). Ezekiel foresees for Israel a new heart and a new spirit (Ezek 11:19; 36:26), both of which they were supposed to gain themselves, which is impossible. According to the ancient Hebrew thought, the 'will' is settled in within the heart, therefore, having the Torah in the heart means having the good will to obey it. They will not have to remind and advise one another to know Yahweh, because everyone will know him (Jer 38:34) and, furthermore, 'knowing Yahweh' requires an expanded meaning of 'knowing and doing the Torah' (cf. Hos 4:1-2; Jer 5:4-5). In Deuteronomy, the people had to be continually reminded of not forgetting and neglecting the covenant (Deut 4:23; 5:1, 32; 6:3, 12, 25; 8:11). The liturgical commands in Deuteronomy 6:6-9 and 11:18-20 remind them to keep Yahweh's words in their hearts. However, neither these nor other admonitions by the prophets had any use. The disobedience prevailed and the Mosaic Covenant was undone.143

Besides pointing out the sins committed and the punishment that will follow, prophets were also offering a word of hope. Judgment is not the last word. Beyond judgment there is a new future. God will cause people to go through the desert again in a new Exodus (Isa 41:17-20; 51:9-11). He will give them a new heart which will make it possible for them to be loyal to the new covenant (Jer 38:33; 39:39-40; Ezek 36:26) that God will make with them, in which he will again be their God and they will be his people (Jer 38:33; Ezek 34:25; 37:26-27).144

Jeremiah 38:31-34 describes the future covenant as an 'everlasting covenant'. Parallel passages are Jeremiah 39:37-41 and Jeremiah 27:5145. The unconditional covenants given to Noah, Abraham, Phinehas and David, together with a few lesser ones, were considered to be

141KJV translation. This verse is missing from the text of the Septuagint.
143Ibid.
145The Hebrew Text Jeremiah 50:5.
everlasting. The unconditional covenants are also characteristic of P traditions (Gen 9:16; 17:7, 13, 19; Exod 31:16; Lev 24:8; Num 18:19; 25:13) and of the psalms from the Jerusalem temple (Ps 88:20-38; 110:5,9; cf. 2 Kgs 23:5). Before the exile, the Abrahamic Covenant and the Davidic Covenant had been expanded, in order to cover Jerusalem and the temple (Isa 37:33-35 = 4 Kgs 19:32-34; Ps 104:8-11 =1 Chr 16:15-18; Ps 131:11-18 cf. Isa 31:4-5; Jer 7:1-15). 146

Ezekiel and Jeremiah foresee the covenant of peace as well (Ezek 34:25; 37:26; Isa 54:10), in which Yahweh’s spirit will dwell within people (Ezek 36:27-28; Isa 59:21) and in which there will be an everlasting covenant between Yahweh and the nation (Ezek 16:60; Isa 55:3; 61:8). 147

The messianic hope had been shaped during this period, and it was closely connected to these different descriptions of the future covenant. According to Second Isaiah, the new covenant will be embodied in the servant figure (Isa 42:6; 49:8), through whom other nations will be brought into a covenant relationship (Isa 55:1-5). Such universalism is characteristic for Second Isaiah, but not for Ezekiel. According to the prophet Malachi, the ‘messenger of the covenant’ is a priestly figure (Mal 3:1; cf. 2:1-9). 148

The date and the authorship of Jeremiah’s prophecy are a matter of dispute, but there is no reason not to attribute it to the prophet Jeremiah, as the tradition says. It is probably from the time after 586 BC and the conclusion is drawn from the following facts. In the ancient concepts of the covenant, the breaking of the covenant would have led to its destruction. In accordance with that, after 586 B.C. the old covenant did not exist anymore, because there was no longer a community which exercised it. 149

After the Babylonian exile, the only continuity in relationship between Yahweh and members of the Israel community could have been established through the enactment of the new covenant with the people themselves, who now lived in completely different political and social circumstances. Just like the Sinai Covenant was established with persons in the community, not social organisations like a monarchy, this is to be done with the new

147 Ibid., 1090.
148 Ibid.
149 Ibid.
covenant, as well. The terminology use of ‘the house of Judah’ and ‘the house of Israel’ (Jer 38:31) now refer to family tree, not to political institution as in the time of the Monarchy.\(^{150}\)

The prophecy emphasizes the discontinuity of the new with the old covenant. With regard to the structure of this new covenant, it is granted by the divine sovereign. There is a prediction of the future acts of God, which this time do not refer to territory, progeny or long life, but the only benefit that is mentioned is forgiveness – a restoration of a broken relationship (Jer 38:34).\(^{151}\)

Thus, in comparison with the structure of the Sinai Covenant, the new covenant has no historical prologue, oath, curses, blessings, witnesses, depositing, public reading or ratification rituals. One element of the Sinai Covenant structure that is retained in the new covenant are stipulations which, on the other hand, are absent in the divine charters. In the new covenant there are no prohibitions, commandments, ordinances. This time the Torah (teaching) will be placed in people’s hearts; thus, there is no need for external enforcement.\(^{152}\)

In the same manner, the depositing and periodic public reading will not be needed, since the divine will will be deposited in the conscience of community members. Because all people will know God, there will be no need for the Torah – the teaching; thus, there will be no need for scribes or theologians to interpret it. The community the text envisions cannot be maintained by humans, but only by God himself.\(^{153}\)

Through the new covenant God will grant to his people a new heart which will enable them to be faithful to the covenant (Jer 38:33; 39:39-40; also Ezek 36:26). He will make a new covenant with them, and again “and I will become a god to them, and they shall become a people to me/καὶ ἐσομαι αὐτοῖς εἰς θεόν καὶ αὐτοί ἐσονται μοι εἰς λαόν” (Jer 38:33; Ezek 34:25; 37:26-27).\(^{154}\)

\(^{150}\)Mendenhall and Herion, “Covenant,” 1189.
\(^{151}\)Ibid.
\(^{152}\)Ibid.
\(^{153}\)Ibid.
\(^{154}\)Guinan, “Mosaic Covenant,” 908.
1.9 Conclusion

Although the expression as such does not exist in the books of the Old Testament, the idea of the Promised Land is present throughout the history of ancient Israel.

When looked at through the lense of traditional biblical interpretation, the thread of the Promised Land is present from the moment God spoke to Abraham all the way up to the times of Ezra and Nehemiah, as well as Maccabees. The land promised to Abraham, was promised again to his descendants. Only a couple of hundred years later the nation of Israel will enter into the land of promise. However, because people will disobey God's covenant, the curse of the covenant will fall upon them – they will be in a position to fight over and over again for the land to eventually lose it completely. All of this happened due to their sins and disobedience to God. Thus, the exile was the result of covenant breaking. An attempt to re-establish the Monarchy was seen as an attempt to re-establish the atmosphere of covenant keeping. On the other hand, the exile was inevitable. God did not leave Israel, but the idea of the covenant was changed. A good example of this is the Prophet Jeremiah and his prophesy about the new covenant. The post-exilic period, including the Hellenic and Roman period, is marked with the renewed hope in the restoration of the temple and the kingdom and insisting on the absolute preservation of the Sinai Covenant statutes.

If seen through the perspective of historical criticism, the idea of the Promised Land is a political construct, from the time of the Monarchy. The land of Canaan was occupied through military actions. The period of Judges is characterized by the mixture of beliefs in ancient Israel, in accordance with its cultural environment in which they used to believe in Yahweh, but also in the gods of their neighbors. The religion of Israel was a mixture of Yahwism and the Ancient Near Eastern religious views. The period of the Monarchy in ancient Israel is characterized by purely political motifs. Once the Temple and the King's Palace were erected, the biblical texts were edited in order to show that the Monarch, as well as his Monarchy, are the result of Yahweh's care and plan. This means that the older texts were edited and updated with the information that was supposed to help in harmonizing the older tradition with the present situation in the Monarchy. The Yahwistic tradition, being the official Jerusalem religion, was modified to justify the aspirations of the kings, land being in the center of them.
Among the prophets there are many of those who criticized the Monarchy for abandoning the covenant statutes. After the exile, the restoration of covenant keeping was seen through the lense of a rigid puritanism.
2 The Promised Land as a Sacral Reality of the Covenantal Relationship

The expression 'Holy Land' is not characteristic for the Old Testament. The term 'Holy Land' appears only in Zechariah 2:16, where it refers to the eschatological future and in 2 Maccabees 1:7. Expressed or implied holiness of the land is something completely dependent on God’s decision to be present in or withdraw from it.

The Hebrew term for 'holy' - qodesh, can be rendered as apartness, sacredness, holy, consecrated thing, dedicated thing, hallowed thing, holiness, most holy day, portion, thing, saint, and comes from qadash – meaning to be set apart or consecrated, consecrate, appoint, bid, consecrate, dedicate, defile, hallow, be holy, where qadosh means sacred, holy, God (by eminence), an angel, a saint, a sanctuary-holy (One).

According to Liddell-Scott-Jones, the Greek term ἅγιος means devoted to gods. In a good sense it can be rendered assacred, holy, pure, a saint, and in a bad sense it means accursed, execrable.

According to Strong, the Greek ἅγιος means holy, saint, sanctuary, reverend, worthy of veneration, set apart for God to be, as it were, exclusively his, prepared for God with a solemn rite, pure, sinless, upright.

In other words, what was considered to be holy was set apart from the common and was dedicated to God and this implies to the land, as well.

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The priests of Israel are designated as a holy class; they are dedicated to the service of God and marked by the rules applied to them.  

The Holiness Code (Lev 17-26) with its exhortation "You shall be holy, for I am holy," the Lord your God (ἡγείμενον ἡγεῖται ὦ ἁγιός κύριος ὁ θεός ὑμῶν" (Lev 19:2), gives the impression that Israel itself is holy, because God has set them apart from other nations to himself, to belong to him.

There are two components in the holiness concept. Firstly, a holy status is initiated by God, and the rules to preserve that status are established by God. Secondly, holiness is actualized by humans through the observance of rules and commandments, which mark off a particular thing as holy. This is how Israel is to be understood: as separate and distinct from other nations. The things that are holy exist as such because they are safeguarded that way. This role belongs to humans. They are the ones with the task and responsibility to preserve the holy in its residence on earth. Holiness does derive from God only, but humans’ role in the sanctification of things, in sanctifying the world, is crucial. If they do not observe those rules, things are automatically desecrated and profaned.

The promise of the land starts in the book of Genesis. Brueggemann claims that the entire theology of the land in Genesis ranges between two histories: the history of the people fully rooted in the land and doing everything to lose it, which they do, in the end (Gen 1-11), and the history of Abraham and his family being without the land and confidently expecting it (Gen 12-50). The course of the biblical text ranges from having the land and being expelled from it and not having the land but anticipating it.

Holiness of the land is absolutely dependent on God’s presence in it. It will be holy if God is present in it, and if God withdraws from it it will cease to be holy.

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164 Ibid.
165 Ibid.
166 Brueggemann, The Land, 15–16.
2.1 The Promised Land – The Sacral Space of the Covenant

Bernhard Anderson explains that Israel first believed in Yahweh as their God, and later as God of the entire world:

„When one opens the Bible and reads from creation towards the call of Israel reads the story backward. Israel came to believe that the word of God created a historical community, a social order (Exod. 15:16, „the people whom thou hast created“; echoed in Isa 43:1-2), before Israel affirmed that „by the word of the Lord were the heavens made.“

In the order of Israel's tradition, as well as in the order of theological importance, redemption was primary, creation secondary. The early faith of Israel was concentrated on the redemptive acts of Yahweh, as well as on Yahweh's lordship over nature. According to the biblical tradition, the plague in Egypt happened on God's command, the Reed Sea events are his victory; the food and water in the wilderness were his gracious gift. Judges 5, the Song of Deborah, describes Yahweh coming on the storm and the stars in their courses, joining the battle, in order to help the Israelites defeat their enemy. Thus, nature is described as the servant of the historical purpose of Yahweh. Exodus 19:5 claims the whole Earth belongs to Yahweh (The Old Epic, J tradition). Israel's early faith attests to Yahweh's sway on the heavens and the earth (Josh 10:12; Gen 49:25; Exod 15; Deut 33:13-16). Such tremendous claims are the result of the faith of the community, which celebrated and remembered Yahweh's salvation in their history. Israel, in history, traced back to the beginnings of human history.

The idea of a strange land in Israel is twofold. There is literally a strange land, as Psalm 136 describes, but this strange land is strange in the absence of their God.

The theme of the land is developed within a paradox that involves the tension between “landedness” as a gift from God, which becomes a temptation to people and “landlessness” as a judgment from God and in the same time the space for experiencing God’s grace.

The land is in the centre of the theological concern of Deuteronomy. God is bringing the Israelites to the land based on the oath he had sworn to their fathers. And although the

169 Ibid., 4–6.
Israelites need to make an effort and possess the land, the success of it depends completely on God. It will be his gift to them, proof of God’s faithfulness and the covenantal relationship; the rest (Deut 12:9) they have been hoping for while roaming in the wilderness. It is described in the most beautiful terms, as the bountiful land.\textsuperscript{171}

Life in such land is less vulnerable and exposed, the life Israel was hoping for during sojourning, slavery and wanderings. It is more guaranteed.\textsuperscript{172}

But, the land contains a task for Israel: Israel's possession of the land and its blessings depends on their single-hearted love and devotion to God (Deut 6:4-15; 8:11-20; 11:26-32; 28). Any disobedience of covenantal provisions and especially the sin of idolatry, will activate the covenantal curses, the worst of which is the return to Egypt (Deut 28:68). The land, given out of God's grace, implies the obedience and becomes the condition for life or death.\textsuperscript{173}

Scholars have argued that Deuteronomy, as a concept of speeches before entrance to the land, has been deliberately formed in such a fashion, by the Deuteronomic school. It was a conscious canonical decision by the community which has lost its land again, but preserved its identity as a landless people expecting the greater promise in the future, which is not yet fulfilled. In such case, the possession of the land in the period from Joshua to the loss of it in 722 and 587 BCE is seen as a 'foretaste', whereas the final fulfillment of the promise is in the eschatological future.\textsuperscript{174}

The Deuteronomic author evaluates Israel’s loyalty to God and the consequences to it. David serves particularly as an example of the loyal king. Due to the kings' behavior, starting with Jeroboam I, Israel was inevitably to lose the land (4 Kgs 17). The main reason is idolatry, but also the inheritance of the land (cf. 3 Kgs 20). After the destruction of the Northern Kingdom, in the Kingdom of Judah the apostasy was predominant, especially in the

\textsuperscript{171}Janzen, “Land,” 147. “For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good and extensive land in which there are wadis of waters, springs of underground waters, flowing out through the plains and through the mountains, a land of wheat and barley, vines, figs, pomegranates, a land of olive trees of oil and of honey, a land in which you will eat your bread without poverty and will not be in need of anything therein, a land whose stones are iron and from its mountains you will mine copper. ὥσπερ τὸ κύριος ὁ θεὸς σου εἰσέδρασε σε εἰς τὴν ἁγιαθνή καὶ πολλήν οὐ χαμαρροὶ ὑδάτων καὶ πηγαί ἀβύσσων ἐκπορεύομαι διὰ τὸν πέδιον καὶ διὰ τῶν ὀρέων γῆ πυροῦ καὶ κρηθῆς ἀμπελοναί σουκαί ὑοῦ γῆ ἐλαίας ἐλαῖον καὶ μέλιτος γῆ ἐρ' ἑς ὦ σοι μετὰ πτωχείας φάγῃ τὸν ἄρτον σου καὶ ὅσον ἔνδειπνησθῇ οὐδὲν ἐπ' αὐτῆς γῆ ἑς οἱ λύθιοι σίδηρος καὶ ἐκ τῶν ὀρέων αὐτῆς μεταλεύσεις χαλκὸν” (Deut 8:7-9).\textsuperscript{172}Brueggemann, The Land, 49.\textsuperscript{173}Janzen, “Land,” 147.\textsuperscript{174}Ibid., 148.
time of King Manasseh (4 Kgs 21:1-18; 23:26-27), although there were periods of faithfulness in the time of King Hezekiah (4 Kgs 18:1-8) and Josiah (2 Kgs 22:1-23:28). The natural consequence of such covenantal unfaithfulness was the revocation of the gift of the land by God and the exile of the people from the land.\footnote{Ibid.}

Unlike the Deuteronomistic historian, the Chronicler, although analyzing the faithfulness and God's justice in the lives of the kings, does not give such an important role to the view of the land. However, it can be seen from the concluding words that the Chronicler sees the loss of the land as the result of sin and the restoration of the people from the exile as God's grace.\footnote{Ibid.}

Brueggemann analyzes the land as actual earthly turf, the place where people can be safe and secure without pressure and fear. In the same time, it is the source of joy.\footnote{Brueggemann, \textit{The Land}, 2.}

He points out that the Bible is preoccupied with placement, and that with respect to that, land may be a way of organizing biblical theology.\footnote{Ibid., 3.} He offers such an approach explaining that the primary concern of Israel is rootage, being at the same time central to God's promise. Such concern for place is evident in 2 Kings 7:5-6, when God refused a house and rather sojourned with his people.\footnote{Ibid., 4.}

Brueggemann stresses the sharp difference between a space and a place. Where space can be understood as an open and neutral realm, place is 'space which has historical meanings', a space where important events took place, important words were spoken, where vows and promises have been made. He emphasizes that the place is 'a protest against the unpromising pursuit of space'. Pursuit from space can be a flight from history, but place is a decision to enter history. Thus, the land Israel longs for and remembers is not just a space but always a place with Yahweh, a place which provides identity.\footnote{Ibid., 4–6.}

Implicitly, as God treats Israel in a special way as his people, just the same he treats the land as a historical place and as his land.\footnote{Ibid., 6.}
2.1.1 The Land – God's Property

The Promised Land appears in the Old Testament as God's. He has it at his disposal to give it to whom ever he wishes to (Gen 12:1-3, 7; 13:14-17; 26:2-5; 28:13-15). „The land is God’s habitat and God’s promise.“\(^{182}\)

The land is in the center of Israel's covenant with God and the basis of Israel's faith. It was a promise to Abraham, the goal of the Exodus and the focus of historical traditions. The land was the divine promise and the divine gift.\(^{183}\) It was also divinely owned: „And the land shall not be sold irrevocably, for the land is mine, because before me you are guests and resident aliens./ καὶ ἡ γῆ οὐ πραθήσεται εἰς βεβαίωσιν ἐμὴ γὰρ ἐστίν ἡ γῆ διότι προσήλυτοι καὶ πάροικοι ὑμεῖς ἔστε ἐναντίον μου“ (Exod 25:23).

The division of the land, its tenure and use of it had an ethical dimension with regard to the ownership of the land by God and the role of the land in the covenant between Israel and God.\(^{184}\)

God is the giver of the land but also everything that it yields (Deut 6:10-11); it is 'a good land' (Deut 1:25,35; 3:23; 4:21-22; 6:18; 8:7,10; 9:6; 11:17) „for it was filled with brooks, springs, wheat, barley, grapes, vines, figs, pomegranates, olives, honey, iron and copper“\(^{185}\). Deuteronomy refers to the land promise to the patriarch eighteen times, and only in three references it is said that God 'gave' it to the Israelites.\(^{186}\)

The Promised Land is not just a space of Israel's worship and life, but a specific place of living. It is always a place with Yahweh. Such rootage is a central promise of Yahweh to

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\(^{184}\)Ibid. „Because we are resident aliens before you and live as resident aliens, like all our fathers. Our days on earth are like a shadow, and there is no endurance/ὅτι πάροικοι ἐσμεν ἐναντίον σου καὶ παροικοῦντες ὄς πάντες οἱ πατέρες ἡμῶν ὡς σκῶ αἱ ἡμέραι ἡμῶν ἐπὶ γῆς καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν ὑπόμονή,” 1 Chr 29:15

„And now if by paying attention you listen to my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be for me a people special above all nations. For all the earth is mine./ καὶ νῦν ἐὰν ἀκοῇ ἀκούσῃς τῆς ἐμῆς φωνῆς καὶ φυλάξῃς τὴν διαθήκην μου ἔστω μοι λαὸς περισσότερος ὧν πάντων τῶν ἐθνῶν ἐμὴ γὰρ ἐστὶν πάσα ἡ γῆ.“ Exod 19:5

„Because I am a sojourner with you, and a visiting stranger, like all my fathers/ ὅτι πάροικος ἐγώ εἰμι παρὰ σοί καὶ παραπλήσσως καθὼς πάντες οἱ πατέρες μου.“ Ps 38:13


\(^{186}\)Ibid.
his people, who refused a house but sojourned with his people (2 Kgs 7:5-6). For the people, being in the land meant not only to be rooted, but also to have a commitment and identity. Yahweh deals with Israel, as his people, in a specific way and just the same he deals with the land as a historical place.187

God is the creator of all that exists. He is the creator and the owner of tebel – cosmos, universe. The pillars of the earth belong to Yahweh; he has set the circle of the earth on them (1Kgs 2:8; Ps 74:4; Job 9:6). Implicitly, he is also the owner of erets – the land.188

Thus, as the ultimate owner of the land, God promises or swears to bring Israel into the land or to give the land to Israel. Israel is to go up, enter into the land, to go over the Jordan into the land, to possess the land, receive the land as inheritance, divide the land and dwell in the land. Israel will receive the land nor originally their own, but by God's initiative. Many passages assume Israel's eventual acquisition of the land and refer to it as Israel's land explicitly (Deut 28:24), or implicitly within the context of the text.189 Although the biblical text often refers to the land as Israel's inheritance, possession and rest, passages such as Leviticus 25:23; Joshua 22:19; Psalms 23:1; 38:13; 118:19; Jeremiah 2:7; 16:18, speak of God's ultimate ownership of the land and Israel's calling to live in it as „guests and resident aliens/προσήλυτοι καὶ πάροικοι‟.190

The concept191 of God's ownership of the land is an integral part of the biblical faith. God owns the world and rules it. Canaan is a part of it (Exod 19:5). As a consequence, all Israelites and all humans are strangers and sojourners in the land (Lev 25:23; Ps 38:13; 1 Chr 29:15), „or in modern terms, God's long-term guests on his land/earth‟.192

The relationship of Israel to the land is often expressed with the words nahālā-‘inheritance’, āhuzzā - ‘possession’ and mēnūhā - ‘rest’.193

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189Janzen, “Land,” 144.
190Ibid., 145.
191Some prominent scholars have argued that the themes of the ‘promised land’ and ‘Yahweh’s land’ belong to two separate traditions: Ibid., 147.
192Ibid.
193Ibid., 144.
2.1.2. Israel – God’s Inheritance

The promise of Israel as a people starts with the promise to Abraham. Answering positively to a simple invitation, Abraham entered a new history which had no connection to the old one. Abraham and Sarah were invited to leave the secure barrenness for the sake of promise. Although the future seemed closed, they were invited to overcome the barrenness and go into the new land - the land that was possessed by others, a land of rootlessness and their sojourning, was their future. The promise given to Abraham was repeated to Isaac and Jacob.

The story of Israel’s dwelling in Egypt has two motifs with regard to the promise: a) Joseph who was the hated younger brother became a model for ‘land-getter and the land-manager’ (Gen 41:57; 42:6; 47:6, 20, 27) because God was with him and b) Jacob’s family understands that this is not the land promised by God.

Israel’s time in the wilderness is remembered as the time of disobedience. “Landlessness does strange things to Israel.” It is the time remembered as the most radical version of landlessness. It is characterized with the struggle with barren land, just like the patriarchs struggled with barren women. It was a surprise since it was not what was promised by the exodus. Right there, at that place in time, Israel is called to faithfulness. The land is life-giving; the desert is connected to death. However, that landlessness became nourishing and they lacked nothing being led by God.

Still, Israel yearned for the safety of slavery rather than the insecurity of the wilderness. It became a probation time for their faith, a way to the Promised Land or unbearable reality, which they would gladly exchange for the safety of slavery. Vulnerability

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195Ibid., 16–24.
196Ibid., 26.
197Ibid., 26–27.
198Ibid., 28.
199Ibid., 28–35.
becomes the central theme of wilderness tradition and the vulnerable ones, not the strong, will inherit the promise. The people were not concerned by God’s presence but by the presence of bread. Yahweh is present to forgive, but he does not assure them they will get to the land.²⁰⁰

The concept of Israel as the chosen one appears for the first time in the Book of Deuteronomy. This election means that Israel is a holy people, holy in a sense that they are separated unto God, separated from the common or ordinary. Such separation implies the separation from peoples and practices inconsistent with the worship of God. It also involves separation to God’s service and includes the observance of the laws given by God and rejection of pagan practices. Basically, it means obligations and responsibility. However, such a concept of election bears the danger of a superiority complex. This is why in the Book of Deuteronomy it is repetitively warned: Israel is not chosen by some special virtue, nor is their inheritance of the land of Canaan due to some special virtue or righteousness or because of their own powers, but rather far from it. God chose Israel not because of its perfection but as an act of spontaneous love. Such election was on God’s initiative, and Israel has no reason to boast because of it.²⁰¹ Thus, Moses reminds Israel that it was not elected by God because of its own special characteristics, but only because God loved them and kept the oath given to their fathers (Deut 7:6–8;²⁰² Deut 8:17–18;²⁰³ Deut 9:4²⁰⁴).

²⁰⁰Ibid., 35–42.
²⁰²“For you are a people holy to the Lord your God, and the Lord your God has chosen you to be for him an exceptional people, more than all the nations on the face of the earth. It was not because you are more numerous than all nations that the Lord chose you and picked you - for you are very few in comparison with all the nations. Rather, because the Lord loved you, and since he was keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, the Lord brought you out with a strong hand and with a high arm and redeemed you from a house of slavery, from the hand of Pharao king of Egypt. / ὅτι λαώς ἄγιος εἶ κυρίῳ τῷ θεῷ σου καὶ σὲ προελάτῳ κύριος ὁ θεός σου εἶναι σε αὐτόν λαὸν περιοισύσθην παρά πάντα τὰ θάνη δότα ἐπὶ προσώπου τῆς γῆς σου ὅτι πολυπληθεῖτε παρά πάντα τὰ θάνη προελάτῳ κύριος ὑμᾶς καὶ ἔξελέσατο ὑμᾶς ὑμᾶς γὰρ ὅτι ἐλεόσυτοι παρὰ πάντα τὰ θάνη ἀλλὰ παρὰ τό ἅγαπαν κύριον ὑμᾶς καὶ διατηρῶν τὸν ὄρκον ὅν ὀμόσεν τοῖς πατράσιν ὑμῶν ἔξελέσατο κύριος ὑμᾶς ἐν χερὶ κραταν καὶ ἐν μαρτυρίᾳ ὑμᾶς ἐλευθέρωσε ἐξ οἴκου δουλείας ἐκ χερῶς Φαραώ βασιλέως Αἰγύπτου." Deut 7:6–8.
²⁰³ Do not say in your heart, “My strength and the mastery of my hand have produced for me this great power.” And you shall remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you strength to produce power - and so that he may uphold his covenant that he swore to your fathers, as today:/ μὴ εἴπης ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ σου ἢ ἴσχύς μου καὶ τὸ κράτος τῆς χειρός μου ἐποίησαν μοι τὴν δύναμιν τὴν μεγάλην ταύτην καὶ μνησθήσῃ κύριος τοῦ θεοῦ σου ὅτι αὐτῷ σοι δίδωσιν ἵσχυν τὸν κυρίαν δύναμιν καὶ νὰ στήση τὴν διάθηκην αὐτῶν ἐν ὀμόσεν κύριος τοῖς πατράσιν σου ὡς σήμερον” Deut 8:17–18.
²⁰⁴“Do not say in your heart, saying: “It is because of my righteousness that the Lord has brought me in to inherit this good land,”/ μὴ εἴπης ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ σου ... λέγων διὰ τὰς δικαιοσύνας μου ἐσήγαγεν ἐν κύριος κληρονομήσας τὴν γῆν τὴν ἀγαθήν ταύτην.” Deut 9:4
The Canaanites will be driven out from God’s land only because of their wickedness, and Israel will get its chance. That chance is conditional for the Israelites just as it was for the nations in the land before them. If the Israelites fail God, they will be driven out of the land just the same. So God keeps testing and correcting Israel, until it is ready for the Promised Land.\textsuperscript{205}

Once the new generation of Israelites reached the border of the Promised Land at the Jordan River, they hesitated to enter. At this point their life was redefined,\textsuperscript{206} and as soon as they entered the land and tasted the fruits of the land, manna stopped appearing (Josh 5:11-12).

Israel is often called God’s naḥālā – inheritance (Deut 4:20; 32:8). Janzen notes that according to Forshey, the reference to Israel as God’s ‘inheritance’ is largely exilic and it could have been a theological mean to link the people closer to Yahweh, due to the loss of the land and, thus, he proposes the term ‘possession’ as a more appropriate translation.\textsuperscript{207}

According to Brueggemann, we meet Israel in biblical history earliest and most often as a landless people, without a place but with a sense of being on their way there, a hope which signifies all their history and life. He gives three images of Israel as landless people on their way to the land of promise:\textsuperscript{208}

a) Sojourners or resident aliens, embodied in Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. On God’s demand they accept to leave the land and accept landlessness, as a result of faith. To be a sojourner is to be where one does not belong, cannot settle and has to find a way to survive. But Israel is not just being there and coping; they are on their way to the promise.

b) Wanderers. In between the life in Egypt and life in the Promised Land, Israel spent forty years in the wilderness. The biblical text confirms that Israel is led by Yahweh, but Israel is dimly on their way, which it keeps forgetting due to the survival battle. They are just there, exposed to the lack of resources, draught, hunger and military attacks. A wanderer is not on the way anywhere, but just survives. This period is characterised by the experience of the bitterness of landlessness and hopelessness.

\textsuperscript{205}Hayes, “Open Yale Courses | Introduction to the Old Testament (Hebrew Bible) | Lecture 12 - The Deuteronomistic History.”
\textsuperscript{206}Brueggemann, The Land, 45–47.
\textsuperscript{207}Janzen, “Land,” 145.
\textsuperscript{208}Brueggemann, The Land, 6–9.
Wilderness memory has a double meaning for Israel: it is a way to the land and in the same time it is a sentence of death. The faith was not easy and without faith Israel was lost. “It is destined to die the long death of the desert on the way to nowhere”.

c) Exile. The period refers to the Babylonian exile in which, although not abused and imprisoned, Israel was alienated from the place that gives the identity and security that empower life and faith. This was a null point where the promise seemed void. But that very landlessness became a context for the new faith. “Yahweh’s strange promise is either especially directed toward or peculiarly discerned among the landless. Faith is precisely for exiles who remember the land but see no way to it.”

On the other hand, another part of Israel’s history is being in the land, controlling it and bearing its fruits:

a) Egypt. Israel was settled and dwelt in Egypt. They soon fell into slavery and were posed before the choice: slaves in the land or free in the desert.

b) Monarchy. The land of the Monarchy becomes a Monarch’s land, something Israel was warned about. Solomon confiscated Israel’s freedom and reduced the social order to the one reminiscent of Egypt. It seemed as if the exodus never happened, in which case the promise is not visible. The land of promise became the source of exploitation and oppression. All was undone.

c) After the exile, Israel dwells in the land, as a small community around Jerusalem, living without full freedom. This time Israel was resolved to keep the land following the rules of strict obedience of purity. They discovered that the purity, just like the power, can not keep the land.

Israel came to exist as the one who had no right to it. Slaves became liberated and called by name, sojourners and wilderness wanderers secured in the land. It was all a gift and Israel needed only to stay with the gift-giver.

\[\text{References}\]

\[\text{Ibid., 8.}\]
\[\text{Ibid., 9–14.}\]
\[\text{Ibid., 57.}\]
2.1.3 The Land – Israel's Inheritance

God promised to Abraham a great name, many descendants and his blessing, if he goes to the land God will point out to (Gen 12:1-3)\(^\text{212}\). It was still the unknown land only later to be identified as the land of Canaan (Gen 12:6-7). That promise was continuously repeated to Abraham and his descendants (Gen 13:15; 15:7; 18; 17:8; 22:17; 26:3; 28:4; 13; 35:12; 48:4; 50:24; Exod 3:8; 6:4-8; 13:5; 32:13; 33:1; Num 10:29; 14:23; 32:11; Deut 6:18, 23; 8:1; 9:5, 28; 10:11; 11:8-9; 21; 26:3, 15; 28:11; 31:7, 20; 34:4; Josh 1:6; 5:6; Judg 2:1). Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will have only a promise and live as sojourners in that very land (Gen 17:8; 23:4; 26:3; 28:4; 35:27; 36:7; 37:1; Exod 6:4) and possess only the cave and the field of Machpelah as a burial plot for Sarah. The family of Jacob had left Canaan, due to the famine and settled in Egypt. As promised by God to Abraham, Jacob’s descendants multiplied greatly and became a people, but they were in a foreign land (Exod 1).\(^\text{213}\)

The Israelites became enslaved in Egypt and Moses was chosen by God to lead them out of that foreign land and take them to the land promised to their ancestors (Exod 3:7-8; 6:2-8). However, instead of going to the Promised Land, the Israelites end up roaming in the wilderness for forty years, as a result of their faithlessness and murmuring (Num 14; 26:63-65; 32:6-15; Deut 2:14-15). They were not allowed to enter the land, and Moses was allowed to see it only from the hill (Deut 34:1-5). While in the desert, God concluded the covenant with the Israelites at Mount Sinai. This covenant will become the basis of their religious life in the Promised Land.\(^\text{214}\)

The land was a gift (Deut 1:20, 25; 2:29; 3:20; 4:40; 5:16) but Israel had to ‘possess’ it (Deut 3:19; 5:31; 12:1; 15:4; 19:2, 14; 25:19).\(^\text{215}\)

Although God promised the land to patriarchs by oath, they possessed only burial plots of that land (Gen 23:16-18), and for half a millennium the land was only the land of Israel’s sojourning. Only after Joshua’s conquest the promise became the reality.\(^\text{216}\)

\(^{212}\) Scholars have developed argumentation for the origin of the idea of land promise in the ANE: Janzen, “Land,” 147.
\(^{213}\) Ibid.
\(^{214}\) Ibid.
\(^{215}\) Ibid.
The gift God gave to the Israelites he called their ‘inheritance’. It was the good land which the Lord their God gave them as an inheritance (Deut 4:21; 4:38; 12:9; 15:4; 19:10; 20:16; 21:23; 24:4; 25:19; 26:1). God who owns all the land allotted Canaan to Israel to be its special ‘inheritance’. 217

The designation of the land as ‘land of Israel’ appears once in 1 Samuel 13:19218 (along with several references to the Northern Kingdom only), three times in Ezekiel (Ezek 27:17; 40:2; 47:18) and five times in Chronicles (1 Chr 13:12; 22:2; 2 Chr 2:17; 30:25; 34:7). Some scholars believe it to be due to a conscious avoidance of the term, while others believe it reflects a debate on whether Israel was or was not able to perceive this land as unity. On the other hand, this view can be challenged, too, because of Israel’s focus on the land theology. 219

Israel is commanded to be brave and courageous and strong when entering the land (Josh 1:6-7, 9, 18). The land is filled with Canaanites, and they are “always more impressive than the Israelites”. 220 Since promises are kept in the midst of threats, Israelites are reluctant. Israel is fearful, and the land is always for those who act in vulnerability. “The land of promise is always filled with enemies of the promise.” 221 Israel’s mandate is to enter with confidence relying on the promise that the land is faithfully given. 222 The land was not to be alienated because it belongs to God, as William Bruce explains:

„When the tribes reached Canaan, the land was equitably divided by Joshua among the families of each tribe. Here, again, the importance of the continuance of the family is attested by the fact that as far as possible the land belonging to it was to be kept entire. The head of the household was not permitted to alienate the possession. ...the land belonging to the family was an inalienable holding given to it by God, in accordance with the theocratic principle, „The land is Mine; for ye are strangers and foreigners with Me“(Lev. 25.23).” 223

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217Ibid., 305.
218‖And there was no craftsman in iron to be found in all the land of Israel, for the allophyles said, “Lest the Hebrews should make sword and spear.”‖ κατεκτωσανθρωποιναυτιοχαριστικοναναγκηθασανθρωποςιωνιουλοσφυλουκοτοισκαιοιευρανομωματισκεθα ἢτοι(1 Sam 13:19)
220Brueggemann, The Land, 68.
221Ibid., 69.
222Ibid., 67–70.
The proprietary rights in the land, which descend by inheritance, are regulated by the law.\textsuperscript{224} The episode of Naboth's Vineyard (3 Kgs 20) illustrates the right attitude of Naboth towards the inheritance of the land. On the other, King Ahab presents the perversion of the law on behalf of the kingship with its power and greed. The character of Jezebel demonstrates the employment of the ancient Cannanite or Oriental belief that the property can be freely traded and exchanged. Such attitude towards property is already mentioned in 3 Kings 16:24, where Ahab's father Omri bought the hill of Samaria. Such attitude is in conflict with Israeliite property laws, according to which the inherited land was not to be sold or bought.\textsuperscript{225} The story clearly shows the perversion of the role of a king as the manager of the people and the land.

What is understood by inheritance is the land Israel received from God without the right to sell it (3 Kgs 20:3).\textsuperscript{226} Two important elements are emphasized: a) the land belongs to Yahweh and he has the authority to dispose it, and b) Israel has the right to retain such land that God granted them.\textsuperscript{227} The root \textit{nḥl} has wide connotations making it extremely difficult to interpret in terms of one model.\textsuperscript{228} There are two interpretations regarding the nature of God’s designation of the land to Israel: a) \textit{nahālā} – inheritance, derives from the realm of inheritance law and b) it is a term of a special type of tenure of the land which a feudal lord was granting to a devoted servant as a fief which was inheritable. Thus, in the later Old Testament sources the meaning of the term was extended to include the meaning of inheritance.\textsuperscript{229}

Whatever the case, it is evident that the term does not refer to a commercial, legal or military transaction, but points to a personal bond between Yahweh and Israel. It is described to refer to Israel as a whole (Deut 4:38; 12:9; 15:4) or to the tribes of Israel (Num 26:52-56; Josh 11:23; 13:7-8; Ezek 48:29). Each tribe was to receive their allotment (Josh 11:23) by taking a lot (Num 26:55; Josh 11:23; Ezek 45:1). The tribe of Levi was excluded from this allotment, since their inheritance consisted of tithe, certain cities, their share in the sacrifices.

\textsuperscript{224}Ibid., 169.
\textsuperscript{226}And Nabouthai said to Achaab, “May it not be to me from my God to give you the inheritance of my fathers.”/ καὶ ἔλεγεν Ναβούθαί πρὸς Ἀχαὰβ μή μοι γένοιτο παρὰ θεόν μοι δοῦσαι κληρονομίαν πατέρων μου σοὶ” (3 Kgs 20:3)
\textsuperscript{227}Janzen, “Land,” 144.
\textsuperscript{228}Ibid., referring to H.O. Forshey in \textit{The Hebrew Root NḤL and Its Semitic Cognates}.
\textsuperscript{229}Ibid.
and ultimately God and his service. Sometimes ‘inheritance’ refers to the ownership of the land of individual Israelite heads of households.\textsuperscript{230}

The designation of the land as God’s \textit{nahālā} is less frequent, probably because he is claimed to be the original owner of the land (1 Sam 26:19; Jer 2:7).\textsuperscript{231}

It seems like there is a gap between God’s promise of the land as the inheritance and the reality of Israel’s settlement in it. The whole land was promised, and God promised to drive out the inhabitants of Canaan little by little (Exod 23:30-33). Joshua made war a long time (Josh 11:18), and the Canaanites were destroyed quickly, (Deut 7:22; 9:3) but in the end, the extent of the conquest is problematic (Josh 12:10-23 cf. Josh 15:63; 17:12; Judg 1:21-22,29). Although many pockets of resistance remained, the territory has been generally secured, from the theocratic standpoint.\textsuperscript{232}

Essentially, the meaning of the inheritance is connected to two important things: the fulfillment of the promise given by Yahweh and the settlement in a fruitful land of the people who were accustomed to bondage and wilderness.

\section*{2.1.4 The Land – Israel’s Possession}

Frequently, the designation of the land points towards the fact that it did not belong to the Israelites: 'land of Canaan’ (JE, P: Gen 12:5; 23:2; Deut 1:7; 11:30; 32:49). Frequently there is a listing of the original owners such as Exodus 3:17, but also in Ezra 9:1 and Nehemiah 9:8. In most of the cases, six nations are given but there is no formula since it ranges from three nations (Exod 23:28) to ten (Gen 15:19). The previous ownership can be expressed with reference to the Canaanites only (Josh 17:16). Israel was supposed to go into the land and possess it and receive it as the inheritance, since God said and promised and swore to give it to them.\textsuperscript{233}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[230]Ibid.
\item[231]Ibid., 144.
\item[233]Janzen, “Land,” 144.
\end{footnotes}
The word ‘possession’ - āhuzzā, in its Hebrew root means ‘seize, grasp, take hold’ and suggests that the land had once belonged to someone other than Israel. God gave the land of Canaan to Israel as its possession (Lev 14:34; Deut 32:49). Just like the word ‘inheritance’, it can be the land possessed by Israel as a whole, by a tribe or by a household. Most often it refers to the land or real estate handed down through generations that are not to be sold (Lev 25:10, 27:22-24). Sometimes it includes property in general. Construct phrases in use, show its closeness to land and inheritance: ‘land of your possession’ in Joshua 22:19, ‘inheritance of their possession’ in Numbers 35:2 and ‘the possession of our inheritance’ in Numbers 32:32. Still, these two terms are not synonyms.234

The book of Deuteronomy affirms in 25 references that the land was a gift (e.g.: Deut 1:20,25; 2:29; 3:20; 4:40; 5:16). Israel was supposed to ‘possess’ it (Deut 3:19; 5:31; 12:1; 15:4; 19:2,14; 25:19).235

2.1.5 The Land – Israel’s Rest

Besides the terms ‘inheritance’ and ‘possession,’ the Old Testament describes Israel’s relationship to the land with the word mēnūhâ - ‘rest’. The Promised Land is the place of Israel’s rest. Expressions such as ‘give rest’ and ‘rest’ are predominantly represented in Deuteronomistic-theology. God’s land promise includes this aspect of rest, once Israel crosses the Jordan and occupies Canaan (Deut 12:9; 25:19; cf. 3.20). The rest across the Jordan is granted by God, but in stages, beginning with the conquest (Josh 1:13,15; 14:15; 22:4; 23.1) and having its climax in the time of Kings David and Solomon (2 Kgs7:1, 11; 3 Kgs 5:4; 8:56).236 Janzen notes that von Rad believes that the essence of this rest is ‘tangible peace granted to a nation plagued by enemies and weary of wandering’.237 Land and particularly the temple can be called God’s rest (Ps 94:11; 2 Chr 6:41). So, the warning of Psalm 94:11 – “As I swore in my wrath, “If they shall enter into my rest!”/ὡς ὤμοσα ἐν τῇ

234Ibid., 145.
ὀργῇ μου εἰς εἰσελέφτονται εἰς τὴν κατάστασιν μου”, is that God’s gift of rest is dependent on their faithfulness and endangered by the rebellion.

The provisions for rest (Exod 33:14; Deut 12:9) are significant “in the ‘place’ that the Lord had chosen to ‘plant’ his people”\textsuperscript{238}. And although Joshua had finished his ministry, Israel had not come to the ‘resting place’ and inheritance of the land yet (Deut 12:9). For that reason, it is unclear why King David had future hope of rest (2 Kgs 7:10-11)? Or why was King Solomon, ‘the man of rest’ (3 Kgs 8:56; 1 Chr 22:9), still hoping for it? The solution to this, Kaiser claims, is that Joshua 21:44-45 is based on a promise, which had not failed Israel. The life in the land of every generation respectably depended only on whether God’s promised inheritance was valued as it should be. The conditional aspect of participation of every generation in the blessings of the Davidic Covenant is not in opposition with the eternal nature of the covenant promise. It simply depends on participation in the benefit of the covenant (3 Kgs 2:4; 8:25; 9:4-5; Ps 88:29-32; 131:12; 2 Kgs 7:14-15).\textsuperscript{239}

“...The ownership of the land (as a gift from God) is certain and eternal, but the occupation of it by any given generation is conditioned on obedience. Therefore neither the days of Joshua nor those of David could be used as a kind of blank check for any subsequent generation to rest on their fathers' laurels. Indeed, the word of promise could also be theirs, if they would enter not only into the material resting place, but if they too would appropriate that rest by faith as did Caleb and Joshua (Ps. 95:7-11; cf. Rom. 9-11).\textsuperscript{240}"

The danger with the gifted land was that it could have become coerced space and its inhabitants – Israelites, could find themselves in the life of banishment (Deut 8:20). Israel was a community under gift (Deut 8:1), and at the same time that was the way to obtain and hold the land. The self-seeking and coveting was an attempt to control instead of trusting. It was a way to death.\textsuperscript{241}

\subsection*{2.1.6 The Loss of the Land}

\textsuperscript{239}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{240}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{241}Brueggemann, The Land, 58–59.
Both Jeremiah and Hosea see God’s judgement in the devastation and loss of the land and in the exile (Hos 8:13; 9:3,6,17; 10:6; 11:5; Jer 4:23-28; 5:14-17; 8:10; 9:10, 11-15; 10:18-22; 12:7-13; 13:24; 15:2,14; 45:2).\(^{242}\)


In explaining the reasons for the loss of the land and for the exile, the book of Ezekiel points to idolatry to emphasize the unfaithfulness of God’s people (Ezek 6:1-7,13; 8; 14:1-11; 16:15-22), referring to the promise to Abraham (Ezek 20:42; 33:24), to Israel’s origins in foreign lands (Ezek 16:3,45) and its life in Egypt (Ezek 20; 23:3). The expression ‘Israel’s land’ is characteristic for Ezekiel and both erets and adamah are in use. That land is described as ‘the most glorious of all lands’ (Ezek 20:6; cf. Jer 3:19\(^{244}\)).\(^{245}\)

The future of Yahweh is with the ones in the exile, according to Ezekiel, but also Jeremiah before him (Ezek 11:15-16; Jer 36). God’s people in the exile will be ‘revived’ by Yahweh (Ezek 37:1-14) and returned to the land (Ezek 11:17-21; 20:40-44; 34:11-16; 37:15-28). Furthermore, Yahweh himself has left his house and city and ‘emigrated’ with his people (Ezek 8-11) and will return to the restored land (Ezek 47-48) and the temple together with the people (Ezek 43:1-5). Such imagery consists not only of the real reconstitution in the land, but also of supernatural symbolism. It involves the equal distribution of the land around the sanctuary to all Israel based on the tribal pattern (Ezek 48:1-29), as well as to the sojourners (Ezek 47:13-23).\(^{246}\)

Deutero-Isaiah (Isa 40–55) proclaims the new age to the exiles in Babylon, using the typology of Israel’s salvation from the creation until the occupation of the land. The emphasis is placed on the motifs of the land in the Pentateuch and Joshua, the new exodus and the importance of Zion and Jerusalem. God will redeem the new Israel from Babylonian captivity

\(^{242}\)Janzen, “Land,” 149.
\(^{243}\)Ibid.
\(^{244}\)Janzen gives also the example of the book of Daniel (Dan 8:9; 11:16, 41, 45), but this text is problematic.
\(^{245}\)Janzen, “Land,” 149.
\(^{246}\)Ibid.
The theme of land ultimately becomes the theme of the eschatological future in Ezekiel and Deutero-Isaiah, as having been pointed out by the earlier prophets (cf. Hos 2:18-25; Isa 11:6-9). The focus is on the salvation of people through the eschatological rest in God’s presence. Some scholars suggest that the period after the exile is marked with the dislocation of interest away from the land to the broadly human, along with the loss of their own land. This is to be especially seen in the books of Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Esther, Jonah and parts of Daniel.248

On the other hand, Ezekiel and Deutero-Isaiah seem to be prophesying about the concrete return to the lost land. And similarly, Jeremiah prophesied that, after seventy years of the exile (Jer 25:11-12; 36:10), “Fields and houses and vineyards shall again be bought in this land/ἐτι κηθήσονται ἀγροί καὶ οἰκίαι καὶ ἀμπελῶνες ἐν τῇ γῇ τὰύτῃ” (Jer 39:15). The prophecy fulfilment may be seen partly in the return of Jews around Jerusalem and the temple, as described in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah.249


According to Kaiser, the characteristic expression for Jeremiah, with regard to the land restoration, is ‘to restore the fortunes (captivity)’: "I will bring back the exile of my people/ἀποστρέψω τὴν ἀποικίαν λαοῦ μου", “I will bring back their exiles/ἀποστρέψω τὰς

247Ibid.
248Ibid., 150. With reference to Davies.
249Ibid.
ἀποκλίας αὐτῶν” (Jeremiah 37:3; 39:44251). For Ezekiel, the expression is in a three-part formula: I will bring you from the people – I will gather you from the lands – I will bring you into the land of Israel (Ezek 11:17; 20:41-42; 36:24; 37:21).252

Some scholars believe that the restoration actually took place with returnees from Babylon. However, Zechariah continued to announce the future return (Zech 10:8-12) with the words reminiscent to that of Isaiah (Isa 11:11) and Jeremiah (Jer 34:19). Isaiah (Isa 11:12) speaks of a gathering of Israel from the four corners of the earth. This is to question whether turning to God and a spiritual and national awakening follows or precedes a return to the land. Sometimes texts suggest that it follows (Deut 30), and sometimes that it precedes general repentance (Ezek 36:1-37:14). In either case, all the prophets announced the future return.253

In the post-exilic period the theme of the land remains of great importance. Some scholars claim that the tensions between the priestly party and the suppressed visionary party in Jerusalem drove the latter to shift from a realized eschatology towards apocalyptic and eschatological expectations.254

There is an opinion according to which there are two phases in the post-exilic period, with reference to the idea of restoration. According to this, the earlier Persian Period is characterized by the restoration of the land and joy, and the latter, the Greek Period, is characterized by a lament over new sins after the exile and the punishment of Jerusalem (Isa 27:9-11).255

Even if the eschatological shift actually took place, the treatment of the subject of the diaspora, such as that in the Books of Esther and Daniel, and of other nations such as that in the Book of Jonah, points out that the land was an important identity reference point.256

According to some scholarly opinion, there is fluidity between the meaning of erets as land and erets as earth, in the post-exilic prophecies of latter time (Deutero-Zechariah; Isaiah

251In Hebrew text also Jer 29:14. NET: „I will make myself available to you,' says the LORD. 'Then I will reverse your plight and will regather you from all the nations and all the places where I have exiled you,' says the LORD. 'I will bring you back to the place from which I exiled you.” (Jer 29:14)
253Ibid.
255Ibid. Refers to Hanhart.
256Ibid.
24-27). In Joel, for example, the locust plague befalls the land of Israel, but extends to the whole earth (Joel 2:1 and passim).²⁵⁷

The introductory words or motive clauses in many of the laws, point out directly to the land and Israel’s existence on it (Deut 15:1; 16:18-20; 17:14; 18:9; 19:1; 19:14; 21:1; 21:22; 24:1-4; 25:13-16). If evil was left unchecked, it became a cause for the defilement of the land that became guilty before God (Lev 26; Deut 28; also Deut 21:23; 24:4).²⁵⁸

2.2 The Promised Land’s Sanctified Time in the Covenant

2.2.1 The Concept of Holy Time

From the creation perspective, the time is created by Yahweh, and therefore owned by him. The holy days dedicated to Yahweh and being holy to him were a symbol of such a perception of time. The concept of history and of time in Israel is dominated by its awareness of their experience of redemption, and that is the redemption from Egypt.²⁵⁹

2.2.2 The Concept of Holy Days

The conception of time in biblical texts, i.e. the priestly texts, is characterized in concentric circles of holiness. There are common, profane days, and there are holy days. Holy days or holidays are separated and demarcated from ordinary days. Special rules applied by humans make them different. Holier from holidays is the Sabbath with even more specific rules to extinguish it from the common days, and Yom Kippur or the Sabbath of Sabbaths is the holiest day. Yom Kippur is separated from all other days by special rules.²⁶⁰ Hayes explains:

²⁵⁷Ibid. Refers to Hanhart.
²⁵⁹Wright, “Sabbatical Year,” 861.
“The holiness of persons, of objects, of time and of space all converge on Yom Kippur, because it's only on this most holy day that the most holy person, the high priest, enters the most holy of holies, the innermost shrine, and performs a ritual upon the most holy of objects, the mercy seat and ark itself once a year.”

In the book of Exodus, we read an account on the covenant with Moses given on Mount Sinai. The code of the Covenant gives specific regulations. Entire lives of Israelites are regulated in detail by specific law preambles. Leviticus gives detailed instructions on sanctuary and celebration, sacrifices and purity. There are four main festivities through the year. There is the worship of the Sabbath, different feast days and sabbatical years. The concept of Sabbath in Israel is closely related to their concept of time, as being created by Yahweh and the dedication of it in the form of holy days or holy time.

We will here explain more closer sabbatical years and the year of Jubilee, because these two are of concern for our topic.

2.2.3 The Sabbatical Year

The term 'sabbatical year' as such appears only in Leviticus 25:2-7. It is a commandment which regulates the life of every seventh year. The Israelites are not to sow or harvest that year, but it will be a year of rest – a Sabbath for the land. Instead, 'the sabbaths of the land' will be the food for them.

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261Ibid.
262 „Speak to the sons of Israel, and you shall say to them: If you enter the land that I give you, the land which I give you, shall also rest - Sabbata to the Lord. Six years you shall sow your field, and six years you shall prune your vine and gather in its fruit, but in the seventh year there shall be Sabbata - a rest for the land, Sabbata for the Lord; you shall not sow your field, and you shall not prune your vine. You shall not reap completely that which sprouts by itself of your field or gather in the grapes of what is something made holy for you; it shall be a year of rest for the land. And the sabbaths of the land shall be food for them and for your male slave and your hired laborer and for the resident alien who adheres to you, for your livestock also and for the wild animals which are in your land all its yield shall be for food. / λάλησον τοῖς υἱοῖς Ισραήλ καὶ ἔρεις πρὸς αὐτούς ἐὰν εἰσέλθητε εἰς τὴν γῆν ἣν ἐγὼ δίδωμι υμῖν καὶ ἀναπαύεσθαι ἡ γῆ ἣν ἐγὼ δίδωμι υμῖν σάββατα τῷ κυρίῳ εἰς ἑτέρας τοῦ ἀγρον σου καὶ εἰς ἑτέρας τῆς ἀμπελῶνις σου καὶ ἑτέρας τῶν κυρίων σου ἀπό τῆς ἡμέρας ἑτέρας διαφέρει. Τὴν γῆν ἣν ἐγὼ δίδωμι σοι καὶ τὴν ἀμπελὼν σου καὶ τὴν ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ ἀγροῦ σου καὶ τῷ ἱερῷ, καὶ τῷ σώματι καὶ τῷ ναῷ καὶ τῷ σταυρῷ καὶ τῷ τοίχῳ σαλαβηθέντος καὶ τῷ παρασκευασμένῳ καὶ τῷ σπείραντι καὶ τῷ λαχανικῷ καὶ τῇ συναγωγῇ καὶ τῷ κυρίῳ παλινομένῳ καὶ τῷ σπείραντι καὶ τῷ σταυρῷ καὶ τῷ παρασκευασμένῳ. Οὕτως ἀναπαύεσθαι ἐπὶ τῇ γῇ καὶ ἐπὶ τῷ σάββατῳ τῇ γῇ μένα καὶ τῷ σάββατῳ τῇ γῇ ἐπὶ μένα καὶ τῷ σάββατῳ τῇ γῇ ἐπὶ μένα καὶ τῷ σάββατῳ τῇ γῇ ἐπὶ μένα. Lev 25:2-7, Wright, “Sabbatical Year,” 857.
This law is an expansion of the law in Exodus 23:10. The seventh year includes some other laws that are supposed to take place that year. The year in which the land is to be left fallow is described as ἁνάπαυςας ἑταί τὴ γῇ σάββατα τῷ κυρίῳ(Lev 25:4). The provision of this rest appears also in the book of Deuteronomy 15, with reference to the release of debts and slaves.

Regarding the attempt to identify the parallels of the concept of Israel's sabbatical years in the sources outside the Bible, some scholars claim that they can be found in the Ugaritic texts, but others object to this. For example, Arvid Kapelrud objects to such parallels explaining that in his work *Ugaritic Literature*, Cyrus H. Gordon concludes that the seven-year cycle is dominant in Ugaritic texts and points to the seven-year as a cycle of Baal's death and revival, and not as it was believed, that Baal's death and revival were a yearly cycle. While the claim that the seven-year cycle is dominant in the Ugaritic texts is right to a certain extent, he interprets the implications wrongly. His followers in this interpretation, G. R. Driver and A. F. Rainey repeat the same wrong conclusion. Number seven is a holy number in the ANE, a high number and a round number, a number of fate, the full number of blessings, as well as of curses. It was the number representing the concentration of everything fully, like saying 'maximum' in contemporary times. Seven was not an accidental, random number, but was deliberately chosen since it was a 'dangerous' number, loaded with strength and danger, the reason for which we do not know, but it is present among other peoples in the ANE. Number seven often designates an indefinite number. It indicated fulfilment, completion or finishing. It also indicated intensity, quality, not directly quantity. It is more probable that seven had no literal meaning, but was used in a sense of intensity and completion. Arguing that the seventh year circle indicates intensity rather than duration he adds:

„John Gray, who occasionally connects the seven year period with the sabbatical year, known from the O.T., (...) adds: „On the other hand this period may simply, in the common Semitic literary convention, denote an indefinite period of time“.“

There are three aspects of the sabbatical year: debt, slaves and legal provision concerning the land. Being primarily a socioeconomic institution, the fact that it has heavy

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263Ibid.
264Ibid.
266Ibid., 498.
religious significance underlines the importance of the economic dimension in Israel’s faith. Bruce explains that:

„If the land of a family had to be sold for debt, the sale held good only for a limited time. As soon as the original owner was able to repurchase it, it was in his option to do so. But should the year of jubilee occur before that time, the possession returned to its owner free. There took place in that year „a new birth of the state“, in which all alienated property was restored, without compensation, to the family to whom it was originally given at the partition of the land.‖

The law of Exodus 23:10 allows six years of agricultural work. In the seventh year, whatever grew in the field by itself – vines, olives, crops - was to be treated as common, at disposal to the poor and wild animals. The law is in corpus of the Book of the Covenant (Exod 21-23), being a part of Israel’s covenantal obligation to Yahweh. It explicitly states the social or humanitarian aspect and implicitly the religious aspect, with significance regarding the land and agriculture. Some scholars point out that the sabbatical year was to be performed in a rotation and not at the same year in the whole land.

It is unclear whether the law of Exodus 23:10 is meant to be practiced in rotation or in the same year. However, the formulation of Leviticus 25:2-7 clearly intends a single universal year. Thus, the theology of the land is more clearly implied here. The humanitarian implication of Exodus 23:10 expressed in the care for the poor, slaves, resident aliens, as well as the care for animals is modified in Leviticus 25:2-7. The Sabbatical year has the same meaning as the Sabbath. After being worked for six years the land is to enjoy rest. In addition to the benefit for the landless Israelites as well as for landless aliens through the weekly rest, the right to annual gleaning, the triennial tithe and the seventh-year right to the fallow produce, the sabbatical institution was a sign of the special relationship, with Yahweh being the covenantal sign.

A lot of evidences point to the existence of the sabbatical year in ancient times, contrary to the opinion that it was a post-exilic invention. However, there is no direct evidence in the Old Testament text that it was actually observed. The text of Jeremiah 41:8-

269 Ibid., 168.
270 Wright, “Sabbatical Year,” 858.
271 Ibid.
16 showed that the institution of the Sabbatical year was known, but was neglected. According to Leviticus 26:34-35, it is exactly the neglecting of the sabbatical year that was the reason for the exile. Thus, once the Israelites are in the exile, the land will be desolate and it will enjoy its Sabbaths; it will sabbatize what it couldn’t when the Israelites lived in it. And again in Leviticus 26:43, once land is abandoned and desolate it will have its Sabbaths, and the people will have their lawlessness for neglecting God’s commandments.

Jeremiah’s (Jer 25:12; 43:10) and Daniel’s (Dan 9:2) predictions for the exile to last seventy years seem to have the same logic. And the book of Nehemiah (Neh 10:32) gives evidence that all the people agree to restore the sabbatical institution.

Chronicler sees the restoration from the exile as the result of God’s grace, where Israel has served its exile, while the land had enjoyed its Sabbaths.

The Torah’s task for Israel was to keep the sabbath. In the earliest tradition, it was for freeing slaves (Exod 21:1-11; Deut 15:12-18) and later for the land’s rest (Lev 25) and release of debts (Deut 15:1-11). The core of this is in connection to the character of life in the land and land as a gift. It served to remind Israel that „cessation from frantic activity will not cause the world to disintegrate or society to collapse“. In the strongest efforts to manage land and life, the sabbath serves to set the boundary to this. It serves as a voice of a gift in a world preoccupied with self-securing and well-being. The sabbath to the land needs to remind Israel that the land is not from them but a gift to them and that it is not completely submitted to their satiation. The land has its own rights and existence; it is not completely at people’s disposal, but on the contrary, it is in covenant with them. The sabbath serves to honor the

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272Ibid., 859.
273 "Then the land shall enjoy its sabbaths all the days of its desolation. And you shall be in the land of your enemies; then the land shall sabbatize and enjoy its sabbaths. All the days of its desolation, it shall sabbatize what it did not sabbatize on your sabbaths when you were living on it. Tóté évódókhsē ãi γῆ tû sábbata aúthês kai pása tâs hêmâras tîs érhmôsou aúthês kai ùmâs ãèspide ãn tî γῆ tûn érhmôn ùmôn tóté sábbatâ ãi γῆ kai évódókhsē tû sábbata aúthês pása tâs hêmâras tîs érhmôsou aúthês sábbatâ ãi ûm õsâmbbâtoson ãn tôis sábbatóis ùmôn ùnìka katekînta aútìnû. Lev 26:34-35
274 "And the land shall be abandoned by them. Then the land shall accept its sabbaths while it was made desolate by them, and they themselves shall accept their lawlessness on account of which they disdained my judgments and were vexed in their soul by my ordinances/καὶ ἡ γῆ ἐγκαταλειφθῆσαι ὑπ᾽ αὐτῶν τότε προσδέχεται ἡ γῆ τὰ σάββατα αὐτῆς ἐν τῷ ἐρμηνευθῆναι αὐτήν δι’ αὐτῶν καὶ αὐτῶν προσέξοντας τὰς αὐτῶν ἁμομίας ἀνθ’ ὧν τὰ κρήμνα μου ὑπερεῖδον καὶ τοῖς προστάγμασιν μοι προσώχθησαν τῇ ψυχῇ αὐτῶν”. Lev 26:43
275Wright, “Sabbatical Year,” 859.
276Ibid.
278Brueggemann, The Land, 63.
land. Keeping the sabbath is to honor also the history through which Yahweh brought Israel to the land.  

Landed people tend to form a society in which land is never rested, and the activities never cease. They are tempted to create a sabbathless society. It means limitless coveting and cancels covenental relations (cf. Amos 8:4–6). Elimination of sabbaths means emptying the land of covenant and the possibility to sell and buy everything.  

Wright states that, according to Leviticus 25:8, the year of Jubilee was either the seventh sabbatical year or the year to follow. In the year of Jubilee, any land which was sold was to be returned to its original owner, and any Israelite who was enslaved due to poverty or debt was to be restituted.  

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2.3 The Promised Land's Sanctity

2.3.1 The Sanctification of the Land

Israel in the land is always in a relationship with Yahweh and with the land. Excluding either one of them leads them astray. The land is not only a nourishing place but also the space of the covenant. It bears a risk that satiated people can both stay in the land and continue to listen.

The land Israel received from God by promise was a gift. It is much different from the land Israel remembers from Egypt. The old land was demanding and required effort. This land is land by graciousness. This means that in the same time it gives life and security. Here security or well-being do not need to be calculated and manufactured, but are provided by the

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279 Ibid., 63–65.
280 Ibid., 65.
281 Wright, “Sabbatical Year,” 857.
282 Brueggemann, The Land, 52–53.
rain-sender, bread-giver, Exodus-causer, and manna-sender.\textsuperscript{283} It is described as the land regarded by God.\textsuperscript{284}

Israel does not need to worry about the land since Yahweh takes care of it. He never takes his eyes off of it, and the whole cycle of the year from planting to harvest is before his eyes. They will be satiated. It is a message of the land given to the people who are landed and empowered, and it required a new consciousness. They will now be granted participation in the full circle of life under his protective eye, enjoying planting and harvesting. At the same time, the faith must not be brought down to a natural fertility religion, in which “land becomes possession and land manipulation”.\textsuperscript{285}

The land will be sanctified through the relationship of Israel with their God:

Hayes explains the concept of holiness in ancient Israel and points out that although the connection between holiness and purity in the Israeliite tradition exists, the two are not identical. To be holy means to be in God’s realm or to belong to him and to be pure is a precondition for that. Purity and impurity are different states of someone or something. Only what is pure can come in contact with the holy. The holy is always pure. Common things can be pure or impure. If an impure object comes in contact with a holy one, the holy object is defiled, i.e. becomes ritually impure. The consequence is that it loses its holy status automatically and becomes both impure and profane. To be restored it, firstly, has to be purified through arital procedure, and secondly, it has to be redebated or given to God, resanctified, in order to become holy again. Additionally, an increased access to the holy requires an increased degree of purity. The purity required of the high priest is higher than that of a priest, which is again higher than that of an Israeliite. In order to be pure, one must separate one’s self from the sources of impurity.\textsuperscript{286}

\textsuperscript{283}\textit{Ibid.}, 51.
\textsuperscript{284} “For the land into which you are about to enter there to inherit it is not like the land of Egypt, whence you are coming from there, when they sow the seed and water it with the feet like a garden of vegetables. But the land into which you are entering there to inherit it is a hilly land and flat; it will drink water from the rain of the sky, a land that the Lord your God regards it. The eyes of the Lord your God are always on it, from the beginning of the year even until the end of the year. / ἕξετε γὰρ ἢ γῇ εἰς ἢν ἐσπορεύθη ἐκεῖ κληρονομήσα ἅυτήν οὐχ ἄσπερ ἢ γῇ Ἀἰγύπτου ἐστὶν ὧδεν ἐκπερασθεὶ ἐκεῖθεν ὡτιν σταῖρωσιν τὸν σπόρον καὶ ποτίζουσιν τοὺς ποσιν ὡσει κήραν λαχανον ἢ δὲ γῇ εἰς ἢν ἐσπορεύθη ἐκεῖ κληρονομήσα ἅυτήν γῇ ὅρειν καὶ πεδινή ἔκ τοῦ ὡστοῦ τοῦ ὀρύανοῦ πιπέται ὅδε γῇ ἢν κύριος ὁ θεός σου ἐπισκέψει αὕτην ὧδα παντὸς οἱ ὄφθαλμοι κυρίου τοῦ θεοῦ σου ἐπ’ ἄυτης ἀπ’ ἀρχής τοῦ ἐναυστοῦ καὶ ἐως συντελείας τοῦ ἐναυστοῦ”. Deut 11:10-12
\textsuperscript{285}Brueggemann, \textit{The Land}, 51–52.
\textsuperscript{286}Hayes, “Open Yale Courses | Introduction to the Old Testament (Hebrew Bible) | Lecture 9 - The Priestly Legacy.”
As deeper as one moves into the sanctuary, the greater is the holiness. Or, in other words, as the proximity of God increases, so the holiness increases. The holiest area is the inner shrine of the sanctuary and is accessible only to the high priest. The sanctuary has a high degree of holiness and is accessible to the priests. The outer enclosure of the sanctuary bears a degree of holiness and is accessible to Israelites who are pure. A certain degree of holiness is present in the Israelite camp. Thus, outside the Israelite camp, the land is ordinary, common.\footnote{Ibid.}

### 2.3.2 The Pollution of the Land

Preservation of the land in its sanctified state depended on the Israelites’ relationship to their God – Yahweh who promised them the land and then brought them into it to possess it. The relationship was regulated by covenantal statutes. However, the land they possessed had already had a history of worship of its own. Yamauchi gives a detailed review of the way the ANE peoples saw the connection of the gods’ activities and the fertility of the land. The Canaanite region especially had problems with the drought, while in Mesopotamia, the vitality of the king was connected with the fertility of the land.\footnote{Yamauchi gives the list of the gods of Sumerians, Babylonians, Egypt, Greece and Syria and Palestine and their connection with the fertility of the land. Edwin M. Yamauchi, “Ancient Ecologies and the Biblical Perspective,” Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation 32, no. 4 (1980): 196–197.}

The covenantal laws strictly prohibit idolatry and images. Brueggemann explains that the images are controllable representations, manageable and predictable sources of value and power. This is especially tempting to the ones who are landed and secured and need to put God as well, to their own disposal. Images remove the land from the history of events, level memory and hope to the present time. If present time is timeless, newness is excluded, as well as all the insecurity.\footnote{Brueggemann, The Land, 62–63.}

Severe moral impurity can defile the sanctuary. In such cases, there are provisions for the purification of the sanctuary through special sacrifices of sin offerings or purification offerings.\footnote{Hayes, “Open Yale Courses | Introduction to the Old Testament (Hebrew Bible) | Lecture 9 - The Priestly Legacy.”}

The land can be defiled by a homicide, intentional or unintentional, and it is referred to as ‘blood guilt’. The intentional murder can be purified only by the death of the murderer.\footnote{Hayes, “Open Yale Courses | Introduction to the Old Testament (Hebrew Bible) | Lecture 9 - The Priestly Legacy.”}
The unintentional murder predicts life in the cities of refuge, until the death of the high priest, which serves as purification of the homicide. In such case the God’s holy land was held guilty and defiled:

„According to the Mosaic Law the land would thereby be held guilty of conniving at the crime. Nothing but the shed blood of the murderer can take away the pollution. …… That the injury to human life was regarded not only in the light of a crime, but also from the ethical and religious side, is proved by the singular ceremonial enacted when a man was found slain without the murderer being discovered. The crime was counted a defilement of God’s holy land, and only a religious ceremony could cleanse the soil polluted with the stain of human blood."

The land can be defiled by idolatry. The punishment for idolatry is stoning and the penalty of being cut off by God. The idols are to be completely destroyed from the land, for they are polluting it.

Severe moral impurity can defile the land, but the land cannot be purified. The holy land of God, which is repeatedly defiled by the sexual transgressions, the bloodshed and the idolatry cannot be purified. The land will vomit out its inhabitants, and this is the reference to the Exile. The Canaanites were expelled from God’s land, for the same reason. Land cannot be ritually purified, but it will purge itself by vomiting out those who dwell in it. The book of Leviticus contains covenantal warnings to the Israelites to restrain from the practices that will pollute the land until it vomits them out.
practices of the inhabitants of the land are condemned and prohibited. The Canaanite cult involved El as the inactive god, Baal his son, and Baal's consort Anath. There were two other goddesses closely linked, Asherah and Astarth. The three goddesses were closely associated with productivity and the wealth of the earth, in sexual terms. Baal was the storm god, associated with the rain and fertility and together with El is also depicted in sexual activity.\textsuperscript{298}

Healey explains the inner difference between the Canaanite religious view and the Israelite one. The Canaanite fertility cults are, he says, connected with the status quo and celebrate the cycles of life and death that represent the essence of the divine which is abstract from the historical. The Israelite experience of God is not based on natural phenomena or an idea of an eternal life circle. Israel's faith originated from the events and was shown within them. Their God is a God of history for the exact opposite reason from the Canaanite one: history is a sequence of the events that happen and move history forward, not in a repetitive closed circle. The God of history acts freely, when and if he wills it. The status quo happens to be vulnerable here. Thus, Israel refuses to recognize a cult which would bind its God to the present, as if to the eternal. God is free, and as such he is always positioned against the predictable. The numinous is moved from the natural to the historical and from the accidental to the conscious.\textsuperscript{299}

In the Book of Judges and prophetic literature, we find the accounts about the pollution of the land. This pollution of the land is not initiated on the level of the material world, while nonetheless the material world suffers from it – the pollution takes place on the level of their spiritual life. The land is sanctified by Yahweh, due to the Israelites' faith. Pagan cults are a pollution to the land, as much as it is a pollution to the people.

Most of the stipulations of the Decalogue refer to the concerns of normal civilized human life. The first two commandments bear relevance for the historical situation of the LB/early Iron Age transition. The ‘other gods’ must have been parochial symbols of the existing political or tribal entities. Yahweh represented concerns beyond immediate interests of political power structure or objects of worship. The prohibition of ‘graven images’ is the part of an antimonarchic theology of the early Israelite movement. Images of gold and silver (Exod 20:23) were symbols of ancient political regimes posting a problem in the differentiation of kings and gods. The Israelite community’s system of values was based on

\textsuperscript{298}Ibid., 791.
\textsuperscript{299}Ibid., 792–793.
ethics and morals and not on a monopoly of force. The political states’ idolatries, with its graven images of Baals and kings were incompatible with the sovereign rule of Yahweh, i.e. the kingdom of God.\textsuperscript{300} Mendenhall and Herion state that the biblical monotheism was:

\begin{quote}
“the product not of philosophers and technical theologians but of people who could plainly see that the careful adherence to the stated will of a single God could guarantee community morale only if other competing value systems (represented by ‘other gods’) were rejected as thoroughly as is humanly possible. In turn, this value system could become an operative and tangible reality only so long as a sufficient number of people accepted the suzerainty of Yahweh, so that together they could offer one another some measure of protection and security from those whose value systems were still symbolized by the old state idols of pagan imperialism.”\textsuperscript{301}
\end{quote}

Brueggeman states that Genesis 1-11 and Genesis 12-50 are two histories which establish the parameters of the theology of land in the Bible. The first history is about people secured in the land and doing everything to lose it and finally being expelled from it. The second history is about people without land, but anticipating and confidently expecting it. The Bible is, however, interested in anticipation. Here he refers to von Rad, saying that Genesis 12:1 “expresses a radical breaking off of the other history and a lack of sustained interest.” It reflects breaking off of the old life of expulsion and taking up the risky way of anticipation.\textsuperscript{302}

But the land offers dangerous alternatives. It offers life without the covenant, which can pervert the land, distort Yahweh and destroy Israel. The only resource for resistance to temptation is memory, which Deuteronomy emphasizes. It also points out that the land is also an enemy to memory, the realm without risk or demand, without gratitude. Israel was in danger to become the controller and manager of the land, instead of the recipient and creature of grace. And Israel forgot.\textsuperscript{303}

Israel became seduced by other gods, something Deuteronomy kept warning about. Becoming secured in the land they needed gods committed to their own satiation, which are practical choices and usable loyalties. However, because Yahweh will not allow this to happen, they will lose the land.\textsuperscript{304}

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{300} Mendenhall and Herion, “Covenant,” 1191.
\bibitem{301} Ibid.
\bibitem{302} Brueggemann, The Land, 15–16.
\bibitem{303} Ibid., 53–56.
\bibitem{304} Ibid., 56–58.
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Elijah (3 Kgs 18:21), Isaiah (Isa 1:12-16), Jeremiah (Jer 7:6,9) and Ezekiel (Ezek 18:5-6) call people to stop following Baal and to adhere to Yahweh, otherwise all the sacrifices they make and feasts they celebrate are meaningless, because the basic sin against the covenant is idolatry. Additionally, this basic sin causes other sins between people, such as lying, stealing, adultery and murder (Hos 4:2; Jer 7:5-6,9; Ezek 18:6-8).\(^{305}\)

Hosea and Jeremiah judge Israelites for their infidelity in the land (Hos 2:3-17; 4:1-3). That infidelity is predominantly present in Canaanite or syncretistic fertility worship (Baalism) that has for its goal to secure the fertility of the land through pagan, magical and often sexual rites (Hos 2:7-15; 4:14-15; 7:16; 9:10; 11:2; 13:1-2; Jer 2:4-8, 20-25; 3:1-5, 6-10; 5.7-8; 13:20-27). Coming from the exodus tradition,\(^{306}\) these prophets celebrate the magnificent period of wilderness (Hos 2:16-17; 9:10; 13:5; Jer 2:2, 6; 38:2-3).\(^{307}\)

The idolatry, and specifically the worship of the golden calf was Israel’s great sin (Exod 32:21; 4 Kgs 17:21). In Exodus 34:16 and Deuteronomy 31:16, such worship is called ‘whoring’ (‘fornication’ in the NETS). Additionally, it has been suggested that the background to this motif is in the Canaanite fertility cults. Marital infidelity was a frequent indictment by the prophets (Hos 4:2,13-14; Jer 5.7; 7:9; 13:27; Ezek22:11; 33:26; Isa 57:3; Mal 3:5). They often used the metaphor of adultery for the betrayal of their relationship with Yahweh (Hosea 1-3, Jer 2:23-25; 3:1-13; Ezekiel 16; 23). This is because the covenant relationship with God is similar to that of the marriage solemn oath (Lev 26:12; Deut 26:17-18; 29:12). The analogy between covenant and marriage was common.\(^{308}\)

The first prophet who made such an analogy between Israel’s apostasy and adultery, was the prophet Hosea who was commanded by God to take a „wife of whoredom/γυναῖκα πορνείας“ (Hos 1:2). Jeremiah has many references to idolatry (Jer 5:7; 7:9; 13:22). Using the provision of Deuteronomy 24:1-4, Jeremiah illustrates the effect of Israel's adulterous behavior with many lovers (Jer 3:1-10).\(^{309}\) The theme is even more developed in Ezekiel.

\(^{305}\) Guinan, “Mosaic Covenant,” 908.


\(^{307}\) Janzen, “Land,” 149.


\(^{309}\) “And you polluted the land with your whoring and wickedness. And you had many shepherds as an obstacle to yourself; you got a harlot’s look; you behaved shamelessly toward all/καὶ ἐμίλας τὴν γῆν ἐν ταῖς πορνείαις σοι καὶ ἐν ταῖς κακίαις σοι καὶ ἔργας ποιμένας πάλλους εἰς πρόσκομμα σεσωτῇ ὑμῖς πόρνης ἐγένετό σοι ἰπνοιασχόντης πρὸς πάντας” (Jer 3:2-3).
Chapters 16 and 23 extensively write about Israel's adulterous behavior and unfaithfulness to God.\textsuperscript{310}

The worship of Baal, which was important to Canaanites and was connected with the land's dependence on the rain, was Israel's great temptation. Before the entrance into the Promised Land and later, Israel was warned not to take part in the cult of Baal-Peor at Mt. Peor in the land of Moab (Num 25:1-9; Deut 4:3),\textsuperscript{311} and they failed (Ps 105:28; Hos 9:10). Baal-Peor was one of the leading gods of the Moabites, Midianites and Ammonites. In Numbers 25, we read that while at Shittim Israeliite men engaged in immoral relationships with the Moabite women, which lead to the worship of Baal-Peor. This resulted in a plague of 24,000 dead Israelites.\textsuperscript{312}

In the period of judges, Israel worshiped the Baals (Judg 2:11, 13; 3:7; 10:6, 10; 1 Kgs 7:4; 12:10) and Asherah (Judg 6:25-32). In the time of the Monarchy, Ahab's wife Jezebel worshiped Baal. He built an altar and temple for this god in Samaria and made a grove for Asherah (3 Kgs 16:31-33). King Ahaziah worshipped Baal (3 Kgs 22:53) and consulted Baalzebub, god of Ekron when he was ill (3 Kgs 1:2-16).\textsuperscript{313} In the kingdom of Judah, King Manasseh was worshipping Baal (4 Kgs 21:3).

The prophets Hosea and Jeremiah condemned Israel for the Baal cult (Hos 2:10; 13:1; Jer 2:8; 23:13). In the post-exilic prophetic tradition, only Zechariah in 12:11 refers to such worship. 'An abomination of desolations/ τὸ βασιλεύμα τοῦ ἐρημώσεων' in Daniel 9:27; 11:31; 12:11 is a play on the name of the god Baal-Shamem. The Hellenistic Zeus Olympos introduced in the Jerusalem Temple by Antiochus IV Epiphanes in 168 BCE, was a Hellenistic form of Baal-Shamem.\textsuperscript{314}

The pagan cult of Baal is also connected with the worship of Ashtaroth (Judg 2:13; 10.6; 1 Kgs 7:4; 12.10), who was Baals consort and with the pairing of Baal and Asherah (Judg 3:7; 6:25-32; 3 Kgs 16:32-33; 18:19; 4 Kgs 17.16; 21:3).\textsuperscript{315}

\textsuperscript{310}Adler Goodfriend, “Adultery,” 86.
\textsuperscript{313}Day, “Baal (deity),” 547.
\textsuperscript{314}Ibid., 548.
\textsuperscript{315}Ibid.
2.4 The Covenantal Legislation in the Promised Land

2.4.1 The Covenantal Laws and Commandments

God's presence in the land depends on the faithfulness of his people, and this is regulated through 'the words and statutes' of the covenant. The ceremony at Sinai is concluded with God’s announcement and Israel’s agreement to covenant stipulations, as Exodus 24:3-4 testifies.\footnote{And Moses went in and recounted to the people all God’s words and statutes. And all the people answered with one voice, saying, “All the words that the Lord has spoken we will do and heed.” And Moses wrote all the words of the Lord.\textit{εἰςηθίδεν δὲ Μωσῆς καὶ ὄρθος ἕτοι}-\textit{μα πάντα τὰ ρήματα τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τὰ δικαίωματα ἀπεκρίθη δὲ πάς ὁ λαὸς φωνῇ μὴ λέγοντες πάντας τοὺς λόγους οὓς ἔλαβες κύριος ποιήσωμεν καὶ ἀκουσόμεθα καὶ ἔγραψεν Μωσῆς πάντα τὰ ρήματα κυρίου” Exodus 24:3-4.}

The scholars have identified literary units in the Pentateuch, which are significant law collections. These are the Decalogue (the Ritual Decalogue - Exod 34:11-26 and the Ethical Decalogue - Exod 20:2-17; Deut 5:6-21), the Covenant Code or the Book of the Covenant (Exod 20:19-23:33), the Holiness Code (Lev 17-26) and the Deutoronomic laws. The laws in ancient Israel were part of oral tradition, which is why some scholars see the use of written documents as a development of a later stage, under the influence of neighboring cultures. The legal tradition was preserved through the public reading, as the tool for memory of keeping the laws.\footnote{Greengus, “Law: Biblical and ANE Law,” 242–244.}

Although there are laws coming from the kings, the legal authority was seen as coming from Yahweh. The agents of these laws are most often prophets, especially Moses. Thus, the laws of the Pentateuch are represented as spoken directly by God and to break legal regulations meant to sin against God. The legal regulations of Israel are connected to the concept of the covenant. With regard to the biblical covenant, and in comparison with the ANE treaties in the field of laws, what used to be stipulations in the treaties of ANE became expanded in the Bible, in paragraphs of laws binding to Israelites. The covenant making and covenant renewing was the context for setting and restating the laws. The theological ideas the covenant brought with it were the divine authority, the Israelites' obedience, the intimate...
relationship between God and his people and a continuous bond between God and Israel. It is the divine covenant and the divine law in the history of the Israelites.\textsuperscript{318}

The covenant laws are linked with apodictic style. This is not unique to Israel, and it existed in some other ANE cultures.\textsuperscript{319} Mendenhall and Herion explain that:

\begin{quote}
„All of the stipulations represent those characteristics of human behavior that constitute the definition of the will of God: they describe the highest value, the „ultimate concern“ of the community formed by covenant, for they are the principles upon which the one God directs the historical fate of the community.„\textsuperscript{320}
\end{quote}

According to biblical traditions the text of the Sinai Covenant was the Decalogue, the Ten Words (Deut 10:4) and „there is no modern evidence that would disprove the ancient information.“\textsuperscript{321}

However, although there is a large number of laws as having been given to Moses at Sinai - e.g., the Ten Commandments and the Covenant Code (Exod 20–23) and the Holiness Code (Lev 17–26), it is difficult to say if any of this, and if so, how much, was part of the original Sinai obligation. These laws, deriving mostly from a later period, consist of two main courses: the right worship of Yahweh and implicitly the right behaviour within the community.\textsuperscript{322}

Mendenhall and Herion argue that the Ten Words (Deut 10:4) are not commands spoken in imperative, but in future indicative form, therefore, representing the action which is an expected consequence of the covenant. Furthermore, they explain, later biblical interpretation as well as the postbiblical one, caused the confusion, treating this text as the commandments. They also argue against the opinion of many scholars who see the Decalogue as a classical example of an apodictic legal form.\textsuperscript{323}

Guinan explains such a great number of laws and regulations, as modernization of the existing ones:

\begin{quote}
„As later generations of Israel retold and renewed their basic covenant story, they included new laws and regulations which made their covenant real for them in the
\end{quote}

\begin{footnotes}
\item \textsuperscript{318} Ibid., 244–245.
\item \textsuperscript{319} Ibid., 245.
\item \textsuperscript{320} Mendenhall and Herion, “Covenant,” 1186.
\item \textsuperscript{321} Ibid., 1185.
\item \textsuperscript{322} Guinan, “Mosaic Covenant,” 907.
\item \textsuperscript{323} Mendenhall and Herion, “Covenant,” 1186.
\end{footnotes}
new situations of their lives. All of these developments were attributed to Moses at Sinai because this was where their covenant began.\textsuperscript{324}

The book of Deuteronomy has been considered a covenant document par excellence. It gives three discourses of Moses in the plain of Moab, focusing on the covenant at Sinai. God has chosen Israel out of his gracious love (Deut 7:6-8) and not because of Israel’s greatness (Deut 7:4; 9:4-6) and Israel is repeatedly called on to hear and remember this covenant (Deut 5:1; 6:4; 4:9, 23; 5:15), since it is not something made between Yahweh and their ancestors, but also with all of them today (Deut 5:1-3; 26:16-18; etc.). If they do this then they will truly and faithfully obey the commands of covenant. The core of this is a call to obey and worship Yahweh only (Deut 6:4-5), and this overflows into all areas of life: care for the poor (Deut 15:1-18), justice in the legal system (Deut 16:18-20) and in the economic sphere (Deut 25:13-16) and care for the natural environment (Deut 20:19-20). The very life and existence of Israel depends on this: fidelity will lead to blessing and infidelity to curse (Deut 28).\textsuperscript{325}

Most scholars agree that the treaty analogy is most clearly present in Deuteronomy and deutoronomic material, although the question whether the Mosaic Covenant was from the beginning formed on the analogy of the ancient Suzerainty Treaties, remains a matter of dispute.\textsuperscript{326}

The text of the Decalogue (Exod 20:1-17) gives no reference to blessings or curses; they are implied in the narratives referring to sacrificed animals and to a common covenant meal with Yahweh (Exod 24:4-8, 11). Deuteronomy 28 gives the elaboration of the blessings and curses. This is the later elaboration of the Deuteronomic writer, just like in Leviticus 26 where the Priestly writer appended a list of blessings and curses with regard to covenant obligations.\textsuperscript{327}

\textsuperscript{324}Guinan, “Mosaic Covenant,” 907.
\textsuperscript{325}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{326}Ibid. The structure contains characteristic elements and vocabulary of ancient treaties. It is possible that the form of ancient treaties present in the Deuteronomy is due to the fact that for over a century Israel was a vassal subjected to the suzerainty of Assyria, even though the use of the treaty analogy in Israel might be older than that. Ibid.
\textsuperscript{327}Mendenhall and Herion, “Covenant,” 1187.
Deuteronomy 27:11-26 gives the recitation of blessings and curses associated with the Mosaic Covenant, as well as the entire deuteronomistic tradition, although scholars believe it to be a part of the Shechem Covenant recounted in Joshua 24.\textsuperscript{328}

The narratives of Exodus and Numbers, as well as of Joshua, give illustrations of procedures against violators of the covenant. It is noteworthy to say that the complaints of the Israelites on their way to Sinai are taken favourably by Yahweh, while on their way from Sinai they are punished. (Exod 15:22-17:7; cf. Num 11; 14; 16). This motif, ascribed to the Priestly source, shows how the status of the people was changed at Sinai, where they became subject to the covenant.\textsuperscript{329}

The Mosaic Covenant was “a practical and functional norm of Israelite self-definition,” and it left a lasting imprint on Israel traditions, in spite of the fact that in the period of the judges and the kings many Israelites fell back into paganism or that, in particular in Jerusalem in the Monarchic period, it failed to have its original impact or it was distorted.\textsuperscript{330}

In the book of Exodus, we read an account of the covenant with Moses given on Mount Sinai. The Code of Covenant gives specific regulations. The entire life of the Israelites is regulated in detail by specific law preambules. The Book of Leviticus gives detailed instructions on the sanctuary and celebration, sacrifices and purity. There are four main festivities throughout the year. There is worship of the Sabbath, different feast days and sabbatical years.

Amos, Micah and Isaiah particularly point out to violations, with reference to legal and economic matters (Amos 2:6-7; 5:1; 8:4-6; Mic 2:1-3; 3:11; Isa 3:14; 5:11-12).\textsuperscript{331}

The prophets were measuring present people’s behaviour, through the past covenant tradition. Once the covenant had been broken and ceased to exist – “you are not my people and I am not your ‘I am.’/owment oú lloúz mou kai èγώ oúk eími ýmuðn” (Hos 1:9; Jer 11:10; 38:32) - the punishment was to follow: people were to be exiled out of the land.\textsuperscript{332}

The entire law corpus regulates the life in the land, but particular laws regulate elements of life in close connection with the land: the Sabbatical year (Exod 23:10-11; Lev

\textsuperscript{328}Ibid., 1188.
\textsuperscript{329}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{330}Ibid., 1190.
\textsuperscript{331}Guinan, “Mosaic Covenant,” 908.
\textsuperscript{332}Ibid.
25:1-7), the year of Jubilee (Lev 25:8-55) and the first fruits (Exod 23:16, 19; 34:22, 26; Lev 2:12; 28:26; Lev 23:10; Num 18:12; Deut 18:4; 26:10).\footnote{Janzen, “Land,” 147.}

The covenantal law is given in Deuteronomy 12-26 and implies Israel’s possession of the land and the blessings, if Israel keeps God’s statutes, ordinances and commandments. Breaking the covenant will bring down the covenant curses.\footnote{Ibid.}

In the context of covenantal stipulations, all of the prophets see the land as having an essential theological meaning.\footnote{Ibid., 149.} With all of them, there is a presupposition of the equal distribution of the land and its fruits among the Israelite people, being God’s inheritance to Israel. This is connected with justice. Amos commonly indicts those in power for the oppression of the small peasants (Am 3:9-10; 5:11; 6:4-7; 8:4, 6), as well as do Isaiah ( Isa 3:13-15; 5:9-10; 10:1-2) and Micah (Mic 2:1-4; 3:1-3; 7:2-3). Ahab’s violence against Naboth was condemned, by the prophet Elijah (3 Kgs 20\footnote{Hebrew Text 1 Kings 21.}).\footnote{Ibid., 149.} The story of Naboth’s vineyard shows clearly the difference between the Canaanite and the Israelite perspective on the inheritance.\footnote{Janzen, “Land,” 149.} The fact that King Ahab wishes to buy the land from Naboth shows clearly disrespect to the laws of the covenant, and Naboth’s refusal is not due to his caprice but due to his loyalty to the covenantal laws (Lev 25:23; Num 36:7; Ezek 46:18). Thus, it is not a coincidence that the author is emphasizing that King Joram along with his cousin King Ahaziah, both descendants of King Ahab, were killed in the land of Naboth by Jehu, as a punishment for Ahab’s deeds (4 Kgs 9:21-27).

Amos and Micah see the responsibility for justice in God’s land in the expulsion of the previous inhabitants and the fact that God gifted Israel with that land (Amos 2:9; 9:7; Mic 6:4-5). For Isaiah, such responsibility is based on the ancient righteousness of Jerusalem and Zion. Thus, Isaiah will see the judgment in the humiliation of Jerusalem and Judah through the Assyrian attack (Isa 1:7-9, 24-25; 3:18-26; 5:26-30; 7:20; 10:5-6). Amos and Micah will see the judgment in the loss of the land and exile (Am 4:1-3; 5:27; 6:7; 7:11; 9:4, 9, 15; Mic 1:16; 2:4; 4:10; 5:2).\footnote{Ibid., 148.}

The land given to Israel was a great responsibility. It was a task sharply put, and Israel was under mandate. The guidelines for management of the land were given in the Torah. This is why God calls Israel to be brave and courageous. Honouring and remembering the Torah will lead to success and prosperity, without modification or compromise. The landed people are exposed to the temptation to forget, and the Torah serves them to remember and remain with the land and with Yahweh. Three special tasks are set by the Torah: exclusion of other gods, exclusion of coveting and care for their covenant brothers and sisters.  

The laws specifically provide regulations for the poor (Exod 23:6; Deut 15:7-11), the stranger (Exod 21:21-24; 23:9), the sojourner (Deut 10:19), the widow and orphan (Deut 24:19,22) and the Levite (Deut 14:27). These are the ones with no inheritance (Deut 14:27). It is Israel’s covenental task to honour them and care for them. These landless ones are named brother and sister, as full participants of the covenant promises (Lev 25:25-55; Deut 15:1-11, 12-18; 22:1-4). Although they have no power to claim the participation in the land and the covenant, they are equal heirs. There was a danger that the land will make Israel forget them.

2.4.2 Blessings and Curses

The covenant with God gives significant place to the blessings and curses. The rituals of renewing the covenant involved the reciting of blessings and curses. This is especially obvious in the book of Deuteronomy. After exposing in details the commandments of the covenant that Israel was to keep (Deut 5-26), Moses instructed people to perform the ritual of covenant renewal at Shechem, in which they declared the curses and blessings for obedience or disobedience of the commandments, which were read (Deut 27-28). Moses repeats to the

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340Ibid.
342Ibid., 65–66.
people that it is their obligation to stay loyal to God and to choose life, good and blessing over death, evil and the curse (Deut 30).  

The Holiness Code (Lev 17-26) concludes with the blessings for obedience (Lev 26:3-13) and curses for disobedience (Lev 26:14-39) of God’s commandments. Additionally, people are assured that even in case of the heaviest consequences such as exile, the genuine repentance and return to God will cause for God to remember his promise and his covenant. God will not abandon his people even in the foreign land and would not break his covenant (Lev 26:40-45).  

Neither blessings nor curses are automatic or irrevocable. They have effect only when spoken by the persons with authority, e.g. God, kings, prophets, priests, elders. They can be revoked.  

The one who has experienced the blessing can be called ‘happy’ ašre, and the result that comes from blessing in a broader sense is ‘peace’ šalom.  

The blessing is mostly understood as prosperity, power and fertility. The essential factor of blessing is the confirmation of relationship between the parties, and God’s blessing is the result of such relationship. The human blessings are based on the human-divine relationship and present good will between the parties. Throughout the Old Testament, blessings appear mostly in the book of Genesis and in the Psalms. The prophetic books are characterized more by curses for the unfaithfulness. According to some scholars, in the Deuteronomistic source - D, the primary blessing of God is with reference to the land prosperity. Some consider that the blessing and deliverance are different realms and activities. The deliverance refers to specific miraculous acts of God, while blessings refer to the natural process of God’s care for his creation. Particular scholars argue that the blessing in the Bible has no connection with magical actions.  

The blessing in Genesis 12:1-4 is the central idea of the Tetrateuch. Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 27-28 use blessings and curses with regard to the covenant stipulations. Deuteronomy 27-33 invites people to choose life and blessing over death and curse. The

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344 Ibid.  
345 Ibid., 755.  
346 Ibid.  
Song of Deborah (Judg 5) employs a series of blessings and curses. The Book of Ruth specifically presents the space between life and death, in which God acts between blessings and curses: the signs of curse as famine, exile and death are opposed to the kindness of God (Ruth 2:20). Ruth’s and Naomi’s complaints and self-judgment are “swallowed up by life and fullness of blessing”. The Deuteronomistic History is characterized by the theology of blessing and curse having the ceremonial recitation of the blessing and curses at crucial points of the history of Israel. The historical narrative involves the blessings by the people’s leaders, and King Josiah tore his clothes after finding the book of the law, probably at the possibility of covenant curses taking effect (4 Kgs 22:11-13). The book of Psalms opens with the blessing (Ps 1:1-2), and each of the first four books concludes with the blessing (Ps 40:14; 71:18-19; 88:53; 105:48). The fifth book ends with the ‘crescendo’ of blessing and praise (Ps 143-150). Many psalms such as Psalm 102, 103, 133, 134 represent blessings of Yahweh.

The land became guilty before God and defiled every time Israelites allowed evil to take place of life in covenantal relationship (Deut 21:23; 24:4). This is clearly shown in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28. As Israel’s prophets announced, the consequences were the hand of God (Am 4:6-12; Hag 1:4-7).

The loss of the land is announced as the worst of all tragedies (Lev 26:34-39). Still, since God promised to fulfill his covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Lev 26:42), as much as the judgment will overtake the future generations of Israelites (Deut 28:15,43; Zech 1:6) so much more will the blessing overtake (Deut 28:2) the judgement in the opportunity of repentance (Deut 30:2,6,8,10; Zech 1:6), and as surely as the unfaithfulness to the covenant will result in an uprooted existence (Deut 30:24-28), just the same will God restore Israel.

2.5 The Six Land Ideologies in the Old Testament

In this chapter we will present a different approach to the theology of the land in the Bible. In his book The Land is Mine, Norman Habel extracted six land ideologies throughout

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350 Ibid.
the texts of the Old Testament. Based on the previous categories, Habel identified the following land ideologies: 1) The Royal Ideology (land as the source of wealth), 2) A Theocratic Ideology (land as conditional grant), 3) An Ancestral Household Ideology (land as family lots), 4) A Prophetic Ideology (land as Yahweh's personal nahalah), 5) An Agrarian Ideology (land as Sabbath Bound) and 6) An Immigrant Ideology (land as host country). The six biblical ideologies of the land are based on the following categories: the dominant image of land, the location of God, charters of entitlement and the locus of power and rights to or of the land.351

Based on Habel's research, according to the royal ideology reflected in 3 Kings 3-10 and the royal psalms, Yahweh is in heaven and rules the world from there. The monarch is God's representative on the whole earth, which is his personal domain. The land is source of wealth, and the wealth is the indicator of wisdom. The people, to a lesser degree than the monarch, have the entitlement to the land. The Canaanites and the poor have no right to the land and can be slaves.352

According to the theocratic ideology, as found in the book of Deuteronomy, Yahweh is the owner of the land and has conquered the land for Israel. God expects gratitude and obedience, and land possession depends on it. All that comes from Yahweh is absolutely good. Yahweh chose Canaan as the location for his relationship with the newly chosen people, who are his primary concern. The violation of the treaty between Yahweh and the Israelites by the latter, means removal and extermination from the land. Ancestral families have the right to their traditional lands; the Canaanites, aliens and the poor do not have this right.353

The ideology of ancestral household in the book of Joshua pictures the land as families' allotments. The land belongs to Yahweh who gives it to his people and fights in the battle on their behalf. The ancestral families are presented as having the initiative to fight for their land, relying on Yahweh. The people are presented as choosing Yahweh and taking matters into their own hands.354

A prophetic ideology, represented mostly by the book of Jeremiah, presents a special bond between Yahweh, the land and the people. Israel as Yahweh's chosen people are 'planted' in his vineyard – the land. The land is Yahweh's chosen nahalah, and it is almost

351Ibid., 14.
352Ibid., 17–31.
353Ibid., 52–53.
354Ibid., 54–74.
personified. Yahweh is the source of fertility, and when people violate the relationship with Yahweh they pollute that sacred land. It mourns and laments and is left desolate. People suffer the exile. Yahweh suffers with both the land and the people. However, in order to continue to have a relationship with Yahweh, Israel must suffer the loss of the land which must be purified and emptied again. The empty land will have the new beginning with Yahweh alone, which will involve a 'new planting' and a 'new heart'. Only in that way will the broken relationship between Yahweh-people-land be re-established in its original intimacy and purity. The people are all equal.355

According to an agrarian ideology in the jubilee legislation of the book of Leviticus 25, Yahweh is the owner of all land, and people are his tenants. Yahweh is presented like a local landowner who walks through the land, which is his sanctuary. The economy is governed by the sabbath principles, meaning that every seventh year and every jubilee year the tenants return their land to the original owner for rest. Violation of this regulation means exile from the land, when the land will be able to enjoy its sabbaths. Sabbath regulation is supervised by the priests.356

An immigrant ideology presents Canaan as a host country to different peoples, whose culture and right to own, share, sell and negotiate Abraham respects. Yahweh who is respected by Canaanite people under different names, owns the land which is marked by sacred sites where Yahweh is present. Yahweh promised the land to Abraham through a treaty and the promise is unconditional. Abraham shares the land through grants, negotiations and purchase and establishes peaceful relations. He is not a military invader, but a peaceful immigrant. Abraham is to accept Yahweh as the host of the land and to respect the land.357

Habel argues that: „It is no longer possible to cite the position of the Bible on land as if that position were singular and obvious.”358

2.6 Conclusion

355Ibid., 75–95.
356Ibid., 97–114.
357Ibid., 115–133.
358Ibid., xii.
The life of Israel takes place in the realm of the Promised Land. Through the history of Israel as a people, there were different phases with its different tasks for Israel, with reference to the land. Israel's ancestors, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, lived in the realm of expecting the land, and the task was to be faithful to the promise. During the exodus, Israel was on its way to the Promised Land, with the task to preserve the memory of who brought them there. Once in the Promised Land, Israel was tasked to keep the covenant with Yahweh and to restrain from the Canaanites' ways of life. When Israel was exiled from the Promised Land, they were tasked to reconsider their faithfulness and Yahweh's faithfulness, and once again they regained hope for the land lost.

The theology of the Promised Land can be divided in two sections: with regard to space and with regard to time.

The space of the Promised Land is a particular land with its boundaries. It is a specific geographical region. The entire earth is owned by God, and so is this particular land, but this land he decided to give to Israel. Israel is God's inheritance, and the land is Israel's inheritance. Israel has the right to possess the land as long as they are faithful in their relationship with Yahweh. Yahweh's presence in the land sanctifies the land. The land in relation with Yahweh, just like the people of Israel in relation with him, become holy. Unfaithfulness to the established relationship with Yahweh means betrayal and breaking of the covenant, consequences of which are the pollution of the land and the exile.

Just like the space of the land can be sanctified in relationship with Yahweh, the time in the land becomes sanctified, too. Israel was commanded to leave the land to rest every seventh year and in the year of Jubilee. Land was not to be worked on, but to be left to bring the fruit of its own.

The theology of the land in the Old Testament depends greatly on the approach. Haber proposed six ideologies of the land, each of which bears its own specific characteristics which are often in conflict with one another.

The Promised Land is a sacred space of the relationship of Israel and God. In order to preserve that relationship, Israel must preserve a sacred space in which that relationship takes place. The unfaithfulness to the relationship with God leads to the loss of the land and to distorted relationship with creation. The way Israel perceives the creation in a true manner is only through the relationship with God.
3 The Promised Land – The Ecotheological Approach

Different interests and scopes of biblical criticism, as well as of theological interpretation in general, have always been in close connection with contemporary developments and interests in the fields of philosophy, science and culture. Our time brought to surface of interest concerns regarding ecological sustainability and environment. Naturally, the concern for the problems of Earth and the nature of contemporary society are concerns of the Church, as well. However, the Church's concerns for the natural world, as the home of human beings, have always been on the agenda. After the environmental controversy, Christianity was accused of being responsible for the exploitation of natural sources and this was on behalf of humans' right to have dominion over nature. In order to express unequivocally the Christian perspective on creation, it became imperative to address these concerns on an academic level, in accordance with contemporary problems. As it turned out, it was no easy task. First of all, once it was accused of being responsible for the exploitative treatment of natural resources, the Church began defending itself, arguing its quite opposite perspective on matters of the natural world. Secondly, it had to find a new way of interpreting its message, which was predominantly anthropocentric and this was for a reason. Namely, in an attempt to emphasize its belief in the Creator who is transcendent from creation, and in order to clarify its difference from pantheism, it focused on man as God's creation who contains all the creation within himself.

This chapter deals with two main fields. First, we will present the way ecological crisis influenced the theological interpretations. Besides the development of ecotheology, the biblical hermeneutics has been influenced by the ecological issues, too. The result of this is the development of the ecotheological hermeneutics, which is still in the process of development. There have been three major attempts to formulate the ecotheological hermeneutical principles. Each of these attempts has its advantages and disadvantages. Second, we will present the biblical concept of the Promised Land, in the light of its importance for the ecotheological hermeneutical readings.
3.1 The History of the Ecotheology

3.1.1 Ecology

The word ecology derives from the Greek word oίκος – home, household and λόγος – sense, reason, science. Ecology is defined as:

"the study of the relationships among organisms, as well as the relationships between them and their physical environment." 359

The term ecology originates from the two Greek words: oίκος for home, dwelling place and λόγος for science. 360 Strong renders the Greek word oίκια, ἡ, as a house, dwelling, household, goods, property, home, household, residence, a family, 361 and Liddell-Scott-Jones renders Greek oίκια, ἡ, as building, house, dwelling, household, domestic establishment, inmates of the house, house or family from which one is descended. 362

The term was used for the first time by the German zoologist, Ernst Haeckel, in 1866 which he used for describing the science of „economies“ of living forms. 363

Mark Stanton and Dennis Guernsey argue that, although the term 'ecology' was first used by Haeckel, the ecological issues are much older:

"The term was first used in 1869 by the German biologist Ernst Haeckel, although writings and research which we would now label "ecological" extend back to the classical Greek period....Etymologically, the term derives from the Greek oikos (house) and may be defined as "the study of 'households' of living organisms together with their interrelationships and the interrelationship with the environment." 364

Anderson gives the same meaning, but puts an emphasis on the mutual relations of humans and the creation:

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361 Strong, New Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance, 3614.
364 The ecosystem is the standard descriptive set of analysis. It is an inclusive term, used to describe all the life-support “households” of the earth... It is a basic ecological thesis that all things are related.... Ecology tells us that we may never look for simple, single cause-effect relationships. Rather, we must understand the complex, interactive relationships which exist within our environment.” Mark Stanton and Dennis Guernsey, “Christians’ Ecological Responsibility: A Theological Introduction and Challenge,” PSCF 45, no. 1 (1993): 2–7.
“Ecology, is derived from the Greek word oikos (house), and refers to the earthly habitation which human beings share with other living beings and specifically to „the mutual relations between organisms and their environment”.365

3.1.2 The Roots of the Ecotheology

According to Vladimir Vukasinovic,366 the ecological issues were introduced to Christian theology through Western European theology in the sixties of the last century, as a result of previous theological approaches by Roman Catholic and Protestant theologians. Vukasinovic gives several streams in theology which lead to the rise of such theological concerns: a) The first half of the 20th century was dominated by theology introduced by Karl Barth and brothers Neibuhr. That theology was by large influenced by the philosophy of Descartes who taught about the distance that exists between nature and history. He sees history as a space where man meets God, while nature is just a stage for this meeting; b) Western theology of the sixties is predominantly occupied by political and social issues with great theologians such as Moltman, Cox and Metz attempting to understand the social existence of mankind, from a biblical perspective. It is the time when the theology of hope emerged, as well as social and political theology, but also secular theology introduced by Bonhoeffer. At that time, Cox, in his bestseller Secular City, accused biblical theology for the desanctification of nature; c) At the same time, at the beginning of the sixties, there are already attempts for addressing ecological problems. Joseph Sitter began addressing the issue at the conference of the World Council of Churches in New Delhi in 1961. Kenneth Boulding continued addressing the issue, but with not much of an echo;367 d) However, ecological problems came into the focus of attention only by the article written by Lynn White Jr. In a period when environmental problems were being discussed in scientific circles as burning issues, White made a serious attempt to discuss the relation between ecological crisis and

367 Ibid.
theology, in which White accused western medieval Christianity of being a main source of ecological crisis.\textsuperscript{368}

In his article \textit{The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis},\textsuperscript{369} Lynn White writes:

\begin{quote}

„Especially in its Western form, Christianity is the most anthropocentric religion the world has seen. As early as the 2nd century, both Tertullian and Saint Irenaeus of Lyons were insisting that when God shaped Adam he was foreshadowing the image of the incarnate Christ, the Second Adam. Man shares, in great measure, God's transcendence of nature. Christianity, in absolute contrast to ancient paganism and Asia's religions (except, perhaps, Zoroastrianism), not only established a dualism of man and nature but also insisted that it is God's will that man exploit nature for his proper ends.\textsuperscript{370}

Stanton and Guernsey argue that White has not accused Christianity, but rather posed a challenge to contemporary theologians:

\begin{quote}

„It should be noted that White acceded that his criticism applies to Western Christianity in the post-Scientific Revolution era. In this regard, it may be more accurate to indicate that White is not necessarily criticizing Christian theology per se, but Christian thought which improperly imbibed the Cartesian/Newtonian world view. Indeed, White concludes his article with a challenge to theologians to present an alternative Christian view which is ecological: "Since the roots of our trouble are so largely religious, the remedy must also be essentially religious..."\textsuperscript{371}

And Vukasinovic points out that the criticism of western medieval Christianity is not the only aspect of White's argumentation. Vukasinovic emphasizes that White sees the possible solution for ecological crisis in that very Christian faith, but only that faith is experienced differently from what he had previously described. White, Vukasinovic argues, refers to a wholistic approach of a certain kind, the one which Francis of Assisi exercised i.e. an understanding of the integrity of life which celebrates God.\textsuperscript{372}
\end{quote}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{368}Ibid., 6.
\textsuperscript{370}Ibid., 1205.
\textsuperscript{372}Вукашиновић, “ЕкотеологијаЉубави.
ПојаваЕколошкеПроблематикеХришћанскојТеологијиXXВека,” 6.
\end{flushright}

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3.1.3 The Development of Ecological Theology

A theologian Rogers published an article in 1973 examining the work of theologians that had appeared since White's article. In that article he presented a biblical basis for ecological theology as follows: a) God is immanent in his creation preserving his own integrity, as well as that of man and nature, b) nature is an integrated ecosystem ruled and sustained by God, c) there must be no dualism between humanity and nature: humans are co-creatures with nature but are caretakers of the nature who have a unique relationship with God, d) the relationship between God-humans-nature is expressed through covenant, e) the sin is imposed on nature as a curse through humans and as such continues to wound nature, f) Christ is the creator of all things, and he holds them together; his incarnation is the proof that creation is good, g) the entire creation awaits redemption; Christ died in order to reconcile all things. Christianity is not only „other-worldly“, h) in the world to come all things will be renewed, and there will be reconciliation between humans, animals and plants (Isa 11:6-9, Ezek 34:25-27). 373

Rogers' analysis shows that an ecological theology is possible. He points to three important elements: a thorough understanding of God's immanence in the creation, the nature of humans in comparison to the rest of creation and the role of the church in ecology. 374

According to Vukasinovic, it is legitimate to say that the ecological debate started developing in theological circles in a period between 1961 – 1975, quickly becoming one of the most prominent aspects of theology. But the first important work was Jürgen Moltmann's book God in Creation (1985). Vukasinovic states that in this book Moltmann points out the question of God's immanence in the world, as one of the main ideas which ought to contribute to the correct understanding of man's relation towards the creation. Moltmann analyzes the Old Testament biblical idea of God's absolute transcendence. He explains this historically, saying that the existence of pantheistic and idolatric surroundings forced biblical authors to use more extreme language, in writing about the problem of God's presence in the world and his absence from it. Such an understanding of God's absolute transcendence was decontextualised bycartesian methodology, in order to set upa mechanistic perspective on the world. Moltmann argues the return to the trinitarian understanding of creation, as an

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374 Ibid.
omnipresent gracious presence of God in the world. The Holy Spirit permeates the creation and sustains it without equating with it. This characterizes ecological theology, in which God is not only a cause or effect of creation, but is in continuous relation with it.\textsuperscript{375}

According to Haeckel, the world system of modern science is equal to that of pantheism, while Christianity has emphasized the transcendence of God in the recent centuries.\textsuperscript{376}

The first fully developed ecological theology has been developed by Jürgen Moltmann in his work \textit{God in Creation} (1985), with one of the main threads being God's immanence in the world, where Moltmann points out that it is important to change the center of ecological thinking, from a distinction between God and the world to the recognition of God's presence within the world and the world's presence within God. Moltmann explains that emphasized transcendence of God in the Old Testament is the result of Judaism's environment, which was pantheistic and animist. Thus, according to Moltmann, it was natural and needful for ancient Israelites to draw a strong line of difference between Yahweh, and fertility and the field idol-gods of the surrounding culture of Canaan. Subsequently, Moltmann explains, the methodology of Cartesian heritage gave a new context and meaning to these distinctions, using them to legitimize mechanistic and an anti-ecological view of the world. On the other hand, Moltmann explains that the foundation of God's immanence can be found in biblical text, when stress is displaced from the doctrine of one God to the trinitarian one – an emphasized role of the Father in creation gives an increased sense of transcendence, while the full trinitarian nature of creation gives special attention to the Holy Spirit. He argues that it is necessary to recognize that all creation is being continually energetically infused by the Holy Spirit, through whom God is immanent in his creation.\textsuperscript{377} Moltmann recognizes the existence of tension in such an understanding of God and creation and gives the following explanation:

"There is tension in this understanding of God and creation, but it proceeds from an immanent tension in God himself: God created the world, and at the same time entered into it. He calls it into existence, and at the same time manifests himself through it...The God who is transcendent in relation to the world, and the God who is immanent in that world are one and the same God. So in God's creation of

\textsuperscript{376}Stanton and Guernsey, "Christians' Ecological Responsibility: A Theological Introduction and Challenge."
\textsuperscript{377}Ibid.
the world we can perceive a self-differentiation and a self-identification on God's part."

Stanton and Guernsey add to this:

"This is a profoundly ecological theology. God's relationship to creation is not one of simple cause and effect; He relates in complex fashion with all the intricate lines of integration which are characteristic of God as Trinity. Creation has always been, and continues to be, a genuinely contingent order. This theology is also distinct from the pantheism of contemporary ecological thought."

Osborn notes that there is a tendency among Christian Greens (ecologically-oriented believers) to overemphasize divine immanence, at the expense of transcendence. The necessity is, he explains, "a doctrine of divine transcendence that is so radical that it necessitates belief in divine immanence".

In the World Wide Fund for Nature's (WWF) 25th anniversary gathering in Assisi in 1986, International President HRH Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh, invited religious authorities participating to give their response to the dangers threatening environmental problems. The Orthodox Church provided an active response to this urging.

Since then, different Christian groups have made an effort to take a stand on the ecological crisis. Pope Benedict XVI, in his encyclical letter Caritas in Veritate from 2009, dedicates chapter four to the problem of the environment, and he is preparing an encyclical on ecology in 2015, which will be presented at the UN Climate Summit.

Co-Directors of the Yale University Forum on Religion and Ecology John Grim and Mary Evelyn Tucker lead the joint program of the Divinity School and the Forestry School which is the only one of its kind in the world (year 2009). This project is the edge of a new field of study. They believe that there is a development of a new relationship between

380 As in: Ibid.
381 Вукашиновић, "Екотеологијаљубави. Појава Еколошке Проблематике У Хришћанској Теологији XX Века,” 8.
382 http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20090629_caritas-in-veritate_en.html#_ednref118
religion and the environment, in which the environment is seen as sacred. The project they are leading is an academic approach to religion and ecology. Also, it is the first time that science is cooperating with the humanities. Thus far, the role of humanities has been unclear in the field of environment. However, it is now being seen as necessary discipline which is covering the area of values. The religions of the world have begun to develop an ecological theology, in order to help solve the global environmental crisis. If the religions of the world have managed for a millenia to offer the world a way of sustaining life, it is obviously necessary now, when humanity is facing the death of life and the extinction of our species, as something that has never happened before. People are willing to make sacrifices, if that concerns good for their children's children. All of the religions have began developing statements and specific programs and campaigns. The religions are slow, but necessary. They are rethinking their stories of the origins of the universe and the role of humans in it. Many religions, that have primarily been focused on the inner life of an individual or a world other than the present one, have nature in the core of their rituals, which became a basis for their involvement in this movement that is decades old. According to John Grim and Mary Evelyn Tucker:

„All the rituals of world religions are very much nature based. You can’t have a eucharist, for example, in the Christian tradition without a sense of wheat, of the earth that brings the wheat forward, or the grapes for the wine, and if the whole system is polluted what does this mean for a sense of eucharist, a sense of thanksgiving, what does that bread actually imply? So a new understanding of sacrament, of ritual, is emerging in these traditions, because fundamentally these traditions take nature as sacred, nature as a manifestation of creation, of created order and, whether they have god involved or not, the western religions do have a sense that this is a sacred and created order and that we are the stewards, we are the trustees of this created order. “

In 1996, an American political activist Tom Hayden wrote:

"What I believe is needed is the kind of passionate engagement in the environmental cause that the clergy of America gave civil rights in the 1950s. Unfortunately, what we are seeing today instead is the Religious Right vigorously condemning environmentalists, as pagans while defending the property rights of polluters as somehow protected by the mandates of Genesis. Meanwhile, the mainstream religious institutions have been largely silent and little engaged in the environmental debate of the past 25 years."

387Ibid., 8:14–9:08.
388Tom Hayden, The Lost Gospel of the Earth (San Francisco, CA: Sierra Clubs Book, 1996); Quote as in: Larry B. Stammer, “Tom Hayden Finds Spiritual Roots for Green Message,” Los Angeles Times, October 5,
Contemporary time with its concerns for ecological problems has resulted in the development of ecotheological biblical criticism, an approach which is making an attempt to read and interpret biblical texts ecologically.

3.1.4 The Orthodox Church's Response to the Ecotheological Movement

The Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios I (1972-1991) made a proposal in an environmental congress held on Patmos, in 1988. The Patriarch declared September 1 to be the day of protection of the environment. In his Message on the Day of Prayer for Creation, Patriarch Dimitrios I called all Christian churches in the world to join the Ecumenical Patriarchate in celebrating this day through prayer. In 1990, with the blessing of Patriarch Dimitrios I, the official hymnographer of the Church, monk Gerasimos from Mount Athos, wrote the service for September 1st – the day for protection of the environment and all creation. Furthermore, Vukasinovic mentions another service of such written in 1992 by Metropolitan Nikodimos of Patra. 389

The Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios I took part in organizing the Inter-Orthodox Conference on Environmental Protection at the Orthodox Academy of Crete, which was chaired by Metropolitan Ioannis of Pergamos. One of the conference’s outcomes 390 was the foundation of an Institute of Theology and Ecology by the Orthodox Academy of Crete. This Institute has for its scope the critical evaluation of activities that had been performed by Orthodox communities, with regard to ecological problems. The Institute began its publishing with relevance to ecological issues. The Institute started working on the development of dialogue between theologians and scientists from other disciplinary fields, with regard to ecological issues, inter-religious dialogue and preparation of ecological conferences etc. 391


Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I (1991 – present), within the two decades of his ministry, contributed even more to the development of ecotheological responsibility in the Orthodox world and developed multiple activities, with regard to ecological problems, which is why he gained the name the green patriarch. He has organized summer seminars about the environmental problems in the Orthodox Theological School of Halki on Halka Island, international symposiums on religion, science and environment, the so-called Floating Symposiums.392

Great contributions to Orthodox theological articulation of the ecological problem was given by Ioannis Zizioulas, Metropolitan of Pergamos. The courses Zizioulas offered at King's College in 1989, with the title Preserving God's Creation393, as well as his work Creation as Eucharist (1992) are necessary in gaining an understanding of the Orthodox approach to this topic.394

Vukasinovic points out several biblical passages mostly interpreted in a discussion related to ecology and Christianities. The first passage is Genesis 1:27-28, as being one of the most interpreted biblical passages of the Old Testament and has become the basis of the human exploitation of nature because it has been misinterpreted.395 Vukasinovic gives one of Zizioulas' standpoints according to which pietism and the mainstream of Calvinism have used these verses to the final extent and encouraged the development of capitalism, technology and contemporary civilisation. This is evident in Max Weber's work Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism, which is still an important text nowadays.396 The basic problem is in the way the verb to subdue is being interpreted397 in Genesis 1:28.398

392Ibid., 7–8. The Floating Symposiums were as follows: The first one in September 1995, Apocalypse and the Environment - a symposium marking the 1,900th anniversary of St. John the Divine's vision of the apocalypse on the Aegean island of Patmos, on a ship floating in the Aegean Sea; the second one took place in September 1997, The Black Sea in Crisis – on a ship floating in the Black and Aegean Seas; the third one occurred in October 1999, Danube: River of Life - on a ship floating down the river Danube.
394Вукашинович, “ЕкотеологијаТуђубави. ПојаваЕкологијаПролематикаХришћанскојТеологијаXXВека,” 8.
396Ibid.
397Ibid., 5.
Atanasije Jevtic interprets this term, as follows:

„Subdue it, can be translated as: conquer it, subjugate it, rule, overmaster it. Through his lordship over the earth and everything on it, man should not forget the truth: „The Lord’s is the earth and its fullness, the world and all those who live in it;” (Pss. 23(24):1; 88(89):12). God-given lordship over the Earth does not mean greedy, merciless exploitation of the earth and its natural resources, as it happens to be the case in our time, which is why the nature „retaliates“ through increasing ecological problems.

Another passage greatly discussed in ecotheological debates is the second account of creation in Genesis 2:15.

Atanasije Jevtić gives the following comment on this account:

„The man is created as the crown of all the creation, as the king of the world, as the host to paradise, but this also means as a guardian as well, as an activist and as a priest. He was supposed to conduct himself towards paradise = world entrusted to him in a liturgical, eucharistic way: having received the creation from God to return it back to him with love and gratitude, to use it but to also offer it: Your gifts from Your own gifts, we offer to You - in all and for all.“

The Old Testament verses given here are of a crucial importance for understanding the Orthodox ecotheological teachings about man as a priest of the creation and creator, who further creates the work of God's hands.

Vukasinovic suggests that the basic field for the battle of ecology is ontological and not ethical. This means that the matter of fact is the existence and life as it is and not moral forms of life. Referring to Zizioulas' thought Vukasinovic points out the basic question: what could be the basic motif for ecotheological reaction?, emphasizing it is still without the answer. The


And the Lord God took the man whom he had formed and put him in the orchard to till and keep it, and to take care of all the plants of the ground. (Gen 2:15) Pietersma and Wright, NETS, 7.

core motif for ecological debate is fear. The ecologists see the very danger that threatens humankind and the entire world to be the reason which should serve as a motif for awakening ecological awareness in men and which should motivate them to change their ways.

The Orthodox Church's approach to ecological problems is based on love for the world, humans and God. It sees the main reason for ecological interests in the same relation and emotion, which serves as a basis for it's entire ministry. Persistence on love as a fundamental ecological motif comes out from the deep experience of positive presence (positive, personal, christocentric ascetics), with regard to the Holy Scripture and ascetics.

Vukasinovic argues that a specific perspective on the world and humans' role in it, as represented in Orthodox Christianity, can be seen in Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I's address on the occasion of the Day for Environment Protection. The way Orthodox Christians name the world – creation, says a lot about the way they see it. They see it as a work of God's hands, as being created, as having its beginning, as having been created out of nothing – ex nihilo. It does not contain eternity in itself nor is it self-sufficient. By its nature the world is finite – „it does not possess any means in itself to overcome its nothingness“, but it is not left to that nothingness. Eternity is possible, but through man. Here lies the supreme human responsibility for the destiny of creation. Thus, the Orthodox Church confesses a eucharistic (relational) cosmology, in which truth and life and the eternal existence of the world are not contained in it itself, but must be established – they are being drawn from the relationship with God. The role of man is to establish that relationship through serving the creation in a priestly manner. Another important perspective in understanding an Orthodox ecotheology, beside the cosmological, is the anthropological one. To be more specific, the way we present the ecological solution is not dependent only on how we define creation, but also how we are to define humans.

Descartes, rationalism and enlightenment have not offered a good enough answer to the question: who is a man?, points Vukasinovic. Insisting of Western philosophy and theology

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404Ibid., 7.
405Ibid., 8.
408Ibid.
409Ibid., 9.
on the fact that the true essence of the human is in his reason and intellect, giving him exclusively the eternal importance, while the world is ephemeral, meaning that there is no place for nature in the Kingdom of Heaven, has resulted in pushing the world and the environment into the background position of existence. Such a rationalistic anthropology has suffered the final strike by Darwinism, with its claim that intelligence and self-conscience are general characteristics of all living beings and not only of man. This way interconnectedness of all that is, has been established again. Darwin's evolution theory does not jeopardise the truth about man. Man is much deeper than the power of his reason. Man is an icon of God, and this is thanks to the freedom, i.e. self-determination, embroidered in his being, according to Gregory of Nyssa. This freedom is reflected in man's capability to overcome the limitations of his own nature, but also to liberate all the creation from these same limitations. Being in himself a microcosmos, man unites the entire creation in himself. He treats it in a creative way. He is a creative being capable of reshaping the world, creating and relating towards nature in a creative way.\textsuperscript{410}

Vukasinovic, referring to Celestin Tomic, points out that God has left the world, in a sort of way, unfinished, so that man would continue finishing it and be God's cooperative on Earth.\textsuperscript{411} That creativity can be inversive as well, destructive, provoked by the limitations of existence, non-freedom. Man's creative nature is also obvious in the fact that we do not offer to God his gifts in the same shape we have received them. We return them with the sealed mark of our additional work, reshaped, creatively amended (the examples are bread and wine of the Eucharist and not wheat and grapes; this has another communal dimension, nurturing for communal life).\textsuperscript{412}

The deep roots of all ecological crisis is in man's rejection to serve the world to God in a priestly way. That way he destroyed a proper relationship with God and a proper relationship with nature. This is extremely disastrous for the world, because without such human priestly treatment, the creation is condemned to death, to disappearance. The universe is finite, which is accepted nowadays by many scientists. Everything that has been created has to disappear, unless something fundamentally different takes place. Thus,a deeply ecological human act is expressed through the words of Metropolitan Zizioulas: ,,The only

\textsuperscript{410}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{411}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{412}Ibid.
way to protect the world from its finitude, which is inherent in its nature, is to bring it into relation with God”. 413

Liturghtal texts of the Orthodox Church often express relations between man and creation. It has been the case that the emphasis was mostly on protection of people from natural forces: hunger, pestilence, earthquake, flood, fire... (Prayers at the Lity, Vespers), but now this is changing. 414 Now we pray for nature to be protected from people:

„Lord, who created the universe at the beginning and gave to each thing its own rank, do not despise the works of your hands, but with an eye of mercy look from heaven upon this vine and restore it according to your will, turning aside from it every purpose that brings corruption and every destroyer; for you are our Shepherd, Deliverer and Saviour, and from you, Master, we receive help in mercy and acts of compassion, as we glorify you.“ (Office of supplication to our God and Saviour Jesus Christ, who loves humankind, for our environment and for the welfare of the whole creation, 1st September, Vespers, At the Liti). 415

Liturgical texts teach us how to value the creation, through thanksgiving for creation, and plural forms of the eucharistic service teach us sharing and community. 416

The Baptism of Jesus Christ is, for Alexander Schmemann, who briefly recapitulates the tradition of the Church Fathers, unification with the entire creation, revelation of the sense and meaning of waters, as well as of the entire creation. The sense and the meaning are in the fact that everything in this world, once renewed in a relationship with God, becomes again man's way towards God and his means to be in relation with God. 417

This experience is being transferred to the entire sacramental life of the Church, in which the elements of the material world become the means for relationship with God, space to meet God, salvational God's acts in our lives. 418

413 Ibid.
417 Ibid.
418 Ibid.
Quite often in ecotheological studies man is being called a steward of the world. Stewardship, being a popular term, still doesn’t reflect entirely what Orthodox ecotheology wants to present, when it comes to the role of man in saving the environment, which has been thoroughly analyzed by Zizioulas. He says that the term steward has been well selected, since it expels misinterpretation about man as a master, i.e. the owner of the creation. On the other hand, this term which involves the responsibility for the creation, also has its limitations. In such a concept, nature is still an object man deals with, in a certain way from the outside and from above, and his relationship towards nature has a utilitarian form. Also, such a concept involves a role of nature which is too passive, and it is also very conservative – in a bad way. A steward is someone entrusted something, within the limits set by existence itself. Man, on the other hand, should develop, perfect and change nature. Zizioulas believes that the term 'priest of creation' is more appropriate for the role of 'man in creation'. Here again there is an emphasis on a priestly ministry, which is understood as a function of offering and an establishing of relation, i.e. love in its deepest sense. The priest of creation makes the creation better than it was, and he/she completes it. It is a cultural, creative and civilisational dimension of this new ecology.

Teaching about man as a priest of creation is particularly developed in the theology of Schmemann:

"The first, the basic definition of man is that he is the priest. He stands in the center of the world and unifies it in his act of blessing God, of both receiving the world from God and offering it to God – and by filling the world with this eucharist, he transforms his life, the one that he receives from the world, into life in God, into communion with Him. The world was created as the „matter“, the material of an all-embracing eucharist, and man was created as the priest of this cosmic sacrament."

Zizioulas explains that such concepts of understanding the relationship between man and the creation – as a steward and as a priest – imply different concepts of ecologically wrong behavior. The term of steward, which is ethical and legal, implies the conclusion that the one who does not perform such duty simply commits a violation, becomes amoral and unethical. He exploits and destructs; he is selfish. If a man is priest to the creation, and

419 Stewardship comes from Greek oikonomia - management of a household or family, husbandry, thrift, stewardship: Liddell et al., “The Online Liddell-Scott-Jones (LSJ),” 1204.
421 Alexander Schmemann, For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy (Crestwood: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1982), 15.
refuses to behave so, than not fulfilling such a designation is tragic and fatal. He does not spoil, but directly executes. The consequences are existential, not ethical.422

Besides the eucharistic approach, the Orthodox Church offers another approach to the contemporary world – an ascetic one:

„An 'ecological asceticism' - if we may coin such a term - always begins with deep respect for the material creation, including the human body, and builds upon the view that we are not masters and possessors of this creation, but are called to turn it into a vehicle of communion, always taking into account and respecting its possibilities as well as its limitations.“423

Reference to asceticism in the context of ecology can easily cause perplexity. It is generally considered that the ascetic spiritual orientation is against the world and its physical, material dimension.424 This can be taken as correct, but only with particular examples, like the influence of Origenism, which despises the material aspect of human existence, as well as an environment, or the influence of Platonism which puts spiritual above material in its hierarchy of values.425 However, these examples are not dominant ones. Large numbers of the church fathers instead of rejecting the body or creation, give them their true dimension. Asceticism is a struggle with egoism and a twisted will, where a human makes an effort to live for the other, to synchronize his will with the will of God, to heal it and renew it. A good example of this is fasting. Fasting is not a denial of the material world through selection of food, but an affirmation of it as a life saving way to God. Relation to food becomes the reflection for sanctification of the entire human being, who now lives by promises and not through instincts and senses.426

Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I points out that such an ascetic approach to the environment makes us capable of realizing that everything we take as common and daily, which we take for granted, is in truth the gift of the love of God which we accept to satisfy our needs. We do not have the world to abuse it and waste it only because we can buy it. The

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422 Вукашиновић, „ЕкотеологијаЉубави. ПојаваЕколошкеПроблематикеУХришћанскојТеологијиХХВека,” 12.
424 Вукашиновић, „ЕкотеологијаЉубави. ПојаваЕколошкеПроблематикеУХришћанскојТеологијиХХВека,” 12.
426 Вукашиновић, „ЕкотеологијаЉубави. ПојаваЕколошкеПроблематикеУХришћанскојТеологијиХХВека,” 13.
previous points out to one more basic principles of the eucharistic ethos – the use of natural resources with gratitude. Thus, both ethos’, eucharistic and ascetic, are interconnected.427

The incarnation of Jesus Christ gives a new hope, but also a new reality for the creation. Through his economy of salvation, Christ has re-established the priestly relation to the world, which Adam failed to do. Christ as the New Adam has become the head of the saved creation.428 This shows that the creation has been indicated to become the Body of Christ, which is St Paul's and St Maxim's theology. The creation, which was designed to intimately be united with God, not only because it has come into existence by his creative hand, but most of all in the person of the God-man, becomes in the deepest sense theophanic.429

This has been emphasized by the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I who, in his epistle from September 1st, 1993, quotes Father Paissios of Mount Athos:

„This grass is an icon; this stone is an icon; and I can kiss it, venerate it, because it is filled with God's grace.

The world is not for us to take things from, but a place where we cast off our passions and desires.“430

In the sacramental life of the Church, the created world has established a relationship with God primarily through the eucharistic act of offering, which has its climax in a central exclamation of anaphora: „We offer to You these gifts from Your own gifts in all and for all!“431

However, a sacramental life should not be seen in a reductionist manner, as if there is a reality of life which is profane and the other that is sacral. John Chryssavgis points out an important dimension of the Orthodox Christian approach: that the entire Earth is seen as a sacrament.432 In discussing an Orthodox Christian approach to the ecological issue, he explains that the genuine Eastern Orthodox interpretation of eschatology has in its core the

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427Ibid., 14.
428Ibid., 15.
429Ibid., 13.
431Вукашиновић, “ЕкотеологијаЉубави. ПојаваЕколошкеПроблематикеУХришћанскојТеологијиXXВека,” 11.
perspective of the „lastness“ or „lastingness“ of all things, „the relationship of all things to the last things“.

3.1.5 The Basic Theological Problems with Regard to Ecology

From its beginnings, ecotheology has been trying to deal with several main problems including:

a) The problem of anthropocentrism. This has been recognized by a number of scholars as the main problem Christians have in dealing with ecological problems starting with White’s observation: “Especially in its Western form, Christianity is the most anthropocentric religion the world has seen.” The common interpretation of the biblical passages Genesis 1:27-28 and Genesis 2:15 speak in favor of that.

b) The problem of eschatology. This problem has been raised with regard to the Christian faith in the world to come. In some Christian communities, the Second Coming of Christ will abolish the Earth. Subsequently, to treat the present creation ecologically is completely unnecessary.

c) The problem of God’s transcendence/immanence. This problem is twofold. The Christian belief that God is infinite and everlasting, while the world is created, is one of the distinct points in which Christianity differs from many world religions and is the core of Christian theology. On the other hand, God’s immanence in the creation can be interpreted in different ways. For Christians, to accept the emphasis on the importance of nature and the creation as it is means the danger to fall into a pantheistic world view.

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433 Ibid., 2.  
434 White, “The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis,” 1205.
3.2 The Ecotheological Hermeneutics

Ecological problems have resulted in the development of ecotheology, but also in an ecotheological biblical criticism, an approach which is making an attempt to read and interpret biblical texts ecologically.

What is now known as 'ecological reading' of the biblical text is opening up a number of theological and exegetical problems. This is evident especially because such readings 'use a concrete ideological lense'.

In an attempt to explore the interpretative strategies in biblical interpretation, Ernst Conradie presents three main traditional 'doctrinal constructs', and three constructs employed for an ecological biblical hermeneutics. Conradie explains that the function of the doctrinal construct is to find the meaning of both the biblical text as a whole and the contemporary context as a whole. This way, an interpreter establishes the link between the text and the context, meaning that sometimes similarities will not only be found, but constructed, as well. The problem is that such constructs may lead to ideological distortions.

He further explains three influential Christian doctrinal constructs, all in close connection with salvation, as follows: 1) victory over the forces of evil, destruction and death in terms of liberation from political or economic oppression, slavery, military danger, sickness, famine, evil spirits and death; 2) healing of broken relationships, the root of which may be a broken relationship with God; 3) moral influence of the biblical text with outcomes such as justice, peace and integrity of creation.

Conradie also points out three dominant ecotheological doctrinal constructs: 1) a sense of human responsibility such as the call to obedience to God, human dominion with reference to its uniqueness, a more humble stewardship for possessions, human priesthood as a mediation between God and creation, covenant with God with its responsibilities and

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437 Ibid., 201.
438 Ibid., 202.
blessings – all of the above being criticized for being anthropocentric, 2) a sense of the sacred meaning that the earth is a sacred gift from the holy God and humans are supposed to keep it and treasure it, with the whole earth being sanctified by God. It is characterized as ‘sacramental’ and is considered to be naïve, 3) an appropriate vision of the future with regard to the environmental problems, which can be correlated with the biblical motifs about the future, based on predictions and God’s promises.439

Although not fully comprehensible, the more sophisticated attempts to link the text, tradition and context would be the ‘liber nation of creation’, ‘wisdom’ and ‘the whole household of God’. The last one, largely represented in the ecumenical literature is based on the Greek word oikos – household and focuses on ananthropology of stewardship – oikonomos, of being ‘at-home-on earth’. It sees the community members as being of the ‘household of God’, or as being sojourners who see the Eucharist as the table of the household where all are gathered together, and the earth will become God’s home.440

The discussion and re-interpretation of biblical texts referring to the creation and humans’ relation to it, has been developed mostly among Protestant biblical scholars. The development of reading biblical texts ecologically, and especially among English-speaking scholars, the so-called “ecological criticism” is an approach that is still developing. Its methodology has not been defined, yet there are some major guidelines. Francis Watson suggested the typology that has been fully developed by David Horrell, Cherryl Hunt and Christopher Southgate.441

3.2.1 The Hermeneutical Principles

Based on Watson’s typology, ecotheological discussion based on biblical texts develops in two main hermeneutical approaches:442:

439Ibid., 203–204.
440Ibid., 205–206.
442Ibid., 847–850.
1. The Hermeneutic of recovery. This hermeneutic approach argues that the biblical text is good and has not caused any ecological problems. What did cause ecological problems was the interpretation of the text and eco-exegetical reading that is supposed to reconstruct and restore the original meaning of the biblical text. It is also described as ‘apologetic’.\textsuperscript{443}

2. The hermeneutic of suspicion and resistance. According to Horrell and some other scholars, this hermeneutical approach can be divided into two types: a) resistance to the biblical text for the sake of ecology and b) resistance to the ecological interests for the sake of the biblical text.\textsuperscript{444}

a) Resistance to the biblical text for the sake of ecology. Based on this kind of approach, the biblical text itself projects the anthropocentric models and is of no help in its present state. Thus, an interpreter needs to face, resist and escape such texts and provide a new edifice. This approach is represented in the Earth Bible Project.\textsuperscript{445}

b) Resistance to the ecological interests for the sake of the biblical text. According to this approach the biblical text is presupposed to be verbally inspired and is seen as the ultimate authority. It is mostly popular in the USA Christian evangelical and fundamentalist circles. For them, ecological issues are parts of the New Age plot. Thus, they refuse to discuss ecological issues. In some cases they promote radical eschatology (for example, dispensationalism or premillennialism).\textsuperscript{446}

3.2.2 The Earth Bible Project

The Earth Bible project published the Earth Bible Series in five volumes and a selection of papers in a small volume, which was delivered at the annual sessions of the SBL Section of the Ecological Hermeneutics. They proposed a radical ecological approach to the text based on the hermeneutic of 1) suspicion, 2) identification and 3) retrieval. As a critique

\textsuperscript{443}Ibid., 848.
\textsuperscript{444}Ibid., 848–850.
\textsuperscript{445}Ibid., 848–849.
\textsuperscript{446}Ibid., 849–850.
against anthropocentrism and as a basis to construct a model of ecological hermeneutics, they established six eco-justice principles. These principles are:

“The Principle of Intrinsic Worth: The universe, Earth, and all its components have intrinsic worth/value.

The Principle of Interconnectedness: Earth is a community of inter-connected living things that are mutually dependent on each other for life and survival.

The Principle of Voice: Earth is a living entity capable of raising its voice in celebration and against injustice.

The Principle of Purpose: The universe, Earth and all its components are a part of a dynamic cosmic design, within which each piece has a place in the overall of that design.

The Principle of Mutual Custodianship: Earth is a balanced and diverse domain where responsible custodians can function as partners with, rather than rulers over Earth to sustain its balance and a diverse Earth community.

The Principle of Resistance: Earth and its components not only suffer from human injustices but actively resist them in the struggle for justice.”

A biblical interpreter of a particular passage is supposed to examine the relation of the text to these principles, i.e. whether it is consistent with them or in conflict with them. If the text is in conflict with these principles, the best approach is the exposure of and resistance to the anthropocentrism.

David Horrell exposed these principles to criticism arguing that what they lack is a theological basis.

3.2.3 The Green Bible

The Green Bible is a Bible edition by Harper Collins from 2008. Its goal was to print in green the parts of the biblical text that clearly show how the Bible shows environmental care for creation. The edition caused a controversy. Horrell criticizes this project considering
it flawed. The main point of his criticism is pointed toward The Green Bible’s attempt to present humans as caring stewards of the creation.

The Green Bible, Horrell says, claims that the Bible teaches humans to act responsibly and care for the earth like its stewards – stewardship is the main thread in the Bible when speaking of the relationship of humans and the earth. When the Bible teaches the dominion of humans over the earth, it teaches a responsible relationship. 451

Horrell refers to Norman Habel, who says that Genesis 1:26-28 is ‘overtly hierarchical: humans are authorized to rule other creatures and to subdue the Earth’ and to Reumann who points out that the terminology of stewardship is little used in the Bible: ‘‘[t]here are virtually no Old Testament roots for what the New Testament and Church Fathers did with the oikonomia theme… It cannot be claimed that oikonomia constitutes a major New Testament theme’. In other words, the Bible does not say explicitly that humans are ‘appointed stewards of creation’. 452

3.2.4 The University of Exeter Project

Horrell, the leader of the University of Exeter project on Uses of the Bible in environmental ethics 453, criticized the principles proposed by the Earth Bible Team.

“One difficulty with this approach, however, at least in terms of an approach to doing Christian theology, is that authority effectively lies not with the Bible or the Christian tradition, but with the ecojustice principles: it is these that present a set of norms to inspire and instruct human belief and action.” 454

452Ibid.
Horrell proposed these principles theologically modified. Such modification should take into consideration the biblical stories about creation, their reception and their development in the tradition of Christian theology. 455

“These principles are: (a) the goodness of creation, (b) humanity as a part of the community of creation, (c) the interconnectedness in failure and flourishing, (d) covenant with all creation, (e) creation’s praise of God, and (f) the liberation and reconciliation of all things.” 456

Ekaterini Tsalampouni evaluates this approach as ideologically nuanced, as well. 457

3.3 The Ecotheological Concept of the Promised Land

The theological concept of the Promised Land can be interpreted in two ways: it speaks of one particular land given to the Israelites, and it speaks of the entire land, i.e. earth. In either case, the Israelites are called to inherit this land, as God’s chosen people. The context of the relationship between the Israelites and God is the covenantal one. Within the covenant, they are bound either by laws or simply by faithfulness and loyalty to the relationship. God promised them bountiful life, and he keeps his promise. People, on the other hand, need to remember that the Creator is God. This means that the special position in the creation belongs to people, and the nature is part of the relationship between God and human.

3.3.1 The Promised Land as a Paradigm for Ecological Problem

The first time the concept of the Promised Land appears in the corpus of the biblical text, as we have it now, is in Genesis 12 when God calls Abraham to leave the land of Haran and go to the land God will show to him (Gen 12:1-3). The emphasis is on Abraham’s

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456 Ibid.
457 Ibid.
faithfulness (Gen 12:4) and on the fact that God will actually give the land to Abraham and his offspring (Gen 12:7).

When Israel was called to leave Egypt, as the place of their bondage and to go to the Promised Land, the emphasis was again on the fact that God will give it to them (Exod 3:8). However, one additional point is noteworthy here. Israel had to go through the desert in order to establish the covenant with God (Exod 19-24). Before going straight into the Promised Land (Exod 33:1), Israel had to remain in the desert, due to its murmuring and rebellion (Num 14:22-23, 28-35; 26:65; 32:13,15; Deut 1:26-28). In the desert it had experienced hunger, insecurity and fear (Exod 16:3; 17:2-3, 8; Num 11:4-6; 14:1-3). The Promised Land was meant to provide them with turf\textsuperscript{458}, which will be their home. However, having reached the land, Israel forgot it was a gift (Deut 1:20, 25; 2:29; 3:20; 4:40; 5:16), which was supposed to be cared for by keeping the covenant (Exod 20-23; 34:11-26; Lev 17-26; Deut 5:6-21; 6:1; 7:12; 10:12). Instead, Israel kept falling into a temptation of battle for the control of nature,\textsuperscript{459} depicted in the breaking of the covenantal laws and in idolatry (for example:Judg 2:2, 10-13, 17, 19; 1Kgs 12:9-12; 3 Kgs 11:1-2; 12:29; 15:3; 16:31, etc.).

The urge to gain control over nature distances Israel from the true God. This, in return, results in the different perception of the land and nature - it ceases to be God’s sacred creation.

The Promised Land, as testified in the text of the Old Testament, is a holy space in the entire creation, designated for Israel's covenantal relationship with their God. The reason for such a covenant to take place at all, and the reason for particular geographical territory to be marked as Israel's land, is described in the third chapter of the book of Genesis. Humans have abandoned their Creator and their decision was reflected on the entire creation. There was no human on earth and there was no place on earth where the true God was worshipped. The covenantal relationship with Abraham and his offspring is a result of Abraham's faith in the true God. Having re-established the once broken relationship with humans, God dedicated a territory on his Earth for their dwelling. In doing so, God placed certain obligations on Israel as the other party of the covenant. Israel was supposed to worship one true God. If Israel was to do so, it will be blessed generously with all the blessings. If Israel fails to worship the true God, they will fall back to be like all other nations - even worse, they will be the nation

\textsuperscript{458}Brueggemann, The Land, 2.
\textsuperscript{459}Ibid., 62–63.
which betrayed the relationship and trust and the curse will fall upon them. We consider that the root to the ecological crisis, according to the biblical text, lays in this broken relationship between humans and God, who is the Creator of the universe. Failing to recognize God as the Creator and Pantokrator of everything, humans utilized one another and the creation for their self-centered purposes. We consider that the root to the ecological crisis is not in the Christian interpretation of the book of Genesis, but on the fact, testified by the Bible, that humans reject God the Creator. One comment is necessary here. The biblical text is being inspected as being anthropocentric. If it is so, it is important to note that, in producing an anthropocentric text, humans have placed the fault for abandoning God on themselves and not on the creation.

The concept of the Promised Land can be used as a biblical example of the right or wrong approach to the earth – the household God created for humans (Gen 1:28; 9:1-3; 12:7 cf. Gen 3:17-19; 4:11-12; Isa 24:5). Different aspects of Israel's life in the Promised Land can be grouped in two categories: the relationship with the creation through the relationship with God (Deut 5:29), or the relationship with the creation in which God is excluded (Deut 4:15-19 cf. Judg 2:12).

The covenantal relationship was meant to help Israel find the true relationship with God and, subsequently, with the creation. The failure to exercise such a relationship, which happened so often in Israel's history, lead to idolatry – the focus was shifted from the relationship with God to the relationship with the creation (Judg 8:24-27; 1 Kgs 2:12-17; 3 Kgs 20; 4 Kgs 20:17). This shift had for its result a worship of the creation. Such a worship had besides idolatry as a special problem with regard to their relationship with the one and true God, another consequence that is of importance for the ecological reading. Namely, worshipping of nature always means utilisation of it and placing the control onto it. The trap Israel fell into, each time it chose idolatry, was the failure to see the creation as God's. Instead, they were drawn into temptation to control it, through a calculative manner and to exploit it.

The aspects of the Promised Land such as: the holiness or defilement of the land, blessings and curses, idolatry or the exploitation or consecration of the land can serve as indicators of the ecological character of the concept of the Promised Land.
3.3.2 The Promised Land – Holy Space

The biblical text testifies that the Promised Land is meant to be holy, as well as Israel (Lev 17-26). Living in God's proximity on a particularly designated piece of land meant for Israel that the relationship they have with God is special and different and separated from the rest of the creation. Everything that takes place in this land is meant to be holy. The relationship with God, as well as the relationships of Israelites with one another, are supposed to be holy. The relationship with the creation is meant to be holy, too. The relationship with God was supposed to be preserved through the right worship, sacrifices and preservation of the memory that it is He who made a nation out of them, delivered them from oppression and brought them to this land (Exod 34:11-26; Deut 4:9, 23; 5:1, 15; 6:4; 7:6-15). The relationships with one another are regulated by the covenantal laws and commandments (Deut 4:14), with reference to all aspects of their family, social and economic life (Exod 21-23 cf. Ps 14). The relationship with creation is regulated through the covenantal laws, which refer to the Sabbatical year (Lev 25:2-7), but also the right relationship with the creation is a natural outcome of the right relationship with God and humans (cf. Ps 64). If they fail in preserving the faithful and caring relationship with God and one another, they will subsequently fail to do so with the creation, too (Deut 8:1-18).

The defilement of the land (Lev 18:25, 28) is a result of the idolatry (Judg 2:11, 13; 3:7; 6:25-32; 10:6, 10; 1 Kgs 7:4; 12:10; 3 Kgs 16:32-33; 18:19; 4 Kgs 17:16, 21; 21:3) Israel was falling into. This suggests that, for the land being part of the creation, natural existence is in being part of the relationships of humans and God. When Israel was abandoning the true God through worshipping other gods, land actually became the focus of humans' attention. Such focus meant two things: it will be worshipped, and it will be exploited. Such position of the creation is not natural, so the land is considered to be defiled every time Israel falls into idolatry.

We consider that the failure to see the creation as a constitutive part of God-humans relationship, leads to the degradative perspective on the creation. The Promised Land was supposed to be the starting point for the restitution of the true relationship with God, one another and the creation.

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3.3.3 Blessings and Curses

We consider that the blessings (Deut 28), as the outcome of the covenantal relationship with God in the Promised Land (Lev 26), are the biblical way of saying what we would call the safe environment. Namely, when people preserve the faithful relationship with their God, they respect nature. In return, God blesses the people and nature, which brings fruit without being forced upon.

The blessings refer to different aspects of Israel's life in the Promised Land, but they are always the visible confirmation of God's presence (Josh 1:5; 3:10; 6:16; 16:28; 1 Kgs 17:45-47). God's presence always means the sanctification of his creation, the Promised Land being part of it. In the Promised Land, curses are always the outcome of Israel's falling back to idolatry (Deut 27:15; 28).

3.3.4 The Problem of Idolatry

The idolatry Israel is frequently falling into in the Promised Land (Judg 3:7), is a particular part of a problem, when seen ecologically.

First of all, the idolatry means abandoning the true God (Isa 1:2). Idolatry means worshipping the creation, instead of God. In an idolatric way of life, God is not necessary. Such a living means control over the realm of creation through the relationship with the gods that do not exist and are the results of human need to make up the gods they can control.462

The problem with the promised land in such a situation is a good example of the ecological problem of the contemporary time: the Promised Land is given by God to Israel to live in it and to maintain the relationship with the God. Instead, Israel starts behaving as if God never existed and had never brought them to this land. They start behaving as if the land is their own, and they are allowed to do with it whatever pleases them. The root to the ecological

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462Brueggemann, The Land, 2.
crisis is exactly the same: humans behave as if the creation is at their disposal to use it as it pleases them, forgetting God and creation. This is obviously an anthropocentric behavior.

On the other hand, the problem of the Earth Bible Project ecological hermeneutics is the placement of the earth in the center of our attention. This is meant to help in rehabilitating the earth from human exploitation. We consider this to be as equally wrong and dangerous. As it is the case with the Promised Land of Israel, the same goes for the entire land, i.e. earth. Once placed in the center of humans’ attention, it becomes at the same time worshipped and exploited. The ecotheological hermeneutics, which advocates such an approach, has no intention of exploiting the earth, but such an approach is reminiscent of worship. Worshipping the earth means to expel God from the broader picture (Isa 1:2). We consider that such an approach will not lead us to the solution of the problem.

3.3.5 The Problem of Exploitation in the Promised Land

We consider that the fundamental problem of the ecological crisis on Earth is overconsumption. This overconsumption has resulted in the excessive use of natural goods and resources, which in return has resulted in the phenomena we now call the environmental problems.

Although the problem of environment and ecology as such does not exist in the times of the origin of the biblical text, the problem of overconsumption is testified in the Promised Land, as being against the covenantal law (Lev 21:1-11, 28-36; 21:37-22:15; 23:1-13; Deut 27:17-19, 25).

The first good example which shows how overconsumption is directly connected with the lack of faith in God is the story of manna (Exod 16:2-27). Israelites were told by God that they will receive their share of food daily, and that they were not supposed to collect more than they need for that day. Still, they couldn't resist and started accumulating manna in case it doesn't appear again (Exod 16:20). Again, it shows the connection between the lack of faith in God the Creator and the need to control and calculate life, once God is abandoned.

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463 Earth Bible project, “Earth Bible: EcoJustice Principles.”
Another good example of exploitation of the natural goods is the provision about the Sabbatical year (Lev 25:2-7). Israel was supposed to work only six days in one week and only six years in a row. The seventh year, the festivity days and the seventh day were days of rest for the people and for the land. Israel was promised, by the same God who promised them the deliverance form Egypt and the promised land (Exod 3:8), that there will be enough food for them (Lev 25:20-22), regardless of the fact that the land will not be worked on on the seventh year. Israel did not have strength to believe in this. Israel was afraid that if they do not control planting and harvesting, there will not be enough of goods for survival.\footnote{Brueggemann, \textit{The Land}, 65.} Thus, Israel failed to observe the Sabbatical year (Jer 41:8-16). The ecological problem of our times comes from the same approach. Humans are terrified for their existence and the solution they are reaching for is gathering and collecting of goods, the exploitation and the production of which has caused the disbalance in the eco-systems.

The time of the Monarchy is marked with the covenant-keeping and covenant-breaking by the kings (3 Kgs 1:2-16; 16:31-33; 22:53; 4 Kgs 21:3). The idolatry kings were exercising placed the focus on nature, instead of God. The natural development of such a living in the Promised Land would be the exploitation of the natural goods. However, this type of problem is particularly connected with King Solomon (2 Chr 9:13-28), who was for most of his life loyal to the God of Israel (3 Kgs 3:3, 5-14 cf. 3 Kgs 11:1-10). Here, we can find another junction point to the text. Not only was the exploitation, being an unnatural way to treat the creation, the natural consequence of the idolatry, but it was also testified as the justification of the king's faithfulness with God. On the other hand, at the same time when the land was exploited (3 Kgs 2:35; 10:22), the people were exploited, too. It shows again that, in a true covenantal relationship, the humans, i.e. Isrealites were supposed to exercise care for each other, and where they failed to do this, the exploitation of the land was inevitable. The good example for this is the division of the Kingdom into administrative units (3 Kgs 4:1-19), the taxation (2 Chr 8:8-9) or the building projects of King Solomon (3 Kgs 2:35; 10:22) or the story of King Ahaz and Naboth (3 Kgs 20).
3.3.6 The Advocate of the Earth

Although the text of the Bible can be seen as being anthropocentric, the tradition about the Promised Land as a whole, preserves the care for the land and the entire creation. Wherever there is such care expressed for nature in the Promised Land, it exclusively comes from God. God is the advocate of the creation in the Promised Land tradition.

Due to the concern for our habitat, the Earth Bible ecotheological hermeneutical approach suggests the advocacy for the Earth in interpreting the biblical text. This places two concerns before us. Firstly, it means that the advocacy for the Earth should be taken from God and placed in the hands of humans. If humans have proven themselves to be inadequate advocates in such a task in the times of ancient Israel, it would be necessary to show that the humans of the contemporary time are any different. Secondly, one needs to be sure that the humans of our times, unlike the humans of the biblical times, have no anthropocentric tendencies and that the ecotheological concern is not, in its essence, the concern for humans solely.

On the other hand, another approach that can be suggested is that the biblical text should be reinterpreted. This time, not only the anthropocentric view should be identified and exposed, but the ecotheological hermeneutical reading of the text should be identified and exposed, too, if it has Earth-centered instead of God-centered foundations.

Christian biblical interpreters ought to seek the true meaning of God's message. However, because the text we are dealing with is not just any ancient text, but the text of the Bible, the lens for such a reading must not be either anthropocentric or earth-centered, but only and exclusively God-centered.

3.4 Conclusion

In an attempt to consider the biblical text in the context of environmental crisis, biblical scholars have developed different hermeneutics.
Habel noted that as contemporary readers, we tend to reflect our own social constructions of what land means to us, being the center of our being with regard to political, economic, social and cultural reality.\textsuperscript{466} Implicitly, the way we ask questions about the land shape the patterns of meaning and understanding. What seem to be objective questions are often the results of our own ideological interests.\textsuperscript{467}

The approach to the topic of the Promised Land, therefore, will to a great extent determine in advance the results of the given investigation. Regardless of how an interpreter intends to be objective and be of good will, the research will develop in a particular direction.

\textsuperscript{466}Habel, \textit{The Land Is Mine: Six Biblical Land Ideologies}, 1.
\textsuperscript{467}Ibid., 6.
4 Conclusion

Humans' life on Earth takes place in time and space. Space is the planet Earth which is humans' habitat. In the raising concern for our habitat, there have been significant developments in biblical hermeneutics, with regard to the environmental problems. The most prominent ones are those of The Green Bible edition, The Earth Bible Project and the University of Exeter Project. The methodology and approach of such biblical hermeneutical approaches are not always in accordance with the faith of the Christian Orthodox Church.

As seen in Habel's analysis of six land ideologies, the Promised Land theme is not unisone in the texts of the Old Testament. Any reference to a particular ideology can have different ecological consequences.

The textual units about the Promised Land can contribute to the ecotheological interpretation as the paradigms of humans' behavior when they are/are not in relationship with God.

The Promised Land is the paradigm for the entire Creation. God is the owner of the land and humans are his guests. God has his creation at his disposal to do with it what pleases him. Humans do not have such rights.

God wants the Holy Land - sacred environment, for his people. People choose to accept it. Idolatry is the paradigm for utilisation and exploitation of the creation and is in direct opposition to God's economy for creation. The 'ecological crisis of the Promised Land' is the result of Israel's faithlessness with God. Whenever Israel rejects God and forgets the covenant, the entire creation suffers from their acts. In rejecting God, Israel utilizes the creation for its selfish purposes.

Disrespectful behavior towards the Promised Land is considered blasphemic too. The creation rebels against humans who behave in such a fashion. Such behavior follows the rejection of God in the first place.

We consider the core to the ecological crisis to be overconsumption. Although it is generally considered that the biblical text does not have solutions to the ecological crisis
because it did not exist in the given time, it can offer useful guidelines to the issue of overconsumption. The Promised Land text units about kings' excessive consumption criticized by the prophets, about the Sabbatical year and its provisions about the land's rest, which will not affect people's existence, or about manna which was not to be stored for the next day, can be used as starting points in further development of biblical ecological hermeneutics.

Orthodox Christian tradition never relies on the text itself solely, but always on the text within the Church community. It is clear that because of that, they expose themselves to accusation for interpreting the biblical text within a particular doctrine, instead of letting the text speak for itself. However, as seen previously, and as already pointed out by many scholars, there is no text without a context – two types of context: that of the author(s) of the text and that of the reader. This calls Orthodox Christian interpreters to a) reconsider the position of the creation, i.e. the land and its fruits, within the context of the Church community, as handed down by the Church fathers; and b) to reconsider thoroughly the biblical text and its message, with regard to the way it deals with the creation, i.e. land and its fruits, in comparison with the ways contemporary Church communities and Church members are dealing with it on a daily basis.

The traditional reading of the text is the most often accused of being anthropocentric. However, if we take into consideration the eco-justice principles developed by the Earth Bible Project, they seem to be earth-centered, in which case humans are neglected.

Another problem that arises is that it is problematic to see humans and the creation as equal in relation to God. Based on the texts of the Old Testament, God does not address the creation, the earth, or nature, but he addresses humans and creates relationship with humans – creation being part of that relationship. On the other hand, the fact that God does not address creation does not mean humans are free to behave towards it in a destructive manner. Biblical text gives such examples, of exploitation of the land and of utilization of the land for one's own purposes, but it neither unanimously supports such behavior nor does it unanimously criticize it. It is more likely that the text itself employs an open discussion on the matter. A contemporary interpreter should perhaps build on that.

Some contemporary ecotheological readings of the text suggest the retrieval of the voice of the earth. A Christian biblical interpreter here faces a great difficulty. Namely, such an approach, in an attempt to struggle with the anthropocentric element, suggests listening to the voice of the earth, instead of the voice of a man. The problem is that the voice of God is
neglected in such hermeneutics, and listening to the voice of the earth brings an interpreter to the ground of pantheism.

The approach according to which Earth has its own rights, regardless of God and humans, is again reminiscent of pantheism. God can destroy the Earth since it is his creation. The Earth is not everlasting; it has been created in time and is finite. Such a cosmogony is specifically Judeo-Christian. In accordance with this, the hermeneutics of listening to the voice of the Earth is problematic, since the Earth has no voice. It does have an advocate – God. In a way, he is the advocate of the poor and the oppressed, and just the same he is the advocate of the Earth, which has no voice of its own.

The cultural and philological context of a reader determine the way of approach. For example: explaining how the stewardship model is being criticized for being overly anthropocentric and managerial, Dominic Coad explains that:

„stewardship relies primarily on fostering a sense of duty which can make environmental care seem both a burden and something of a peripheral responsibility, with no real relevance to the core of Christian belief. Stewardship cannot easily inspire a sense of joy and wonder in nature and is unlikely to foster a sense of kinship with the non-human world.‖

In the Orthodox Christian tradition, stewardship is understood in a quite different way. It is a good example of the necessity of dialogue between Eastern and Western Christianity.

The word ecology derives from the Greek οἰκία, οἰκέω. In the biblical text of the Old Testament, neither land or earth is ever referred to as οἰκία, but the verb οἰκέω is used to describe dwelling in the land,“These people are peaceable with us; let them live on the land / οἱ άνθρωποι οὗτοι εἰρηνικοὶ εἰσιν μεθ᾽ ἡμῶν οἰκείωσαν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς (Gen 34:21). The question arises regarding whether humans' concern for ecological crisis is in its essence just as anthropocentric as is the exploitation. Habel criticizes strongly such an argument, but the argument is still not proven to be invalid. Namely, when humans are concerned for the planet, are they concerned for the planet itself, or for them, themselves?

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The fact that humans exploit and destroy the earth can be compared to the fact that humans have been doing so to each other, too. Sometimes they do so by God's command – when they get the commandment to exterminate the Canaanites, and sometimes they do it on their own – for example with the tribe of Benjamin, or what King David did to Uriah the Hittite. It could be useful also, besides an anthropo-centric versus creation-centered point of view, to examine the texts from an egoistic versus self-sacrificing point of view.

David Clough proposes that the 'ecotheology' should be rejected as an aspect of theological inquiry, if it can be proven that it is a way of thinking which cannot be expected of other areas of theology.\textsuperscript{470} Instead, Clough proposes moving beyond ecotheology. Clough argues that it has become inappropriate for any theologian to neglect the ecological aspect in their work. Identifying themselves as ecotheologians, theologians authorize others to ignore environmental concerns.\textsuperscript{471}

We will conclude this research appropriately with his words:

\begin{quote}
„The time has come to move beyond ecotheology. Not because its concern to take up ecological questions within theology was inappropriate – it was crucial and inescapable. Nor because the ecological challenges it has addressed have been overcome or now seem less important – they are clearly of greater magnitude and more urgent than ever. The time has come to move beyond ecotheology because it is no longer appropriate – if it ever were – for any theologian to fail to take account of ecological concerns in their work. The term ‘ecotheology’ contains a logic that allows some theologians to do theology with attentiveness to ecological issues, while others legitimately proceed with non-ecological theologies. Ecological concern among theologians can no longer be appropriately delegated to a group of enthusiasts who happen to be warmly inclined to green issues: the challenge is much more important than that. Theologians should therefore cease to identify themselves or others as ecotheologians, on the grounds that they thereby authorize others to ignore environmental concerns. We must move beyond ecotheology because its project is too important to leave to ecotheologians.“\textsuperscript{472}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{471}Ibid., 47.
\textsuperscript{472}Ibid.
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