

**AN EXPERIMENT IN BIBLE TRANSLATION**  
**AS TRANSCULTURAL COMMUNICATION:**  
**THE TRANSLATION OF ברית 'COVENANT' INTO LOMWE,**  
**WITH A FOCUS ON LEVITICUS 26**

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this dissertation is my original work and that I have not previously submitted it for any degree or diploma at any university for a degree.

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BY

**STUART JEREMY FOSTER**



DATE: 03 FEB 2005

**DISSERTATION PRESENTED FOR THE DEGREE OF**  
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UNIVERSITY OF STELLENBOSCH

ARTS

AN EXPERIMENT IN SIDLE TRANSLATION: A STUDY OF  
THE TRANSLATION OF 1 PETER 2:1-10  
WITH A VIEW TO THE CHURCH

BY STYLINUS M. M. VAN DER MERWE

The narrow question is how best to translate the Greek word  
"government". The first question arises as to what  
circumstances in which this word is used in the  
scripture and from the impact of the word on the

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Yahweh and his people

accountable and **DATE:**

adequate analogs to each

not had the Old Testament as their language, nor do they have the same

ecclesiastical sense of their relationship to God, nor do they live as a church

while under the threat of divine judgment. For the present experiment

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governance concepts metaphorical were relationship and obligation (not

sanctions), and responsibility and accountability (not not security or power).

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task of the churches, especially owing to the potential of using the Bible

of God as an integrating framework.

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ABSTRACT

AN EXPERIMENT IN BIBLE TRANSLATION: IS TRANSLATION  
THE TRANSLATION BY THE COVENANT? WITH  
A FOCUS ON LEVITICUS

BY STUART J. COOPER

The major question is how best to translate the Bible into  
vernacular. But the question arises in the first place  
because it is clear that the Bible is not a book of  
complete and final instruction.

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ABSTRACT

**AN EXPERIMENT IN BIBLE TRANSLATION AS TRANSCULTURAL COMMUNICATION:  
THE TRANSLATION OF בְּרִית 'COVENANT' INTO LOMWE,  
WITH A FOCUS ON LEVITICUS 26**

**BY STUART J. FOSTER**

The narrow question is how best to translate into Lomwe the biblical Hebrew term בְּרִית 'covenant'. But this question draws in many other issues when the contextual nature of communication is taken into account. Using Leviticus 26 as a focus text, this study sketches a complete arc from the impact at worldview level of covenant concepts in the original to impact at worldview level among present-day Lomwe-speakers in northern Mozambique.

This study defends a definition of covenant in its ancient Near Eastern context as a chosen relationship of mutual obligation guaranteed by oath sanctions. A close reading of Leviticus 26 in its literary contexts highlights the integrating role of covenant in the Old Testament. Used for Yahweh and his people, covenant language stressed that the relationship was exclusive, secure, accountable and purposeful. However, Lomwe-speakers are traditionally matrilineal with no adequate analogs to ancient covenantal customs. Protestant Christians among them, who have not had the Old Testament in their language, show by their songs that they do not have a covenantal sense of their relationship to God, but see life as a journey of escape to heaven while under the threat of divine judgment. For the present experiment, volunteers preached from a translation of Leviticus 26 to their congregations. In the resulting recorded sermons, the covenant concepts emphasized were relationship and obligation (but not chosenness or oath sanctions), and exclusivity and accountability (but not security or purpose). To compensate, the study proposes specific steps for Bible translators and those involved in the broader teaching task of the churches, especially dwelling on the potential of using *muloko wa Muluku*, 'people of God' as an integrating framework.

## OPSOMMING

### **'N EKSPERIMENT IN BYBELVERTALING AS TRANSKULTURELE KOMMUNIKASIE: DIE VERTALING VAN בְּרִית 'VERBOND' IN LOMWE, MET 'N FOKUS OP LEVITIKUS 26 DEUR STUART J. FOSTER**

Die enger vraag is hoe 'n mens die Bybels-Hebreeuse term, בְּרִית 'verbond', die beste in Lomwe kan vertaal? Indien die konteksgebondenheid van kommunikasie in berekening gebring word, impliseer hierdie vraag egter 'n hele aantal ander strydvrae. Deur Levitikus as 'n fokusteks te gebruik, skets hierdie studie 'n volledige boog: van die impak op die vlak van die wêreldbeskouing van verbondsbegrippe in die brontaal tot by die impak wat die vertaling van hierdie konsepte maak op die wêreldbeskouing van die Lomwe sprekers in die noorde van Mosambiek.

Hierdie ondersoek verdedig die volgende definisie van verbond in 'n Ou Nabye Oosterse konteks: 'n Verbond is 'n vrywillig gekose verhouding met wedersyde verpligtinge wat gewaarborg is deur die sankie van eedswering. 'n Noukeurige lees van Levitikus 26 in sy literêre kontekste beklemtoon die integrerende rol van verbond in die Ou Testament. As 'n konsep wat gebruik is vir die verhouding tussen Jahwe en sy mense, aksentueer verbond die feit dat die verhouding wat ter sprake is, eksklusief, veilig en doelgerig is, asook dat dit verantwoording impliseer. Lomwe sprekers is egter tradisioneel matrilinêr en het geen instelling wat analoog is aan 'n verbondsverhouding nie. Die Protestantse Christene onder hulle wat ook nog nie 'n Ou Testament in hulle moedertaal het nie, gee in hulle liederes blyke daarvan dat hulle geen begrip het wat 'n verbondsverhouding met God beteken nie. Hulle sien die lewe as 'n ontvlugtingsreis na die hemel te midde van die swaard van 'n goddelike oordeel. Vir die huidige eksperiment het vrywilliges vir hulle gemeentes gepreek uit 'n vertaling van Levitikus 26. In die preke wat op band opgeneem is, is die aspekte van verbond wat telkens beklemtoon is, die van verhouding and verpligting (nie die van nabyheid of die sanksies wat verband hou met eedswering nie), die van eksklusiwiteit en die doen van verantwoording (en nie die van sekuriteit en doelgerigtheid nie). Om te kompenseer stel die ondersoek stappe voor wat Bybelvertalers en mense wat betrokke is in die breëre lerende taak van die kerke kan gebruik. Aan die potensiaal van die konsep *muloko wa Muluku*, 'God se mense' word besondere aandag gewy as integrerende raamwerk.

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Thank you.

*Soli Deo gloria.*

## ABBREVIATIONS

ANE	ANCIENT NEAR EAST
ATR	AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION(S)
BH	BIBLICAL HEBREW
BDB	BROWN, DRIVER, AND BRIGGS HEBREW LEXICON
ESV	ENGLISH STANDARD VERSION
JSOTSS	JOURNAL FOR THE STUDY OF OLD TESTAMENT SUPPLEMENT SERIES
KB	KOEHLER AND BAUMGARTNER HEBREW LEXICON
LXX	SEPTUAGINT
MT	MASORETIC TEXT
NAB	NEW AMERICAN BIBLE
NIDOTTE	NEW INTERNATIONAL DICTIONARY OF OLD TESTAMENT THEOLOGY AND EXEGESIS
NIV	NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION
NJB	NEW JERUSALEM BIBLE
NLT	NEW LIVING TRANSLATION
NRSV	NEW REVISED STANDARD VERSION
NT	NEW TESTAMENT
OT	OLD TESTAMENT
REB	REVISED ENGLISH BIBLE
RSV	REVISED STANDARD VERSION
TEV	TODAY'S ENGLISH VERSION
WCD	WORLD CHRISTIAN DATABASE

## SELECTED BIBLICAL BOOKS

GEN	GENESIS
EXOD	EXODUS
LEV	LEVITICUS
NUM	NUMBERS
DEUT	DEUTERONOMY
JUDG	JUDGES
1 SAM	1 SAMUEL
2 SAM	2 SAMUEL
1 KGS	1 KINGS
2 KGS	2 KINGS
1 CHRON	1 CHRONICLES
2 CHRON	2 CHRONICLES
NEH	NEHEMIAH
PSA	PSALMS
PROV	PROVERBS
ISA	ISAIAH
JER	JEREMIAH
EZEK	EZEKIEL
HOS	HOSEA
ZECH	ZECHARIAH
MATT	MATTHEW
ROM	ROMANS
1 COR	1 CORINTHIANS
2 COR	2 CORINTHIANS
GAL	GALATIANS
HEB	HEBREWS
REV	REVELATION

## CHAPTER 1

# THE PROBLEM OF COMMUNICATING COVENANT

### 1.1 Introduction

The initial question is narrow: how best to translate for Lomwe speakers in northern Mozambique the key biblical Hebrew term *בְּרִית*, ‘*covenant*’.<sup>1</sup> Yet, inexorably, understanding Bible translation as a form of transcultural communication draws in broader issues. Context is crucial, both that of the ancient original and that of contemporary hearers and readers. Ultimately the context must include an attempt to understand worldviews. This study stands within a complete arc from impact at worldview level on original hearers to impact at worldview level on one contemporary group, Lomwe-speakers in northern Mozambique. The goal is to test the understanding of a translation and propose improvements. The focus is one set of concepts with a key structuring role in Scripture and one text, Leviticus 26. The primary means is an experiment analyzing how church leaders use the text to communicate with others. And the implications are profound: a stronger engagement between God’s Word and his people in Africa.<sup>2</sup>

This study builds on the author’s master of theology thesis (Foster 2000), which dealt in broad strokes with covenant concepts in biblical theology and their communication in Africa. Attention was given to specifics of Lomwe culture, but “the biggest question of all for communication is the response of the receptors” (Foster 2000:120). That issue was not addressed at all. The present work attempts to remedy that lack within a more tightly focused framework, while still aware of the broader issues.

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<sup>1</sup> For convenience, this study will use the English term *covenant* as a translation of *בְּרִית*, despite its limitations. The focus is on translation into Lomwe, not English.

<sup>2</sup> For convenience, *Africa* is used when the more specific and cumbersome *sub-Saharan Africa* is meant. Unlike North Africa, with its ancient history of contact and interchange with the Middle East and Europe, Africa south of the Sahara has had a more isolated development until recent centuries. Both in traditional cultural patterns and in the historical experience of colonialism and its aftermath, many commonalities can be found across the region.

The problem of communicating covenant concepts is acute. They were an integral, meaningful part of the ancient Near Eastern cultures in which the Old Testament<sup>3</sup> was written. For most contemporary cultures, including that of Lomwe-speakers, they are alien. These are not concerns contemporary readers and hearers of Scripture bring to the text. Rather, the text brings covenant to them as something inescapable, however alien. Covenant concepts are not incidental to Old Testament Scripture, but integral to it.<sup>4</sup>

The challenge of communicating is to make the alien meaningful. Bible translation gives priority to the source text, even while it approaches hearers with respect, sympathy, and understanding. The emphases of the text demand attention, and a responsible effort to minimize distortion. This means moving through the fascinating realm of ANE cultures and customs to consider the nebulous yet vital questions of meaning and impact by explicitly addressing worldview. And when attention is given and the effort is made, there may be a surprise: the alien message is deeply relevant. It is hoped that focus on a particular case will illumine these issues for others, stimulating deeper reflection both on the text of Scripture and the realities of each cultural situation.

Communicating covenant is crucial to an integrated understanding of the Bible. This is not just an issue for Lomwe-speakers and those like them in Africa who do not have a whole Bible in their language. Despite those who have talked of an “African predilection for the Old Testament” (Dickson 1979:97), the challenge of Bediako is that “if the Christian way of life is to stay in Africa, then African Christianity should be brought to bear on the fundamental questions of African existence in such a way as to achieve a unified world-view which finally resolves the dilemma of an Africa uncertain of its identity” (1995:5).<sup>5</sup> Elsewhere, he suggests that “academic theological discourse will need to connect with the less academic but fundamental reality of the ‘implicit’ and predominantly oral theologies found at the grassroots of many, if not all, African Christian communities” (1998:64-5) while noting that “the translated Bible has provided in Africa an essential ingredient for the ‘birth of theology’” (1998:67). The present work seeks to rise to Bediako’s challenge as it links worldview, oral theology and Bible translation in an African context around the uniting theme of covenant.

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<sup>3</sup> As a work of Christian scholarship, the present study uses distinctly Christian terminology such as “Old Testament” and “BC” instead of alternatives considered to be more neutral.

<sup>4</sup> They have a fundamental role in New Testament Scripture, too, but that is another argument, only glanced at in these pages.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Katongole, who argues that “the formation of church communities who read and take the Bible seriously is an even more urgent challenge for the 21<sup>st</sup> century” (2001:269). Cf. also in an earlier generation Mbiti (1979:90-91).

## 1.2 Thesis

Covenant in its ANE context was a chosen relationship of mutual obligation guaranteed by oath sanctions. In Leviticus 26 and throughout the OT, it was used to structure an integrated understanding of the relations between Yahweh and his people, stressing that the relationship was exclusive, secure, accountable and purposeful in contrast to the abiding insecurities of ancient polytheism. God's reliability, his faithfulness to his own people, was highlighted despite human vulnerability. However, Lomwe-speakers are traditionally matrilineal with no adequate analogs to covenantal customs, though there are affinities with ancient worldviews of competing spirit powers. Even the Lomwe Christians surveyed do not have a covenantal sense of their relationship to God, but see life primarily as a journey of escape to heaven while under the threat of divine judgment. Fear is emphasized over security. Analysis of the preaching of Leviticus 26 in translation can pinpoint which aspects of covenant concepts are clear to Lomwe-speakers and which need extra emphasis and clarification. Specific steps follow for Bible translators and those involved in the broader teaching task of the churches, especially dwelling on the potential of using *muloko wa Muluku*, 'people of God' as an integrating framework.

## 1.3 Flow of argument

The argument in support of this thesis is developed as follows: The balance of this first chapter is devoted, after introducing the Lomwe, to preliminary matters: clarifying assumptions, explaining method of approach, defining ברית 'covenant' in its ancient Near Eastern context and surveying literature on communicating covenant concepts in African contexts. The focus is then on the ancient world, moving from the specifics of Leviticus 26 and its canonical contexts in chapter two to more general, worldview-related issues in chapter three, which argues for a missiological understanding of covenant concepts. Chapters four and five turn attention to Lomwe-speakers, moving from general matters of traditional and Protestant Christian worldviews in chapter four to the specifics of how volunteer preachers used a translated Leviticus 26 in chapter five. The sixth and final chapter deals with implications and proposals.

## 1.4 Lomwe and its speakers

This study focuses on translation into Lomwe, a language spoken by about 1.3 million people in northern Mozambique (and another 700,000 in Malawi). Lomwe is a major dialect of the Makhuwa language family, which is predominant in northern Mozambique and reaches into southern Tanzania. There are close cultural as well as linguistic ties between the Lomwe and

the Makhuwa. In Mozambique, Lomwe speakers are concentrated in the northern two-thirds of Zambézia province, from the Indian Ocean to the Malawi border.<sup>6</sup>

Lomwe-speaking people have never had their own unified government and have been subjected to distinct outside influences. Islamic religion and culture are firmly implanted along the coast, after a thousand years of Indian Ocean trade with Arabia. However, Islamic influence never penetrated far inland, where Christians are more prominent since the missionary work started early in the twentieth century.<sup>7</sup> Among Christians, the largest group would be Roman Catholic, benefiting from a privileged position under the Portuguese colonial regime, which dominated the first three-quarters of the twentieth century and whose cultural impact is still strong.

The practice of traditional religion is not publicly prominent among Lomwe-speakers at the present time. Traditional chiefs, who also have a priestly role in traditional religion, exist but have limited influence after the vicissitudes of colonialism and civil war. Other traditional specialists also continue, but in many cases belong to churches as well.

Lomwe is perhaps the largest language group in Africa still without a complete translation of the Bible, though two translations of the New Testament have been published.<sup>8</sup> For Lomwe Christians, access to the Old Testament, and hence to concepts like covenant that are prominent in the Old Testament, has been indirect. A small minority have had access through other languages, especially Portuguese, Mozambique's official language. At present an interconfessional team under the auspices of the Bible Society in Mozambique is preparing an Old Testament translation into Lomwe.<sup>9</sup> It is draft text from this team that has been used for the feedback experiment described below.

## 1.5 Assumptions

### 1.5.1 Discipline

The present work is multi-disciplinary, which is the nature of both translation studies and missiology, the fields within which it moves. In the measured words of Mojola: "In the current interdisciplinary environment within which translation studies thrive, it seems wisest to listen

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<sup>6</sup> See Chapter Four for more detail.

<sup>7</sup> Bandawe (1971) gives a first-hand account of the early mission work. Moreira (1936) summarizes Protestant developments to the mid-1930's. For the largest Protestant group, historical developments up to the late 1980's are summarized in Thompson (1989).

<sup>8</sup> See Renju (2001:196-197) for a brief review of the history of Bible translation in Africa.

<sup>9</sup> The present author is part of this team.

to the wide variety of voices on translation rather than attempt to argue for a particular theoretical stance or an exclusive approach to Bible translation” (2002:144; cf. Whang 1999:49).

This study relates strongly to several disciplines. Biblical studies is foundational, with the use of Leviticus 26 as a focus text. The intertextual connections of ברית, ‘covenant’ and the concepts associated with it have clear implications for biblical theology. The cognitive science of communication informs the emphasis on worldview. Ethnography provides background understanding for the Lomwe singers and preachers whose contributions constitute oral theology.

Inevitably, interaction with so many disciplines limits depth in any one. The compensation is a thematic coherence as many angles are brought to bear on the one problem of communicating ancient biblical covenant concepts among Lomwe-speakers today.<sup>10</sup>

It further complicates matters that most of the fields mentioned are experiencing internal flux as established modernist assumptions are critiqued from post-modernist perspectives that privilege dissonance over coherence (cf. Wimbush 2002:173).<sup>11</sup> For example, Gottwald simply declares that “most aspects of Hebrew Bible Studies are currently unsettled and in great flux” (2002:190).<sup>12</sup> Debating such issues is well beyond the scope of this work. They do require that assumptions be stated with particular care and thoroughness (cf. Zevit 2001:1-80).

### 1.5.2 Epistemology

This work adopts a critical realist epistemology as defended by Wright (1992:31-100), Hiebert (1999:68-116) and Groothuis (2000). “Critical realism, roughly put, acknowledges that our grasp of reality is partial and mediated by our cultures and experiences” (Groothuis 2000:131-2), while affirming that an objective reality exists outside people which can be known truly. It balances confidence in pursuing knowledge with humility. “We do not equate the supreme truth of God with our limited grasp of it, but we do have something to grasp” (Groothuis 2000:130). Like Johnson, this author is “distrustful of postmodernism’s radically autonomous

<sup>10</sup> The discipline of covenant theology as historically developed from the Protestant Reformation on is only tangentially related to the topic of this study and is not considered.

<sup>11</sup> A post-modernist like Brueggemann would prefer terms like “plurality” and “hegemony” (1997:xvi) to *dissonance* and *coherence*.

<sup>12</sup> Even archeology is convulsed by these debates. Note the heated polemics of Dever (2001).



epistemology in which factions remain isolated in their own bubbles of truth, immune to challenge from without” (1998:73).<sup>13</sup>

### 1.5.3 Scripture

From its first page to its last, the Bible assumes and states that it is God’s word. In the language of the conclusion of this study’s focus text, Leviticus 26:46:

אלה החקים והמשפטים והתורות אשר נתן יהוה בינו ובין  
בני ישראל בחר סיני ביד-משה

These are the statutes, decisions and instructions which Yahweh placed between himself and the Israelites at Mount Sinai through Moses.<sup>14</sup>

It is no contradiction that this divine word comes through a human agent like Moses.<sup>15</sup> Human language and culture are assumed. It is a contradiction when biblical text is read merely as human opinions and insights on religious (and other) experience (cf. Wolterstorff 1997:30-34).<sup>16</sup> At that point a worldview extraneous to the Bible, one which denies a living and active God, has stepped into to rule out what the Bible writers take for granted. Sternberg argues: “Were the narrative written or read as fiction, then God would turn from the lord of history into a creature of the imagination, with the most disastrous results” (1985:32). On its own criteria, the Bible would not make sense.<sup>17</sup>

As a work of Christian scholarship, this study attempts to take seriously what the Bible says about itself.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Without using the expression *critical realism* Gunton argues (1993:101-154), with considerable historical awareness and philosophical and theological depth, towards a concept of universal truth that is appropriate to the limits of “finite and fallible human beings” (135). This is an integral part of a much larger constructive critique of both modernity and post-modernity. Tambiah, without a Christian commitment and also without using the expression “critical realism” makes thoughtful use of it in analyzing the issues of “magic, science, religion, and the scope of rationality” (1990). By contrast, Brueggemann simply accepts as a postmodern given “the general epistemological climate in which we work” (1997:41) which vaunts plurality and reduces all truth claims to “the advocacy of a vested interest” (1997:62). Blamire’s articulation of principles of a Christian worldview is still relevant (1963).

<sup>14</sup> Unless otherwise specified, all translations in the present work are those of the author.

<sup>15</sup> Note the title and argument of Warfield’s classic article: “‘It Says:’ ‘Scripture Says:’ ‘God Says:’” (1948[1899]:299-348).

<sup>16</sup> Note also House’s comment, using the language of Brueggemann about ‘interpretive communities’: “If these passages that stress closure and certitude are excluded, then the text has been read in a manner foreign to its original community’s understanding and in a way that leaves its second community with themselves as final authorities over its claims” (1998:556).

<sup>17</sup> As Shaw argues, if we understand that there is a God who “intended to be understood” behind the biblical message, then “the traditional elements of the hermeneutical equation, author, text, and communicator, are inadequate for our purpose. We must expand this traditional model to include God’s intent in communicating with humans and then expand that communication to audiences in their particularity” (2003:4).

<sup>18</sup> This might be called a ‘hermeneutic of sympathy’ in contrast to a ‘hermeneutic of suspicion’ that privileges some definition of ‘liberation.’ It is proper to suspect one’s self, one’s assumptions and one’s conclusions. Failures in understanding (and

### 1.5.4 Theology

This study also assumes Bible translation is a central and intrinsic part of a much larger theological and cultural process: the encounter between divine revelation in canonical Scripture and people (cf. Sevanoe 2002:54). Theology is in essence a “hermeneutical spiral” (Osborne 1991:6; cf. Shaw 2003:23) between text and context. Questions arising from the life situations of Christians are brought to the text of Scripture and Scripture in turn challenges and questions the assumptions brought to it. In this process, text and context are not equal. Scripture is authoritative. When Scripture is reduced to mere echoes of the context, when it is used to buttress preconceived opinion, then it is not being heard. God has decisively revealed himself in Scripture. While he is active in human contexts, it is Scripture that ultimately shapes how people should discern and understand that activity. While Scripture is final, no person or group has a final, exhaustive understanding of it. Others, and the questions arising from their contexts, will bring out more light. To speak of a hermeneutical spiral rather than a circle emphasizes that there can be genuine progress in understanding despite a cyclical process (cf. Carson 1996:540).

It follows from these assumptions that theology will be ineffective if the hermeneutical spiral gets stuck at one point. If the questions being answered from Scripture are those of another context, remote either in time or place, the answers, however competently derived, will seem irrelevant. If the context’s questions, its urgent issues, drown out Scripture, theology will become insipid, with no word from God addressing the human condition.

Theology so conceived, or communicating the Scriptural message, is an inherently cross-cultural process. It implies *translatability*.<sup>19</sup> Sanneh uses this term to emphasize the larger implications of Scripture translation (Sanneh 1989:3), what he calls “the liberating and empowering effects of Bible translation on the native idiom” (Sanneh 2002:85). An ancient message has a radical, transforming impact on vernacular culture when the very language and thought forms of that culture are used to transmit the message (cf. Bediako 2002:1; Mbiti 1994:27; Walls 1996:26–42).

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even more, obedience!) there will be, but at least the starting point attempts to be one of respect for the text and its assumptions.

<sup>19</sup> Underlying this understanding of theology there also lies an assumption about the nature of language: “Languages are significantly different but commensurable” (Baker 2001:233).

### 1.5.5 Oral Theology

Genuine theology is thus not necessarily written and published. Among the poor it is likely to be oral, expressed in sermons, song and ceremony.<sup>20</sup> Laryea writes of “the many ordinary Christians whose reflections on the gospel can be discerned in their prayers, songs, testimonies, thank offerings and sermons. They are the ones who are now beginning to set for us the parameters and framework for doing theology in a new key” (2002:35; cf. Bediako 1998:64-65; Tshehla 2002:17). This understanding of theology is sympathetic to the emphases of contextual theologies in Africa (Ukpong 2002:12-17; cf. Manus 2003:39, 210; West 2000) and accepts the limited relevance of much imported theologizing. However, in this view, emancipated Bible readers are disciplined and challenged by the alien, demanding text itself.<sup>21</sup> God does not say whatever readers make of it. This does assume of course, that people get access to the text. The written work of Bible translation is essential for oral theology to flourish.

### 1.5.6 Worldview

This study assumes translation is a form of transcultural<sup>22</sup> communication (Wilt 2002:145) and that meaning is profoundly dependent on context (Katan 1999:2, 243; Munday 2001:127, 182; Gutt 2000:104; Heimerdinger 1999:37-41; cf. Sperber and Wilson 1986). “Meaning is not merely decoded from the text, but is inferred from the dynamic interplay of text and context” (H. Hill 2003:2). In fact Wilt’s theoretical presentation of frameworks for Bible translation is in some ways simply a structured list of the contexts within which the work is done (Wilt 2002). And, primarily, “context refers to the hearer’s assumptions about the world, that is, to his/her *cognitive environment*” (Smith 2000:39).

Worldview is understood as the deepest level inner coherence of a culture, the “fundamental cognitive orientation of a society,” expressed and constituted in part by its language (Palmer 1996:113). When worldview is not addressed as the ultimate context of communication, meaning is distorted. Worldview structures how people understand their utterances and acts. As

<sup>20</sup> For an early introduction to oral theology in Africa, see Klem (1982).

<sup>21</sup> This is more than the attenuated canon within a canon suggested by Ukpong: “The validity of readings is judged by their faithfulness to the ethical demands of the gospels which include love of neighbor, respect for one another, etc.” (2002:17). Nor is it the reactionary approach of Manus who applauds that: “The African exegete is obsessed by the fact that missionary enterprise has brought the Bible as a condemnation of African culture” (2003:41). Still less is it the dismissive attitude of Maluleke, who questions the usefulness of the Bible for his liberating agenda (2002). Contrast Oleka (1998).

<sup>22</sup> *Transcultural* is a near synonym of *intercultural*. The latter term is most appropriate when two contemporary cultures influence one another. This study reserves the former term for communication across cultures where one culture is outside the influence of the other. The culture underlying the original biblical text is not changed by the cultures of those who try to understand it in the present day.

Gutt explains about Bible translation: “It is not just missing bits and pieces of information that hinder people’s comprehension, as has often been assumed, but the absence of whole mental models” (2003:22).<sup>23</sup>

Worldview is widely acknowledged to be a helpful concept (cf. Niditch 1997:4-7; Ninian 1995:2-3; Zevit 2001:12-22).<sup>24</sup> It is a way of identifying what people more often assume than describe or defend, their ways of understanding and evaluating events and intentions, their values. Worldview is shaped by a group’s shared culture, though with limited individual variation. Worldview tends to be stable, slow to change, a powerful force for coherence, though it does change both in individuals and societies. Behaviors, even symbols and rituals, change more easily.<sup>25</sup>

Narrative is a fundamental component of worldview. Missiologist Steffen argues that “symbol-based narrative (story) serves as the primal foundation of worldview and social structure” (1998:477). Facts and symbols only ‘make sense’ when placed, either implicitly or explicitly, within a narrative (480). Similarly, cultural anthropologist Bohannan (who does not use the term worldview) declares: “People live by stories—they use stories to organize and store cultural traditions” (1995:150).<sup>26</sup> New Testament scholar Wright contends that “worldviews are at the deepest level shorthand formulae to express stories” (1992:77). Narrative is basic to human life, not a substitute for some more abstract ‘real thing’ (1992:38; cf. Carson 1996:193-314, Satterthwaite 1997:125).

## 1.6 Method of Approach

The assumptions above and other considerations shape the method of approach used in this study.

### 1.6.1 Text Focus

One chapter is chosen as a window into both biblical covenant concepts and Lomwe culture. The limitation makes the experiment workable.

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<sup>23</sup> Cf. Lakoff writing in the field of cognitive linguistics on the need for a “structured whole” (1987:272).

<sup>24</sup> In the field of missiology, nine of the 925 doctoral dissertations listed by Skreslet (2003) have the term in their title.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Brown (2003:62) for a definition: “A worldview is a person or society’s framework of values and beliefs about life, God, man, and the universe. It is not just a collection of perspectives but a structured framework based on the core beliefs and values of that person or society. It is through this framework that a person views the world and evaluates other people, events, and ideas.”

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Johnson: “Not only are we born into complex communal narratives, we also experience, understand, and order our lives as stories that we are living out” (1987:171-2).

The text chosen for the focus of this experiment is Leviticus 26. This chapter, a coherent unit and part of the conclusion of the book, has a high density use of the key BH term ברית, 'covenant.' It is long enough to provide the term with useful context. Moreover, the links with biblical covenant concepts in this chapter are much broader than one key term. Many key phrases provide strong intertextual links with the rest of the Bible. The dominant genre of the chapter, blessings and curses, is an established part of ancient Near Eastern covenant formulae. Since covenant language is not strongly associated with Leviticus, its clear presence in chapter 26 is an excellent example of pervasive covenant concepts well beyond Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic history.

Of course, the controverted and convoluted academic discussions of Pentateuchal origins suggest that it might be wise to avoid a focus text in Leviticus. Passages in some of the prophets might bring less argument and less speculation about authorship, date and audience. Nevertheless, within the canon and, crucially, for Lomwe readers of the biblical text, the Mosaic setting of the Pentateuch gives it a foundational authority. This is part of the covenant ideal, the standard, a controlling pattern.

The present study gives priority to the canonical text of Leviticus 26 which is the basis for Bible translation. Source critical issues are of limited relevance. (This point will be revisited in chapter two.) The analytical tools of most contemporary scholarship approach Scripture in a way that is explicitly disintegrating, emphasizing divergence. It is an assumption of this study that these approaches may obscure integrating themes that are present in the canonical text.

Focus on the canonical text makes no claim that the viewpoint of the writers was that of a majority of ancient Israelites and is unembarassed by the observation that only a small elite could read and write.<sup>27</sup> Quite conceivably, the viewpoint found in the texts is that of a small minority of even the elite. The Old Testament writers seem (by their frequent explicit statements) to have been more concerned to represent Yahweh's opinions than those of their contemporaries. They also seem to have been conscious of being an unpopular, even embattled minority.

There is a further, quite practical, reason for choosing Leviticus 26. Unlike several other chapters that might have been chosen, it had already been translated into Lomwe and checked by the review committee at the time of the experiment.

### 1.6.2 Feedback experiment

The core of this study is an experiment in controlled feedback from users of the Lomwe Bible translation now being worked on. The experiment involved asking volunteers to prepare sermons in response to a biblical text relevant to covenant issues and not previously available in Lomwe (Leviticus 26). The volunteers were from two interdenominational groups of church leaders in Zambézia province. Initially they were exposed to the simple text of the translation, then the text plus a study seminar on covenant issues, including a short, written, study Bible-type introduction. At both stages sermons were recorded for analysis. The same volunteers were involved throughout, though there was inevitable attrition.

While the eventual audience of a Lomwe whole Bible translation is conceivably all Lomwe-speakers, church members will be the first audience. It is important that a translation not be intelligible only to ‘insiders,’ those who are already in the churches. But it is the church people who already know something of the Bible who will naturally have the most interest to start with. Among church members, the most literate and influential are those with leadership roles. Those who lead in church activities, including women’s groups and young people’s groups, will also be the first to publicly use a new translation. These people have a recognized role as opinion shapers in their communities. More articulate than the average person and with established positions, it is reasonable to assume they will express a predominant, public worldview among Lomwe-speaking Christians, making explicit what they affirm and value. It is also reasonable to assume that what they understand and express of alien, Bible-shaped covenant concepts may be understood by others, but that what they do not understand is not likely to be understood by very many others. It is from these oral theologians and influencers of communities that the volunteers for this experiment came.

There are several limitations to this approach. No attempt is made to form a ‘random sample.’ Most sampling techniques assume the autonomy of individuals and are of limited reliability in a culture with a strong sense of community. (Junior members of a group are only free to express their opinions in very limited ways.)

The volunteers represent major Protestant churches<sup>28</sup> in two areas, both small towns, and the surrounding countryside. They do not represent the Roman Catholic church, numerically the

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<sup>27</sup> Cf. however, Dever (2001:203).

<sup>28</sup> For several reasons the present study does not use the established academic typology of AICs (African Initiated/Independent Churches) versus mission-initiated churches. All of the denominations (at least two of which have Zionist-type worship style

strongest in the region. Inclusion of Catholics would have allowed stronger conclusions about Lomwe Christians in general. But given the historically greater emphasis on the vernacular Bible among Protestants than Catholics, focus on Protestants is justifiable.<sup>29</sup> The volunteers do not represent all of Lomwe-speaking society or even all Lomwe-speaking churchgoers. They are, however, a sample of the cutting edge of contact between the Bible and Lomwe culture. They provide an essential insiders' view. Of course, extrapolation must be cautious.

Other methods of studying feedback were rejected. Both questionnaires and formal interviews would have been culturally alien, imports from a westernized urban culture. As such the very form of communication would have required participants to function cross-culturally. Sermons (and church choruses), however, are no longer alien, as they certainly would have been a century ago, perhaps even half a century ago. Church attendance and membership are now widespread among Lomwe-speakers. Sermons are in fact some of the most common ways for Lomwe-speakers to address one another in public. It has been said that a church meeting is the only place Lomwe-speakers regularly meet with those who are not of their family.<sup>30</sup> (Near the coast, mosques would also be prominent.) Younger people in semi-urban areas, even many of those who do not attend church, will probably have heard more sermons and church songs than they have heard traditional Lomwe tales and fables. Thus sermons and church songs, though imported forms, are now privileged insider communication. They can powerfully reveal understanding and imply worldview. Through them, one insider is communicating with another. With questionnaires or formal interviews, communication would be with a cultural interloper.

The experiment's focus on public words has another limitation. The Scriptural injunction is "Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says" (James 1:22, NIV). It does not take great experience to realize that throughout the world there is a large gap between what is said in church and what people actually do. This experiment does not

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and structures) with preachers who participated in this experiment trace their history, directly or indirectly, to the initial Protestant missionary work among the Lomwe, which started in 1913. All grew (multiplying overall more than 25 times) with no resident missionaries for the 25 years between 1960 and 1985 and had very limited outside contacts for the next ten years, up to 1995. All use the same New Testament translation. Moreover, Essamuah has questioned (2003:4-5) any presumption of greater authenticity for AICs in the "synthesis of biblical Christianity and African culture at a very deep level" (2003:22). Mijoga's (2000) extensive study of sermons in Malawi (which did use the AIC/mision-initiated typology) concluded that there was no substantive difference between the two types. Note his title: *Separate But Same Gospel*.

<sup>29</sup> Extending the research to Roman Catholic Lomwe-speakers would also have demanded changes in research method since local songs and sermons have a less prominent role among Lomwe-speaking Catholics than they do among Lomwe-speaking Protestants.

<sup>30</sup> Personal interview, Padre Claudio, 1998, Milevane, Nauela, Zambézia Province.

systematically press on into behavior, but limits itself to words used in church meetings. Insights are thereby limited, partial. Nonetheless, the focus on word is justified. “Faith comes from hearing” (Rom 10:17) and this is an experiment in what people hear of the translated word.

African sermons have been used before for their insights into oral theology, culture and rhetoric (Wendland 2000, Mijoga 2000). Indeed, “preaching is a major institution in African life today which deserves detailed study” (Mijoga 2000:11). The present work is distinct in not simply analyzing a collection of sermons, but in using sermons in a controlled experiment focused on a specific text.

In addition to the controlled feedback of sermons on Leviticus 26 (the core of chapter five), church songs, composed in Lomwe and collected from young people’s singing groups, are another source of oral theology and insights into the public worldview of many Lomwe Christians (analyzed in chapter four). Young people’s singing groups have a prominent role in worship services, often taking a third or more of the time.<sup>31</sup>

### *1.6.3 Analyzing worldview*

For all its importance, perhaps precisely because of its importance, worldview is hard to study. It is an abstraction, describing principles through which people see their world and rarely discuss directly. Even academic discourse which acknowledges the importance of worldview shows no consensus on how to analyze it.<sup>32</sup> In the context of Bible translation and focusing on receptor cultures, Wendland (1990) describes four major dimensions of worldview: belief system, values, affections, and goals (1990:8-9). Culturally established stories, symbols, and rituals imply the underlying worldview (1990:4-23). Wendland shows deep sensitivity to the central African cultural contexts with which he is familiar and effectively supports his argument with examples, but does not defend a methodology. His distillation of “seven principles of a central African philosophy of life” (71-112) is persuasive and useful.<sup>33</sup> But there is no clear pattern for others to follow.

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<sup>31</sup> This is based upon the author’s experience particularly with congregations of the Igreja União Baptista since 1983.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. the contributions in Marshall, et al (1989) for a debate from a Christian perspective. Zulu uses the concept extensively in his dissertation without specifying a methodology (1998:3-28).

<sup>33</sup> The list of seven abstract nouns is also profoundly alien to the cultures he is describing, virtually untranslatable into local languages as it stands, as this author discovered in a class with Angolan university-level theology students (June 2001).



Also in the context of Bible translation but focusing on source culture, van Steenberg (2001, 2002b) suggests worldview analysis as an exegetical tool. Developing the model of Kearney (1984), he proposes as worldview variables: *classification, self/other, relationship, causality, time, and space* (van Steenberg 2001:8-11; 2002b). Fundamental analytic categories like these have, in fact, been fruitfully used long before the term *worldview* was introduced to academic discourse (cf. Frankfort 1967 [1946]:6-26).

Kearney's approach, however, is explicitly based on a materialist understanding of human society which this author rejects. For Kearney, ideas arise from interaction with the physical environment and are reified. The spiritual beings that figure large in many ancient and contemporary worldviews would be construed by Kearney as simply projections of social realities and natural phenomena. It is quite possible to respect the profound influence of environments on human understanding without accepting a materialist reductionism that eliminates spiritual realities *a priori*.

Van Steenberg rejects placing the worldview variables in a rigid analytic structure; there will be "models," plural (2001:10).<sup>34</sup> Flexibility is crucial. The connections and relative prominence of the variables will vary from culture to culture (11). He also notes that "it is impossible to construct an entire worldview system" (12) from the limited biblical data. And even the limited data make it clear that there were polemic differences between the worldview of biblical authors and that of their audiences. Thus, after the caveats, a worldview analyst is left with a list of highly abstract concepts from which to pick and choose. They are a useful heuristic device for categorizing data, but are static, weak at showing the dynamic coherence of worldviews. Moreover, their theoretical framework is inadequate. An approach to worldview that is based consistently on cognitive theory has yet to be developed.

In New Testament studies, Wright has built worldview analysis into a ground-breaking New Testament theology (Wright 1992:122-6).<sup>35</sup> Worldview cannot be ignored.<sup>36</sup> He describes "four things which worldviews characteristically do, in each of which the entire worldview can be

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<sup>34</sup> "The actual world view analysis may result in different models with different central variables and varying degrees in intensity of the relationship between the variables" (van Steenberg 2002a:10).

<sup>35</sup> Wright's opus is *Christian Origins and the Problem of God*, three volumes so far published.

<sup>36</sup> "Worldviews are thus the basic stuff of human existence, the lens through which the world is seen, the blueprint for how one should live in it, and above all the sense of identity and place which enables human beings to be what they are. To ignore worldviews, either our own or those of the culture we are studying, would result in extraordinary shallowness" (Wright 1992:124).

glimpsed” (1992:123). These are stories, basic questions, symbols (both artifacts and events), and praxis (including, crucially, life-aims, intentions and motivations). Of these four, narrative is primary, indeed it could be said that “worldviews are at the deepest level shorthand formulae to express stories” (1992:77). Narrative is basic to human life, not a substitute for some more abstract “real thing” (1992:38, cf. Carson 1996:193-314). This focus on what worldviews do, fused somewhat directly with how they are glimpsed, greatly simplifies worldview analysis. Instead of extrapolating to ill-defined abstractions, an analyst seeks to determine the underlying stories people tell themselves and each other about life. This is not unimaginably remote from the biblical text itself. Wright’s concept of “subversive stories” also describes a method for worldview change (1992:77). Wright does not attempt, however, to interact with the social science literature in defending and developing his worldview model. Nevertheless, as noted above, he is far from alone in highlighting the crucial role of narratives in worldview. By eschewing the abstract, a narrative approach also has the advantage of being a synthesis that could make sense to someone from within the culture being analyzed.

A still broader survey of the literature on worldview analysis (cf. van Steenberg 2001:1-7; 2002b:46; Nishioka 1998:459-470) would, one suspects, substantiate these two conclusions: Do not neglect worldview analysis. And do not expect a theoretical framework to provide one consistent, workable methodology. Eclecticism reigns.

In that spirit, this study attempts to synthesize two complementary approaches. It uses the framework proposed by Kearney (1984) as modified by van Steenberg (2002a; 2002b:43-61). The list of worldview variables (van Steenberg 2002b:50; Kearney calls them universals) is a tool that can be applied consistently both to Leviticus 26 and to contemporary Lomwe speakers. Attention will be given to the variables of *Time*, *Space*, *Causality*, and *Self/Other*. These will then be integrated into an underlying worldview narrative which will attempt to convey dynamically the worldview system. This author finds Wright’s narrative-focused approach fruitful and persuasive. The other two categories suggested by van Steenberg and Kearney, *Classification* and *Relationship*, will not be used. They attempt to describe how the rest of the variables combine to form a system. This goal can be accomplished more dynamically by worldview narrative.

Ambiguities of methodology and limitations of sources mean that conclusions about worldviews will remain tentative, whether the worldview is that of the ancient author of

Leviticus 26 or that of contemporary Lomwe hearers of the passage. But even tentative conclusions still provide insight.

### 1.7 A definition of בְּרִית, 'covenant' in biblical Hebrew in its ANE context

To synthesize recent research, this study proposes a four-part definition of בְּרִית, 'covenant' as a 1) chosen 2) relationship of 3) mutual obligation 4) guaranteed by oath sanctions. This particular understanding will underlie all discussion in the ensuing chapters. The basic concept is what Cross calls "kinship-in-law" (1998:6-7). Despite the prominence of treaty forms, both in the Old Testament and in recent scholarship, they are a subset of this larger concept. As McCarthy puts it: "biblical covenant may be described as a single species expressed in variant forms, not a unique form" (1986:75).

This definition is in substance though not in words that developed by Hugenberger (1998:167-215): "The predominant sense of *brut* in Biblical Hebrew is an elected, as opposed to natural, relationship of obligation established under divine sanction." (171). The discussion that follows is indebted to his thorough treatment (cf. also Foster 2000:12-26). Such a complex summary acknowledges the reality described by Buis, that "il n'existe dans le monde actuel aucune réalité juridique que recouvre le champ sémantique de *berit* en son entier" (1976:45).<sup>37</sup>

#### 1.7.1 Limitations:

This definition is limited to the biblical Hebrew term, בְּרִית, 'covenant' in its ancient Near Eastern context. It does not consider the theological development of the translation 'covenant,' prominent in Reformed theology, even though the positive or negative connotations of that theology for a contemporary audience may influence reactions to בְּרִית, 'covenant' in the OT. The conventional English translation *covenant* is used for convenience in the present work, as already noted. A chief benefit may be that its meaning is quite vague to ordinary English-speakers. This study does not focus on translating בְּרִית, 'covenant' into English.

This discussion does not attempt to follow the development of the term through time or to analyze dialect differences (cf. Hugenberger 1998:171). The data are quite limited for firm conclusions of this nature. Taking biblical Hebrew as a whole implies a potential loss of nuance, but does permit the delineation of the semantic field within which particular occurrences must be placed.

<sup>37</sup> 'There does not exist in the world today any legal reality which covers the semantic field of *berit* in its entirety.'

As noted above (section 1.5.6), this study adopts a theoretical understanding of translation which highlights the role of contextual assumptions by both speakers and hearers in the interpretation of texts. In the approach used here, broad cultural background is given priority over the case by case analysis of texts. A good example of a complementary approach which carefully builds up conclusions from specific texts is that of McConville (1997:747-755) in NIDOTTE, or, in French, that of Buis (1976:15-44).

This study recognizes that the whole definition, the prototypical sense of the term, is not necessarily involved in each instance where the term is used. In particular passages, the literary contexts or cotext make much narrower denotations relevant. Hugenberger notes (1998:173-4): a commitment to a particular course of action (Ezra 10:3), a document witnessing to a commitment (1 Kgs 8:21), an oath sign that seals a relationship (Gen 17:3), and a specific stipulation in the context of mutual obligations (Lev 24:8). This phenomenon has led some to define the term too simply, as, in essence, bond, relationship, or oath. The definition given here includes these, but gives greater precision than any one of them. Not just any obligation, relationship or oath is covenantal.

### 1.7.2 Background

It is a fallacy that etymology controls meaning (cf. Cotterell and Turner 1989:132-3) and it is generally accepted that the etymology of *ברית*, 'covenant' is too obscure for any confident conclusions (McConville 1997:747; cf. also Barr 1977:23-38 and Nicholson 1986:99-103). Tadmor's comment is that etymology is in this case irrelevant: *ברית*, 'covenant' is "an old, frozen form whose original meaning had already been forgotten in the first millennium" (1982:138). It is far more fruitful to acknowledge that *ברית*, 'covenant' is the most prominent of several terms in biblical Hebrew referring to a complex of customs widespread throughout cultures of the ANE. The cultural pattern of covenant-making to which it refers was broad and well-established. Wiseman comments: "The covenant idea and its terminology has been shown to form the warp and woof of the fabric of ancient society" (1982:311). There was a standardized ANE terminology (Weinfeld 1973:190-7), of which *ברית*, 'covenant' in BH is just one part, attested from the fourth millennium down to the Hellenistic and Roman periods (Wiseman 1982:311). It is quite possible to refer to this reality in BH without using this specific term.<sup>38</sup> To focus exclusively on the single term *ברית*, 'covenant' would in fact be a

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<sup>38</sup> For an extensive survey of such language, see Kalluveetil (1982:17-91).

distortion. It is simply the most common word that gives entry to a broad semantic field. This broad cultural background is decisive for an adequate definition.

It should be noted that within the ANE context, people make a ברִית, ‘covenant’ with other people, not with gods. The gods are involved as witnesses, not parties. Thus the most prominent use of ברִית, ‘covenant’ in the Old Testament, for Yahweh’s relationship with his people, is exceptional and demands explanation. As a special case, it should not control the definition. Rather, it is illuminated by it.

*1.7.3 Definition: a 1) chosen 2) relationship  
of 3) mutual obligation 4) guaranteed by oath sanctions*

1) A ברִית, ‘covenant’ is **chosen**. It creates the relationship. Those who are family members by birth do not make a ברִית, ‘covenant’. The possible biblical exception of Jacob and Laban is in fact a confirmation (Gen 31:43-55). The (perhaps covenantal) marriage relationships of Jacob with Laban’s daughters do not automatically link Jacob with Laban. Indeed, Laban claims that Leah and Rachel and their children are his, but says nothing of the kind about Jacob (Gen 31:43).

This aspect of choice is apparent in the verbs associated with ברִית, ‘covenant’. Covenants are made, established, given, or entered into (Hugenberger 1998:180). They do not just happen.

Of course, this does not exclude the (frequent) renewal of ברִית, ‘covenant’ to maintain or restore a relationship. It also does not imply that the two parties had no previous contact with each other.<sup>39</sup> Rather, because of the ברִית, ‘covenant’ they now relate as family. This tie is not natural, but made. The choice is, of course, not necessarily a free or equal one by both parties.

2) A ברִית, ‘covenant’ establishes a **relationship**, analogous to kinship. This family relationship aspect is highlighted by the conventions of ANE treaty literature. Whatever the political and military circumstances leading to the making of a ברִית, ‘covenant’ between an overlord and a possibly reluctant vassal, they would address each other in this context as father and son. In a parity treaty, the two parties are brothers. There are a few examples in biblical Hebrew of exceptions, of covenants with impersonal entities, such as Job’s with his eyes (Job 31:1), but these best make sense as anthropomorphic, figurative language (Hugenberger

<sup>39</sup> The historical prologues of many ANE treaties emphasize ongoing relationship (Craigie 1976:22-3, 39-40).

1998:177). Characteristic covenant rituals such as the handshake, the shared meal and the grasped robe symbolize this point of relationship (Kalluveettil 1982:20-27). As noted above, the relationship may not be the primary focus of בְּרִית, 'covenant' in a given context. Perhaps a commitment to action is prominent. But the relationship is the underlying reality. McCarthy is emphatic: "it seems impossible that *berit* not acquire an association with ideas of relationship. ...It is relational" (1986:84).

Thus בְּרִית, 'covenant' is closely linked with strongly relational words in both BH and the ANE treaty literature. On אָהַב, 'love' Els summarizes: "the concept of the covenant is itself an expression, in judicial terms, of the experience of the love of God" (1997:280). Moran shows that love belonged to the terminology of international relations at the Amarna period and was required of covenant partners, whether equals or vassal and suzerain (1963:79,82). The term שָׁלוֹם, 'peace, well-being' can function with בְּרִית, 'covenant' as a hendiadys (Weinfeld 1973:191-2; cf. Num 25:12; Isa 54:7-8; Ezek 34:5, 37:26). Another word with strong covenantal associations is חֶסֶד, 'loyalty, kindness' defined in a thorough study as "deep and enduring" bilateral commitment given practical expression (Clark 1993:217).

One further example is negative. The use of רִיב, 'quarrel, grievance' in the prophetic books of the Old Testament to describe the strained relationship between Yahweh and his people has led scholars to speak of a "covenant lawsuit" genre. However, De Roche has challenged this, accusing scholars of "importing modern precision," without warrant (1983:564) into a situation of elders gathered at the city gate. The point is well taken. De Roche then goes on to challenge the links with covenantal language on the grounds that specific treaty parallels are limited and ambiguous (1983:573). His conclusion, however, betrays his own inadequate concept of covenant: "The quarrel between Yahweh and Israel remains on a personal, bilateral level" (1983:574). In fact, it is not thereby less covenantal, but illustrates the contention being made in this study that relational, kinship language is primary in BH covenant concepts.<sup>40</sup>

3) A family-type relationship involves **mutual obligations**. These may be radically unequal, as in the relationship between mother and small child, but they are inescapable. Sometimes the commitments are specified in detail, as when covenant concepts are appropriated for international treaties. Sometimes the obligations are more general, as in Jacob and Laban's

<sup>40</sup> See Foster 2000:17-23 for further examples, cf. Burden 1970:61-111.

commitment not to harm each other (Gen 31:52). In many cases, cultural convention means that conditions do not even need to be specified (McCarthy 1972:3).

The importance of obligations in a covenant relationship is widely acknowledged. Hugenberger speaks of that rare thing, “a scholarly consensus” (1998:181), and notes that obligations are implied in 263 out of 283 BH references to ברית, ‘covenant’ (1998:169). The element of obligation is such that in BH a ברית, ‘covenant’ can be commanded. Note בריתו אשר צוה, ‘his covenant which he commanded’ in Deut 4:13 (cf. Judg 2:20, Psa 111:9). In Psa 103:18 לשמרי בריתו, ‘to those keeping his covenant’ parallels ולזכרי פקדיו לעשותם, ‘to those remembering to do his orders.’ Also ברית, ‘covenant’ and דק, ‘statute’ function as synonyms in Psa 50:16 and Isa 24:5. Kalluveetil develops further examples (1982:30 ff).

It has been argued that covenant obligations were not always mutual. Weinfeld argues for a “covenant of grant” which is one sided, with nothing required of the recipient (1970:184-203), but this ignores the relational context and the category has not withstood further scrutiny (Hugenberger 1998:181). The fact that covenant obligations are in the context of a relationship makes them mutual, however unequal and whatever the emphasis in a specific context (cf. Milgrom 2001:2340). Some have argued against the mutuality of covenant obligations (e.g. Mendenhall 1962:715), perhaps in a theologically driven attempt to defend God’s sovereign grace when ברית, ‘covenant’ is applied to the relationship between Yahweh and Israel. It is helpful to distinguish between the creation of the ברית, ‘covenant,’ not necessarily based on the prior good behavior of the parties, and the behavior demanded once the ברית, ‘covenant’ has been instituted.

4) This commitment is **guaranteed by oath sanctions**. Whether in words or symbols, whether explicitly or implicitly, the gods are summoned to enforce the commitment made. Frequently the oath is self-maledictory in form: “May I die (=may they kill me) if I do not keep my commitment.” The appeal to divine authority and intervention is intrinsic to ANE covenant-making. The prominence of blessings and curses in the ANE treaty literature is a clear illustration of the expected divine enforcement of a ברית, ‘covenant’. Oath is not simply symbolic words and ritual.

In many contexts, oath and covenant can be synonymous and interchangeable (Tadmor 1982:132). The word ברית, ‘covenant’ is widely associated with the language of oaths and

curses (Hugenberger 1998:183-4; cf. Brichto 1963:27-38). Instead of ‘cutting a covenant,’ we find in one place ‘to cut oath/curse,’ כרתה + אלה (Deut 29:11 [ET12]). Instead of the idiom, ‘swear an oath/curse,’ אלה + נשבע it is possible to ‘swear covenant,’ בריתה + נשבע (Deut 4:31, 7:12, 8:18). On אלה, ‘swear, curse’ Gordon explains that it is “properly a curse by which a person is bound to an obligation.... Covenantal associations are frequently prominent” (Gordon 1997:403).

The phrase כרתה בריתה, ‘cut covenant’ occurs 86 times in BH,<sup>41</sup> and its cognates are well-established in Sumerian and the Semitic languages (Carpenter 1997:729-31). It is the stereotyped phrase for the process of entering into a covenant relationship and is usually rendered simply “make a covenant” in English translations (NASB, NIV, NLT, NRSV, REB, etc.). It alludes to the oath ritual invoking divine enforcement of the covenant commitments.

This ritual is alluded to in three widely-spaced Old Testament contexts: Gen 15:9-21, Exod 24:3-8 and Jer 34:1-20 (cf. also Psa 50:5). In each case, sacrificial animals are killed. An extra-biblical treaty parallel illustrates the point: “This head is not the head of a lamb, it is the head of Mati’ilu, it is the head of his sons, his officials, and the people of his land” (Tadmor 1982:135). In Jeremiah 34, the elite of Jerusalem, besieged by Nebuchadnezzar (34:1-7), had made a covenant to free their Hebrew slaves (34:8-10), then reneged on their commitment (34:11). Yahweh, through Jeremiah, passes sentence, decreeing a punishment that fits the crime, an ironic “freedom” (34:17). And those who swore covenant will be like “the calf which they cut in two and passed between its pieces” (34:18b). Word play adds to the impact of this verse. The verb עבר, ‘pass’ is used both for passing between the pieces of the animal and for trespassing covenant obligations. Both calf and covenant are כרתה, ‘cut.’ Passing between the pieces of the sacrificial animal is reiterated in the next verse (34:19). The covenant-making elite had participated in a stereotyped ritual, but Yahweh is taking it literally.

These examples show that ‘to cut covenant’ implies to make a ritual self-curse by cutting up sacrificial animals, to declare in effect: “May I become like these sacrificial animals if I do not keep my commitment” (cf. Weinfeld 1970:196-7). It is not legitimate to insist on this full sense wherever the phrase כרתה בריתה, ‘cut covenant’ occurs. The full ritual may or may not have occurred in any given case when no further detail is given. Moreover, the emphasis is

<sup>41</sup> Sixty times כרתה precedes בריתה, and 26 times it follows.



frequently on the result and not the process. Still, the fact that this becomes the stereotyped expression for covenant-making in BH highlights the role of oaths and self-cursing in covenants. Tadmor's summary sees "the oath containing the self-curse as the essential—if not the most potent—component of the treaty" (Tadmor 1982:132-3; cf. McCarthy 1972:34).

One clarification may be necessary about the role of blood in covenant-making. The phenomenon of "blood brotherhood" is widely attested in ethnographic literature (Tegnaeus 1954) and, following Smith (1901:313-320), analogies have been drawn with biblical covenant-making by Mulago, among others (Mulago 1957; Asomogha 1997; Healey and Sybertz 1997:257-8). Typically, rites involve the mixing of blood by two parties to symbolize the creation of family ties between them. Though the function is clearly similar to that of *ברית*, 'covenant' in BH, the blood rites have a distinct role. Many cultures do not use blood as a metaphor for family relationship and this is the case in BH. The analog in BH to the English phrase "flesh and blood" is *עצם + בשר* (Gen 2:23; 2 Sam 5:1), "flesh and bone" (cf. Brueggemann 1970). In the context of ANE covenant-making, blood rites do not symbolize family ties, but imply animal sacrifices, oath-taking and life or death commitment.

#### 1.7.4 Others' definitions

Others' definitions highlight some, but not all of the four elements of Hugenberger's definition. Williamson speaks of "a solemn commitment guaranteeing promises or obligations undertaken by one or both covenanting parties" (2003:139, citing Hugenberger), which puts the weight on obligations over relationship. The article by McConville in NIDOTTE lists four related English terms: treaty, agreement, alliance, and covenant (1997:747), all of which are rather too narrowly political or commercial to be equivalents for *ברית*, 'covenant.' McConville explains after a survey of OT usage that *ברית*, 'covenant' consistently involves "mutual commitment" (1997:752). Robertson defines the term as "a bond in blood, sovereignly administered" (1980:4-15), emphasizing relationship, life and death commitment (implied by oath), and an absence of negotiation or bargaining. Mendenhall defines *ברית*, 'covenant' as "a solemn promise made binding by an oath, which may be either a verbal formula or a symbolic oath/action" (1962:714). This makes obligations, commitment to a course of action more prominent than commitment to a relationship. By contrast, Smith puts the emphasis squarely on relationship, though not oath: "Primarily the covenant is not a special engagement to this or that particular effect, but a bond of truth and life-fellowship to all the effects for which kinsmen are

permanently bound together” (1901:315-316). Kline does not highlight the fact that *ברית*, ‘covenant’ creates the relationship, but otherwise his definition fits with that used here: “a sanction-sealed commitment to maintain a particular relationship or follow a stipulated course of action. In general, then a covenant may be defined as a relationship under sanctions” (1968:16). Similarly, Newman: it is a “formal relationship of obligation between two parties, normally resulting from some prior common experience and sealed by a solemn oath or cultic rite” (1975:120). Kalluveetil states: “Covenant is relational, in one way or other it creates unity, community” (1982:51), and “this implies a quasi-familial bond which makes sons and brothers” (1982:212). Smick (1980:128-130) emphasizes relational context in defining *ברית*, ‘covenant.’ Between nations, it is a treaty or alliance, between individuals, a pledge or agreement, between monarch and subjects, a constitution.

It should be noted that one prominent term is excluded from these definitions. A *ברית*, ‘covenant’ is never a testament, an authoritative document disposing of someone’s property after their death. The Greek term *διαθήκη* used to translate *ברית*, ‘covenant’ in the LXX, and hence prominent in the NT, had this as one meaning, whence it came into English and other European languages, most prominently as the titles of the two parts of the Bible, the Old and New Testaments (cf. Robertson 1980:12-13). Given the dominant OT/LXX background of the term, it is doubtful that *διαθήκη* should ever be translated ‘testament’ in the New Testament.<sup>42</sup>

### 1.7.5 Definition summary

Covenant was a means of making people who were unrelated effectively family. Though cultures define the detailed obligations of family relationships very differently, though family membership is defined by very differing criteria, though family values may well be disregarded in actual practice, nonetheless all cultures have some sense of committed natural relationships with mutual obligations. Covenant created an analog, then strengthened it by invoking supernatural enforcement. This was the complex of metaphor themes<sup>43</sup> used in the Old Testament to describe the relationship of Yahweh with his people.

<sup>42</sup> Many translations (NIV, RSV, NRSV, TEV, REB, NAB, NJB, NLT-but see footnote ad loc., Biblia Version Popular—Spanish; Boa Nova-Portuguese) make an exception for Heb 9:16ff. However, this is not the best understanding of that passage, cf. Lane (1991, ad loc.), Hughes (1979) and Westcott (1979).

<sup>43</sup> Note that metaphor is basic to human cognition, cf. Goatly (1997).

## 1.8 Survey of covenant in theological literature in Africa

There is no body of literature dealing with communicating covenant concepts in Lomwe culture. There are, however, a limited number of scholarly attempts to relate biblical covenant concepts to other contemporary African cultures.<sup>44</sup> Twelve of these are surveyed below (Mulago 1957; Mafico 1973; Arulefela 1977, 1980, 1988; Abe 1986; Onwu 1987; Asomugha 1997; van Rooy 1997; Oduyoye 1997; Turaki 1999; Kisirinya 2001; Muutuki 2002; Kitoko-Nsiku 2003).<sup>45</sup> Typically, a parallel is drawn between ancient customs or values and their contemporary (or traditional) counterparts. Less commonly, contrasts are emphasized between biblical and traditional religion. The Eucharist in the New Testament is often a central concern. Though these examples do not provide precise models for the approach followed in the present work, they suggest issues of which to be aware and hint at the fruitfulness of a deeper engagement between biblical covenant concepts and African Christians. Several of the questions raised here will be revisited in the final chapter of this work.

Of course, the primary theological texts in most African languages are Bible translations. The present author's earlier survey (2000:55-67) of patterns of translating *ברית*, 'covenant' into 35 African languages with a total of 100 million speakers, concluded that "for many African languages crucial biblical covenant vocabulary has lost much of its meaning and impact in translation. It is not that the translations are incorrect, but that they are inadequate" (2000:67; cf. Kisirinya 2001:190).<sup>46</sup> Weak translations correspondingly tend to weaken understanding, reflection and use.

### 1.8.1

**Vincent Mulago** (1957) makes an early link of covenant themes in Scripture with an African cultural situation. Mulago analyzes customs for political friendship treaties between neighboring chiefs found among the Bashi, Banyawaranda and Barundi peoples (in what is now Burundi, 1957:172). The core of the traditional ceremonies involved publicly making incisions on the chest or abdomen of the chiefs and gathering the blood on leaves. Then,

<sup>44</sup> Published African theology has in general devoted its attention to issues of identity (cf. Bediako 1992; though perhaps *dignity* would be a better term). Cf. also Tienou (1998:46). For bibliographies see Holter (1996) and Young (1993). Perhaps covenant issues have not been seen as relevant, despite their biblical role in establishing identity for God's people (cf. Foster 2000:54-87). Covenant is better represented at the level of African doctoral dissertations.

<sup>45</sup> The distinct history of covenant theology in South Africa, which is in most ways part of a European conversation despite its local impact, is beyond the scope of the present work.

<sup>46</sup> Curiously, however, Himbaza's very detailed exegetical analysis of two Old Testament translations in Kinyawaranda (2001), comparing them with the Masoretic text in a broad selection of passages, makes no mention of issues pertaining to the translation of *ברית*, either in texts where it is used or in the translation of 'testament.'

simultaneously, both parties would drink the blood. The drinking would often be more symbolic than actual; the bloody leaves could be dipped in milk which was then drunk. Nevertheless, there was a genuine mingling of blood, seen as “le courant vital,” (1957:176)<sup>47</sup> and it created a family tie in some ways more strict than natural family ties because this ritual was accompanied by specified rights and duties with stated penalties for infractions. Gifts and a communal meal were also part of the ceremony (with ‘community’ understood to include dead ancestors as well as the living; Mulago 1957:178).

As a Catholic, Mulago sees these ceremonies as analogous to the sacrament of Eucharist, a blood union of the communicant with Christ in the context of a meal, in which the mystery of the blood founds and feeds solidarity and unity (1957:180-184). Mulago’s exposition and illustration of communal values in African culture is moving: “Pas d’individu isolé, pas de famille isolée, pas de vie isolée” (1957:172).<sup>48</sup> The customs he describes seem a rare example in Africa of a genuine analogy to covenants of the ancient Near East in that a family-type bond is created among people otherwise unrelated.

It is unfortunate for the relevance of his example that already at the time of writing he describes these customs largely in the past tense. Observers in the 1990’s mention that these blood-sharing ceremonies are almost unknown (Healey and Sybertz 1997:257-8). This is not surprising. Under the pressures of modernization, dynamic cultures adapt. Cultural forms are dispensable.

As noted above when discussing the definition of ברית, ‘covenant,’ a greater problem is that Mulago does not reflect on the significance of covenant blood in Scripture. Jesus’ Last Supper reference to “the new covenant in my blood,” (Luke 22:20, 1 Cor 11:25) alludes to Exodus 24:8, as does the exposition in Hebrews 9:15-22. There, blood is not a symbol of family ties, but a symbol of sacrifice and an oath sign, invoking death on one who violates covenant. Perhaps these elements were also implicit in the customs described by Mulago. Nevertheless, his argument is weakened by not noting that apparently similar blood symbolism need not mean the same things.

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<sup>47</sup> “the life-flow”

<sup>48</sup> “no individual isolated, no family isolated, no life in isolation”

### 1.8.2

**Temba Mafico** (1973) argues for the relevance of Old Testament covenant concepts to his Ndaue people primarily as a model of indigenization. As “Israel borrowed the [ANE covenant] structure but theologized it, making it unique” (1973:47), so missionaries to the nations should do the same. Mafico does not follow up on the idea of covenant relationship with God as a clue or key to the uniqueness of Israel, but simply points out similarities in OT and traditional Ndaue understandings of God. He acts definitively in the present, not vaguely in the future and he can be approached by a whole family (1973:95). Mafico’s master’s thesis bears the marks of a preliminary work, noting concerns without following them through in a coherent fashion. Two of those concerns bear repeating. Missionary denigration of traditional culture (1973:1-4) is both evil and ineffective. Mafico also reacts strongly to what he calls missionaries’ “sleeping gods” (1973:94). They do not act or speak with authority like Jesus. Their greatest disservice is “their lack of conviction in the Gospel they preach” (1973:94), while Ndaue people are looking for a God who acts and even terrifies. A study which denigrates local culture or denies a God who speaks and acts will be of little use.

### 1.8.3

**Joseph Arulefela’s** works (1977, 1980, 1988) are broad summaries of biblical teaching on covenants, complemented by a survey of traditional covenantal customs among the Yoruba of Nigeria. Both continuities and contrasts are highlighted between the biblical material and Yoruba tradition. The pastoral focus of the works is the role of the Lord’s Supper among Yoruba Christians. Specifically, Arulefela is concerned to relate covenant concepts to whether or not polygynists should participate in the Lord’s Supper. Arulefela uses a rather broad definition of covenant which includes all kinds of commitments bound by oaths. His presentation of the biblical material illustrates the integrating and structuring role that covenant concepts have throughout the Bible. He is aware of the need for a relevant presentation of covenant among the Yoruba to help communicate the reality of God’s grace, because “the right idea of grace was not well grounded in the hearts of the Christians in Yorubaland” (1980:149).<sup>49</sup> Either forgiveness is seen as cheap and easy or the fear of failing to keep covenant obligations inhibits Christian commitment (1980:149-151). Unfortunately, though this need is pointed out, Arulefela does not explore it in the depth it deserves. How does a biblical understanding of covenant concepts address the issue?

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<sup>49</sup> Arulefela adds: “and in the hearts of Nigerians in general.”

#### 1.8.4

**G. O. Abe's** article on covenant (1986) promises to connect the biblical concept with Nigerian society, but suffers from superficial analysis. After a brief definition, the article makes two apparently contradictory assertions: Covenant created for Israel a "special relationship to Yahweh" that "made their religion meaningful" (1986:66). And, in the next paragraph: "Covenant making is a common feature in every religion" (1986:67). The contradiction is never acknowledged and certainly not explained. Thus covenant is said to be God's means to bring people into close fellowship with himself, but is then developed as a model of a constitutional authority and standard of accountability, which serves as a check on those exercising power (1986:67-69). Israelite and Nigerian history illustrate the consequences of flouting the requirements of honesty and faithfulness. Abe's final appeal is to "Nigerian educationists" to adopt the role of Israel's prophets (1986:72).

This article illustrates a characteristic danger in applying covenant concepts. Nigeria, a multi-ethnic, multi-religious modern state, is set up in parallel with ancient Israel and simple correspondences are made. As a result Jeremiah's new covenant is for Nigeria a still-future reality (1986:72); Jesus' coming and fulfillment vanish from consideration. Biblically, not just any group can claim covenant status with God.

Abe's concern for honesty, accountability, and the rule of law in Nigeria is genuine and clear. And there are analogies between the covenant framework and the constitutional structure of modern societies. But there are also vast differences in principle and purpose. When these are not considered, Scripture is being abused. God's moral standards do apply, whether in Nigerian public life or in any other society on earth, but this is not the way to argue for them.

#### 1.8.5

**Nlenanya Onwu** (1987) provides a taste of the fruitfulness biblical covenant concepts can have in an African context. He argues in a succinct article that covenant is intrinsic to understanding of the Eucharist; otherwise it "robs [Eucharist] of its context, gravity, and importance" (1987:145). He defines covenant as "a relationship of mutual friendship into which two people or groups of people enter with mutual pledges of fidelity which eliminates all forms of betrayal and fear" (1987:151). Though his definition lacks precision, he illuminates it from Igbo tradition, highlighting the intrinsic role of blessing and curse in covenants, which he argues is often neglected in Western theological discussion (1987:152). This understanding is then used for the exegesis of 1 Cor 11 and applied to the issue of Christian unity.

### 1.8.6

The work of Nigerian Catholic **Catherine Asomugha** (1997) makes connections between biblical covenant concepts, the Eucharist, and community solidarity. Her focus is also on Igbo culture, where she finds not specific parallel rituals, but a broader cultural value of kinship, which needs to be reinforced and applied via the “covenanted kinship” represented in the Mass. There are rituals which build community solidarity, and parallels with these can be used to supplement traditional models of the Eucharist. Asomugha draws on the rich relational themes of biblical covenant, highlighting a people in loving communion with God himself, seeing the Eucharist as a covenant renewal ceremony of communion (1997:55). Her understanding is that “Igbo kinship brings to the christian [sic] understanding of the Eucharist the time-treasured values of belongingness, sharing, co-operation, and mutual interdependence” (1997:88).<sup>50</sup> These values persist even as specific cultural forms are lost (1997:31, 85-86).

In Asomugha’s work, biblical themes and cultural values are allied in an attempt to renew and enrich Christian life and practice, an excellent illustration of the potential biblical concepts of covenant have to make a deep impact on Africa. However, at least three key issues are neglected in her work: 1) Covenant, like kinship, creates boundaries, insiders with privileges and obligations. While Asomugha sees that these boundaries go far beyond the traditional bonds of kinship, she is vague about covenant boundaries in her application. Do these covenant principles apply equally to all Catholics, all Christians, all Nigerians?<sup>51</sup> 2) Her focus on “covenanted kinship,” community relationship, could imply that this is all covenant language implies in Scripture, missing a wealth of implications. 3) Moreover, there is a contrast between the created kinship of covenant and the traditional kinship of birth ties which is missed.

### 1.8.7

**J. A. van Rooy’s** approach (1997) is distinct, not focused on one particular African cultural group and with a stress on the contrasts between covenant in Old Testament biblical theology and African traditional religions. Covenant relationship, encapsulated in the “I will be your God” formula “is not looked upon as natural but as placed in history by Yahweh” (1997:315). This relationship is of a different quality than the traditional religion emphasis on “power and the manipulation of forces” (1997:319). In the Old Testament, relationship with God has

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<sup>50</sup> Asomugha also warns against romanticising traditional culture. Respect and critique go together (1997:63-64, 150).

<sup>51</sup> Given the abuse of outsiders in most social systems, it is important to note how they should be treated, even when the focus is on insiders.

priority over relationship with people. Van Rooy's perspective has definite affinities with the argument developed in the following chapters. The present work aims for greater depth and precision than is possible with van Rooy's generalizing method.

#### 1.8.8

**Mercy Amba Oduyoye** (1997) tantalizes with a sweeping assertion: "Covenant-making is a characteristic of African life" (1997:112) that she does not substantiate. She does connect covenants with oath-taking and ritual meals and makes the penetrating suggestion that: "We should investigate what makes African traditional oaths and covenants more binding than the Lord's Supper" (1997:113). Unfortunately, she does not follow up her own suggestion. Nor, it seems, have others.

#### 1.8.9

**Yusufu Turaki** (1999) makes several references to covenants while dealing with his primary concern of evaluating African traditional religions from a Christian perspective. For him, "covenant concept and practice abounds in the traditional religions" (1999:331), though "the traditional religions operate under a different set of covenants, which have to be laid aside if one is to become a disciple and follower of Christ" (1999:338). Both of these significant and sweeping statements beg for more detailed substantiation than Turaki gives.

#### 1.8.10

**Serapio Kisirinya** (2001) specifically focuses on the translation of ברית, 'covenant' into East African languages (more than twenty), criticizing a tendency to use terms from the semantic field of 'contract' as the result of "an inherited legalistic Christianity that is 'made in Europe'" (2001:190). He accepts 'last will' as one meaning of the term (2001:189), despite the lack of evidence, but argues vigorously for giving priority in translation to 'covenant' as "in fact richer in meaning and implications" (2001:191) than other options. He assumes that covenantal rites do in fact exist "in the different ethnic groups in Africa" and that these include "formal ratification of a relationship," "an exchange of rights and duties," and "the creation of a new community of people with definite moral obligations and moral claims, a new sense of being and belonging" (2001:191). Kisirinya's strictures on the inadequacy of terms like 'contract' or 'agreement' must be born in mind when making proposals for translation into Lomwe. However, it would be naive to assume that clearly covenantal rituals in fact exist in all African



ethnic groups. Where they do not, the translation problem becomes acute in a way that Kisirinya does not consider.

#### 1.8.11

**Joseph Muutuki** (2001:125-129) argues for a particular translation of *ברית*, ‘covenant’ in Kamba, defending a term which earlier Bible translators had rejected as having too many pagan associations. It is connected with a traditional Kamba ceremony involving animal sacrifice, an oath of unity, and God as oath enforcer, all features prominent in the ANE cultural context of *ברית*-making. Unfortunately, Muutuki’s argument is rather too focused on the problematic etymology of *ברית*, ‘covenant’ and does not raise the issue of how relevant the traditional ceremonies are to contemporary Kamba-speakers. Nevertheless it is a good example of finding comparable cultural elements in the ANE world of the Old Testament and in an African society.

#### 1.8.12

**Edouard Kitoko-Nsiku’s** recent work (2003) focuses on relating the book of Hosea and contemporary sub-Saharan Africa. It is an impassioned reflection on ancient and contemporary covenant-breaking with emphasis on the deep feeling God invests in the relationship with his people: “the God who is involved with human beings in Hosea in the form of a marital bond is not the apathetic God of the Greeks. He is extremely passionate” (246, cf. 172). Though covenant issues are not the central focus of his work, they are a substantial component, developed in theological, sociological and ecological dimensions (241-262), and seen as having a “metahistorical” role (253). Nsiku-Kitoko’s study demonstrates the powerful structuring role of covenant concepts for understanding the relationship of God with humanity, both in biblical theology and in an African theology. His emphasis on “the pathetic *ברית*” (242) is a valuable corrective to tendencies to understand covenant language as merely formal or structural and challenges attempts to communicate covenant concepts that remain abstract and do not connect with the situation and suffering of real people. He does not investigate specific African cultural issues relating to covenant concepts.

### 1.9 Chapter conclusion

The present chapter has ranged widely while tracing an arc for transcultural communication of biblical covenant concepts. Before an experiment that deals narrowly with the specifics of covenant in one chapter of the Old Testament and its use by Lomwe preachers, there have been

many preliminaries. A multi-disciplinary project demands extra care explaining method of approach and assumptions. Three issues in particular have needed attention: a responsible way to address the deep and often nebulous level of worldview; a clear definition of the much controverted covenant concepts to be communicated; and a survey of scholarship on biblical covenant in the African context.

The way is now clear to turn in the next two chapters to the biblical text of Leviticus 26 and to its setting.

2.1 Preliminaries

This chapter is a preliminary survey of the biblical text of Leviticus 26 and its setting. It discusses large areas of the text, but does not attempt to provide a detailed commentary. The purpose is to provide a clear and concise overview of the text and its setting, and to identify the key issues that will be discussed in the following chapters. The text of Leviticus 26 is a covenantal text, and it is important to understand the context of the covenant in the African context. The text of Leviticus 26 is a covenantal text, and it is important to understand the context of the covenant in the African context. The text of Leviticus 26 is a covenantal text, and it is important to understand the context of the covenant in the African context.

## 2.1 Preliminaries

### 2.1.1 The pre-covenantal context

This subsection discusses Leviticus 26:1-11.

Some of the reasons are simply practical. In the first place, the text of Leviticus 26 is a covenantal text, and it is important to understand the context of the covenant in the African context. The text of Leviticus 26 is a covenantal text, and it is important to understand the context of the covenant in the African context. The text of Leviticus 26 is a covenantal text, and it is important to understand the context of the covenant in the African context. The text of Leviticus 26 is a covenantal text, and it is important to understand the context of the covenant in the African context. The text of Leviticus 26 is a covenantal text, and it is important to understand the context of the covenant in the African context.

Other reasons derive from the chapter's content. It uses the term 'covenant' in a way that is not used in the rest of the Bible. It is an eight of the ten uses of 'covenant' in Leviticus. Only half a century ago, the whole Old Testament was the term as often in proportion to their length and only in a few

## CHAPTER 2

### LEVITICUS 26—TEXT AND COTEXT

The present chapter anchors discussion about communicating biblical covenant concepts to Lomwe-speakers in the specifics of a sample passage in Leviticus. Those covenant concepts then draw in widening circles of other biblical texts through their strong intertextual connections.

This single chapter is a powerful example of the structuring role of covenantal concepts throughout large swaths of the Old Testament canon and beyond. Internal to the Old Testament lies a metaphor theme which is a powerful force for cohesion. It integrates life around a particular secure yet demanding relationship between Yahweh and his people. When this theme is neglected, the results tend to be either incoherence or an imposition of coherence by extraneous criteria as readers seek to make sense of the text before them. Yet this metaphor theme of covenant, richly rooted in ANE cultural patterns, is alien to contemporary readers and hearers of the Bible. It is particularly prone to distortion in translation.

#### 2.1 Preliminaries

##### *2.1.1 The choice of Leviticus 26*

This experiment uses Leviticus 26 as its focus.

Some of the reasons are simply practical. It is a block of text small enough to expect a preacher to read all of it in preparation for a sermon. It is big enough to give preachers flexibility about which aspects of it are emphasized. The translated Lomwe text of the chapter was available, drafted and checked by the Bible Society in Mozambique translation team. The work had been done in the normal course of the translation project, without any potential distortion from awareness that this chapter would receive special public attention. As prose, the text is less complex to understand than poetry would have been.

Other reasons derive from the chapter's content. It uses the term *ברית*, 'covenant' intensively. In it are eight of the ten uses of *ברית*, 'covenant' in Leviticus. Only half a dozen chapters in the whole Old Testament use the term as often in proportion to their length and only one chapter

uses it more times.<sup>52</sup> Moreover, Leviticus 26 does not use ברית, ‘covenant’ alone; it makes extensive use of other covenantal vocabulary and forms, creating rich intertextual links throughout the Old Testament that highlight the structuring role of covenant concepts. These links are all the more striking in a book which is not as noted for its covenant emphasis as Deuteronomy and Exodus are.

### 2.1.2 Focus on the canonical text

This study analyzes the canonical text of Leviticus.<sup>53</sup> For three reasons, it does not focus on nor seek to identify hypothetical earlier stages in the development of the text.

1. As an experiment in transcultural communication in the context of Bible translation, the accepted canonical text used for Bible translation is naturally its basis.
2. The text as a whole shows discourse features and literary style which are obscured by a fragmentary approach.
3. As traditionally practiced, both the theoretical foundations and the results of source criticism and tradition criticism need to be treated skeptically.

This final point demands discussion. Established scholarly tradition since the end of the nineteenth century seeks to analyze Old Testament texts by identifying their sources and discerning internal marks of development. The influence of successive redactors in differing situations is isolated. For the Pentateuch as a whole, the discussion is still shaped in terms of the Graf-Wellhausen documentary hypothesis, which divides the canonical five books among documents, redactors or schools labeled J, E, D and P. For Leviticus, dominant theory divides the book between P, the priestly writer or writers, and H, the holiness code or work of the holiness school (usually chapters 17-26). The existence of H is so well accepted that Joosten (1996) simply adopts it as the framework for his study. He calls H a “well defined corpus of laws” (1996:ix), even while acknowledging that “research on H as a distinct entity has been characterized by a growing complexity in the reconstruction of its redaction history” (Joosten 1996:7) with the result that he is “more pessimistic as to the possibility of reconstructing that history in the majority of cases” (1996:9).

<sup>52</sup> Genesis 17 uses ברית 13 times, but raises the issue of circumcision which would be heard by Lomwe-speakers in the context of traditional initiation rites, adding complexity to the experiment.

<sup>53</sup> The Masoretic text is used and is generally free of complex text critical issues in this chapter. For a careful text critical analysis with a robust defense of the MT, see Barrick (1981:32-43; cf. Hartley 1992:448-449, 453-456).

The theoretical problem is that the criteria for identifying compositional strata have not been clearly justified. Apart from quotation formulae and occasional explicit citations in the biblical text, most of the criteria used by Wellhausen and others have been challenged, as Whybray argues at length with respect to the Pentateuch (1987). Doublets, variations in style and the like are well-attested in ancient historiography (Whybray 1987:227-8).

The practical problem is that results are speculative. A scholar of immense erudition like Milgrom is confident that he can detect inserts into the final text, “because they interrupt the flow of the text and when removed the text runs smoothly” (2003:29). He concludes of a final redaction of Leviticus that “the text itself had congealed. Thus the redactional process was one of arrangement and occasional insertion” (2003:39). However plausible his proposal, it depends on a sense of style and flow that is inevitably in the eye of the beholder. Whybray summarizes:

In all Pentateuchal study up to the present time, it has been assumed that it is possible to detect the activity of successive redactors or editors. Yet the variety of conclusions which have been reached ... arouses the suspicion that the methods employed are extremely subjective (1987:233).<sup>54</sup>

On Leviticus, Ruwe concludes that there is a “lack of sufficient factual and linguistic criteria” for determining layers (2003:56). He sees instead “flowing tradition processes,” attempts to “avoid diachronic differentiations at all” and to “try to make the text order of Leviticus comprehensible as a meaningful composition” (2003:56).

For the present study, it is sufficient to note some major recent source critical analyses of Leviticus 26 and refer an interested reader to them.<sup>55</sup> Hartley summarizes source critical discussion about the second half of Leviticus in general (1992:251-260).

1. Budd defends (1996:6-20) a ‘conventional’ view whereby priestly writers in colonial Israel in the sixth or fifth century revise and expand existing traditions, including H, a “miscellany” connected by its exhortations to holiness (1995:18). Chapter 26 is the conclusion to this holiness document and a work of its editors (1995:360).
2. Similarly, though with more detail, Levine sees the core of chapter 26, verses 3-46, as a later stratum of H, an “epilogue to the holiness code” (2003:22). His earlier, detailed

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<sup>54</sup> Cf. Lewis’s strictures on the danger of arrogance for those who reconstruct ancient texts (1967:154-161).

<sup>55</sup> These issues will be revisited when discussing historical context in the next chapter of this study.

- analysis (1987) detects a primary epilogue, later interpolations, and primary and secondary post catastrophe additions, for a total of at least four strata (1987:11-13, 19).
3. Milgrom's recent, monumental commentary on Leviticus 23-27 (2001) identifies two strata in chapter 26, labeled H and H<sub>R</sub> (2001:2272), challenging those who argue for three or four compositional levels (2001:2363-2365). Specifically, he proposes a core, written in the time of Hezekiah (vv. 3-33a, 36-42, 45) and an exilic interpolation (33b-35, 43-44). Knohl, though differing in detail, also supports dating a holiness school to late in the monarchy (1995:206).
  4. Sun (1990) challenges the view that there was a distinct holiness code: "the structure analysis of the book of Leviticus as a whole does not sustain the interpretation of Lev 17—26 as a distinct form-critical unit" (1990:494), preferring to see "a long process of supplementation" (1990:567). Sun sees the conditional form of much of chapter 26 as secondary to an earlier form that simply listed curses and blessings (1990:551), but nonetheless concludes pessimistically that "there is insufficient evidence to assume a wholesale transformation of Lev 26 from an earlier text to its present shape" (1990:554).
  5. Like Sun, Gerstenberger is pessimistic about detailed source critical reconstructions, even as he sees a Leviticus "sewn together like a patchwork quilt from many different, individual pieces" (1996:2). Indeed, he tends to "view the Holiness Code as a wishful phantom of scholarly literature" because he sees more "fortuitous emergence of tradition" than "conscious literary structuring" in it (1996:180). Nonetheless, he does accept that Leviticus 26 "especially is intended as a concluding point" (1996:399) in the book.

## 2.2 Analysis of Leviticus 26

### 2.2.1 *The structure of the chapter*

As outlined below, internal clues divide this chapter into three major parts, each longer than the one before, and a concluding statement, 26:1-2, 26:3-13, 26:14-45, and 26:46. Verses 1-45 are part of a direct speech of Yahweh himself, continuing from Leviticus 25:1. Appropriately, it is Yahweh's assertion of himself, אֲנִי יְהוָה, 'I am Yahweh' that marks the conclusion of each section, in verse 2, in verse 13 and in verse 45. In an *inclusio*, this same phrase also marks the

transitions at the beginning and the ending of the speech in this chapter, appearing in amplified form as **אני יהוה אלהיכם**, 'for I am Yahweh your God' in verse 1 and verse 43 just before verses 2 and 44.

The first section of the chapter is succinct, verses 1-2, two lists of imperatives, one of negatives, one of positives, each concluding with an **אני יהוה**, 'I am Yahweh' phrase. The imperatives provide a link to the preceding chapter while rhetorically preparing for what follows.<sup>56</sup> This is a hinge section.

The second section of the chapter, verses 3-13, is one complex if/then statement with a conclusion. The protasis is in verse 3, followed by 27 then-statements (mostly *weqatal* verbs, twenty times, with occasional variation to *we-X-yiqtol*, seven

times).<sup>57</sup> These can be separated into three parts by the repetition of **ונתתי**, 'then I will give,' each marking the beginning of a sub-unit in verses 4, 6, and 11. An amplified **אני יהוה**, 'I am Yahweh' statement concludes this second section in verse 13.

The third section of the chapter also uses the if/then form, but expands it significantly. Five times **אבל**, 'but if' begins a sub-unit in which it is followed by a series of then-statements (again mostly *weqatal* and some *X-yiqtol*): verses 14-17, 18-20, 21-22, 23-26, 27-33. The first of the if-then sub-units actually repeats **אבל**, 'but if' three times, helping mark the section transition. The five-fold crescendo of warning is followed by another sub-unit, which breaks the pattern and sets a limit to the doom, verses 34-45. It is demarcated by **אז**, 'then,' occurring twice at its

#### Outline of Leviticus 26

Yahweh's speech, 1-45  
 Imperatives, 1-2  
   Negative, 1  
   Positive, 2  
 Positives, 3-13  
   If-then, 3-12  
     "I will give" 4-5  
     "I will give" 6-10  
     "I will give" 11-12  
   "I am Yahweh" 13  
 Negatives, 14-45  
   If-then, 14-17  
     18-20  
     21-22  
     23-26  
     27-33  
   Then/remember, 34-45  
 Narrator's conclusion, 46

<sup>56</sup> Noth (1965:193) and Levine (1989:181-182) simply link verses 1 and 2 to the preceding chapter, ignoring the structural clues for the unity of chapter 26 as well as the verses' rhetorical force.

<sup>57</sup> This is consistent with Sawyer's observations on the language of Leviticus: the frequency of *weqatal* stands out with respect to the entire BH corpus, *yiqtol* is more common than average, *qatal* and *wayyiqtol* are less common (1996:16-17). This is appropriate given the minimal narrative text of Leviticus, despite its setting within a narrative (cf. Fox 1996).

beginning and in verse 41, and by וְזָכַרְתִּי ‘then I will remember’ in verses 42 and 45. This highly marked section (cf. Fox 1996:81) is thematically pivotal.

Verse 46 is the only part not the direct speech of Yahweh himself. It is the voice of the narrator who has asserted thirty-seven times in Leviticus that the Lord spoke these words to Moses (and/or Aaron), and parallels the more concise concluding statement of the next chapter and the book (27:34). These commands or instructions are from Yahweh to the people via Moses at Mt. Sinai. The book, including chapter 26, is explicitly linked to the whole Sinai covenant narrative.

### 2.2.2 *The argument of the chapter*

This chapter is a coherent, carefully structured appeal for faithful living as the people of Yahweh.<sup>58</sup> Leviticus 26 is a challenge to action. The apparent imbalance of the chapter, with its three unequal sections, gives it rhetorical force. This is not the place for an exposition of legal requirements; that has already been done in earlier chapters. A few succinct commands at the beginning stand here as a reminder of the whole corpus. The next section piles up blessings for obedience, for taking seriously what Yahweh says. Yahweh will give, and give, and give. The list is not exhaustive, but it is rich, culminating in Yahweh himself. To be his and in his presence is the essence of blessing. The third section is the heart of the matter. Not so much a threat, it is a plea. There are five if-clauses, not just one. This is not simply because long sentences get cumbersome. (The sentence in the previous section, vv. 3-13, is already long enough to be very awkward to translate.) Rather, each pause is in effect a plea to repent, a challenge to change. As parents will recognize, “If you keep on disobeying” implies “Why not stop?” The repetition underlines, too, that they do not stop. These grim punishments are for ongoing recalcitrance. Yet the punishment is not inexorable and it fits the offense. Four times Yahweh states אֲנִי-אֵלֵי, ‘I for my part’ (and once אֲנִי-גַם, ‘also I’) after one of the וְאִם, ‘but if’-clauses. His emphatic action is in response to the people’s disobedience.<sup>59</sup> The context is their relationship. Then, in the final part of the third section of the chapter, the call to repentance is made explicit and symmetry is startlingly broken: the people may הִפְרֹךְ, ‘break’ the בְּרִית, ‘covenant’ (v. 15), but Yahweh will not do the same (v. 45). It is in this final part of

<sup>58</sup> Gerstenberger writes of a “powerful concluding admonition” (1996:402) and Hartley notes “the sermonic design of this speech” (1992:462).

<sup>59</sup> On אֲנִי-אֵלֵי as indicating a “corresponding reaction,” cf. van der Merwe, et al (1999:317).



the chapter that direct references to ברית, ‘covenant’ cluster. Yahweh’s exhortation depends on the committed relationship, both secure and demanding, called ברית, ‘covenant.’

It is conventional to refer to blessings and curses in this chapter (so Wenham 1979:324; Hartley 1992:451; Gerstenberger 1996:399; Gorman 1997:141; Rooker 2000:312; Bellinger 2001:156; cf. Levine 1989:182, who writes of blessing and execration). In the covenant-treaty form which has obviously influenced Leviticus 26, parties to the covenant call upon the gods to act for good or ill to enforce the commitments made. Blessings and curses are implicitly prayers, even when the words appear to have an *ex opere operato* effectiveness. What is distinctive about a covenant with Yahweh is that he is both a party to the relationship and its enforcer. What Israel is promised in the relationship, whether of good or ill, does not happen either automatically or by appeal to the intervention of any other power. Repeatedly, emphatically, Yahweh himself is the one who will act. Thus the terms *bless* and *curse* can only be used cautiously, with awareness of how a covenant with Yahweh redefines them. In a speech by Yahweh, it is more precise to speak of promises and warnings (Budd 1995:360, cf. Milgrom 2001:2287).

### 2.2.3 An exposition of the chapter

More detailed analysis, section by section, confirms this understanding of the argument of Leviticus 26 as a rhetorically powerful call to covenant relationship. The Masoretic text of each section, formatted by the present author to highlight structure, style, and flow of thought, is followed by a translation and then a discussion.

#### 2.2.3.1 Section 1: Imperatives, Leviticus 26:1-2

1 לֹא־תַעֲשׂוּ לָכֶם אֱלִילִים  
וּפְסֵל וּמִצְבֵּה לֹא־תִקְיִמוּ לָכֶם  
וְאֲבֵן מִשְׁכִּית לֹא תִתְּנוּ בְּאַרְצְכֶם לְהִשְׁתַּחֲוֹת עָלֶיהָ  
כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם  
2 אֶת־שַׁבְּתֹתַי תִּשְׁמְרוּ  
וּמִקְרָשֵׁי תִירָאוּ  
אֲנִי יְהוָה

1 You must not make for yourselves idols.

Neither must you set up for yourselves an image or stone pillar.<sup>60</sup>  
You must not put a carved stone<sup>61</sup> to worship upon in your land,

<sup>60</sup> See Zevit (2001:256-262) for a discussion of such pillars.

<sup>61</sup> The phrase *מִשְׁכִּית אֲבֵן* is a hapax in BH, probably abbreviated in Num 33:52. Hurowitz (1999) argues that the consensus is that it refers to a “carved stone of idolatrous nature that is looked at and bowed down upon” (206), perhaps a decorated threshold (cf. Zevit 2001:263, 557 n.153).

for I am Yahweh your God.

2 You must keep my sabbaths.

You must honor my holy place.

I am Yahweh.

The short, vigorous list of imperatives in this opening section of Leviticus 26 sums up what is expected of those people who belong to Yahweh. In all but the first imperative, the object is fronted. The commands imply more than they state, alluding to what has gone before both in Leviticus and in the whole Israel-at-Sinai section of the Pentateuch, specifically the Decalogue. Note Milgrom's comments in another context about: "the covenantal obligations of the Decalogue (Exod 18:6), the two distinctive elements of which are the rejection of idolatry and the observance of the sabbath (Exod 20:3-11)" (1996:68). These imperatives stand as covenant stipulations in Leviticus 26:1-2 and introduce themes for the rest of the chapter.

The triple  $\aleph$ - $\text{yiqtol}$  absolute/general prohibitions of verse 1 make clear by repetition and multiplied examples that the worship of Yahweh excludes substitutes. Given human creativity, the list of what is prohibited is far from comprehensive. But the use of both general (in the first line) and specific (in the next two lines) terms for alternate worship shows that the intention is to be comprehensive. This effect is heightened by the inverted word order of the two lines of specific prohibitions, with the objects fronted, which makes a chiasm with the opening line as verbs of prohibition flank the prohibited objects themselves. The prohibitions are in the context of relationship, showing covenant-shaped thinking well before direct reference to  $\text{בְּרִית}$ , 'covenant.' Second-person plural suffixes mark each line: the non-gods are not for you, but, I, Yahweh, am, as is the land. The Yahweh-given  $\text{אֶרֶץ}$ , 'land' is a prominent, repeated theme throughout the chapter.<sup>62</sup>

Two shorter, positive commands occupy verse 2. Instead of holy objects, both Yahweh's holy times and place must be honored (with first person singular possessives neatly balancing the second person plurals of verse 1, even as the fronting of the objects to be honored in both cases highlights the contrast between them; cf. Meyer 2004:138). The relational context is underlined, but there is little other detail. Presumably, this is because these imperatives are reminders of what has gone before. Chapter 26 does not stand on its own, but as a rhetorical peroration to the book of collected speeches which is Leviticus. (This will be given more

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Floor (2003) who argues that "marked information structures play a very crucial and specific role in theme marking" (2003:10), highlighting both variation of BH's standard Verb-Subject-Object word order as a marking device along with "relexicalization" (257).

attention below.) Both sabbaths and holy place<sup>63</sup> are given detailed attention in earlier chapters as well as later in this chapter.

It says much for the carefully constructed rhetorical unity of this chapter that the only specific offenses mentioned after verses 1-2, idolatry (v. 30) and neglecting the sabbath (vv. 34-35), are precisely those mentioned in these opening verses. Otherwise, references are to general offenses against the relationship with Yahweh, like disobedience.

### 2.2.3.2 Section 2: Positives, Lev 26:3-13

3 אִם־בְּחַקְתִּי תִלְכוּ

וְאֶת־מִצְוֹתַי תִּשְׁמְרוּ

וַעֲשִׂיתֶם אֹתָם

4 וְנָתַתִּי גִשְׁמֵיכֶם בְּעֵתָם

וְנִתְּנָה הָאָרֶץ יְבוּלָהּ

וְעֵץ הַשָּׂדֶה יִתֵּן פְּרִי־וֹ

5 וְהִשִּׁיג לָכֶם דִּישׁ אֶת־בְּצִיר

וּבְצִיר יִשִּׁיג אֶת־זֶרַע

וְאָכַלְתֶּם לַחֲמֻכֶם לְשִׁבְעַ

וַיִּשְׂבַּתֶּם לְבָטַח בְּאֲרָצְכֶם

6 וְנָתַתִּי שְׁלוֹם בְּאָרֶץ

וַיִּשְׁכַּבְתֶּם וְאִין מִחֲרִיד

וְהִשְׁבַּתִּי תְהֵה רְעָה מִן־הָאָרֶץ

וְחָרַב לֹא־תַעֲבֹר בְּאֲרָצְכֶם

7 וַיִּרְדְּפֶתֶם אֶת־אִיְבֵיכֶם

וְנִפְּלוּ לִפְנֵיכֶם לְחָרַב

8 וַיִּרְדְּפוּ מִכֶּם חֲמֹשֶׁה מֵאָה

וּמֵאָה מִכֶּם רֶבְבָהּ יִרְדְּפוּ

וְנִפְּלוּ אִיְבֵיכֶם לִפְנֵיכֶם לְחָרַב

9 וּפְנִיתִי אֵלֵיכֶם

וְהִפְרִיתִי אֶתְכֶם

וְהִרְבִּיתִי אֶתְכֶם

וְהִקְוַמְתִּי אֶת־בְּרִיתִי אִתְּכֶם

10 וְאָכַלְתֶּם יֵשֶׁן נוֹשֵׁן

וַיֵּשֶׁן מִפְּנֵי חָדָשׁ תּוֹצִיאוּ

11 וְנָתַתִּי מִשְׁכָּנִי בְּתוֹכְכֶם

<sup>63</sup> The term מקדש itself is used in Leviticus nine times, two of them in this chapter.

וְלֹא־תִגְעַל נַפְשֵׁי אֲתֹכֶם  
12 וְהִתְהַלַּכְתִּי בְּתוֹכְכֶם  
וְהָיִיתִי לָכֶם לֵאלֹהִים  
וְאַתֶּם תִּהְיוּ־לִי לְעַם

13 אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם  
אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִי אֲתֹכֶם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם  
מִהֵיטֵת לָהֶם עֲבָדִים  
וְאֲשַׁבֵּר מִטַּת עַלְכֶם  
וְאוֹלֶךְ אֲתֹכֶם קוֹמָמִיּוֹת

3 If you walk in my statutes,  
guard my commands  
and do them,

4 then I will give you your rains at their right time.

The land will give its produce  
the tree in the field will give its fruit.

5 For you, threshing will go on till grape-picking season  
And grape-picking season will go on till planting time.  
You will eat your bread and have plenty.  
You will settle down securely in your land.

6 I will give peace in the land

so when you lie down no one scares you.  
I will put a stop to dangerous beasts in the land.  
War will not pass through your land.

7 You will chase away your enemies  
and they will fall before you in battle.

8 Five of you will chase away a hundred,  
and a hundred of you will chase away ten thousand.  
Your enemies will fall before you in battle.

9 I will turn toward you.  
I will make you fruitful.  
I will make you multiply.  
I will establish my covenant with you.

10 You will still have lots of last year's crop to eat  
when you have to get rid of it to make space for the new harvest.

11 I will give you my presence among you  
and you will not be disgusting to me.

12 I will travel along among you.  
I will be your God

and you will be my people.

13 I am Yahweh your God,

the one who brought you out from the land of Egypt  
so you would not be their slaves.

I smashed the bars of your yoke.  
I made you walk standing tall.

This section begins with an if-clause (v. 3), dwells on the good things Yahweh promises to do and be (vv. 4-12) as a result, and concludes with a reminder (v. 13). The underlying reality, if it is not to belabor the obvious, is the relationship between Yahweh and his people. These verses are saturated with *I-you* language. Note, too, the wholeness of promised blessing. Economic, political and religious spheres are not separate. Instead, the presence of Yahweh shows itself in every dimension of life.

The condition is obedience. Three general verbal clauses, **ב**, **הֵלֵךְ**, 'walk in,' **שָׁמַר**, 'keep' and **עָשָׂה**, 'do' describe what *you*, the people, must do. On Yahweh's side, there are statutes and commands, general terms for requirements to be obeyed. These look back to the samples just given in the opening verses and forward to the beginning of the next section (v. 15) as well as the narrator's summary that concludes the chapter (v. 46). In both verses 15 and 46 **חָק**, 'statute' reappears along with other general terms for Yahweh's demands on those who belong to him.

In verses 4-12, Yahweh promises good to his obedient people. The verb **נָתַן**, 'give' is prominent. Three times in *we-qatal* form in the first person singular it introduces subsections (vv. 4, 6, and 11); twice more it is used in verse 4. There, Yahweh's giving leads to the land and the fruit trees giving. This is really the pattern for the whole section. Both abundance and victory are his gift. They do not happen on their own and they are certainly not Israel's achievement. (The negative section of the chapter picks up on the same term, as well as the same topics, for both contrast and coherence.)<sup>64</sup>

Verses 4 and 5 dwell on agricultural prosperity, piling up expressions for abundance that were conventional in the ANE and are readily understandable by those who know they live off the land. The final line of verse 5 summarizes the result of these blessings and introduces the next three verses. Security has both economic and political dimensions.

The theme of verses 6 through 8 is safety from violence, though the opening promise of **שָׁלוֹם**, 'peace' is a wholeness that looks back to prosperity and far beyond military security. Yet the freedom to sleep without fear of violence is a profound blessing best appreciated by those who have not had it. **חֶרֶב**, 'sword' is used three times in these verses, as often in BH, as an emblem

<sup>64</sup> **נָתַן**, 'give' is also used in the opening and closing verses of the chapter. It is, of course, a common word in BH. Yet it is given thematic and structural prominence in Lev 26, serving an integrating role in the discourse.

of warfare and battle. The promises are, again, conventional in the ANE environment and their impact is cumulative, though their order appears inverted chronologically. No invaders could well be the result of chasing off enemies after defeating them in battle. The reiterations of verse 8 emphasize that the victories are wildly improbable, hence clearly Yahweh's gift.

Verse 9 strikingly varies the pattern of נתן, 'give' plus blessings, with four declarations in the form of: I will do it for you (first person singular *we-qatal*, then the second person plural object). The first promises Yahweh's interest and presence (looking forward to the emphasis of vv.11-12). The next three are *hiphils*, with causative force. פרה, 'be fruitful' and רבה, 'be many' are basic blessings (with strong intertextual links starting at Gen 1). This list culminates with ברית, 'covenant.' Yahweh will make it stand for them. The implication of both the term and the context is that the ברית-relationship is being confirmed, not inaugurated.<sup>65</sup> As in five other places in this chapter, ברית, 'covenant' is used with the first person possessive pronoun. Yahweh reiterates "it is mine," something highly personal and relational. This usage is typical in BH and appropriate to a superior or initiating covenant partner.<sup>66</sup>

The following verse (v. 10) picks up the theme of abundance again, with chiasmic structure and condensed language that encourages a periphrastic translation. The thematic *inclusio* with verses 4 and 5 rhetorically separates the following 'I will give' section (vv. 11-12) from the preceding ones, with climactic effect. (Fox describes v. 10 as a "dramatic pause," 1996:77.)

The final set of blessings, in verses 11 and 12, puts the focus explicitly on Yahweh's relationship with and presence among his people. His גושן, 'dwelling' among them provides a strong link with the preceding and following books of the Pentateuch.<sup>67</sup> Put negatively, such closeness means he will not געל, 'loathe' them. The vehement term is used four more times in this chapter (and only here in the whole Pentateuch), in counterpoint to the emphasis in verse 11. The next promise makes it clear that the relationship is not defined simply by holy geography. It is not that Israel is close to Yahweh because they are at some particular place of

<sup>65</sup> This is Milgrom's argument (2001:2343-2346). One possible exception is the use the *hiphil* of קם, 'stand' in Gen 6:18 and 9:11. There the use may imply that there was an earlier ברית, 'covenant' in Genesis, at creation. On the other hand see Williamson 2003:143.

<sup>66</sup> ברית, 'covenant' is used 289 times in BH, 52 times with the first person possessive suffix.

<sup>67</sup> The term is used 57 times in Exodus, 4 times in Leviticus, 41 times in Numbers, and not at all in Genesis and Deuteronomy.

his presence (such as a famous holy mountain). Rather, he will be on the move among them.<sup>68</sup> The climax and conclusion of blessing is the formula of covenant relationship which ends verse 12 and which resonates throughout the Bible: I will be God to you and you will be my people (note the prominent fronted pronoun in the final clause, ואתם, 'and you'; cf. Fox 1996:77).

The following verse (v. 13) concludes this second major section of the chapter (vv. 3-13), standing outside its *if/then* structure, beginning with a clause that has neither verb nor introductory conjunction (one of only three asyndetic clauses in the chapter, vv. 35, 45; cf. Fox 1996:77). Yahweh not only declares himself, echoing the conclusion of verse 12 and using the יהוה אנני, 'I am Yahweh' formula. He also adds an אשר clause describing himself in standardized language as the savior from Egypt.<sup>69</sup> He expands upon the great rescue with rhetorical flourish in three clauses: they were slaves, treated like cattle, but he smashed their oppression and set them walking free. Yahweh's identity as Israel's God, the rightness of his claims upon them and the reliability of his promises are grounded in their experience, in a fact of common knowledge.

#### 2.2.3.3 Section 3: Negatives, Leviticus 26:14-45

14 וְאִם-לֹא תִשְׁמְעוּ לִי  
וְלֹא תַעֲשׂוּ אֶת כָּל-הַמִּצְוֹת הָאֵלֶּה  
15 וְאִם-בַּחֲקֹתַי תִּמְאָסוּ  
וְאִם אֶת-מִשְׁפָּטַי תִּגְעַל נַפְשְׁכֶם  
לְבַלְתִּי עֲשׂוֹת אֶת-כָּל-מִצְוֹתַי  
לְהַפְרֹכֶם אֶת-בְּרִיתִי  
16 אֲף-אֲנִי אַעֲשֶׂה-זֹאת לָכֶם  
וְהִפְקַדְתִּי עָלֵיכֶם בְּהִלָּה אֶת-הַשְׁחָפֶת וְאֶת-הַקְּדַחַת  
מְכַלּוֹת עֵינַיִם וּמְדִיבַת נֶפֶשׁ  
וְזִרְעָתָם לְדִיק וְרַעְעָם וְאָכְלָהוּ אִיבֵיכֶם  
17 וְנָתַתִּי פָנַי בְּכֶם וְנִגְפַתֶם לְפָנַי אִיבֵיכֶם  
וְרָדוּ בְכֶם שְׁנֵאֵיכֶם וְנִסְתָּם וְאִין-לְדַךְ אֶתְכֶם  
18 וְאִם-עַד-אֵלֶּה לֹא תִשְׁמְעוּ לִי  
וְיִסְפַּתִּי לְיִסְרָה אֶתְכֶם שְׁבַע עַל-חַטֹּאתֵיכֶם  
19 וְשִׁבַּרְתִּי אֶת-גְּאוֹן עַזְכֶם

<sup>68</sup> The *hitpael* of דָּלַךְ, 'walk' is also used in Gen 3:8, adding to the Edenic overtones of these verses in Lev 26 (cf. Milgrom 2001:2301).

<sup>69</sup> This basic form, יהוה אשר אנני, is found in Gen 15:7, Exod 29:46, Lev 19:36 and 25:38 and Num 15:41, in each case followed by the *hiphil* of יָצָא, 'go out.' Except in Genesis, the references are all to Israel's rescue from Egypt.

וַנִּתְּתִי אֶת־שְׁמֵיכֶם כַּבְּרוֹזַל וְאֶת־אֲרָצְכֶם כַּנְּחֹשֶׁה  
20 וְתִם לְרִיק כַּחֲכֶם  
וְלֹא־תִתֶּן אֲרָצְכֶם אֶת־יְבוּלָהּ  
וְעַץ הָאָרֶץ לֹא יִתֵּן פְּרִיּוֹ

21 וְאִם־תֵּלְכוּ עִמִּי קָרִי  
וְלֹא תֵאָבוּ לְשֹׁמֵעַ לִי

וְיִסְפְּתִי עֲלֵיכֶם מִכָּה שֶׁבַע כַּחֲטֹאתֵיכֶם  
22 וְהִשְׁלַחְתִּי בְכֶם אֶת־תִּית הַשָּׂדֶה  
וְשִׁפְלָה אֶתְכֶם  
וְהִכְרִיתָה אֶת־בְּהֵמֹתֵכֶם  
וְהִמְעִיטָה אֶתְכֶם  
וְנִשְׁמוּ דְרָכֵיכֶם

23 וְאִם־בְּאֵלֶּה לֹא תִנְסְרוּ לִי  
וְהִלַּכְתֶּם עִמִּי קָרִי

24 וְהִלַּכְתִּי אַךְ־אֲנִי עִמָּכֶם בְּקָרִי  
וְהִכִּיתִי אֶתְכֶם גַּם־אֲנִי שֶׁבַע עַל־חֲטֹאתֵיכֶם  
25 וְהִבֵּאתִי עֲלֵיכֶם חֶרֶב נִקְמַת נִקְמַת־בְּרִית  
וְנִאֲסַפְתֶּם אֶל־עָרֵיכֶם  
וְשִׁלַּחְתִּי דָבָר בְּתוֹכְכֶם  
וְנִתְּתֶם בְּיַד־אֹיֵב

26 בְּשִׁבְרֵי לֶכֶם מִטַּה־לֶּחֶם  
וְאָפוּ עֶשֶׂר נָשִׁים לַחֲמֹכֶם בְּחֲנוּר אֶחָד  
וְהִשִּׁיבוּ לַחֲמֹכֶם בְּמִשְׁקַל  
וְאָכְלֹתֶם וְלֹא תִשְׁבְּעוּ

27 וְאִם־בְּזֹאת לֹא תִשְׁמְעוּ לִי  
וְהִלַּכְתֶּם עִמִּי בְּקָרִי

28 וְהִלַּכְתִּי עִמָּכֶם בְּחַמַּת־קָרִי  
וְיִסְרַתִּי אֶתְכֶם אַךְ־אֲנִי שֶׁבַע עַל־חֲטֹאתֵיכֶם

29 וְאָכְלֹתֶם בָּשָׂר בְּנִי־כֶם  
וּבָשָׂר בְּנִתֵיכֶם תֹּאכְלוּ

30 וְהִשְׁמַדְתִּי אֶת־בְּמֹתֵיכֶם  
וְהִכְרַתִּי אֶת־חַמְנֵיכֶם

וְנִתְּתִי אֶת־פְּגָרֵיכֶם עַל־פְּגָרֵי גֵלוּלֵיכֶם  
וְנָעְלָה נַפְשֵׁי אֶתְכֶם

31 וְנִתְּתִי אֶת־עָרֵיכֶם חֶרֶבָה  
וְהִשְׁמוּתִי אֶת־מְקוֹדְשֵׁיכֶם  
וְלֹא אֲרִיחַ בְּרִיחַ גִּיחְחֲכֶם



- 32 וְהִשְׁמַתִּי אֹנִי אֶת־הָאָרֶץ  
 וְשָׁמְמוּ עָלֶיהָ אִיבֵיכֶם הַיְשָׁבִים בָּהּ
- 33 וְאַתְּכֶם אֲזַרְהָ בַגּוֹיִם  
 וְהִרִיקְתִּי אַחֲרֵיכֶם חֶרֶב  
 וְהִיְתָה אֶרְצְכֶם שְׁמָמָה  
 וְעָרֵיכֶם יִהְיוּ חֲרָבָה
- 34 אִזּוּ תִרְצָה הָאָרֶץ אֶת־שַׁבְּתוֹתֶיהָ כֹּל יְמֵי הַשְּׁמָמָה  
 וְאַתֶּם בְּאֶרֶץ אִיבֵיכֶם  
 אִזּוּ תִשָּׁבֵת הָאָרֶץ וְהִרְצַת אֶת־שַׁבְּתוֹתֶיהָ
- 35 כֹּל־יְמֵי הַשְּׁמָמָה תִּשָּׁבֵת אֶת אֲשֶׁר לֹא־שָׁבַתָּהּ  
 בְּשַׁבְּתוֹתֶיכֶם בְּשַׁבְּתוֹתְכֶם עָלֶיהָ
- 36 וְהַנְּשֹׂאָרִים בְּכֶם וְהַבָּאֵתִי מִרְדֵּךְ בְּלִבְכֶם בְּאַרְצֹת אִיבֵיהֶם  
 וְרַדְדָה אֹתָם קוֹל עֲלֵה נְדָף־  
 וְנָסוּ מִנִּסְת־חֶרֶב  
 וְנִפְּלוּ וְאִין רֹדֵף
- 37 וְכָשְׁלוּ אִישׁ־בְּאֹחִיו כַּמִּפְּנֵי־חֶרֶב  
 וְרַדְדָה אִין  
 וְלֹא־תִהְיֶה לְכֶם תְּקוּמָה לִפְנֵי אִיבֵיכֶם
- 38 וְאַבְרַתֶּם בַּגּוֹיִם  
 וְאַכְלָה אֶתְכֶם אֶרֶץ אִיבֵיכֶם
- 39 וְהַנְּשֹׂאָרִים בְּכֶם יִמְקוּ בַעֲוֹנֹם בְּאַרְצֹת אִיבֵיכֶם  
 וְאֵף בַּעֲוֹנֹת אַבְתֶּם אֹתָם יִמְקוּ
- 40 וְהִתְנַדְּדוּ אֶת־עוֹנֵם וְאֶת־עוֹן אַבְתֶּם  
 בְּמַעַלְם אֲשֶׁר מְעַלּוּ־בִי  
 וְאֵף אֲשֶׁר־הִלְכוּ עִמִּי בְקָרִי
- 41 אֵף־אֲנִי אֵלֶיךָ עַמִּם בְּקָרִי  
 וְהַבָּאֵתִי אֹתָם בְּאֶרֶץ אִיבֵיהֶם  
 או־אִזּוּ יִכְנַע לְכֶם הָעָרֶל  
 וְאִזּוּ יִרְצוּ אֶת־עוֹנֵם
- 42 וְזָכַרְתִּי אֶת־בְּרִיתִי יַעֲקֹב  
 וְאֵף אֶת־בְּרִיתִי יִצְחָק  
 וְאֵף אֶת־בְּרִיתִי אַבְרָהָם אֲזָכֹר  
 וְהָאָרֶץ אֲזָכֹר
- 43 וְהָאָרֶץ תִּעְזֹב מֵהֶם  
 וְתִרְץ אֶת־שַׁבְּתוֹתֶיהָ בְּהִשְׁמָמָה מֵהֶם  
 וְהֵם יִרְצוּ אֶת־עוֹנֵם  
 יַעַן וּבִיַעַן בְּמִשְׁפָּטִי מְאֹסוּ

וְאֶת־חֻקֹּתַי גְּעַלְהָ נַפְשָׁם  
 44 וְאֶרְגֹּם־זֹאת בְּהִיזְתֶּם בְּאֶרֶץ אֲיִבֵיהֶם לֹא־מֵאֲסָתִים  
 וְלֹא־גַעְלֹתִים לְכֻלָּתָם  
 לְהַפֵּר בְּרִיתִי אִתְּם  
 כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיהֶם  
 45 וְזָכַרְתִּי לָהֶם בְּרִית רֵאשִׁנִּים  
 אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִי־אֹתָם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם  
 לְעֵינֵי חַגּוּזִים לְהִיֵּת לָהֶם לְאֱלֹהִים  
 אֲנִי יְהוָה

14 But if you do not listen<sup>70</sup> to me,  
 and do not follow all these commands,

15 if you reject my statutes,  
 and if you are disgusted by my decisions

so that you do not follow all my commands,  
 so that you break my covenant,

16 then I for my part will also be doing this to you:

I will bring on you terror, disease<sup>71</sup> and fever  
 that will exhaust your eyes and shrivel up your life.

You will plant your seeds for nothing—your enemies will eat them.

17 I will turn my face against you  
 and you will be defeated by your enemies.

People who hate you will rule you  
 and you will run away even when no one is chasing you.

18 But if you still do not listen to me after this,

I will continue to discipline you, seven times for your sins.

19 I will break the pride you have in your strength.

I will make your skies like iron and your land like bronze.

20 Your energy will be used up for nothing.

Your land will not produce crops.

In it a tree will not bear fruit.

21 But if you stay hostile to me  
 and are not willing to listen to me,

I will add seven more blows against you, just like your sins.

22 I will send wild animals against you  
 leaving you with no children.

They will get rid of your livestock.

They will shrink your numbers  
 leaving your roads empty.

23 But if after this you will not learn from me,

<sup>70</sup> The semantic field of שָׁמַע covers hearing and obeying.

<sup>71</sup> שָׁחַפַת is used just twice in BH, in Deut 28:22, as well as here, both covenant curse contexts. Despite BDB's suggesting "wasting disease, consumption" (KB: "consumption"), it is not possible to specify the precise nature of the disease (Harrison 1997b, cf. 1997a). It is the immediate context that supplies the idea of progressive degeneration.

and you stay hostile to me

24 then I for my part will be hostile to you.

I myself will hit you seven more times because of your sins.

25 I will bring war against you, exacting what the covenant requires.

You will be huddled into your cities.

I will send plague among you.

You will be handed over to the enemy.

26 When I smash your bread supply,<sup>72</sup>

ten women will bake your bread in one oven

and distribute your bread by weight

but when you eat, you will not have enough.

27 But if you will not listen to me in spite of this,

and you stay hostile to me,

28 then in anger I will be hostile to you.

I will also for my part discipline you seven times more for your sins.

29 You will eat your sons' flesh

and you will eat your daughters' flesh.

30 I will smash your high places.

I will cut down your incense altars.

I will pile your corpses on top of the corpses of your idols.

I will be disgusted with you.

31 I will make your cities ruins

I will make your holy places abandoned.

I will not sniff your pleasing sacrifices.

32 I myself will make your land desolate

so that even your enemies who come to live in it will be appalled.

33 You yourselves I will scatter among alien peoples.

I will get a sword out against you.

Your land will be desolate

and your cities will be in ruins.

34 Then the land will get to enjoy<sup>73</sup> its sabbaths,

the whole time it is abandoned.

While you yourselves are in the land of your enemies,

then the land will rest and enjoy its sabbaths.

35 The whole time it is abandoned it will rest

to make up for the times<sup>74</sup> it did not rest

those sabbaths you were living in it.

36 As for those who are left of you, I will send despair into their hearts

while in the lands of their enemies.

They will run away from the sound of a falling leaf

as if they were fleeing a battle.

They will fall, when no one is chasing them at all.

<sup>72</sup> This is an exceptional translation of *בִּטְּוֶה*, extending its standard meaning because of the context.

<sup>73</sup> The word *רִצְוָה* is used five times in vv. 34, 41, and 43 with two contrasting meanings: the land being satisfied with its sabbaths and with satisfaction being given for guilt. Lexicographic discussion centers on whether there are two distinct BH roots involved or one (Averbeck 1997c:1187). Either way, the author of Lev 26 is playing on the contrast and connection, linking people and land.

<sup>74</sup> The MT is more condensed, *אֵת אֲשֶׁר*.

- 37 They will stumble into each other as if coming from a battle,  
when there is no one chasing them.
- 38 They will perish among alien peoples.  
The land of their enemies will eat them up.
- 39 As for those who are left of you, they will rot in the lands of your enemies  
because of their guilt.  
They will rot because of the guilt of their fathers as well.
- 40 But when they confess their guilt and the guilt of their fathers  
when they betrayed me  
and also when they were hostile to me
- 41 —so for my part I was also hostile to them  
and sent them into the land of their enemies,  
if then they<sup>75</sup> humble their heathen hearts  
and then make amends for their guilt
- 42 then I will remember my covenant with Jacob,  
as well as my covenant with Isaac.  
I will also remember my covenant with Abraham.  
I will remember the land.
- 43 The land will be empty of them.  
It will be satisfied by its sabbaths while it is abandoned by them.  
But they will pay for their guilt  
because they rejected my decisions  
and were disgusted by my statutes.
- 44 In spite of this,<sup>76</sup> I will not reject them when they are in the land of their enemies.  
I will not be disgusted with them and finish them off,  
so breaking my covenant with them,  
for I am Yahweh their God.
- 45 I will remember for them my earlier covenant,  
when I brought them out from the land of Egypt,  
with the heathen peoples watching, in order to be their God.  
I am Yahweh.

The climax of Lev 26 is this long third section, warning of deep hurt in a relationship that strains but will not snap. Five unequal **אִם**, ‘if’ clauses (vv. 14-33) are followed by a final division marked by **אָז**, ‘then’ and **זָכַר**, ‘remember’ (vv. 34-45). Impassioned warning of the danger of stubborn willfulness reaches a limit, then covenant faithfulness overrides final failure.

<sup>75</sup> The MT’s **אִם־אִם** here is a hapax. The Syriac and LXX suggest a more straightforward **אִם־וְ**, perhaps implying the unusual (and awkward) MT expression is original. Milgrom (2000:2332) and Hartley (1992:455) both, correctly, see this phrase and the following as still part of the protasis, with the apodosis beginning in the following verse. The Syriac and LXX reading would imply that the apodosis begins here. Hartley defends the English translation ‘if, perchance’—archaic-sounding, but appropriate (cf. BDB, Fox 1996:82).

<sup>76</sup> The MT’s **אִם־גַּם־זָכַרְתִּי** is another hapax phrase, taken as synonymous with the **זָכַרְתִּי** of v. 27 (cf. Milgrom 2001:2337; Hartley 1992:456).

The first and the last of the **אם**, ‘if’ clauses stand out from the others and are given rhetorical weight (in vv. 14-15 by a triple use of **אם**, in vv. 27-33 by an extended list of consequences). The alternative to a blessed life as Yahweh’s obeying people comes with the break in verses 14 and 15, where **אם**, ‘if’ is repeated three times and disobedience is described six different ways. Both acts and attitudes are covered: actually failing to do what is commanded as well as rejecting or being disgusted by the requirements that are Yahweh’s (the parade of possessives continues). The sixth phrase is culminating, another explicit and climactic use of **בִּירַת**, ‘covenant’: this kind of behavior breaks covenant. Covenant is the context for obedience. After this drawn out “if you really mean it,” the consequences actually start in verse 16. The longest of five lists of consequences is the last one, fifteen clauses (vv. 29-33), two to three times as long as the others. This pattern break both signals a thematic change and by its sheer length conveys the overwhelming crush of curse.

It is clear in verse 16 (as well as later) that the punishments are Yahweh’s response to his people’s rebellion. The phrase **אֲנִי־אֵנִי**, ‘I, for my part’ is fronted, highlighting his role and the way it corresponds to the people’s role. Throughout, first-person singular verbs are prominent, used in more than half of the curses in the chapter. The categories of doom are those that will be revisited: disease, agricultural futility and defeat by enemies. In verse 17 there is also the judicial language of Yahweh personally executing sentence (elsewhere in the book used in parallel with someone being “cut off from his people”<sup>77</sup>) by removing his presence. The theme, though not the vocabulary, connects and contrasts with the promise of presence in verses 10 and 11.

The next **אם**, ‘if’ clause, in verse 18, adds **עַד־אֵלֶּה**, ‘in spite of this,’ making clear, though implicit, a call to repentance.<sup>78</sup> The punishments are designed to make people listen to and obey Yahweh. He responds to sin, seeking to **יָסַר**, ‘instruct.’ He does it seven times. The phrase **הַטָּאת+שֶׁבַע+יָסַר**, ‘add’+‘seven [times]’+‘sin’ is part of the introductory formula for each of the four **אם**, ‘if’ clauses after the first (vv. 18, 21, 24, and 28). It is not followed by lists of seven specific punishments. It does convey Yahweh’s persistent attempts to bring Israel back. It makes a strong link with the sabbath-theme and its patterns of sevens, so prominent in this

<sup>77</sup> The phrase **בָּ+פָּנָה+נָתַן**, ‘give’+‘face’+‘in, to’ appears only in Leviticus and Ezekiel: Lev 17:10, 20:3, 6, Ezek 14:8, 15:7.

<sup>78</sup> The phrase **עַד־אֵלֶּה** is a hapax in BH. It could literally be rendered ‘up to this’. Hartley (1992:452) translates ‘in spite of this;’ Milgrom (2001:2307) proposes, ‘for all of that.’ In context it functions very like **בְּאֵלֶּה** in v. 23 and **בְּיָאֵת** in v. 27.

chapter, the preceding one and the broader Sinai and creation narratives.<sup>79</sup> It thereby implies completeness: judgment reaches its full limit, then there is a break. The patterned, prominent references to the general term **חַטָּאת**, ‘sin’<sup>80</sup> make it clear that not listening to Yahweh, which amounts to the same thing as not obeying him, is a moral offense. The grim punishments that follow are not vindictive outbursts nor some impersonal grinding of the wheels of cause and effect: they are the interventions of one committed to the relationship and its restoration. Yahweh sets the terms, of course.

The five punishments in verses 19 and 20 reverse the agricultural abundance promised in verse 4, echoing the language but taking about twice the space. Yahweh will also target **עֹזְכֶם**, ‘your strength’ and **כֹּחֶכֶם**, ‘your energy.’ These general terms include agricultural production, but focus particularly on an attitude of self-sufficiency that could keep Yahweh’s people from dependence and obedience. Note Yahweh will smash **נִאֲוֶן עֹזְכֶם**, ‘pride in your strength.’<sup>81</sup>

The third **אם**, ‘if’ clause, in verse 21, varies its reference to **שָׁמַע**, ‘hear, obey’ from the pattern, adding **אִבָּה**, ‘choose, will.’ Israel’s misbehavior is willful. This implies both full responsibility and the possibility of repentance, of choosing a different pattern. Also, this verse introduces another of the distinctive phrases that tie this chapter together and highlight its theme: **הֵלֵךְ + עַם + pronoun suffix + [ב] + קָרִי**, ‘walk’ + ‘with’ + pronoun suffix + [‘in’] + ‘hostility.’ The phrase is used again six times in Leviticus 26, in three pairs (in vv. 23 and 24, 27 and 28, 40 and 41). The noun **קָרִי**, ‘hostility’ is not used again in all BH. The metaphorical use of **הֵלֵךְ**, ‘walk’ implies a pattern of conduct, not a single incident (and a sharp, ironic contrast with the **הֵלֵךְ**, ‘walk’ promised in the first part of the chapter, v. 12; cf. Fox 1996:79). The preposition and pronoun suffix make it explicitly relational. The pairs that come later in the chapter balance Yahweh’s harsh response with harsh provocation. Yahweh’s actions fit in the relationship.

The five punishments promised in verse 22 reverse the promise of verse 6: Yahweh is sending rather than removing wild animals. As is typical throughout the chapter, the negative is given more detail than the positive and the impact is cumulative. Children and livestock are killed, population decreases, and roads are deserted as survivors avoid places between settled areas.

<sup>79</sup> It also sets up a pattern that will structure the book of Revelation (Beale 1999:373, 535, 803).

<sup>80</sup> For a discussion of **חַטָּאת**, ‘sin,’ its semantic field and its synonyms see Luc (1997:87-89).

<sup>81</sup> The phrase is used just six times in BH, the five other times in Ezekiel: 7:24, 24:21, 30:6, 30:18, 33:28.

The fourth **אם**, ‘if’ clause, in verse 23, both repeats the structuring pattern of this section of the chapter and varies it to emphasize the element of appeal. There is no direct reference to obedience. Instead the verb **יסר**, ‘instruct’ is used in the *niphal* and followed by **לי**, ‘by me.’ The terrible consequences are for those who (still) will not be taught by Yahweh. Discipline is implied.<sup>82</sup> The goal of the punishments is to change the way those who belong to Yahweh relate to him, to stop antagonism leading to antagonism. Yahweh himself is the one to deal the blows (cf. **נכה**, ‘smite’), to administer the spanking.

The cluster of consequences in verses 25 and 26 relate to war, when people take refuge in fortified cities, become vulnerable to disease, and under siege, begin to starve. Verse 26 is a vivid vignette of scarcity beginning to grip the staple, **לחם**, ‘bread.’ The warfare (**חרב**, ‘sword’ used in metonymy) Yahweh brings is specifically to enforce covenant. The key root is **נקם**, ‘avenge.’ Most connotations of the English *avenge* mislead. “The idea of legitimacy and competent authority is inherent in the root **נקם**” (Peels 1997:154). It is just in the context of the relationship; a “discipline to restoration” (Peels 1995:109, cf. 103-109). Though Lev 26:25 is the only verse in BH to explicitly link **נקם**, ‘avenge’ and **ברית**, ‘covenant,’ conceptually the two are close. Covenant relationship includes specific legal sanctions for covenant-breaking and these are enforced in order to continue the relationship.

The fifth and final **אם**, ‘if’ clause, in verses 27 and 28, reiterates themes and expressions from its predecessors: For his part, Yahweh himself (**אני-אני**) acts to instruct (**יסר**), treating his people with a hostility (**קר**) that matches theirs, when in spite of what has already happened (**בזאת**), they will still not listen and obey (**שמע**). But the emotional intensity is greater: in verse 28 there is the first reference in the chapter to Yahweh’s **חמה**, ‘anger.’

The intensity is reflected in the longer, climactic list of promised punishments that follows. These pick up where verse 26 left off. The neat, redundant chiasm of verse 29 underlines the ultimate horror of starvation under siege: cannibalism of one’s own children. In verse 30, the focus shifts to Yahweh’s horror of alternate worship in various manifestations. Prohibited in verse 1, there has been no mention of such worship since, though ignoring Yahweh implies it.

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<sup>82</sup> Note Merrill’s comment: “There is a fine line between coercive instruction (discipline) and correction or even punishment, and the OT use of **יסר** reflects this ambivalence in numerous places” (1997:480).

The *במות*, ‘high places’ and the *תזמנים*, ‘incense altars’<sup>83</sup> to be destroyed are both plural and “yours.” Yahweh does not recognize them. The promise that your corpses will be piled on idols’ ‘corpses,’ piles desecration on insult (cf. Ezek 6:5). It is no wonder that the concluding clause is of stomach-turning disgust. In verse 31, Yahweh continues to destroy his people’s religious symbols. The terms used, *מקדש*, ‘sanctuary’ and *ריח ניחוח*, ‘soothing aroma,’ have both had very positive connotations throughout Leviticus (and in this chapter, v. 2!).<sup>84</sup> They are characteristic of worship instituted by Yahweh. Here, they have the second person plural suffix that is so often pejorative in this chapter. The implication is that Yahweh will reject even formally approved religion when the relationship is not right. With the connotation of destruction, *הרבה*, ‘ruin,’ frames verses 31-33,<sup>85</sup> a minor *inclusio* that, along with other repetitions, helps signal the end of the list of promised punishments. *שמים*, ‘be desolate’ with its cognate noun *שממה*, ‘desolation’ is used three times, and *ארץ*, ‘land’ twice in two verses. The culmination of the punishments comes in verses 32 and 33. After invasion and siege, after the destruction of cities and holy places, the land itself is lost, left in desolation. *ואתכם*, ‘But you’ (note the fronted directed object), Yahweh scatters in exile, chasing off his people with his sword in hand.

The concluding portion of the long third section of Leviticus 26 is marked by *אז*, ‘then’ (twice each in vv. 34 and 41) and *זכר*, ‘remember’ (three times in v. 42 and again in v. 45). These correspond thematically to two parts: one (vv. 34-41) setting limits to punishment and the next (vv. 42-45) looking beyond punishment.

Within the first of these parts, the *inclusio* of *אז*, ‘then’ repeated twice at the beginning and twice at the end also marks a thematic sub-division.<sup>86</sup> Broadly, two limits are given to the ultimate punishment of landlessness, one from the point of view of the land itself (vv. 34-35)

<sup>83</sup> This is the only use of the term in the Torah. Other references, all negative, are in Isaiah, Ezekiel, or 2 Chronicles. It could be a general term for the sanctuary of a foreign deity (Averbeck 1997b:903).

<sup>84</sup> *ריח ניחוח*, ‘soothing aroma’ is used 16 other times in Leviticus always positively, usually with *לַיהוָה*, ‘to Yahweh’ attached.

<sup>85</sup> These verses are the only places in the Pentateuch where the term is used with this meaning. However, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel use it thus over 30 times.

<sup>86</sup> Note Fox’s observation that *אז*, ‘then’ is a particle characteristic of “juridical discourse,” often part of “the conclusion or result of a discourse portion” (1996:80).



and one from the point of view of the people (vv. 36-41).<sup>87</sup> For the land, the issue is *שבת*, ‘rest, sabbath’ (used three times as a verb and three as a noun in vv. 34 and 35,<sup>88</sup> also in vv. 2, 6, and 43). Those who are given the land do not give it the rest periods prescribed in the previous chapter that acknowledge it as a gift from Yahweh. Therefore, the land will get its due without them, while they are off in the land of their enemies. And they will stay there until this is done. For the people, the issue is *עון* (used five times in verses 39-41). It must be confessed and paid for. Hearts must be humbled, instead of treating Yahweh with rebellion (*בזעל*) and hostility (*קרי*—again!). These two basic limits to punishment do not permit time calculations. They serve rhetorically to argue that even the ultimate punishment promised has its point and is not the end of the relationship.

But even while setting these limits, the horror of exile is made plain. It is ongoing punishment, not itself an end to suffering. Verses 36-39 are framed by references to *הנשארים בכם*, ‘those who remain of you,’ which signal a shift in these verses, and on to verse 45, from the direct second person plural address which dominates the chapter to mostly third person plural (cf. Fox 1996:81-82). The distancing language suits the remoteness in time and place of exile. There, survivors are so traumatized that they panic and trample each other over nothing. All resistance broken, elimination follows. Only immediate context tempers the doom of verse 38: to *אבר*, ‘perish’ away from home and have your enemies’ land personified to *אכל*, ‘consume’ you, to eat you up. The reprieve for a few in verse 39 is in order to *בזקק*, ‘rot.’ Verses 39 and 40 repeat a double reference to *עון*, ‘guilt’<sup>89</sup> and help mark a transition to the final section of the speech. Twice, *עון* is both ‘their’s,’ that of the distant generation in exile, and ‘their ancestors’, ‘fathers’,’ including the earlier generation to whom the chapter is addressed. In perspective is a sweep of time across generations. In verse 39 the *עון*, ‘guilt’ is the reason for rotting, but in verse 40 it is the content of confession. In verses 41 and 43 *עון* is used with *רצה*, ‘pay for.’ Guilt is not overlooked, but dealt with.

<sup>87</sup> These two themes also correspond to two distinct uses of *רצה* (as noted above), which is either a single root used in two contrasting senses, or two homonymous roots, brought together in wordplay. *רצה* in v. 34 refers to the land enjoying its deserved rest. In v. 41 the guilty must pay or make amends. Both uses are juxtaposed in v. 43.

<sup>88</sup> The infinitive construct of *ישב*, ‘dwell’ sounds similar and almost makes a very sabbatical seventh use.

<sup>89</sup> The lexical field of *עון* includes both that which incurs guilt, or iniquity, and the guilt which results.

The concluding verses of this speech, verses 42-45, are dominated by זָכַר, 'remember' and בְּרִית, 'covenant.' It is not simply that the word for remember is used. The patriarchs Jacob, Isaac and Abraham<sup>90</sup> are mentioned as is removal from Egypt. It is also not simply the word for covenant, repeated again and again. The covenantal requirements (מוֹשְׁפָטִי, 'my decisions' and חֻקֹּתַי, 'my statutes') stand in verse 43. The covenant formula in verse 45 echoes verse 12: לֵהִי־לָהֶם לֵאלֹהִים, 'in order to be God for them.' Both the reasons for and limits to punishment are repeated in verse 43, the land and its sabbaths and the people's guilt. Rhetorically, it is as if the promises to remember בְּרִיתִי, 'my covenant' were letting the pressure off in verse 42, though Yahweh makes no specific commitment to act beyond remembering. Offense and punishment are again the topic in verse 43. Doom is deserved.

Then the climactic break comes in verse 44. Symmetry no longer rules. The people may מֵאִם, 'reject' what Yahweh requires, but he will לֹא־מֵאֲסִתִּים, 'not reject them.' They had been disgusted (גַּעַל) with his statutes, but he will לֹא־גַעַל־תִּים, 'not be disgusted with them.' The break in symmetry is followed by two purpose clauses introduced by the preposition לְ: so as to neither finish them off (כִּלְהָ) nor פָּרַר, 'annul, break' his covenant with them. This is of course a further break in the symmetry of the relationship because הִפַּר אֶת־בְּרִיתִי, 'break my covenant' is precisely what they had done back in verse 15 at the beginning of this long section of miseries. The declaration of what Yahweh will not do is explained by his self-declaration and supported by his covenant faithfulness. He will remember his commitment to the רִאשֹׁנִים, 'ancestors' of those in exile, to those he publicly rescued from Egypt.<sup>91</sup> Though this commitment of Yahweh's looks beyond exile, its content actually looks back to former times of commitment. In a chapter quite full of specific future consequences, there are no consequences now specified. Simply, the relationship will continue. After all, אֲנִי יְהוָה, 'I am Yahweh.' To have me is enough.

#### 2.2.3.4 Section 4: Narrator's conclusion, Leviticus 26:46

46 אֵלֶּה הַחֻקִּים וְהַמִּשְׁפָּטִים וְהַתּוֹרָה  
אֲשֶׁר נָתַן יְהוָה בֵּינוֹ וּבֵין בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל  
בְּהַר סִינַי בְּיַד־מֹשֶׁה

<sup>90</sup> The 'reverse' order of names, unique in the Old Testament, shows it is possible to refer to tradition without being merely formulaic.

<sup>91</sup> The term could also include the patriarchs (Milgrom 2001:2339).

46 These are the statutes, decisions and instructions  
which Yahweh placed between himself and the Israelites  
at Mount Sinai through Moses.

As noted above, this brief narrator's note ties chapter 26 to wider literary and narrative contexts. Apart from three other brief narrator's comments setting the scene (Lev 7:38, 25:1 and 27:34<sup>92</sup>) a reader of Leviticus might forget that the whole book, along with the last half of Exodus and the first chunk of Numbers, is set at the great covenant-confirming encounter with God at Sinai, between rescue from Egypt and the approach to Canaan. These structural links are given more attention below when discussion shifts to the cotext of Leviticus 26.

The list of three general terms for covenant requirements is a standard rhetorical device emphasizing the comprehensiveness of what Yahweh demands. But the vocabulary also carefully ties Leviticus together, underlining the role of this chapter as a concluding appeal for living in covenant relationship. This is the only time in the book that *הַקִּיּוֹם*, 'statutes,' *בְּמִשְׁפָּטִים*, 'decisions' and *תְּוֵרוֹת*, 'instructions' are used together. It is the only time for each term to appear in the plural (with the exception of *הַקִּיּוֹם*, 'statutes' in Lev 10:11). In the singular, *חֻק*, 'statute' is used in chapters 6-10 and chapter 24. *בְּמִשְׁפָּט*, 'decision, judgment' is used in chapters 5 and 6, but is concentrated in the second major division of Leviticus, in chapters 18-26. By contrast, the phrase *זֹאת תְּוֵרָתוֹ*, 'this is the instruction about' is a major structural marker in the first division of the book, in chapters 6 through 15.

Interestingly, 26:46 also includes the only use of the *בֵּין...בֵּין*, 'between...between' formula in Leviticus where it describes a relationship between persons. Elsewhere in the Pentateuch the phrase is particularly prominent in covenant-making contexts in Gen 9, 17, and 31. It is also used twice in Exod 31, describing the role of the Sabbath as a sign of the people's relationship with Yahweh. It is strikingly relational here. Yahweh's statutes, decisions, and instructions are not simply given. They stand between him and Israel, connecting the two.

### 2.3 Leviticus 26 and its cotext

Connections between the focus text for this study and a widening circle of texts around it, its cotext, have already intruded into the discussion above. But now they will be given due attention. Leviticus 26 is rich in intertextual connections both with its immediate literary

<sup>92</sup> Note the cluster towards the end of the book.

contexts and with themes that stretch through the Old Testament and into the New. Consistently, these are covenantal.

### 2.3.1 *Literary context*

Leviticus 26 acts as a conclusion and rhetorical climax for four widening circles of text. It is the second and final part of the divine speech started in Leviticus 25. It is the climax of the section running from chapter 17 (or 18), often called the ‘holiness code.’ Apart from the next chapter, it concludes the book of Leviticus. And it completes the covenant-making encounter with Yahweh at Sinai that starts in Exodus 19.

#### 2.3.1.1 *Leviticus 25*

The book of Leviticus presents itself as a series of speeches by Yahweh to his people through Moses while they are gathered at Sinai. Leviticus 26 is in fact the second part of the second to last speech in the book, which begins in chapter 25, marked by a speech introduction formula (25:1), and concludes in 26:46 with the narrator’s comment just seen.

The two chapters are united by the interrelated themes and vocabulary of sabbath and exodus.<sup>93</sup> Key terms are *שבע*, ‘seven,’ used four times in each chapter, and *שבת*, ‘sabbath’ used seven times in Lev 25 and nine times in Lev 26. In chapter 25, this is a principle much larger than one day of rest in seven. The weekly pattern is extrapolated to shape economic life in the land (*ארץ*, ‘land’ is used 20 times; 23 times in Lev 26) and prevent over generations the formation of a land-deprived or debt-bound underclass. (This sabbatical conjunction of time and space has worldview implications which will be given attention in the next chapter of the present work.) The sabbath-pattern is one of the basic commands reviewed at the beginning of chapter 26 and a fitting shape for the punishments Yahweh threatens. Neglect of it is a reason for exile later. The sabbatical theme is undergirded by the declaration *אני יהוה אלהיכם*, ‘I am Yahweh your God’ (vv. 25:17, 38 and 55), which is both structural and thematic (not only in these two chapters but also in Lev 11 and often in Lev 18-26). Twice the phrase is linked with being brought out of Egypt (vv. 25:38, 55), once (v. 38) also with the statement that the purpose of rescue is covenant relationship, *להיות לכם לאלהים*, ‘to be God for you.’ The exodus from Egypt is also mentioned in 25:42. It is basic to Yahweh’s credibility in the relationship, and the liberating pattern for his liberating requirements. Thus, though *ברית*, ‘covenant’ is not once mentioned in chapter 25, it is covenant-shaped concepts that link it to the next chapter.

There are other links between these two chapters. The theme that obedience to Yahweh's commands brings prosperity and security in the land is introduced in chapter 25. בטח, 'security, trust' is in Leviticus 25:18 and 19 as well as 26:5, and nowhere else in the book. The chapters play on two key terms that sound alike in BH, but differ sharply in meaning: גאל, 'redeem' prominent in chapter 25 and געל, 'loathe,' uniquely in chapter 26 (cf. Warning 1999:100-101).

Though intimately linked,<sup>94</sup> chapters 25 and 26 are also clearly distinct. The former exhorts obedience and motivates it, but the dominant tone is didactic, explaining specific requirements Yahweh has for his people. Leviticus 26 assumes the didactic work is done and concentrates on motivation within the context of covenant relationship.

### 2.3.1.2 *Leviticus 17<sup>95</sup>-26*

These chapters form a distinct unit within Leviticus, marked by style and content, whether or not one accepts source critical convention and identifies them as a Holiness Code. Most characteristic is the phrase אֲנִי יְהוָה, 'I am Yahweh,' used fifty times in chapters 18-26. Milgrom identifies other, less decisive, markers such as a conspicuous use of chiasms and a pattern of using key words in sevens (2000:1319-1326).<sup>96</sup> In these chapters, the book's central theme of holiness is applied to the whole Israelite community. The first half of the book (chs. 1-16) is devoted to the dangerous presence of a holy God among his people, and the rituals and sacrifices that allow this presence to continue. Its divine speeches are addressed to Moses or Aaron. But beginning in Leviticus 17:2 Yahweh instructs Moses to also address כל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, 'all the Israelites' (it is the כל, 'all' that is distinctive; cf. also 19:2, 21:24, 22:18). The commands tend to focus on proper conduct and relationship in the community, demonstrations of holy relationship with Yahweh. The rhetoric includes more to motivate hearers to obey, such as regular references to the rescue from Egypt (in 18:3; 19:34, 36; 22:33; 23:43 as well as the instances already mentioned in chs. 25 and 26).

<sup>93</sup> Meyer (2004:137, 149-150) defends in detail a tight linking of Lev 25 with Lev 26.

<sup>94</sup> Contrast, however, Noth (1965:193).

<sup>95</sup> It is best to see Lev 17 as a hinge chapter, with deliberate affinities to what precedes and follows, though it simplifies the outline to include it with what follows. See Milgrom (2000:1332) and contrast Wenham (1979:7), who sees a stronger link to what precedes. This does undercut views of H material as independent from the rest of Leviticus.

<sup>96</sup> Hartley lists other stylistic markers that have been suggested (1992:247-251). Milgrom includes Lev 27 in his 'Holiness Source' (2000:1333).

However, it could be argued that, apart from chapter 26, this section of Leviticus has little to say about covenant. A preliminary answer is that Leviticus 26 is not to be read apart from the rest. It is marked by the same stylistic clues prominent in the other chapters of the section. As it is covenantal, so must they be. A more substantive answer is provided by Joosten. He argues (1995; 1996), in effect, that failure to see covenant concepts in Leviticus derives from too narrow an understanding of covenants. Instead of the suzerain-vassal relationship, he proposes that another covenantal ANE cultural pattern is involved: “The underlying idea is not one of political dependence, but of sacral correlation” (1996:116). The people of Israel are conceived as sanctuary slaves on a god’s property clustered around his holy place (1996:134-136, cf. 1995:394-396).<sup>97</sup> The holiness of their relationship with Yahweh “contains a strong spatial component” (1996:128). Even though Yahweh’s holy presence is not conceived as fixed, but mobile, the principles are the same and control the whole conception. Holiness is profoundly relational. It is because Yahweh himself declares *קדוש אני*, ‘I am holy’ (19:2; 20:26; 21:8) that his people are to demonstrate holiness. Without the prior relationship, without belonging to Yahweh, the whole scheme disintegrates. And it is covenant that structures the relationship.

### 2.3.1.3 *The book of Leviticus*

What is true for its second half is also true for the whole book of Leviticus. The themes of holiness, *אני יהוה*, ‘I am Yahweh’ and exodus from Egypt are not just found in the second half of the book. In Leviticus 11:45, they are together at the thematic heart of the book (which has its echo in 19:2 as well as in the covenant formula of 26:12):

כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה הַמַּעֲלֶה אֶתְכֶם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם לְהִיֵּת לָכֶם לֵאלֹהִים  
וְהִיִּיתֶם קְדוֹשִׁים כִּי קְדוֹשׁ אֲנִי

For I am Yahweh who brought you up from the land of Egypt in order to be your God. Be holy because I am holy.

The canonical text of Leviticus is marked by other unifying features that stretch throughout the book. Warning (1999) has identified many details in style and wording that provide links on both micro and macro levels within Leviticus. Three examples are: the use of *קדוש-קדושים*, ‘holy of holies’ in chs. 2 and 27 providing an *inclusio* for the entire book (Warning 1999:46-48, 169); *מצא*, ‘find’ linking chs. 5 and 25 (1999:144-145); ten uses of *שלח*, ‘send’ linking chs. 14 through 26 (1999:145-146). Though individual examples are not a convincing argument for the

<sup>97</sup> Milgrom (2001:2285) challenges Joosten on this point. It is best to see Joosten as overemphasizing a valid (and neglected) point.

text's unity, their cumulative effect is. Such clues demonstrate an overarching structure for Leviticus that is not linear, but uses chiasm and *inclusio* to great effect. Douglas calls it a ring structure (1996) and is supported by Milgrom (2000:1364-1367). It makes Leviticus 19 (in the second part!) central.

This stylistic and structural unity can also be seen thematically. Rooker outlines Leviticus in a conventional, linear fashion and makes the day of atonement ritual in chapter 16 central (2000:45-46). As he sees it, "the main concern of Leviticus 1-16 is the continuance of the presence of God in the midst of the sinful nation, while Leviticus 17-27 emphasizes the way of living for God" (2000:42). The earlier chapters dwell on tabernacle-centered holiness (1-15) and are followed by those that emphasize community expressions of holiness (17-27; cf. Kiuchi 2003:524-525).

Different emphases are integrated by the common theme of the holy presence of Yahweh. Being a people who are close to Yahweh and belong to him has consequences. Rituals and actions are to reflect the relationship. Joosten's picture of a god's sanctuary slaves clustered around his holy place has already been noted. Joosten limits his discussion to Leviticus 18-26, but the metaphor theme he identifies has broader influence. Earlier in Leviticus, the foundational categories of clean and unclean, holy and profane are organized with respect to the presence of Yahweh localized within his portable sanctuary. This presence is also a major theme and focus of the book of Exodus. As Averbek notes, the presence of God is crucial in priestly theology: "This is the organizing feature that controls and directs its concerns" (1993:13).

The final speech of Leviticus (chapter 27) is influenced by, but does not much influence, the preceding chapter. It reads like an appendix to the book, a supplemental set of regulations, though clearly related to the Levitical theme of קִדְּשׁ, 'to be holy' and the Leviticus 25 theme of גָּאֵל, 'to redeem.' Barrick's suggestion is that Yahweh's vows and promises in Leviticus 26 are "the perfect exemplar for human vows and promises" (1981:11) in Leviticus 27. Its concluding verse (27:34) is a terse echo of Leviticus 26:46. Its language also echoes the first chapter of the book, so it is carefully placed, no accidental end (cf. Milgrom 2000:1333; Warning 1999:46-48).

#### 2.3.1.4 *Covenant at Sinai*

Belonging to a holy Yahweh means covenant relationship, secure and accountable, as the larger context of Leviticus 26 makes clear.

As to narrative, the whole book of Leviticus is set at Mount Sinai, as a development of the covenant-making encounter of Israel with Yahweh that begins in Exodus 19. Only in Numbers does the narrative move on from Sinai. (The actual departure is in Numbers 10, but the earlier chapters are focused on preparations for travel.<sup>98</sup>) In the book of Exodus, Yahweh introduces himself as the one who has made covenant with the patriarchs (Exod 3:6). His intervention flows from his prior commitment. Yet the immediate goal of the narrative is not rescuing people from oppression to give them the ‘promised land.’ The promise to Moses is: “You will worship God on this mountain” (Exod 3:12) and the great march from Egypt is a march to meet with God at the mountain. The purpose of the meeting is to make covenant (Exod 19-24). The legal and ritual material that follows, in the second half of Exodus, into Leviticus and in much of Numbers, can seem like an interruption. If the story has been defined as march to Canaan, this material is an interruption. But if the story is defined as march to covenant, this is not so. These are simply specific obligations that grow out of covenant identity as the people of God, the conduct that befits the relationship (cf. Kiuchi 2003:523).

As to form, the Exodus account by itself is incomplete in terms of the treaty formulae that are a subset of ANE covenantal traditions. Kline (1963, cf. McConville 2002:23-24; Kitchen 2003:283-288) summarizes helpfully the typical forms of covenant treaties, which included: preamble, historical prologue, stipulations, document clause, witnesses, and sanctions, or blessings and curses.<sup>99</sup> Treaty forms like preamble, historical prologue and specific stipulations are reflected in the narrative, as well as a blood ritual of covenant-making commitment (Exod 24).<sup>100</sup> Yet Exodus does not have a blessings and curses section, which treaty convention would lead one to expect. It is not that Exodus or Leviticus are written as actual covenant-treaty text (though they may occasionally cite such text). The genre is narrative, an account of covenant-(re)making, that is structured by treaty conventions (just as the conceptual framework of covenant structures understanding of the Yahweh-Israel relationship). The ‘missing’ section is

<sup>98</sup> The characteristic יהוה 'אנני, ‘I am Yahweh’ phrase is also used six times throughout Numbers.

<sup>99</sup> This present discussion does not depend on precise distinctions between first and second millennium treaty forms.

<sup>100</sup> The precise meaning of the “blood of the covenant” ritual in Exodus 24:8 is disputed. Nicholson (1982:83) argues that it is simply symbolic consecration. More plausible, in covenant-making context, is Kline’s argument (1972:116) that the blood sprinkling is a form of the covenant oath sign. Earlier, Kline also argues that there is a clear document clause in Exodus, specifying two copies, the vassal’s and the suzerain’s (1963:19).



precisely Leviticus 26, putting Leviticus 1-25 squarely within the covenant-treaty form, as additional stipulations of the covenant at Sinai.

In Exodus, the sacral picture of sanctuary slaves around their god's presence, set free to serve him, is explicitly covenantal. It complements the political picture of loyal vassals of an overlord (bearing in mind that a distinction between sacred and political is very much one contemporary readers bring to the text, not something arising from the ancient world). The distinct relationship of Yahweh with Israel is described using images and conceptual structures readily available in the ANE context. These are not slavishly imitated but creatively adapted and combined.

### 2.3.2 *Intertextual themes*

The previous section highlighted covenantal themes in four widening circles of text surrounding Leviticus 26. The present section takes a different approach, picking out the threads of themes arising in Leviticus 26 and noting their path through the Old Testament and into the New. The survey is not exhaustive. It does illustrate how the covenantal themes which are wound into this chapter have a profound structuring and unifying role throughout the rest of Scripture, and go far beyond the use of the term *ברית*, 'covenant.'

#### 2.3.2.1 *Blessing and cursing*

Blessings and curses are built into covenants, as the supernatural sanctions that enforce the commitments the parties make to each other in their relationship (Hillers 1964; cf. Fensham 1962, 1963; McKeown 2003). The form of blessings and curses adapted in Leviticus 26 is echoed in Deuteronomy 28, as part of the conclusion of an account of covenant renewal. Many similarities of language need not imply direct copying of one list from the other. Rather, both have been formed out of a common tradition, using the blessings and curses pattern of ANE covenant-making, and adapting traditional wording of actual blessings and curses, then applying these to the relationship of Yahweh with his people. The near-stereotyped ANE pattern is illustrated by Brinkman's comment about an Assyrian-Babylonian treaty of 821 BC, that "most of the rest of the curses are similar to—and could have been taken *verbatim* from—the epilogue to the Babylonian laws of Hammurabi written some 940 years earlier" (1990:97). The narratives in Joshua 8:30-35 and Joshua 23 illustrate the pattern of covenantal blessings and curses in the relationship with Yahweh.

Links between covenant-making, blessing and cursing are also clear in accounts in Genesis of covenants between Yahweh and Noah (Gen 8:20-9:17) and Yahweh and Abraham (Gen 15 and 17).<sup>101</sup> Though the precise language of blessings and curses is not that of Lev 26 in the Genesis accounts, ארץ, 'land, earth' is prominent in all as the locus of blessing and curse. The link of ארץ, 'land, earth' with God's blessing is also made in Gen 1 (with curse included in Gen 3) where there is no explicit link with covenants, though the strength of the pattern tends to imply one.<sup>102</sup>

In fact, covenantal blessings and curses spread very widely. Stuart (1987:xxxi-xlii) has demonstrated in detail how the language of Leviticus 26 and its counterpart in Deut 28 shapes the discourse of the prophets, providing vocabulary, imagery, themes and thought structure (developing the insight of Kline 1963:34). Stuart summarizes: "Nearly all of the content of the classical (writing) prophets' oracles revolve around the announcement of the near-time fulfillment of covenantal curses and the end-time fulfillment of covenantal restoration blessings" (1989:x). Of his listing of twenty-seven different curse types,<sup>103</sup> no less than nineteen are found in Leviticus 26. The prophetic mission was that of covenant enforcement.<sup>104</sup>

### 2.3.2.2 Patriarchal covenant

Leviticus 26 refers explicitly to two times of covenant-making, or re-making. In verse 42 the reference is to covenant with Jacob, Isaac, and Abraham, linking this chapter with the patriarchal narratives of Genesis. In verse 45, the link is to the narrative of exodus from Egypt (cf. Williamson 2003:149-150).

In Genesis, the narrative focuses on one man after human arrogance reaches new heights at the tower of Babel (Gen 11:1-9). This time, the story of human sin will not lead directly to judgment, as in the cycle from Adam to Noah, but through covenant-making to a remade, redeemed people. The call to leave kindred and homeland to be given people, land and blessing is implicit covenant language (Gen 12:1-3). It becomes explicit in Genesis 15 (Kline 2000:181-

<sup>101</sup>Note also in Gen 12:1-3 how the themes of kinship, land, and blessing and cursing cluster together in a way that implies covenant, even though the explicit connection comes three chapters later.

<sup>102</sup>Niehaus is one who argues from literary/legal form and from allusions in later Scripture (Hos 6:7; Jer 33:20,25) that a covenantal structure is implied in the Genesis creation narrative (1995:142-149). With a quite different argument tending to the same point, compare Rendtorff (1989:388). For criticism of this point of view see Williamson (2003:141).

<sup>103</sup>Which Stuart acknowledges is just one possible organizing scheme (1989:xxxii).

<sup>104</sup>A further example goes beyond the theme of curses and blessings. The term מַחֲלָה, 'quarrel, grievance' was often used when an aggrieved party sought redress of another (Bracke 1997:1105-1106). Its use in the prophets and elsewhere for the relationship between Yahweh and his people has led scholars to speak of a "covenant lawsuit" genre (cf. Nielsen 1978).

183). Yahweh reminds Abram of his promise of many descendents and reassures him (15:1-5). Abram believes and it is counted as righteousness (15:6). What follows is a ceremony confirming this commitment. Sacrificial animals are brought, cut in two, and the halves are laid out on the ground (15:9-10). A deep sleep and darkness follows for Abram (in language reminiscent of Gen 2:21), then more words of divine promise. The words are followed by a vision in which smoke and flame pass between the split carcasses (15:17). This is a theophany in which Yahweh uses covenant oath ritual to invoke on himself an unimaginable curse should he fail. The covenant with Abraham is again renewed two chapters later (Gen 17:1-14). There Abraham is given an oath sign, circumcision (Kline 1968:39-49; cf. Naudé 1997:1199), alluded to in Lev 26:41, where uncircumcision can be used metaphorically for covenant faithlessness. This covenant commitment is renewed with Abraham's son and grandson (Gen 17:19, 26:5; cf. Exod 2:24) and patriarchal blessings extend it to future generations (Gen 49). There is much narrative tension in the closing half of Genesis over who in the next generation will get the blessing. It is not simply a patriarch's blessing on his progeny. Precisely at issue is the covenant blessing of Yahweh. Nonetheless, the Genesis narrative ends in suspense. The promise of progeny has begun a modest fulfillment. A pattern of blessing and curse-bearing to other peoples has likewise begun, but the only land held is a tomb.

This theme of patriarchal covenant extends far beyond Genesis. It is the ground for Yahweh's action in the book that follows (Exod 2:24; 6:5) and often through the Old and New Testaments. Abraham's name is mentioned in BH twenty-four times outside the Pentateuch and a further seventy-three times in the New Testament, where a link to Abraham is the *sine qua non* of spiritual legitimacy. Eleven of the times Abraham's name is mentioned in BH it is linked with the *niphal* of שָׁבַע, 'to swear.' Though בְּרִית, 'covenant' is not used, the close linking of covenants and oath language means Yahweh's covenant with Abraham (and the other patriarchs) can be referred to this way.

Patriarchal covenant is strongly echoed in the material celebrating the Davidic monarchy. In David, there is a leader distinguished by his loyalty to Yahweh. Yahweh makes a covenant with him and his family, to maintain his dynasty, to discipline his descendents and to accomplish the worldwide blessing long-since promised through Abraham (2 Sam 7:8-16; Psa 89:3-37).

### 2.3.2.3 *Sinai covenant*

Like the covenant with Abraham, the covenant mediated through Moses at Sinai stretches far beyond the book where it is introduced. We have already noted the tight integration of Leviticus 26 into the exodus narrative and its covenant. The exodus from Egypt is a paradigm of salvation throughout Scripture, echoed and re-echoed in countless ways.<sup>105</sup> Explicit references to מֹשֶׁה, ‘Moses’ occur sixty-five times in BH outside the Pentateuch and Joshua, where they are most concentrated, often along with words like דַּבֵּר, ‘speak,’ צִוָּה, ‘command,’ and תּוֹרָה, ‘instruction.’ It is the covenantal stipulations that are associated with Moses more often than even the exodus narrative is. And, as with Abraham, the pattern continues into the New Testament.

### 2.3.2.4 *Sabbath*

A theme that links Leviticus 26 and the beginning of Genesis is שַׁבָּת, ‘sabbath’ and the pattern of sevens it is associated with. This is a pattern of creation, but it is also explicitly covenantal. In Exodus 31:12-17 Yahweh calls it a בְּרִית עוֹלָם, ‘permanent covenant’ and describes it as אֶת בֵּינִי וּבֵין בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת, ‘between me and the Israelites a sign.’ It may be theological convention to sharply distinguish creation and redemption and limit covenant to the latter, but this does not do justice to the biblical evidence. The covenant blessings of abundance and fruitfulness that faithful Israel is promised are echoes of Eden, creation as it should have been, and foretastes of re-creation to come. The sevens pattern of curses is picked up in eschatological context in Revelation (Beale 1999:373, 535, 803) and eschatological sabbath rest is in Hebrews 3-4.

### 2.3.2.5 *Covenant formula*

The declaration in verse Leviticus 26:12 (and echoed in verse 45),

וְהִיְיָ לָכֶם לֵאלֹהִים וְאַתֶּם תְּהִיוּ לִי לְעָם  
I will be your God and you will be my people,

connects Leviticus 26 to a covenantal theme stretching from Genesis (17:7) to Revelation, where the great vision of consummation is summed up by the words: “they shall be his people and God himself shall be with them and be their God” (21:3). Sometimes the complete formula is used, sometimes just half of it, sometimes the order is varied, but it is an inescapable refrain (Exod 6:7; 29:45; Num 15:41; Deut 7:6; 14:2; 29:12; 2 Sam 7:24; 1 Chron 17:22; Jer 7:23;

<sup>105</sup>For one study see Daube (1963).

11:4; 24:7; 30:22; 31:1, 33; 32:38; Ezek 11:20; 14:11; 36:28; 37:23, 27; Zech 8:8; cf. 2 Cor 6:16; Heb 8:10).<sup>106</sup>

This relationship is the core and climax of blessing in the argument of Lev 26 and has a similarly rich role in other biblical texts where it is used. Rendtorff observes in his thorough study that “the covenant formula almost never stands alone, and that it is often linked not only with one but with several other formula-like elements or expressions which touch on the relationships between God and Israel” (1998:39). For example,

the texts in Genesis 17 (as forerunner, so to speak), Exodus 6 and Leviticus 26 span the whole complex in a carefully crafted warp and weft of mutual crosslinks, from God’s first appearance to Abraham to the close of the law-giving on Sinai. There is no other theological formulation about which anything comparable could be said (1998:51).

Already, elsewhere in the Pentateuch (as in Lev 26), this formula connects the beginning of relationship with God and eschatological future (1998:90-91) and both the prophets and New Testament writers develop the theme. Jeremiah’s prophecy of (re)new(ed) covenant (Jer 31:31-37) with its heart knowledge of Yahweh and forgiveness of sin, its reference to the cosmic order of creation and to an unshakeable guarantee of ongoing relationship (as in Lev 26), centers on this formula (Jer 31:33b). The apostle Paul’s only quote of Leviticus 26 (2 Cor 6:16) links the formula with God’s presence, with temple language, and with a challenge for present conduct that is holy and free from defilement. This implies that he was not only aware of the formula but of its overall context in Leviticus.

Kalluveetil (1982:1-2) argues that the expression itself is performative language, adapted from covenant-making formulae in the ANE. Sohn takes the argument a step further and makes a link to the fact that covenants constitute kinship. This is not just the language of ancient treaties. It adapts the performative declarations of adoption and marriage ceremonies (1999:357). Sohn bases his argument on several factors, including patterns from divorce documents as well as marriages. Most decisive are the syntactic parallels of  $\text{ל}+\text{ל}+\text{ל}$  and  $\text{ל}+\text{ל}+\text{ל}$  (1999:364-366). Sohn sees the language of Yahweh’s presence with his people in Exod 29:43-46 as echoing the togetherness of a married couple (1999:368). Name-bearing language is linked to adoption (1999:372). Interestingly, two of the references to the covenant formula just mentioned above connect it in context with kinship. In Jer 31: 32, the reference is

<sup>106</sup>The following other texts contain probable allusions to the formula: Deut 14:21; 27:9; 1 Chron 17:21; 2 Chron 20:7; Neh 9:32; Psa 33:12; 47:10; 50:7; 95:7; 100:3; Isa 40:1; Hos 2:25; Zech 13:9.

to marriage, in 2 Cor 6:18 to adoption. Weinfeld also makes a link with “legal terminology used in connection with marriage and adoption” (1972:81). Niehaus notes other links between covenant and household or kinship language (2000:51, 61).

### 2.3.2.6 *Theodicy*

Leviticus 26 provides a framework for Israel’s history, for understanding both success and disaster as the interventions of Yahweh, as part of his relationship with his people. This will receive more attention in chapter 3. Here it is enough to note how this framework links Leviticus 26 to parts of the Old Testament canon which may not seem explicitly covenantal.

In the Psalms, a prayer of complaint gets its poignancy from the tension between covenant expectations and the experience of defeat (Psa 44; Psa 89:38-51), what Brueggemann describes as “Yahweh’s failure to adhere to covenant” (1997:373). Indeed, covenant relationship provides the grounds for complaint to Yahweh. It is because he has committed himself to his people’s prosperity and security that bitter experiences to the contrary are brought to him.

Wisdom literature is the major division of the OT canon that shows least interest in the special relationship between Yahweh and his people, with limited covenantal vocabulary and themes. Instead, literary parallels abound with the cosmopolitan wisdom literature of the ancient Near East. Yet even here covenant can be seen to have a structuring role, though the argument must be made indirectly, via the themes of blessing and curse and ארץ, ‘land, earth.’ The wisdom literature looks to creation, its patterns and its problems, and seeks the source of blessing and curse. Garrett has shown the echoes of Genesis 1-3 in the book of Ecclesiastes (1993:278-279). Wisdom herself is a creative agent in Proverbs (Prov 8:22-31). The purpose of human existence is to live in committed relationship with God, so יראת יהוה, ‘fear of Yahweh’ is the essence of wisdom.

Theodicy is an issue that arises when the pattern of blessing and curse does not make sense in human experience. For example, the awful things that have happened to Job are brought before Yahweh as a question of justice. The book of Job is full of legal language. Every character in the dialogs makes reference to justice and fairness, to cases and the courts. Job himself does so as much as all the other characters put together.<sup>107</sup> One commentator even contends that “the book of Job is, in fact, a lawsuit drama with Job and God as litigants and the friends as witnesses and judges” (Scholnick 1979: 105, cf.176), buttressing her point by showing forensic

<sup>107</sup>The terms צדק, דין, גושפט, and ריב are used 63 times in the MT of Job, 33 times in the mouth of Job himself.

technical terms in the book (1979:3, 91).<sup>108</sup> Finally, Job 40:1-14 puts a cosmic perspective on the issue of justice. Job has tended to view justice egocentrically, from the point of view of his own deserts. From a theophany (Job 40:6), Yahweh counters Job's "my justice"—a fair deal for me (note: Job 6:29; 10:15; 27:2; 29:14; 34:5-6) with his own "my justice" (Job 40:8)—a fair deal for everyone, the point of view of the ruler (cf. Scholnick 1979:265-306). Theophanies have strong covenantal associations in the Old Testament (Niehaus 1995:83-86, 383-384), as does God's royal justice. Above all, the presumption to complain implies that Yahweh is legally bound, which again implies a covenant framework. Simkins (1994:161-163, 255) sees in Job a reaction to covenant theology. These are issues that underlie the debate.

### 2.3.2.7 *New Testament*

Though New Testament issues are outside the scope of the present work, it is appropriate to note that covenant concepts provide many links between the testaments. This is much more than the allusions and references which could be cited at length. "The idea of covenant was central to Judaism in this period" (Wright 1992:260; cf. Sanders 1977:420).

Indeed, it can be argued that covenant creates the underlying problem of the New Testament. The covenant people are oppressed in their very homeland or scattered abroad. The great Davidic monarchy and the (re)new(ed) covenant are not visible. Yahweh's covenant faithfulness is in question. It is the contention of the New Testament writers that Yahweh answers that question in Jesus, inaugurating new kingdom and covenant, and beginning to spread the covenant blessings to all peoples. Thus New Testament scholar Wright titles a work on Pauline theology: *The Climax of the Covenant*, paraphrasing Rom 10:4, and argues "nothing less than the framework of covenant theology will do justice to the plight as perceived by Paul" (1993:261). Jesus describes his own death in terms of "the blood of the covenant" (Matt 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25), echoing the covenant inauguration ceremony at Sinai (Exod 24:8) and its ritual curse for covenant breakers. Paul explains that Messiah Jesus has himself born the curse of covenant failure on behalf of his people (Gal 3:13).

## 2.4 Chapter conclusion

Leviticus 26 demonstrates a prime contention of the present study: To understand the Old Testament on its own terms and as part of the whole Bible, it is essential to understand covenant concepts. These are the skeletal structure of Scripture. It is not necessary to accept the more tentative connections made above, such as those between covenant and wisdom literature,

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<sup>108</sup>Cf. Hoffman 1996:142.

to acknowledge that covenant concepts are inescapable in the Old Testament and fundamental to its coherence. And approaches to Old Testament study that do not value coherence have to discount massive internal evidence. This is not an extraneous scheme, whether theological, historical, or sociological, foisted upon the text. Indeed, it is a conceptual framework quite alien to modern interpreters, despite its familiarity in the ancient world. It is the framework the Old Testament itself favors.

This point of view may be associated with the theology of Eichrodt (1961, 1967), who argued for covenant as the center of the Old Testament. Hasel (1991:49-51, 167-171) is one sharp critic. Hasel argues against using covenant or any other single conception<sup>109</sup> as the unifying center for OT theology.<sup>110</sup> Brueggemann also criticizes Eichrodt, yet acknowledges “covenant is no accidental ‘one idea’” (1997:31). Rather “it is an extraordinary insight to be able to see that this one idea illuminates and brings into relation a rich variety of themes and images” (1997:28). “For all the vagaries of Old Testament scholarship, ‘covenant’ looms large in ancient Israel, and in the faith of the church” (Brueggemann 1999:1). In fact, Brueggemann proceeds to use covenantal concepts, though he prefers the term *partner*, to structure and integrate a major section of his work on Old Testament theology (1997:407-564).<sup>111</sup> Similarly, Albertz sees covenant as bringing “the whole relationship between Israel and God in history and the present under a single heading” (1994:231). The point being argued here and demonstrated in Leviticus 26 is not the one Hasel and others reject. It is not that covenant integrates everything. It is just that without covenant there can be no integration.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>109</sup>For an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of using a single unifying theme in OT theology see House 1998:53-57, 539-540.

<sup>110</sup>A more nuanced synthesis is that of Dumbrell (1985). He discerns five biblical-theological themes that permeate Scripture and culminate in the final chapters of Revelation: new Jerusalem, new temple, new covenant, new Israel, and new creation (35, 42, 78). He sees the overarching image as kingdom or government. Yet each of the other themes implies covenant. The new Jerusalem is not so much a place as a people (Rev 21:2). The new temple is “the dwelling of God ... with men” (Rev 21:3). The new Israel is another name for the chosen people of God. The crown of the new creation is a renewed humanity. The king rules his people. In each case, a people who belong to God is integral to the biblical conception. And covenant is the concept that explains and structures that relationship.

<sup>111</sup>Note his explanation that Yahweh “never comes ‘alone’ but is always Yahweh-in-relation” (1997:409), about which he comments: “This quality of relationship (conventionally referred to as ‘covenant’)” (1997:410).

<sup>112</sup>Brueggemann, however, ultimately denies integration and coherence due to his postmodernist priority of plurality. Thus there is “no going back to a singular coherent faith articulation in the text” (1997:xvi). Despite his admiration of Eichrodt, Brueggemann dismisses his position on *a priori* grounds: there is no going back to Eichrodt’s understanding because “the general epistemological climate in which we work and the current needs of the theological community do not permit such a return” (1997:41). Nevertheless, he acknowledges “it is this matter of pluralism and coherence that poses the most difficult issue for the ongoing work of Old Testament theology” (1997:41).



## CHAPTER 3

### LEVITICUS 26—WORLDVIEW AND IMPACT

The present chapter turns from the specifics of surveying the text and context of Leviticus 26, integrated by covenant concepts, to two more general issues: What was the worldview underlying the text and what was the impact of this worldview in its original ANE context? This last question cannot be addressed without first considering the text's historical setting.

The worldview implied in the text is that of people who belong to Yahweh alone and explain their life and history by that secure, demanding relationship. This was revolutionary for people living in a world of competing spiritual powers. It was the result of turning covenant language in a new direction, to describe the relationship between a god and his people.

#### 3.1 A worldview analysis of Leviticus 26

The opening chapter of this study proposed a two-fold framework for analyzing worldviews: a grid of worldview variables (*Time, Space, Causality, and Self/Other*) and an integrating narrative summary. The present chapter applies this framework to Leviticus 26 (as future chapters will apply it to aspects of Lomwe culture).

Some scholars speak of “Yahweh alonism” as a movement in Israel (cf. Niditch 1997:75). This focuses on the distinctive of exclusive worship. Perhaps it would be better to speak of “Yahweh centrism.” Van Steenberghe noted, when using a grid of worldview variables to analyze portions of Isaiah, that *Causality* came to dominate all the others (2002b:72). Everything was traced back to Yahweh's action. A different way of making essentially the same point would be to say that Yahweh himself is the coordinating principle. The whole worldview system illustrated in Leviticus 26 and urged on its hearers coheres around him and is structured by covenantal relationship to him.

#### 3.1.1 Worldview variables in Leviticus 26

##### 3.1.1.1 Time

In Leviticus 26, the worldview variable of *Time* is dominated by the concept of שַׁבָּת, ‘sabbath,’ a pattern of rest one day in seven which was also applied to years in the immediate context.

Attempts to find clear parallels to this pattern in other ANE cultures have been inconclusive.<sup>113</sup> The sabbath was unique (Andreasen 1974:460).<sup>114</sup> Unlike days, months and years, this weekly pattern is imposed on natural cycles and is not simply derived from astronomical phenomena (cf. Tsevat 1972:449, n. 4). Yet the account of creation in Gen 1-2 and the commandment in Exod 20 relate the pattern of seventh day rest to God's activity in creation. Observing *שבת*, 'sabbath,' is an explicit act of imitating God in his creation. There is hardly a hint in the Pentateuch that the seventh day was specially linked to tabernacle-centered sacrificial and cleansing rituals (though a seven day pattern was common for required rituals and festivals, cf. Lev 8, 13, 14, 15, 23).<sup>115</sup> Nonetheless, this was a ritual pattern symbolically linking everyday created life in time to Yahweh.<sup>116</sup> It also linked everyday redeemed life to Yahweh. In Exod 31:12-17, *שבת*, 'sabbath,' is explicitly a covenantal sign, a distinctive mark of being God's people (as well as, again, an echo of creation). The pattern is later linked with rescue from Egypt. It was a public practice which provided protection for the whole community, especially those most vulnerable, from overwork and exploitation as in Egypt.

The economic implications of *שבת*, 'sabbath,' are large on a seven-day scale. The implications are huge when the pattern is extrapolated to years. One year in seven the land was to be left fallow and there was to be release from debt and debt-bondage. After seven sevens of years, leases on farm land were to expire (sales were prohibited—the land was Yahweh's). Such property was to revert to the family originally granted the land. The Old Testament never claims these ideals were ever actually put into practice consistently. (In fact, Leviticus 26 rather assumes the opposite.) But it is easy to imagine the costs and consequences had the rules been followed. There would be no open market in persons or farm land. There would never be a permanent underclass denied access to the means of earning a living. And the whole society would take the risk of starving by not cultivating crops one year in seven, trusting Yahweh to make up the difference. This kind of economics was as radically unconventional as the Yahweh warfare described in Deut 20, which eschewed technical and numerical superiority for trust that Yahweh himself would do all the important fighting.

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<sup>113</sup>Lowery's summary is indeed that it is "unparalleled in the ancient world" (2000:4). Seven day festivals were known in 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium Emar (Zevit 2001:46).

<sup>114</sup>It must be acknowledged that all claims to uniqueness depend on a weak argument, from the silence of other evidence.

<sup>115</sup>Note the comment by Tsevat (1972:456), that sabbath "stands somewhat apart from the other phenomena of Israelite religion."

<sup>116</sup>Cf. Bosman: "It is therefore important to appreciate the theological significance of ordinary Israelites abstaining from work without resorting to any cultic festivity reserved for the Sabbath" (1997:1160).

The *שַׁבַּת*, ‘sabbath’ ideal marks time on small and large scales for society, asserting in a very intrusive and costly way that relationship to Yahweh, being his people who live in his presence, takes precedence in all of life. A pattern of imitating him is to mark the activity of those who are his. This pattern transcends a dichotomy between cyclical and linear time. It is both. Perhaps a better term is Simkin’s suggestion, “spiral time” (1994:128, cf. Bosman 2001:105). Like a cycle, it repeats continuously, though it is imposed on, not derived from, the natural cycle. Yet its creation pattern has a linear flow from chaos to finished, perfect work, then rest. The eschatological sabbath in the New Testament (Heb 4) answers to this inner logic (and is already hinted at in the Old Testament; cf. Wolff. 1972:75; Kline 2000:33-34). Completion and consummation are the direction time is headed.

The *שַׁבַּת*, ‘sabbath,’ is not the only indicator of the *Time* worldview variable in Leviticus 26. The text is explicitly aware of specific generations past and those to come. Yahweh’s commitments to the patriarchs and his actions in the exodus define the past, remote and immediate, just as his promises of blessing or curse on into a future beyond exile define what is to come, when those people will be looking back to a *בְּרִית רֵאשִׁימִים*, ‘covenant of ancestors’ (Lev 26:45). Indeed, both in Leviticus 26 (four times) and elsewhere, one of the characteristic things to do with a *בְּרִית*, ‘covenant’ is to *זָכַר*, ‘remember’ it (cf. Kline 2000:231; Exod 2:24, 6:5; Jer 14:21; Ezek 16:60). It is something Yahweh is praised for doing (Psa 111:5; in Psa 105:8-11//1 Chron 16:15-17, specifically with respect to his covenant with the patriarchs) and people are condemned for not doing (Amos 1:9). It is what Yahweh promises to do with Noah, at a time of re-creation and re-establishing the cycles of nature (Gen 9:15, 16). Covenant is linked with time. It is meant to be enduring. Appropriately, several of the actual blessings and curses are experienced from one generation to another, in fruitfulness (Lev 26:9) or its ghastly opposite as desperate parents eat their own children (Lev 26:29).

Brueggemann (2002:197-198; cf. Simkins 1994:121-127) has criticized a facile dichotomy between nature and history in Old Testament studies, with an overemphasis by some on Yahweh as God of history. Certainly, Leviticus 26 illustrates more of *both/and* than *either/or*. There are blessings and curses of agricultural production and wild animals. Either the natural world (at Yahweh’s command) heaps up abundance in an echo of Eden or it consumes human effort in futility. There are also blessings and curses in the course of history, astonishing victories or appalling defeats. The important dichotomy, as Simkins has argued (1994:127), is between creator and creation.

### 3.1.1.2 Space

The next worldview variable reveals many of the themes and emphases just seen in looking at *Time* in Leviticus 26. *Space* is just as much Yahweh's arena. This perspective transforms a conventional division between insider space and outsider space, between our land and enemy land (cf. Frankfort 1977:20-23; Liverani 1990:33-43). It is all Yahweh's land. What 'we' have is 'ours' by covenant, a tangible result of relationship to Yahweh, and the arena of that relationship. How the land is treated affects the relationship with Yahweh and relationship with Yahweh affects what the land gives as well as 'our' tenure. The characteristic term for a plot of land in Leviticus is אַחֲזָה, 'holding' (instead of נַחֲלָה, 'inheritance,' cf. Milgrom 2000:1326), used 18 times in chapters 25 and 27 (and two more times in chapter 14). It underlines dependent status.

The term אֶרֶץ, 'land, earth' reveals a powerful theme in Leviticus 26. The word is used twenty-three times (out of a total of 82 in the book). Note that the term in BH encompasses emphases that English vocabulary separates, including both territory and the land as the primary means of production for agricultural people. It is the place of blessing, where the fruitfulness and security Yahweh gives is received. It can also be the place of curse, whether specifically Egypt or generally the אֶרֶץ אֵיבֵיכֶם, 'land of your enemies.' But there is no simplistic division between good land and bad lands, or between lands where Yahweh has authority and others where he does not. The distinction between *our* land and *their* land is not fundamental. Despite its power, the אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם, 'land of Egypt' could not stop Yahweh from rescuing his people. And curse in enemy lands both continues what Yahweh had already started at home and is no obstacle when he decides nevertheless to bless. In verses 19 and 20, it is their very own land that refuses to cooperate. It is personified as it does not נָתַן, 'give' the crops and fruit expected. It is the אֶרֶץ, 'land, earth' that is claiming the sabbath rests it is due in verse 34. It almost has the status of a covenant partner in verse 42 where Yahweh has been speaking of remembering his covenant with the patriarchs, in ascending order with Abraham last, then adds: וְהָאֶרֶץ אֲזָכֵר, 'and the land I will remember.'<sup>117</sup> The object is dramatically fronted even as the clause takes climactic position. The phrase is not in this chapter, but this is the same line of thought that in Leviticus 18:28 and 20:22 warns that the land may קִיא, 'vomit' out its inhabitants. The personified land's covenant role may be identified as witness. Kline notes this in Deuteronomy 31:28 and

<sup>117</sup>Cf. Milgrom's comment: "It is almost as if there are two independent agencies requiring reparation—God and the land" (2001:2336).

32:1 (1963:35, 139). Simkin's observation is that "creation's witness to Israel's fidelity to the covenant is formalized in terms of blessings and curses" (1994:159).<sup>118</sup>

It should be noted that this understanding of the ארץ, 'land, earth' has implications for other worldview variables, too. The land is primarily an aspect of space but also connects generations past and future through time (cf. Brueggemann 2002:199). It influences the *Self/Other* variable by what it means to belong to the community of Yahweh's people. The land is not only a place, it is also a primary means of economic life. The way it is held and used is fundamental to social ethics. C. Wright develops the interconnections of these themes in *God's People in God's Land* (1990, esp. 4-23) as does Brueggemann in *The Land* (2002).

Similarly, the sabbath theme looked at above under *Time* could just as well belong here. The rest years are for the land, owed to it (26:35). The rest pattern is for people's economic interaction with their environment.

Just as the ancient Israelite renounced his sole possession of the land and his right to exploit it, thereby acknowledging the lordship of Yahweh in the sabbatical year, so on the weekly sabbath he was to acknowledge Yahweh's dominion over time and thus over himself (Andreasen 1974:459).

There are also other ways besides *land* and *sabbath* to look at the worldview variable of *Space* in Leviticus 26. In verses 11 and 12, building up to the climax of the *your god/my people* covenant formula, the word בתוככם, 'in your midst' is used twice in promises of blessing. First Yahweh promises to give משכני, 'my dwelling.' Second he promises התהלכתי, 'I will walk about' among you. These promises are at once both spatial and relational. Yahweh's presence is definitely localized (in the literary context specifically in the אהל מועד, 'tent of meeting;' Exod 40:35-38) in theophanic manifestations (cf. Simkins 1994:144; Niehaus 1995). The ritual focus of the first half of Leviticus deals with the very practical problems of pollution and defilement for a people with the holy presence of a god among them, holy space colliding with the unholy.<sup>119</sup> But this presence is not attached to a holy spot. It is not fixed, but mobile, staying with the people. Yahweh's commitment to them is realized in space, but it is not by means of a place or space that people connect to him. The covenant relationship comes first. Neither מקדשיכם, 'your holy places' nor cities nor sacrifices will be spared when the relationship has

<sup>118</sup>Lowery stretches the personification further still: "the earth has its own vocation to obey and worship God" (2000:62).

<sup>119</sup>The need to separate the holy from pollution is part of the underlying logic of exile, though this perspective is not developed in Lev 26.

been violated (Lev 26:31). For Yahweh's people, space has a center, where he is among them. It is not defined by its edges.

### 3.1.1.3 *Self/Other*

The prominent self in this chapter is Yahweh (as he says אֲנִי יְהוָה, 'I am Yahweh!'). The prominent other is collective, Israel.<sup>120</sup> Their relationship is absorbing, exclusive, demanding, intimate, and ultimately unbreakable. It involves deep mutual commitment while being radically unequal. Yahweh is unmistakably in charge. For Israel, this relationship takes precedence over all others, whether with the land, with other peoples, or with other gods. This relationship with Yahweh gives definition and direction, identity and purpose. To be Yahweh's people is their privilege. To be in his presence is the height of their joy. To displease him is their doom. At the heart of this worldview is committed relationship, of self with other, rather than of self against others. Intimacy takes priority over autonomy, and belonging over activity.

This worldview does not limit its understanding of self and others to humans and their environment. There is a dominating, assertive presence and person who is outside of, while involved in these systems. The relationship with Yahweh is not seen as an extrapolation of other relationships, a reification, perhaps, of social structures in the family or political structures in the society. The language of covenant does, of course, have powerful connections with both kinship and overlordship. The images used to describe the Yahweh relationship come from those known realms of discourse. But in Leviticus 26, relationships within Israel, its social structures, are virtually invisible. Israel is consistently undifferentiated. The only exception is the special role of Moses, mentioned in the narrator's footnote in the concluding words of the chapter, בִּיד־מֹשֶׁה, 'by the hand of Moses,' by means of Moses. Moses was the intermediary for communication between Yahweh and Israel, but neither Yahweh's nor Israel's relationship with Moses is in view.

Similarly, Yahweh is not seen as an extrapolation of the natural order. He is clearly involved in it and in charge of it, but Israel does not relate to him through it. Rather, they relate to the created order around them through him.

In this understanding of self and other, the prominent individual is Yahweh himself. Israel is consistently plural and collective, a whole to belong to. Individual persons are subsumed into it.

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<sup>120</sup>Of course, from the perspective of Israel's worldview, the roles are reversed: the first person plural self, 'we' is Israel and Yahweh is the other.

The threat of *המעיטה אתכם*, ‘they will shrink your numbers’ (26:22) implies the death of many individuals, even as the collective people continue. In fact, even factions are not visible in this vision of what ought to be. The issue, prominent in prophetic and historical writings, of some faithful Yahwists versus a faithless majority, does not arise. Israel as a whole is in view, even when the call is for heart-level repentance. Note the singular heart with the plural suffix in *לבבם הערל*, ‘their uncircumcised heart’ (26:41). The allusion to a covenant oath sign administered individually (to males; females being included via corporate solidarity) implies a gap between symbol and the reality it should signify, not a gap between one person and another in the community.

There are still others involved besides Yahweh and Israel in Leviticus 26, though they are on the periphery of attention. Enemies and nations are mentioned as used by Yahweh in his dealings with Israel. There is just a hint of a larger purpose. Note the crucial phrase in Leviticus 26:45: *לעיני הגוים*, ‘in the sight of the nations.’<sup>121</sup> Other peoples are the audience for Yahweh’s action, even as he is making Israel his own, echoing the covenant formula, *להיה להם לאלהים*, ‘to be god for you’. What he does for Israel has an impact on the others, echoing themes from the beginning of the narrative of covenant-making at Sinai (Exod 19:5-6).

This chapter is silent on a *Self/Other* question with many implications: who belongs to Israel and how? The focus is on the implications of the relationship for those who are in it, not on the boundaries that define who is in it and who is not. That there are boundaries, however, is the implication of the preceding paragraph. In the canonical context, of course, the Israel of Leviticus 26 are those who made a covenant with Yahweh at Sinai. As noted in chapter one of the present work, a covenant is not a natural relationship, but a chosen one analogous to kinship. In the present case, for one party, Israel, it assumes solidarity across generations, even as it needs renewal for each generation. But it is not simply the case that people are born into covenant relationship with Yahweh.

#### 3.1.1.4 Causality

This Yahweh-centered worldview in Leviticus 26 has a correspondingly Yahweh-centered understanding of causality. The simple fact that Yahweh is the speaker throughout the whole chapter (apart from the concluding verse) means that he sets the agenda and defines the issues. And he is not reticent about referring to himself directly. The chapter is dense with verbs with

<sup>121</sup> Also used nine times in Ezekiel.

first-person singular subjects (45 out of a total of 172 verbal forms), and also dense with first person singular suffixes (31 times). An even stronger measure is the symbolically significant use of וְנָתַתִּי, ‘and I will give’ seven times (26:4, 6, 11, 17, 19, 30, 31), in each case introducing a concatenation of clauses, all consequences of Yahweh’s action. Unlike conventional ANE blessings and cursings, Yahweh appeals to no other powers, explicitly or implicitly, to implement what is coming to covenant keepers or breakers. He will handle it himself. Even the personified אֶרֶץ, ‘land, earth,’ demanding its due, does not act independently. It is Yahweh’s obedient servant (26:4), just as the sky is (26:19). The climax and epitome of blessing is simply the relationship with him, to belong to him and be in his presence.

Other agents exist, but they are subordinate, too. The Israel Yahweh addresses has abundant, unspecified enemies. There are thirteen references to the אֹיִב, ‘enemy’ in the chapter, all but one plural with a possessive suffix. Even when Yahweh blesses, there will be enemies and battle, though they will be defeated with astonishing ease (26:7-8). These enemies have lands of their own (hence the phrase בְּאֶרֶץ אֹיְבֵיכֶם, ‘in the land of your enemies,’ 26:34, 38; and similar phrases, 26:39, 41, 44). They can also be in Israel’s land (cf. אֹיְבֵיכֶם הַיֹּשְׁבִים בָּהּ, ‘your enemies dwelling in it,’ 26:32). They hate, rule (26:17) and destroy (26:38). But the key phrase about them is וְנָתַתָּם בְּיַד־אֹיִב, ‘you will be given in to the hand of the enemy’ (26:25). It is not the enemies’ own power that is significant. Rather the *niphall*/passive form implies Yahweh’s action. Israel is to deal with him. What happens with the enemies is simply a consequence.

The other, inescapable agent in Leviticus 26 is the people, those whom Yahweh is addressing. They are given orders and expected to respond. The sweep of persuasive rhetoric presumes it is theirs to decide to obey or not. The mounting *if/then* clauses hinge on their reactions. The repeated, seven-fold threats of punishment both affirm Yahweh’s inescapable authority and eloquently plea for the people’s responsible reaction. Causality is not so bound up in Yahweh that others are reduced to automata. Rather, Yahweh’s action is a precise and appropriate response to his people’s. The אֲנִי־אֲנִי, ‘also, I for my part’ in verses 16 and 28 has the sense of responding accordingly and in proportion.

Yahweh’s authority does not overwhelm the people’s responsibility, but covenant relationship does channel that responsibility. The crucial issues, success and disaster, life and death, depend on how people respond to him. His goal is to replace arrogant independence with humble obedience, and, ultimately, intimacy. The implication under this system is that when there is



astonishing blessing, the people may presume that all is well (though his presence might already tell them). When there is trouble, the people are to examine how they have been treating Yahweh.

Yahweh is, of course, not an automaton, either. The rules of blessing and curse are not inexorable principles that operate on their own in some mechanistic fashion. They are his. He uses them to shape how the people respond to and relate to him. They are expressions of the committed, accountable relationship with him that is covenant. The escalating symmetry of offense and punishment is not locked in. It can be broken when Yahweh refuses to let the covenant be broken. At the end of the chapter, he promises to both destroy and remake the failed people. Beyond utter doom, he will be faithful.

Causality in this worldview is Yahweh-shaped and Yahweh-dominated, yet focused by him on the covenant relationship with his own.

### 3.1.2 *Worldview narrative in Leviticus 26*

The observations above on worldview variables in Leviticus 26 lead to a short narrative that draws them together, along with other themes from the chapter. The narrative is, of course, imagined. Its usefulness lies in its (potential) ability to integrate elements otherwise left fragmented by the process of analysis. In order to make comparisons easier with Lomwe worldviews in the next two chapters, the point of view has been changed, from that of Yahweh to that of the implied Israel to whom he is speaking.<sup>122</sup> This Israel is, of course, an ideal, what the chapter is trying to persuade its hearers to become.<sup>123</sup>

We are a people who belong to Yahweh our God. He rescued us from oppression in Egypt so that we could enjoy both living with him and the good land he is giving us in this dangerous world. We have to do what he says. We only worship him and we make sure we respect him as the owner of our time and land. When we listen to him he stays close to us and wholeness and happiness follow. When we do not listen, he does everything to get our attention and change our attitude. He will pile up disaster upon disaster, matching our stubbornness step by step, stripping away all his gifts, even the land itself. But he will not let us go. We will still belong to him.

<sup>122</sup>Other students of Lev 26 might produce quite different narrative summaries, and so succinctly highlight understandings that contrast with this one.

<sup>123</sup>The actual worldviews of the original recipients were probably quite different and rather more like ANE paganism in general. Lev 26 is powerful rhetoric designed to persuade and change its hearers.

This summary attempts to show how the secure and demanding covenant relationship of Israel with Yahweh provided identity, focus, and direction. For the covenant people this amounted to a theory of everything. They were to relate to everything else through their relationship with him. Whatever happened, this was the framework for understanding it. As Buis puts it: “Mais le berit est surtout liée à la vie d’Israël, en ce sens qu’elle donne au peuple un moyen de comprendre ce qu’il vit” (1976:191).<sup>124</sup>

### **3.2 The historical setting of Lev 26 and its covenant concepts**

Up to this point, the present work has avoided discussion of historical setting. Both exposition of the canonical text and analysis of its worldview have been undertaken without considering in detail the situation of its writer(s) and the original audience. It has been assumed generally that the context was of Israel in the ancient Near East, but no attempt at greater precision has yet been made. Of course, the historical context of a text illuminates attempts to understand the worldview of an author and his or her audience. These are not vague, timeless truths, but a message to real people confronting real problems (while relevant to other real people confronting other real problems). But in the present case, there is a great danger of circular reasoning, in which a hypothetical historical setting is assumed and then used as a hermeneutical key which, curiously, confirms the posited setting (and, often, reconstructs a posited text to suit). It was to avoid this mistake that questions of historical setting have been postponed until after considered, careful attention to the canonical text as it stands.

Logically, the historical setting of Leviticus 26 and the historical setting of the covenant concepts within the chapter could be considered separately, but they shall be treated as interrelated, complementary discussions here.

It must be acknowledged at the outset that conventional historiographic methodology has severe limitations with determining the setting of many Old Testament texts, including this one. The evidence does not permit conclusions stronger than that a certain setting, whether that stated in the text or one proposed by later interpreters, is more or less plausible than another. It must also be acknowledged that this methodology depends on Enlightenment paradigms alien not only to original writer(s) and audience, but also to many audiences today. Used without sympathy, such methodology can build distance, not understanding.

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<sup>124</sup> ‘But the covenant is above all linked to the life of Israel, in the sense that it gives to the people a way of understanding what they live.’

The long, controverted history of discussion on these matters is well outside the scope of the present work.<sup>125</sup> Here the intent is to broadly review the available evidence and sketch out a proposal (inevitably, a controversial one), while taking note of alternative points of view.

### *3.2.1 Evidence for historical setting*

#### *3.2.1.1 External evidence*

For texts such as Leviticus 26, direct external evidence is miniscule.

The perishable nature of papyrus means that the earliest copies of the Old Testament documents of the Pentateuch are at least 1000 years later than the setting the events described in them are given. To say that the text was written in some ancient Near Eastern setting before 200BC leaves things rather vague, but is the best that the dating of manuscripts can do.

Leviticus 26 is set in a narrative that recounts the exodus of Israelite tribes from Egypt and their journey to Canaan. In the nature of the case, nomadic wilderness encampments would not leave remains discernible by archeology several thousand years later, so it is not surprising that none have been found. Besides, external evidence of such an exodus would have to be very rich and detailed to enable firm conclusions about whether an account of it was contemporaneous to the events described, a (much) later recollection, a work of historical fiction, or some compendium of all three.

External evidence can, at most, hint at the plausibility of an historical setting. There are indications that Leviticus does reflect the era in which its narrative is set, though these are not strong enough to eliminate other possibilities. Even a conclusively ancient detail might have been incorporated into an account written much later. Cumulatively, however, these indications must then be incorporated into an overall proposal that does justice to them.

1) **Ritual regulations:** The highly detailed sacrificial system and regulations described in Leviticus have many parallels in documents of the second half of the second millennium BC (cf. Millard 1998:106-110). Where it was once thought that sophisticated, codified ritual like the bulk of Leviticus implied a late stage of development (perhaps in the second half of the first millennium), abundant evidence to the contrary has been found. Weinfeld cites numerous second millennium Hittite examples, detailing exact sequences of ritual procedures and

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<sup>125</sup>For summaries see Hartley (1992:xxxv-xliii), Budd (1996:6-20) and Ruwe (2003:55-56). Ska (1996:248-265) reviews recent scholarship on the composition of the Pentateuch in general. On the history of covenant ideas in critical scholarship see Nicholson (1986:3-117).

complex festival dating (1983:97-103).<sup>126</sup> Millard's complementary examples come from Emar (1998:110). Of course, there may well also be parallels with still earlier and also later ANE ritual systems, but Harrison argues that:

Modern discoveries have shown that priestly material from the Near East is always early rather than late in origin, and that priestly traditions are usually preserved in a meticulous manner. Therefore to assign a priestly document such as Leviticus to a late date is to go completely contrary to ancient Near Eastern literary traditions (1980:22-3).

2) **Yahweh's tent:** The tabernacle, Yahweh's portable tent shrine, is described in elaborate detail in the second half of Exodus, assumed throughout Leviticus and alluded to in Leviticus 26. It contrasts with the very solid temples built at Jerusalem during the first millennium and described later in the canonical text. On the other hand, the second millennium Hittites had divine tents (Weinfeld 1983:104). Most striking are the detailed parallels between the tabernacle and Egyptian war tents. Kitchen concludes: "history indicates that the Tabernacle tradition belongs to the Bronze Age Egypto-Semitic world, not to the Mesopotamian world of the mid-first millennium BC" (2000:14; cf. Kitchen 2003:282-283). It is implausible as a later creation.

3) **Regulations for release:** Close to Leviticus 26, in the preceding chapter, are careful regulations for release from slavery and debt. The term used is *לְחֵרֶת*, 'freedom' in Leviticus 25, which is cognate to the Akkadian *andurâru(m)*, used for very similar royal actions "to 'restore' the economic equilibrium in the land" (Olivier 1997:986) and found in Mesopotamia from the mid-third millennium to nearly the middle of the first millennium. This detail thus fits well with a second millennium date, though it does not demand it.

4) **One god:** Similarly, monotheistic ideas, or at least monolatry, were also part of the second millennium ANE milieu. De Moor argues at length (1990:42-100) that there was a late Bronze Age and early Iron Age "crisis of polytheism" (1990:42) in the ANE, adducing examples from Egypt, Mesopotamia and Ugarit. In this context, concentration on one god was seen as a solution to the problematic pantheon (1990:100; cf. Gnuse 1989:147). Halpern writes of "successor-states to the Egyptian empire in Asia" in the late Bronze Age: "These states appear uniformly to have devoted themselves to the worship of the national god" (1987:84). While this environment does not account for or explain the passionate emphasis of Leviticus 26 on worship of Yahweh alone, it does provide plausible background.

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<sup>126</sup>Weinfeld does so while demolishing the five central pillars of Wellhausen's argument for a late date for P (1983:95).

5) **Idolatry:** The vehemence of not only Leviticus 26 but also most of the rest of the Old Testament about worshipping Yahweh alone stands in contrast to abundant archeological evidence, as goddess figurines and shrines have been unearthed, that ancient Israel before the exile worshipped a great deal more than Yahweh alone (Laato 1998:119-125; Dever 2001:173-197).<sup>127</sup> Of course, the very vehemence of the prohibitions gets its rhetorical force from the assumption that doing the contrary was a real possibility. It is not plausible to see the prohibitions and threats in the text as the product of a time when exclusive worship of Yahweh was conventional or established. Rather, it is vigorously contested.<sup>128</sup> Unfortunately, this criterion is rather imprecise and would only rule out a period well after the Babylonian exile. The temptation to resort to powers besides or along with Yahweh was common throughout the whole earlier period.

6) **Covenantal treaty language:** It has already been mentioned in chapter one that covenantal ideas were widespread in the ANE from the third to the first millennia. Indeed, Wiseman argues that covenantal concepts and technical terminology are attested all the way from the fourth millennium down to the Hellenistic and Roman periods (1982:311). Weinfeld writes of a “common heritage of covenantal traditions in the ancient world” (1990:175).

For the forms of treaties in particular, Weinfeld identifies the middle of the second millennium BC as a crucial period. Such language was coined in “an area where there was intensive political interstate activity such as that which actually existed in the 15<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> centuries in the ancient Near East” (1990:177). Similarly, Zaccagnini argues that the second half of the second millennium was one of “intensive interaction of the great politico-territorial formations” (1990:37), when uses of international treaties “reach a true peak in the entire Near Eastern history” (1990:38). Zaccagnini notes that Egyptians of this period used treaties and oaths rather less than the Hittites, but were still familiar with the formulae (1990:51-54; cf. Burden 1970:38). Kitchen gives several examples of the specific term *brt* as a Semitic loanword in Egyptian documents of the period 1300-1170 BC, where it is used of vassal relationship (1979:453, cf. Kitchen 1989:122-123). Fensham gives examples from Ugaritic epics and states, it “is clear that the international treaty was well known all over the Ancient Near East during the late Bronze Age” (1979:265).

<sup>127</sup>This is also the abundant internal evidence of the biblical text. Women of Judah, exiled in Egypt after the fall of Jerusalem to Babylon, are quick to blame the disaster on failures to give the *מלכת השמים*, ‘queen of heaven’ her due (Jer 44:17-19).

<sup>128</sup>Laato’s historical reconstruction is that “very ancient monolatrous (or monotheistic) tendencies were favoured by certain religious circles which did not regain cultic dominance in Judah or Israel until a relatively late period” (1998:126).

The strongest version of this argument is that parallels in form between the Pentateuch and other ANE documents not only make a second millennium setting plausible, but also make a later, first millennium setting, implausible. Thus Kitchen argues that the Sinai covenant “has the closest expectable links with both third/early second millennium Laws and the late second millennium Treaties” (1989:128) and that, specifically, “the phenomenon of few blessings/many curses goes with early law, not with Assyrian treaties” (1989:129), which omit blessings. Kitchen bases his thorough form-critical argument on a substantial corpus, ninety ANE treaty texts (2003:283-294). The form of Deuteronomy does not settle the question for Leviticus, but Meredith Kline has made a detailed case that its structure best fits second millennium parallels (1963). However, there are also treaty parallels in the period of Assyrian ascendancy in the first millennium, which are often held to be decisive in influencing the biblical text (Nicholson 1986; Otto 1998). It is doubtful that considerations of form alone are adequate to decide the question. Walton concludes that “the data are only suggestive, rather than conclusive” (1989:107). But form parallels are enough to at least support the measured conclusion of Fensham, that “the covenant form of the relationship between the Lord and his people analogous to the secular treaty would not have been unintelligible to the Israelites through this whole period” (2000:50), while raising serious questions about Assyrian influence. Fensham defends the plausibility of a second millennium covenant at Sinai (2000:47-48).

7) **Pattern of covenantal traditions:** The work of Cross places the roots of ANE covenantal tradition in the concept of “kinship-in-law” (1998:6-7). Thus covenantal formulae were related to customs like marriage and adoption which took outsiders into the family. As ancient societies developed the technical and societal means for large-scale production, the numbers of people involved meant that older family and clan-based ways of thinking needed to be adapted. Thus the creation of kinship-type obligations reinforced by spirit powers was used to manage relationships on a larger scale.<sup>129</sup> Originally, such rituals would have bound individuals, families and clans. In time, they also bound kingdoms, though the kings still addressed each other in familial terms (and smaller scale commitments would have continued throughout society). And in the course of human events, such commitments would be threatened and need to be enforced, would break down and need to be renewed.

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<sup>129</sup>Cf. McKenzie: “The covenant was, therefore, a cultural, legal, and religious device for uniting distinct kinship groups.” (2000:11-12). Cf. also McCarthy (1978:20).

It should be noted how well this pattern fits with the account of Yahweh's covenant(s) with his people in the canonical text, including Leviticus 26. First, Yahweh makes covenant with individual patriarchs and their offspring. These are simple affairs with few explicit stipulations. Later, the scale is larger. Covenant is remade with a whole people, using the formulae of treaties and with much more detailed stipulations. Repeated ups and downs of covenant enforcement and renewal follow. Such correspondences between the biblical pattern of covenant development and that of the ANE in general do nothing to specify the date of a given passage within a millennium. They do reveal a highly credible and consistent overall scheme, assumed in a wide range of texts. They make implausible revolutionary theories of covenant in Israel, which see a new conception introduced and creatively written back into the past. They make plausible evolutionary views, which take seriously organic development along the lines of the canonical narrative.<sup>130</sup>

### 3.2.1.2 *Internal evidence*

Before proposing a historical setting that incorporates the external evidence above, it is also necessary to review various evidences internal to the biblical text.

1) **Focus on land:** As we have already seen, the land is a fundamental issue in Leviticus 26. The sabbatical regulations and repeated assertions underline that it is Yahweh's gift to his people. His right to revoke it underlies the theological understanding of exile. The land, and all it means for human life, is secondary. The relationship with Yahweh is primary. Rhetorically, receiving the land is supposed to motivate gratitude and obedience. It is not plausible to see this as the perspective of settled, secure occupants of a traditional territory. Such people would tend to see the land as their own, without question or discussion. Rather, the point of view of Leviticus 26 is that of the landless, or at least potentially landless.<sup>131</sup> The most plausible settings would be before secure Israelite settlement in Canaan, or after Assyrian or Babylonian exiles. Of course, the historical books of the Old Testament portray settled stability as more the exception than the rule, so this clear evidence is not decisive.

2) **Time frame:** The text sets itself within a broad sweep of history, as Yahweh himself speaks, ranging from the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to a future when a battered, exiled

<sup>130</sup> McCarthy (1972:85-89) notes how "the vital complexity in our texts" (85) and the variety in the traditions is an argument for antiquity. "If everything is late (deuteronomic, exilic), there is no time or mechanism to explain change" (1986:92).

<sup>131</sup> Albertz does not agree with the dating to be proposed here, but asserts vigorously that the origins of Israelite religion lie in "extreme conditions outside cultivated land" (1994:66).

remnant would not be forgotten. Rather, looking back to a ברית, 'covenant' with their ancestors (Lev 26:45), they would even then see the faithfulness of Yahweh. The present tense, plural 'you' who are addressed are the generation of the exodus from Egypt. Rhetorically, it is a time when obedience, disobedience and repentance are real options.

It is conventional to see this perspective, focused on the present but looking back and forward in time, as a disguised retrospective by those who had actually experienced the Babylonian exile. For example, Joosten sees the ברית ראשונים, 'covenant of ancestors' not as imagining the future, but as a slip, when the fiction of a wilderness setting is momentarily dropped and the much later perspective of the actual author is revealed (1996:113).<sup>132</sup> This can be combined, as it is in Joosten's case (1996:196-198) with viewing the text as a composite, in which different layers are responses in retrospect to different phases of the historical experience of Israel. Implicitly, imagining the past is assumed to be more likely than imagining the future.

In fact, both are possible. It is impossible to describe a vast sweep of events without imagining either forward or backward in time (leaving aside the observation that Yahweh himself is speaking in the text—and presumably has no difficulties with either direction). Neither act of imagination should be assumed to be more probable than the other. In the case of Leviticus 26, the text claims to be looking both directions. Failing to take the claim seriously would undermine the rhetorical impact of the text. If the account is all in retrospect, challenge would shrink to explanation. Curiously, too, Leviticus 26 is rather silent about what will happen after the threatened exile, beyond affirming Yahweh's covenant faithfulness. An exilic audience would presumably have been interested in more detail.

3) **Reality of exile:** The externally attested destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC, with its attendant deportations, was a massive turning point in the history of Judah. It is nevertheless a serious misunderstanding of both the ANE context and the argument of the text to assume that references to exile must be responses to that experience. It is a methodological error to assume that the mere relevance of a text indicates provenance.

The threat of deportation was part of the standard range of curses proclaimed against ברית, 'covenant'-breakers. It was also the historical experience of various peoples of the ANE before it became the experience of Israel and Judah. Long before 586 BC its omission might therefore

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<sup>132</sup>He does concede, however, of the desert setting that the "fictional context is held to very consistently" (Joosten 1996:204).



be more implausible than its inclusion (cf. Milgrom 2001: 2363). A similar principle applies to any other of the dire consequences threatened for disobedience.<sup>133</sup> Deep insecurity was common enough throughout the ANE for there to be no need to extrapolate from particular instances to particular threats.

Within the text, the doom of exile is logically linked to exodus, the gift of the land and the sabbatical principle. It flows from the theological assumptions of the text that the land is Yahweh's to give and to take. It does not read as something tacked on after the fact. (This whole perspective, of course, could also have been created after the fact.) The point is that the plausibility of the argument does not depend on first-hand historical experience of a Babylonian, or Assyrian, exile.

Generally, the fact that a text is highly relevant to a given situation does not necessarily imply that it is the creation of that situation. For centuries, Christian readers of Old Testament texts have found them highly relevant in their own situations while fully aware of their alien provenance. This can be seen as a work of the Holy Spirit or an autonomous work of an interpretive community. There is certainly no *a priori* reason why this process could not have functioned within the Old Testament period, so that, for example, covenantal language in differing ways provided identity and unity for a motley agglomeration escaping Egypt, and for the incomplete occupiers of the territory of technologically superior Canaanites, and for a rising monarchy dealing with Philistine pressure, and for a shriveling monarchy under Assyrian pressure, and for a crumpled remnant in Babylonian exile.<sup>134</sup>

**4) The language of Ezekiel:** There are widespread links between the language of the book of Ezekiel and that of Leviticus, including chapter 26. This could imply common origin, or that the author of one was steeped in the message and wording of the other.<sup>135</sup> Zimmerli notes of our focus text: "It is above all Leviticus 26 which made one consider seriously the similarity of authorship of H and Ezekiel. Here also, however, closer examination leads to recognition that close connection stands alongside striking independence of formulation" (1979:51). Later work

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<sup>133</sup>Noth's comment is that "this and the foregoing do not produce anything indicating a specific historical situation belonging to one particular moment; rather do they express experiences that Israel must have undergone again and again from the beginning of her history, or at least since the Syrian wars of the ninth century BC" (1965:199). Still, he sees the "end of the period of the Jewish kings as a likely historical background" (1965:200) for the passage.

<sup>134</sup>For a comparable, but more extensive, summary of Israelite history cf. Kitchen (2003:489-492).

<sup>135</sup>Zimmerli proposes abandoning these "sharp alternatives" (1979:47), and concludes that both Leviticus and Ezekiel "drew from the great stream of priestly tradition" (1979:52).

by Hurvitz and Milgrom establishes the probability that Ezekiel knew, borrowed from and adapted Leviticus. Hurvitz deals with the priestly writings in general, acknowledges a lack of “philologically reliable criteria that would enable us to decide what was in fact the direction of influence and borrowing” (1982:14), but still concludes “apparently it was from the P document as we now have it, that Ezekiel drew—directly—the material included in both of these compositions” (1982:150).<sup>136</sup> Milgrom analyzes nine examples<sup>137</sup> from Leviticus 26 and concludes: “It is Ezekiel who exhibits expansions, omissions, and reformulations, all of which lead to the conclusion that Ezekiel is the borrower” (1997:61). Elsewhere Milgrom summarizes: “Apparently, he [Ezekiel] knew Lev 26 as it exists in the MT” (2001:2296). This suggests a date for Leviticus before the Babylonian Exile, since Ezekiel is dated internally with unusual precision for an Old Testament book.

5) **Prophetic use of covenant curses and blessings:** There is a more general case that amplifies the previous point. As Stuart has established (1987:xxxi-xliii; developing an observation of Kline 1963:34), the biblical prophets make extensive use of a repertoire of covenant curses, like those found in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28, as they threaten doom to God’s disobedient people (cf. Allan 1997:796; Kitchen 2003:291, 401, 420). Such curses were part of the broader ANE cultural environment, so direct dependence cannot be proven. They do imply, however, that the prophets understood the relation between Yahweh and his people to be a covenant, even where they do not use the term בְּרִית, ‘covenant.’ It is plausible that, as the prophets claim, they were building on and harking back to an earlier understanding of Yahwism, such as that embodied in the Pentateuch. Many scholars have argued, of course, that the influence went in the opposite direction. This implies, implausibly, that the prophets were creating the traditions to which they appealed for authority. There are, of course, sophisticated admixtures of these arguments, in which ancient traditions are elaborated in successive redactions.

6) **The question of fiction:** This issue rarely reaches the surface of discussions of biblical criticism, but is for this author decisive. Many scholars apparently have no difficulty with understanding the text’s narrative setting as imaginative fiction. The Pentateuch’s accounts of Moses, the exodus from Egypt, the patriarchs, and so on were invented but still functioned as

<sup>136</sup>Hurvitz is careful to point out that the similarities do not require a “common historical age” (1982:154); it is the relative order that is clear whatever the absolute dating (1982:155).

<sup>137</sup>Milgrom also mentions thirteen other verbal parallels or echoes (1997:57-62) of Lev 26 in Ezekiel.

authoritative and revelatory for original author and audience. Thus Whybray, while arguing that “the author of the Pentateuch was in some sense a historian” (1987:238) nonetheless concedes “it is well established that a large proportion of the narratives in the Pentateuch are fiction” (1987:240).<sup>138</sup> Joosten detects in ‘H’ “un jeu subtil de anachronismes” (1995:387)<sup>139</sup> and sees the setting of Leviticus, in which Israel is in the desert, as literary fiction (1996:9). While fiction is a genre of the ancient world, it is not plausible to see Leviticus 26 as a conscious work of fiction. It is a persuasive speech, set in a narrative. This is not a common genre for fiction. The text assumes that Yahweh has in fact spoken and acted in particular ways, is doing so and will do so. If he has not and does not, all rhetorical force is lost. Sternberg writes in defense of the text’s internal point of view when he states: “Were the narrative written or read as fiction, then God would turn from the lord of history into a creature of the imagination, with the most disastrous results” (1985:32). While an author may have been mistaken about Yahweh or the events, it is not plausible that the author was deliberately composing these accounts. Certainly they are interpretations of events, but they are not self-conscious inventions. Those who disagree with the ancient writer’s interpretation or find implausible some astonishing event, may do so, but should realize they are using a viewpoint of superiority well outside the text.

One alternative to seeing the text narrative as intentionally fictitious is the view that the ancient writer(s) elaborated older stories that they thought were true but that a later interpreter does not find credible (though he or she may still find them helpful, insightful, and so forth). The account is meaningful and helpful in itself despite its setting (and the writer’s mistake). Such a position assumes that the meaning is a result primarily of what readers bring to the text. This may avoid some of the communication conflicts that result from seeing the narrative in Leviticus as intentionally fictitious. But such a view contrasts with the biblical presentation of a Yahweh who speaks and acts reliably. He is the focus of relevance. If he did not in fact speak and act as stated in one situation, there is no reason to expect him to do so again.

### 3.2.2 *A proposed historical setting*

Leviticus 26 purports to be an accurate record of words received by Moses while leading an exodus from Egypt to Canaan. The external and internal evidence above shows that a setting in

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<sup>138</sup>Kitchen argues rather sharply that such a view is not well established at all, mounting up considerable evidence for, e.g., the plausibility of an historical exodus (2003:241-312).

<sup>139</sup>‘a subtle play of anachronisms’

the second half of the second millennium is plausible. There is nothing in the text that does not fit this time frame and much that would be surprising as a later invention. This claim should be accepted. (It could also be nuanced by the possibility that genuinely Mosaic material was followed by “some shaping and modernizing of the ancient laws” which “took place after the settlement of Israel in the land; but this does not detract from the antiquity and authenticity of the work as a whole” Ross 2002:41.)

Historical data can be explained many ways. But all other things being equal, it is the simplest proposal that accounts for the evidence that should be accepted. This view of Mosaic authorship avoids creating a tension between what the text claims about its setting and a much later setting (not mentioned in the text and supplied by the interpreter) in which an author was using the earlier setting. In other words, one setting is simpler than two. With respect to covenant concepts, this view allows for organic development as patriarchal covenants grow into something on a larger scale at Sinai and then the covenant traditions are used as a point of reference in later times of crisis and renewal (in interaction with surrounding cultures and their ideas). This, too, is simpler than positing that a new, outside idea was at some point in Israel’s history brought in to integrate Israel’s understanding of itself in relationship to Yahweh.

Contemporary scholars who hold views similar to this one include Ross (2002:41), Bellinger (2001:5), and Harrison (1980:23), and especially Kiuchi (2003:523), Kitchen (2003:283-294, 479), Rooker (2000:23-39) and Barrick (1981:20).

### 3.2.3 *Major alternative proposals*

There are a variety of other ways to accommodate the limited historical evidence reviewed above in reconstructions of when and how a text like Leviticus 26 might have been written. Broadly, these amount to two proposed settings: after the Babylonian exile and during the divided monarchy. Specific reconstructions often posit admixtures of these two settings with, occasionally, some older material allowed as well.<sup>140</sup> The data do not permit firm conclusions, as several writers admit. Levine comments: “there is no clear way to demonstrate the conclusiveness of any one reconstruction over the others” (2003:12). Ruwe’s cautious

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<sup>140</sup>Hartley, for example, gives great weight to ancient traditions (“it is inconceivable that the distinctive faith of Israel could have originated without a formative leader like Moses, for innovative social change usually requires a charismatic leader” 1992:xli), but sees the trauma of exile as spurring priests and scribes to undertake a “standard edition” of these traditions (1992:xlii-xliii), while leaving undefined what creativity such priests and scribes may have exercised.

summary is that “an agreement on the genesis of Leviticus still seems to be a long time off” (2003:56).<sup>141</sup>

**After the Babylonian exile:** According to these proposals, the catastrophe of loss of homeland and statehood after Judah’s defeat by Babylon catalyzed a new understanding of Israelite identity and a thorough re-working of Israelite tradition, which provided a program for renewal and reconstruction and produced most of the Old Testament texts as we now have them. This is probably the majority position in contemporary scholarship. Gerstenberger (1996:6), van Seters (1999:204), and Levine (1987:31; 1989:xxxiii; 2003:17-22) tend to understand the composition of Leviticus 26 in these terms. Budd specifically locates the work in “colonial Israel” of the sixth or fifth centuries (1996:8) and sees its completion by the time of Ezra (1996:20). Levine suggests a setting in the Persian period, while acknowledging “in late priestly writings, we note a widespread tendency toward anachronism, and the blending of early and late traditions” (2003:17).

**During the divided monarchy:** Alternative proposals emphasize an established priestly point of view centered on a Jerusalem temple dedicated to Yahweh, the crushing pressure of Assyrian and other outside powers, and the catalyzing effect of the fall of the northern kingdom on those who remained in Judah. Those who defend the decisiveness of this setting may also allow a greater or lesser amount of final redaction after the Babylonian exile. Milgrom is the most prominent exponent of this position and declares: “over 95 percent of the H material can be attributed to the product of the eighth century” (2000:1345). He sees details in Leviticus 26 that make it a specific reaction to the fall of Samaria (2001:2364). This holiness material presumes, supplements and revises earlier priestly writings (2000:1349-1352) and is itself finally edited by an exilic tradent, who, for example, inserts the following verses into chapter 26: 1-2, 33b-35, 43-44 (2000:1346). Houston states unequivocally: “There can in any case be no question that the cult promoted by the priestly writers of the Pentateuch was, or was derived from, the ‘establishment’, state-sponsored cult of the monarchy” (1993:224), while allowing for rather later writing. Joosten suggests that the setting of this part of Leviticus can “best be understood against the background of a rural milieu in Judah of the pre-exilic period” (1996:203).

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<sup>141</sup> Despite these uncertainties attending scholarly reconstructions, Mosaic authorship is not usually entertained as an option. Perhaps more common is a pessimism like that of Gottwald who writes of “serious doubt that we know anything substantial about Israelite origins” (2002:192), or of Sun who comments: “The prospects of writing any sort of history of pre-exilic Israel

### 3.2.4 Views on the genesis of covenant theology in Israel

Intertwined with debates about the historical setting of Leviticus 26 is a related historical question: At what point did some people in Israel begin to think of their relationship with Yahweh as a covenant? It was before Leviticus 26 was written, which assumes its hearers know about this covenant and challenges them to care about it and to shape their lives by it. An early date for the text requires an early date for the concept, but the opposite is not true. Again, two broad schools of thought can be discerned: one which emphasizes the first millennium period of Assyrian ascendancy and one which sees roots reaching into the second millennium (one form of which has been defended above).<sup>142</sup>

**Later/Assyrian influence:** The Assyrians used vassal treaties extensively to help establish their hegemony throughout much of the Near East during the eighth and seventh centuries BC. The Assyrians had a devastating impact on the northern kingdom, destroying it, and a massive impact on the southern kingdom, Judah, which survived. Many scholars see this setting as the time when Yahweh's relationship with Israel was first called a covenant. Usually a link is made especially with Josiah's reforms and the "book of the law" (identified as Deuteronomy<sup>143</sup>) found in the temple which influenced them. Nicholson (1986) makes this argument (cf. van Seters 1999:100-101). Gnuse argues (1989:112-117; cf. 1997:110) that covenant is a late development, "more of a result than a cause" (113), its basic idea derived from 'election', in the ANE context for kings and dynasties, specifically Asshur's relations with Assyrian kings (cf. Otto 1998; Albertz 1994:229-231). A more nuanced version of this view is that of McKenzie, who argues that "the image of covenant for God's relationship to Israel came to full expression relatively late in Israel's history" (2000:16) even though "the institution of covenant in the form of treaties binding clans, tribes, and nations together was very ancient" (2000:24). "The use of this image in the Bible cannot be found with certainty before the eighth century" (2000:24; cf. Zevit 2001:477, 688-690). This view tends to emphasize a treaty-focused understanding of covenant concepts which downplays their origin in kinship and emphasizes kingship. It also tends to see covenant thinking as a revolution. This new perspective was introduced late in Israel's pre-exilic history. Subsequently (this is usually seen as during the Babylonian exile and

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or Judah are remote in the extreme" (1990:573). Cf. Kitchen (2003:449-488) and Dever (2001) for criticism of such pessimistic historiography.

<sup>142</sup>Buis's survey (1976:118-120) sees three schools of thought, distinguishing Mosaic origin from other early settings. Oden's survey of scholarship from 1880 to 1980 (1987:429-436) is more interested to trace a gradual waxing and then waning of interest in "asserting the antiquity and centrality of the covenant relationship" (432).

<sup>143</sup>For a critique of the widespread assumption that Deuteronomy was a product of this era, see McConville (2002:26-38).

afterward), it became the dominant point of view and was imposed on the texts and traditions now in the canon in a massive, though incomplete, reworking.

**Earlier/second millennium:** Other scholars see much earlier roots for covenantal theology, without necessarily claiming these are Mosaic (and often not insisting on a specifically second millennium context). Cross argues that there was a move from early patriarchal covenants to a league covenant in Palestine (1973:270-271). McCarthy is convinced that “covenant is an ancient concept in religious contexts” (1978:14) and that “the oldest traditions already testify to a covenant” (1978:15). The narrower treaty genre is what appears in deuteronomistic literature after 700 BC, developing but not inventing covenant concepts (1978:15-16; 1986:111-120). Instead, as society expanded beyond the level of natural groupings, there was:

a social need so strong as to develop a sturdy literary genre and a focus of tradition to maintain it. Rarely do we find a *Sitz im Leben* so clearly the source of a genre. It is also very old, older than J and E. This is something basic, a real response to a real need (1986:78).

Joosten also criticizes the position that this use of covenant originated in the Assyrian period: “For it to be received and transformed by the Deuteronomic school, covenant theology had to be part of Israel’s older theological traditions” (1996:110). Weinfeld places covenant and decalogue “at the dawn of Israelite history” (1990:32; cf. 1987:303-310). Freedman uses pre-monarchic poems to argue that the covenant-related themes of “recognition of Yahweh’s monopoly of power and his exclusive claim on Israel as his property” (1987:328) go back to the Mosaic period. After thirty years of criticism and debate of his proposals Mendenhall is unabashed in insisting that “the foundation of biblical Israel was the Sinai Covenant” (1990:86) and locating this in the chaotic transition from Bronze to Iron ages (1990:87).

### 3.2.5 Comment on the debate over historical setting

However helpful it would be to settle these debates and pinpoint a historical setting for Leviticus 26 with confidence, much useful study can be done regardless. Gorman argues that a responsible understanding of the priestly worldview is possible even though “a precise historical and social setting for Priestly rituals is most difficult to specify” (1990:14-15; cf. Jenson 1992:30).<sup>144</sup> Those who are committed to the assumptions of nineteenth and twentieth century critical scholarship will probably remain unconvinced by the defense of a Mosaic

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<sup>144</sup>Note that this is not the approach of Mullen with the Deuteronomistic history. He first posits a setting and then argues for how the text might have been useful in that setting: “the deuteronomistic author created a ‘common myth of descent,’ a history that could be shared by the group facing the tragedies of the exile” (1993:10).

setting made above (too many larger issues are involved). They should not thereby rule out the conclusions of this study. The key contextual factors affecting the worldview implications of the text are not narrowly derived from a setting at Sinai during an exodus from Egypt any more than they are from an exile in Babylon, or any point in between. The links of covenant concepts with holiness and monolatry against a background of paganism and human vulnerability remain valid during a broad sweep of ANE history, indeed most of the thousand years during which serious proposals for dating this text might place it. This is in fact precisely what one should expect from a set of concepts with the broad, integrating role in the Old Testament noted in chapter two.

### **3.3 The ancient impact of covenant concepts**

This concluding portion of chapter three relates the covenant-shaped worldview of Leviticus 26 to the broader ANE religious context. It seeks to go beyond noting convergences and divergences to suggesting how covenant concepts functioned as a radical religious system, defining a secure yet accountable relationship with God. While a full exposition and defense of these proposals is beyond the scope of the present study, it is possible to sketch out an argument.

#### *3.3.1 The covenant distinctive*

There is a curious parallel between two discussions. Contemporary critical scholarship places less emphasis on covenant concepts than did scholars a generation earlier. At the same time stress has shifted from Israelite discontinuity with the ANE environment and context to continuity. It is quite possible these two trends are interrelated and illustrate something fundamental about covenant concepts in the Old Testament: they are fundamental to what is distinctive in the canonical text, to the break with the pagan worldview (cf. Oden 1987:437).

Gnuse defends continuity vigorously: "Above all it is important that future discussion reflect the sensitive awareness of Israel's great continuity with the ancient Near Eastern world" (1989:117).<sup>145</sup> He rejects established dichotomies in scholarship like monotheism vs. polytheism, linear-historical oriented vs. cyclic-nature oriented, human freedom vs. fate, and epics vs. myths (1989:18; cf. Saggs 1978). Nonetheless, Gnuse acknowledges "one is impressed by the divergence, even if it is not as complete as we had been wont to say in the past" (1989:136), and speaks of Israel being "different," though he is not willing to say

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<sup>145</sup>Cf. Houston: "It is not possible any longer to speak of 'Canaanite' culture as something foreign to Israel" (1993:120-1).



“unique” (1989:136). He elaborates: “the core of people who became Israel were a community set in opposition to the values of their local Palestinian environment to some degree, which in turn reflected the generic values of the ancient world” (143). In his understanding, this opposition led in time (after the exile) to “the complete emergence of a new worldview” (145). Despite the many qualifications, this amounts to a declaration that something radically distinct was in fact at work in Israel!<sup>146</sup> Gnuse is even willing to identify what this was: “Notions like covenant, election, and monotheism are paramount” (1989:130).

Other scholars are more forthright. Walton sees in monotheism and covenant that which “clearly and everywhere distinguishes Israel from her neighbors” (1989:247). For Simkins, “covenant has long been recognized as a central, if not the central, institution of the religion of Israel” (1994:152). Mendenhall asserts that covenant relationship with Yahweh was “the only unique feature of ancient Israelite society, culture, and religion” (1990:89) and explains that “where ancient biblical society radically differed from what we know of ancient pagan polytheism, those features are derived from or at least closely associated with the structure of the Sinaitic covenant” (1990:89). Milgrom comments that in ancient Mesopotamia: “the idea of covenant between the deity and the people is absent” (2001:2305).<sup>147</sup> Nicholson sees covenant concepts as key to a radical discontinuity between Israel’s religion and its pagan environment (1986:216-217). N.T. Wright sums up Israel’s distinctive, what he calls “the focal point of the world-view” (1992:221), as “covenantal monotheism” (1992:251-252, 259-279).

There may have been many points of commonality with the majority environment and many distinctives with some parallels somewhere in the ANE. Yet when all the parallels have been pointed out (and whatever time scheme has been adopted), there is still an overall distinctiveness that needs to be acknowledged. The writers of Scripture were very conscious and polemical about not fitting in. That needs to be taken seriously.

But it would be much simpler if polemic was the only canonical mode of religious interaction with paganism.<sup>148</sup> Many pagan religious customs were indeed adopted and adapted in

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<sup>146</sup>Saggs (1978), after an extensive argument for continuity and against facile distinctions, is willing to use the term ‘unique’ when it comes to the canonical prophets (1978:187).

<sup>147</sup>Zevit (2001) states that in some cases “communities had very specialized covenants with deities intended to protect them from other malevolent gods” (520).

<sup>148</sup>The use of the terms “paganism” and “pagan” is not meant to be pejorative, though such connotations are unavoidable for many. In specific contexts precision is served by referring to “ancient Sumerian religion,” or, in contemporary Africa, to “traditional Lomwe religion.” But when, as here, there is a need for generalizing about religious patterns outside biblical revelation, some such expression as “paganism” is unavoidable unless there is recourse to cumbersome periphrasis.

normative Israelite religion. The definitive theophany experience at Sinai fits a pattern more generally known (Niehaus 1995:30-38). Winged creatures called cherubs supported the thrones of pagan gods, just as, figuratively speaking, they did Yahweh's (Psa 99:1; Keel 1978:169). Ancient kings culminated their conquests with temple-building, just like David and Solomon did (Niehaus 1995:284) and the design of that temple echoed standard pagan models (Keel 1978:154). Indeed, Phoenician craftsmen were prominent on the work site (1 Kgs 7:13-14). The gods and goddesses clustered on mountain tops, like Hermon, Zaphon or Olympus (Keel 1978:114). Yahweh had his (oddly unimpressive) Mount Zion. The very language of a Ugaritic hymn to Baal could be taken over and turned into a hymn to Yahweh (Psa 29; Niehaus 1995:163-171). If so much from pagan religious practice was usable, perhaps when redefined, what were the criteria for determining what was rejected?

Furthermore, there is a curiosity that complicates the question. Assman notes that "during the last three millennia B.C.E., religion appears to have been the promoter of intercultural translatability" (1996:27) in a "common world extended from Egypt to the Near and Middle East and westward to the shores of the Atlantic" (1996:28). Assman specifically credits the treaty-making process for spreading "the conviction that these foreign peoples worshipped the same gods" (1996:26) as divine names were translated from one people to another so the gods could serve as guarantors of covenant commitments. Yet in the Old Testament, covenant concepts shaped distinctiveness even as elsewhere in the ANE they were a force for blending religious traditions.

The answer is to look beyond particular practices to the overall system of which they are expressions. (Gnuse, too, writes that the key to distinctiveness is in the "overall synthesis" 1997:229.)<sup>149</sup> Covenant was not merely a custom, a set of powerful ritual practices. It functions within the Old Testament as a coordinating system, in which Yahweh is no mere guarantor like the other divinities but both party to the covenant with his people and its guarantor. So it is necessary to understand the contrast by seeing paganism as a system, too.

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<sup>149</sup>Cf. also Albertz: "It is not the individual elements but the structure as a whole which makes the religion of Israel distinctive" (1994:20); though Albertz sees this structure primarily in sociological terms. By contrast, this is specifically denied by Saggs: "whilst there are abundant differences of detail and developments, no fundamental differences of principle are discernable, sufficient to set Israelite and Mesopotamian religions apart as two distinct systems" (1978:181-182). He traces eventual differences to Israel's 'critical selectivity' derived from the pressures of its historical situation: "Israelite society was, both for good and for bad, basically less tolerant than Mesopotamian" (1978:185). Saggs does not consider the role of covenant concepts. His method of approach privileges Israelite majority practice over the (presumably minority) case being made by the canonical Old Testament texts.

### 3.3.2 *The ancient Near Eastern religious system*

It is beyond the scope of this work to assess historical developments and cultural distinctives in ancient Near Eastern religions. Inevitably, generalizations imply distortions and loss of nuance. Yet consistent, broad patterns are discernable. It is not unreasonable to treat ANE religions as a whole in general terms. Assman's comment has just been noted above (1996:27-28).

Ancient paganism was focused on human needs, on maintaining and enhancing fragile human existence in the face of hostile forces. Lete writes of Canaanite religion that the various mythologies addressed "the origin, function and cessation of human life and of the real world as it unfolds" (1999:44). This provided a framework of meaning. On the other hand, the cult dealt with "the more immediate demands of the life of the faithful" (1999:44). For everyday human life in its natural course "as a technique, the cult tries to co-ordinate and control ... by means of well-defined rituals that put the faithful in contact with the appropriate god for every case" (1999:44). The world was saturated with the supernatural. Indeed, a distinction between natural and supernatural would not even have made sense. "According to the pattern of ancient Near Eastern literature in general, including Greek literature, human drama can be understood only from the action of the forces of the 'other world,' which govern and shape it" (1999:326). The appropriate human response to this reality is clear: "man must maintain an attitude of obedience and make atonement to ensure the normal rhythm of his existence" (1999:327). Zevit summarizes religious rituals in the same vein (referring to what he considers the majority practice of ancient Israelites):

They were technical ways of guaranteeing much of what communities desired: physical safety, natural and human fertility, placating (untimely) death, longevity and access to information about the future. By achieving these through popular rituals, which presupposed a somewhat mechanical, almost automatic and conventionally recognized tit-for-tat arrangement with the divine powers that be, officiants and participants in these rituals had a sense of control over their own destinies (2001:585).

Keel's summary is blunt, however: "There exists no hope at all for man to share in the eternal, blessed life of the gods. The highest to which he can attain is a happy, secure life on this earth. However, this highest good is constantly threatened by a host of baleful powers" (1978:78).

Ancient Near Eastern religious customs focused on maintaining the cycle of nature, on maintaining social order, and on coping with crises of life. The first two goals were united in widely practiced holy marriage rites, in which "the king, by uniting with the life-giving goddess of love, ensures life and fertility to his land" (Ringgren 1973:29; cf. Bottéro 2001:158). These

rites are linked with “mythical expressions of the dying away of life in the hot and dry summer,” and a “conception of the king as the quintessence of the powers of fertility” (Ringgren 1973:14). Fertility and fecundity were primary issues (Ringgren 1973:128). Trees were not mere sources of firewood, fruit and shade. Keel writes of “the age old Near Eastern concept of the tree as a symbol and signal of a divine power, namely of prosperity and blessing, which ultimately reside in the earth” (1998:46). The Asherah poles so often mentioned in Scripture were symbolic, and often literal, trees (1998:54-55). Sacrifices served the gods “to make them in some way better equipped to carry out their duties to the benefit of mankind,” and “keep the processes of life going” (Ringgren 1973:42).

Fertility did not stand by itself. Mixed together were the goals of “prosperous government, good vegetation, abundant prosperity, victory and success” (Ringgren 1973:29). Nicholson summarizes: “the cosmic order was not merely given; it had to be sustained. It was society’s guarantee against the ever-present forces of destruction, the forces of chaos, which might manifest themselves in, for example, disruptions of the fertility of nature, attacks by enemies (seen as allies of the cosmic forces of chaos), and the like” (1986:194). The value of social order is seen not only in the prominence given to kingship, but in that sins against the gods included alienating family and friends, offenses against the community (Ringgren 1973:113; cf. Bottéro 2001:186-188). The gods’ retribution could be assumed against such (Ringgren 1973:118). The community could also include past generations: at Ugarit, there were rituals for directly obtaining the favor of ancestral spirits (Lewis 1986:158; cf. Blenkinsop 1997:82; cf. also Zulu 1998:102 comparing contemporary Ngoni with ANE practice). Such practices occurred “especially at critical moments of the individual’s life cycle and of the group’s generally precarious existence” (Blenkinsop 1997:82). Frankfort distinguishes nuances between the Mesopotamian and Egyptian spheres of the ANE: “Throughout the Mesopotamian texts we hear overtones of anxiety which seem to express a haunting fear that the unaccountable and turbulent powers may at any time bring disaster to human society” (1977:366), whereas the Egyptian view is more stable. Nonetheless, “the two peoples agreed in the fundamental assumptions that the individual is part of society, that society is imbedded in nature, and that nature is but the manifestation of the divine” (1977:366-367).

Yet the gods’ interventions (and those of other spirit powers, like demons and spirits of the dead) were unpredictable. Life was fraught with uncertainties. “The conduct of the gods lacked consistency and was for the most part unpredictable” (Walton 1989:238). Speaking of

sicknesses, Keel comments: “Offenses against the deity also play a role in this context in Mesopotamia. In polytheism, however, these offenses are less absolutely defined and demons can assail a man without any cause. Prophylactic measures are accordingly abundant” (1978:81). Bottéro explains: “The only possible reason that could be given to explain attacks by ‘demons’ (as *we* would say), was their wantonness and pure malevolence, for the attacks could not be explained through any provocation on the part of their victims” (2001:187). Conventional wisdom in Babylonia is reflected in a text from the second millennium:<sup>150</sup> “He who waits on his god has a protecting angel;/The humble man who fears his goddess accumulates wealth” (ll. 21,22). But the reality has been different: “My god decreed, instead of wealth, destitution” (l. 75). Indeed, the sufferer laments of various gods that they “gave perverse speech to the human race” (l. 279). Since it was believed that human life was “constantly threatened by evil powers or demons which caused sickness and suffering” (Ringgren 1973:89), amulets, incantations, and divination were important parts of life (the “prophylactic measures” referred to by Keel, above). Amid uncertainty, to know the future and prevent, direct, or control it was a deep concern (Lete 1999:345).<sup>151</sup> Gnuse’s comment is that “ancient Near Easterners were moral, ... but they ultimately could experience neither religious certitude nor satisfaction from their moral behavior” (1997:251). Halpern is more dismissive: “Theodicy in a polytheistic culture is a fundamentally adolescent genre” (1987:106).

The negative side of ancient paganism, human vulnerability before arbitrary powers, should not obscure its undeniable attractiveness. As Keel comments: “The cult of idols, in which the deity seemed readily accessible to man and, in large measure, at man’s disposal—indeed, in man’s clutches—again and again proved a fascination to many Israelites” (1978:236). These religions sought the good life, their prayer was for “fullness of life” (Ringgren 1973:110). Their promise was power through technique.

### 3.3.3 *Covenant as a religious system*

By contrast, in Leviticus 26 and elsewhere in the Old Testament, Yahweh uses the language of covenant, taken from family law and international politics, to define a religious system. Yahweh becomes a covenant initiator and partner (not just a guarantor). Right relationship with Yahweh is given center stage. That relationship is exclusive. He does not compete with other

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<sup>150</sup>“The Babylonian Theodicy” (Thomas 1958: 97-103).

<sup>151</sup>Note that a clear distinction between “religious” practices of the cult and “magical” practices such as these cannot be sustained. Cf. Ringgren, 1973:34.

powers, but rules all. And in that relationship he is not arbitrary, but reliable and purposeful, patiently, relentlessly pursuing his goal. He is neither inscrutable nor arbitrary.<sup>152</sup> He has defined his obligations to his people. He has also defined their accountability to him. The “good life” is knowing him. It is obtained by pleasing him.

Despite the dangers of reductionism, the theological purpose of covenant concepts in the Old Testament can be put in these terms: The covenant structure highlights relationship with Yahweh and exclusivity, security, accountability and purpose within that relationship.

**Exclusivity:** A personal relationship with deity was not in itself unique in the ancient world. The Babylonian sufferer whose complaint was cited earlier, speaks quite naturally of “my god” (l. 75). The great variety of deities made having personal favorites and specialists for every need quite easy. The immanence of deity was not really an issue. But the covenant relationship is exclusive (cf. Chisolm 1995:67). The pagan religious pantheon put competing powers at the center of its conception of life. However, the political concepts of overlord and vassal did not allow for competing loyalties. Of course, they existed in practice, but the purpose of an overlord creating a covenant relationship was to insist on excluding others from that role in the vassal’s life. Like no pagan religious concept, this is a model for communicating monotheism, not in an abstract ontological sense, but as a demand for commitment. Covenant defines and shapes monotheism. This accounts theologically for the prominence of the treaty form of covenant in the Old Testament.

This exclusiveness of covenant relationship with Yahweh depends logically on the covenantal nature of creation (cf. Simkins 1994:127-161). Nature is not an arena of competing powers, but the realm of one ruler. This gives him both the right to insist on being treated as overlord and the ability to fulfill his obligations. His good intentions are not going to be stymied by any opponent.

**Security:** The specific, kinship-type, mutual obligations of covenant created a relationship of both security and accountability. Old Testament theologian Eichrodt highlights covenant security in contrast to pagan religion:

Because of this, the fear that constantly haunts the pagan world, the fear of arbitrariness and caprice in the Godhead, is excluded. With this God, men know exactly where they stand; *an atmosphere of trust and security* is created,

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<sup>152</sup>This does not mean Yahweh was not frustrating to deal with: After discussing the manipulative power of ritual, Zevit comments “This sense of control was not easily and readily available in the Yahwistic alternative” (2001:585).

in which they find both the strength for a willing surrender to the will of God and joyful courage to grapple with the problems of life (1961:38; italics original).

The result is a unified, purposeful, view of the world and a “robust affirmation of life” (1961:39). These are “two marks that distinguish it clearly from the fissile and pessimistic tendencies of paganism” (1961:39). When the God who creates is seen as a covenant-making God, it becomes “inconceivable that the creation should be based on impulsive caprice, or the unpredictable and aimless sport of kindred or hostile divine powers” (1967:98). God’s will may not always seem reasonable and explicable, “but neither is it felt to be a tyranny of chance caprice” (1967:370).

Kaiser chose promise as the central theme of his Old Testament theology (1978:12-14, 32-40; cf. House 1998:40-41). As he recognizes, that theme is not independent but a component of the covenant framework. Yahweh’s covenant obligations are expressed as promises, backed up by oath commitments. Such specific commitments provide a radical security. Noah and his family know that no other world-wide flood is coming, that the natural cycle will not fail until the end. They can set out confidently to fill and reshape the world (Gen 9:17-20). Pagan deities had implicit obligations to defend and provide for their worshippers and temples, out of self-interest primarily. But Yahweh made explicit commitments. Gnuse concludes: “The ultimate result was a view of the world in which people no longer feared the forces of nature or the unknown future” (1997:254). McGrath makes this component central to his understanding of covenant: “The very idea of a covenant, on which the history of Israel and the church depends, is grounded in God’s *faithfulness*—that is to say, God’s principled decision to act in certain ways, and not others, which he has disclosed to us” (2003:348).

**Accountability:** Within the mutual commitment of covenant, security is never divorced from accountability. One of the great temptations of Israelite history was to forget this, to cry “The temple of Yahweh! The temple of Yahweh!” (Jer 7:4) and to presume that its mere presence, or earlier, that of the ark (1 Sam 4:3), guaranteed immunity from disaster. Within the pagan system the fundamental danger is of inadequate manipulation (though there can also be grim consequences for misbehavior). But the Old Testament record relentlessly makes the point that covenant unfaithfulness has the most severe consequences. Oaths with sanctions and curses are built into the covenant structure. Yahweh cannot be manipulated.

Nicholson notes that in the ANE, human social order was validated by the cosmic order. But the covenant theology framework stands outside this scheme. Yahweh stands over against the world. His purpose is not to sustain it but to transform it (1986:208). Instead of conformity, “adoption and free decision” become distinctive (1986:vii). Nicholson’s focus on the social order, inadequate in itself, nevertheless highlights the accountability implicit in covenant structure. The pagan religious system did indeed deify the *status quo* (cf. G. E. Wright: “Polytheism was thus preeminently a religion of the *status quo*” 1963:4). But covenant provided a basis for a radical critique, with both standards and purpose given from outside the system.

At the corporate and individual levels, covenant security and accountability provide both tension and balance. They are the counterparts of gospel and law, of indicative and imperative. “Ce qui finalement est exigé, ce n’est pas telle ou telle action, mais une attitude, une tension constante de tout l’être vers Dieu” (L’Hour 1966:68).<sup>153</sup> In the Torah, security and accountability are the motives for obedience. In the Psalms, they are the grounds of both praise and complaint. In the Prophets, they are the grounds of both judgment and hope. Thus Brueggemann comments that law and grace, conditional and unconditional are “misguided polarities” (1999:37). Covenant relation is a deeper category (1999:38). “Our most serious relationships, including our relationship to the God of the gospel, are at the same time, profoundly unconditional and massively conditional” (1999:36).

This tension between security and accountability did not exclude genuine bafflement from the life of faith, experiences of frightening insecurity and hardship that defied neat analysis, where covenant transgression and punishment did not line up. (Halpern indeed highlights the complexity that monotheism brings to theodicy, 1989:106.) Yet this is the framework within which those very problems are brought to Yahweh (Pss 44; 89). This framework is bigger than the experience of blessing which is the goal of paganism. The primacy of the relationship can even lead to the paradox of a God who inflicts hardship, to humble, to test, to grow covenant children in their trust in their covenant father and lord (Deut 8:2-5).

**Purpose:** Covenant concepts also provide final purpose in history. The commitment is made at a specific point between specific parties. It is not a natural fact of life. It begins. It is renewed across generations. Obligations are made for the future. Consequences, both for good and for

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<sup>153</sup> ‘What finally is required is not this or that action, but an attitude, a continual tension of one’s whole being toward God.’



ill, can be expected. All of this amounts to an historical framework. This is not the framework of paganism. The covenant relationship is designed to establish peace, a comprehensive, wholesome well-being. In the Old Testament, that intimate relationship is never quite achieved. It is begun, but full consummation lies in the future. This is the framework of eschatology, of final purpose.

Cross discusses the contrast between ancient paganism and Yahwism in the literary categories of myth versus history or epic (1973:viii). Myth is cyclical, focused on natural processes. Epic is linear and goal-directed. Myth tells fantastic stories, whose message is independent of whether they could ever happen. History allows for miracles, events that are genuine signs and wonders. Such distinctions are valuable (despite the criticisms noted above by Gnuse and others that the contrasts have been overstated<sup>154</sup>). Covenant concepts in fact decisively link God with a people in history and through linear history. They underline “the factual nature of the divine revelation” (Eichrodt 1961:37). A goal in history is a corollary of covenant. Mendenhall sounds the same theme: the “meaningfulness of history is the most important contrast also between biblical thought and ancient Near Eastern paganisms” (1990:92) and specifically locates this in the blessings and curses formulae (1990:95).

Walton highlights revelation as a purpose of covenant: “The purpose of the covenant is to reveal God” (Walton 1994:24; cf. 150). He explains that “the covenant gave meaning and purpose to the acts of deliverance, therefore finding its purpose in revelation” (1994:34).

### **3.4 Chapter conclusion**

A generation ago, G. E. Wright commented in a missiological journal: “The church which lacks the Old Testament again becomes easy prey to paganism” (1963:8). He explained: “It is the Old Testament which initially broke radically with pagan religion and which thus forms the basis on which the New rests” (1963:9). The present chapter gives the foundation for a more precise formulation: it is the worldview communicated by covenant concepts, like those in Leviticus 26, understood in the historical and religious context of the ANE, which makes for a radical break with the worldview of paganism (even while happily absorbing many noncontroversial elements of pagan culture).

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<sup>154</sup>The Assyrians, for example, were happy to argue that their God Asshur willed the expansion of the Assyrian empire (Saggs 1978:84)—a purpose in history! The point is not that ANE religions did not have examples of purpose, of accountability, of security, and even of exclusivity. What is distinctive is the overall synthesis made by OT covenant theology.

This understanding raises more acutely than ever the translation question the present study started with. It is not just how to translate the BH term בְּרִית, 'covenant' into Lomwe, but also how to convey its radical, transforming impact.

Before turning to Lomwe culture and worldviews in the chapters that follow, it helps to be able to state the impact succinctly, as above: The covenant structure highlights relationship with Yahweh and exclusivity, security, accountability and purpose within that relationship. This summary becomes a set of criteria for evaluating attempts to communicate covenant concepts. Partial analogies such as contract, agreement, treaty, alliance, or adoption can be analyzed in these terms, their strengths and weaknesses identified. Integrating power, the capacity to structure an understanding of life, is vital. No mere formal correspondence of cultural concepts will be adequate. The goal is nothing less than a committed relationship to God in which people deny other loyalties, rejoice in God's guarantees, expect to be held to his standards, and are eager for his purposes. Anything less does not do justice to Old Testament Scripture, though the Old Testament narratives rather suggest that this goal is more something to struggle toward than it is an instant acquisition.

## LOMWE CULTURE AND WORLDVIEW

The present chapter jumps to a contemporary situation, that of Lomwe-speakers, the audience of the Lomwe Old Testament translation. The goal is to discern elements in their culture and worldview which will prove essential to their understanding and appropriating the Old Testament covenant concepts so integral to Leviticus 26 and indeed to the whole Bible being translated into their language. In part this process is negative, identifying the gaps in perspective where communication is most likely to fail, where distortions are most likely to occur. Then the next chapter looks at the specifics of communicating Leviticus 26 and covenant concepts in this context, while chapter six suggests responses.

To attempt to do justice to the complexity and variety of a dynamic reality, the chapter is in two complementary parts. The first part uses ethnographic sources for an introductory survey that is both general and somewhat dated, focusing on a traditional way of life that, while both recognizable and deeply influential, is not simply to be taken for granted by many Lomwe-speakers now. The second part uses contemporary local songs in Protestant churches for insights into the culture, theology and worldview of those Lomwe-speakers who will be the first to use the new translation. These are only two of many perspectives which interact with each other as people who speak Lomwe live their lives and seek to understand their world.

**Background:** About 1.3 million<sup>155</sup> Lomwe-speakers live in Mozambique,<sup>156</sup> concentrated in the northern part of Zambézia province, in a swath from the coast to the Malawi border. Lomwe-speakers share Mozambique's history: Five hundred years of Portuguese colonial influence along the coast, with effective occupation of interior regions beginning at the end of the nineteenth century (though slave raiding and trade had a much earlier impact). In the closing decades of the twentieth century, Mozambicans experienced colonialism, a guerrilla

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<sup>155</sup>The estimate in the Barrett and Johnson (2004), World Christian Database (WCD) is 1,295,571. The database is the on-line update of the (2001) *World Christian Encyclopedia*. URLs for the website are: <http://asp2.breuer.com/wcd>; <http://www.worldchristiandatabase.org/wcd/>.

<sup>156</sup>Another 871,987 (WCD 2004) live across the border in neighboring Malawi, subject to a British rather than Portuguese colonial history and a dominant Chichewa rather than Portuguese language environment. They are not the focus of this study, though parts of it could be highly relevant. On their history, see Boeder (1984). *Ethnologue.com* estimates for Lomwe-speakers Malawi are higher, 1.5 million, cf. [http://www.ethnologue.com/show\\_language.asp?code=NGL](http://www.ethnologue.com/show_language.asp?code=NGL).

war for independence, Marxism, civil war,<sup>157</sup> and then, after 1992, a slow rebuilding of society and economy. Ranked the poorest country in the world in 1992, Mozambique achieved a 2001 per capita annual income of US\$210 (UNESCO).<sup>158</sup> This national average is raised by the relative concentration of wealth in the south of the country, close to the regional economic powerhouse, South Africa. Most Lomwe-speakers, as subsistence farmers, located in the north in rural settings, have incomes much lower than this average figure.<sup>159</sup>

Deep poverty is attended by its grim companions. National average life expectancy is 39 years (lower for most Lomwe-speakers). AIDS and other diseases overwhelm the formal health care system. Adult literacy is at a mere 44 per cent (UNESCO).<sup>160</sup>

These social, economic, and political realities merit study, and action, in their own right. For the present work, these brief reminders serve simply to set the context in which Lomwe-speakers live and with which their culture and worldview must grapple. Life is deeply vulnerable. Subsistence is won with courage at high cost.



In addition to the crises of recent history, Lomwe-speakers are also dealing with longer term processes that promote instability and insecurity at a deep level. Traditional social structure and worldview have been adapted, as we shall see, for survival in a setting of subsistence agriculture. Now there is also the irreversible and incoherent impact of wider worlds, whether it is called modernization, urbanization, globalization or something else. Christianity is just one, albeit powerful, element in this.

The rest of this chapter takes two contrasting (and somewhat idealized) snapshots of Lomwe culture and worldview, using quite distinct approaches (that are not strictly comparable). One is the traditional way of life, as seen through ethnographic secondary literature, supplemented by

<sup>157</sup>See Hall and Young (1997) for a balanced account of Mozambican history in the period 1970-1995.

<sup>158</sup>[http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/mozambique\\_statistics.html](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/mozambique_statistics.html). WCD (2003) quotes a GDP per capita of US \$80.

<sup>159</sup>Cf. "Lion Cubs on a Wire." *The Economist*, August 14, 2003.

<sup>160</sup>Nampula-based literacy specialist Nancy Loveland quotes the much lower figure of 16.7% (personal communication, November 15, 2003).

insights from traditional oral literature, primarily proverbs. The other is the public worldview of some contemporary Lomwe-speaking Christians, as seen through the primary literature of their songs. Neither snapshot alone does justice to dynamic, indeed convulsive, reality. Together, they hint at the tensions and struggle of those who will hear the Lomwe Old Testament translation and its alien message of covenant.

#### 4.1 Traditional Lomwe social structure and worldview

As already noted, while the present tense used in ethnographic literature may give a poor picture of current practice, these descriptions do highlight the traditional values that both underlie and critique contemporary practices. The following survey begins (after a review of resources) with social structure and customs that define kinship bonds. This is the cultural area that in the Ancient Near East gave rise to covenantal customs. The survey then looks at worldview variables of the Lomwe tradition.

##### 4.1.1 Ethnographic resources:

Most of the relevant published ethnographic material deals with Makhuwa-speakers,<sup>161</sup> but it is also applicable to the Lomwe. The names Lomwe and Makhuwa imply two distinct ethnic groups, which are conventionally divided between the Lomwe in Zambézia province and Malawi and, farther north, the 5.3 million Makhuwa (Barrett and Johnson 2003) in the provinces of Nampula, Niassa, and Cabo Delgado as well as Tanzania. This division sits awkwardly with the reality of a variety of related dialects shading into each other as one moves from north to south and from the coast inland (Martinez 1989:32-39, cf. Ciscato, n.d.:iii). One might speak of a Makhuwa language family,<sup>162</sup> with Lomwe as one of its largest dialects.<sup>163</sup> Neighboring dialects are mutually intelligible. Ones from opposite extremes are much less so.<sup>164</sup> Lomwes and Makhuwas share a common identity rooted in myth, social structure and traditional religion (cf. Manjate 2000:5, 26). Throughout the area, traditions of origin speak of

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<sup>161</sup>The name is also spelled *Makua* in English and *Macua* in Portuguese. The spelling *Makhuwa* is used in Grimes (2003; <http://www.ethnologue.com>) and the French sources consulted. It has the advantage of being the spelling in the Makhuwa language itself (according to official Mozambican orthography; Anon. 1999). Note that Bantu languages use prefixes to distinguish between a language, a people, and a land. Thus *A-lomwe* is "Lomwe people" and *E-lomwe* is "Lomwe language," and similarly with Makhuwa. This technical distinction, which can be cumbersome in English, has not been followed.

<sup>162</sup>A phonological distinctive is the absence of the voiced consonants, b, d, g, and z, which are found in neighboring language groups.

<sup>163</sup>Lomwe, of course, can also be analyzed into a variety of component dialects. See Grimes (2003), [http://www.ethnologue.com/show\\_language.asp?code=NGL](http://www.ethnologue.com/show_language.asp?code=NGL).

<sup>164</sup>It is striking, however, that Maples' *Handbook of the Makua Language*, published in 1879 and based on work in what is now southern Tanzania, uses many Makhuwa terms current among Lomwe speakers in Zambézia province today.

one place: "We came from Mount Namuli."<sup>165</sup> Moreover, the same clan names are recognized (in variant forms, Macaire 1996:43-44). As is typical in much of Africa, one creator God, *Muluku*, is acknowledged, though prayers and offerings are directed to ancestral spirits who maintain social order (Martinez 1989:225-230).

The key ethnographic summaries published on the Lomwe and Makhuwa are those of Martinez (1989), *O Povo Macua e a sua Cultura*, Macaire (1996), *L'Heritage Makhuwa au Mozambique*, and Geffray (1990), *Ni père ni mère, Critique de la parenté: le cas makhuwa*. Specifically on the Lomwe is the work of Ciscato (1987), *Apontamentos de Iniciação Cultural*, along with his other publications, including an extensive collection of traditional proverbs (n.d.).

Martinez' work attempts a description of Makhuwa culture as he knew it as a Spanish missionary priest in one part of Niassa province over the years 1971-1985. His focus is on the great life cycle rituals at birth, initiation, marriage, illness and death, which he describes in helpful detail. His theme is the value of life, a gift from the ancestors that each human is responsible to pass on (1989:104-105). The tone is of one defending the depth and richness of Makhuwa culture against its, presumably colonial, denigrators.

Macaire's analysis is the most thorough of Makhuwa and Lomwe culture yet published. In some 430 pages, the French anthropologist interacts with material published by others as well as information from the colonial era that has never been published (1996:6). His survey moves from social structure and concepts of lineage to rites of passage from birth to death and concludes with a section on traditional economic activity and arts. Unfortunately, this stimulating sweep of material is used to make a tendentious argument about the origins of human society. Macaire argues that a matrilineal structure is the earliest form of social organization.

Geffray's work is a useful complement to the two previous books. Also a French anthropologist, Geffray analyzes Makhuwa society from the perspective of economic power relationships (1990:30-31, 47-50), basing his conclusions on field work in Nampula province during 1983-1985. His concern is to demonstrate that the language of blood relationships used

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<sup>165</sup>The author has heard this stated or alluded to widely; cf. also Macaire (1996:20-24), Martinez (1989:38-41), Ciscato (2003). Mt. Namuli is located in a Lomwe-speaking area, in the northern part of Zambésia province near its convergence with Nampula and Niassa provinces.

in anthropological discussions is an entirely social construct without necessary biological foundations (1990:22-24, 32-34).<sup>166</sup>

Ciscato's focus is on introducing Catholic mission workers from outside the Lomwe area to local cultural distinctives, demonstrating a rare sympathy for his subject, and an even more rare integrating perspective, with his concept of *cosmobiologia* (1987:26), whereby the human body is seen as a microcosm of the natural environment, and, conversely, the natural environment is a macrocosm of the body. Ciscato has also written on burial customs (1998), the spirits (1999), and the Lomwe holy mountain, Namuli (2003). His undated collection of 1,636 Lomwe proverbs and sayings, *Mashiposhipo*, is a rich source of primary material. Note that proverbs are particularly useful at revealing established traditional values and worldview because "estão sujeitas a uma censura preventiva que não permite a difusão de textos refractórios ou hostis às normas axiológicas prevalecentes nessa comunidade" (Manjate 2000:49, cf. 55).<sup>167</sup>

#### 4.1.2 Social structure

Historically, the Lomwe have a social structure<sup>168</sup> that is matrilineal, exogamic and matrilocal. This presents special challenges for Christian communication (cf. Niemeyer 1993). It also presents challenges to communicating the concept of covenant, whose ANE roots are in the idea of chosen kinship. Such ideas are poorly represented in Lomwe tradition.

##### 4.1.2.1 Summary

**Matrilineal** means that descent is traced through a line of mothers going back into ancestral antiquity. The key term is *erukulu*,<sup>169</sup> which means 'womb' (Martinez 1989:62; Macaire 1996:72-73; Geffray 1990:88). To be of one womb can mean literally to be born of the same mother. But one's mother's womb emerged from another womb, creating an image of nested wombs that defines who one's relatives are. In English, it is common to speak of blood relatives and the same metaphor is preserved in the Latinate anthropological jargon of consanguinity. In Lomwe, womb imagery replaces that of blood.

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<sup>166</sup>As will be seen below, questions of social structure raise many issues for Bible translation.

<sup>167</sup>'They are subject to a preventive censure that does not permit the diffusion of values inimical or hostile to the axiomatic norms prevailing in this community.'

<sup>168</sup>Vuyk (1991) discusses four other matrilineal peoples of Central Africa. Though distinctive, Lomwe/Makhuwa social structure is not unique. Cf. also Wegher 1995, 1999.

<sup>169</sup>Note that this study follows the official orthography of 1999 (Anon.), not the inconsistent models in the sources.

**Exogamic** means that marriage and sexual relations are not permitted within the same womb. They would be regarded as incest. So a proverb recommends some prior family research: *Wachunaka othela, okoheke; onamuthela munamurokoriyo, nari maluwa* (Ciscato, n.d.:210, #772), ‘If you want to get married, ask [first]; you may marry your own sister, or a wildcat.’ The womb concept is extrapolated to include all maternal relatives, going back to the earliest known ancestress, who defines a clan. A fundamental corollary of this concept and the previous one is that one’s father is not strictly one’s relative (though one’s mother’s brothers are). The general term for kinship relation is *ohima*. One still common phrase from a mother to her children is: *ole muhima waapaapa*, ‘that one is [your] father’s relative,’ implying ‘and not yours.’<sup>170</sup> The outworking of these principles means that most kinship terminology is not directly translatable between Lomwe and Western languages. Geffray comments: “Il n’y a guère que le mot désignant l’épouse, *mwaraka*, que se révélera traduisible sans ambiguïté” (1990:21).<sup>171</sup> And even the basic terminology for wife or husband is redefined by the kinship system.

**Matrilocal** means that at marriage a bride customarily does not leave her mother. A husband leaves his family and lives as an outsider (on probation for several years, Martinez 1989:158, 165-168) with his wife’s family, under the authority of his father-in-law and mother-in-law:

L’homme étranger au clan reste un étranger, un ennemi virtuel en qui on ne peut avoir pleinement confiance, que est tout d’abord mis à l’essai, et avec lequel on entretient toujours une certaine ségrégation (Macaire 1996:107).<sup>172</sup>

Eventually a family settlement of daughters, sons-in-law and grandchildren grows.

It is important not to confuse this social structure with a matriarchal one (Macaire 1996:73). Women do not rule. Chiefs and heads of families are men. Their authority, however, is not over their own children, but over their sisters and younger brothers and over their sisters’ children, and so on. This social structure does keep men from concentrating power as much as they can in polygynous patrilineal systems. Historically, there have not been large concentrations of political power among the Lomwe, except in reaction to outside pressure (Martinez 1989:46). Traditionally, a key woman, the *apwiyamwene* (literally: ‘chief’s lord’), does function as senior

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<sup>170</sup>Personal conversation with Simões Duarte, Estevão Campama and Zacarias Pedro, 15 October 2004. They note that in recent years *ohima* and *muhima* have begun to be used for fathers and their relatives.

<sup>171</sup>‘There is hardly anything but the word designating wife, *mwaraka*, which can be translated without ambiguity.’ Cf. also 1990:151. There is also a word for husband, apparently unknown to Geffray.

<sup>172</sup>‘The man, an outsider to the clan, remains an outsider, a virtual enemy, in whom one cannot have full confidence, who is first of all put to the test, with whom one always maintains a certain segregation.’ Cf. 1996:211-215.



adviser to the chief and has a major role in the selection of a new chief (Martinez 1989:69, 74-76; Macaire 1996:59). Senior women administer the stocks of staple food in each extended household (Macaire 1996:72; Geffray 1990:67, 83, 91). But this extensive influence does not remove men from formal leadership (Macaire 1996:9).

#### 4.1.2.2 Nihimo and initiation

A key term in this social structure is *nihimo*, 'clan' (Martinez 1989:62-67; Macaire 1996:8-9).<sup>173</sup> Geffray (1990:67) even calls it a "spiritual entity." People of a common *nihimo* can trace their lineage back to a common ancestress. Because they cannot intermarry, they have to live near people of other clans. In fact, people of one *nihimo* end up scattered all over the area where Lomwe (and Makhuwa) people live. There is a strong obligation to care for one's fellow clan members when one meets them, but the vast majority would be strangers.

Strictly speaking, a child is not born as full member of a *nihimo*. It is at the time of initiation, done separately for groups of boys and girls at puberty, that a person becomes a full person and clan member,<sup>174</sup> is given a new name and is taught the secret signs for identifying fellow clan-members, from wherever they come. Initiation gives the clan a partially covenantal character. A proverb puts it bluntly: *wiineliwa oyarayara mwaana*, 'initiation is when a child is really born' (Martinez 1989:110; cf. 1997:170), as does a song: Yesterday you weren't a *muchu*, 'person'; now you've entered the *nloko naachu*, 'the category of people' (Martinez 1989:151). "Todo o ser humano...colabora na construção do homem novo que saíra da iniciação" (Martinez 1989:110).<sup>175</sup> It is such a big social investment that it is not even done every year (Martinez 1989:113). Circumcision is the great symbol of initiation, but it is not the main focus. (Puberty is not even strictly prerequisite, Martinez 1989:132.<sup>176</sup>) The focus is instruction of traditions and proper behavior (Martinez 1989:112, 120-123, for girls, 142-143), with a strongly sexual element (Martinez 1989:147-148; Macaire 1996:172). It is a group experience, aimed at entry into full society (Macaire 1996:171; Martinez 1989:153). Only the initiated may be married, participate in sacrifices, speak in meetings and attend funerals (Martinez

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<sup>173</sup>Related etymologically to both *ohima*, 'to be a relative' and *muhima*, 'relative'.

<sup>174</sup>Funerals for those not initiated are relatively perfunctory (Martinez 1989:209, cf.151; Macaire 1996:283; on initiation, see 149-166).

<sup>175</sup>"The whole human being...collaborates in the construction of the new person who will emerge from initiation."

<sup>176</sup>However, contrast Macaire (1996:168) who sees menstrual blood as essential symbolically. Duarte, Campama and Pedro (15 Oct. 2004 conversation) accept the traditional priority of instruction over circumcision in initiation, citing a common expression about someone's misbehavior, "Nem parece que foi circuncidado," 'It doesn't even seem he was circumcised.' Still, they argue that for contemporary Lomwe-speakers the act of circumcision is the essential focus.

1989:109). They share secrets that may not be revealed to the uninitiated (Martinez 1989:123). An ongoing relationship is made with deep obligations, some of them to people unknown, under the full panoply of supernatural sanctions. However, (except under extremely rare circumstances<sup>177</sup>) this created kinship does not forge a bond horizontally with those who would otherwise not have been considered relatives. Rather it reinforces the 'vertical' connection to relatives who have gone before, the ancestral spirits, while establishing sexual and social maturity.

#### 4.1.2.3 Marriage

The traditional Lomwe social system gives a distinctive shape to marriage. In many cultures, marriage is an obvious candidate for covenant analogies, since it creates a genuine kinship among unrelated people both in Scripture and the ancient world.<sup>178</sup> However, traditional Lomwe and Makhuwa marriage does not create a strong, lasting relationship between man and woman (Martinez 1989:177; cf. Alfane 1996:30).<sup>179</sup> It is focused on producing children, understood as a meeting of generations past, the ancestors, with generations to come (Macaire 1996:181), but, crucially, it does not create a bond between families. A woman's brothers (especially the oldest) are the significant, responsible men in her children's lives. The sperm donor is not.<sup>180</sup> For example, a father's attempt to pay his children's school fees can be rejected in no uncertain terms as interference in a *nihimo* to which he does not belong (Geffray 1990: 65-66). The proverbial advice to a man is: *Woothelani, woothelani; waameyaa, waameyaa*, 'Where you married is where you married, where your mother is is where your mother is' (Valente de Matos 1982:138). The subtext is: Your loyalty is to your clan. In particular, first

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<sup>177</sup>Up to the twentieth century, slavery was a routine part of Lomwe/Makhuwa society. Geffray (1990:115-123; cf. Macaire 1996:231-246, Ciscato n.d.:201) makes a convincing case that there were two distinct types of slavery, however. One focused on capturing and trading (primarily) men for export. This was a response to external demand (Arab, Portuguese, and French traders) and was tremendously disruptive. The other was a necessary ancillary of the social structure and focused on girls. Any lineage that ran short of women was in danger of extinction. Marriages and alliances could be no remedy. The solution was to capture girls from a neighboring (ideally not-too-close) *nihimo*. These should be near the age of initiation, but not yet initiated, hence without any clear clan identity. They could then be initiated into the capturing clan, using all the powerful rites for separating from past life and inaugurating a new identity that were already part of the initiation process. Henceforth, they would be full clan members and their wombs would perpetuate the lineage. There was some social distinction maintained between slave and free, but older slaves' children could be chosen as chiefs. This custom, prohibited along with the abolition of the other kind of slavery, is now a very dim memory, not a living tradition. Its chief value is as an illustration of the relation between initiation and *nihimo* identity. Despite all the language of womb and birth, there was a sense in which clan members were made and not born.

<sup>178</sup>For a detailed discussion, see Hugenberger (1998:280-338), who argues that as a genuine covenant it included oath signs.

<sup>179</sup>Geffray (1990:109-110, 127-147) describes in some detail the way men who have children of marriageable age can manipulate marriages between their own clan and the one they have married into in order to build up an economic and political base of power. This gives them a long-term incentive to stick with a marriage, but only slightly counteracts the social forces that make dissolution easy.

<sup>180</sup>Note Geffray (1990:41-42): "le féconneur."

marriages are rather experimental and do not last (Macaire 1996:220). Sterility, *othomeya okumi* ('to suspend life'), is the great tragedy, not the breaking of a marriage (Martinez 1989:91, 177; Macaire 1996:131; cf. Fernando 1996:29, 33). Without the 'bride price,' common in patrilineal societies in Africa (cf. Vuyk 1991: 87-88), there is no significant financial investment in a marriage by the families involved. These things tend to make divorce easy and multiple marriages (whether in sequence or simultaneously) common. A man may have various wives in different places who do not even know of each other (Macaire 1996:218). Thus, while traditional marriage creates a relationship, it is not one of genuine kinship. Commitments are limited and there are no spiritual sanctions.

#### 4.1.2.4 Value of kinship

Within the traditional social structure, kinship is highly valued. Fables are a key component in traditional oral wisdom literature, conveying received values from generation to generation. One collection of Lomwe/Makhuwa fables<sup>181</sup> highlights the theme that "blood is thicker than water."<sup>182</sup> True to the genre, horrific themes are broached matter-of-factly. In three stories, friends plot to murder their mothers, and come, of course, to no good. Without a mother, you can expect to starve (Fuchs 1992:19, 20-22, 23). Several other stories deal with betrayal among "friends" (1992:11-12, 13-15, 16). They work together but steal from each other the fruit of their labors. In fact, within the genre the word "friend" signals trouble. When, once, a friend does not let his pal down, the reader is a bit surprised (1992:40-45). The message "don't trust friends, trust family" is hard to miss. This is extended to unknown members of the kinship group in the story "A irmã desconhecida" (1992:46-48). When a stranger identifies herself as part of your *nihimo* 'clan', you had better welcome her, or else. The matrilineal system is also reinforced by a story emphasizing that children belong to their mother's clan (1992:38-40). When a father dares to touch his son's birds, he is put in his (outsider's) place in no uncertain terms (1992:49-51). While family relationships are not idealized, overall such stories portray a clear suspicion of relationships outside the family and illustrate the assumption that relationships to one's mother and her kin are supreme, stronger and more lasting than relationships formed by marriage or fatherhood.

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<sup>181</sup>Twenty Makhuwa stories were collected in 1983 from men and women in two areas of Nampula province. Later they were translated into Portuguese and published: Fuchs (1992).

<sup>182</sup>Of course, the metaphors of this traditional English proverb are not used.

#### 4.1.2.5 Lack of covenantal parallels

The present author asked a group of twenty senior Lomwe church leaders<sup>183</sup> if they knew of any traditional customs that could create kinship, with its privileges and responsibilities. This was in the context of a day-long discussion of biblical covenant concepts. After reflection, the unanimous answer was negative. All known potential models, such as Christian marriage or adoption, were cultural imports.

However, certain traditions do overlap with aspects of ANE covenants. Initiation into the *nihimo*, 'clan' implies that adult responsibility to the family group is not merely natural or automatic, but a commitment that is made and backed up by spirit sanctions. Secret societies, primarily for men, bind members together by oath. With music and dance at major public rituals, they inculcate values and traditions in the younger generation in the name of the ancestral spirits who possess them during their performances (Macaire 1996:199; Martinez 1989:170-171). Their focus on a task, secrecy and fearsome reputation limit their usefulness as a covenant model. Another task-focused group, a *muhavo*, forms in order to hunt, a dangerous activity with spiritual implications, involving dreams, sacrifices and amulets (Macaire 1996:321-329). The commitment, however, does not necessarily continue beyond a particular hunting expedition. The ritual of *wuntaka nnashe*, 'breaking the grass stem' was used in some traditional weddings.<sup>184</sup> Bride and groom snap a stalk of dried grass, the jagged end in each one's hand a reminder of their mutual commitments (however these may have been limited by the kinship system). Among Lomwe-speakers who emigrated to Malawi, in the context of life as migrant laborers on great tea plantations, women would commit to each other in mutual care and obligations, exchanging goods and services, their children addressing each other in familial terms (Boeder 1984:54-55). This seems like an adaptation of matrilineal family group values to a new situation.

These examples demonstrate that committed relationships, bound by oath sanctions or the like, are known in traditional society. They can provide vocabulary and concepts with which, after suitable qualifications, to communicate Old Testament covenants. What they do not provide is an adequate model to adopt.

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<sup>183</sup>Gathered at the I.E.C. Moneia church in Gurué, 16 March 2002.

<sup>184</sup>Personal communication, Elia Ciscato, 2002. He commented that the custom has now largely fallen into disuse.

Traditional Lomwe social structure thus makes communicating biblical covenant concepts, like those in Leviticus 26, especially difficult. While kinship plays a powerful role and is given high value, kinship-in-law is alien. This problem is not insurmountable, but must be frankly acknowledged. It has implications far wider than the appropriate translation of ברית, 'covenant.' The biblical vocabulary of God as *father*, profoundly influenced by covenantal concepts, creates a problem for translators into Lomwe. Should *atiithi*, 'sperm donor' be used? Should *ataata*, 'senior maternal uncle'? In practice, New Testament translations in circulation have made these decisions, which are already fixed in Lomwe Christian tradition, but familiarity can obscure serious weaknesses in understanding.

#### 4.1.3 Traditional Worldview

This lack of covenantal parallels and analogies in Lomwe social structure makes it all the more necessary to analyze the traditional Lomwe worldview, preparing the ground at a deeper level for the challenge of communicating covenant.

The Lomwe worldview is an example of patterns found in other agrarian African peoples. These have been ably summarized, though without an explicit use of the worldview variables and narrative summary which form the analytical grid for the present work.

For example, Maimela (1985) writes that the traditional African worldview focuses on life in its fullness in a hostile, precarious environment. Life is seen as "a network of mutual interdependencies" (1985:66). Causes are,

always externalised and personalised...Hence the traditional African spends a great deal of his energies trying to control or manipulate these powers, so as to empower himself to be more successful in life's undertakings than his neighbour (1985:67).

Evil is that which saps life, conceived as a "vital force" (1985:67), or that which threatens harmony, good relationships in the community, conceived of as including the spirits of the ancestors as well as the currently living. Bosch concludes: "There is a prayer that is echoed all over Africa in all its languages. It is the prayer, 'Give us power'" (1987:56-57)!

In the context of Bible translation, Wendland summarizes the central African worldview in terms of seven abstract presuppositions (1987:72-112), which can be illustrated from the ethnographic literature about the Makhuwa: *Synthesis* is the tendency to relate everything and

everyone into a larger whole (cf. Macaire 1996:419).<sup>185</sup> *Dynamism*, “life force,” or “soul power” is “the notion of divinely-originated and spiritually-sustained individual forces in continual variation and interaction with one another” (Wendland 1987:86, cf. Sundermeier 1973:112-135) and permeating the cosmos. *Gradation* organizes these powers into an implicit hierarchy, within human society and beyond (cf. Martinez 1989:249). *Communalism* restrains competition among competing individuals and forces, driving them toward solidarity, subordinating all to the group. Thus Martinez describes the focus of life for the Makhuwa as *wunnuwana*, ‘to grow along with’ (1989:84; cf. Kinoti 1997). *Experientialism* backs up personal experience with ancient wisdom, is essentially conservative and downplays both abstractions and future accomplishment. *Humanism* puts people and their needs at the center of the system. Traditional religion has a “pragmatic, utilitarian nature” (Wendland 1987:106). For the Makhuwa:

As práticas do culto...não têm outra finalidade senão, na riqueza do seu simbolismo, obter do Ser Supremo, através da mediação insubstituível dos antepassados, a protecção para a vida individual e da sociedade (Martinez 1989:225).<sup>186</sup>

*Circumscription* views all the resources for a satisfying life to be in limited supply. Thus someone who gains in life force is presumed to have done so at someone else’s expense. A positive side of this imposition of limitations is that it can strengthen contentment.

For the Lomwe, the present work analyzes primarily the writings of Ciscato in terms of the worldview variables of *Time*, *Space*, *Self/Other*, and *Causality*. It then attempts a brief narrative synthesis. The results complement and illustrate the general summaries just cited.

#### 4.1.3.1 Time

The dominant view of time is cyclical. Human life passes through the cycle from birth to puberty to having children to dying and joining the ancestors (Ciscato 1987:65). Thus birth symbols are used at death: a corpse is placed in the fetal position and a mound is erected over a grave in allusion to pregnancy (Ciscato 1998:55). While the individual is transitory, life perpetuates its pattern and “a morte é engolida pela vitalidade” (Ciscato 1998:58).<sup>187</sup> Nature,

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<sup>185</sup>Kitoko-Nsiku challenges this formulation with a perspective that seeks to affirm apparent contradictions in sustained tension (2002:6-14).

<sup>186</sup>‘The practices of the cult have no other purpose than, in the wealth of their symbolism, obtaining from the Supreme Being, by means of the irreplaceable mediation of the ancestors, protection for the life of the individual and of society.’

<sup>187</sup>‘death is swallowed by vitality.’

too, follows a similar pattern, with the waxing and the waning of the moon and with the seasons of the agricultural year (Ciscato 1987:67, 72). History has no particular direction. What will be is what has been and this in a mythic past reflecting more interest in enduring patterns than in specific events (Ciscato 1987:53-55).<sup>188</sup>

There is also a pragmatic awareness of the future. Proverbs speak of *Nanihiku nimoha* (Ciscato n.d.:357, #1311, 1312), 'the one day person,' too impatient to get what he wants. Many goals demand perseverance: *Shiriku onteka empaawe, nnashi nimoha-nimoha* (Ciscato n.d.:372, #1367), 'the canary builds its house one blade of grass at a time.' On the other hand (in the proverb genre there is always another hand), it is foolish, perhaps arrogant, to count too much on the future: *oreela woomwaahiyu khontekeliwa nthata* (Ciscato n.d.:261, #961), 'you don't build a granary for a future abundant harvest.' Similarly, *wuushayani, honaroromeliwawo* (Ciscato n.d.:270, #994), 'hunting is not something to count on' (cf. Ciscato n.d.:269, #992; 271, #998; 287, #1065; 309, #1143). Human life and action do move into the future, but the overall pattern is one set in the past.

Time is marked by special events. These tend to highlight the human lifecycle, such as birth, initiation and death, or to mark the agricultural year, such as planting and harvest.

#### 4.1.3.2 Space

The worldview variable of space is defined by the life-giving land, intimately linked to the human body. Above all, the land and body should be fruitful, producing life in abundance. *Echaya tamihu*, 'the soil is our mother' (Ciscato 1987:27) is not just one isolated saying. It is buttressed by many more. The *ikano*, 'traditions' taught in the sacred context of initiation ceremonies link rocks and bones, grass and hair, termite mounds and the penis, holes in the ground and nostrils (Ciscato 1987:34). Many vegetables, as products of the ground, are associated with parts of the body (Ciscato 1987:75). *Erimu*, 'the sky,' of course, stands over against the ground, but in a distinctly subordinate role, as the place from which *Muluku*, 'God,' sends the rain which the land needs. The land in general can stand for the sphere of human existence, as in the proverb, *elapo lookho, enlyiwa ewaawaka*, 'the land is hot pepper, it tastes

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<sup>188</sup>Cf. Bosman: "African historical thought as 'mythical time' is characterized by its intemporality, and its essentially social aspect. Time is not duration as it affects the fate of the individual, but it is the rhythm of the breathing of the social group" (2001:103). Such typologies as 'cyclical' are easily overdone. Cf. Bosman again: "To my mind the image of a spiral is best suited to depict the essential elements of African concepts of time and history—an image which incorporates both linear and cyclical dimensions" (2001:105).

bitter when eaten' (Ciscato n.d.:384, #1405). The sense is that there are many unpleasant things to put up with in this world (cf. Ciscato n.d.:393, #1441).

There is also a specific link between a particular human and his or her land, the land where the umbilical cord is buried (as a proverb has it: *orivo etheku khoncuwaliwo*, 'the place of the umbilical cord is not forgotten' Ciscato 1987:29). Thus exile is akin to death. To be forced to leave one's own mother land is to be deprived of sustenance and protection, hence, inevitably, to wither and die (Ciscato 1987:49). This conception leads to practical advice: *othela, khonlupha muhice*, 'to marry, don't cross the river' (Ciscato n.d.:206, #757). There is a certain suspicion of people who are not from close to home. Similarly, *elapo ya weecela, waruwaniwa, omaale*, 'in a land you are visiting, shut up when they mock you' (Ciscato n.d.:318, #1179b). Your rights are limited where you don't belong.

The land has a fundamental division, between *mmawani* and *otakhwani*, between the area of human habitation and cultivation and the surrounding wilderness, the area of comparative safety and the area of unknown danger (Ciscato 1999:51-52).<sup>189</sup> The contrast is implicit in the proverb *mwaano, mutakhwammo*, 'the mouth is a wilderness' (Ciscato n.d.: 1425, p.389). This caution to speak carefully depends on the understanding that *otakhwani* is a vast expanse of uncertainty and danger. In common euphemism a cemetery is *otakhwani*. This is partly because burial places tended to be on the boundary between settled areas and the wilderness. But a cemetery is also *otakhwani* symbolically. For all the involvement of ancestral spirits in daily life, death is not quite domesticated despite the fact that gravesites are called *ipa*, 'houses' and even shaped and thatched like houses (Ciscato 1998:26-28). There is a wildness about the place of death. But sexual relations belong *mmawani*, 'in the settled area.' If you must engage in sex outside, at least tie the tall grass together over you to make a symbolic house (Ciscato 1987:33). Initiation rites, on the other hand, belong *otakhwani*, apart from normal life.

The cosmic center of space is Mt. Namuli. It is not only the highest mountain in northern Mozambique. It serves to order life symbolically. Ciscato argues it is:

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<sup>189</sup>For the same patterns in the ANE see Frankfort (1967).



um ponto de interseção [sic] de vários níveis ou eixos: o mundo subterrâneo (os mortos), o mundo terrestre (é o umbigo da terra) e o espaço celeste (chuva, nuvens); do visível e do invisível; do início primordial (Namuli é a primeira mãe) e das suas reactualizações pelas outras mães (o parto no chão, e talvez olhando ao Namuli); dos espíritos da natureza e dos antepassados; da vida e da morte (2003:6).<sup>190</sup>

Thus Namuli is where the first man and woman came from, and to die is to return there (Ciscato 1998:20, 53). It is where a body should point when it is buried (Ciscato 1998:21). It is the place spirit practitioners go, whether in body or in trance, to procure the most powerful cures and spells. Local mountains and even termite mounds can be symbols of Namuli in ritual. It is thus the prototypical sacred space.

There are also other special places for contact with the spirits, such as gravesites (cf. Alfane 1996:16) or certain trees (sometimes indicated in dreams).

#### 4.1.3.3 *Self/Other*

The worldview variables of *Self* and *Other* are shaped by a dynamic and corporate conception of the person (Ciscato 1998:54). Birth alone does not make one a full human being. Indeed, newborns are merely provisional human beings (Ciscato 1987:45). It is the assumption of responsibilities as one fulfills one's roles in the social structure, especially that of procreating, passing on life, that makes one fully a person, and it is to this end that the great rite of passage rituals are shaped, initiation in particular, as noted above (cf. Ciscato 1987:47). Someone who fails to function properly in society is condemned as not being a *muchu*, 'person' (Ciscato 1987:40). Thus, *mulipa ohiilima, tahiyeene muchu*, 'someone who doesn't farm, is not a person' (Ciscato n.d.:120, #419). An individual's goal in life is to make his mark in the social grouping to which he belongs. "Toda a grandeza da pessoa ('ser alguém') deriva do exercício da função que lhe compete (função de pai, mãe, tio,...), pelo lugar que ocupa ou lhe foi atribuído dentro daquela ordem universal" (Ciscato 1987:41-42).<sup>191</sup>

Proverbs repeatedly underscore that life is shared with others. *Matata, mvahe—omwaakhe*, 'the hands [are called] "give" and "receive"' (Ciscato n.d.:133, #470). Giving and receiving, helping and being helped, are what hands are for. Sharing applies to both the good things and

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<sup>190</sup> 'a point of intersection between various levels or axes: the underworld (the dead), the earthly world (it is the navel of the earth) and the expanse of the sky [or heaven] (rain, clouds); of the visible and the invisible; of the primordial beginning (Namuli is the first mother) and its reactualizations by other mothers (childbirth on the ground, looking, perhaps, toward Namuli); of the spirits of nature and of the ancestors; of life and of death.'

<sup>191</sup> 'All the grandeur of being a person, (to "be somebody") derives from the exercise of his appropriate function (the function of father, mother, uncle, ...), by the place which he occupies or which was given to him within that universal order.'

the bad things in life. *Eyano emoha, khenasuwela osiva wa mathapa*, ‘one mouth, does not know the tastiness of the sauce’ (Ciscato n.d.:152, #547). Also, *malavi, anamukawaniwa*, ‘a shock is to be shared’ (Ciscato n.d.:153, #551). Individualism does not make sense. Even a wound depends for its existence on the body where it is found: *nikhwaca naariye: kiwiiphe amwali, eyaaka ovithiwa oothene mmahiyeni*, ‘the wound said: I’ll kill the girl, though they both end up in the same grave’ (Ciscato n.d.:295, #1090). More generally, a large proportion of traditional proverbs is devoted to helping people live together. Showing respect (Ciscato n.d.:236-241, 212-216), putting up with differences (Ciscato n.d.:45-48), and accepting advice (Ciscato n.d.:219-235) all help.

The interconnection of *Self* with *Others* is not only with other visible human beings. The human body is a microcosm of an animated physical world, which is often, in turn, described as a macrocosm of the human body (Ciscato 1987:48). The environment is living, full of presences, which include the spirits of dead people among other actors. With all of these, too, it is necessary for living humans to fulfill their roles and sustain the delicate balance of life. The living dead function to guard and police society (Ciscato 1999:50). Political power in the community derives its legitimacy from the ancestral spirits (Cuehela 1996:10-14).

However, focus on belonging to a group, defined by place and kinship, and fulfilling one’s roles within it should not obscure the fact that sometimes the *Other* is alien. An in-group implies an out-group. One proverb addresses an outsider, *‘anayaaworu’ yaalocaka, ohiwakhule; onii olive ti yoowe*, ‘when “just themselves” are talking, don’t answer; you (sg.) will be the one who pays’ (Ciscato n.d.:317, #1175). Those who do not belong to some in-group, such as a matrilineal kinship group, should not interfere in others’ business, or they will unite against him and blame him for whatever goes wrong. Those who don’t belong are called *amalapo*. The most succinct advice about them is *amalapo khanreera*, ‘outsiders are no good’ (Ciscato n.d.:162, #591), and this sums up the perspective of quite a few proverbs (Ciscato n.d.:161-163, 183). Worse than *amalapo* are *amwiicani*, ‘enemies.’ Sometimes these are invisible and unknown, sometimes they are part of the community. One piece of advice is, *khavo onamphara mwaana a mwiicani awe*, ‘no one grabs his enemy’s child’ (Ciscato n.d.:322, #1189), because it could start a fight. This assumes a known and near enemy and counsels against aggravating conflict. Worst of all is the *mukhwiri*, “congenitamente e

impenitentemente antisocial” (Ciscato n.d.:102),<sup>192</sup> a person (‘sorcerer/witch’) devoted to evil, which radiates through him or her in mysterious ways.

#### 4.1.3.4 Causality

The Lomwe worldview sees an interrelated complex of causality dominated by personal agents, whether living humans, the spirits of the dead, other spirits (often not precisely distinguished from ancestral spirits, Ciscato 1999:52), or God. In this framework, causality is very diffuse. Personal agents, seen and unseen, must all do their part to maintain cosmic and social harmony. People must work (Ciscato n.d.:116-126) and are warned if they don’t (with lovely wordplay): *ohaawa, ohaawiha*, ‘poverty brings privation’ (Ciscato n.d.:121, #427).<sup>193</sup>

But causality is fraught with uncertainty and ambiguity. Several proverbs have the form, today this, tomorrow that, like *ovonne olelo, omeelo mulip’atala*, ‘stuffed today, starving tomorrow’ (Ciscato n.d.:8, #26; cf. n.d.:2-12). These, and others like them, are an affirmation of the cyclical pattern of life. They underline the fragility of individual well-being. But paradoxically they also affirm the stability of the overall system. The mix of the good and the bad will average out in the end.

An implication is that one should help maintain the system, helping those who have less when one has more and expecting help when one has less. One application of this principle is *omwiiyerya mukunya, ovukula*, ‘to steal from a white person, is [just] a reduction’ (Ciscato n.d.:113, #393). It is not that there is no idea of personal property, no definition of stealing. Many proverbs assume the contrary (Ciscato n.d.:105-115). But this one reveals a larger context. To accumulate vast wealth, as white people seem to have done, creates an imbalance. To reduce the imbalance, to redistribute wealth, by stealing from one is justified, or at least excusable.

Of course a corporate conception of life which values harmony, sharing, balance and fruitfulness is particularly sensitive to disruptions. Ciscato comments: “A sociedade revela-se

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<sup>192</sup> ‘congenitally and unrepentingly antisocial’

<sup>193</sup> Mozambican scholar Manjate argues that, in contrast to the proverbs of the dominant Tsonga of southern Mozambique, in Lomwe and Makhuwa proverbs: “A astúcia, a subtileza e a inteligência são uma constante,” ‘Cleverness, subtlety and intelligence are a constant’ and there is no “glorificação da força física, do poder evidente,” ‘glorification of physical force, of demonstrable power’ (2000:100). However, this behavior so highly appropriate to the underdog in no way diminishes a focus on human causality.

como um convívio em volta de uma mesa em baixo da qual esconde-se um campo de batalha” (1998:40).<sup>194</sup> Evil is present as that which disturbs the balance.<sup>195</sup>

The greatest source of offense is *nrima*, a broad term for a collection of anti-social motivations (Ciscato 1987:89), including envy, jealousy and egotism. Someone with *nrima*, *khaneeca nachu*, is all alone (Ciscato n.d.:398, #1460; lit.: ‘does not walk with people’). *Nrima* destroys kinship (Ciscato n.d.:399, #1464), ruins people (Ciscato n.d.:399, #1466), and kills (Ciscato n.d.:399, #1467). Nevertheless it *khannamurama muchu*, ‘is never missing from a person’ (Ciscato n.d.:399, #1463), and remains a powerful destructive force within every group. One response to it is to *ovosha ekhuma*, for the senior person in a kinship group to gather together his family, and guided by a *mulipa a ehako*, diviner, to interrogate people to determine who is the cause of a sickness or disaster. A principle to follow is *onruna evoshiwaka ekhuma, tonamukhura mwaana*, ‘the one who denies it during the *ovosha ekhuma* ceremony, is the one eating the child’ (Ciscato n.d.:415, #1528), acting as a *mukhwiri*, ‘sorcerer/witch’ or agent of destructive spirit power. It is assumed that the cause of evil is a person.

Sickness is understood not as a bodily mechanism that is malfunctioning, but as social (Ciscato 1998:18), a disruption of one’s full participation in the group. Healing is a restoration of harmony (Ciscato 1999:59).<sup>196</sup> Disruptions can be caused by anyone acting against the good of the whole, whether individually or in concert with others. Thus the rupture of social relations is often linked with spirit manifestations (Ciscato 1999:63). The difficulty of discerning the

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<sup>194</sup>‘Society reveals itself as a celebration shared around a table under which is hidden a battle field.’

<sup>195</sup>This aspect of the traditional worldview persists vigorously into the present. The following excerpts from a letter by Philip Piper, an Australian missionary working in Cuamba, a town on the fringe of the Lomwe-speaking area in Mozambique, illustrate several of the relational issues with which people struggle and the way they see themselves surrounded by enemies:

“Monday, 18 August 2003

I chatted to each of our workers today. They (and others) have often told me that “this race” (pointing to their skin) is very complicated, and today’s chats certainly seem to uphold that conclusion.

Snr José is back at work after being absent for almost three weeks with serious back troubles. I gave him 300.000MT to travel to his brother’s house, so they could take care of him—his wife was away (for almost 3 months!) staying at her mother’s. I suspect that he went to a *curandeiro* [=healer] while he was there, since going to see family in the country is often the excuse church people use when they visit *curandeiros*. He explained to me that he knew who had “done this” to him. When I asked him to explain, he told me that his best friend had given him these back pains, because the friend was jealous of him and wanted his (Snr José’s) wife. They had played together as kids, fought together in the army, helped each other in troubles, but now the friend wanted to harm him. Snr José couldn’t understand why that would be, but he was certain it was true. He told me that when he came home from his brother’s house, mostly free of the back pain, the friend had been shamed and had left his house and gone to visit relatives because of the embarrassment—apparently shamed because the curse had not “worked.”

Mama Louisa was feeling a little better. The really bad headaches had ceased, but she had had some other troubles. She’s convinced that Snr Vincent tries to get rid of any one else who works with him. She thinks he had put some hexes/curses on her to make her sick so that we’ll get rid of her.”

<sup>196</sup>For a similar pattern in the biblical world see Bascom (2003:107-110).

precise agents of disruption in a complex and cosmic whole demands specialists (such as the *namuko*, ‘medicine man/witchdoctor’<sup>197</sup> and *nahako*, ‘diviner’ 1998:34) with esoteric knowledge that gives them power (Ciscato 1987:84). These specialists can in turn act for good or for evil on the community system.

Death is a more acute disruption than sickness and calls for vigorous response. This is a paradox and comes despite a system that sees death, like birth, as part of the natural cycle and honors departed ancestors as being still intimately involved in life. Any individual’s death threatens the harmony of the system. Death does not ‘just happen.’ It is caused by someone, who should be exposed and stopped. To cope with this threat, there are extensive ceremonies to identify the cause of someone’s death and reintegrate the grieving (Ciscato 1998:32-44).

The role of the creator God in the nexus of causality is ambiguous. Ciscato argues God is not distant nor absent (Ciscato 1987:95-98), but rather, stable and secure (Ciscato 1987:110-115), and, hence, prone to be taken for granted. God is not excluded, but neither is he in focus (Ciscato 1998:60; cf. Martinez 1997:112-113). His function seems to be in the background, stabilizing the overall system, perhaps, and only rarely intervening on a more local scale. “Ele, mais do que a causa última é o recurso último, actual, ao qual se recorre quando tudo desmorona” (Ciscato 1987:99).<sup>198</sup> God’s stabilizing, though sometimes startling interventions are the setting for the proverb: *yovan’he Muluku, honakhwa ohiya*, ‘God is the one who gave it to you, it won’t kill you to lose it’ (Ciscato n.d.:100, #347), and for its counterpart, *yoovahile Muluku, waakhele yeeyo*, ‘God is the one who gave, you receive it’ (Ciscato n.d.:101, #349). Both encourage resignation.

#### 4.1.3.5 Worldview narrative

The connection between these worldview variables is one of tight integration. What Ciscato describes as *solidariedade cósmica*, ‘cosmic solidarity’ and a *concepção corporativa do ser humano*, ‘corporate understanding of the human being’ (1999:49) connects all the variables. The concept of *cosmobiologia* (Ciscato 1987:26) brings together *Time*, *Space*, *Self/Other* and *Causality*. The cosmos is centered on persons and their life. Ciscato is critical of descriptions which place *life force* at the core of the worldview of African peoples, a conception for him too distant and cold:

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<sup>197</sup>The terminology available in English is particularly inadequate.

<sup>198</sup>‘He, more than the ultimate cause is the ultimate resource, contemporary, to which one has recourse when everything falls apart.’

não entendemos falar de uma força que se pode manipular, ...mas de uma energia da qual o homem não se sente dono, e que ele deve conservar, transmitir, celebrar nos ritos, na qual participa juntamente com todo o mundo (1987:37).<sup>199</sup>

The story that the traditional Lomwe worldview tells may thus be summarized as follows:

Life goes on. As different individuals we come. We grow. We become full people, contributing to our group. Through sex and through farming we struggle to be fertile, to be productive together in our place, even as enemies around us, seen and unseen, filled with *nrima*, try to get all the good things for themselves. Allied with our dead who have gone before, we try to keep things in balance. In time, a successful person dies and is transferred to the status of ancestor. The individual passes. Life goes on.

This highly coherent, though far from idyllic, traditional worldview has many points of contact with the majority world of the ancient Near East, as seen in the religious system summarized in the preceding chapter. For much of the ancient world, as for the Lomwe, there was a predominantly cyclical view of time patterned after the natural seasons, a concrete understanding of space, rooted in a particular land, and a view of causality dominated by the conflicting actions of personal agents, seen and unseen. This is in contrast to the sharp divergence between Lomwe tradition and the ANE at the level of social structure in general and kinship-in-law in particular.

But the traditional Lomwe worldview now competes with and interacts with other understandings of reality. We turn to one of these, that of Christians in some Protestant churches, as seen through their songs.

#### **4.2 A worldview analysis of songs in Lomwe-speaking churches**

Change from the traditional worldview to that noted in the Lomwe Christian songs and sermons studied fits a pattern that Walls has described generally as African peoples have come under Christian influence. Thus “the Christian period in African religion has brought to it deep-rooted changes,” including “the reordering of worldview, and the introduction of new symbols and sources” (2002:123). While the components for understanding the transcendent are retained, relationships among components are transformed as the God component is given more prominence and some of the other elements are demonized (2002:123-125). Also retained is what Walls calls “that busy, constantly crossed frontier of the phenomenal and transcendental

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<sup>199</sup> ‘we do not mean to speak of a force which can be manipulated, ...but of an energy of which the human being does not feel himself master, but which he must conserve, transmit, celebrate in the rituals, in which he participates together with the whole world.’ Cf. also Martinez who speaks of the “valor fundamental, a vida” (1997:171), ‘fundamental value, life.’

worlds” (2002:124) in contrast to which “post-Enlightenment Western maps, even when designed by Christian believers, tend to imply a closed frontier, or at most one with defined, regulated crossing points” (2002:124).

The songs analyzed in this study are close to the heartbeat of these Lomwe-speaking Christians. This is not analytic or reflective theology; it is the public expression ordinary Christians give to their faith. As such it reveals much of the worldview common in their churches at the present time.<sup>200</sup>

#### *4.2.1 Where the songs come from*

In thatch-roofed and tin-roofed buildings, under mango trees and along the roads, Christians sing. Usually without instruments<sup>201</sup> and usually in groups of a half a dozen to thirty or so, people gather, practice, then sing. For the leaders, words are scribbled in notebooks, hand copied from one group to another, adapted freely, original author unknown. Repetition is important, because most people do not have the notebooks. But repetition with variation keeps people’s attention. A song may challenge the men, then the women, the young people, the preachers, a different target in each verse, with the same theme. The music is not written down; it is memorized. Rhythms and volume are important. No one is paid; everyone is a volunteer.

This is a living, local tradition. The songs are not just in Lomwe, they are in all the languages of multi-lingual people in a multi-lingual environment: Portuguese, the official language; Chichewa, the language of neighbouring Malawi; Makhuwa from the province to the north; Shangaana from down near the capital city; even English sometimes. But Lomwe songs, the most common, are the focus of attention here.<sup>202</sup>

Translated hymns are also part of Lomwe Christians’ worship, with both adapted and imported tunes. They have high status because they are part of the official, printed hymnbook, but they are not sung with the same enthusiasm as the locally-produced songs and are not given as much

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<sup>200</sup>Note that while this theology is not fixed in time, there are not enough data in this study for conclusions to be drawn about changes over time, much less about factors influencing changes.

<sup>201</sup>This is the tradition of the churches best represented in these songs; instruments are used in other churches and in traditional Lomwe culture.

<sup>202</sup>Anonymous authorship and the freedom to adopt and adapt from others means that it cannot be claimed that all the songs are original local compositions. However, they have been appropriated by Lomwe believers and integrated into their worship. While it might be fascinating to attempt to trace influences from and interactions with other cultural and religious traditions, that is definitely outside the scope of this study.

time in most worship services. They have been excluded from this study because of the difficulty in knowing how much they express of Lomwe Christians' theology.

The songs are not mere entertainment, even though the singers clearly enjoy themselves. The most common introduction to the time for singing in Lomwe-speaking churches during weekly worship is that this is the *olaleerya wa mashuventute*—‘the young people’s<sup>203</sup> preaching.’ Comments and prayers in response afterwards routinely use the same kind of language: these songs speak the word of God to his people just as much as when a senior church leader reads a passage from the Bible and speaks on it. A simple use of the clock gives a different confirmation of the prominence of these local songs for Christians. Routinely, one quarter of the time in a worship service is spent by the singing groups, and often substantially more than the time taken by the spoken sermon.<sup>204</sup> On special occasions, when Christians from half a dozen local congregations gather in one place, time for this singing takes an even larger proportion.

Singing groups have a prominent place in worship services, but many local songs are also sung by the whole congregation. Sometimes the initiative is by a leader standing up at the front, sometimes the preacher himself. But often someone in the congregation will start a song and all will join in, to fill a pause, to prepare for the next part of the service, to respond to the last part. Worship services have their formalities and structure and they are like conversations. Songs are a guided way for the people to participate in the conversation and to affirm that they belong to the group.

This involvement should not be construed as debate. Neither young people nor congregation are directly challenging the point of view of the established leaders in the churches. A song that did so would be critiqued after the service and very likely not repeated.

The patterns of what is emphasized in these songs are a clear reflection of the public, established theology of Lomwe-speaking churches, what people accept as right and good. Conclusions are not based on individual songs, but on clear trends. Any particular song might be popular simply because of a catchy tune, with little thought given to content.

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<sup>203</sup>Note that the definition of “young people” is imprecise, but could include even those in their mid-30s. Older people, especially women, also participate in singing groups, though it is “young people” who predominate.

<sup>204</sup>As an example, in May and June 1998, at the Ceta-Quelimane, Alto Molocué congregation of the Igreja União Baptista, Cara J. Foster recorded times ranging from 14% to 36% of the total service, with an average of 24%. At the IUB Serra church in Gurué on 8 August 2004 the songs took 50 minutes; the sermon 15.



The lyrics of the 263 songs analyzed here (see Appendix A) were collected between 2000 and 2003 in northern Zambézia province, in several dozen local churches.<sup>205</sup> The songs come from three sources. Eighty-three were jotted down by the author while participating in services. Another 147 are from the handwritten notebook of Domingos Alexandre Matupa, while an active member of the youth singing group at the Serra church of the Igreja União Baptista in Gurué. Thirty-three songs are prize-winning entries in a district-wide contest held by the youth groups of Igreja União Baptista churches in Alto Molocué. The young people's leadership determined the best songs by their own criteria. No attempt was made to rate the relative popularity of any of the songs in these three groupings. Some may have been sung only once, others many times. But all are popular in the sense of being locally produced and used.

There are likely to be errors and lacunae in the transcription of some of the songs,<sup>206</sup> but a large database and a focus on broad trends guard against false conclusions based on problems in transcription.

#### *4.2.2 What the songs say*

The worldview analysis that follows of these songs is in three complementary parts. A first pass through the material notes prominent themes. On a second pass, worldview variables are used as an analytic grid, though this is not rigid, imposed on the material. It is a set of heuristic tools aimed at opening up the underlying structures assumed by the texts. The priority is to allow outsiders an understanding of the insider's perspective, albeit imperfect.<sup>207</sup> Thirdly, a narrative synthesis is made, retelling the story that these Lomwe Christians tell each other about their lives and God as they sing.

##### *4.2.2.1 Themes*

Prominent themes in these songs include judgment, the return of Christ, repentance, sins, and death. These Lomwe Christians repeatedly remind each other of their accountability to God, living fragile lives in an uncertain, dangerous world.

**Theme 1: Judgment is coming.** Song after song says this in different ways. Places, people and events from the Old Testament are not particularly prominent. (The Old Testament has, of

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<sup>205</sup>The majority of these were from the Igreja União Baptista denomination, the largest Protestant group among the Lomwe. More data might allow for comparisons highlighting contrasting emphases among the denominations. The current body of material may provide a baseline for such studies.

<sup>206</sup>There is also orthographic variation, though an attempt has been made to follow official orthography.

course, not yet been published in Lomwe though there is limited access to it through Portuguese and Chichewa.) So it is striking that, apart from Jesus himself, the Bible characters most frequently mentioned or alluded to are Noah and Lot.<sup>208</sup> There is the plaintive, dramatic call as people doomed to drowning bang on the closed door of the ark:

*Koo Koo*  
*Yaanamana nsele*  
*Nihulele Noowa!*  
*Nootholowa* (Appendix A: Song 128)

Knock, knock  
 They banged the door  
 Open up for us, Noah!  
 We're done for

As another song on the same subject has it, *Ishavi sookushiwa ti mwaneene Muluku*, 'God himself has taken away the keys' (Song 85). There is the searing heat of fiery punishment as Sodom is consumed:

*Makalume yaamorela muSootoma*  
*Achu oocheka yinlaka owaye, owaye*  
*Oororomela yiipaka aleluya, ee, aleluya.* (Song 86)

Flames fell on Sodom  
 Sinners wailing, Owaye, owaye!<sup>209</sup>  
 Believers singing, Aleluia, yes, Aleluia!

Several songs devote a verse each to Noah and to Lot. Their stories are punctuated by refrains that make it clear the events are not historical curiosities but relevant realities. They are patterns for the judgment still to come:

*Annaka waaca mahiku annavira*  
*Masooso aatepa elapo ya vathi*  
*Muhakhu wootepa elapo ya vathi*  
*Annaka nivileele, nari noonaka iha*  
*Nnarwa ninla—Ayi, ayi, ayi*  
*Shuventute, shuvenile—Ayi, ayi, ayi*  
*Asitiithi ni Asimai—Ayi, ayi, ayi* (Song 79)

My brothers/sisters, the days are passing  
 Much sickness is on the earth  
 Much wealth is on the earth

<sup>207</sup>In other words, priority is given to the emic rather than the etic point of view, cf. Nishioka (1998:466), Houston (1993:23), Shaw (2003:3).

<sup>208</sup>Noah is mentioned 17 times, and Lot 16, (plus another song which speaks of Sodom and Gomorah without mentioning Lot's name). Contrast these with nine references to Abraham, five to Adam or Eve, and nine to Moses (in just two songs). Noah and the flood and Lot at Sodom are, of course, used in the New Testament as patterns of final judgment: Matt 24:37-8; Luke 17:26-9, which probably contributes to their prominence.

<sup>209</sup>The wails and cries of misery in this song and the one below (Song 79) cannot really be translated.

My brothers/sisters, endure, even though we see these things  
We will wail,—Ayi, ayi, ayi  
Young people, children—Ayi, ayi, ayi  
Fathers and mothers—Ayi, ayi, ayi

The theme of judgment is found in at least 28% of the collected songs. The dominant tone is one of warning and fear. Judgment is not as often seen as a hope for vindication, a reassurance that God will put right all that is wrong.

**Theme 2:** A similar pattern is clear in the second most prominent theme in these songs (mentioned in 17%): **Jesus is coming back.** This is a keynote of Christian hope through the ages and here, too, is a challenge to persevere and to trust because rescue is coming.

*Nkoonani annaka, mahiku yaala tawoopiha*  
*Hankoni nlipisherye ovekela,*<sup>210</sup>  
*Ophiyerya aruule Yeesu mvulusha* (Song 198)

Look, my brothers/sisters, these are dangerous days  
Come on, let's be strong in our praying  
Until Jesus the savior comes

Yet, more often, the return of Christ is simply linked with judgment day and the warning is to be ready or be doomed.

*Annaka olelo ninnoona ineneeryo*  
*Woosha woomalavo, aKiristu*  
*Nlipe noovekela, aKiristu*  
*Apwiya onnamorwa*  
*Arwaka, aniphwanye tho nri aweela* (Song 209)

My brothers/sisters, we see the signs  
Christians, time is running out  
We must be strong in our praying, Christians  
The Lord is coming  
When he comes, may he also find us holy

The song just quoted also says:

*Annaka ewoora ya phama ti yeela*  
*Mulokohe soocheka sanyu muryanyuno*  
*Ewoora yaphama ti yeela* (Song 209)

My brothers/sisters, this is the right time  
Confess those sins of yours you have  
This is the right time

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<sup>210</sup> *ovekela*: This verb is translated 'to pray'; it also has a more general sense, *pars pro toto*, of 'to perform religious activities,' a rough equivalent of 'go to church' in some English-speaking contexts.

**Theme 3:** The response the warnings mentioned above call for is *ocharuwa*, to **repent** (used 24 times in these songs), often with the quite specific explanation that this means to stop sinning and confess to the church authorities. The two that follow both show who should hear the confession:

*Chiri, chiri, wooshavo anna*  
*Mulokohe soocheka sanyu wa arummwa* (Song 75)

Truly, truly, it's late, brothers/sisters  
Confess your sins to the leaders

*Munnaka kinoolopola wi wakhalano yoocheka*  
*Olokohe warummwa, olociwe mwilapo ya vathi*  
*Apwiya Yeesu yarwaaka namwipela*  
*Aleluya, aleluya, hosana* (Song 161)

My brother/sister, I warn you that if you have a sin  
Confess it to the leaders, have it talked through on this earth  
So when the Lord Jesus comes we can sing to him  
Aleluia, aleluia, hosana

**Theme 4: Sins** are also prominent. These songs may tend to be sung overwhelmingly by people of junior status, but they pull no punches in naming and denouncing sins, including those of their elders.

*Paapa oyere mootepano*  
*Anapapa omwene wawirimu mooyeleela* (Song 141)

Father, you are too lazy  
Fathers, you have failed the kingdom of heaven

The song goes on to explain that these people do not get ready to go to church, but smoke cigarettes. The refrain of another song lists other sins: *Owooka okaakamela, woosela, oohapaliwaka omwaleela, soophwaniherya* (Song 246), 'to cheat on an engagement, to be vain, to be drunk in daylight, idols.' Of course, it is not just the elders who sin. Another song tells of a young man who has gone off to the big city. He has no time to come to the young people's meeting. When he comes back he wants everyone to be amazed at him. He bathes all the time and puts on cologne (Song 93). While the ten commandments are mentioned in one song (228), the specific sins named tend to be those public offenses that disqualify someone from participating in the insider group that is the church. Most often, however, sins are not specified, but referred to in general terms. The root *ocheka*, 'to sin, offend' is used in 37 of the songs and its synonym *onanara*, 'to be dirty, wrong' in 14.

**Theme 5: Death** is a related theme in these songs (mentioned in over 13 songs referring to people). It is coming and must be reckoned with. Occasionally, too, the focus is on the death of Jesus, which saves and demands a response of trust (six times). Hardly ever is it metaphorical, referring to a renunciation of evil in the Christian life. Most often it is the literal end of human life. One common, and blunt, song is used to introduce new stages of a worship service, the offering, prayers, or singing:

*Elukuluku ela ti ya oveleela/ovekela/wiipela*  
*Vathi wa mahiye hawivo oveleela/ovekela/wiipela* (Song 18)

This is the time to make an offering/pray/sing  
 Underneath the grave there is no offering/praying/singing

Death is both inescapable and unpredictable: *Nivekele, okhwa honasuwanyeya* (Song 73), 'Let's pray, death can't be figured out.' Another recommendation is: *Nreherye mirima sahu nihiku nookhwa navulushiwe* (Song 109), 'Let's prepare our hearts so we are saved on the day of death' (cf. Song 178). This is because:

*Achu masana masaneene anakhwa mootutusha*  
*Ehikhanlevo elukuluku yoomwavya Muluku* (Song 246)

Tens of thousands of people die suddenly  
 Without any time to seek God.

#### 4.2.2.2 Worldview variables

The worldview variables of *Time*, *Space*, *Self/Other*, and *Causality* provide more systematic insights into the theology expressed in these songs than the preceding listing of themes can do. It will be seen that with respect to *Time* and *Space* there are sharp contrasts between the worldview of these Christians and that of Lomwe tradition, while there is more continuity with the variables of *Self/Other* and *Causality*.

##### 4.2.2.2.1 Time

The worldview variable of *Time* is marked prominently in these songs both by specific vocabulary and by grammar. *Time* is divided into past, present, and future, with the latter two categories receiving the emphasis. Of them, the present, the time of action, decision, and participation is crucial.

The most common word indicating time in these songs is *nihiku*, 'day,' used in 78 of them. Some uses of *nihiku* are clearly anchored in the past, introducing retellings of stories from the Bible, like those of Abraham (Song 106) and of Israel in Egypt (Songs 98, 250), or the popular ones of Noah and of Lot at Sodom (Songs 4, 13, 76, 82, 122, 124). In these contexts a key phrase is *mahiku a khalai*, 'days of old' (Songs 81, 83, 106, 243). It has already been noted,

though, that these references to judgment stories in the past also have strong future and present implications.

*Nihiku* is used to speak of the future about as often as it does the past. Four times it is stated that 'the days are ending' (Songs 25, 184, 228, 243) and 11 songs refer to *mahiku ookuchula* or *oomaliha*, 'the last or final days' (Songs 42, 70, 52, 104, 131, 160, 175, 225, 228, 233, 258). Of course, these are not simply statements about the future. Contemporary experience implies the last days may already have begun:

*Mahiku ookuchula waapa, munyemu, wootha*  
*Sinyothukumana okeresha* (Song 42)

In the last days murmuring, mocking and lies  
Will meet together at the church

In fact, they have. The future is present:

*Nyuwo aKiristu mveke moohihiya*  
*Ala ti mahiku ookuchula*  
*Hamunasuwela wi mahiku aamala?*  
*Munii mwaakheliwe ni sheeni?* (Song 228)

You Christians, plead unceasingly  
These are the last days  
Don't you know that the days have ended?  
How are you going to be received?

Most often *nihiku* refers directly to the present. Used in the singular and often with *olelo*, 'today,' there are 17 times when it indicates a present event being honored in the song. This can be a local event like special visitors (Songs 105, 189), a teaching seminar (Songs 87, 202), a building dedication (Songs 146, 147) or a wedding (Song 229). It can also be an event in the Christian year, at once both historical and present, like the triumphal entry (Song 181), the crucifixion (Songs 113, 214) or Pentecost (Songs 186, 187).

Another present-tense situation is when *nihiku* is used in the plural with the demonstrative pronoun *yaala*, 'these.' Here, a negative tone dominates.

*Mahiku yaala a mutano*  
*Nivilele. Saweha sinnatepa.* (Song 16)

These days, this season  
We must endure. Trials abound.

In 'these days' faith flees and love ends (Song 29), the earth tilts (Song 46), we fall into sin (Song 93) and are tricked by the devil (Song 133). These days are dangerous (Songs 117, 161, 193), especially in the sense that it is a hard time to live as a faithful believer.

The plural of *nihiku* with the adjective *oothene*, ‘all’ is a common expression for ‘all the time.’ We want to sing, thank and honor God *mahiku oothene* (Songs 26, 128, 146, 230) and we ask him to be with us and lead us by the Spirit *mahiku oothene* (Songs 193, 233, 252). There are people making war on us all the time (Song 244) and some people will end up wailing forever (Song 223). In most of these cases, a present reality continues into the future.

Apart from these uses of *nihiku*, verb forms also reveal the worldview variable of *Time*, accenting the present and to a lesser extent the future. Most significant is the use of the imperative,<sup>211</sup> a call for action here and now. It is found in fully 71% (188/263) of the songs, sometimes addressed to God in prayer, more often addressed to the congregation in exhortation. Past and, more often, future realities may be referred to, but the present dominates.

A lexical marker of the future is the verb *orwa*, ‘to come.’ It is used as a helping verb indicating future tense in 27 of these songs. In every case,<sup>212</sup> it is clear from the context that it refers to eschatology, the conceptual complex involving the return of Christ, the day of judgment, the punishment of the wicked and the rescue of Christ’s own. (These are precisely the prominent themes noted above.) In one short song (136), there are four instances (the helping verb future tense marker is underlined):

*Nihiku nlo onarwa Apwiyahu Yeesu vamoha ni arummwa,*  
*Onarwa okhalavo wunla otokwenesha wa alipa oocheka.*

*Otheya ori wa yaawo oororomela*  
*Enarwa yaakhela ikuru soomoonano Apwiya Muluku.*

*Ankelo awirimu enarwa yooapa chiri nipenka onakhuma nsuwa*  
*nave miteko seelapo yavathi sinarwa simala. (Song 136)*

On that day Lord Jesus will come with his messengers  
There will be great crying by the sinners.

Joy is to those who believe,  
They will receive the power to see the Lord God.

The angels of heaven will blow the trumpet where the sun rises  
And the works of the earth will end.

The future in view in these songs is a very specific one, that of God’s final action.

<sup>211</sup>This includes strict grammatical imperative forms and the more frequent imperatival use of the subjunctive.

<sup>212</sup>There is a possible exception in Song 147 where *ninarwa niipa*, ‘we will sing’ could refer to a more immediate future, but *wirimu*, ‘heaven’ in the following line seems to imply otherwise.

#### 4.2.2.2.2 Space

The spatial world of these songs is marked by a clear dualism between *elapo*, 'land, earth' and *wirimu*, 'heaven, sky.' The full Lomwe phrase *elapo ela ya vathi*, 'this land here below' is used some 15 times. It is the clearest Lomwe expression to refer the earth in general, the world of human habitation. More common are partial versions of the phrase, *elapo ya vathi*, 'land here below,' used 25 times, and *elapo yeela*, 'this land, earth,' used 27 times. Another 18 times *elapo* is used without modification, though the context usually makes it a synonym of the phrases above. By contrast *elapo* is only used four times with the names of specific places, such as Sodom, and another nine times modified by *ele* or *eyo*, meaning 'that land,' again with specific, biblical places in view.<sup>213</sup> Complementing these instances of *elapo*, is *vathi*, 'below,' used four times by itself and 11 times with the locative particle *va*, with the sense of 'here below.' In one case (*vathi wa mahiye*, 'beneath the graves'), *vathi* has a more limited reference. Every other time, it is synonymous with the *elapo* phrases above. In total, this makes at least 99 references to the concept of *elapo yeela ya vathi* in 263 songs.

Over against this land below, stands heaven, *wirimu* (formed by the locative prefix *o* and *erimu*, 'sky'), used 56 times. (By contrast, *erimu*, 'sky' as a part of creation, is referred to just twice.) The major synonym of *wirimu* is *osulu*, '[the place] above,' used seven times. Supremely, *wirimu* is the place of God (18 times it is linked directly with Father, God, or Lord). By extension, it is also the place of life:

*Mi koosuwela wirimu wookhalawo okumi* (Song 24)

I know that in heaven there is life.

It is also the place of peace (Songs 133 and 168), and of praise (Songs 91, 105, 140 and 147). Sometimes this spatial concept is most striking when none of the typical vocabulary is used:

*Okhwa waka antoko kivave,  
Kivave sintoko Eliya  
Eliya arin'vava anakhala ni ankeelo  
Eliya anakhala ni ankeelo.* (Song 99)

My death, may it be like I fly  
May I fly like Elijah  
Elijah flew to be with the angels  
Elijah is with the angels.

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<sup>213</sup> Even in these instances, as noted above about Noah and Lot, the specific place may function as a type of general judgment, so a specific *elapo* has connotations of the whole earth.



Other spatial references fit readily into this same contrasting scheme of earth and heaven. References to specific biblical places may be those fit for judgment like Sodom and Gomorah, and hence earthly:

*Sootoma ni Komora yaniina  
Apwiya yamuruma munkelo ampahule Sotoma  
Khuma mu Sotoma, munampahuliwa (Song 62)*

Sodom and Gomorrah—they were dancing  
The Lord sent an angel to destroy Sodom  
Get out of Sodom—you will be destroyed

Or a place could be a symbol of blessedness like Jerusalem, the holy and heavenly city (see also Songs 21, 77, 219, and 248):

*Yerusalemu, Yerusalemu chiri oreera owo  
Nakhale vamoha ni Pwiya Yeesu,  
Niipaka aleluya, hosana,  
Chiri hosana, aleluya (Song 108)*

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, truly it's the beautiful one  
Let's be together with the Lord Jesus,  
Singing aleluia, hosana  
Truly, hosana, aleluia

This dualistic sense of space is dominant but does not rule out other perspectives. Occasionally, a place mentioned may simply be a location in a Bible story (cf. Song 110). It could also be where the singers are or the place they are from (as in Songs 119, 125, 152, 155, 209, and 214, or in the title given the recording of Songs 231-263). Local pride, a sense of 'our group in our place,' is definitely part of life and not simply an aspect of *elapo ya vathi* which needs to be left on the way to *wirimu*.

*Ninnovekaani Pwiya awirimu:  
Munihoolele hiyo aninyu  
Nipuro nenla noo Seera ninnovekani Munepa anyu (Song 119)*

We ask you Lord of heaven:  
Lead us your children,  
In this place, at Serra, we ask for your Spirit

The place we are here and now is one to receive the Spirit, to be blessed (Song 125), to thank and to pray (Songs 152, 155), in fact to connect in some way with the realities of *wirimu*. But these needed nuances do not alter the overall dualistic structure of space in the worldview of these songs.

#### 4.2.2.2.3 Self/Other

The group is much more prominent than the individual in these songs. It is not some individual self that stands out against all others. Rather the self blends in to a group where it belongs. The individual's obligation is to fit in, particularly by the appropriate behavior that marks the insider group. The group is more defined by this behavior than it is by opposition to other, outsider groups.

The skillful rhetoric of Song 219 is an illustration of these dynamics. The song begins and ends with emphatic use of the first person plural. *Hiyo nri vamukwahani*, 'We are on a journey' has a redundant (and hence emphatic) first-person plural pronoun in first position. The final verse picks up both the journey theme and the first-person plural, with first position use of a redundant helping verb: *Hankoni niye omucecheni waweela owo*, 'Come on, let us go to that holy city.' However, the central verse and refrain of the song are addressed to a second-person singular *muchu oocheka*, 'sinner' (literally, 'person of sin'), again with the redundant pronoun in emphatic first position: *Weyo woohala nthowa noocheka*, 'You [sg.] are left behind because of sin.' The effect is to isolate and expose the sinning individual: As it is you are on your own while the group is pressing on. Repent quickly and get back to the safety of the group.

This worldview variable of *Self/Other* is also revealed in part by patterns of grammar. The first-person is used in the plural in 132 songs, but in the singular only in 55 songs. Of course setting influences this. These songs are the products of groups singing in a public context. It is thus natural to speak of *we* and of *us*. But it is striking that all these songs were sung by groups. There were no solos in these Lomwe church services. The plural dominates the singular, though it does not eliminate it.

The singular is used for the named biblical characters already mentioned in many of the songs. These heroes do not seem to have been subsumed into their groups.

Another insight into the *Self/Other* variable is the vocabulary used for relations with other people. Family relationships are the preferred way of expressing these. The self who relates does so in ways that stress connection and belonging. The word for person, *muchu*, is used 98 times (singular and plural) in these 263 songs. The most general word used for relative is *munna*, 'sibling,' which does not emphasize age or rank.<sup>214</sup> It is used 142 times (15 of them

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<sup>214</sup> An exception (not found in these songs) is when it used in context with *alupale*, 'elder brother,' and means 'junior sibling.'

singular, the rest plural). Thirty-seven of those times a possessive pronoun is attached, making still stronger the family connection. Christians are conventionally seen as an extended family. Other frequent family terms, which function as honorifics when addressing an older man, are: *tiithi*, ‘father’ (the term found in the Lomwe New Testament of 1931), addressed to people 21 times<sup>215</sup> and *paapa*, ‘father’ (a loanword<sup>216</sup> from Portuguese more used in contemporary Lomwe), 26 times. The corresponding term for mother, *mai*, is used 39 times, mostly in strict parallel with *tiithi* or *paapa*.<sup>217</sup> By contrast the general term for Christian, *muKiristu*, is only used 16 times.

To connect with and belong to others implies having a place in the group. Thus calling people *father* or *mother* not only declares a family relationship but gives respect and assigns senior status. The following terms for fellow members of the group highlight age-ranking over family relationship. They are frequently used in parallel with the words for father and mother: the Portuguese loanwords *jovem*, ‘young person’ and *juventute*, ‘youth,’ used 23 times, the Lomwe male equivalent, *mmiravo*, 10 times, and female equivalent, *mwali*, 7 times. These latter terms broadly describe those who have reached puberty but have not yet had children.

The worldview reflected by these songs is well aware of boundaries between the insider group and outsiders, but does not stress the reality of exclusion over inclusion. Outsiders tend to be either an undifferentiated mass or erring individuals who need to change in order to belong. They are not clearly marked opposing groups who by their opposition strengthen the insider group’s bonds. The common word for enemy, *mwiicani*, is used in only two of the songs (190 and 199) which speak frankly of lots of enemies surrounding the singer and trying to swallow him up. What is surprising is how rare this perspective is in these songs.

Some songs contrast the insiders who are relatives, *anna*, from the outsiders, mere people, *achu*. The distinction headlines two contrasting verses of Song 244:

*Achu ale eelapo yeele yamweera okhwela waya*  
*Owurya ni orapheya, otheya, othela ni otheliwa, othuma ni otumiha*

*Annaka niireherye, mahiku aamala, anna*  
*Apwiya onamorwa wakusha oororomela*

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<sup>215</sup>And 31 times to God.

<sup>216</sup>The strong presence of Portuguese loanwords in the vocabulary for relationships implies that the processes of colonization and modernization have had an impact in this area, with significant social change and, perhaps, redefinition of key family relationships.

<sup>217</sup>Almost always these terms include the honorific plural of respect: *a-tiithi*, *a-paapa*, *a-mai*.

Those people of that land did their own will  
Drinking and vomiting, laughing, marrying and being married, buying and  
selling

My brothers/sisters, let us prepare, the days have ended brothers/sisters  
The Lord is coming to take the believers.

This same kind of pattern is found in Songs 13, 53, 81, and 82. But the term *muchu*, ‘person’ is  
equally at home being used both for insiders and outsiders (cf. Songs 118 and 142):

*Yeesu Kiristu akushevo achu oothene oororomela,  
Ehanlevo achu oocheka erikimunla ni orimela* (Song 255)

May Jesus Christ take from here all the people who believe,  
Let there remain here the sinning people, crying and lost

And the relatives can be sinners and need to repent, too (Song 191). The crucial distinction  
between insiders and outsiders, between *we* and *they*, self and other is made by people’s  
behavior with respect to God’s standards.

#### 4.2.2.2.4 Causality

Verbs are a powerful indicator of people’s view of *Causality*. In these songs the use of  
imperatives (including subjunctives) demonstrates that while God is a powerful actor, human  
action is a stronger emphasis. It is crucial to whom imperatives are addressed, implying who is  
expected to act. Fifty-eight of these songs contain imperatives addressed to God (or the Lord)  
in prayer. Yet fully 141 songs contain imperatives addressed to people. This same imbalance is  
seen more sharply when the actual verbs used as imperatives are listed. While only 25 different  
imperatives are addressed to God, at least 89 are addressed to people. Human effort is  
extensive, varied, and prominent.

Of the 25 imperatives addressed to God or Jesus in prayer he is asked most frequently to  
*oreeliha*, ‘bless’ (22 times) or to *okhala ni*, ‘be with’ those who pray (15 times). Next he is  
asked to *orwa*, ‘come’ (11 times), to *ovaha*, ‘give’ or *okurusha*, ‘send down’ the Spirit (a total  
of 10 times), to *wiwa*, ‘hear’ (seven times) or to *ovulusha*, ‘save, rescue’ (also seven times).  
All these are requests for help in quite general terms, with an accent on God’s presence or  
closeness as a key element of his help. Several other requests are also for protection in general:  
*opharela*, ‘to grip, secure’ (three times), *orwela*, ‘to come for’ (three times), *okhaviherya*, ‘to  
help’ (three times), *okhuvela*, ‘to come quickly towards [someone]’ (twice), *okhapelela*, ‘to  
keep’ (three times), *waakiha*, ‘to defend’ (once), and *ovaha ikuru*, ‘to give strength’ (once). A  
less prominent set of verbs pick up imagery of the journey to heaven with God as the  
gatekeeper or guide: *ohula*, ‘to open’ (four times), *okusha*, ‘to take’ (three times), *waakhela*, ‘to

receive, welcome' (twice), and *ohoola*, 'to guide' (once). Four times God is asked to *okhurumuwela*, 'forgive,' once each to *openusha*, 'heal' and to *ohusiha*, 'teach.' No other request is made more than once.

Regarding human action and looking only at imperatives used five times or more, certain emphases are apparent. The context of singing in worship services makes calls to *othamala*, 'thank' God (26 times), to *ohakalala*, 'rejoice' (16 times), to *wiipela*, 'sing to' him (ten times), and *ocicimiha*, 'to honor' him (11 times) appropriate. The here and now of worship is important, hence commands to *orwa*, 'come' (13 times) and *woona*, 'see' (seven times). The second most frequent imperative, however, (19 times) is *ocharuwa*, 'to repent,' complemented by the challenge of *wiivarerya*, 'to examine oneself' (six times), *olokoha*, 'to confess' (eight times), and *ohiya*, 'to leave' (six times), indeed, *ochawa*, 'to flee' (also six times). Sins demand a vigorous response. This response is what is implied by *wiireherya*, 'to prepare' (eight times), in the light of coming judgment. Though this aspect is most prominent, human responsibility is not just negative. Positively, one must *ochara*, 'follow' (11 times), especially Jesus, and *waakhela*, 'receive' (seven times) him, as well as *ororomela*, 'trust' (five times).

There are also other important obligations: *ovekela*, 'to pray' (13 times), which is a general term for religious obligations as well as a specific word for addressing God and spiritual powers, *osivelana*, 'to love one another' (seven times) and *olaleerya*, 'to proclaim' (five times). It is necessary to *wiriyana*, 'listen' (six times), *wuupuwela*, 'to remember' (seven times) and *osuwela*, 'to know' (five times). Perhaps because of the burden of such obligations, there are also strong exhortations to *ovilela*, 'to persevere' (nine times), *olipiha*, 'to make strong' (six times) and *olipisherya*, 'to strengthen' (five times). Human agency is emphatically the most prominent component of *Causality* in these songs.

Another agent is *Saatana*, 'Satan,' mentioned in 14 of the songs (contrast *Yeesu*, 'Jesus,' mentioned in 87 of the songs). Satan plays a definite, but subsidiary role in the causality structure of this worldview, treated with respect but not undue fascination. He is never addressed directly. He is the source of *saweeha*, 'testings' (Songs 39, 217, 247), a deceiver (Song 91) and obstructor (Song 172). It is the *mulavilavi*, 'scoundrel' who gives Satan space (Songs 41 and 218, cf. Song 141). People must beware<sup>218</sup> lest they hand over their life to him (Song 54), be kept by him (Song 97), or be caught by him as he lurks (Song 103). He wants to

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<sup>218</sup>Human agency is again foregrounded.

take people with him to the fire (Song 183). He is *atepa wuupa*, 'very powerful' (Song 234) and must be fought (Song 184).

#### 4.2.2.3 Worldview narrative

The evidence from the themes highlighted in these songs and from the analysis of worldview variables can be synthesized in a narrative, as follows:

We are on a journey from this land here below, which is full of troubles and sins, to the wonderful place above, heaven, where God is. God and Jesus help us along the way, and Jesus is coming to meet us. Satan tries to stop us. We must watch out and work hard because we may not make it. At any moment the journey could be ended by death or Jesus' return.

Key parts of this story are worth developing at more length. The first person plural, 'we' is critical. The group is more prominent than the individual and belonging to the insider group is a key source of happiness and security, as seen in discussing the worldview variable of *Self/Other*.

The 'life is a journey' metaphor theme (cf. Ross 2003:153) which underlies this narrative is pervasive, and does not depend on just one or two key terms. One song tells almost the whole story, using *mukwaha*, 'journey':

*Voorwa Apwiya mahiku oomaliha awo*  
*Muchu oocheka hanarowa wirimu*  
*Nyenyaa oocharuwa onaya vamukwahani*  
*Mukwaha wooyano wa Apwiya* (Song 258)

When the Lord comes those last days  
The sin-person will not go to heaven  
But a repentor is going on a journey  
A journey going to the Lord

Similarly, Song 236 affirms *wirimu mukwaheni*, 'heaven is a journey.' The second verse of that song states, *elapo ya vathi hayivo yoophwanela*, 'there is nothing worthwhile in this land below,' and goes on to make some recommendations. Because of this:

*Nlipisherye mirima, nimuchare Yeesu owo*  
*Nimweherye mwene ahu owo*

We must strengthen our hearts, we must follow that Jesus  
We must wait for that king of ours.

However, only seven of the songs actually use the noun *mukwaha*, 'journey.' Another 11 refer to *ephiro*, 'path, way.' God has a path (Songs 55, 234) which leads to life (Song 242), though it is long (Song 168). There is also another path, which leads to the fire (Song 89).

Much more common than these nouns are the verbs of travel and motion. *Weeca*, 'to walk' is found in 22 songs and used to mean manner of life in all but five instances.<sup>219</sup> Other basic verbs of movement are *orowa*, 'to go' (used in 16 songs) and *oya*, 'to go [someplace]' (seven songs). Another key verb is *ochara*, 'to follow,' used in 15 songs, more than half of the times for following Jesus. People need to *ocimula*, 'set out' (three songs), to make sure they do not *ohala*, 'remain behind' (ten songs), so that they can *ophiya*, 'arrive' (18 songs) and *ovolowa*, 'enter' (14 songs). Of course, travel implies people will *ohiya*, 'leave behind' some things (16 songs) and *ovira*, 'pass by' others (11 songs). On the way someone must *ohoola*, 'lead' (with *ohoolela*, ten times). *Okusha*, 'to take [with]' is used in 32 songs (and in 21 of them refers to God or Jesus coming to take his own to be with him).

This 'life is a journey' metaphor theme is reinforced by key terms that have both spatial and temporal reference. The preposition *ophiyerya*, for example, is derived from the verb *ophiya*, 'to arrive.' In a spatial sense it means 'unto,' as in Song 17, which challenges people to make a bridge:

*Ovinya vathi ophiyerya osulu*

From below unto on high

Context indicates it is used this way in four songs. Much more common is a temporal sense, 'until,' found in 18 songs. One example is Song 165, where other terms reinforce the image of traveling through time:

*Apwiya Muluku ninnothamalani*

*Mowerya onihoolela chiri ophiyerya nihiku nalelo*

*Hinarora wi nnaphiyerya*

Lord God we are thanking you

Truly you have been able to guide us until today

We did not expect we would arrive.

Similarly, the spatial term *muhoolo*, 'ahead, in front of' is most commonly used to refer to the future, as in:

*Hiyano ninchuna olakana samuhoolo mmahiku ookuchula* (Song 131)

We want to agree together about the things ahead in the last days

In the same way, the adjective *ovirale*, from the verb *ovira*, 'to pass,' is used to refer to past time every time it is used.

<sup>219</sup>In two of these five, *weeca* describes Lot's wife and it is doubtful in context that literal travel is all that is implied when she *weeca vakhani*, 'walks slowly' (Songs 71, 129).

The strong dualism between life down on earth and heaven above has been explored above under the worldview variable of *Space*. The prominent spatial imagery requires some understanding of how the two lands connect, which the journey metaphor provides. This orientation does not clearly see a mission on earth besides escape.<sup>220</sup> Biblical themes of evangelism, transformation, new creation and resurrection are neglected.<sup>221</sup>

But this worldview is far from escapist or passive. There is a relentless challenge to human effort, more vigorous than God's activity, as seen in the parade of imperatives analyzed under the variable of *Causality*. God's role is not suppressed or denied, but it is downplayed. One song declares:

*Epoonti, enakhweleya epoonti yoolipa*  
*Yoophiyano msulu.* (Song 17)

A bridge, a strong bridge is needed  
To reach on high.

It repeatedly commands people *pakani epoonti*, 'make a bridge,' then mentions in the last line that *epoonti ti Yeesu*, 'Jesus is the bridge.' Or, as in the following two songs, God is watching and judging, while people exert themselves:

*Anna, navekelaka Muluku, onannoona.*  
*Nihivele chiri ni mavekelo*  
*Ni weera saphaama.* (Song 3)

Brothers/sisters, as we pray to God he is seeing us  
Truly, let us not get tired with our prayers  
And with doing good things

*Nivekelaaka, echu emoha mnachunaahu,*  
*Muluku ahincuwale*  
*Ahinrihele okhwipi* (Song 10)

As we pray, there is one thing we want  
May God not forget us  
May he not throw us away.

People need to remind themselves, repeatedly, *nivileele*, 'let's persevere' (Song 259).

However, God is also active here and now and there is much to thank him for. The uses of *othamala*, 'to thank' are instructive. God or Jesus are always the ones thanked in the 29 songs where this verb is used. There is thanks to Jesus for who he is, Chief of chiefs (Songs 134,

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<sup>220</sup> A rare clear exception is Song 233, which commands: teach all peoples, baptize and preach (cf. Songs 146, 183, 247).

<sup>221</sup> For example resurrection is referred to in only three of these songs, using *ovinya*, 'arise.' Twice it speaks of Jesus' resurrection, once the resuscitation of Lazarus.



211), Savior (Songs 26, 222), Son of God (Song 159), and for his beautiful name (Songs 128, 261). There is thanks for what he has done, his death (Song 156), his kindness in instructing of heaven (Song 177), his repeated forgiveness (Song 86), and his protection (Songs 215, 247). But by far the most common motive for thanks, in 17 of the 29 songs, is for life today. This is common enough to be the conventional use. God has helped his people reach today (which is often a special occasion). Thus, one of God's most prominent activities is sustaining people on the journey of life. The underlying assumption is that life is precarious, fragile, and not to be taken for granted. People are vulnerable. To survive and make it to any particular occasion is noteworthy and cause for thanks to God.

The journey to heaven is fraught with deep uncertainty. As the worldview variable of *Time* and the themes of death and Christ's return make clear, people do not know when their journey will end. They also do not know if they will make it to heaven. God's judgment is strict. The best hope is to follow the standards that ensure full participation with the group of fellow travelers. Merely being labeled as part of the group is not enough. Song 130 dramatizes the plight of active church members left out at heaven's door, begging to be let in.

#### 4.2.2.4 Supporting evidence

This chapter has relied on local songs for insights into the theology and contemporary worldview of some Lomwe-speaking Christians. It is assumed that a comparable corpus of sermons preached in these churches would lead to similar conclusions.<sup>222</sup> The limited evidence of the author's notes from four messages bears this out.<sup>223</sup> One challenges the congregation to pay up their tithe cards, lest the church officials not find them on the list and know how to bury them, *otakhwani*, 'in the wilderness,' a euphemism for cemetery. It is implied that burial as a church member in good standing brings with it blessings. Burial as a *mmalapo*, 'outsider' does not. The framework is that of following what is prescribed in order to be a member of the group in God's favor, and so have his protection when confronting death. Similarly, the sinner who confesses his misdeed to the church authorities is promised, *akhwaka anavava*, 'when dying, he or she will fly,' moving up to heaven. Another sermon dwells on death. Many have been *wichaniwa*, 'called,' a euphemism for death. This is simply God's choice. It is not that they were worse sinners than the rest or that those who remain are more faithful. Since people can't see God, they should love those like him, other people. In particular the young should

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<sup>222</sup>There would doubtless also be many qualifications as well as more secure results.

<sup>223</sup>Note that the author's role as a participant has severely hampered his role as an observer with respect to sermons in Lomwe churches. He has too frequently been the preacher himself.

*ocicimiha*, 'respect' their elders. The warning is that many are dying before they even reach 30. Their suffering is *okontariwe makhuva*, 'having their bones counted' (presumably an allusion to the extreme thinness that often accompanies AIDS). The inescapable reality of death is a challenge to good behavior. Another sermon assumes that people come to church to obtain *okumi wohimala*, 'eternal life.' It uses the story of the Emmaus Road to launch into the metaphor of life as a journey. Yet, it is argued, these days many fail to reach their destination due to the influence of Satan and videos. The exhortation is *niinanela nnoohapala*, 'we refrain from intoxicants.'

### 4.3 Conclusion

This chapter has used a wide variety of sources, both primary and secondary, to survey two influential worldviews among the Lomwe, that of tradition and that of some contemporary Protestant Christians. There are sharp contrasts between them with respect to *Time* and *Space*. Instead of a natural life cycle lived out in a specific land, these Christians see their lives as directed heavenward both through time and space. Instead of tight integration, there is a dualism with little positive to say about life here and now. There is also much in common between the two worldviews with respect to *Self/Other* and *Causality*. People find their identity within their group, following its rules and rituals, whether that group is a *nihimo* or a church. Human beings along with unseen persons exert themselves to influence life. God does have a more prominent role for the Christians than he does in the traditional view.

These contrasts and continuities may stimulate reflection. It would be fascinating and fruitful to consider factors in culture and history that have led to this configuration. Have the near-apocalyptic experiences of life in Mozambique over recent decades encouraged the apocalyptic emphasis of theology in the churches? (Or do other African Christians with less traumatic experiences have similar emphases?)<sup>224</sup> It would be valuable to ponder biblically the strengths and weaknesses of these emphases. How does the Bible's view of God's role in *Causality* (which allows room for human and unseen agents) nevertheless challenge both of these worldviews? It would also be revealing to discover the interplay of these worldviews in the lives of Lomwe-speakers. How do people cope when a highly integrated received worldview collides with a less integrated one? Where the worldviews do not overlap, do people use them

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<sup>224</sup>Of course, it could well be that what is anomalous is that rich, comfortable people downplay the apocalyptic element in Scripture.

to complement each other? Does the traditional worldview (or some other view) fill the gap left by these Christians' negative understanding of the here and now?

Nevertheless, for the present study it is sufficient to note particular challenges for communicating Old Testament covenant concepts, like those in Leviticus 26, that arise from Lomwe tradition and from the dominant theology and worldview of Lomwe Christians. Some have already been noted in the course of discussion. Others have not.

- 1) Traditional Lomwe social structure does not have adequate parallels or analogies to ANE covenant concepts. However, it places a high value on kinship and it uses oath commitments. These components are available to use in communicating covenant concepts.
- 2) Key covenantal vocabulary is virtually absent from Christians' songs. The word used in the Lomwe New Testament to translate διαθήκη, *nlakano*, is used just twice, referring to the titles of Old and New Testaments. A related verb, with the sense of 'to agree together, promise' is used twice. The term *waataana*, 'to have fellowship' used by the Lomwe Old Testament translation project for ברית, 'covenant,' is not used once in these songs. This implies these Christians may not have a strong commitment to either translation decision, leaving them more open. It may also imply limited interest in or exposure to covenant concepts.
- 3) The traditional Lomwe worldview has affinities with that of the majority of peoples in the ancient Near East. All these societies sought to maintain their viability in a harsh environment amid an array of, often conflicting, spirit powers. This makes the issues in Leviticus 26 highly relevant to Lomwe-speakers, though indirectly. Leviticus 26 stands in polemic tension to the majority view in the ANE, affirming a good life rigorously centered around relationship with Yahweh. Similarly, Leviticus 26 and its covenant concepts should have both points of contact and polemic in a traditional Lomwe context.
- 4) The survey of Christian songs suggests there are significant gaps between the worldviews of Leviticus 26 and of Lomwe-speaking Christians, particularly with regard to the variables of *Space* and *Causality*. Leviticus affirms all space as the sphere of Yahweh's rule, whereas these Christians see themselves as trying to move

to a place where God is from a place where his presence is not really to be counted on. On the other hand, the gaps are narrower with respect to *Time* and *Self/Other*. Both tend to affirm time as sweeping from past to future under God's control and see individuals as primarily part of a community in relation to God.

- 5) Both Leviticus and Lomwe Christians make use of journeys in their worldview narratives. However, the worldview narrative of Leviticus places strict accountability within the framework of a secure relationship with God. The worldview narrative of the Lomwe Christians seems to have the accountability without the security.
- 6) The tight integration of the traditional Lomwe worldview poses a challenge during a time of intense social and cultural change. For many it is no longer adequate to explain all of life. The worldview of these Lomwe Christians does not attempt a thorough integration. Perhaps covenant concepts, with their strong integrating role in biblical theology, can be communicated in such a way that they have an integrating role for Lomwe readers of the Bible, helping them 'put the pieces of life together.'

These challenges will decisively influence the experiment in the following chapter, as Lomwe preachers attempt to communicate Leviticus 26 to their people. The comparison and contrast of worldviews will be revisited at the end of the chapter. Then the issues raised must be addressed in chapter six as the conclusion to the present work charts a way forward in communicating covenant concepts in the Lomwe context.

## PREACHING LEVITICUS 26 IN LOMWE

This chapter turns from Lomwe worldviews in general (both traditional and Christian) to the specifics of communicating Leviticus 26 and its covenant concepts in Lomwe. The data analyzed come from an experiment in which volunteers from Lomwe churches preached the text to their congregations.

The first section of the chapter describes details of the experiment. The next section turns to the body of sermons produced, analyzing them both for broad themes and also in terms of the worldview expressed, using the tools of worldview variables and narrative summary already found in earlier chapters of this study. It is expected that the worldview reflected in these sermons would be basically the same as that in the Lomwe church songs analyzed in the preceding chapter, with differences in emphasis occasioned by the specifics of the text in Leviticus. Extensive quotes from the sermons give some of the flavor of what would otherwise be inaccessible. Finally, the most problematic issues in the sermons for communicating covenant concepts are identified, using as points of reference the definition of ברִית, 'covenant' argued in chapter one and the summary of the worldview impact of covenant theology defended in chapter three.

### 5.1 Details of the experiment

#### 5.1.1 *Method of approach*

The experiment was conducted from 2001 to 2003. Volunteers meeting in the district capitals of Gurué and Alto Molocué (both districts of Zambézia province with an overwhelming majority of Lomwe-speakers and near the traditional Lomwe heartland of Mt. Namuli) were given an envelope with a printout of the text of Leviticus 26 in Lomwe. This text was produced by the Bible Society in Mozambique's Lomwe Old Testament project in the normal course of its work. Though not yet published, the text had been drafted, checked by translators and exegete, then corrected and approved by the project's interdenominational Review Committee. It was a sample in near final form from the whole Bible in Lomwe which is still to be published. Apart from three section headings, the passage had no explanatory notes. The volunteers were not told at this point that the experiment has a particular focus on

communicating covenant concepts. It was simply explained that they were helping test comprehension of the text. This was to avoid skewing emphasis of the content towards the researcher's interests and failing to reflect the preachers' own perspective. The volunteers were also given a blank cassette tape. They were asked to read the chapter, prepare a sermon using it, and in the normal course of their ministry to preach the sermon to a congregation. This sermon was to be recorded on the tape which would then be returned for analysis to the author of the present study. The volunteers who completed the assignment were invited to a further meeting to discuss their reactions and to study the passage. It was at this stage that covenant concepts were highlighted. The preachers were then invited to take a second blank cassette and record a further sermon on the passage, which several did. In all, the 17 volunteer preachers who recorded audible tapes produced 27 sermons on Leviticus 26. (Ten of them recorded two sermons each). The 27 sermons will be studied as a single corpus. Only on one issue, duly noted below, do the second chance sermons clearly tend to diverge.

### *5.1.2 The preachers*

These preachers were representative of the cutting edge of contact between the translated Scriptures and Lomwe culture. They were responsible, trusted leaders in churches which traditionally assign a high priority to the Bible. They were educated enough to read well but not so educated that they would favor the official language of Portuguese and reject their mother-tongue. Due to the nature of the experiment, they were also probably more enterprising and open to new things than the average person. To volunteer to preach and record a sermon from a hitherto unknown Old Testament passage is not something for the timid.

Of the 17 preachers, one was a woman. Six had the status of pastor in their churches (which does not necessarily indicate they were paid or had formal theological training, but does indicate a supervisory role over more than one congregation). The rest were from lower ranks of recognized leadership which would involve them in preaching from time to time (the precise hierarchies and terminology of titles vary from denomination to denomination). They represent five different denominations, though the two largest Protestant denominations among the Lomwe dominate, with 13 of the 17 preachers and 22 of 27 the sermons. These were the Igreja União Baptista de Moçambique and the Igreja Evangélica de Cristo em Moçambique. (The other denominations were the Igreja Fé dos Apóstolos, Igreja Jesus é o Caminho, and the Igreja de Cristo.) Most commonly the preachers had four years of general education (9 of 17); a further four had five to eight years of schooling and another four had nine to twelve years of

schooling. None had actually finished secondary school. For biblical and theological training, a majority (10 of 17) had done some extension or correspondence courses. Four had attended a residential Bible school. Three reported no formal training. In age, there was a broad spread: four leaders were over 60, seven were between 40 and 60, another five were between 30 and 40, and one was under 30.

### *5.1.3 Limitations*

The number of preachers and of sermons is not large enough to permit analyzing the data in terms of differences between preachers from different denominations, or of different generations, or with differing levels of training. Nor was that the purpose of this experiment. The goal was to analyze how a broad sample of Lomwe preachers communicate a text brimming with covenantal language and ideas to their congregations. It was assumed that the preachers would not tend to challenge, but rather, express, the predominant worldview assumptions of the Christian communities to which they belong. It was also assumed that in expressing themselves to others they would reveal naturally their own understanding of the alien worldview in the text.

If people like these preachers understand and wish to communicate a new idea, there is a reasonable chance it will spread further through Lomwe churches and eventually through Lomwe culture in general. (Gaps, delays and distortions in the process, while important and fascinating, are definitely the focus of some other study.) These are established opinion-shapers in their communities. On the other hand, if interested, open leaders do not understand a new idea, it is going to have a much harder time being disseminated and integrated.

It should be noted that taping sermons lets a listener repeat his or her listening and be particular over small points when the speaker had only once to express himself or herself.<sup>225</sup> As with the songs in the previous chapter, the present approach is to look for broad trends and only note an idiosyncrasy where it can by contrast highlight a general tendency.

This study's focus on content inevitably fails to do justice to matters of style. Some of these preachers are moving, effective communicators of their message (just as some of the songs surveyed in the previous chapter were beautiful and powerful) but the present work does not

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<sup>225</sup>Perhaps it is inevitable in studying oral theology that there be an imbalance between the informality of those who speak and the ponderous analysis of those who write about that speaking!

address such issues. It does not look for rhetorical technique,<sup>226</sup> nor attempt to assess impact on an audience. In apology, it is simply noted that much beauty and delight is flattened (if not trampled) in the following pages.

#### 5.1.4 The text

In most of these sermons, the entire 46 verses of Leviticus 26 were read aloud at the beginning. It would have been the audience's first exposure to this portion of the Old Testament and only the preacher had a copy of the text to refer to. Where a preacher felt a pressure of time, he or she might make his own remarks shorter, but give time to reading the text. The minority who read excerpts from the text made their cuts from the long curse section.

The Lomwe text used by the preachers in this experiment is in Appendix B supplemented by an interlinear, near word-for-word, back-translation into English.

It should be noted that the section headings in this text provided by the translation team had a clear influence on the sermons, primarily as a synopsis of the chapter. One preacher (Trinta 2003) actually used the three section headings in the Lomwe translation of Leviticus 26 for the three points of his sermon (the only sermon which had three points): *Mareeliho wa achu awiwelela*, 'Blessings for people who obey,' *Wuulumeliwa wa achu ohiiwelela*, 'People who disobey are cursed,' and *Wuuluula waataana*, 'Renewing fellowship.' He then ranged widely through other passages of Scripture, spending very little time on the specifics of the actual text of Leviticus 26. More commonly, the preachers used the section headings in opening or closing summaries of the text (cf. Sambora 2002b). In any case, the three headings did not encourage the preachers to give the three topics equal time. As will soon be seen, the middle one dominated the others and the third one was given least attention.

## 5.2 Analysis of the sermons

Just as was done with church songs in Lomwe in the preceding chapter, the 27 sermons from this experiment are analyzed two different ways. A preliminary pass through the material notes major themes. The second time, the grid of worldview variables, introduced in previous chapters, is used. This is followed by an attempt to synthesize the data in a worldview narrative.

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<sup>226</sup>For such an approach to African preaching, see Wendland (2000).



### 5.2.1 Themes

The preachers' own comments highlight the strongest theme in these sermons: present **judgment**. In a group discussion with preachers on their initial reaction to Leviticus 26, one commented, *masu wiiweya*, 'the words make sense,'<sup>227</sup> it's just *woopiha waya*, 'how scary they are.' Another's feelings were much the same, *Miva, masu yaanakiicela. Woopiha!* 'For me, the words made me hurt. It's scary!' Another wondered, *Kahi, epula ehinarupa—ti yeeyo?* 'I don't know, the way it's not been raining—is it because of this?' (Someone else around the table was quick to scoff at that suggestion.) Another said that we used to obey and have blessing, *nto oleelo noonahu epahu*, 'but nowadays we see disaster.' The promised punishments for disobedience had grabbed people's attention. It was not just the preachers who reacted this way. One volunteer reported that after he had spoken the congregation had broken into a spontaneous song of: *Wuulu! Elapo yoothene, epahu*. 'Oh no! Disaster for the whole land.'

After further reflection on the passage, typical comments were, *Muluku taphaama, onapacerya omuleela echu, omulopola muchu*, 'God is good, he starts by explaining something, warning the person.' Or, *Afinal, Muluku é malandro! Trata-nos como um pai as crianças, é exigente*, 'After all, God is a scoundrel! He treats us like a father his children, he's demanding.'

In the previous chapter, judgment was a strong theme noted in the songs of Lomwe churches. It is not surprising that it is this theme in Leviticus 26 that gets unanimous attention in these sermons. All are agreed that God acts to punish those who do wrong. *Muluku hanathatiwano*, 'God is not to be played with' (Mirra 2002b).

Most often, God's action in judgment is seen as near or present. It is not a remote abstraction, some vague principle, but a lived reality. Examples from experience blend naturally with forceful statements of principle. Santos Alfredo (2002a) explains that the creator God is very involved in people's lives: *Muluku ohaapaka achu oothene, osivela ni oothene*, 'God made all people, is loving to all.' But God declares, *Nyuwano achu a elapo ya vathi, mweereke yeeyo kinchunaaka*, 'You, people of the earth, be doing what I want you to do.' Otherwise, the preacher explains, *Muluku onaatarazariha ichu, negócio*, 'God makes things, business, go slow' for the *jovem ohinaya oshuventute, onaya okacaasu, ogiradisco*, 'young person who doesn't go to the young people's meeting, but goes to drink liquor, or goes to the disco.' As Alfredo puts it in another sermon (2002b), *Ninnathoiwa hiva oleelo vaava nthowa*

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<sup>227</sup>The quotes in this paragraph and the one that follows are from the author's notes while participating in the discussion being reported, held at the IEC Moneia, Gurúé on 16 March 2002. Quotes cannot be individually attributed.

*noohiweleela masu a Muluku*, 'We are deprived today because of not obeying the word of God.' The principle is clear. God says, *achu akiweleela, eneera malamulo, wiichuuwa; herwa okhalano ohaawa*, 'people who obey me, do what I command, will rest; they will not have misery' (Buanare 2002a). Vitorino Molacassua asserts (2001): *nahiwiiweleela, nnahaala woona sincipale soonihoosha*, 'if we disobey, we will see many things that cause us to suffer.' Fulgêncio Careva speculates (2002) that the length of human life is getting less; *talvez Muluku ooruuha olaka*, 'maybe God has brought punishment.' After all, *Muluku onanikookiherya wiirumiha wahu, nthowa na ohiiweleela malamulo*, 'God is repaying us for our arrogance, because of not obeying the commands.'

The parade of examples of God's judging includes hunger, disease and war along with poverty. Saraiva Matope (2002b) says that there is, *etala nthowa na ohinachariha ela Muluku onakhweleiye*, 'hunger because of not following this thing that God wants.' God has declared, *elapo ya vathi, moonaka ekoi, mukiiweleleke. Mwahikiweleela, etala, ekhoco*, 'on the earth, if you are suffering, obey me. If you do not obey me, there will be hunger, there will be war.' Jossamo Mirra affirms (2002a): *Oleelo vaava, noona sootikiniha, Muluku toneeraa*, 'Today, when we see wonders, it is God who is doing them.' While *wonders* could have a positive connotation, Mirra's examples of it do not: *Olya, ohivona, yoolaka ya Muluku nthowa na ohiiweleela*, 'To eat but not be satisfied is the punishment of God for disobedience.' In his second sermon, he points out, *ereca ya shiita enavira mahiku ene yaala, vanthowa na ohiiwa okhwela wa Muluku*, 'the disease of AIDS is around these days, because of not paying attention to the will of God' (2002b; cf. Jorge 2002b). Zacarias Pedro supports this view: *ancene anaakhela masooso ahihano evolonwe mulaponi mwahu*, 'many are receiving the new disease which has entered our land' (2002). The experience of warfare also helps make God's judging present and palpable. Natália Jorge explains (2002a) that *ipahu, onanariwa wa Muluku*, 'disasters are the anger of God,' then reminds her hearers of her own experience as well as theirs, *miyaano kihoona ekhoco yeele evirale, ohaawa, ochawa-chawa*, 'I myself saw that last war, the misery, the fleeing and fleeing.' Dias Bento Feliciano (2001) brings up vivid wartime experiences, too: like the exiles who would panic over a leaf, *nikhuuku namora, munoova*, 'you are afraid when a leaf falls.'

Agricultural disaster is a frequent component of doom. Elias Sambora (2002a) warns, *nahiiweleela, nnahaala ophwanya yoolaka ene*, 'if we disobey, we will get that punishment' and later (2002b) comments, *nahimwiiweleela, imaca sahu ihiiamaru echu*, 'if we disobey him, our

fields will not produce a thing.’ José Carlos Januário affirms (2002), *elapo ahu ennuukhuwa, etala, ipahu, ampava*, ‘our land is in trouble, with hunger, disasters, robbers’ and the problem is *ohiya malamulo*, ‘leaving the commands.’ Once crop yields were better; now *echaya ti yeele*, ‘the soil is the same,’ but productivity is down. *Nthowa nene, soocheka*, ‘The reason is sins’ (cf. Januário 2003, Z. Pedro 2002). Similarly, Samuel Pedro affirms (2003a), *oleelo vaava imaca sahu soohuuma; epula yarupa, eniipha yoolya*, ‘today our fields are dried out; and if it rains, it kills the crops.’ *Soothene seiya nthowa noohimwiiwelela Muluku*, ‘All these things are because we disobey God.’ Bernardo Jemusse states (2002), *namuchekela Muluku, miri sahu hekaimaru*, ‘if we offend God, our trees will not produce fruit.’

It should be noted that affirming present judgment can create tension within this corpus of sermons. These preachers acknowledge but do not emphasize the distance of the Old Testament text from themselves and their audiences. Rather, they tend to put themselves into the text and see it as straightforwardly addressed to them. This makes for vivid, immediate communication, taken as directly from an authoritative God. However, the extravagance of the promised blessings and the horror of the promised punishments in Leviticus 26 can raise a difficulty for some of the preachers, who note that they do not correspond to experience. After all, skeptics and scoffers may argue, *Muluku oomaala, hanoona voothevene*, ‘God is calm, he doesn’t see everywhere,’ when divine punishment does not directly follow an offence, though Samuel Pedro warns his audience not to be taken in by such thinking (2003a).

One approach sees the promises as exaggerations and subtly tones them down. Thus, Samuel Pedro urges that if just two, or three, or four obey God’s commands, *elapo ahu enamureelihiwa*, ‘our land will be blessed’ (2003a). This means, however, that *masooso anyokhala masooso normale, ohiya olakiwa*, ‘disease will be normal disease and not that of punishment’ (2003b), which is not quite what the text states. A similar approach is that of Bernardo Jemusse (2002) who reinterprets the curses to show their contemporary relevance. He explains that the threatened blindness for those who disobey is the ‘blindness’ of church members who do not respond when told of a day when all should help build someone’s house. The wild beasts of the text are not mere *amwaco*, ‘lions’ but a cryptic reference to *minepa yoonanara*, ‘evil spirits.’ The former are not an immediate threat, but the latter are.

Another response is to read the promises as eschatological, not really intended for life in this world before the end. Fernando Buanare argues that *mahiku yaala achu oohiwelele enalya*, ‘these days people who disobey eat’ (2002a). Whereas, *mahiku yaale yaakhala ashinama*

*yaaphara achu, oleelo hiyiwowo*, ‘in those days there were animals that seized people, nowadays there are none’ (Buanare 2002a). These are blessings that do not fit the system. So, in effect, the curses and blessings of Leviticus 26 are no longer directly applicable and have to be pushed into the past or the future. The judgment threatened becomes less immediate and more final: *Muchu ohineeca ephiro ya Muluku, onahaala okhalano ekoi yoohimala*, ‘A person who does not walk in the path of God, will have punishment forever’ (Buanare 2002b). David Murrupa (2001) explains, *Ninnacheke—yoolivela ya yoocheke ti okhwa; naanyaanya eyaataano ni Muluku*, ‘We sin—the payment of sin is death; we have wrecked the agreement with God.’ He later states (2002): *Muchu onaya wa mooro ntakhara oocheka wawe*, ‘A person goes to the fire because of his sin’ but, *voochariha ikano, onakhala elapo ya hihano*, ‘by following the laws, he is there in the new land.’ Brilhando Trinta (2003) joins in warning, *nnahaala ophiya omaphahuwelo*, ‘we will reach destruction.’ But whenever the judgment strikes, all these preachers (along with the text) affirm the principle that *ohiweleela onmaruaha sookacamiha*, ‘disobedience brings troubles’ (Z. Pedro 2002).

The inescapable theme of judgment in these sermons connects, logically enough, with two other themes: the sins that provoke the judgment and the response that warnings of doom should produce.

Certain **sins** get mentioned, though the weight of emphasis is on disobedience in general. The problem is not particularly that people do not know what the sins are, it is to *okhala a wuuma murima ni masu a Muluku*, ‘be dry hearted [=stubborn] with the word of God’ (Alfredo 2002b). Underlying attitude is crucial. Santos Alfredo (2002a) warns the arrogant that God promises, *kinampahula yoowo oneeca mu siyo mwene*, ‘I will destroy the one who walks his own way.’ In punishment, *Muluku onanikookiherya wiirumiha wahu*, ‘God repays us for our pride’ (Careva 2002). Closely related to arrogance is *ohilelelya* (Matope 2002, cf. Júlio 2001), to be someone who does not listen to advice. Brilhando Trinta warns against *ikuru saahu nnaroromelaahu*, ‘our strength that we trust in’ (2003) and proceeds to give a specific instance, *anamuku nnachawelaahu*, ‘the spirit specialists we run to.’

When sins are enumerated, adultery is frequently mentioned, though not exclusively. *Mulopwana, muthiyana, ohikhaleno, oheeceno mukina, ahikhala awawe*, ‘A man or a woman must not have, must not go with another that is not his/her own’ (Jorge 2002b). *Muchu ahimutannyeke mwaara a nthamamwene awe*, ‘A person must not touch his friend’s wife’ (Buanare 2002b; cf. Jemusse 2002, Trinta 2003). José Carlos Januário mentions *mararuwo*,

*omwaaciha, wiirumiha*, ‘adultery, multiple wives, arrogance.’ Bernardo Jemusse (2002) challenges, *nrihe soothene, eviinyu, asipwana*, ‘let’s get rid of it all, wine, lovers’ and Saraiva Matope (2001) has a similar pair: *otheka, mararuwo*, ‘beer, adultery.’ Alfredo Júlio lists *nrima, mararuwo, mirece*, ‘jealousy, adultery, spells<sup>228</sup>’ (2001). Zacarias Pedro warns against the hard-to-catch sin of *okusha caakwa a mukhweiyi*, ‘taking your fellow’s cassava’ (2003).

Two other categories of sins are prominent, particularly because they occupy the first two verses of Leviticus 26. To worship other gods and to dishonor God’s day are both condemned, though the latter seems more of a present danger than the former. Preachers have ready examples of those who dishonor God’s day: *mahiku yaala, anna akina analima nihiku na murunku*, ‘these days, some brothers/sisters go farming on Sunday’ (Mirra 2002b) and others sell things by the roadside on Sundays (Januário 2002). But the preachers strain to provide examples of idolatry, to *okhalano amuluku eeli*, ‘have two gods’ (Matope 2002). Santos Alfredo does mention those who *ovekela mwiri, nari mwaako*, ‘pray to a tree or mountain’ (2002a) and Zacarias Pedro those who *waavya nahako*, ‘seek a diviner’ (2003). José Carlos Januário explains that idolatry is in essence, *ichu sookusha nipuro na Muluku mukumi mwahu*, ‘things that take God’s place in our life’ (2002).

Warnings about the dread consequences of sin lead naturally to a **response**, what sinners should do. *Hankoni nihiyeke soohikhala phaama, neereke saphaama*, ‘Let us leave the things that are not good, let us do good things’ (Alfredo 2002a). This general exhortation is often supplemented by more specific instructions for the church community. *Muchu aye okerasha, alokoha, acharuwa, apatisiwa*, ‘A person should go to church, confess, repent, be baptized’ (Alfredo 2002b). Similarly, *Taani arino yookacamiha awe?*, ‘Who has a problem?’ All that is needed is that *muchu acimule, aaleele pastore, nari katekista; mwaha olociwa, akhurumuweliwe*, ‘a person should get up, go tell the pastor or catechist; when the matter is talked through he can be forgiven’ (Buanare 2002b). Of course, as David Murrupa (2001) explains, *olokoha ni ocharuwa*, ‘to confess and repent’ also means *nihikookele tho*, ‘we should not go back and do it again.’ Saraiva Matope mentions that the response to God’s anger should be *niiveleleke va miithoni va Muluku*, ‘let us offer ourselves before God’ (2002). As Natália Jorge (2002a) explains, *muchu uupuwelaka yoonanara awe, acharuwa, anla, omvekela Muluku, Muluku onamukhurumuwela yoonanara*, ‘if a person remembers the wrong he has done, repents, cries, and prays to God, God will forgive that wrong.’ Similarly, *muchu*

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<sup>228</sup> *Mirece* are specially prepared objects or substances which channel spirit power to help or to harm someone.

*oniimake mekheiyē; mapastore akhalavo, asitokwene akhalavo; muchu onaveleela yoocheka awe wa Muluku*, ‘a person should bind himself; there are pastors, there are leaders; a person hands his sin over to God’ (Jorge 2002b). For Bernardo Jemusse (2002) the steps are similar. A sinner needs to speak to the church leader, *Atokwene, miyo kooraruwa*, ‘Great one, I committed adultery.’ *Osameliwa* ‘being reproved’ follows, along with *omaalihiwa*, ‘being made silent [=church discipline].’ Finally the leaders *anamaliha mwaha aka yoola*, ‘finish this case of mine’ and the person can say *koophera*, ‘I’m done.’

A right response to sin offers benefits beyond escaping threatened judgment. Santos Alfredo explains, *neereke saphaama, sooleleya, wi naakhele okumi woohimala*, ‘let us do good things, what we have been told, so we can receive life unending’ (2002a). *Hankoni nrukunuwe, wi nikhwe mwaphaama, mwa murecele*, ‘Let us repent, so we die well, in peace’ (Alfredo 2002b). Elias Sambora (2002b) puts the emphasis on trust over action, *naroromela, nnahaala waakhela okumi woohimala mahiku ookuchula*, ‘if we believe, we will receive life unending in the last days.’ Fulgêncio Careva (2002) puts both in parallel: *Muluku oovaha okumi*, ‘God gives life’ to *oothene oororomela*, ‘all who believe’ and also *arinono murima ooperekha soocheka saya*, ‘have a heart to present their sins.’

Sometimes Jesus Christ has a role in this process, though the role may be only vaguely explained. (Less than half the preachers mention it.) David Murrupa explains that, *Muluku oonivaha tho eneneeryo, anruma mwanawe Yeesu Kristu, nuuluule waataana*, ‘God gave us a sign, he sent his son Jesus Christ so we could renew fellowship’ (2001). Brilhando Trinta encourages, *Nimwaakhele Yeesu Kristu wi nihoone yoohoosha*, ‘Let us receive Jesus Christ so we do not get suffering’ (2003). Others give more detail. Saraiva Matope (2001) tells a story of cosmic conflict: After God decides, *kaatoloshe oothene*, ‘I will destroy them all,’ Jesus Christ says, *Paapa, ha oye!*, ‘Father, not at all!’ But God says, *Saataana ole, oolipasha, okunshe elapo yoothene, ti yaaka*, ‘that Satan is very strong, he has taken all the land, yet it’s mine.’ *Yeesu Kristu onii: Nari, kinaya weiwo, ocupha munlaano was Saataana, kiiphiwa. Não pode omuhyerya musaserya elapo epakiwe taatithi*, ‘Jesus Christ says: No, I will go there, jump over Satan’s boundary, be killed. The devil cannot be left with the land made by the father.’

For some, Jesus’ primary role was as a teacher. Santos Alfredo (2002a) says Jesus, God’s son, was sent to *ohusiha soothene soophwanelela mwa muchu*, ‘teach all the things a person ought to do.’ Similarly Alfredo Júlio describes Jesus’ mission as to *oruuha malamulo*, ‘bring commands’ (2001).

For others, there is special reference to Jesus' death. For Fernando Buanare (2002a), the *oyeeherya wa nikhami*, 'shedding of blood' of Jesus Christ means that all people can *waakhela ovulushiwa*, 'receive salvation' (cf. Trinta 2003). *Apwiyaahu Yeesu Kristu ti yoowo oonooponle hiyo wa soonanara sahu*, 'It is our Lord Jesus Christ who has redeemed us from our sins' (Mirra 2002a). José Carlos Januário assures his audience that, *okhwa wa Yeesu Kristu mareeliho matokweene wa alipa oororomela*, 'the death of Jesus Christ is great blessing for believers' because by it they can *waakhela okumi woohimala*, 'receive life unending' (2003). Zacarias Pedro (2003) specifically links the death of Jesus with relationship to God: *Yeesu Kristu akhwaka va mwikimanyo wi hiyo oothene nikhale anamwane awe*, 'Jesus Christ dying on the cross so that we all could be his children.' *Apwiya Yeesu Kristu aayeherya nikhami nawe nthowa na ichu seelapo ya vathi, ntakhara a hiyo achu, wi nikhale achu a wiiweleela*, 'The Lord Jesus Christ shed his blood because of the things of this earth, on behalf of us people, that we might be people who are obedient' (Molacassiu 2001).

In summary, these sermons dwell on the theme that God punishes those who sin, both here and now as well as later and definitively. But people can escape this consequence. They should change their behavior and report to the church leadership. Jesus can help.

## 5.2.2 Worldview variables

The variables of *Time*, *Space*, *Self/Other* and *Causality* next provide a grid for analyzing these twenty-seven sermons on Leviticus 26 in terms of their underlying worldview. This perspective complements the approach of identifying major themes and often echoes those themes.

### 5.2.2.1 Time

The worldview of these sermons, in sharp contrast to the traditional Lomwe worldview, locates people in a narrative that is clearly moving from past to future, a biblically rooted past and an eschatologically-shaped future.

The special status of Leviticus 26 as a foretaste of the Old Testament in Lomwe ensured that almost all the preachers in this study were aware of its 'old' setting and refer to an ancient time in contrast to the present. *Mahiku a khalai Muluku aaloca ni Moose*, 'In days of old, God spoke with Moses' (Buanare 2002a). This text is *ekaarata ya makholo yaaleeliwaaya ti Muluku*, 'a letter of the ancestors that they were told by God' (Matope 2002a). The key, and frequent, phrases are *mahiku a khalai*, 'days of old' and *mahiku yaala*, 'these days.' These are

supplemented by frequent language of *then* and *now*. *Vano*, ‘now’ and *oleelo vaava*, ‘right today’ are common markers.

This scheme is used to explain exotic terms: then there were *alipa a mukucho ni aLeevi*, ‘priests and Levites,’ now we are led by pastors and elders (Sambora 2002b, S. Pedro 2003a). But this is more than just a change in terminology over time. There are two epochs in salvation history. Then, there were *alsarayeli*, ‘Israelites,’ now there are *aKiristu*, ‘Christians’ (Feliciano 2001; cf. Molacassiu 2001). *Oleelo vaava hiyo tho, na anamwane a Muluku*, ‘Today we, too, are children of God’ (Z. Pedro 2003). Then, worship was on the seventh day, now *nihiku noothanliwa nri noothanliwa ti Apwiya ahu Yeesu Kristu, nihiku na murunku*, ‘the chosen day is chosen by our Lord Jesus Christ, Sunday’ (Trinta 2003; cf. Jemusse 2002, Júlio 2001, Mirra 2002b, Alfredo 2002b). Then, forgiveness demanded lots of complex and expensive animal sacrifices, now it is a simple (and cheap) process of presenting oneself to the church leaders (Jorge 2002b, Buanare 2002b). Prayer replaces offerings (Sambora 2002b, Buanare 2002b). Then, *saakhalamo sookhoveleliha*, ‘there were customs’ like carving images to worship, now people sell on Sundays (Januário 2002). Conflict has changed: *Oleelo vaava, mavaka makina; mmawana ni munepa*, ‘Right today, the spears are different; we fight with spirit’ (Mirra 2002a). The punishments are different, too: *hiyano ooleelo, ninnaweherya mooro*, ‘we of today await the fire’ (Buanare 2002a).

This *then* and *now* framework is not just used to contrast Old Testament and contemporary settings. It is more flexible. Salvation history with its *then* and *now* sense of shifting ages is not merely a way to look at the biblical text. These preachers straightforwardly apply it to themselves and their audience. They are inside this history as they look for signs of blessing and curse, though there may be ambiguity about precise location within the history. Without any shift in the vocabulary, preachers can put the ancient time (*mahiku a khalai*, ‘days of old’) within the memory of the audience. Some things have actually gotten better. Jossamo Mirra (2002b) mentions two. Then there was, *ekhoco yeeyo yeereya elapo ela*, ‘that war that was done in this land.’ Also, *elapo ela khalai, inama saakhalamo*, ‘in this land of old, there were beasts’ but now, *Muluku oomaliha mwayini, wi achu yiichuuwe*, ‘God finished them off of his own will, so that people could rest.’ Bernardo Jemusse remembers that, *khalai vaava amwaco yaatepa waphara achu*, ‘of old, lions used to seize people here a lot’ (2002). Jemusse also declares of the congregation that since the war, *nookoowa, naacereriwa*, ‘we have flourished, we have been increased’ (2002), experiencing blessing. The scheme also works when



unbelievers have become believers. Alfredo Júlio (2001) contrasts *khalai, nihipatisiwe, nihisuwenle*, ‘of old, when we were not baptized, when we didn’t know’ with *hihano vaava, noosuwela, nniwa sa malamulo*, ‘right now we know, we hear about the commands.’

On the other hand, it is more common to stress that things were better *then*, in the old days, with the implication that blessing is being replaced by curse. (This is not just the point of view of older preachers.) Crop yields<sup>229</sup> are a favorite example (Januário 2003, Z. Pedro 2002, 2003; S. Pedro 2003a, 2003b; Careva 2002). *Olimwa weere wa khalai ohiyana nooleelo vaava*, ‘Farming long ago was different from nowadays,’ even though *echaya ti yeele*, ‘the soil is the same’ (Januário 2003). *Oleelo va mareliho yaala hanooneya*, ‘Today these blessings are not seen’ (Z. Pedro 2003). The present time is criticized in more general terms, too. *Mahiku yaala masooso aatepa*, ‘These days sickness is too much’ (Januário 2003). *Ichu sineereya mahiku yaala ti sootikiniheya ni soonarara*, ‘The things being done these days are startling and bad’ (Mirra 2002b), including Sunday farming. This sense of decline can confirm that the last days have arrived.

Of course this *then* and *now* framework does not just highlight difference and change. It also establishes continuity, linking contemporary and ancient authority in one story. Just like the people of old, we need to *ochariha ikano naakhelaahu*, ‘follow the laws we have received’ (Murrupa 2002b). *Masu achu ahaan’waaya mahiku akhalai, nnya hiyo ninnahaawa tho oleelo vaava*, ‘People suffered because of the words in the days of old, but we also are suffering right today’ (Santos 2002a).

Less prominent than *then* and *now* in this body of sermons, but still clear, is an eschatological future. *Muhoolo nnahaala waakhela okumi woohimala, mareliho anaacereriwa*, ‘Ahead we will receive life unending, blessings multiplied’ (Z. Pedro 2003). *Nnahaala waakhela okumi woohimala mahiku ookuchula*, ‘We will receive life unending in the last days’ (Sambora 2002b). The future is, of course not all positive. *Yahaala otoloshiwa elapo ela; Muluku oohiya elukuluku wi ncharuwe*, ‘This land will be destroyed; God has left time so that we repent’ (Matope 2002b). But the time left can run out: *Woosha woomalavo, anna*, ‘Brothers/Sisters, morning is over’ (Santos 2002a).

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<sup>229</sup>The statistics to confirm or question this impression are not available, but population pressures and tired soil make it very plausible.

It has already been noted in passing that several preachers are concerned about people dishonoring *nihiku na Apwiya*, 'the day of the Lord' (cf. Trinta 2003; Januário 2002; Jemusse 2002; Júlio 2001; Mirra 2002b; Alfredo 2002b). However, this is not developed into a positive statement on sabbath symbolism. (After all, the preachers did not have ready access to Leviticus 25!<sup>230</sup>) It is simply that God's authority has been flouted and should not be. It is not asserted or explained, but it is indeed implied that God has authority over time and work, to prohibit what he wills.

#### 5.2.2.2 Space

In these sermons on Leviticus 26, the worldview variable of *Space* is marked especially by two factors already noted in the Lomwe church songs: the contrast between *wirimu*, 'heaven' and *elapo ya vathi*, 'the land below' and also the journey of life which connects these two. There are also other references to place which tend to be subsumed into these overarching schemes.

The setting of Leviticus occasions several comments on place: *Yiikuputu*, 'Egypt' has been left behind and the people are *oSinai*, 'at Sinai,' where the laws of Moses were given (Jemusse 2002; cf. Z. Pedro 2002; Jorge 2002a; Mirra 2002a; Buanare 2002b; Matope 2002a; Alfredo 2002a) awaiting being given their own land of Canaan (Molacassua 2001; Januário 2002; Sambora 2002a; Murrupa 2001, 2002). This setting is not the subject of detailed attention, but places the unfamiliar Leviticus 26 within a larger, somewhat familiar, narrative. It can be used to allude to the pervasive metaphor theme that life is a journey: *alsarayeli yeecaka mukwaha aya*, 'the Israelites walking their journey' (Buanare 2002b) swiftly refers just as well to people today and their journey in life.

One preacher actually uses examples from specific contemporary lands: Gaza province in Mozambique (Januário 2002) and Burundi (Januário 2003) and another mentions *maJoni*, 'Johannesburg' (Matope 2002b). But these hints of God's involvement in the wider contemporary world are striking by their absence from most of the sermons. At least in the context of a church service, for these preachers and their mostly rural audiences locations mentioned in the Bible, even the untranslated Old Testament, are more familiar and 'close' than names of places mentioned on the radio.

The paradigmatic contrast is between *elapo ya vathi*, 'the land below' and *wirimu*, 'heaven' (cf. Júlio 2001; Molacassua 2001; Murrupa 2002; Alfredo 2002a, 2002b). *Elapo ela ya vathi*,

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<sup>230</sup>Most, however, could have consulted it in Portuguese.

*oothene nivileele. Sookhalamo sawooneya mwa phaama; masi wirimu, soonanara*, ‘This land here below, let us all persevere. In it, there are things that seem good; but to heaven, they are bad’ (Buanare 2002b). So when troubles come, *noonaka ichu, nsuwele wi ocheka wa elapo ya vathi*, ‘when we see things, we should know that it is [because of] the sin of this land below’ (Matope 2002). This land can be *elapo yoowo yawuulumeleya*, ‘the land that is cursed’ (Z. Pedro 2003).

Of course, the earth is not always seen as bad. It is God’s creation. Ever since *opacerya voopacerya apakaka elapo ya vathi, Muluku onakhwela waataana*, ‘the very beginning when he was making the earth, God wants fellowship’ (S. Pedro 2003b). One preacher does carry the contrast to an extreme and speaks of *elapo ya Saataana*, ‘the land of Satan’ (Matope 2002b), but even he explains that it is Jesus’ mission to wrest back control of this land. The contrast should not be overdone. *Oorwa Yeesu Kiristu, elapo yoothene yoorukunuwa*, ‘When Jesus Christ came, the whole land turned around’ (Buanare 2002a).

Perhaps influenced by the pervasive land vocabulary of Leviticus 26 (and its silence about heaven), some preachers emphasize contrasting lands, not speaking so much of *wirimu*, ‘heaven’ but of *elapo ya hihano, henavolowamo echu yoocheka*, ‘the new land, in which nothing sinful enters’ or simply of *elapo eyo*, ‘that land,’ the one where believers will be *vamoha ni Muluku ni achu awe*, ‘together with God and his people’ (Murrupa 2002). Thus land can symbolize status before God. A preacher asks, *Nivarerye ichu noonaahu elapo ahu. Nri elapo taani? Yooreelihiwa? Nari yawuulumeliwa?*, ‘Let us examine the things we see in our land. What land are we in? The blessed one? Or the cursed one’ (S. Pedro 2003a)? (As he continues he uses *nikhuuru*, ‘group’ in a parallel set of questions.)

In identifying with the biblical story our land and this earth are not distinguished. The specifics of *mulaponi mwahu*, ‘in our land’ (Z. Pedro 2002) illustrate the general situation of *elapo ya vathi*, ‘the land below.’ It is *ipooma sahu*, ‘our cities’ that are threatened with ruin for our disobedience (Sambora 2002a). *Echaya anyu*, ‘Your soil’ is under threat of curse (Murrupa 2002). Jossamo Mirra mentions *elapo ela khalai*, ‘this land long ago,’ which used to have wild animals (2002b). It is also of *elapo ela*, ‘this land,’ he declares, that *ookhala mwaneene oopanke*, ‘there is an owner who made it,’ who gives rain and food (Mirra 2002a). Another spatial reference is Natália Jorge’s to *empa ya Muluku, yoocicimiheya; nrweke vaava, neereke omucicimiha Muluku*, ‘the house of God is to be respected; let us come here, let us show

respect to God' (2002b). The local Christian meeting place assumes the role of holy place designated for worship.

The dominant spatial metaphor theme is that life is a journey. We can hear about *mukwaha woolamuleliwa wa akhwihu alsarayeli, ovulushiwa waya, okumihwa waya oYiikuputu*, 'the journey commanded to our fellows the Israelites, their being rescued, their being taken out of Egypt' and be reminded, *Hiyano, hihano va nri vamukwahani si ntoko akhwihu; elapo nivahiwaahu, nleelo nihiphin'yewo*, 'We, now are on a journey just like our fellows; the land we are given we have not gotten there yet' (Buanare 2002b; cf. Z. Pedro 2002). There is a warning for, *muchu ohineeca ephiro ya Muluku*, 'a person who does not walk the path of God,' because *onahaala okhalano ekoi yoohimala*, 'he will have pain unending' (Buanare 2002b). A chorus sung during the sermon warns and reassures: *Mavuwo ootepa mweelapo ela; Yeesu onanihoolela mphironi mwawe*, 'There are many noises in this land; Jesus leads us on his path' (Buanare 2002b). Another preacher exhorts, *nihikookele oculi, anna*, 'let us not go backwards, brothers/sisters' (Jemusse 2002) as well as *nihye soonanara*, 'let us leave bad things' (cf. Z. Pedro 2002). Jemusse explains, *Nri vamukwahani, nnaya oKaanani, elapo ya hihano oriwo mwiri wookumi*, 'We are on a journey, we are going to Canaan, the new land where there is the tree of life.' There is a need to *ohula ephiro wirimu*, 'open the path to heaven' (S. Pedro 2003a). Other language of the march, of movement, abounds. It is important to *ochariha malamulo*, 'follow the commands' (Murrupa 2002). Hearers can be exhorted, *nikushe murima ahu oothene, niiveelele veeri va Muluku*, 'let us take our whole heart, let us hand it over to God' (Murrupa 2002).

#### 5.2.2.3 Self/Other

The worldview variable of *Self* and *Other* is marked by two dominant and interconnected relationships: the individual is subsumed into a group, a people; these people together relate to God. This is the basic pattern already noted in Lomwe church songs.

'We' belong to the people of God. Dias Bento Feliciano urges *nsuwele okhala achu a Muluku*, 'let us know how to be people of God' (2001). While the *then* and *now* scheme noted above of two ages in salvation history can be used to emphasize contrasts, it is also used to highlight continuity as one community through time. Perhaps the key word is *makholo*, 'ancestors.' Moses and Abraham, Adam and Eve and many other figures from the Old Testament narratives are routinely introduced as *makholo ahu*, 'our ancestors' (Sambora 2002a, 2002b, cf. Jemusse 2002), or even given priority as *makholo ahu oopacerya*, 'our first ancestors' (Careva 2002).

By contrast, only once does *makholo ahu* mean specifically our pre-Christian, tradition-following ancestors: *Vano, nahela mukucho wa makholo ahu, Muluku onamunanariwa*, ‘Now, God will be angry if we place the offering of our ancestors’ (Sambora 2002a). We, too, are part of the people of God along with characters from the Old Testament (Z. Pedro 2003, 2002) and it is natural to speak of *akhwihu akhalai aIsarayeli*, ‘our fellows of old the Israelites’ (Alfredo 2002a; cf. Buanare 2002a) or *anna yaala*, ‘these relatives’ (Buanare 2002b). There has been fellowship with God *opacerya ni makholo ahu oculiwo*, ‘beginning with our ancestors back there,’ referring to Mt. Sinai (S. Pedro 2003b). It is not at all incongruous to affirm, *Oleelo vaava, nookhuma oYiikuputu, nthamale vamoha*, ‘Right today we have come out of Egypt, let us give thanks together’ (Murrupa 2001) or to urge, *nikhale ntoko Aparahamu*, ‘let us be like Abraham’ because *Muluku aya, Muluku ahu*, ‘his God is our God (Matope 2002a). *Mmasu a Apwiya, nri nloko nimoha ni aIsarayeli*, ‘In the word of the Lord, we are one clan with the Israelites’ (Januário 2003).

In all this, the first-person plural dominates the singular. Santos Alfredo declares, *kata nihiku nnamukhwa, nnamuyariwa*, ‘each day we are dying, we are being born’ (2002a). This is the opposite of an individualized view of life. Together, *nri mwiili mmoha noonaka masooso*, ‘we are one body suffering pain,’ just as much as when a person wears a new pair of shoes, *mwiili oothene oocicimiheya*, ‘the whole body is honored’ (Januário 2003). What is required, though often absent and hence incurring curse, is *waataana mukina ni mukhwawe*, ‘fellowship one with another’ (Januário 2003). The sense of solidarity is clear when Natália Jorge declares, *epahu henakhala ya muchu mmoha, enakhala ya achu oothene*, ‘disaster is not one person’s, it is everyone’s’ (2002a).

The characteristic, indeed almost the only, form of the imperative for these preachers (who are not shy about using imperatives), is the first-person plural. ‘We,’ preacher and congregation together, are exhorted to act. There is, however, also space for individual responsibility. Then the reference is simply to *muchu*, ‘a person.’ *Muchu arino makacamihó*, ‘A person who has problems’ (Buanare 2002b) should present himself to the church authorities. First-person plural alternates with third-person singular (and the second-person, singular or plural is not used). This standard pattern is illustrated by David Murrupa. After urging, *nikooke, nivahe mathamalelo veeri va Muluku*, ‘let us go back, let us give thanks before God,’ he then explains, *muchu alokohe soocheka sawe wa Muluku*, ‘a person should confess his sins to God’ (2001). One effect of this recurring contrast between ‘us’ and a sinning, anonymous, singular *muchu*,

'person,' is to convey that misbehavior isolates. Those who do not obey are left out on their own. To conform is to belong: On your own, you get into trouble. Together, we do what is right.<sup>231</sup>

A hierarchy within the community is assumed. There are recognized classes of leaders, with titles from prestige language loan-words: *mavancelista*, 'evangelists,' *mansiyawu*, 'elders,' *mapastore*, 'pastors' (Jorge 2002b). There are also juniors, like the *anaamiravo anaathiyana*, 'female young people' who *khanleeleya*, 'cannot be told anything,' but *aneera okhwela waya, ahiya ikano sa makholo*, 'do their own will, leaving the laws of the ancestors.' *Vanthowa nene nenla, nmahaala ophwanyana olakiwa*, 'For this very reason, we will find punishment' (Mirra 2002b)—the whole community suffers.

The second dominant *Self* and *Other* relationship in these Lomwe sermons is that between the creator God and people, who are his. *Mulukhu ahu yoowo anipatunshe hiyaano oothene nri mumu*, 'Our God who has created all of us in here' (Alfredo 2002b) is the one who is close to the obedient. Bernardo Jemusse also speaks of *Mulukhu ahu*, 'our God' (2002). It is not strange to declare, *Mulukhu ori ntoko hiva*, 'God is like us' (Alfredo 2002b), even if the preacher would acknowledge that it is more precise to reverse the phrase (Alfredo 2002a). *Mulukhu ohaapaka achu oothene, toosivela ni oothene*, 'God made all people, he is loving to all' (Alfredo 2002a). As creator, God has proper authority over his creatures and rightly insists on obedience: *nyuwano achu a veelaponi ya vathi, mweereke yeeyo kinchunaaka*, 'you people of the earth, do what I want' (Alfredo 2002a). This relationship, when God promises to *omaka vamoha ni nyenyu*, 'dwell together with you' recalls Adam *mu emaca ya Eeteni*, 'in the garden of Eden,' when *Mulukhu aari vamoha nthowa na ohicheka*, 'God was together [with him] because of not sinning' (Careva 2002). *Wiiweleela onooniha waataana*, 'Obedience shows fellowship' (S. Pedro 2003b).

The relationship of creator and creatures can be described in terms of parent and child. God calls, *nyuwano, anamwane aka*, 'you, my children' (Alfredo 2002a) and *hiyano na anamwane a Mulukhu*, 'we are the children of God' (Mirra 2002a). Note that, with this image, it is people

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<sup>231</sup> Cf. the comment of Alfane on traditional society: "O indivíduo renegado pela sua comunidade fica desprotegido, porque dela não pode ter nenhum tipo de ajuda" (1996:37); 'The individual rejected by his community is unprotected, because he cannot get any kind of help from it.'

who are called *anamwane*, ‘children.’ It is rare to call God *tiithi*, ‘father,’ and he is not called *paapa*, ‘father,’ or *mai*, ‘mother’ at all in these sermons.<sup>232</sup>

Relationship with God implies imitating God. He declares, *miyaano ka aweela*, ‘I am holy,’ so *hiyaano nikhale aweela tho*, ‘we should be holy, too’ (Murrupa 2002). *Muluku haneemererya wi yoonanara evolowe mu okumi awe, nari wi yeereye mukum’aahu*, ‘God does not accept that evil enters his life, nor that it should be done in our life’ (Murrupa 2002).

The dominant emphasis on being part of a people who belong to God implies that it would be important to define the boundaries of this people, specifying who belongs and who does not. The general principle seems to be that conforming to the group’s standards of behavior guarantees belonging. However, there does not seem to be a consistent approach to how to join in these sermons. Some of the preachers above seem to imply that the fact of being created is itself enough to make people children of the creator God.<sup>233</sup> This status can be impaired by misbehavior and restored by the formalities of repentance followed by subsequent good behavior.

A large group of preachers imply, on the other hand, that the status of people of God must be acquired. One illustration is the promise for the future: *munii mukhale muloko na achu oothanliwa*, ‘you will be the people of the chosen ones’ (Careva 2002). Samuel Pedro explains that God’s people in the past were those who *yaamwacamenle Muluku, yaamusuwenle Muluku, yaarino nlakano nawe ni Muluku*, ‘who came close to God, who knew God, those who had an agreement with God’ (2003a). José Carlos Januário specifies the present, *oleelo neeriwaahu anamwane a Muluku*, ‘today having been made children of God’ (2002).

Jesus Christ can have a prominent role in this process. *Apwiyaahu Yeesu Kristu, hiyano oonikhwela va mwikimanyo*, ‘Our Lord Jesus Christ died for us on the cross’ and *ti yoowo onooponle hiyo wa soonanara sahu*, ‘he is the one who has redeemed us from our sins’ (Mirra 2002a). *Hiyano neeriwa ahima a Apwiyaahu Yeesu Kristu, ntoko alsarayeli, nloko na Yeesu*, ‘We have been made relatives of our Lord Jesus Christ, like the Israelites, the clan of Jesus’ (Mirra 2002b). This is clear because, *hiyo tho, noohiya soonanara sakhalai*, ‘we, too, have left the sins of old’ (Mirra 2002b). *Namuroromela Yeesu, nookhalano okumi woohimala*, ‘If we

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<sup>232</sup>Perhaps the awkwardness of paternal status in a matrilineal tradition *vis a vis* the patrilineal traditions reflected in the Bible contributes to this tendency.

<sup>233</sup>Note that the only major church among the Lomwe routinely practicing infant baptism is Roman Catholic.

trust Jesus, we have life unending' (Júlio 2001), but if there is someone who *okhooca Yeesu vamithoni va achu, Yeesu onamukhooca*, 'denies Jesus before people, Jesus will deny him.'

However acquired, the status of people of God must be maintained by appropriate behavior, which can be contrasted with the way other people behave. The *muKristu oororomeleya ahikilateke ni alipa oonyemula*, 'faithful Christian should not sit with those who despise' (Matope 2002b, an allusion to Psalm 1:1). There is a contrast between *aKristu*, 'Christians' and *achu a mmwawaani*, 'people in the settlements,' or ordinary people (Jorge 2002b). For Christians, *neeraka soocheka, muru onuula*, 'when we do sins, we are ashamed,' and even begin to *othukumela*, 'tremble' (Matope 2002b). *Achu awe*, 'his people' are *yaaworu anamwiiweleela*, 'only those who obey him' (S. Pedro 2003a). For Alfredo Júlio (2001), *neemererya oleeliwa, okumi woohimala nookhalano*, 'if we accept rebuke, we have life unending,' but *nahineemererya oleeliwa, hinanono echu*, 'if we do not accept rebuke, we have nothing.'

A few of the preachers do stress that the relationship continues after God has been offended. (All who do so were preaching a second sermon on Leviticus 26 after participating in a seminar focused on covenant concepts in the text. This is the distinctive of the second-time sermons.) People who offend God are urged, *naavye waataana ni Muluku*, 'let us seek fellowship with God' (Sambora 2002b). While, *Muluku oonanariwa*, 'God is angry' (Matope 2002a), this is not the end because he forgives. *Muluku haathanye achu awe*, 'God has not rejected his people' (Matope 2002b, cf. 2002a). *Achu awe ekooke wi aataane ni Muluku*, 'His people must return to have fellowship with God' (S. Pedro 2003b). *Yawiphini ya Muluku*, 'God's secret' is that *onlaka, tahi wi onimalihe khuluwi, nto wi nikooke*, 'he punishes us, not that he should finish us off completely, but so we come back' (S. Pedro 2003b). Similarly, Zacarias Pedro (2003) explains that God will *walaka anamwane awe*, 'punish his children,' *eeraka hiihaale wi nuuluule waataana*, 'doing this so we renew fellowship;' thus *muchu yoole ohuwenle, akooke*, 'that person who has strayed should come back.'

#### 5.2.2.4 Causality

The view of causality in these sermons is dominated by *Muluku*, 'God.' He is *mwaneene Muluku*, 'the owner God' (Sambora 2002b), indeed *mwaneenesha, oneera ntoko okhwela wawe*, 'the real owner, who does what he wants' (Mirra 2002a), the one with authority and rights. He is active, able and involved. Christians in some traditions may affirm God's action in the past and in the future while being hesitant to identify it in the present. (In still other



traditions, the past and future activity of God also gets vague.) That is not the case for these Lomwe preachers. They see a robust God who has no trouble asserting himself in his creation, whether in the past, the present or the future. This assumption underlies the warnings about judgment which dominate these sermons. It is a real threat that God will act against the disobedient. Most can cite examples, most often from Mozambique's civil war, of God's anger in experience. Natália Jorge asserts, *miyano kihoona*, 'I myself saw it' (2002a). Zacarias Pedro explains (2002) that God declares, *Achu yaale yahirukunuwa murima, kinahaala wahoosha*, 'Those people who do not repent, I will make them suffer' and explains that this is *hihano vaava*, 'right now' and not *mmahiku ookuchula*, 'in the last days.' *Elapo ahu ennuukhuwa nthowa na ohiya malamulo*, 'Our land is in trouble because of leaving the commands' (Januário 2002). *Onanlaka, ewoora yeele*, 'He will punish us, that very hour' (Sambora 2002a). For others there is the reassurance that, *Muluku onnaakhaviherya, eecaka phaama*, 'God is helping them as they walk well' (Z. Pedro 2002).

While other powers are acknowledged, they get only peripheral attention in these sermons. Preachers warn their hearers against worshipping anyone besides God. *Minepa yoonanara*, 'Evil spirits' (Jemusse 2002) are around, but the most common reference is simply to *amwiicani*, 'enemies.' Powerful enemies are presumed to be part of the environment in which people live. It is often not stated whether or not these are spiritual entities. Usually no attempt is made to distinguish living human agents from spirit agents. (Both kinds of agents can in any case manipulate one another.) Human effort alone is no security in the face of such opponents. In fact, it is doomed to defeat. The proper human response to this reality is to seek the greater power of God, available for defense, obtained by obedient behavior and lost by disobedience. A good summary of the general pattern is given by Brilhando Trinta: *Amwiicani, elukuluku yoothene ari ni hiyo; Muluku onawerya onaakiha. Nahimwiweleela elukuluku yoothene, nnii nikhale ni amwiicani. Muluku onahaala onyanyala hiyo*, 'Enemies are with us all the time; God is able to defend us. If we do not obey him all the time, we will be with the enemies. God will abandon us' (2003). This theology clearly articulates that believers' response to a world of enemy powers should not be to engage or manipulate them directly, but to seek security in God. The focus for causality is redirected to the divine-human axis, even as other causal agents are acknowledged. Trinta's condemnation of *anamuku nnachawelaahu*, 'the spirit doctors we flee to' (2003) implies that more direct responses to *amwiicani*, 'enemies' are popular (cf. Januário 2002). Alfredo Júlio uses two Portuguese loan-words to make a similar point about seeking protection in God rather than alternate sources: *Nihikhaleno guarda-costa ahu; muchu*

*guarda-rede awe ti Munepa Waweela*, 'We should not have our own bodyguard; a person's goalie is the Holy Spirit' (2001).

Most prominent among the enemies is Satan. Satan is real, but he is not the main focus of attention. Samuel Pedro warns that people must choose between obeying God or Satan. One choice brings *okhala mmureceleni*, 'to be in peace,' the other *okhwa*, 'death' (S. Pedro 2003a). We need rescue from *okapuroni wa Saataana*, 'being in slavery of Satan' and *onyooro wa Saataana*, 'chains of Satan' (Sambora 2002a).

However, a pattern already noted in the previous chapter in Lomwe church songs is repeated here. Despite all the prominence given to God in causality, human agents are in effect given still more weight. God's role tends to become the reactive one of rewarding human behavior appropriately. *Muluku onanikookiherya wiirumiha wahu*, 'God returns to us our pride' (Careva 2002). Of course, genre counts here. Sermons are not prayers; they and their imperatives are addressed to people. Nonetheless, these sermons do not dwell on God's purpose or initiative, or his commitment to these. The impression is that human effort is what really counts. *Hankoni, nthanle omwiweleela Muluku, anreelihe*, 'Come one, let us choose to obey God so he will bless us' (Feliciano 2001). *Natitelela omukhooa Muluku, nnahaala wuuluula olakiwa*, 'If we keep on rejecting God, we will be punished again and again' (Trinta 2003). *Nahicicimiha nihiku na Apwiya, nnamukhwa*, 'If we do not honor the day of the Lord, we will die' (Júlio 2001). *Nahiwiweleela, nnahaala woona sincipale soonihoosha*, 'If we disobey, we will see many things that make us suffer' (Molacassiu 2001). Samuel Pedro sums up the issues as simply *weera nari oheera malamulo*, 'to do or not do the commands' (2003a). The principle is that *soocheka, owoopa wuulumeliwa*, 'sins invite being cursed' (Januário 2003). The concluding challenge of Santos Alfredo (2002) to his audience is to sing "Pakani epoonti" (Song 17), which commands them to make a bridge from earth to heaven as they prepare for death.

There are other clues of this stress on the efforts of human agents. When there has been failure to obey, proper procedures within the community are important, *muchu onaveleela yoocheka awe veeri va apastore, asitokweene yeereno ovekela*, 'a person will present his sin before the pastors, the great ones will do a prayer' (Jorge 2002b). Of itself, a concern with proper procedure and group standards need not indicate a misplaced confidence in human effort. It could demonstrate a humble willingness to be obedient. But the explicit emphasis is on what people do. *Niheemereryeke wi yoocheka evolowe mukumi ahu*, 'We must never accept that sin

enters our lives' (Murrupa 2002) is a ringing challenge. It also rather assumes that sin is something external to human beings, rather than a radical heart condition. Jossamo Mirra argues that trouble comes when God says *ela mwiikho, achu ehiiwa*, 'this is forbidden, and people do not listen' (2002b). The implication is that God's commands are normally prohibitions, about things to avoid, and can be followed straightforwardly.

This focus on human agency in causality can be emphatic. Brilhando Trinta (2003) wants to assert human responsibility and specifically denies ideas that salvation is out of human hands: *Akina anuupuwela, aniiwoka wi okumi woohimala ori esoorthe*, 'Some think, deceiving themselves that [one receives] life unending by luck.' Such people think, *kakhala ekari, kinamvuluwa*, 'If I'm lucky, I will be saved.'

### 5.2.3 *Worldview narrative*

The sermons by Lomwe preachers on Leviticus 26 tell an overall story of life reflected in the themes and the worldview variables analyzed in the preceding pages. This story can be summarized as follows:

We are travelling from this land here below, where we are surrounded by enemies, to a new and good land above, where God is. This is a journey that many of our people have made before. As we go, God, strict and powerful, is watching, ready to deal out disaster if we fail to keep to the standards he has set and so cut ourselves off from his people. But if we turn around and behave, he will help us. Jesus is helping us, too. Otherwise, we will end in judgment fire forever.

## 5.3 **Communicating covenant in these sermons**

The present section of this study of Lomwe sermons based on the translation of Leviticus 26 turns from stressing analysis to evaluation. The evaluation focuses on how well Old Testament covenant concepts are communicated, identifying points of congruence and points of conflict between ancient text and contemporary sermons on it. After a preliminary review of the limited use of covenant vocabulary in the sermons, this evaluation turns to the definition of ברית, 'covenant' in its ANE context. How well do these sermons convey what a covenant was? A second, more important, question follows: How well do these sermons convey how covenant was used theologically? Thirdly, how do the worldview narratives underlying Leviticus 26 and the sermons compare and contrast? These complementary approaches together provide an accurate, even somewhat precise, sense of the strengths and weaknesses of communicating covenant in this experiment.

### 5.3.1 Covenant vocabulary

Immediately, the paucity of explicitly covenantal language in these sermons is striking. In translation, the density of references to covenant in Leviticus 26, noted in chapter two, was either not obvious or not particularly important to the preachers. Apart from being read aloud in the text and the interpretive titles provided by the translation team, the term *waataana*, ‘fellowship’ used to translate ברִית, ‘covenant’ is almost ignored. The handful of sermons that mention it are second sermons on the text given after the preacher had participated in a seminar on covenant issues in Leviticus and the Old Testament. Even then, only Zacarias Pedro made it the centerpiece of his sermon (2003). He asks his audience what people do with each other *wi aataane*, ‘in order to have fellowship’ and develops an example from a young man seeking an engagement to be married. He will, *oloca sooreera vamoha ni yeeyo kihincunaaka*, ‘speak lovely things as well as what I do not want.’ This then illustrates the pattern of Leviticus 26, while subordinating its promises of satisfaction and pain to an overall relational goal. Zacarias Pedro’s use of *waataana*, ‘fellowship’ thus shows that it is an appropriate term for some human relationships. It is certainly more natural than the term *nlakano*, ‘promising one another’ used in the original Lomwe New Testament. *Nlakano* was a neologism coined by the translators of the New Testament. Its near absence from the sermons implies that, in seventy years of influence in the Lomwe-speaking community, it has not progressed beyond being a title for part of the Bible.<sup>234</sup> By contrast, *waataana* is at least not a neologism. It is used naturally in speech, though it does not seem to be used freely to describe relationship to God. But whichever term is used, the translation alone did not make communicating covenant a priority for these preachers.

### 5.3.2 Covenant definition

The first chapter of the present work defended a four part definition of ברִית, ‘covenant’ in its ANE context: as a 1) chosen 2) relationship of 3) mutual obligation 4) guaranteed by oath sanctions. This definition is, of course, not part of the text of Leviticus 26, nor are all of its components equally emphasized there. The definition is also not the topic of any of the sermons. (In any case, the preachers appear to have been disinterested in analytic definitions.) It can nevertheless provide a helpful checklist to identify which of the aspects of covenant in the ANE context of Leviticus 26 are communicated in the sermons and which are relatively neglected.

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<sup>234</sup>One sermon (S. Pedro 2003a) uses the term, in the sense of an agreement between God and his people of old.

Of these four component concepts, relationship and obligation are prominent. The fact that the relationship is chosen is obscure. That it is guaranteed by oath sanctions is almost invisible. The preachers routinely emphasize that people relate to God. They belong to him and are in church to hear from him. The relationship is family-like: people are *anamwane awe*, 'his children.' In the relationship, obligations are prominent. They may be implicitly mutual, but they are especially those of people toward God. The sermons were overwhelmingly dedicated to explaining to the people in the audience their obligations to God and urging them to fulfill them. God's obligations to his people had a lesser, but inescapable role, since he would not fail to punish the disobedient. That God would also protect, provide, and bless is mentioned in the sermons, though less prominently than punishment. In the ANE, covenants were chosen, created relationships, distinct from natural family ties. That component of covenant is perhaps implied by those preachers who speak of the need to trust Jesus. Other preachers leave the impression that the relationship derives from the mere fact of creation. Perhaps the majority simply assume the relationship (after all, they are speaking to people in church) and do not dwell on how it is formed. This reflects the focus of Leviticus 26, which does not recount covenant formation but urges people to keep a covenant already formed (back in the narrative in Exodus). The fourth aspect of ANE covenants in the definition is that they were guaranteed by oaths, invoking the divine powers to enforce commitments with life or death sanctions. This is precisely why blessings and curses were an essential component of covenant ceremonies and the subsequent documents. The sanctions are inescapable in Leviticus 26 and well represented in the sermons: *Muluku*, 'God' will intervene against those who disobey. However, they are not presented as the result of a sworn commitment to the relationship. They are a fact of life that must be taken into account but whose origin is not really explained. That oath commitments were involved is never mentioned nor implied.

### 5.3.3 *Covenant impact*

There is a second, complementary checklist of four components that can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of communicating covenant in these sermons. Chapter three of the present work went beyond a definition of covenant in its ANE context to argue for a specific understanding of its worldview impact when used in the Old Testament to describe Yahweh's relationship with his people. Communication would still fail if all the components defining covenant were explained but their impact as used in the text lost. The conclusion of chapter three was that the covenant structure in Leviticus 26 and elsewhere in the Old Testament

highlights relationship with Yahweh and exclusivity, security, accountability and purpose within that relationship.

The sermons, on the other hand, highlight relationship with *Muluku* and exclusivity and accountability within that relationship. Security and purpose in the relationship are neglected.

The corporate **relationship** of a first person plural *us* with *Muluku ahu*, 'our God' has been noted above. It dominates the section on the *Self* and *Other* worldview variable in the present chapter. It is how these Christians think of themselves, their primary explicit identity.

However, there are two critical limitations to relationship with God in these sermons. First, it does not tend to be expressed in affective, intimate terms. As just noted, *waataana*, 'fellowship' is not much used in the sermons despite its prominence in the translated text. Second, the sermons tend to equate relationship with God and good standing with the church group. It is assumed that the church group is properly related to God and the key issue becomes relating to the church. This may well mean for some that relationship with the group eclipses relationship with God in effect. Thus, sin can tend to become only violating a public community standard. Also, it is not considered whether or not the group to which people belong might fail corporately in its relationship to God. Corporate suffering is traced to solidarity with individuals whose failures deserve punishment, not to corporate guilt. These are byproducts of seeing safety as being with the group and sin as being out on your own.

The preachers are emphatic that the relationship with God is to be **exclusive**. They are helped by the fact that *Muluku* is an inherently singular term in Lomwe (Cf. Martinez 1989:239). Translators have resorted to the neologism of pluralizing it. Leviticus 26:1 uses the phrase *amuluku atheru*, 'false gods.' While perfectly intelligible, it has an irretrievably alien sound. Within the Lomwe-speaking context, it is odd to imply and, indeed, hard to conceive that there could be more than one supreme creator God. But the monotheism of these sermons is more than theoretical. Discussions of the *Causality* variable make it plain that believers are surrounded by enemies (not alternative sources of help). The people of God are clearly told that he is the only legitimate source of protection from these enemies.<sup>235</sup> Seeking help from other powers is what in fact makes a person vulnerable to the enemies. At this point, there is a sharp

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<sup>235</sup>This is in effect the substance of the thoughtful, extensive argument Ferdinando makes (1999), noting the biblical precedent: "The near-total silence of the Old Testament on the role of demons in suffering is itself a polemic against much ANE thought" (1999:174). Ferdinando points out that much remains to be done at the pastoral level in African churches to help people live out this principle (1999:400).

conflict between the worldview affirmed by these Lomwe churches and the worldview of Lomwe tradition. In the latter, there is a complex web of beneficent as well as maleficent powers with which to interact, with the help of a range of spirit-specialists. This conflict between church worldview and traditional worldview implies there will be problems in people's lives as they make choices amid tension. There may indeed be pressures on the worldview of these churches to adapt in ways that lessen opposition to the traditional understanding.<sup>236</sup> However, these sermons robustly defend for Lomwe-speakers the covenantal ideal of exclusive loyalty to and dependence upon God. The role of Jesus might be construed as a threat to exclusive relationship to God, but that is not how these preachers see it. Rather, relationship to Jesus is absorbed into the relationship with God. It is not an alternative loyalty.

It need hardly be repeated that the relationship to God is also **accountable**. Every preacher impresses upon his hearers that they are vulnerable to judgment. Failure to obey will be met with sanctions administered by a God who is active, involved and able. These preachers clearly hear and affirm this emphasis of Leviticus 26.

However, **security** and **purpose** in the relationship are obscured. Indeed, the relationship people have with *Muluku*, 'God' is profoundly insecure. For those who make wrong choices, doom is assured. It was noted above that there is a paradox in the view of causality in these sermons. Despite all God's authority, power and active involvement, human effort is more prominent as an agent of causality. This makes human failure a very present danger and emphasis. One danger of the pervasive journey metaphor is that full relationship with God can be placed at the end of the journey and be seen as a result of making right choices along with way. This misses the point of Yahweh's promise to walk around with his people (Lev 26:13). In effect, *Muluku* is more a covenant enforcer than a covenant partner. He is not seen as being committed to the success of the relationship. Thus the traditional, enforcing role of deities in ANE covenants comes through in preaching from the translation, but the Old Testament's radical innovation does not.

Insecurity in the relationship tends to reduce the only purpose to that of humans seeking to avoid punishment and problems. God's intentions in the matter are not clear. He is not seen as intervening to accomplish what he desires in or through his people. This is reflected in the

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<sup>236</sup>One example not endorsed in these sermons: In conversations, some Lomwe-speaking Christians argue that while it is not permitted to hire spirit-specialists for harming others, it is legitimate to do so for protection.

dualistic tendencies of the worldview variables of *Space* and *Time* for these Lomwe Christians. The here and the now are more to be endured or escaped than to be used.

The exception to this generalization is the minority of sermons already referred to made in response to a seminar on covenant concepts. In several of these, preachers described an enduring relationship with a God who uses punishments to discipline his children, correcting and improving their behavior, rather than just rejecting them for failure. These exceptions prove the rule. This was not the initial understanding and expression of the text by the Lomwe preachers. However, it was also not so radically alien a perspective that it was rejected or ignored by preachers once exposed to it.

#### 5.3.4 Comparing worldview narratives

At four points in the present work, the author has summarized data from worldview analysis in the form of a short narrative. In chapter three, the narrative was derived from Leviticus 26, as the ideal for which the chapter is arguing. In chapter four, there were two narratives, one that of Lomwe tradition, the other that of some Lomwe churches. The present chapter presented one from Lomwe sermons on Leviticus 26. It will make comparison easier to repeat all four now in order, though attention will be focused particularly on the first and the last.

##### 1) Leviticus 26

We are a people who belong to Yahweh our God. He rescued us from oppression in Egypt so that we could enjoy both living with him and the good land he is giving us in this dangerous world. We have to do what he says. We only worship him and we make sure we respect him as the owner of our time and land. When we listen to him he stays close to us and wholeness and happiness follow. When we do not listen, he does everything to get our attention and change our attitude. He will pile up disaster upon disaster, matching our stubbornness step by step, stripping away all his gifts, even the land itself. But he will not let us go. We will still belong to him.

##### 2) Lomwe tradition

Life goes on. As different individuals we come. We grow. We become full people, contributing to our group. Through sex and through farming we struggle to be fertile, to be productive together in our place, even as enemies around us, seen and unseen, filled with *nrima*, try to get all the good things for themselves. Allied with our dead who have gone before, we try to keep things in balance. In time, a successful person dies and is transferred to the status of ancestor. The individual passes. Life goes on.

##### 3) Lomwe church songs



We are on a journey from this land here below, which is full of troubles and sins, to the wonderful place above, heaven, where God is. God and Jesus help us along the way, and Jesus is coming to meet us. Satan tries to stop us. We must watch out and work hard because we may not make it. At any moment the journey could be ended by death or Jesus' return.

#### **4) Lomwe sermons on Leviticus 26**

We are travelling from this land here below, where we are surrounded by enemies, to a new and good land above, where God is. This is a journey that many of our people have made before. As we go, God, strict and powerful, is watching, ready to deal out disaster if we fail to keep to the standards he has set and so cut ourselves off from his people. But if we turn around and behave he will help us. Jesus is helping us, too. Otherwise, we will end in judgment fire forever.

Several observations are in order:

- The subject in all four is "We." Group identity and life in community are fundamental in these worldviews. Individualism is not.
- Danger, enemies and trouble are another aspect common to all four. Things are not right with this world and we are vulnerable. These worldviews are far from triumphalist.
- God is prominent in the first, third and fourth, and much less so in the second, the worldview of Lomwe tradition. Among the Lomwe surveyed, Christian influence has at this point caused a dramatic shift in emphasis.
- Both the narratives of Leviticus 26 and Lomwe tradition are positive about a specific earthly land, while the narratives of Lomwe Christians are focused on escape from earth in general.
- The first two narratives diverge in that Lev 26 gives priority to historical events while Lomwe tradition gives priority to the cycles of nature.
- The last two narratives say that life is a journey, the second that life is a farm, the first that life is a relationship.
- The first makes belonging to God basic. The latter two make it a goal.
- The last two are the most similar, diverging only in emphasis.
- The first and fourth agree that God can deal out disaster.

The worldview changes from Lomwe tradition to Lomwe churches are massive. Dramatic changes do happen in cultures at the worldview level, though it is to be expected that such changes lead to much disorientation and unresolved conflict in people's lives. On the other

hand, people tend to read a text in terms of their existing worldview, to see in it what they already know. The Lomwe preachers found in the translation of Leviticus 26 themes of their familiar church worldview. Where the text might challenge or correct them, perhaps with its robust covenantal sense of belonging to God and of a God who commits himself to his people, an initial reading was not enough.

**5.4 Chapter conclusion**

The volunteers in this experiment preached vigorously to their people from the translation of Leviticus 26. They took it as clear, forthright communication from God to them, not as an ambiguous or obscure ancient text. They read it within the overarching Christian narrative of life as understood in their churches. Unsurprisingly, they heard and communicated most clearly elements in the text which fit the predominant worldview in the churches. Those aspects of the text, like covenant, that assume the background of the culturally alien world of the ANE or that would qualify or correct the established worldview came through poorly.

The following, final chapter of the present work proposes some ways of better communicating covenant in a Lomwe context.

## SUMMARY AND PROPOSALS

The opening page of this study set two goals: to test Lomwe-speakers' understanding of covenant concepts in translation and to propose improvements. This final chapter focuses on the second goal. One of the foundational assumptions of the present work is that theology, whether written or oral, academic or popular, can be described by the notion of a 'hermeneutical spiral.' The spiral metaphor combines the notions of cyclical process and genuine progress. Questions derived from readers' context are brought to the text of Scripture. But Scripture in turn then challenges readers, presenting them with questions and commands. While understanding may never be complete here and now, it can get better. As they read the Old Testament, Lomwe-speakers have a partial understanding of covenant concepts. This chapter suggests ways that understanding and engagement can be deepened, lest the spiral become stuck.

However, before making proposals, it is helpful to summarize the arc sketched so far in these pages, following covenant concepts from the ancient world to contemporary Lomwe-speakers in northern Mozambique.

### 6.1 Summary of the argument

#### 6.1.1 *Introduction and definitions*

The opening chapter introduced the problem, pointing out how the contextual nature of communication makes translating the biblical Hebrew term *ברית*, 'covenant' into Lomwe a much bigger issue than simply plugging in a single, equivalent term. The chapter then summarized the assumptions, method of approach and limitations of the present work. This work uses Leviticus 26 as a sample text and includes worldviews in the discussion of context. The chapter next addressed two key components in the larger context of communicating biblical covenant concepts in contemporary Africa. The first of these components was the common heritage of covenantal customs and concepts which spanned the ancient world for almost three millennia, background assumptions which biblical writers and their audiences brought to the Old Testament text. Chapter one defended a complex definition of *ברית*,

'covenant' in its ANE context as a chosen relationship of mutual obligation guaranteed by oath sanctions and rejected narrower summations. The second of these components was a survey of theological writings on covenant in an African context. The rather thin results confirmed the need for works like the present one which endeavor to take seriously both the biblical text and contemporary Africa. Covenant has been a peripheral issue in African theologizing, despite its relevance to issues of identity. The survey did identify covenantal understandings of the Lord's Supper as a persistent and potentially fruitful area of interest.

### 6.1.2 *Leviticus 26*

The second chapter anchored the generalities of biblical covenant concepts in a specific text, presenting a close reading of Leviticus 26, the rhetorically powerful peroration of the book of Leviticus and, indeed, the whole account of covenant-making at Sinai. This close reading demonstrated that biblically much more is involved than the single word, ברית, 'covenant.' Though the chapter has a very high density of the term, it is also tightly linked with other covenantal vocabulary and also with covenantal forms. The highly thematic Scriptural refrain of 'they will be my people, I will be their God' is prominent in the vocabulary. In form, the adaptation of blessing and curse formulae in Leviticus 26 links it with the whole ancient covenant treaty tradition. Careful attention to widening circles of cotext around Leviticus 26 demonstrated further the powerful integrating role of covenant concepts in the Old Testament. The chapter is linked, covenantally, to the preceding chapter, to the second half of Leviticus, to the Sinai covenant narrative, to the rest of the Old Testament canon and also to the New Testament. To neglect or distort covenantal concepts in translation thus deprives contemporary readers and hearers of an integrating framework for Scripture which has the distinction of growing integrally from the text instead of being imposed on it by extraneous agendas.<sup>237</sup>

### 6.1.3 *The contexts of Leviticus 26*

The third chapter dealt with three general issues in the larger context of the covenant concepts in Leviticus 26. These issues are concerned with impact at worldview level in the ANE. For each issue, conclusions are admittedly tentative. The first issue was the worldview underlying Leviticus 26. This was described using a grid of variables for analysis and a short narrative for synthesis. The process revealed a worldview focused on a consuming relationship with Yahweh, in which pleasing or displeasing him is the answer to questions of identity and security in the world. The second issue was the historical setting in which Leviticus 26 was

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<sup>237</sup>Good translation is necessary, though it is probably not sufficient, for communicating covenant.

written. Gaps in extra-biblical evidence and disagreements over methodology rule out consensus. After reviewing the debate, the present work defended the second millennium setting claimed by the text as highly plausible and preferable to speculative reconstructions. It further argued that the crucial setting presumed by the text was the background of polytheistic paganism which prevailed throughout almost all the Old Testament period. The third issue was the theological purpose of using covenant concepts to describe Israel's relationship with Yahweh. In contrast to the multiplicity of arbitrary powers characteristic of ANE religious systems, despite their attempts to stabilize social, economic and political orders, it was argued that covenantal concepts were used in the Old Testament to communicate a radically different system marked by a relationship to Yahweh that was exclusive, secure, accountable, and purposeful. Ideally, a translation should aim for a similar impact.

#### 6.1.4 *Lomwe-speakers and their worldviews*

The fourth chapter left the ANE and prepared for the experiment on communicating Leviticus 26 in Lomwe by analyzing two crucial worldviews of contemporary Lomwe-speakers. First, the traditional Lomwe worldview was described, using ethnographic research data supplemented by primary sources such as proverbs. As part of this, the characteristic matrilineal traditional social structure was introduced. Where even marriage does not create a kinship bond (so that a father is not considered related to his own children), there is a dearth of meaningful analogs to the ANE customs of kinship-in-law underlying biblical covenant language. The classic technique of adopting and adapting established local customs is not a viable option for translation in this case. The traditional worldview itself is marked by '*cosmobiologia*', a life-cycle shaped understanding of the world, which gives priority to sustaining fragile human life amid a perilous reality. This primal perspective shares broad similarities (as well as significant differences in detail) with ANE paganism. The second section of chapter four examined a quite different worldview. Christian churches have become widely established among Lomwe-speakers and Protestant churches in particular are the first point of contact between the translated Scriptures and broader Lomwe culture. Locally-written songs from these churches were analyzed to reveal a public worldview marked by escaping the troubled earth on a journey to a heaven with rigorous entrance standards. God is prominent and powerful, but human effort can seem even more so. The Old Testament tends to be seen as a collection of stories about those who were punished for failing to meet God's standards and is not perceived to have a covenantal shape. This worldview is, at most, a problematic ally in communicating biblical covenant concepts.

### 6.1.5 *Leviticus 26 in Lomwe*

After these general matters of Lomwe culture, the fifth chapter turned to the specific experiment, in which volunteers produced and recorded 27 sermons in Lomwe based on a draft translation of Leviticus 26. Predictably, the worldview of the sermons is much closer to the established worldview of the songs than it is to that of Lomwe tradition or to that of the alien text of Leviticus. It was most characteristic to emphasize the threats of punishment contained in the ‘curse’ section of Leviticus 26 and to urge people to change their behavior. After introducing the experiment, the chapter summarized the perspective revealed in the sermons, once again using the tools of a grid of worldview variables and a narrative synthesis. The final section of the chapter turned to the specific issue of how effectively the sermons communicated the covenant concepts of Leviticus 26. Of the four components of the definition of ברִית, ‘covenant’ in the ANE, two were clearly present and two were obscured. There was talk of a relationship and obligation (not necessarily mutual obligation), but this was not clearly chosen nor guaranteed by oath. Chapter three had also produced a list of four components summarizing the worldview impact of using covenant to structure the relationship between Yahweh and his people. Of these four, again, two were presented in the sermons and two were neglected. Relationship with God was to be exclusive and accountable; it was neither secure nor clearly purposeful.

The work so far thus identifies a clear gap between covenant concepts in the original text and their meaning and impact in translation. It also specifies some aspects of that gap. The present chapter suggests appropriate responses. Some of these are the particular responsibility of those involved in Bible translation. Others are part of the larger teaching task of the church, understood not as mere pronouncements, but as exploration together of God’s truth, using many different formats. This latter responsibility cannot be precisely separated from translation.<sup>238</sup> The proposed responses use two distinct, though complementary, strategies: compensation and integration.

## 6.2 Proposals for communicating covenant

### 6.2.1 *A translation of ברִית, ‘covenant’*

Here, the ideal would be a key term that captures in Lomwe the definition of ברִית, ‘covenant’ in its ANE context summarized in chapter one: a chosen relationship of mutual obligation

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<sup>238</sup>Cf. Gutt: “in many situations the magnitude of the background information needing to be supplied for reasonably successful communication requires the embedding of Bible translation in a wider programme of biblical communication” (2003:20).

guaranteed by oath sanctions. In the absence of such a term, one that is the least inadequate needs to be identified, used, and then vigorously supplemented by way of compensation.

Bible translation among the Lomwe began with a translation of the New Testament and Psalms, published by the Bible Society of Scotland in 1931. The Roman Catholic Congregation of the Sacred Heart published in Rome another New Testament in Lomwe in 1982. These translations have rendered differently the key biblical covenant vocabulary. The Greek New Testament follows the model of the Septuagint and uses *διαθήκη* for the Hebrew *ברית*. The 1931 Lomwe translation consistently renders this as *nlakano*, most prominently in its title, *Nlakano Na Hihano Na Jesus Cristo Apwiyahu*. *Nlakano* is a neologism, a noun form created from the verb *olakana*,<sup>239</sup> which means, ‘to promise (one another)’ or to sit down, discuss something and come to a (usually) short term agreement.<sup>240</sup> The result is a word that is weak, with little meaning and less emotional impact outside restricted church contexts. It was conspicuous by its absence in the Lomwe sermons of chapter five. The verb itself also covers only one part of the semantic range of *ברית*, ‘covenant.’ It implies certain (unspecified) mutual obligations are created, but does not speak of an ongoing relationship and kinship nor of divine sanctions.

The translation of 1982 replaces *nlakano* with *waataana*.<sup>241</sup> This is an infinitive, meaning ‘to have/be in (good) relationship.’ Like *nlakano*, it contains the characteristic Bantu language reciprocal morpheme *-an-*, which adds a “one another” component of mutual responsibility. Its semantic range includes the idea of fellowship. It is a term from common speech with positive connotations. It is not explicitly a kinship designation, denoting a relative of some kind, but it is from the semantic field of kinship values. It is a general term for how one ought to relate to one’s kin (and others). Relationship is explicit. Mutual obligations and commitments are implicit since *waataana* is a positive statement about how a relationship should be. It has connotations of closeness. Though most of the Lomwe preachers in chapter five avoided using it for the relationship of God with his people, it could in time change understanding of the quality of that relationship. The term does not specify that this is a relationship created by

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<sup>239</sup> Etymologically, *olakana* is a reciprocal form of the verb *olaka*, meaning to discipline, counsel or punish. This is a good example of the limited usefulness of etymology in shaping meaning.

<sup>240</sup> Personal conversation with Simões Duarte, Estevão Campama and Zacarias Pedro, 15 October 2004.

<sup>241</sup> Briefly, the Lomwe OT translation project adopted *eyaataano*, a nominalized form of *waataana* (cf. Sociedade Bíblica em Moçambique 1993a, 1993b, 1996). This has all the drawbacks of the stilted language of a neologism and no real benefits, except formal correspondence, over *waataana*. It has since been abandoned.

choice nor that it is connected with oath commitment (though it does not necessarily exclude these, either).

These characteristics of *waataana* are illustrated by its use in contexts other than Bible translation and churches. In a study on civic education in traditional Mozambique, Alfane defines *waataana* as follows: “Uma relação de amizade muito íntima, com todos vivendo juntos sem conflito, é denominada *waataana*, em emakhuwa, e esta é a expressão usada para dar nome à ‘unidade nacional’ junto a este grupo étnico” (1996:25).<sup>242</sup> It is not just for ethnic unity. *Wookhalavo waataana*, ‘there is (good) relations there’ implies one can travel all over a ‘foreign’ area without being molested by people of a different ethnic group.<sup>243</sup> Traditional proverbs provide other examples. One can have *waataana* with a superior,<sup>244</sup> though not lightly: *Waataana ni amwene, wiwelela*, ‘To be in fellowship with the king/chief is to obey’ (Ciscato, n.d.:241, #888). This is very significant, since a term only used for social equals would be very awkward to use for the relationship between people and God. This quality in relationships is costly to achieve (and its opposite is enmity): *Waataana ovila, wiicana okhweya*, ‘To be in fellowship is hard, to be enemies is easy’ (Ciscato, n.d.:171, #627). Valente de Matos records the Makhuwa proverb *Waataana ovoreya*, ‘To be in fellowship will make you sick’ (1982:116). This does not mean you cannot stand it, but that it is very demanding. Similarly, *Waataana, ovilela*, ‘To be in fellowship, endure’ (Ciscato, n.d.:171, #628; cf. Valente de Matos 1982:90<sup>245</sup>). There is no escaping the element of obligation. What does escape is any element of security, of permanence. In human relationships, it is not to be counted on: *Waataana, olaava*, ‘Being in fellowship will trick you’ (Ciscato, n.d.: 171, #626). But when it is achieved it is like being part of the same body: *Naataaneke ephula nniitho*, ‘Let us be in fellowship like the nose and the eye’ (Valente de Matos 1982:250). It should also be noted that Ciscato and Valente de Matos have between them collected over 2100 Lomwe and Makhuwa proverbs. Some eight of these use the term *waataana*; none use *nlakano* or *olakana*.

Chapter four argued that in traditional Lomwe social structure there is no precise or even adequate parallel to ancient Near Eastern covenant customs. So translators into Lomwe have been forced to use these expedients. Another alternative might be to use a term explicitly from

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<sup>242</sup> ‘A relationship of very close friendship, with everyone living together without conflict, is called *waataana* in Emakhuwa, and this is the term used to express ‘national unity’ for this ethnic group.’

<sup>243</sup> Personal conversation with Simões Duarte, Estevão Campama and Zacarias Pedro, 15 October 2004.

<sup>244</sup> Cf. *Musatoro ole, waataana ni achu*, ‘That [government] administrator relates well with people’ (Personal conversation with Simões Duarte, Estevão Campama and Zacarias Pedro, 15 October 2004).

<sup>245</sup> Valente de Matos has *ovilelana*, ‘put up with each other.’



the language of kinship, such as *ohima*, ‘to be a relative (literally, of the same clan, *nihimo*).’ This could connect with rich cultural traditions of mutual obligations. However, when kinship is not normally conceived of as being made or chosen, complex periphrases would be required to make sense of covenant-making texts in Scripture. The fact that *ohima* traditionally excludes one’s father further complicates matters. Also, *ohima* does not make any connection to oaths and divine sanctions. To use *ohima* would make associations with initiation rituals more likely. Such associations could have some benefits and many complications.

All the above proposals lack references to oaths and sanctions. Attempts to remedy this by using *olipela*, ‘to swear (an oath),’ have the problem that (like the verbal form *olakana* referred to above) this immediately raises the question: “To do what?” One cannot commit oneself in the abstract. A consequence begs to be specified. It was noted in chapter four that there are several traditional examples of oath commitments that were taken very seriously. This is a resource in the language and culture that could be used to supplement the term chosen to translate בריתה, ‘covenant.’ *Olipela* is not, however, on its own an adequate translation.

Of these possibilities, summarized in the chart below,<sup>246</sup> *waataana* is the strongest on relational commitment and has the fewest drawbacks, while demanding that translators make special efforts to supplement it, especially in the area of oath commitments and divine sanctions, qualities that gave an enduring quality to בריתה, ‘covenant’ and which *waataana* misses.

Term	Chosen?	Relationship?	Mutual obligation?	Oath sanctions?	Natural language?
<i>nlakano</i>	+	-	+	-	-
<i>olakana</i>	+	-	+	-	+
			(needs to be specified)		
<i>waataana</i>	+/- (needs to be specified)	+	+	-	+
<i>ohima</i>	-	+	+	-	+
		(only kinship)			
<i>olipela</i>	+	-	+/- (not necessarily mutual; also needs to be specified)	+	+

<sup>246</sup>A further possibility is to transliterate a Hebrew, Greek, or Portuguese term, but that would in effect be to fail to translate. Yet another, superficially attractive, alternative would be to use a variety of terms in different Old Testament contexts. Inconsistency would, however, obscure the unity of a strong integrating theme in the text.

One such supplementing proposal was made by the present author (Foster 2000:112-114) in a conscious echo of the biblical Hebrew idiom כרת ברית, 'cut covenant.' However fossilized the form may have become, it did allude both to oath-making rituals along with the resulting committed relationship.<sup>247</sup> The current drafts of the Lomwe Old Testament project follow established translation practice and translate this idiom generically as *opaka waataana*, 'to make to be in (good) relationship.' This makes clear that the relationship is based on choice (and probably implies some previous enmity or brokenness) while allowing that some unspecified ritual may have been involved. However, given the emphatic role of oaths and self-cursing in ancient covenant-making, this is a seriously weak translation. It would be permissible if the term used for ברית, 'covenant' itself carried connotations of divine sanctions. Since *waataana* does not, the proposed solution was to consistently translate כרת ברית, 'cut covenant' as *olipela waataana*, 'to swear to be in fellowship/(good) relationship.' As a relatively common phrase in the Old Testament it would help a Lomwe reader to associate *waataana* with oaths throughout Scripture, linking otherwise unrelated semantic fields.

However, this proposal, was not welcomed by the Bible Society's Lomwe translation team. While theoretically ingenious, it is open to the criticisms leveled at neologisms above. It simply sounds awkward and unnatural. Yet the chart above makes it clear that the semantic field of *olipela*, 'to swear' very helpfully complements *waataana*, 'to be in (good) relationship.' At the very least, where *waataana* and *opaka waataana* are used in the translation, the context should be carefully studied for natural-sounding ways to include or allude to oaths and sanctions.<sup>248</sup>

The remaining alternative is to compensate for the weaknesses of *waataana* outside the translated text itself, as in the proposal that follows.

### 6.2.2 Supplement the text

Wendland mentions "the absolute necessity of publishing study Bibles" (2003a:219, n.49). This is simply an acknowledgement of the fact just illustrated by using *waataana* to translate ברית, 'covenant.' Words do not match. Moreover, original hearers and readers brought to the text tremendous contextual knowledge beyond the denotations of words. It can only be recovered in part, but even that part is crucial for interpreters in other contexts. Yet trying to fit too many of

<sup>247</sup>Note Weinfeld's comments on a pattern of hendiadys phrases referring to covenant throughout the ANE whereby one term is from the semantic fields of oath and commitment and the other from the fields of kinship and friendship (1973:192): ברית, 'covenant and loyalty', ואמת, 'loyalty and faithfulness', ברית שלום, 'covenant of peace'.

these contextual assumptions into the translated text itself simply clogs the flow of thought, obscuring understanding in other dimensions. Notes are needed.

However, defining a study Bible is like defining poetry: there are a whole spectrum of distinguishing features, which makes it impossible to determine precisely when a line was crossed. Section headings and footnotes, not to mention verse and chapter divisions, are added to almost every Bible translation text to facilitate study and understanding. Yet some Bibles squeeze the canonical text into a corner of the page, overwhelming it with lively comments, questions, and decorations from the editors. Moreover, too much complex detail may simply intimidate, not illuminate readers, demanding of them, as Wendland puts it (following Gutt 2000; cf. Sperber and Wilson 1986): “excessive or undue processing effort” (2003b:7).

While avoiding excesses, communicating covenant adequately in a Lomwe Bible will require the use of several features characteristic of a study Bible:

- 1) **Section headings** can highlight key issues and themes, especially those with a strong role in the macro-structure of the discourse, which is often the case with covenant language. Note the section heading *Wuuluula waataana*, ‘To renew fellowship’ in the translation of Leviticus 26 used in the experiment in chapter five. This did have influence on some of the sermons. It might also have been helpful if the two earlier section headings in the chapter, *Mareliho wa achu awiiwelela*, ‘Blessings for people who obey’ and *Wuulumeliwa wa achu ohiiwelela*, ‘People who disobey are cursed’ had made a covenantal connection. The original audience would certainly have understood the blessings and curses as covenant formulae. Section headings must, of course, not become cumbersome. In the present instance, however, the relational and covenantal context could have been hinted at simply by inserting the possessive pronoun *awe*, ‘his’ into the headings above: *Mareliho wa achu<sup>249</sup> awe awiiwelela*, ‘Blessings for his people who obey,’ and *Wuulumeliwa wa achu awe ohiiwelela*, ‘His people who disobey are cursed.’ Note also how although ברית, ‘covenant’ is not used in 2 Samuel 7, a section heading there could alert the reader to the presence of prominent covenantal themes in the chapter. Similarly, it may be obvious to a translator from the Hebrew that Micah 6 is a chapter where the

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<sup>248</sup>In some contexts it could be useful to use *olakana* in a similar, complementary fashion.

<sup>249</sup>A further possibility will be discussed below: replacing the general term *achu*, ‘persons’ with the more specific *muloko*, ‘people.’

covenant lord is calling his covenant people to account in a רִיב, ‘dispute’ even though ברִית, ‘covenant’ is nowhere used. This is how the chapter makes sense within Scripture. A chapter title could make the assumptions explicit.

- 2) **Glossary entries**<sup>250</sup> linked to asterisked terms in the text provide translators with the opportunity to expend a concise paragraph explaining terms like ברִית, ‘covenant’ that are both fundamental and frequent. For *waataana* it would be important to describe it as a means of taking people who were not related and giving them the privileges and responsibilities of family or kinship, noting the four components of the definition of ברִית, ‘covenant’ in its ANE context. Lomwe terms like *ohima*, ‘to be a relative’ and *olipela*, ‘to swear’ that were discussed above should definitely be incorporated. It would also be important to note how the prominent use of *waataana* in the Old Testament for the relationship between Yahweh and his people was unique in the ancient world and had implications also susceptible to a four-fold summary. The relationship was exclusive, secure, accountable, and purposeful. However, it should not be assumed that a list of abstract terms would be the best way to communicate these elements. For a Lomwe audience, a succinct narrative, with a sentence devoted to each element, might be much more effective. The following is a possible example, in Lomwe-influenced English:

When God made covenant (*opaka waataana*), he took people (*achu*, ‘persons’) and made them to be his own people (*muloko awe*), just as if they were his relatives (*ntoko ahima awe*). He wanted them to only serve him (*olapa*). He swore (*olipela*) he would not abandon (*onyanyala*) them. He would reward their obeying and punish their disobeying. He would change them so they would always be with him.

- 3) **Notes** on the page are the third essential tool translators should use. H. Hill’s research (2003, cf. 2002) in a translation project in Côte d’Ivoire suggests that even readers with a very basic level of literacy were happy to use and profit from footnotes, after a brief orientation, “thus dispelling the idea that footnotes are too hard for receptors” (2003:16). Though it is notes at the foot of the page that are defended by this research, R. Hill, (Harriet’s colleague and husband) suggests that notes in the margin are even better, “one of the more accessible means of providing

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<sup>250</sup>On this section and the following one cf. van Steenberg (2004:21).

supplemental information along with the text” (2003:20). It is less disruptive to a reader to glance over at the margin than to look down at the bottom of a page, finding the appropriate symbol among several, and then to find his or her place again up in the text. For Leviticus 26, a note that put curses and blessings in covenantal context as results of a sworn commitment to the relationship could have helped the reader-preachers of the experiment in chapter five see beyond a generalized pattern that God rewards good behavior and punishes bad behavior. A second note might have highlighted the rhetorical features in the text designed to encourage those offending against their covenant partner to change their behavior and renew the relationship. A third note might have highlighted Yahweh’s ongoing commitment to the relationship even after its breakdown. (Preachers who had this pointed out to them in a seminar session did incorporate the emphasis in subsequent sermons.)

### **6.3 An integrating proposal: *Muloko wa Muluku***

The proposals so far have depended upon supplementing the key covenantal vocabulary in Lomwe. However, there is a danger with this approach. The analytic focus of the present work identifies concepts that need to be supplemented but could also lead to major failures in communication. Analysis encourages clarity with lists of components, but it also tends to fragment its object. Fragmentary, piecemeal solutions would fail to do justice to the role of covenant in the Old Testament canon. It was argued in chapter two that covenant concepts have a profound integrating role. Indeed, when covenant is obscured, unity is either lost or imposed by some system extraneous to the text. Yet it is doubtful that any approach based on lists can convey organic unity, however competently the lists may have been derived.

Furthermore, fragmentary solutions would fail to do justice to the African context of communication. Many observers have noted that traditional African worldviews are holistic and prefer integration to analysis. The first fundamental presupposition identified by Wendland in his summary of African tradition is *synthesis* (1987:72-85; cf. Macaire 1996:419). Ciscato writes of Lomwe tradition and its “solidariedade cósmica” (1999:49)<sup>251</sup> and “visão integral da pessoa” (1999:59)<sup>252</sup> which makes, for example, a cure “uma reconstrução de uma harmonia

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<sup>251</sup>‘cosmic solidarity’

<sup>252</sup>‘integrated vision of the person’

total” (1999:59).<sup>253</sup> Moreover, this pattern of cultural preference is not a lost or dying tradition in contemporary Africa. Buconyori conducted research on cognitive and learning styles in East African students in higher education. He concludes that these students overwhelmingly favor a so-called ‘field-dependent,’ holistic approach over an analytic, compartmentalizing approach (also called ‘field-independent,’ 1991:97). The students preferred to begin learning with an overall perspective and structure, rather than build up from details. It is important to realize this does not imply any deficiency in the use of analyzing skills (1991:194). These are simply “contrasting ways of information processing” (1991:197), yet it behooves communicators to respect these preferences. Other research suggests such patterns can be extrapolated well beyond East Africa (O’Donovan 2000:8-10). These observations about both traditional and contemporary Africa imply that an adequate approach to communicating covenant concepts in an African context needs to emphasize integration, a framework which can tie together the complex detail.

The communication problem can also be put in more general terms. Brown comments on a Bible translator’s dilemma:

“To infer the themes of the Bible, the receptors need to accept the premises. Many of the premises are implicit contextual assumptions, and many premises are contrary to the basic premises of the receptors’ worldview. For their own worldview to change, the receptors need to get a global view of the biblical metanarrative and the worldview it conveys. So they need the big picture before they can grasp the bits, but they need the small bits to make up a picture” (2003:78).

Having addressed ‘small bits’ it is now time to look to the ‘big picture.’

An initial step is simply to avoid obscuring unifying themes in the Old Testament text. Where translators are not aware of the structuring role of covenant concepts in Scripture, they will tend to obscure this in translation. Instead, they need a conscious respect for the intertextual links of Scripture. In the process of exegeting and then rendering meaningfully the curses of Amos 4:6-10 and 5:11, phrases may be chosen that are quite different from those used when translating these covenant curses within the Pentateuch. Instead, as much as possible, internal allusions (including covenantal allusions) need to be preserved.

Covenant is not just the word *ברית*, whether translated by *waataana* or some other term. It is an integrated cluster of concepts used to describe a distinct, and revolutionary, way of relating

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<sup>253</sup>‘a rebuilding of a complete harmony’

to God. To get Lomwe preachers, and through them Lomwe Christians, closer to the view of reality underlying Leviticus 26, requires a concept that in Lomwe can be as integrating as covenant, with organic connections throughout Scripture. It also needs to be on the surface of the biblical text, ideally in this very chapter, not an imported idea which the canonical text in translation does not itself emphasize. It should also clearly be part of the biblical complex of covenantal ideas. The proposal that follows has implications far beyond the role of Bible translation. Responsibility for communicating these ideas is that of Christian churches among the Lomwe. Nevertheless, this perspective should inform the decisions Bible translation teams make.

This study proposes that the key concept to emphasize is the phrase: *Muloko wa Muluku*, 'people of God.' This phrase is natural in Lomwe. It is central to biblical covenant theology. It is coherent with community-focused worldviews. It highlights an overarching biblical narrative. It can demonstrate the covenantal character of Christian rituals like baptism, the Lord's Supper and weddings. It provides a framework for dealing with the experience of disaster. (It also has some dangers, which will be examined in due course.) Whereas in Lomwe, *waataana* can simply not bear the weight, *muloko wa Muluku* can. The pages that follow suggest some of the rich biblical and theological themes that flow through this concept.

### 6.3.1 A natural phrase

*Muloko wa Muluku*, 'people of God' is clear and natural Lomwe.<sup>254</sup> The most frequent word meaning 'person' in Lomwe is *muchu*; its plural is *achu*. It denotes human beings, humanity in general. By contrast, *muloko* implies a distinct, gathered group of people. A common phrase combines the two terms: *muloko wa achu*, 'crowd/group of people.'<sup>255</sup> Some principle of selection is implied that separates out a (large) number from people in general. The principle can be as simple as all being together in the same place. The term *muloko* is closely related to *nloko*, a kinship or ethnic term which covers a larger, more inclusive group than a *nihimo*, the word for 'clan' (and shares with it a common plural, *maloko*, 'peoples, tribes').<sup>256</sup> The proposed phrase relates this *muloko* to God. Belonging to him is what constitutes it. It is neither humanity in general nor a kinship grouping defined by birth ties. The possessive relationship is crucial, even more important choosing between *muloko* and *achu*: in many biblical contexts

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<sup>254</sup>Personal conversation with Simões Duarte, Estevão Campama and Zacarias Pedro, 15 October 2004 was particularly helpful on the points in this paragraph.

<sup>255</sup>It is also possible to have a *muloko* of animals, a herd.

<sup>256</sup>Another etymologically related term, always plural, always doubled is *miloko miloko*, 'of various kinds.'

where God is speaking, *muloko aka*, ‘my people/group’ is virtually interchangeable with *achu aka*, ‘my people/persons.’ It is the possessive pronoun (capable where rhetorically appropriate of being reinforced: *akaaka*, *akeene*, both meaning ‘really mine’) that removes ambiguity.

The term *muloko* is not an awkward neologism when used this way. The precise phrase *muloko wa Muluku* is not used in the Lomwe church songs analyzed in chapter four, but one describes Jesus’ mission as being to *woopola muloko woothene*, ‘redeem the whole people’ (Song 115) and another refers to *muloko anyu Apwiya*, ‘your people Lord’ (Song 177, cf. Song 137). In his sermon Fulgêncio Careva promises, *munii mukhale muloko na achu oothanliwa*, ‘you will be the people of the chosen ones’ (Careva 2002). When people (*achu*) are selected (*oothanliwa*), it is natural to describe them as a *muloko*.

### 6.3.2 A central concept

*Muloko wa Muluku*, ‘people of God’ is central to biblical covenant theology. The theme of a distinct people who belong to God is, of course, an expression of the covenant formula of Leviticus 26:12,

והייתי לכם לאלהים ואתם תהיו לי לעם

*I will be your God and you will be my people.*

**Kinarwa kikhala Muluku anyu nave nyuwo munarwa mukhala achu aka.**

**I-WILL BE GOD-YOURS AND YOU WILL BE PEOPLE-MINE.**

As noted earlier, in chapter two, Rendtorff has established (1998) that this phrase is a structuring theme of the entire Pentateuch and “there is no other theological formulation about which anything comparable could be said” (1998:51). Indeed, echoes of this language are repeated from Genesis to Revelation and given great thematic weight. This phrase is at the heart of the biblical use of covenant concepts to describe Yahweh’s relationship to his own.<sup>257</sup> To emphasize a Lomwe expression of it is not to make something peripheral central. It puts the central in focus.

It does have to be acknowledged that, inconveniently, the proposed phrase is not used in the actual Lomwe draft text of Leviticus 26:12. The more general term *achu* is used instead of *muloko*. This could be a useful reminder that the concept is more important than the precise phrase. It could also imply that the translation team should reexamine its choice of vocabulary in the light of the larger issues being raised in the present study.

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<sup>257</sup>Note that House’s summary of OT theology, which uses the character and action of God as its integrating center, nevertheless concludes by focusing on the “people of God” (1998:543-546).



### 6.3.3 A communal focus

*Muloko wa Muluku*, 'people of God' fits worldviews with a communal focus. It was noted in chapter five that all four of the worldviews summarized in the present work give priority to the first person plural, to *we* and to *us*. To belong to a group, a community, a family is a basic starting point in life, whether in Leviticus 26, in Lomwe tradition, or in the Lomwe Christian worldviews studied. Emphasis on belonging to the people of God respects this emphasis and orientation, putting community before the individual. This way of thinking is so pervasive that a communication strategy which neglects it will be severely handicapped. A communication strategy that opposes it, emphasizing the individual, is likely to be either rejected or subverted, even as it distorts the original text.<sup>258</sup>

### 6.3.4 An overarching theme

*Muloko wa Muluku*, 'people of God' can give readers an integrated understanding of the biblical narrative. One basic strategy for communicating covenant concepts to Lomwe speakers is indeed to translate the whole Bible, thus exposing them to its organic interconnections. A New Testament alone tends to seriously distort understanding of Christian truth. It is the Old Testament that deals with the defining worldview issues with respect to paganism. But even a whole Bible in translation can fail to be understood organically. A respected church leader and popular preacher in Malawi laments that "most Christians really do not know anything substantial about what is contained in their Bibles....They do not perceive the 'big plan,' namely the story of salvation as it is unfolded in sequence throughout the Bible" (Wendland 2000:250). This is said of a people with an established tradition of the whole Bible translated into their language (a third version having recently been published). What people need is a uniting framework for the entire Old Testament story that also links it to the New Testament. This story is not to be conceived as a series of biographies of more or less exemplary characters. It is not to be conceived as a series of examples of divine judgment on human rebellion. It is rather a biography of the *muloko wa Muluku*, a story of the relationship of God with his people, a story as Leviticus 26 (and so many other passages) portrays it, of a loving faithful God, patiently working with a recalcitrant people. He is a father or husband, caring to provide and to discipline. He both welcomes and changes his people. Indeed, as the New Testament tells it, he ultimately remakes his people around Jesus.

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<sup>258</sup>Note the relevance of communal focus in post-modern Africa in the sharp and insightful comments of Katongole on "condomization" (2001:262-267).

### 6.3.5 A connection with ritual and oath

*Muloko wa Muluku*, 'people of God' can also connect with a covenantal understanding of Christian rituals. Christians have introduced three prominent rituals among the Lomwe: baptism, the Lord's Supper, and the Christian wedding. As rituals, they have potential for tremendous public impact and for shaping at a deep level people's understanding of God and their relationship to him. Yet, rituals can also be practiced without any deep awareness of their symbolism. They can simply be required mechanisms for obtaining power and blessing in life or reinforcing the solidarity of a local group. Instead, they should be seen as oath commitments for entry into the *muloko wa Muluku*, 'people of God,' for maintaining *waataana*, 'fellowship' with *Muluku*, 'God' and his *muloko*, 'people,' and for modeling the relationship between *Muluku*, 'God and his *muloko*, 'people.' It is especially through these rituals and their symbolism that the language and impact of *olipela*, 'oath' can be linked with belonging to the people of God.

In Scripture, oaths are redefined when Yahweh himself is a participant. He is not subject to or threatened by outside powers. He is himself the guarantor. He even invokes curse on himself. In contemporary cultures with a rigid sacred/secular distinction, without any sense of active transcendent powers, oaths lose their impact. Who is going to enforce anything? For the Lomwe, however, there is no shortage of enforcers. A self-curse is the most severe commitment imaginable. Yet now in the Bible God himself is the enforcer, and he takes the curse on himself when he makes covenant with his people. An oath should bring real dread, and yet in the Lord, an astonishing security. When he takes the oath sanction on himself, the only dread left is displeasing him. For those in his new covenant, the curse for failure has already come, on God himself in Jesus.

At the heart of the matter lies the atonement. What God did in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ demands multiple explanations. No one metaphor or set of metaphors is adequate. Covenant connects to the atonement through oath and curse. When God himself swears the oath of condemnation for failure, a powerful contradiction is set up. Since God himself cannot die or fail, the covenant relationship will not ever fail. Yet the people's failure demands their extinction, which would abrogate the covenant. Jesus' death on behalf of the covenant people is the execution of the covenant curse. Now the failure cannot be held against them. This could be a powerful, relevant image for explaining the death of Christ.

Baptism is a rite of entry into the *muloko wa Muluku*, 'people of God.' Biblically, it is a covenantal oath sign. The water shows identification with Jesus in his death and resurrection.<sup>259</sup> As Meredith Kline argues (1968:63-83), it functions this way as an oath ritual analogous to circumcision. In effect, it declares: "May this water drown me in judgment (as in the days of Noah), if I do not keep this commitment." And for those who are committed to Jesus, his curse takes the place of theirs. Andrianjatovo has argued for a "re-appreciation of baptism as identity focalizer" (2001:184). The link with *muloko wa Muluku*, 'people of God' and covenant could help this happen for Lomwe-speakers.

Similarly, the Lord's Supper is a covenant renewal ceremony of the covenant community (cf. Asomugha 1997, Onwu 1987, Arulefela 1980). It affirms a genuine kinship that transcends birth ties, connecting God's people first with Christ and through him with each other. Though rarely emphasized, it also contains an aspect of implicit oath. Some of the Corinthians who abused it suffered severe consequences (1 Cor 11:27-32). Out of these emphases could emerge a deeper experience of fellowship for believers with God and each other, of solemn obligations and of life and death commitment.

Christians have introduced distinctive wedding ceremonies among the Lomwe (cf. Songs 195, 196, 210). Biblically, however, the emphasis is all on marriage. At its best, the ceremony serves to highlight the commitments of marriage. These are explicitly oath commitments that create a covenantal bond and are modelled on the relationship of God with his people (Eph 5:22-33).<sup>260</sup> As noted in chapter four, traditional marriage among the matrilineal Lomwe does not create kinship between husband and wife. The Christian understanding of marriage is radically different, with implications in two directions. One is the marriage relationships of Christians. The other is the relationship of *muloko*, 'people' with *Muluku*, 'God.' To explore these implications is to touch intimately on values that shape society,<sup>261</sup> to communicate covenant concepts with deep impact. Where Christian marriage obligations are emphasized without the organizing core of covenant principle, they can become merely onerous requirements. Why one man and one woman once and for all? As Christian marriages model covenant principles, those very principles can give coherence and definition to marriage in a mutually reinforcing cycle.

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<sup>259</sup>Since symbolism is polyvalent, the water can also speak of cleansing and new birth.

<sup>260</sup>As is clear much earlier than Ephesians, or even Hosea. Note how in the Old Testament the word for unfaithfulness,  $\text{נֶפֶשׁ}$ , is used of the Israel-Yahweh relationship well before it is specifically called a marriage (Cf. Ortlund 1996:25-45).

<sup>261</sup>Including the HIV/AIDS crisis.

### 6.3.6 A test: coping with disaster

The integrating power of living as the *muloko wa Muluku*, 'people of God' will be tested by human experience of disaster, defeat, and death. At the personal level, oppression, marginalization and indignity amount simply to suffering. All people suffer, but the suffering of people like Lomwe-speakers, who live in one of the poorest countries of the world's poorest continent, is objectively severe. It is also subjectively acute because the traditional worldview focuses on obtaining life and power. Suffering is an alien intrusion that implies hostile powers, *amwiicani*, 'enemies.' Only when covenant concepts control people's response to suffering have the concepts really been communicated. This is a clear test of the change at worldview level that covenant should bring. After all, it seems reasonable to expect that the *muloko wa Muluku*, 'people of God' should be exempted by an all-powerful God from the miseries of human experience.

Biblically, the covenant relationship is one of security. When an enemy of God's people uses all the resources at his command to curse them, he is stymied (Num 22-24). God has decided to bless. No power can overrule his decision. Yet in the next chapter (Num 25), covenant disloyalty to Yahweh rapidly brings disaster. This is the framework of security and accountability which the covenant brings. There is safety without complacency. This is the pattern that dominates Israel's history. When security brings presumption, the prophets warn of the consequences. A covenant-shaped understanding of disaster does not deny that enemies curse or an adversary opposes (Job 1). It does deny them authority over the covenant people. The decision is God's. The nations rage and plot, but their efforts are futile (Psa 2:1). The enemies of Leviticus 26 are simply executing Yahweh's decisions. They are not independent threats. The powers are real, but nothing is to be gained by attempting to manipulate them.

Disaster is somehow God's intention. It can be reproof for specific failures. God's covenant loyalty demands he intervene to keep his people on track. It can be testing to strengthen the bond of covenant trust and dependence. No one thrills to hear of the parental, disciplinary interventions of God within the covenant family (Heb 12:5-11). But they are an essential part of the covenant relationship. It is demanding. Accountability is real. Yahweh is not someone to manipulate.

It does not follow that disaster and pain are therefore always a direct consequence of covenant failure. Both individually and corporately there are times when there is no visible correspondence between failure and disaster (Job; Pss 44, 89). The relationship of *muloko* with

*Muluku* provides the framework for bringing these problems to God. Without it there would be no grounds for complaint. There would simply be a failure somewhere in manipulation.

Besides this privilege of complaint, the covenant gives security in disaster. Even if disaster is deserved, the covenant is not abrogated. Yahweh swore to this commitment. However severely punished, the *muloko wa Muluku*, ‘people of God’ will not disappear. Even seven-fold punishment threatened five times is not the end of the story. God’s purpose continues. To be the *muloko wa Muluku*, ‘people of God’ links people to this larger purpose through time. Experience here and now is not the ultimate test. God’s commitment is bigger and will not fail. On this basis, even the inexplicable can be put in brackets. A covenant relationship with God, exclusive, secure, accountable, and purposeful, can cope with suffering. The *muloko wa Muluku*, ‘people of God’ are not exempt from suffering. They should not be surprised by it even though it may frequently baffle them. This framework is essential.

By contrast, a theology of accountability without security, which sees relationship with God as a distant goal after a hard journey, can place a severe pastoral burden on people’s lives: “Não confiam que Deus está ali. Vale a pena ir ao curandeiro, ou, fica de vez.”<sup>262</sup>

### 6.3.7 Three dangers

Despite this well-illustrated potential of *muloko wa Muluku*, ‘people of God’ to be a powerful integrating theme for Lomwe Christians as they read the Scriptures, the approach is open to abuse (as indeed are all emphases in theology). There are at least three ways that *muloko wa Muluku*, ‘people of God’ can be misused by turning it, in effect, into *muloko ahu*, ‘our people.’ Good communication will identify and reject these subversions, after first seeking to understand them.

#### 6.3.7.1 “Our group”

One characteristic danger of emphasis on covenant is its perversion into a form of in-group pride that benignly neglects or viciously abuses people who do not belong. This is a particularly acute danger where issues of identity are prominent (cf. Bediako 1992). For people routinely oppressed, living at the margins of the world community, their defining traditions under the abrupt assault of modernization, the issues of dignity and identity will not go away. One response can be to emphasize rigid standards in dress (ties, head scarves, skirt length) or order

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<sup>262</sup> ‘They don’t trust God is there. They might as well go to the witchdoctor or just quit [being a Christian].’ Personal conversation with Simões Duarte, Estevão Campama and Zacarias Pedro, 15 October 2004.

of worship (Does the Lord's prayer come before or after the psalm?) or respect for leaders (Who sits on the front bench?). These are insider/outsider signals that reassure insiders, giving people a sense of security.

Yet real need can generate false solutions. Andrianjatovo warns that "identity-crisis oriented hermeneutics" (2001:182) lead easily to ethnocentrism (2001:183). There are examples in South African history of an entrenched pattern in which covenant concepts were hijacked to justify the dominance of one ethnic group over others. Thus "'the covenant' made between the Trekkers and God ...became the most sacred of symbols for Afrikaner nationalism" (de Gruchy 1991:264). Covenant was used politically and "this inevitably led to the conviction that the Afrikaner nation as it came to be was an elect people, chosen by God to exercise rule and authority in southern Africa" (1991:266). This form of covenant theology profoundly met the needs for dignity and self-respect of an oppressed people and became in due course a potent tool for oppressing others. 'We have been blessed' can be transformed from a motivation for humble gratitude into a proof of 'our' superiority. Instead of grace, favor to those who deserve the opposite, the category of merit is imported. It is assumed that God has a particular affinity for 'our' kind. It would be well to reflect that by definition covenant creates a relationship between non-relatives, those who have no natural affinity. Thus those related to God by covenant have nothing in themselves that qualifies them for privilege.

Examples of such distortions abound far beyond South Africa. In the late 1990's,<sup>263</sup> congregations related to the Igreja União Baptista located in the lower Zambezi river valley worshipped exclusively in Lomwe, despite the fact that the majority population of the area were speakers of Sena. Queried as to why more Sena-speakers were not participating in their worship services, the Lomwe-speakers leading the churches explained that Sena-speakers were welcome, that the doors were open to them. However, it was important to use Lomwe as the language of worship because Lomwe had a translated New Testament and a published hymn book. In effect, these blessings were also signs of prestige that favored one group and excluded another. The language of covenant was not used in these churches, but signs of relation to God

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<sup>263</sup>This example is from the author's personal visits and contacts in the areas of Mopeia, Luabo and Marromeu during October 1998.

were being turned into a tool of ethnocentrism. Example of such ethnic capture can be multiplied and from far beyond Africa.<sup>264</sup>

Of course, there are clear biblical examples of the same pattern, where people blessed by covenant relationship turn it into a privileged and exclusive status. This is a theme of God's dealings with the reluctant prophet Jonah, who was not willing to accept God's mercy for pagan oppressors though he welcomed it for himself (and, implicitly, 'his' people). For the early church of the New Testament, the issues of disentangling covenant boundaries from the ethnic boundaries of Jew vs. gentile caused major conflicts. These are explicitly addressed in Acts 15, in Galatians, and in many other passages (cf. Walls 1996:16-18).

Yet understanding the *muloko wa Muluku*, 'people of God' as defined by covenant can radically undercut racism, tribalism, the perennial human divisions into *us* and *them* on the bases of language, ethnicity and class. Covenant creates kinship where there is none. It makes family of those who are not. When God uses it to define his relationship to people, it relativizes every other division. It challenges ethnic capture, when church and ethnic identity begin to fuse. To be the people of God is a privilege of his choice, unearned. In Exodus 19, that astonishing dignity (19:4-5) is immediately linked with the dignity of a divine mission to all peoples of the earth (19:5-6). In Leviticus, the holiness of the covenant lord is the pattern for all of life. Covenant-defined people of God with a covenant-defined mission have a dignity that is found in worship and service.

#### 6.3.7.2 Group failure

There is a second, related way in which *muloko ahu*, 'our people' can, in effect, displace *muloko wa Muluku*, 'people of God.' If the group is not seen to offend God, to fail, to sin, problems will tend to become entrenched. The previous chapters noted how, for some Lomwe Christians, sin is regularly seen as individual failure to live up to the established group standards. Conformity, it is assumed, assures acceptance by God. The possibility that 'our' group could fail, and indeed be under judgment, tends to be overlooked. However, in Leviticus 26 the accountability before Yahweh enforced by covenant sanctions is primarily that of the whole people.

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<sup>264</sup>Cf. Aboagye-Mensah (1993:130-136). This can happen even in a missionary and theological tradition emphasizing individual conversion, cf. Fiedler (1994:330).

### 6.3.7.3 Group entrance

The third dangerous confusion of *muloko ahu*, 'our people' and *muloko wa Muluku*, 'people of God' has to do with entrance requirements. When people focus on satisfying the standards of admission to the local group of *muloko ahu*, 'our people' they may assume that their status with God is assured. For example, O'Donovan expresses the concern of a Western evangelical with considerable experience viewing the African situation<sup>265</sup> for "those who are Christians in name only" (2000:218). "Nominal Christians may consider themselves to be Christians because they go to church, or because they grew up in a Christian home, or because they have a Christian name or because they help other people or for some other reason, but they have no personal relationship with Christ" (2000:218). What is essential, however, is that "a true Christian is someone who has been born again (that is, made alive spiritually) by the power of the Holy Spirit" (2000:218). This is linked to the related problem of "salvation by works rather than by faith" (2000:224; cf. Arulefela 1980:149): "In a subtle way, the idea is communicated to these new believers that they have been saved by what they have done and not by what God has done for them by sending Christ to die for their sins on the cross" (2000:225). He notes regarding prohibitions in churches: "The particular list of such practices which must be forsaken to become a 'Christian' will vary from one culture to another" (2000:225), but, inevitably, behavioral standards verifiable by the group attain first importance. O'Donovan's response to these issues tends to be to focus on individual responsibility to and relationship with God. This is inadequate both biblically and culturally for it stresses the individual in opposition to the *muloko*, 'people.' A more fruitful approach to the genuine problems identified would be to frame the discussion in terms of covenant boundaries: what in fact qualifies a person to belong to the *muloko wa Muluku*, 'people of God'? For a Christian, membership in the new covenant people of God depends on relationship to Christ. Jesus' sacrificial death is the guarantee that God himself has dealt with covenant-breaking, taking on himself the doom. It is by genuine identification with Jesus, then, that a person is freed from curse to experience blessing. Jesus is the entry point to and the epicenter of the people of God. Relating to him is fundamental. It demands trust in him and loyalty to him. Through him alone a person is connected to the *muloko wa Muluku*, 'people of God.' From this perspective, the problems that O'Donovan describes as "nominalism" and "salvation by works" can be seen as manifestations of trying to belong to *muloko ahu*, 'our people' by meeting its standards of behavior rather than joining *muloko wa Muluku*, 'people of God' through commitment to Jesus Christ.

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<sup>265</sup>Cf. O'Donovan 1992.



In Scripture, God takes the initiative. The covenant relationship comes before its obligations, both in the narrative (the Red Sea before Sinai) and in principle. The obligations are an expression of the created kinship. They are how one acts in a relationship that is exclusive, secure, accountable, and purposeful. They are not the grounds for acceptance but its expression. This is how believers can sing “How I love your law!” (Psa 119:97, 113, 163).

It should also be noted that a traditional worldview with its emphasis on manipulation and insecurity can underlie much perceived legalism. If God does not in Jesus make people securely part of the *muloko wa Muluku*, ‘people of God,’ the controlling framework may still be a traditional one of seeking to satisfy competing powers, *Muluku* among them. Attempts to challenge such a perspective using New Testament texts without an Old Testament covenantal framework are probably futile.

### 6.3.8 Checklists

This section began by criticizing checklists. Although useful for analysis, they are not good at integrating. However, now that *muloko wa Muluku*, ‘people of God’ has been proposed as an integrated way of communicating covenant concepts, it is time to use the checklists again. First, how well does this overarching concept do at communicating the reality of ANE covenants? Second, and most importantly, how well does it do at conveying the impact of using covenant language for Yahweh’s relationship with Israel?

#### 6.3.8.1 Covenant definition

Covenant in the ANE had been defined as a 1) chosen 2) relationship of 3) mutual obligation 4) guaranteed by oath sanctions. *Muloko wa Muluku*, ‘People of God’ covers these areas of meaning well, particularly when linked with other covenantal themes, as suggested above.

- 1) The term *muloko*, ‘people’ highlights a select, gathered body of people in contrast to less specific terms that may imply natural family or ethnic groupings.
- 2) The phrase *muloko wa Muluku*, ‘people of God’ tells its hearers clearly by its structure that the two parties, *muloko* and *Muluku*, are in relation to one another, and in a relationship where *Muluku* is the senior partner.
- 3) The phrase itself does not indicate that the relationship has mutual obligations, though it does not exclude them either. It was noted in chapter five that Lomwe preachers tended to emphasize people’s obligations to God to the virtual exclusion of God’s obligations to his people. And it can be assumed that the *muloko* has

obligations to obey and serve its owner. Perhaps a sense of ‘herd’ that *muloko* has when applied to animals could link up with biblical shepherd imagery to convey the obligations the owner of the herd (*Muluku*) has to care for his own. However, it is ultimately the overarching Old Testament narrative already referred to that will help communicate the quality of the owner: one who does not exploit but sacrifices himself.

- 4) The phrase recommended says nothing about oath commitments, and this was another major gap in Lomwe preachers’ understandings of covenantal language. It will need to be addressed by specific, targeted teaching, both in the notes and comments of Bible translators and the efforts of those involved more broadly in the teaching task of the church. It is here that highlighting the aspects of oath commitments and covenantal bonds in the rituals of baptism and Lord’s Supper is essential to defining the *muloko wa Muluku*, ‘people of God.’ These must be portrayed as responses to God’s prior oath commitments, in the Old Testament, and especially in Jesus Christ, lest the burden of human responsibility become crushing. The fact that oath commitments were an integral part of traditional society provides terms and examples that can readily be put to use in these explanations.

#### 6.3.8.2 Covenant impact

Covenant language was used in the Old Testament to communicate a relationship between Yahweh and Israel that was 1) exclusive 2) secure 3) accountable 4) and purposeful. *Muloko wa Muluku*, ‘People of God,’ when developed with the biblical and theological themes suggested in the preceding discussion, can also cover these aspects well.

- 1) When a *muloko*, ‘people’ is defined by its relationship to *Muluku*, the implication is that this relationship is to be exclusive. The repeated explicit rejections in Scripture of serving other gods (which imply that, however clear to original hearers the covenant language may have been, mere clarity of language was not enough) further serve to specify that the relationship is exclusive. This was in any case robustly defended by the Lomwe preachers of chapter five. (As noted earlier, problems seem to arise more at the practical level than at the theoretical level. People perceive that *Muluku*, ‘God’ is not providing and protecting as they wish and so seek to supplement him with other, apparently more responsive, powers.)

- 2) The security of the *muloko wa Muluku*, 'people of God' depends largely on the relationship's basis in an oath commitment, as outlined in the previous section, and on the faithful character of God, as declared and portrayed in the Scriptural narrative. This makes a covenantal understanding of defeat, disaster and discipline, as presented above, a crucial component. The language alone, apart from Scriptural content, cannot communicate security.
- 3) The accountability of the *muloko* to its owner and master, *Muluku*, is implied by the structure of the phrase and the obligations discussed above. This is also an area clearly emphasized by Lomwe Christians even without a covenantal framework.
- 4) The purposes of *Muluku* for his *muloko* are not contained in the phrase. The dependent role of the *muloko* in the relationship does imply that God's purposes should be respected; it is the owner's right to what he chooses with his own. That the *muloko* is to reflect the character of *Muluku*, to carry out his assignments, and to know him with increasing intimacy can only be known in the larger context of Scripture, especially its overarching narrative. It is linked with an understanding of the nature of the security of the relationship.

No word or phrase on its own is the secret of effective communication. What is proposed here is an organizing principle whose clarity and rich connections can make it highly effective at structuring the wealth of covenantal concepts as they are used in Scripture. It then becomes a powerful yet nuanced tool for shaping the Bible translation process in Lomwe and the teaching task of the churches, especially when used with awareness of its weaknesses.

#### **6.4 Suggestions for further study**

- The proposals made in this chapter need to be tested among Lomwe speakers. In particular the suggestion that *muloko wa Muluku*, 'people of God' be used as an integrating covenantal concept must be evaluated at length by native-speakers of the language. Should it be rejected and replaced with something better, something with greater impact, with more integrating power, that more adequately meets the criteria proposed in these pages, the proposal will have served its purpose.
- There is much scope for gathering further data from other Lomwe Christians, especially the Roman Catholics neglected by this research, in order to strengthen and/or qualify the conclusions.

•This research attempted to describe the worldview of some Lomwe Christians as implied by their public songs and sermons. Further study would attempt to incorporate actions, both public ritual and private behavior, as well as words.

•Further research could make and test hypotheses about why these Lomwe Christians have the worldview they do. What are the relative levels of influence of traditional culture, translated Scriptures, historical experience and missionary teaching?

•The analysis and proposals made here demand comparison and contrast with other African peoples, especially those with established access to a translated Old Testament. To what extent are biblical covenant concepts appropriated by other African Christians? How could they be used more fruitfully? To what extent are the Lomwe Christians studied representative of other African Christians and to what extent are they distinct? Comparison and contrast could well begin with peoples near to Lomwe-speakers and who may have influenced them, such as Chichewa-speakers in Malawi.

## **6.5 Conclusion**

This study began with a single word in biblical Hebrew: בְּרִית, ‘covenant.’ The question of how best to translate it for contemporary Lomwe speakers in northern Mozambique has drawn in a host of other issues, from the ANE background of the term to its Old Testament impact, from Lomwe tradition to the worldview of some Lomwe-speaking Christians. The discussion was integrated by a focus text, Leviticus 26, and by an experiment in which that text was preached in Lomwe translation.

The very process highlights the complex, interdisciplinary nature of Bible translation and the demands of setting communicating as a goal: what counts is what the hearers understand, use, and live as they encounter God’s alien yet deeply relevant word. This process has implications for many in Africa who may not speak Lomwe but seek to live by the Scriptures as worldviews collide, as values traditional and modern are in flux, as societies are in crisis.

The challenge for Africa is an ever more deep and fruitful encounter with God through Scripture so that Africa’s deep yearning for wholeness is met by greater wholeness. This greater wholeness can be captured by covenant.

## APPENDIX A:

### LOMWE CHURCH SONGS

- 1**  
Aaparhamu, nikholo na alipa oororomela  
Mu elapo ya hihano  
IUB Serra, 7/4/02
- 2**  
Peeturu, Muluku aamuruma munkelo, ohula  
okariposo  
Owaleliwa nthowa noolalerya michaka ya phaama  
IUB Serra, 28/4/02
- 3**  
Anna, navekelaka Muluku, onannoona.  
Nihivele chiri ni mavekelo  
Ni weera saphaama  
IUB Serra, 28/4/02
- 4**  
Mmahiku a Noowa  
Achu oothene yaamweera okhwela waya  
Muluku aamwala nsele.  
IEC Moneia, 31/3/02
- 5**  
Asimai  
Nlipisheerye mirima sahu  
Apwiya anakooka  
IEC Moneia, 31/3/02
- 6**  
Asimai, hankoni nimoone Yeesu oKalileya  
Yeesu oni "Kamukumi," oovinya  
Rowani, nyu, mwakumaneno oKalileya  
IEC Moneia, 31/3/02
- 7**  
Amalapo taani?  
Mwamuthomeye oKoolekota  
Yeesu aaphariwa, ahiiphiwa, avithiwa  
Itari saaruma omahiyeni  
Washilaaya nihiku na murunku, Yeesu oovinya.  
IEC Moneia, 31/3/02
- 8**  
Soocheka, soocheka  
Soontepelela, soontepelela  
IUB Serra, 18/8/2002
- 9**  
Noowe anlopolaka, Noowe  
Ii, achu akina yanaloca  
Weeca sawe...  
Ehanle...  
Nimpache mwaaceya, epula enoorwa eyo, yeeyo ti  
ya malavi.  
IUB Licungo, 21/7/02
- 10**  
Nivekelaaka, echu emoha nnachunaahu,  
Muluku ahincuwale  
Ahinrihele okhwipi  
IUB Serra, 18/8/02
- 11**  
Achu/Majovem/Akiristu  
Oopacerya veelapo ya vathi  
Ti Aatamu ni Eva  
IUB Serra, 18/8/02
- 12**  
Nnamvilela,  
Nnamphiya oKanaa.  
Sim, sim, sim, oKanaa
- 13**  
Annaka nyuwo, annaka muupuwele mahiku a  
muSootoma  
Wasareya soolya ni owurya  
Khwino Muluku Muluku enre sheeni?  
Muluku arumiha michaka wa Looti  
Chawa Looti  
Muluku onakhwela opahula  
Looti chawa<sup>266</sup>
- Aari vamukwahani, Looti aari vamukwahani  
Hiyo nri nekari vawi Muluku aikharari aruma  
apastore  
Olalerya masu weera achu eelapo ya vathi ehikhwele  
muhakhu  
Aakhala akina ookhwela muhakhu wa soona  
Yaawo apastor yaalaleryaka  
Eniwa masu, masu ehicharuwaka  
Eneeriwa masu, achu yaawo eneeriwa masu, masu  
eneeriwa masu  
IUB Mweela Maahi, 27/10/02
- 14**  
Namuku, namuku, namuku, Yeesu  
Onapenusha ireca namuku Yeesu.  
Koovira (oleshe), kiphula (oleshe), kipiya (oleshe)  
Kimwaveryaka namuku.  
IUB Mweela Maahi, 27/10/02  
IUB Licungo, 4/5/03
- 15**  
Yoona aalalerya oNinive  
IUB Serra, 1/12/02
- 16**  
Mahiku yaala a mutano  
Nivilele. Saweha sinnatepa.  
IEC Moneia, 29/12/02

<sup>266</sup>Throughout these songs a refrain is indented.

- 17**  
Asitiithi/Asimai/Juventute, pakani epoonti  
Mweera, mwakhwa mulapuweno  
Ovinya vathi ophiyerya osulu  
Epoonti, enakhweleya epoonti yoolipa  
Yoophiyano msulu  
Pakani epoonti  
Epoonti ti Yeesu.  
IEC Moneia, 18/01/03; 3/3/02  
IEC Namihali 14/4/02
- 18**  
Elukuluku ela ti ya oveleela/ovekela/wiipela  
Vathi wa mahiye hawivo oveleela/ovekela/wiipela.  
IUB Serra, 26/1/03  
IUB CQ at Licungo 28/10/01  
IEC Moneia 31/3/02
- 19**  
Nsivelane, nsivelane  
Yeesu onnaloca nsivelane.  
IUB Serra, 26/1/03
- 20**  
Noomala olaleerya,  
Pwiya munreelihe  
IUB Serra, 26/1/03; 9/6/02
- 21**  
Akiristu, nimuchare Yeesu  
Yerusalemu oleelo  
Nakhaleke vamoha ni Apwiya Yeesu  
Niipaka Hosana, Aleluya chiri  
Nipuro na Aparahaamu, na Isaaki, na Apwiya  
Ti nooreera  
Hankoni, nakhalewo  
Apwiya annichana achu oothene  
Yaawo oororomela Apwiya Yeesu.  
IUB Serra, 26/1/03
- 22**  
Okisivela, Pwiya,  
Malamulo anyu, Pwiya  
IUB Serra, 26/1/03
- 23**  
Mavanshelisti aamwalamwala  
Veeru wa weehiwa  
Vohikhala nyu Pwiya  
Pwiya mukhale ni mi.  
IUB Serra, 26/1/03
- 24**  
Mi koosuwela wirimu wookhalawo okumi  
IUB Licungo, 2.2.03
- 25**  
Mahiku enamala  
Eyaakha ennavira  
Apwiya, reelihaani muteko anyu oleelo.  
IUB Licungo, 2/2/03
- 26**  
Nimuthamale Yeesu Kiristu  
Mvulushaahu, pwiya owo  
Apwiyaahu Yeesu Kiristu yoowo toosivela hi  
Nimucicimihekeru mahiku oothene awo  
IUB Licungo, 2/2/03
- 27**  
Achu oothene  
Nimukokhoreleke  
Nimvekeleke  
Nimlaleeyeke  
Weera arwaaka, anikushe hi.  
IEC Moneia, 23/2/03
- 28**  
Opacerya mu Genesesi  
Ophiyerya Yawuupulula  
Woorempwavo: Pwiya mukhale ni mi
- 29**  
Mahiku yaala nrromelo nahu noonichawa  
Osivela wene womala  
Elapo yoohivekela  
Elapo yeela ennamala  
Hankoni oothene nlipele ovekela
- 30**  
Mwakookihe oohuwela, oocecheya  
Mwakookihe yaawo.
- 31**  
Nimuroromele/nimucicimihe Yeesu Kiristu  
Nsina nawe noopwaha  
Charuwani anna,  
Muhiyeke soocheka seelapo ya vathi  
Nakhale aweela cwee
- 32**  
Nikotemo, oyariwa wiili ti opatisiwa mu nsina  
Na Atiithi, nna Mwaana, nna Munepa  
IUB Serra, 16/3/03
- 33**  
Pwiya Yeesu onoorwa, onoorwa mootutusha  
IUB Serra, 16/3/03
- 34**  
Murwe weno,  
Yeesu owiichuuwiheeni  
"Katundu" okilimela  
IUB Serra, 16/3/03
- 35**  
Muluku oompaka muchu ni sheeni?  
Echaya  
Aamverela miwiya sawe  
Nave muchu aakhala mukumi  
IUB Serra, 16/3/03
- 36**  
Okhwa, okhwa hawinono ewoora  
Okhwa, okhwa hawinono nihiku  
Muupuweleleke, okhwa hoonsuwaneyya  
Asitiithi/asimai/juventute  
Yoonanara mulokohe olelo  
Asitokwene ari vaava  
IUB Serra, 16/3/03
- 37**  
Paapa/etc  
Khalani amvai  
Vathi wooshavo  
IUB Serra, 23/3/03

- 38**  
Aawara soowara saweela cwee  
Anii arwe muneekuni  
IUB Serra, 23/3/03
- 39**  
Yeesu aakhala mahiku makhumi mashеше  
mutakhwani  
Kusha ephawu  
Hiyo aKiristu nlipihe  
Saweeha seiya soo Saatana owo  
IUB Serra, 23/3/03
- 40**  
Namuku owo munamwicheanyu  
Mucuwala Muluku a ikuru  
IUB Serra, 23/3/03
- 41**  
Mulavilavi, Saataana  
Omukusha mwanawe, omvonyerya mmoroni  
Saataana moomwaserya epuro  
IUB Serra, 23/3/03
- 42**  
Mahiku ookuchula waapa, munyemu, wootha  
Sinyothukumana okeresha  
IUB Serra, 23/3/03
- 43**  
Munchuna omoona Yeesu  
Niinaneleke  
Nchareke malamulo  
Neerekeno malamulo  
IEC Moneia, 6/4/03
- 44**  
Mweelapo elapo ya vathi, munipharele  
Osivela omalamo mweelapo ela  
Ikharari soomalamo mweelapo ela  
IEC Moneia, 6/4/03
- 45**  
Yoona, Yoona, Yoona  
Yeeca vakhani ayaaka olaleerya oNineevi  
IUB Serra, 9/6/02
- 46**  
Mahiku yaala, mahiku a mutano  
Elapo ya vathi va  
Chiri yootithimana  
Chiri nihakalale  
Aleluya nimwiipele Apwiya  
Roromelani Apwiya  
IUB Serra, 9/6/02
- 47**  
Khalani, anna, nyu oovekela  
Chiri yoophiya elukuluku  
Ya orwa wawe, chiri, Apwiya ahu  
IUB Serra, 9/6/02
- 48**  
Okumi kooveleela,  
Kikhwe mwa Apwiya  
Apwiya Yeesu ahiiveleela  
Ekhwa mwa hiyo  
IEC Moneia, 7/7/02
- 49**  
Yooveleela yavakhani mureelihe, Apwiya  
Pooti okhala ya kinyentu, mureelihe, Apwiya  
IUB Serra, 9/6/02
- 50**  
Alipa muhakhu/Alipa mavuwo/Alipa mirece  
Enarwa ethananiheya  
Yoonaka mirece saya ethatuwaka ncupi  
Apwiya munimorele ikharari  
Ni saweera sahu  
IUB Serra, 9/6/02
- 51**  
Ee, oovinya Laasaru ommahiyeni  
IUB Serra, 9/6/02
- 52**  
Mahiku ookuchula onarwa okhalavo wunla  
Maloko ni maloko, Yeesu onawichana  
Munnawehani wirimu watithi?  
Mwaana a muchu oophiya.  
IUB Serra, 9/6/02
- 53**  
Asitiithi nyu  
Mwahilipa murima  
Munarwa mukhala si ntoko akhaka.  
Ntakhara khaka taachu awo  
Oonanara murima  
IEC Moneia, 5/5/02
- 54**  
Asitiithi/asimai/amiravo  
Okumi ti wooreera  
Okumi anyu munaveleela oSaatana  
Taneccano  
IEC Moneia, 5/5/02
- 55**  
Miyo oleelo, kinamuchuna ephiro ya Muluku  
Apwiya mukirwenle,  
Ka mwaana awinyu.  
IEC Moneia, 5/5/02
- 56**  
Weyo munnaka  
Onnachara seelapo  
Onniisoona  
—wiisooneela yoocheka  
Yeesu onakooka vathi va  
Wi aakushe oororomela  
Oyeno osulu  
IUB Serra, 28/4/02
- 57**  
Onawurya otheka haneeceliwe  
IEC Namarroi, 17/3/02
- 58**  
Okhwa mi nkinoova  
—Ole onnoova okhwa  
Kinnoova soocheka  
IEC Namarroi, 17/3/02
- 59**  
Hulani maru akhwaaka,  
Nleeliwe  
IEC Namarroi, 17/3/02
- 60**  
Volowani achu oothene  
IEC Namarroi, 17/3/02

- 61**  
Mulopwana oSansawu  
Yaavinya mamwene mararu  
Eyaaka ohela mukucho wa mulopwana oSansawu  
...?  
Oo, selesteyo  
Enoopa elulu emwiikaraka  
IEC Namarroi, 17/3/02
- 62**  
Sootoma ni Komora yaniina  
Apwiya yamuruma munkelo ampahule Sootoma  
Khuma mu Sootoma, munampahuliwa  
Ompava, koohiya  
IEC Namarroi, 17/3/02
- 63**  
Muluku aampaka Aatamu ni Haava  
Akuha mmacani  
Variyari va emaca waakhala mwiri  
Aamweera mwiri ola muhilye  
Muluku ahiloca mwiri ola ti wooreera  
Anna/Mai/Oothene/Jovem, nchawele mwa Yeesu  
IUB Serra, 10/3/02
- 64**  
Asitithi/Asimai  
Tisheeni nyuwo mweemenlaanyu vamilako?  
Hamuchuna ovolowa mwa empa yaweela cwee?  
Nkha miyo, kohaleela ovolowa mwa empa yaweela  
cwee.  
IEC Moneia, 3/3/02
- 65**  
Noocimula mukwaha  
wawi si yoole oYiikuputu  
IEC Moneia, 3/3/02
- 66**  
Hiyo ninchuna ovolowa muceche waweela owo  
IEC Moneia, 3/3/02
- 67**  
Kacimula, kiyaaka okerasha  
Kinaphwanya emaca  
Ekaakhula  
Muluku aka...  
Ehipa miyo...  
IEC Moneia, 3/3/02
- 68**  
Yoona, vinya olaleerye  
IEC Moneia, 3/3/02
- 69**  
Aneeca ni Yeesu, anooneya  
Anooneyaka oleelo  
IEC Moneia, 3/3/02
- 70**  
Asitithi/Asimai  
Mahiku ookuchula  
Munwarwa mukohiwa, "Cikici toovi?"  
Apwiya tenichana, "Cikici toovi?"  
IUB Serra, 10/2/02
- 71**  
Mwaara a Looti, oSootoma  
Eeca vakhani, eemela  
Eeca vakhani, orukunuwa  
Ntakhara soocheka  
IUB Serra, 10/2/02
- 72**  
Chiri, chiri,  
Wooshavo anna  
Mulokohe soocheka sanyu wa arummwa  
IUB Mihekani, 23/6/02
- 73**  
Nivekele, okhwa honasuwanyeya  
Asimai, IUB Licungo, 28/10/01
- 74**  
Apwiya Yeesu arikimweeca  
Amphwanya muthiyana arikaka maahi  
Weyo mSamaritana, weyo mSamaritana,  
Weyo okivahe maahi  
IUB Serra, 23/12/01 (and often)
- 75**  
Niiyevihe si mwamwaana  
Wi navolowe m'umwene owo  
IUB Serra, 23/12/01
- 76**  
Annaka oothene nivarerye  
Elapo yeela okhala waya  
Enalikana ni Sootoma vamoha  
Ni mahiku a Noowa  
Annaka waaca—mahiku annavira  
Masooso—aatepa elapo ya vathi  
Muhakhu—wootepa elapo ya vathi  
Annaka nivileele, nari noonaka iha  
Nnarwa ninla—Ahi, ahi, ahi  
Juventute, juvenile—Ahi, ahi, ahi  
Asitiithi ni Asimai—Ahi, ahi, ahi  
Mahiku yaale apaapa aNoowa  
Analoca: annaka hankooni  
Nipacerye ompacha mwaceya  
Nnarwa ninla ni oneela, ahe  
Mahiku yaale apaapa aLooti  
Elocaka yeera ethale saari  
Seeparipari seereyaka vamwiilini  
Ni ovarela, ahe  
IUB CQ(jovens B), 21/6/98
- 77**  
Yerusalemu, Yerusalemu, Yerusalemu  
Muceche waweela owo  
Hankooni annaka oYerusalemu, Yerusalemu,  
Yerusalemu  
Muceche waweela owo  
Namoone Yeesu, Yeesu, Yeesu  
OYerusalemu, muceche waweela owo  
Namwiipele Yeesu, Yeesu, Yeesu  
OYerusalemu, muceche waweela owo  
IUB CQ(jovens B), 21/6/98
- 78**  
Noowa, Noowa, Noowa  
Aleeliwe ti Muluku  
Ompacheya mwaaceya  
Epula, aai, Epula aai,  
Epula enoorwa eyo ti ya malavi, anna  
Elapo ela enyomiriwa  
Epula to maahi erupa  
Maahi, maahi, maahi, maahi awo  
IUB Walaka, Pebane, 25/11/00



79

Muluku aamuruma Noowa:  
Ompache mwaaceya  
Epula enorwa ti ya malavi

IUB Mihekani, 22/10/00

80

Annaka oothene nimoove Muluku  
Noowa aarumwa ompacha  
Mwaaceya, aaleela achu oothene  
Mwiilaponi wi empache mwaaceya,  
Epula enoorwa ti yamalavi

Epula eyo yaarupa  
Epula eyo yaarupa  
Noowa onihulele nootholowa,  
Masele aawaliwa, ishaavi sookushiwa  
Ti mwaneene Muluku.

Asitiithi oothene nimoove Muluku  
Looti aari mwiilaponi ya muSootoma  
Waakushe amwaaraa ni anaa oothene  
Okhume mwiilaponi—enampahuliwa

Mooro owo waarupa mwiilapo eyo  
Ya muSootoma ni Komora,  
Yaavarela makalume,  
Looti aakushiwa ti mwaneene Muluku

IUB Nakasaka, Nauela

81

Mahiku tho a khalai Muluku  
Ahaaruma ankelo mwiilapo ele  
Yaweeriwa Sootoma ni Komora wi  
Elapo epahuliwe

Ankelo yaarowa wa Looti  
Emuleela wi elapo enampahuliwa  
Ankelo yaarowa wa Looti  
Emuleela wi elapo enampahuliwa

Achu ale mwiilapo ele yaamweera  
Okhwela waya, owurya ni orapheya,  
Yaatumiha, othela ni otheliwa

Makalume yaamorela muSootoma  
Achu oocheka yinlaka owaye, owaye  
Oororomela yiipaka aleluya, ee, aleluya.

Annaka niireherye Apwiya anamorwa  
Waakusha oororomela, oocheka yinlaka  
Owaye, ekhurihaka miino.

IUB

82

Mahiku a Noowa hiwariwo ikharari  
Muluku aapahula elapweyo vanthowa  
Nawi achu hiyawiiwale masu a Muluku

Annaka akhwaka apaapa Noowa annaloca  
Rukunushani, ennoorwa maahi  
Hiyani ochara sooreera seelapo

Achu ennaloca  
Noowa osavuwu tahi ni mwaceya owo  
Tamusavunle tho annaloca tho

Masu wi ennoorwa tho maahi  
Hankoni niwuryeke otheka owo  
Hankoni nipakeke ipa tho

Mahiku a Looti hiwariwo ikharari  
Muluku aapahula elapweyo vanthowa  
Nawi achu hiyawiiwale Masu a Muluku.

Annaka akhwaka, Looti annaloca onnoorwa  
Moro, hiyani ochara sooreera seelapo  
Achu yannaloca Looti saavuwu kahini

Masu Muluku tamusuwenle/tamusuvunle tho  
Hankoni niwuryeke otheka owo  
Hankoni nipakeke ipa tho

IUB Narre, 10/11/02

83

Mahiku ale akhalai mwelapo ela ya vathi va  
Aakhalavo mulopwana nsina nawe Abrahamo

Abrahamo aamveleela mwanawe  
Ephepa ya Muluku, Abrahamo

Isaaki ahaakoha atithinya yowo ariki  
Ipucepuche eri woowi Abrahamo

Muluku onneiyee nrromelo na Abrahamo  
Aamvaha epucepuche Abrahamo

IUB Narre, 10/11/02

84

Nikotemo aari muchu mutokwene  
Oovuwa, muru waamula ovinya ochana  
Oya wa Yeesu.

Yeesu aamuleela otumihe muhakhu yoowo  
woothene  
Oryaaweno, wawahe oohawa

Yoowo aavinya ohiyu orowatho wa Yeesu wi  
Amukohe Yeesu oyariwa wiilitho  
Atithinya yaamukoha oyariwa wiili, keere hayi?  
Mmurimani mwa mai miyo kuuluvanle tho?

Oyariwatho wiili Yeesu ashipenleiyee ti ocharuwa ni  
opatisiwa

D.A.M.<sup>267</sup>

85

Pwiya kaakheleni  
Pwiya kaakheleni  
Pwiya kaakheleni  
Koorimela oleelo va

D.A.M.

86

Nimuthamale Muluku ahu  
Va mahiku onanlevelela

D.A.M.

<sup>267</sup>Songs with the indication: D.A.M. are from the handwritten notebook of Domingos Alexandre Matupa of the Serra church of the Igreja União Baptista, Gurucé, who graciously made it available to copy, June 2003.

<b>87</b> Noothukumana nihiku naleelo Weerela namoona sa siminariyu		<b>93</b> Mahiku yaala okumi aka kini keecaka Kinamuwa iri soocheka	
	Aleluya, amem, nimuthamale Apwiya		Nivileele anna ni saweeha
Nimuthamale Muluku ahu onivaha muteko wa siminariyu		Namurunku aphyiaka kinuupuwela iplano saka Munnaka ojuventute onamukivila	
Muluku chiri mwamalavi Mwavekiwa munnavaha Monivaha siminariyu Nipuronla noo Nakwakwe.	D.A.M.	Mwammiravo owanneshale, koomoona ophiya oMaputo Namiyo, kinmuhiya masu Kaphiye oMalawi, karwaka ajuventute enakitikhina	
<b>88</b> Muluku, okumi wohimala Nimvahe nicicimiho	D.A.M.	Amiravo, munnaraparu, mmukusha perfume, mwiihela Mvarerye okumi anyu Onamuchariwa, onchariwa ti ekwilihi Guarda costa onlaleya muhakani muchaale khalai Suulelo vaava okumi anyu onamukushiwa.	D.A.M.
<b>89</b> Wiriyanaani annaka nyuwo, Wirimu iriwo iphiro piili		<b>94</b> Kinneemererya Yeesu ti pwiya Aai, kinnema ee, Kinamweemeryerya Muluku atiithi optunshe erimu ni elapo ya vathi.	D.A.M.
Ekina enaya wa Apwiya Ekina enaya omooroni Thanla yaawo, thanla yaawo, thanla yaawo			
Wirimu iriwo miphiro piili. Asitiithi/Asimai/Juventute thanlani yawinyu, Wirimu iriwo iphiro piili.	D.A.M.	<b>95</b> Anna oothene khalani oosuwela Orwa wa pwiya chiri onnacamela Orwa wakusha yaawo oororomela Ni wathoriha alipa yaawo oocheka	
<b>90</b> Yooviha ekhoco ya musaserya Anna niwaraletso	D.A.M.	Khwoo, Pwiya, ... ole, kiphareleni ...	
<b>91</b> Hiyo Apwiya, noorwa oleelo ohiya soocheka Vamiithoni vanyu Niiweni Pwiya oveka wahutho, nikhaviheryeni.		Nihiku nenlo anna noothoriha, muchu a mwiiili, havo onasuwela hankoni anna, niirehererye okumi ahu ohakuvale ophiya wa mwaana a muchu	D.A.M.
Niiweni Pwiya, wichana wahu, hiyo aninyu elapo yeela, Saataana ootepa onaniwoka hi, rwani munivulushe hi.		<b>96</b> Inaani saka sinalimela ntoko ehava yoonana	D.A.M.
Apwiya rwani munikushe hi neere nakhwatho Nivinye ni nyuwo vamoha ni angelo Wirimu wiwotho niipaka Hosana	D.A.M.	<b>97</b> Juventute, hankoni nlipisherye ovekela Saataana onikhuparela	D.A.M.
<b>92</b> Apwiya Yeesu yakookaka ni ncicimiho Noorwela wirimu orwa wakusha oororomela Ni miteko saya soophwanelela		<b>98</b> Mahiku yaale akapuro a Isarayeli yaanahaawa Otesha ecurwa ya moro Oteka ipa mu Yikuputu	
Nkavareryani, elapo yeela okhala waya Nkalokohani soocheka sanyu, Apwiya Yeesu enakhurumuwela.		Sa ikharari, sa ikharari, sa ikharari a Isarayeli. Yaanahaawa, yaanahaawa, yaanahaawa makholo ahu. Yaanahaawa, yaanahaawa, yaanahaawa makholo ahu.	
Nyuwo amajovem mwaweiwa ni miteko Seelapo yavathi, Kiristu hammoona Nkalokohani soocheka sanyu Apwiya Yeesu enakhurumuwela	D.A.M.	Yaapacerya tho wikhupanyerya, Nalye esheeni mutakhwanimmo?	D.A.M.

<p><b>99</b> Okhwa waka antoko kivave, Kivave sintoko Eliya Eliya arin`vava anakhala ni ankeelo Eliya anakhala ni ankeelo.</p>	D.A.M.	<p>Hinasuwela wi narwa nikhala nihiku nalelo Chiryene anna ohakalala olelo.</p>
<p><b>100</b> Ka Yohani mpatise: onamoowa vaculi vaka Mvulusha a oothene Onamoowa mvulusha nsina nawe Yeesu.</p>	D.A.M.	<p>Nyuwo Apwiya muri wirimu Apwiya munivahe munepa anyu, Okhale ni hiyo chiryene.</p>
<p><b>101</b> Ti okumi, ti okumi, ti okumi, Yeesu owo tokumi wohimala Kiipe aleluya, kiipe aleluya Yeesu owo ti okumi.</p>	D.A.M.	<p>Yahikhala anna yaala yarino oweherya Evisita nihiku nalelo Nihakalale nikhale otheya, rya, rya, rya</p>
<p><b>102</b> Muluku aamuruma Moose OYiikuputu nkahawe: waleele amwene Farawo weere Muluku tokirume elapo ela wakuhe anamwane a Isarayeli.</p>	D.A.M.	<p><b>106</b> Mmahiku ale akhalai mweelapo ya vathiva Aakhalavo mulopwana Aparahamu, Aparahamu</p>
<p>Wakushe achu oYiikuputu Oroweno vamukwahani oya oKaanani</p>		<p>Aparahamu, Aparahamu aamveleela mwanawe wa ephepa ya Muluku Aparahamu</p>
<p>Farawo wawiiwa Moose ohaakusha achu awopa ekhoco waacimakela Moose aamana maahi achu elapuwa Achu ale a Farawo yaatholowa</p>		<p>Nave Isaaki aahakoha atiithinya awo Epucepuche eri woowi, Aparahamu, Aparahamu?</p>
<p>Aisarayeli yaalapunwaaya emake ele Yaahipa ncipo noohakalala, Eriki Aleluya Muluku ahu Olelo va hi noovuluwa</p>	D.A.M.	<p>Muluku vomoona Aparahamu, Nroromelo nawe, aahivaha epucepuche Aparahamu, Aparahamu</p>
<p><b>103</b> Apaapa, muchaweni Saataana, Onamwiipurula</p>	D.A.M.	<p><b>107</b> Asitithi/Asimai/Juventute, mwacheka, muhere "koochekaru" Mumvekeke Muluku okhurumuweleeni</p>
<p><b>104</b> Naphara-phara miteko elapo ela Nuupuwele weera Apwiya anichana, eniwa, Annaka mwakuveke, ala ti mahiku ookuchula</p>		<p>Rwani, rwani, rwani Yeesu apwiyaka Rwani mukhale ni hi.</p>
<p>Oo Apwiya, oo Apwiya Cikici nkinono, okimora</p>		<p><b>108</b> Akiristu oleelo va hankoni Oothene nimuchare Kristu owo Ni omuroromela weera Naphwanye okumi wohimala owo Wirimu watiithi. Yerusalemu, Yerusalemu chiri oreera owo nakhale vamoha ni Pwiya Yeesu, niipaka aleluya hosana, Chiri hosana aleluya</p>
<p>Vaavaanto Apwiya enoopacerya wunla Weyo mwanaka veelapona weerani miteko sawo Hiri ni miyo, iri ni mulipa oothoriha.</p>	D.A.M.	<p>Nipuro na Aparahamu ti noorera Nipuro na Isaaki ti nooreera Nipuro na Apwiya ti nooreera Hankoni nakhalewo</p>
<p><b>105</b> Nyuwo anna, olelo va Annaka oothene nihakalale Nihiku nalelo chiryene Nimuthamale Muluku a wirimu Ni omwiipela alelua, hosana</p>		<p>Apwiya annichana achu oothene yaawo anaroromela wa Pwiya Yeesu weera yamwiipeleke Hosana chiri wirimu watithi.</p>
<p>Olelo vava ohakalala ninrahuno ti wa sheeni, anna Ohakalala nrahuno noophiya nihiku na visita</p>		<p><b>109</b> Apwiya eyaka oYerusalemu Achu oothene yaahakalala Yaakusha miwaro yatelela Mphironi yiipaka hosana, hosana</p>
		<p>Hosana, hosana, wa mwaana Tavite Ooreela onoorwa wa pwiya</p>

Nimuthamale Muluku atiithi  
Vophiyerya olelo va  
Nihakalale achu oothene niipaka hosana, hosana

Olelo anna nohaakhela masu  
Achu oothene nihakalale  
Nreherye mirima sahu nihiku nookhwa navulushiwe  
D.A.M.

**110**  
Nave waari wacamela o Petefashe  
OPetaaniya, va mwaakoni Asitona  
Aaharuma oohuserya eeli

Aleluya, oovolowa olelo Yeesu  
mmucecheni wochuwiwa Yerusalemu

Haweni wichokoni ori voluluwana ni nyu,  
Mummo mvolowilemo  
munamphwanya mwaana a puru

Nave muchu okohani munamutaphulelani,  
Munarwa mulocha wii  
Apwiya omurama

Omakiwatho vaa havo muchu awenlevoru  
Mutaphuleni yoowo  
Mukusheni wa miyo.

Mwaalakhanye mekhinyu sa Luuka  
19 e verso 29  
ovolowa wa Yeesu.

D.A.M.

**111**  
Hosana wa mwaana Tavite  
Oreelihiwa ti yoowo onoorwa mu nsina na Pwiya  
Hosana, wirimirimu

D.A.M.

**112**  
Vakhiviro va mwikimanyo  
Apwiya aakhwavo  
Orivo ikharari, Mariya ananla  
Orivo ikharari, Mariya ananla vomoona

D.A.M.

**113**  
Olelo vava achu oothene nookhalano wunla  
vanthowa na Pwiya yoowo olelo othomeiwa

Mariya Mariya ananla, aYuuta yaamutheya  
Elisapete ananla, aYuuta yaahakalala

Wuma murima wa Yuuta  
Yaamwiipha Apwiya

Wunla wahu nihiku nalelo  
Nnamunlela Apwiya.

D.A.M.

**114**  
Mwipiiphini kaaheecamo, kiicanaka omwalela  
Vano olelo kinnichana, Muluku mukakhele

Koothanana mwipiiphini, vohikhala  
omwalela  
Vano olelo kinnichana Muluku, mukakhele

Waari oyariwa wiili, woosuwela ikharari,  
Mwaana olelo okookele weceke mumwaleela.

Warivo ohakalala, voosuwela ikharari,  
Mwaana olelo okookela, oneecha mumwaleela.  
D.A.M.

**115**  
Nkarerya ni Yeesu ni mi  
mweelapo ela yavathi  
Vathi va, vathi va woopihavo,  
miyo mekha nkiwerya weeca.

Saweeha sootepa elapo ela yavathi  
Mawowo achu oorukurerya elapo ela  
Akina aniiseera anene a masu ala  
Ehuwelihaka muloko anyu Apwiya.

Saweeha soothene mwaloncaanyu nyuwo Apwiya  
Soomala ovira elapo ela  
Akiristu amala, khovelela masu ala  
Achu ala soorwa wanyu Yeesu

Nkarwani Apwiya nyu Yeesu, munep'owo  
Musembiheke wamusaserya ola  
Nakhole anyu owo  
Ti mwala woovitheya wophwanela ochawelamo

D.A.M.

**116**  
Pwiya Yeesu onichana ni ikuru sawe  
Weera niphareke muteko wa Muluku  
Aheera chawani muteko woonanara

D.A.M.

**117**  
Nimuthamale Muluku atiithi chiri  
Onikhavihenre nipuro ninla  
Noonannahu nanna yaawo nahiyannahu mahiku  
avirale

Muluku chiri yoowo oheerano mareeliho awe  
Chiri noonannahu ni anna yaawo  
nahiyannahu mahiku avirale

Munnoona Apwiya nohaawa chiri vopwaha hiiho  
Yaawo ti yaawo mwalocaanyu Apwiya  
Mwalakhanye Marko kapitulu 13, 1 verso

Munnoona Apwiya mahiku yaala ari awoopiha  
Mwahikhala nyuwo, Apwiya mohikhala nyuwo  
onivaha ikuru sitokotoko

D.A.M.

**118**  
Maloko a vathi vava enarwa ethorihiwa  
Nihiku nenlo noorwa wawe,  
Mwene Pwiya mvulusha wakusha chiri achu awe  
Yaawo ororomela wera yakhele okumi chiri

Vavaa nnarwa noona yooshosa etokotoko  
Yeeyo enii yalake achu oohileleya  
Wunlasha ni okhuriha miino ni okhuwelasha  
Pwiya kivulusheeni miyo.

Enarwa ekhala epiiphi elapo yoothene ela,  
Nave nnarwa noona neeku ntokotoko,  
Arivo mwaana a muchu,  
yoowo onathoriha maloko yaawo oothene chiri

Oororomela yaawo arino nccimiho  
Osivela waphaama, okhaviherya chiri, oleva,  
ikharari,  
aweerano-tho masu enarwa evulushiwa chiri

D.A.M.

**119**

Anna oothene suwelani  
Pwiya Yeesu onamorwa vahilekenle, mootutusha  
Nikhale anna oomuweherya

Achu oothene nihakalale  
Nipuro nenla noo Seera ninaveka munepaanyu

Asitiithi ni nyuwo amai mwivarerye mokumi  
mwanyu  
Mulokohe soocheka sanyu,  
Weera mwakha mwavulushiwe

Ninnovekaani Pwiya awirimu  
Munihoolele hiyo aninyu  
nipuro nenla noo Seera ninnovekani munepaanyu.

D.A.M.

**120**

Koo Koo  
Yaanamana nsele,  
Nihulele Noowa  
Nootholowa.

D.A.M.

**121**

Wawawawa  
Ekahi eri yoosareya nikhami na Yeesu  
Yoowo onarapa nikhami nlo oriha soocheka

Oriha soocheka yoowo onarapa nikhami nlo  
Oriha soocheka

Wirimu wi naphiyewo, nikhami na Yeesu  
Yoowo onarapa nikhami nlo oriha soocheka

D.A.M.

**122**

Annaka nyu Noowa aarumwa  
Ompacha mwaaceya ee, ee  
Epula enarwa erupa mahiku  
Makhumi mashesheshe

Koo, koo  
Vamoha ni anamwane aya  
Vamoha neemusi oothene

Annaka nyu, Looti aarumwa  
Owaakhela aleco, ee, ee  
elapo enarwa esya mahiku  
makhumi mashesheshe

D.A.M.

**123**

Tiithi/Mai/Anna hiyani soonanara mwilapo yeela ya  
vathi  
wirimu onnorwa walaka achu ohilaleya, ee, anna

Kaari muKiristu katekumeni ni ovinte a  
Pwiya  
Mahiku oothene kaaphara muteko anyu,  
kihuleleeni Apwiya

Apwiya enarwa eloca, kaari mukariposo, awiiceliwa,  
himwakicince  
Navetho muleco ni etala, himwakaakhenle

Nikhiku noothoriha ninnorwa  
Othorihiwa muchu mmoha ni mmoha ni miteko awe  
seelapo ela.

D.A.M.

**124**

Afarise, afarise.  
Yaamukohilaaya omwene owo onii orwe liini,  
Aawakhula omwene owo onii orwe mootutusha

Omwene wa Muluku oni orwe liini  
Onii orwe mootutusha

Nave aahi wa ohuserya awe  
Enarwa ephiya elukuluku muneeranyu  
Mukhaleno ni minkhela yoomoona Yeesu

Nave aahi hankoni olelo nuupuwele mahiku a  
Noowa

Achu yaamolya ni owurya ni othela ni otheliwa

D.A.M.

**125**

Nookhalano otheya ni ohakalala  
Nowaakhela arummwa ahu yaala  
Muluku atiithi munreelihe oothene

Muluku atiithi munreelihe oothene nipuro nla noo  
Seera

Muluku atiithi mukurushe munepaanyu,  
Osareye veeri vanna yaala  
Ehicecheye ni miteko ayene

Aleluya seentro Nakhwakwe  
Aleluya Gurue, Aleluya Seera

D.A.M.

**126**

Nimuthamale, ii, Muluku atiithi, ii  
Onihoolenle, ii, ophiherya olelo, ii

Atiithi ni amai, mwiriyane, ii  
Nchuna wiiwanana, ii, olopolana, ii  
Meeceelo aphaama, ii, amwaKiristu, ii, amwApwiya,  
ii

Hiyano a mutano, ii, nootepa otakhaliwa, ii  
Yaalaleeriwaka, ii, masu a Muluku, ii, ohiroromela,  
ii

Enakhala minikwa, ii, antoko Tomasi, ii, Tomasi  
Sawawe, ii, soovira, ii, nihanle ti hiyano, ii,  
amutano, ii

Arummwa yaale, ii, akhalai, ii, yaakhala ni ekari, ii,  
Minikwa soothene, ii, yaryayano, ii, soocheka  
soothene, ii, yarayayano, ii  
Apwiya Yeesu, ii, evekelela, ii, ereeliha, ii, evinyaka  
erowa, ii.

D.A.M.

**127**

Hananiya akhwile muhakhu vanthowa na wootha

D.A.M.

**128**

Annaka olelova nimuthamale hi  
Apwiya Muluku ahu mahiku othene  
Nuupuwele nsina nanyu chiri nooreera  
Olelo Apwiya, pwiya aka mi

Yeesu ti mwene  
Mwiipeleeni Yeesu owo  
Awirimu iwo onikhwela mwikimanyo  
Onivulusha hi olelo Apwiya, pwiya aka mi

Mureelihe Apwiya eelapo yoothene  
Weeca wahu woothene okhale waweela  
Ophiyerya Apwiya orwa wanyu  
Chiri olelo okhale waweela, pwiya aka mi

Mwareelihe Apwiya mapastore oothene  
Elalerye masu anyu mahiku oothene  
Ophiyerya Apwiya orwa wanyu  
Chiri olelo Apwiya, pwiya aka mi.

D.A.M.

**129**

Elapo yaweeriwa Sootoma ni Komora  
Ikucho saananliwa elapo ene eyo

Mwaara a Looti muSootoma  
eeca vakhani eemela,  
eeca vakhani, arukunuwa

D.A.M.

**130**

Kaari vangelista mwiilapo yavathi

Khwoo, Pwiya kihuleleeni.  
Khwoo, Pwiya kihuleleeni.

Kaari shama viva mwiilapo yavathi

Kaari mortomo mwiilapo yavathi

Kaari juventute mwiilapo yavathi

D.A.M.

**131**

Biblia ari owaani, Sagrada ori owaani.  
Apaapa munrwele, kovaheeni mwenrowano  
Ichu onaloeiye sinkhala itheru sene,  
Onaloeiye sinkhala sawootha.

Onakihaha wikombela, worancura  
Onakihaha wikombela, ophara mapele  
Onakihaha wikombela kawoone ampwanaka  
opooma

Omooroni apaapa, onamwinliwa ikucho  
wawawa.

Moona elapo ecikinyeyaka  
Apaapa ovanya ecimakaka nnasope aya ene  
vanikhucheni,  
Amwali ovanya ecimakaka ni nasope aya ene  
vanipeleni  
Ajovem ovanya ecimakaka emwakenle soona  
vaninoni

Paapa rihani muthala owo  
Wakhula iperere mmmainoni  
Amai muruleni mwana owo onanla, mwimwinye  
nipele  
Anamwa chirene, wiiwanana ori olelo nihiku  
namurunku  
Hiyano ninchuna olakana samuhoolo mahiku  
ookuchula.

D.A.M.

**132**

Asitiithi/Asimai/Juventude rwani wirimu tApwiya  
Yeesu Kiristu enapenusha  
Sawiicela sinakhala samurima

Espitale yawirimu tApwiyahu Yeesu Kiristu  
enapenusha  
Sawiicela sinakhala samurima

D.A.M.

**133**

Otheya wamusaserya ti wamalavi  
Onaloca anamwane, kihawoka anamwane a Muluku  
Kihawoka onii, kinalamula ti mi, onii, kihawoka

Rwani mwiiwe Yeesu onawichanani  
Oni rwani, wirimu wokhalawo nipuro  
Wirimu wokhalawo murecele

Asitiithi oolosowa analoca wii,  
Kowiiwa majovem yiiipaka wi mahiku ene yaala  
kinawokiwa ti musaserya,  
kinamweerano mararuwo, kinamweerano kithuwe.

D.A.M.

**134**

Kinamuthamala, mwene a mamwene,  
Vathiva, Yeesu ti mwene a mamwene.

D.A.M.

**135**

Orwa wa mwana a muchu, mahiku yakhwanela  
Onii okhale chiri mootutusha anii arwe yoowo  
sintoko mpava.

Nireherye achu hiyo, wosha wamalavi  
(muthupi sinanla) mwaana a muchu onorwa

Ineneeryo soothene Apwiya yaaloncaaya  
Sikina sineereya sincipale, ninnoona  
Ohanle sheni tho? Oruma nipenka.

D.A.M.

136

Nihiku nlo onarwa Apwiyahu Yeesu vamoha ni arummwa,  
Onarwa okhalavo wunla otokwenesha wa alipa oocheka

Otheya ori wa yaawo oororomela  
Enarwa yaakhela ikuru soomoonano Apwiya Muluku

Ankelo awirimu enarwa yoopa chiri nipenka onakhuma nsuwa  
nave miteko seelapo yavathi sinarwa simala

24/8/2000  
D.A.M.

137

Nyuwo Muluku atiithi  
Ninovekaani olelo rwani mukhale ni hiyo  
Veeri va conferencia

Oo Muluku atiithi,  
Olelo wipa wahu rwani mukhale ni hiyo  
Veeri va conferencia

Nyuwo asimai oothene ninovekaani  
Olelo weera mucicimihekeke  
Veeri va emusi anyu.

Veeri va asaatokweeme ahu, laleryaani ni murecele  
Weera muloko woothene wororekeeni nyuwo.

D.A.M.

138

Muluku aamurumua Moose, orowe oYikuputu  
Wulume ni mwene Farawo, wakushe alsarayeli

Moose aacimula, wuluma ni mwene Farawo  
Muluku takirumme elapo ela, wakusha anamwane awo.

Vomala wakusha achu Moose oYikuputu,  
Farawo aananariwa, awichana anakhoco awe.

Alopwana anakhoco awo, yaakusha ikavalu saya,  
Orowa omphara Moose, yoowo akunshe alsarayeli

Moose aamana maahi, Aisarayeli yaalapuwa  
Moose aamana maahi, anakhoco yaatholowa.

D.A.M.

139

Weyano munnaka wotakhaliwa  
Onarwa ophara muteko siyo  
Weere shishe, wuupuwelele, watitelela ohala.

Hi, hi. Othanana waninkelo  
Hiyo othananelaka weyano munnaka.

Weyano munnaka wotakhaliwa  
Onalocha mooshiphela onyemulaka masu yaala  
Munnaka, onlocaawe Apwiya enaiwa.

Wiliwili onaloca masu yaala eri mutempwano  
Eninka eri yoophiyawo wirimu wene,  
Munnaka, onlocaawe Apwiya enaiwa.

D.A.M.

140

Atiithi ni amai tisheeni enohihani ororomela Biblia  
Mwaalakhanyaka mahiku oothene

Elukuluku ennacamela, vilelani

Mwaaca minikwa munarwa mvonnyiya muniya ya  
moro

Oororomela emwipelaka aleluya amem, wirimu iwo.  
D.A.M.

141

Paapa oyere motepano  
Anapapa omwene wawirimu moyeleela

Nosha kinaya okeresha, preparação ohiyu  
Mabansula sikarete  
Saataana momwinya katera.

Mai oyere motepa nyuwo  
Amai omwene wawirimu moyeleela

Jovem oyere mootepano nyuwo  
Ajovem omwene wawirimu mooyeleela

D.A.M.

142

Anna oothene munarowanyu mvelele mooni wachu  
oothene oororomela

enarwa ekhala vamoha ni Apwiya Yeesu,  
achu oocheka enarwa yinla chiri omooroni.

Woshishelo othana oshekuwa  
Eriyari mithupi siipaka oyaka nusha onarwa ee  
Mootutusha enarwa tisheni onnorwa Yeesu owo  
wavulusha ee, oororomela

Anna enorwa tisheeni? Onorwa Yeesu  
Nasope, nasope waluma ee oohiroromela

D.A.M.

143

Kincicimiha Apwiya wirimu  
Mi kinchuna Hosana mumwene

Aleluya [5x] Mama [5x]  
Mi kinchuna wi Hosana mumwene.

Apwiya rwani muhule ephiro  
Mi kinchuna wi Hosana mumwene.

D.A.M.

144

Nhipacentre owipa akoro,  
Hiyo ninnaveka munepa waweela

Kileeleeni paapa/mai/jovem oriwo Apwiya, ee,  
Rwani, rwani, nawoone Apwiya

D.A.M.

145

Aatamu ni Eva waweema nsu nanowa  
Muluku aananariwa, awikara mwemaca

Paapa, annaka, nivekeleke mai nivekeleke  
Jovem annaka, nivekeleke, soocheka sootepa

Evinyaka vomunyemula Yehova Muluku  
Achu yaapacerya owana mukina ni mukhwawe,  
ophiyerya wiphana

Yoonanara yahinnuwa, mweelapo ya vathi,  
Yaavolowa mmurimani mwachu oothene awo.

Aleluya Muluku nyu, Aleluya Yeesu  
Aleluya Munepa, ninnoveka ni nyu, mukhale ni  
hiyo.

D.A.M.

**146**

Olelo annaka nimuthamale Muluku  
onihalenle hi nihiku-sha nenla  
onipisha chiri nihiku nalelo.  
Nimuthamale Muluku mahiku oothene,  
nimmuthamale yoowo oonivaha okumi vopaka  
empa ela, ee, ee.

Ninnovekani Apwiya muniholele hi  
nihikusha nenla nikhale naweela, nipurosha nenla  
Ophiyerya owaani nikumane ni anna  
nothamalani nyuwo Apwiya Muluku  
munivahe ikuru soowerya olaleerya mahiku oothene,  
ee, ee.

Munreelihe Apwiya achu oothene hi  
weeca wahu okhale waweelasha chiri  
ophiyerya Apwiya mwarwaka elapo ela  
muniphwanye hiyo nri aweelasha cwee.

D.A.M.

**147**

Ikharari sanyu Apwiya Muluku  
Noothukumana olelo empa ela yaweela,  
Vamoha narummwa a mwa Apwiya oothene  
Reelihaani chiri empa ela chiri

Khuruwani munepa, mureelihe nihiku nla  
Nikhale naweelasha chiri,  
Onivaha ikuru sooteka empa ela.

Ninnaveka ikuru soohimala  
Murecele wa hiyo aninyu,  
A mwa elapo ela ya vathi  
Yawiiwanana masu anyu Apwiya  
Reelihaani empa ela chiri

Vaavaa ninarwa niipa aleluya, hosana,  
Hosana, aleluya wirimu.

D.A.M.

**148**

Hiyani soonanara paapa  
Yeesu onnawichanaani

Ekeresha nihiteke mahaleene  
Yeesu onnawichanaani

D.A.M.

**149**

Ninamuthamala [x3]  
Muluku awirimu vooteka empa ela  
Pwiya mureelihe.

D.A.M.

**150**

Vakhani Apwiya anamorwa  
Ewoora yoophiya  
Nsivelane ophiyerya omala wa empa ela

Achu oothene nsivelane ophiyerya omala wa  
empa ela

Ekoi masooso ni ohaawa  
Ntekaka empa ela ya Muluku  
Ophiyerya omala wa empa ela.

Achu a maloko a vathi va  
Nimuthamale Muluku atiithihu ophiyerya omala wa  
empa ela

D.A.M.

**151**

Hankoni oothene nihakalale  
Nookhala vamoha mu empa ela.

D.A.M.

**152**

Wiriyanani Apwiya nihiku nalelo elapo ya vathi  
yoohakalala,  
Nipuro nla nooSeera noosareya otheya ni ohakalala

Apwiya chiri nihiku nla nalelo  
Nla na murunku reelihaani olelo

Ninnathamala wa Muluku ahu wa Pwiya Yeesu  
Ni munepa owo, wonihoolela, niphya olelo  
Nimwakhela murunku ola.

Anna oothene oSeera nimuthamale Muluku ahu  
Oonihoolela niphya olelo

D.A.M.

**153**

Paapa, charuwani sootheseene  
Nipenka narumaka,  
Mwakohiwaka  
Munii mweere sheeni?

D.A.M.

**154**

Kinthanana eniya ya mooro  
Miyu, kawecaka  
Omana mwamanaka

D.A.M.

**155**

Hiyo majovem oSeera  
Ninnathamala Apwiya, munepanyu waweela  
Moweerya onihoolela ophiyerya olelo  
Voophiya nipuro nla naweeriwa oSeera  
Olelo nnamwipela aleluya hosana

Munnaka wiinaneleke we, masu a Yehova ari  
ovileene  
Apwiya Muluku munihoolele oothene vochikela  
oculi

Nuupuwele masu anyu nihiku munarwaanyu  
Noothamaleeni Apwiya



Munnaka kinoolopola wi wakhalano yoocheka  
Olokohe warummwa, olociwe mwilapo ya vathi  
Apwiya Yeesu yarwaaka namwipele aleluya aleluya,  
hosana.

D.A.M.

**156**

Chika chiri weyo oohuwela  
Yeesu Apwiya aayeha nikhami woveelelela weyo

Oo Apwiya nimuthamale aleluya  
Yoowo aakhwa nimuthamale aleluya  
Hiyo oothene nimuthamale aleluya

Anchuna yamahala eyo wa weyo ni miyo,  
Wi nakhele okumi Yeesu oovaha

Anavahiwa taachu yaawo enaroromela eneerano  
Oloca Yeesu tApwiya.

D.A.M.

**157**

Pwiya miyo kinnanla mahiku yaala  
Omwene waka ola onamaleya, keere sheeni?

Hankoni, elapo eyo yahihano  
Erehereryiwe tApwiyahu Yeesu Kiristu  
Yaawo wi aKiristu ekhalemo.

Elapo ya vathi enamalaya  
Okumi aka ola onamalaya, keere sheeni?

Pwiya mukipharele ni ntata nanyu  
Vohikhala nyuwo Apwiya okikhaviherya,  
koorimela.

D.A.M.

**158**

Oo, aleluya,  
Laleryani paapa/mai/jovem

D.A.M.

**159**

Thamalen, Yeesu, mwaana a Muluku, thamaleni

D.A.M.

**160**

Mahiku ookuchula anna, nnarwa noona ineneeryo sa  
miloko-miloko  
Sinii sirimelihe okumi ahu

Anna, yoocheka etokwene nari ekhaani, tevi,  
anna

Nihiphienre nihiku nekuchula  
AKiristu oothene enya wanamuku  
Kitusheeni mi, mukipophe nlu mi me  
Mukinwihe ekhulu  
Yeesu arwaaka, hiyo hanimoonaya

Amiravo yaala mwavareryeeni weeca waya  
Yaphiya mukeresha enamwivaverya  
Murimaya woothene onkhala wathiyana, ai

Asimwali mwavereryeeni weeca waya  
Yaphiya mukeresha enamwivaverya  
Murimaya woothene onkhala walopwana, ai

D.A.M.

**161**

Mahiku yaala ahihano yaala aritho awoopiha  
Anna elapo yavathi vaava, anna chiri yoothitimana

Khwoo, aleluya, nimwiipele Apwiya  
Aleluya anna chiri nihakalale

Niirehererye asinnaka oothene weera  
Namwaakhele Apwiya, yoowo hihano onnamoorwa  
anna chiri nihakalale

Roromelani asitiithi oothene, amiravo, asimai,  
asimwali  
wi mwaakhele anna okumi woohimala.

D.A.M.

**162**

Apwiya mukirwele  
Ka mwaana awinyu  
Apwiya ka mwaana awinyu

D.A.M.

**163**

Atiithi, mwaana ni munepa waweela  
Ninnothamalaani vawi monihoolelelela muyakha  
ovirale ophiyerya olelo va  
Ninnothamalaani

Ninnothamalaani mahala mweenraanyu onipisha  
olelo va  
Vahiyo mukhatihu naari ohisuwela weera  
naphiyerya

Eri yoothananiha vahiyo juventute ovolowa  
mmuyaakha  
weeraka nihirunle mirici yoonanara hiiho nrahuno

D.A.M.

**164**

Nihakalale olelo va noomorela muyaakha olelova  
Noomorela muyaakha  
Nimuthamale Muluku.

D.A.M.

**165**

Apwiya Muluku ninnothamalani  
Mowerya onihoolela chiri ophiyerya nihiku nalelo  
Hinarora wi nnaphiyerya

Hankoni oothene nimwipele aleluya  
Apwiya Yeesu aayeha nikhami vanthowa na  
soocheka sahu

Mureelihe chiri Apwiya Muluku  
Nihiku nalelo chiri weera chiri nikhale naweela  
cwee  
Ophiyerya orwa wanyu chiri.

D.A.M.

**166**

Apwiya yaalalerya [2x] ephiro yoovulusha  
Yaawo Apwiya teerinono zitone  
Muthiyana oKanani, aakhuma molohani  
Akhwela Pwiya, mwanaka mpenusheeni

Muthiyana ahiloca  
Mukimorele ikharari  
Mwanaka ori ophariwe ti nsololo

Pwiya hakhunle nari  
Yakhunle toohuserya  
Muleeleeni muthiyana owo aroweke

Apwiya yaahaakhula  
Nkarwenle achu akina  
Karwenle ipucepuche soorimela

Apwiya yaakokhora  
Emvekelela mwana  
Mwanaka onii openushiwe ti Apwiyaaka

D.A.M.

**167**  
Yehova mwakotihe  
Oo Yehova mwakotihe  
Achu yaawo oocecheya  
Achu yaawo oohuwela  
Mwakotihe yaawo

D.A.M.

**168**  
Ephiro eyo yoorekama tiyaphama ocharasha,  
Mirici yaalimela Yeesu'wo tani anrule

Onii okhale murecele, wirimu murecele  
Wanna awo murecele ovuluwa murecele

Nave hiyo nnamunla miithoni  
Elapo ela, Yeesu yoowo onavuta miithori achu  
ootherne

D.A.M.

**169**  
Nivekeleke enampicuwa weera ntholowe  
Erwemo akina

D.A.M.

**170**  
Anna ootherne nimuchareke Yeesu  
Nari muchu arivo atenshe mwikimanyo  
Antoko Simoni ooKurene

Nteshe mwikimanyo, nimuchareke

Hiyo ootherne ninnaromela wi okumi ahu  
Mwapatunshe tho ni miruku, ni ikuru sootherne  
Nyuwo Apwiya mwa mutokotoko

D.A.M.

**171**  
Pwiya Muluku ninnovekani mureelihe evisita  
Kho, kho, hulani nivolowe  
Hiyo noophiya majuventute

D.A.M.

**172**  
Kooheceeca vathi va, weera sookhala sookumi  
Vano koheeca kokomo.  
Koorwa pwiya aka, ookikhaviherya ti nyuwo  
Saataana onamukivanyiha elapo yeela kokoma  
koorwa Pwiya aka  
Mukikhuvele vakhiviru vaka Pwiya aka

D.A.M.

**173**  
Noothukumana achu ootherne mu empa ela ya  
Muluku  
Weerela chiri onamoona wa anna yaala a mwa  
Apwiya

Olelo otheya vookkhala chiri vamoha in anna  
yaala a mwa Apwiya

Ninnovekaani nyuwo Apwiya mwareelihe anna ala  
Orweela chiri olalerya nihiku nalelo

Mureelihe elapo ela ekhale yaweela  
Mwareelihetho anna ala oorwela olalerya

D.A.M.

**174**  
Hiyo nakhala mwa Yehova  
Soonihoocha hinrwa noonatho

D.A.M.

**175**  
Mwaleeliwa paapa/mai, mwaleeliwa, charuwani  
Mahiku ala tookuchula

Akhweya munootha mweere masu nkiiwale  
Akheya munaruna mweere masu nkiiwale

Annaka nihiku nlo hawivovo  
Tatio, ala da mano, ola musuwelaaka  
Kikushe ikhorowa, kamane kunya,  
Sintoko eneereelaaya elapo ela.

Annaka sivanovano nathope atuturunwe mooro  
Ipweto sootherne sunyukunwe makalume  
Desculpa ahirivo, pepari ahirivo  
Ai, ai, noorimela

D.A.M.

**176**  
Nsina na Yeesu nlo, nsina na Yeesu to nooreerasha

D.A.M.

**177**  
Yehova ninnothamalaani  
Epewe eereelaanyu ni hi  
Munooniha sa vathi sootherne  
Munisuweliha sawirimu

Okumi owo woohimala moorehererya  
waachu yaawo ari othanliwa  
Epahu eyo teri yamalaaya ootherne ohileleya  
teri yawaakhelaaya.

Moonsivela hiyo woopwaha  
Mmuruma mwaninyu  
Elapo ela, woopola muloko woothene  
Ayeha nikhami wa hiyo

Ncicimiho nanyu narwaka  
Wakusha aweela murima ootherne,  
Wavaha korowa ookumi  
Okhalano vamoha noomwene anyu.

D.A.M.

**178**  
Noothukumana nipuro nimoha weerela soonamoona  
Sa masu yaala niwiriyaane, nthokororye, weera  
nakhwa, navuluwe  
Nni neere sheeni nariki nakhele okumi wohimala?

Sophwanaphwana sa masu yaala munlakano na  
khalai  
Isekeeli opacherya yawupulula ophiyerya va 9  
Nimvekeke Muluku anreelihe, ee, anreelihe

Weera nakhale niweherya aphaama  
Murumwa Isekeeli elapo yaweeria kaledei  
Atiithinya aweeria Yaboose  
Ahoona samalavi, evilivili ya sapata, vamwihiceni  
va kapara, aalaveya

Moone Isekeeli oothanliwa, ee, oothanliwa  
ahonihwa samalavi, ee, samalavi  
Aawara mukwachala wa nrapala, ee, nrapala  
Avira mutakhwani woophipamo, ee, woophipamo  
Alya mahavo, nasope, ee, alaveya

D.A.M.

179

Muluku nyuwo awirimu  
Khurumuwelaani hiyo oothene  
Munivahe munepaanyu waweela

Apwiya reelihaani evisita ela, ekhale yaweela  
Reelihaani evisita ela olelo

Malakano ahu hiyo oothene mureelihe  
Muluku atiithi wi.ekhume

Nimveke Muluku atiithi  
Areelihe evisita weeca waya woothene okhale  
waweela

D.A.M.

180

Mwivaverye nyuwo paapa, mwivarerere  
ni ruhani soocheka sanyu weera mukhurumuweliwe

Yeesu owo onii rwani oothene nyu  
Ovaheni okumi owo  
Rwani annaka [2x]

Hiyo anna nachekaka niheere noochekaru,  
Naveke apwiyaahu Yeesu weera enikhurumuwele

Ekhoco enoorwa tiyalamavi, nivarerere anna Daniel  
12

Onaloca rwani annaka

D.A.M.

181

Anna hiyo oothene, nihakalale  
Olelo va vophiyerya nihiku nenla nihakalale

Yamwiipela hosana mwaana a Tavite  
Alelua hosana, noohakalala

Olelo ti nihiku yaavolonwe Apwiya Yeesu  
MuYerusalemu, nihakalale

Yaanatala miwaro saya ni ssowara  
Waari chiri ohakalala muYerusalemu

D.A.M.

182

Pwiya Yeesu ayaka oYerusalemu  
Achu oothene yaanipa, yanantaka miwaru  
yanikarakha,  
Yatala soowara saya mphironi.

Yaahiipa hosana anna awo  
Yaaniipa hosana oreelihiwa onarwa mwa  
Apwiya

Ntoko mwa mahiku yaale, muchu yoowo  
Akusha omwene, anamwela mwasaana a Puuru  
Nave achu tho yaanipa, ni witupiiha elokohaka wi  
mwene ahu.

D.A.M.

183

Yeesu owo arowaka elapo yamusulu  
Aahiya masu mwahala mvekeleke  
Vahilekenle kinarwa kookushani

Mwahala mulaleeryeke, mukokhore,  
mvekeleke  
Yeesu owo arwaka anikushe nrowe  
Vamoha osulu wa Atiithihu

Weyo munnaka, murokoraka, wakuvekeke,  
Ocimizeke, Saataana onochuna, onochuna  
Nrowe vamoha omoroni

Hankoni achu oothene nlaleyeke masu  
A Muluku Yeesu arwaaka anikushe  
Nrowe vamoha osulu wa Atiithihu

D.A.M.

184

Apwiya Muluku muri a ikuru  
Moonivaha hiyo evilelelo  
Wooweheryani nyuwo Apwiya Yeesu

Apaapa charuwaani soonanara  
Amai charuwaani soonanara  
Ajovem charuwaani, woosha, woomalavo

Apaapa mahiku aamala muhilokon'he soocheka  
sanyu  
Munarwa muhala oculi paapa

Annaka, mahiku aamala  
Niwara mavaka a Muluku  
Nawane ekhoco ya Saataana, paapa.

D.A.M.

185

Oororomela enarwa emoona Pwiya  
Munekuni enarwa emoona

D.A.M.

186

Nave naphiyenraaya nihiku na Pentekoste suulelo  
Yaathukumana vanipuro nimoha

Chiri oohuserya yaahakhela  
Nihiku nla munepa waweela

Nave chiri mootutusha  
Yahiiweya masu oothene, yatuthuwa, yaatheya  
ryarya

Yaaloca olocela soohiyana hiyana  
Eparte, elami, efrança, eroma, etiopia, elibiya

D.A.M.

187

Nave naphiyenraaya nihiku na Pentekoste suulelo va  
Yaathukumana oohuserya oothene mu empa yeele  
yooKalileya

Nimuthamale Apwiya vophiyerya olelo  
Nohakhela munepa

Nave yahooneya va yaawo makalume antoko mooro  
Nave yaakilathi va yaawo oothene, yaasareya  
Munepa Waweela

Nave yaanaloca malumi makina  
Eparti yaanaloca, elibiya yaanaloca, egipto  
yaanaloca.

D.A.M.

188

Elapo ene yeela aakhalavo mulopwana  
Nsina nawe Elias  
Aalalerya michaka mwiilapo ela yavathi

Amwi alaleryaka achu hiyiwaru  
Anavekela Apwiya kirweleeni mwiilapo ela  
ya vathi

Apwiya yaakurusha nikereta,  
Aahiwela munikeretani  
Ti yoowo onarowa omulacuni

Apwiya yaamukusha emushoviherya omoroni  
Enamooniherya samalavi saari weiwo  
Eliya oophariha miitho oweha omoroni

Waweha amakanya ikhotwa vanlakani  
Ipweto sooreveya Eliya athananaka ahinla  
Pwiya kicikihe mi, kalelo anamwananyu

D.A.M.

189

Nyuwo anna, olelo vava annaka oothene  
Nihakalale nihiku nalelo chiryene  
Nimuthamale Muluku awirimu  
Ni omwiipela aleluya hosana

Olelo vava ohakalala ti nasheeni anna  
Ohakalala nryahunu nophiya nihiku navisita  
Hinnasuwela wi narwa nikhala nihiku nalelo  
Chiryene anna ohakalala olelo

Nyuwo Apwiya muri wirimu  
Apwiya munivahe munepaanyu  
Ekhale ni hiyo chiryene

Yahikhalavao anna yaala yaarino oweherya evisita  
Nihiku nalelo nihakalale  
Nikhale otheya ryaryarya

D.A.M.

190

Anna ancipaleene noosareya ohakalala  
Vokhala vamoha mu empa ela yaweela

Ahiri Yehova amwiicani yakanimiry  
nomaka

Muluku ta ikharari onipisha olelova  
Omwareya ni ohaawa waari veeri va hiyo

Anna ancipaleeni ninnavela ni masoso  
Yoowo muhooleli ahu onanikhapelela

D.A.M.

191

Nihakalale, ophiyerya olelo va anna  
Anna charuwani weera soonanara.

D.A.M.

192

Apwiyahu Yeesu yaawo enamoowa elapo ela  
yavathi  
Wakusha achu oothene yaawo oororomela  
Yakhaleno wirimu

Nimuroromele Pwiya Yeesu onamorwa  
Nimucicimihe nsina nawe noopwaha

Anna ineneeryo hiho saalociwe soothene sineereya  
Charuwani anna wosha woomalavo  
Pwiya Yeesu onamorwa

Charuwani paapa charuwani mai, wosha woomalavo  
Muhihe soocheka seelapo ya vathi weera  
mwavulushiwe

D.A.M.

193

Nkonani annaka, mahiku yaala tawoopiha  
Hankoni nlipisherye ovekela,  
Ophiyerya arunle Yeesu mvulusha

Muluku atiithi iiwani oveka wahu mahiku ala  
ee,  
Munivahe munepa waweela neeekenno  
ophiyerya mahiku oothene

Ineeneeryo soomala, Apwiya Yeesu yaaloncaaya  
Hankoni nlipisherye ovekela  
Ophiyerya arunle Yeesu mvulusha

Apwiya munivahe munepaanyu waweela  
Sawoopiha sootepa elapo ela,  
Apwiya rwani munivulusha oothene hi  
Ophiyerya arunle Yeesu mvulusha

D.A.M.

194

Ninnovekaani nyuwo Apwiya,  
Munikhurumuwele ee, soocheka sahu  
Soocheka soonirica  
Murwe nyu Pwiya

D.A.M.

195

Hiyo anna oSeera noorwa chiri wArshote wenna  
Orweela chiri ochapela sa othela waweela

Asitiithi ni asimai, amiravo ni asimwali oothene  
Rwani moone othelana wa anna yaala yaavilenle

Ninnovekani nyuwo Apwiya mwareelihe chiri  
Anna yaala, othela waya nihiku nalelo okhale othela  
waweela

Vaavaa ninahala wooleelaani mapastore ala  
mwichananyu  
Muharepihevo etheru musuwelaka yawiphini anyu  
D.A.M.

**196**

Rwani moone othela wa anna ala eli  
Enthelana olelo, munsina na Yehova tori othela.  
D.A.M.

**197**

Weeteteya wa murimaka womakiwa ni saweeha  
Nyenya kinnaveka wa nyuwo  
Pwiya, mukhale ni mi.

Apwiya mukhale ni mi, Pwiya  
Vomala elapo ela Pwiya mukhale ni mi.

Nyenya kinnaveka wa nyuwo Pwiya  
Mukivahe munepaanyu waweela owo  
Okhale ni mi, Pwiya mukhale ni mi

Masu anyu anyu analociwa va mirunku soothese  
Achu anyu anamukhoca  
Pwiya mukhale ni mi

Kinoochekelaani nyu, Pwiya, ntakhara saweera saka  
miyo, moosuwela ni moohisuwela  
Apwiya mukikhurumuwele mi  
D.A.M.

**198**

Kookhalano mi oothananasha va osuwela wi  
mwakikhwela  
Oo Apwiyaka kiiwekeeni ni mukikhurumuwele  
D.A.M.

**199**

Kinnovekaani nyuwo Apwiya mukikhaviherye  
mwiilapo ela,  
Amwiicani aka akirukurerya, kihinawerya ophara  
muteko anyu Apwiya

Munepa anyu waweela wakhala ni mi, kinamwerya  
ophara muteko anyu Apwiya  
Ni walapiha amwiicani oothene, nihiku munarwanyu  
mukikushe nyu Apwiya  
D.A.M.

**200**

Vanshelista nyuwo, munihusiheke masu  
owaakhelano Apwiya  
D.A.M.

**201**

Nipaceryaka osuwelana, munepa waweela  
tiwansuwelinhe  
D.A.M.

**202**

Apwiya ninovekaani, mmureelihe siminariyu  
nihiku nla nalelo  
Pwiya mukhale ni hi.  
D.A.M.

**203**

Voopacerya vari masu nave masu yaari wa Muluku,  
Nave masu ti Muluku, ala yaari voopacerya wa  
Muluku.

Oo Apwiya, iwani oveka wahu  
Khwoo, Pwiya, iwani wunla wahu,  
Pwiya munihusihe masu anyu,  
Wi oothene nrromele mwa nyuwo.

Soothene saapatushiwe ti yoowo,  
Nave echu ekina yaapatushiwe,  
Hiyapatushiwe voohikhala mwa yoowo,

Mwa yoowo mwaari okumi,  
Okumi waari omwaleela waachu  
Nave omweleela wahaarya mwipiiphini  
Nave epiiphi hiyasuwenlesha  
Ala muchu ooruma ti Muluku.

Nsina nawe ti Yohane, ola aarwa mwa namoona  
Oorwa weerela namoona soomwaleela  
Wi oothene naaromele mwa yoowo.  
D.A.M.

**204**

Nyuwo mulokohe soocheka vammithoni va atiithihu  
Muluku  
Ninnaveka ikharari, ninnaveka mahala  
Pwiya rwani olelo wi munreelihe

Annaka ewoora ya phama ti yeela  
Mulokohe soocheka sanyu muryanyuno  
Ewoora yaphama ti yeela

Annaka ee, nnarwa ninla hiyo vamiithoni va Muluku  
Annaka olelo ninnoona ineenergyo  
Woosha woomalavo aKiristu, nlipe noovekela  
aKiristu

Apwiya onnamorwa, arwaka, aniphwanye tho nri  
aweela  
AKiristu oothene olelo, nlipe noovekela,  
AKiristu, nasope onamoorwa  
D.A.M.

**205**

Niwiriyane, Sootooma oovarela mooro  
Amai niwiriyane, apaapa niwiriyane  
D.A.M.

**206**

Moorapa maahi aweela orihavo soonanara,  
Maahi murampanyu olelo ti nikhami na Yeesu owo.

Moowurya ekahi eyo ya nlakano na hihano  
Nooheliwa ntakhara a nyuwo orivaho soocheka

Moohamela vamesani wi mweereni yawuupusherya  
Yolya mulyilaanyu olelo ti mwiili wa Yeesu owo

Muhikookele oculi sintoko ekupa eyo  
yaarampe maahi aweela ekookela va nchokwani

Muhikookele oculi sintoko mwanapwa owo aari  
woorapheya yoolya  
Akookela moorapheya awe.

Tiithi, mwaana, ni munepa tho munreelihe  
aleluya, aleluya, aleluya hosana  
D.A.M.

207

Koohona mahiku avirale mulopwana amukunshe  
liivuru  
Alocaka murukunushe murima, omwene wa Muluku  
woohacamela

Taani? Yohane Mpatisi, mpatisi analya mahavo,  
analya nasope, aviraka mutakhwani Yohane ee

Annaloca, rwani koopatiseeni,  
Kinnopatisaani anna oothene ni maahi, ee  
Onapatisa ni munepa ohanle muculi mwaka,  
onnorwa, ee

D.A.M.

208

Hiyo anna oKuruwe noorwa chiri  
Norwa chiri oNyawela wenna orwela tho ohusiha ni  
ohuserya masu a Muluku

Pwiya Yeesu arowaka ahaloca tho ni ohuseryawe  
Husihani patisani oothene nyuwo nunsina naka

OKuruwe oNyawela nyuwo anna oothene patisani,  
Pwiya Yeesu onnakaoka  
Okele oreherya nipuro nlo

D.A.M.

209

Olelo noohakala vowaakhela anna yaala  
Yaarwenle onececela nipuro nla  
NoSeera Apwiya nyu mwareelihe

Mahiku a waaca avirale hiyo hinaweherya okumana  
ni anna ala  
Chiri olelo ohakalala ninnathamala ikuru sanyu

Hiyo tho ninnathamala anna yaala weeca waya  
okhale waweela chiri ophierya  
Orowa waya yoothamaleeni Yehova

D.A.M.

210

Nimuthamale Muluku atiithi akhavihenre anna ala  
olelo  
yaavilenle ophierya olelo anthelana mwaweela  
nihakalale

Muluku atiithi ninnovekani, munepa waweela  
mwakurushele  
anna ala eli esivelaneke yiiwananeke ophierya  
muholo mmo.

D.A.M.

211

Yaari chiri mahiku yaale oorepela oorwela  
Wa mwene Kaisara chiru Augusto

Anna nihakalale achu oothene nipuro na  
vinti-sinku

Yaaphiyerya chiri mahiku ooyara wawe  
Maria aamuyara chiri mwanawe, mwaneene,  
mwamulopwana

Voomuyara chiri mwanawe, yaahorwa alipa miruku  
Oorwela omuthamala mwene owo a mamwene

Anna, ooyariwa munikokani mmoroheyammo,  
Yeesu owo mwaana a Tavite

D.A.M.

212

Anna rwani mwiiwe michaka  
Ooyariwa Mvulusha, ooyariwa  
Anna rwani mwiiwe michaka  
Ooyariwa Mvulusha.

D.A.M.

213

Apwiyaahu Yeesu yaawo anamoorwa elapo ela  
yavathi  
wakusha achu oothene  
yaawo oororomela yakhaleno wirimu.

Nimuroromele Apwiyaahu Yeesu Kiristu  
Weera chiri nakhale aweela cwee  
Nimucimihe nsina nawe noopwaha

Anna ineneeryo hiiho saalociwe soothene sineererya  
Charuwani anna, woosha woomalavo,  
Pwiya Yeesu onamoorwa.

Charuwani paapa, charuwani mai  
Woosha woomalavo  
Muhiye soocheka seelapo yavathi weera  
mwavulushiwe

D.A.M.

214

Achu oothene hinasuwela weera naphiyerya olelo  
Noovahiwa nihiku nla nihiku na visita

Ee aleluya, olelo ohakalala

Muluku nyu mwa malavi, mwavekiwa munavaha  
Monihooleela hiyo oothene munivaha evisita

Asitiithi ni asimai, amiravo ni asimwali  
Rwani moone evisita ela nipuro nla nooSeera

D.A.M.

215

Yeesu Kiristu aasivelasha anamwane  
Erwe wa miyo yaawo taari mikelampa ya wirimu wa  
Muluku

Yeesu Kiristu aleluya, aasivela anamwane  
awe

Erwe wa miyo, muhaahihe, erwe wa miyo

Oohuserya yaahahiha anamwane orwa wa Yeesu  
Nave Yeesu aawichana, muhaahihe, erwe wa mi

Nimuthamale Muluku ahu yoowo tonikhapelenle hi  
Onivaha anawane ahu, muhaahihe oya wa Yeesu

D.A.M.

216

Anii arwe munekuni awanre soowara saweela cwee

D.A.M.

217

Yaakhwana ewoora ya anamwane a Muluku  
Wi ehoshiwe mwiilapo ela

Ntoko Apwiya yaahoshiwaaya  
Ni mithipo eyo vamwikimanyo

Yeesu aakhala mahiku makhumi mashesho  
Oohilya echu mutakhwani mmo

Aarwa Saataana, amuweha Apwiya Yeesu  
Muthakhwani mmo

Yoowo aaloca kushani nluku  
Mutatushe epau, mwipheno etala.

Muchu hakhala ni okumi ni epau  
Nyenya ni masu a Muluku ahu

Hiyo aKiristu nihilipenoru  
Saweeha siha sa Saataana owo

D.A.M.

**218**

Asitiithi akina wiipa enamoocele  
Eneera muru okuula ari vinyu  
Ntakhwa hacahaca  
Saataana momwavyerya epuro

Mulavilavi Saataana, oomukusha mwanawe  
Amvonyerya omooroni  
Saataana momwavyerya epuro

Asimai akina, wiipa waara wapa  
Nlume lavelave  
Saataana momwavyerya epuro

D.A.M.

**219**

Hiyo nri vamukwahani woya  
Omucecheni, woya oYerusalemu

Weyo woohala nthowa noocheka  
Vathiva wunla, horwa ophwanya okumi  
Wookhurumuveliwa wi ovolowe  
Yerusalemu

Weyo muchu oocheka cicimiha Muluku  
Onooweha we, weyo muchu oocheka

Hankoni niye omucecheni waweela owo  
Namooone Yeesu, ovolowa

D.A.M.

**220**

Ovolowa wa Pwiya Yeesu  
Achu oothene yaahakalala  
Mwaana a Tavite yaamwipela anna awo Hosana

D.A.M.

**221**

Mwiri wohiima echu onarwa wuhiwa

D.A.M.

**222**

Elapo yeela nrimpoleiwa hiyo,  
Nnalapa muteko ephiro ya wirimu,  
Ooromela yamwaakhele-tho chiri,  
Korowa atiithi wirimu

Nthamwenaka, ocharuwe soocheka oneerawe  
Kininooleela weyo ocharuwe soocheka

Achu ancipale noolemeya tho chiri  
Ni minkhela seelapo ya vathi-va  
Yeesu arwaka ninarwa ninla hiyo  
Soocheka siiho sinricale.

Waari yooreera omuthamala Yeesu owo  
Waari yooreera omvuwaha mwene owo  
Waari yooreera omwipela mvulusha,  
Moopoli a maloko oothene.

10/5/03, D.A.M.

**223**

Tiithi, mai, anna, hiyani soonarara mu elapo yeela  
Walaka achu ohileleya, wookhalawo mooro  
woohishipha

Ai, ai, wunla; ai ai, wunla  
Ni okhuriha mino mahiku oothene

Kaari muKiristu Caticumeno ni ovinte  
Apwiya kihuleleni

Kaari muleco mwichokoni mwanyu  
himwakaakhenle,  
Kaari mukariposo, awiceliwa himwakeecelela  
Apwiya kihuleleni.

D.A.M.

**224**

Wooneya wa Yeesu, eniya yooPetaniya  
Oohuserya hiyasuwenle weera ti Yeesu  
Vonyani mowaya ontatani makupa oolopwana  
Yaawo yaavonya mowaya ephara ihopa sincipale

D.A.M.

**225**

Weyo munnaka wootakhaliwa,  
Onamweeca oya wu ni wu  
Suwela wi elapo enamamala,  
Ninnarwa nihiku chiri nookuchula

Papa suwelani wi elapo enamala  
Enii ekhale ekucho etokweene

Weyo munnaka olelo suwela  
Onumunliha Pwiya Yeesu  
Onarwa wunla nihiku nookuchula  
Charuwa we omwaakhele Yeesu

Apwiya Yeesu yaaloca ni oohuserya  
Kinaya wAtiithi, kareherye mapuro  
Wakusha oothene yaawo ooromela  
Vahilekenle kinarwa kikoka

D.A.M.

**226**

Wosha womalavo anna  
Wiireherye ni mavekelo anna, wosha.

D.A.M.

**227**

Mureelihe Apwiya elapo yavathi wi ekhale yaweela  
chiri,  
Ophiyerya nihiku munarwanyu  
Naakhele okumi woohimala.

D.A.M.

228

Wirimu wa Muluku Atiithi, Pwiya Yeesu  
Onareherya nipuro nlo ntokotoko  
Wichuuwano alipa oororomela

Kinii keere sheeni wi kaakhele okumi  
wohimala  
Munnaka charuwa weyo  
Ohiiphe, ohiraruwe, ohikhale namoona a  
wootha  
Ohiwoke, cicimihani atiithi aa ni amai aa

Nyuwo aKiristu mveke, moohihya  
Ala ti mahiku ookuchula  
Hamunasuwela wi mahiku aamala,  
Munii mwaakheliwe ni sheeni?

D.A.M.

229

Nihiku nla anna, nihiku nla, nikhale naweela cwee  
Nihiku nla Apwiya reelihaani, nikhale naweela cwee

D.A.M.

230

Wirimu toriwo khorowa  
Okumi anna naroromela nakhele wirimu  
Mahiku oothene anamwiipela Muluku

AIsaki ari wirimu iwo, Abrão ari wirimu iwo  
AYakopo ari wirimu iwo,  
Mahiku oothene anamwiipela Muluku

Annaka charuwani weera soonanara  
Apwiya jaarwaka wi eniphwanye hiyo  
Nri awireherya

Asitiithi ni nyuwo asimai,  
Amiravo ni nyuwo asimwali,  
Vinyani nopane ni Yeesu,  
Anikushe hiyo nakhale wirimu.

D.A.M.

231

Wiipeleni Apwiya ncipo  
Hosana, Aleluya

“Macipo Aamolocue”<sup>268</sup>

232

Pwiya Yeesu aviraka oniya  
Aaphwanya alopwana eeli  
Simon, Andrey a munnawe  
Evonyaka mowaaya

Yeesu aaloca:  
Hiyani mowaaya, mukichare

Yookhwela ya Pwiya Yeesu  
Ti yoohiya inaniweha  
Nimuchare Pwiya Yeesu  
Nivolowe mumwene awe

“Macipo Aamolocue”

233

Husihani maloko oothene a elapo ya vathi  
Mwapatiseeni makhalelo a munepa waweela

Laleeryani soomwene, omwene wa Muluku  
Laleeryani soomwene, wi achu esuwele

Mu saweeha, muhooshiwani vileelani oothene  
Ophiyerya orwa waka mahiku ookuchula

Muhikhaleno minikwa voolalerya masu  
Munepa onaya ohoolelaani mahiku oothene

“Macipo Aamolocue”

234

Elapo ya vathi Saataana atepa wuupa  
Anamwane a Yehova olelo ari mwiphini  
Yaamucuwala chiri Muluku a wirimu ni ichu  
seelapo ela

Oo, Yehova  
Rwani munivulushe, mwi ichu sa Saataana

Nimvekele Muluku anivahe omwaleela  
Neeceke mphiro mwawe, niipeke macipo awe  
Nihiyee seelapo ela, nimuchare Muluku, nrowe  
navulusihiwe

“Macipo Aamolocue”

235

Kootepa ociwa, osarasareya murima  
Vowiiwa ichu sineereya mwelapo ela

Elapo ela Apwiya Yeesu akhweleiyee

Mirece, wipha, wakhulana, ni nrima  
Sohilana achu anceene mweelapo ela

Tatushani mirima anyu mwivileele  
Mumvahe pwiya ncicimiho noophwanela

Siveleeni, okisivela, nsivelane  
Si ntoko pwiya ansivenleiyee hiyo oothene

Apwiya Yeesu aavulusha hiyo oothene  
Oothene, namchara, noovuluwa

“Macipo Aamolocue”

236

Annaka roorani ela, wirimu mukwaheni  
Mukwaheni wa wirimu  
Apwiya olakana, nkamuweheni  
Nimweherye mwene ahu owo

Apaapa, amai,  
Nimweherye mwene ahu owo  
Onamorwa vathi va wakusha oororomela  
Nimweherye mwene ahu owo

Elapo ya vathi hayivo yoophwanela  
Neere sheeni nyu annaka  
Nlipisherye mirima, nimuchare Yeesu owo  
Nimweherye mwene ahu owo

“Macipo Aamolocue”

<sup>268</sup>“Macipo Aamolocue,” CD recorded June 2003 at the Rádio Trans-Mundial studios in Mocuba, by a young people’s group of the Igreja União Baptista, Alto Molocué.



237

Apwiya onnichana, mwakhule mwawakuva  
Yeesu onnichana, oo, mwakhuleni  
Mwakhuleni. olelo,

“Macipo Aamolocue”

238

Voopacerya Muluku aapaka erimu  
Vaachu hiva aapaka elapo ya vathi  
Elapo ya vathi yaari epiiphi  
Voorukurerya elapo yaasaerya maahi

Mulopwana oopacerya ti Atamu, ti Atamu  
Muthiyana oopacerya ti Haava, ti Haava

Yoothananiha, enowa yaahorwa  
enawoka Haava wi yalye sawiima  
Yaakawana vamoha ni Atamu  
Yaapacerya osuwela wi hanono yoowara

Vohilekeleya, Apwiya yaahichana  
Atamu, Atamu, ori woowi  
Vawi woochawa mmacani  
Onasuwela yoowara ya makhuku

Muluku aatepa onanariwa  
Enowa yoolya anyu ncupi  
Muthiyana ekoi vooyara

“Macipo Aamolocue”

239

Elapo ela chiri yoothithimana  
Onakhweleya ocharuwa soocheka

Yeesu onamorwa wakusha oororomela  
Onakhweleya ocharuwa soocheka  
Charuwani paapa, mai, mmiravo

Niivilele sootheene sineereya  
Sookukuceya, etala ni ikhoco

“Macipo Aamolocue”

240

Rukunushani mirima sanyu wi mukhale ahihano  
Elukuluku chiri yoomala, mwaakheleni Yeesu

Chiri wa Yeesu, yaawo aweela enarwa yeela  
Yaawo oonanara enarwa enanara  
Elukuluku chiri yoomala, mwaakheleni  
Yeesu

Asitithi ni asimai, amiravo ni asimwali  
Enarwa ekhupanya ni wunla, mwaakheleni Yeesu.

Mwiiyevihe si ntoko mwaana wi mukhale ahihano  
Elukuluku chiri yoomala, mwaakheleni Yeesu  
“Macipo Aamolocue”

241

Achu oothene olelo khalani oosuwela  
Wi nri mmukwahani voomoona Pwiya

Anna, anna, onnakoka Yeesu,  
vohilekeleyavo, onnakoka Yeesu

Munnoona olelo elapo yoothene  
eri yoosareya ni masu a Muluku

Achu oothene olelo nookhalano ekari  
Vawi onichekela elociwe olelo

“Macipo Aamolocue”

242

Yeesu oriye:  
Yoowo onachara ephiro aka, onamphwanya okumi  
“Macipo Aamolocue”

243

Ni ikharari sa Muluku olelo, noothukumana  
Nimvekelaka Muluku atiithi  
Maloko oothene olelo tho nosuwelihana,  
oloca tho sa masu anyu

Apwiya ninnaveka munepa waweela  
Apwiya munivahe munepa waweela

Elapo ela ya vathi yoosareya soohoosha  
ohaawa masooso ni ichu sincipale  
Vohikhala nyu Apwiya munanihoolela  
Chiri nnamorimela hiyo

Ninnaveka nyu Muluku ikuru ni epewe anyu,  
munreelihe hiyo oothene  
Niphare muteko anyu, nncimihе nyuwo  
Nihiku munarwanyu nawiipeleni

“Macipo Aamolocue”

244

Mahiku akhalai, Muluku, aaharuma ankelo elapo ele  
Elapo yaweriwa Sootoma ni Komora, elapo  
enapahuliwa

Ankelo yaaphiya wa Looti,  
emuleela ovinye mu elapo ela  
Elapo ela enampahuliwa

Achu ale eelapo yeele yamweera okhwela waya  
Owurya ni orapheya, otheya, othela ni otheliwa,  
othuma ni otumiha

Annaka nureherye, mahiku aamala, anna  
Apwiya onamorwa wakusha oororomela

Makalume yaavarela mu Sootoma oocheka yinlaka  
owayi

Oororomela yiipaka aleluya, ee, aleluya  
“Macipo Aamolocue”

245

Apwiya kinnichana ni nyuwo, kakhuveleeni,  
mukiwiryane, kinawichanakaani

Yoowo, onakipakela soonanara murima  
mwawe,  
mahiku oothene enawopa ekhoco

Kaakiheni Yehova wa muchu oonanara,  
kikhapeleleni wa muchu, anna ala

Kikhapeleleni Yehova, kihivolowe  
mmatani wa oonanara, kikhapeleleeni  
“Macipo Aamolocue”

246

Vinya wa miyo omoroni ilukuluku soothene  
Onarwa oruha esara wa achu oohiroromela

Owooka okaakamela, woosela, oohapaliwaka  
omwaleela, soophwaniherya

Achu masana masaneene anakhwa mootutusha  
Ehikhanlevo elukuluku yoomwavya Muluku

Chiri tookhweleya omwavya Muluku elukuluku  
yoothene  
Niirehererye oothene wi nakhele okumi  
“Macipo Aamolocue”

247

Nyuwo annaka, chiri nkoonani makhalelo ookumi  
wa munepa  
Onahuwela, ochuna wa Saataana ori wa hiyo otesha  
mwikimanyo

Anikushe, anikhapelele, nkinahiya  
woothamalani Yeesu,  
aleluya, aleluya, nkinahiya olaleerya miyo

Saari sa ikharari vomoona mwaana a Muluku  
oKolokota  
atesha mwikimanyo olimela ehirivo yeeyo  
aachenkeiye  
“Macipo Aamolocue”

248

Muluku, Muluku, cicimiheeni  
Muluku mtokotoko, achu cicimiheeni  
Mwene a mamwene, achu cicimiheeni  
“Macipo Aamolocue”

249

Pwiya wiriyani oveka wahu, rwani nyuwo  
mvulusha ahu  
Rwani amwene aikuru, a murecele owo, rwani  
nyuwo mvulusha ahu

Nimvekele, nimvekele  
Nimvekele mvulusha Yeesu  
Onaniwa tho, onakhapelela hi

Hiyo oothene, neece moonanara muhiichalevo,  
nimuchare mvulusha ahu  
Ni murima waphama, makhalelo munivahe  
oomuroromela Apwiya

Hiyo oothene, masu awinyuru ntoko mvulusha,  
hiyo, mukikhapelele Apwiya  
Kirwe kiwooneni, kihusiheni, kihusihe eparipari  
“Macipo Aamolocue”

250

Yerusalemu ahihano, wirimu woorerasha, muceche  
waweela owo  
Weiwo mwiri hanuuma, nsuwa hanshipha, muceche  
waweela owo

Nsuwa hanashipha, makukhu awo hanamora,  
achu oororomela enarwa emoona Yeesu,  
muceche waweela owo

Yeesu ahaloca miyo kinamurowa oreherya nipuro,  
achu oororomela enarwa emoona Yeesu, muceche  
waweela owo

“Macipo Aamolocue”

251

Ninnanla miithori vawoona murima aka ocheka-  
chekaka

Ee Yopu, Yopu, ananla chekani

Anamwane a Yopu yaahookhwa oothene ni  
muhakhu aya ene

Yopu aahaakhela masooso mancene, ahicheka nari  
“Macipo Aamolocue”

252

Mahiku ahaaca ookapuro, alsarayeli yaanahaawa,  
yaatesha ecurwa, ecurwa ya moro, yaateka ipa  
oYiikuputu

Anna, yaanahaawa, yaanahaawa, makholo awo

Yaapacerya tho wiikhupanyerya mutakhwanimo,  
nalyemo esheeni, sa ikharari wa alsarayeli  
“Macipo Aamolocue”

253

Pwiya, kinwa wa nyuwo, pwiya munivulushe  
Elapo ya vathi vano, pwiya, pwiya, nkinahiya  
wupani  
Nkarwani Apwiya, kivolowe mumwene anyu,  
pwiya, pwiya munivulushe  
Kinchuna wanyu Apwiya, kivolowe mumwene  
anyu, pwiya, pwiya munivulushe  
“Macipo Aamolocue”

254

Lipa murima va murima, Apwiya onnichana  
Nyuwo asitiithi, nyuwo asimai, vahani murima

Apwiya onnichana, rwani asinnaka,  
okumi wohimala, hankoni asinnaka

Weyo munnaka orivovo shishe, onuupuwela sheeni  
Onorwavo othorihiwa, okhwipi wa Tavite

Muluku atiithi ninnovekaani ikharari ni epewe anyu  
Mukhale ni hiyo mahiku oothene, wi noone orwa  
wanyu  
“Macipo Aamolocue”

255

Narumaru nipenka nlo nomaliha na munkelo owo,  
Yeesu mweene anii arwe, withela wa mahiriku

Anii arwe munekuni, awara ekuwo  
yaweelasha  
akushaka oororomela, achu ocheka  
erikumunla

Yeesu Kiristu akushevo achu oothene oororomela,  
Ehanlevo achu ocheka erikumunla ni orimela  
“Macipo Aamolocue”

**256**

Makuchuwelo a sooreera seelapo, oo, oo, oo, anna ti  
ala  
Onani elapo ya vathi annaka, oo, oo, oo,  
yoorukurerya  
Onani omwene ni mwene olelo, oo, oo, oo, annaka

Suwelani orwa wa Apwiya, oo, oo, oo,  
waacamela  
Vilelani, orwa wa Apwiya annaka, oo, oo, oo,  
waacamela

Mirece, wiipha, wakhulana, ni nrima, oo, oo, oo,  
soohilana  
Okhwa, ohaawa, etala, wirumiha, oo, oo, oo,  
soohilana  
Niirehererye hiyano, Apwiya, oo, oo, oo, onamorwa  
"Macipo Aamolocue"

**257**

Mirici iyo, kiryakano, Apwiya, kiruleeni  
"Macipo Aamolocue"

**258**

Voorwa Apwiya mahiku oomaliha awo  
Muchu oocheka hanarowa wirimu  
Nyenya oocharuwa onaya vamukwahani  
Mukwaha wooyano wa Apwiya

Nnaveka hi Apwiya, aa,  
munivahe munepaanyu waweela,  
okhale mwa hiyo

Oocharuwa onarowa mukwaha wa wirimu  
Wirimu wa hihano, elapo ya hihano  
Voorwa Apwiya mahiku oomaliha awo  
Oocheka hanarowa wirimu

Eekhaikhai enaakhela okumi wohimala  
Oohapaliwa onarowa woohapaliwani  
Eekhaikhai enarowa mukwaha wa wirimu,  
Wirimu waweela wa Apwiya  
"Macipo Aamolocue"

**259**

Mahiku annacamela  
Nivileele anna ni saweeha.  
Nivileele, anna wa Apwiya awo  
Anamorwa, ee, vahilekenle, anna  
"Macipo Aamolocue"

**260**

Kiri mukukhula aphaama akhwenle ipucepuche  
soorimela, yoowo onahavya, orimela okumi aka

Mu ichu iwo kaahula iparari, kahula tho mata  
Kahulele soowara, kihanle oohaawa mi

Ipucepuche saka iyo sinakiiwa wiichana,  
kinavaha tho okumi, atiithi akhapelela

Muhinle soowara iyo, muhinle napiili  
Muhiwokiwe achu nyu, kiri mukukhula owo,

Kinchuna achu nyu, kiri mukukhula owo,  
kiri mphiro, kiri mulako, chawani ichu iwo  
"Macipo Aamolocue"

**261**

Voovekela hiyo va voomwichana tiithihu  
Koosuwela mmurimani mwaka kinirwa ni Apwiya

Rwani nyu, wa Apwiya ahu Yeesu owo  
Rwani nyu, murweeni olelo va

Vathi vava hawivovo murecele woopwaha  
Nyenya voocharuwa murima kinirwa ni Apwiya

Aleluya, ncicimiho na wa Muluku atiithihu  
Aleluya, aleluya, murecele vathi va  
"Macipo Aamolocue"

**262**

Nivilelele omuchara, akhapelele hiyo  
Nimchare Yeesuru, ni omuroromela  
Annaka nari nyu mumchare Yeesu ni oreeliha  
Koone waarya wa musulu, aleluya wirimu  
"Macipo Aamolocue"

**263**

Vuwihani nsina na Yeesu  
Thamalani nsina na Yeesu  
"Macipo Aamolocue"

APPENDIX 3

LOWWE TEXT OF LEVITICUS 26 WITH ENGLISH FULL TRANSLATION

Liviro a filipa a mufuho  
Book of laws of worship/offerings  
Ekapitulu 26  
Chapter 26

Marellim wa achi achi-nyama  
Blessings for people who work

1 \*Mufipakela apakela akwari, nari wamwacha kuti akwari akwari  
"Do not make yourselves gods-like, nor do you compare yourselves  
gashururika wi mutapaka mwestagani mwanari. Mpa ka Apawa, mpa  
-prepared that you are ve-[anna] [repeatedly] in the day, I am [repeatedly]

2 \*Mufipakela akwari nari wamwacha kuti akwari akwari  
Respect [repeatedly] day-after the day and you will have [repeatedly]  
ka kwariya.  
an Lord.

3 \*Mufipakela, mufipakela akwari nari wamwacha kuti akwari akwari  
"If you obey me, following [repeatedly] laws of the Lord, I will  
kuvutazani apula mu shururika aya yaphama wi achaye yinam kuti  
give you rain in time-as-good as the soil needs-to grow for you  
mufi hano sanelina sawasa. 4 Fwawa apuya mufiwa a mutala, mufiwa  
trees give fruit-many. There will come days of abundance for you  
onawa apuya akufuku ya anawala. Mufiwa hano wawala akwari  
there will come time of picking. You not having finished as long as  
ya wala. Mufiwa hano, mufiwa hano mufiwa hano akwari  
of planting. You will not be full, being in-peace in land yours.

5 \*Kinarwa kwari akwari nari wamwacha kuti akwari akwari  
I will give land-yours peace so that you sleep [repeatedly] without  
Kufikarano ashikarano akwari nari wamwacha kuti akwari akwari  
chore-out animals-dirty and war will not enter also to-land yours.

7 Amwani anu yakwari akwari nari wamwacha kuti akwari akwari  
Enemies your being-punished [repeatedly], they will be killed among you  
People-five of you

akwari akwari akwari nari wamwacha kuti akwari akwari  
will be five-(to ten)-of them: enemies-a hundred. And a hundred of you will kill a hundred  
of their enemies-thousands-ten.

Amwani anu yakwari akwari nari wamwacha kuti akwari akwari  
Enemies yours will be killed with-spear you watching [repeatedly].

8 \*Mpa kinarwa kwari akwari nari wamwacha kuti akwari akwari  
I will watch-over you and I will make that you multiply-ten-fold. I will  
kufikarano akwari akwari nari wamwacha kuti akwari akwari  
fulfill following-mine with you. Food-crops-yours of your-part will not be lost.

## APPENDIX B:

### LOMWE TEXT OF LEVITICUS 26 WITH ENGLISH BACK TRANSLATION

#### **Liivuru a Alipa a Mukucho**

Book of doers of sacrifice/offering

#### **Ekapitulu 26**

Chapter 26

#### **Mareeliho wa achu awiwelela**

Blessings for people who-obey

**1 “Muhipakele amuluku atheru, nari weemesha iruku soopachiwa nari maluku**

“Do not make yourselves gods-false, nor raise images-carved nor stones

**oorehereriwa wi mulapeke mweelaponi mwanyu. Miyo ka Apwiya, Muluku anyu.**

-prepared that you serve-[them]-[repeatedly] in land-yours. I am Lord, God-yours.

**2 “Mucicimiheke nihiku naka naneethanu nawiili nnipuro naka naweela. Miyo**

Respect-[repeatedly] day-mine the fifth-and-two and place-mine holy/white. I

**ka Apwiya.**

am Lord.

**3 “Mwakiwelela, mucharihaka ikano saka ni malamulo aka, 4 miyo kinarwa**

“[If] you obey me, following-[repeatedly] laws-mine and commands-mine, I will

**koovahaani epula mu elukuluku aya yaphaama wi echaya yiimihe soolya saphaama nave**

give you rain in time-its-good so that soil causes-to-grow foods/crops-good and

**miri ivahe sawiima sawaaca. 5 Enarwa ephiya mahiku a mulaala, muhimalinhe ohepha**

trees give fruits-many. There will come days of abundance, you-not-having-finished harvesting

**enarwa ephiya elukuluku ya wuurula. Muhimalinhe wuurula enarwa ephiya elukuluku**

there will come time of picking. You-not-having-finished picking there will come time

**ya waala. Mukaamulya, mvona, muri mmureceleni mweelaponi mwanyu.**

of planting. You-will-eat, be-full, being in-peace in-land-yours.

**6 “Kinarwa kivaha elapo anyu murecele wi nyuwo mukoneke muhitutushiwe. Kinarwa**

I-will give land-yours peace so that you sleep [repeatedly] not-startled. I-will

**kiwikaramo ashinama ooluwa nave ekhoco herwa evolowa tho mweelaponi mwanyu.**

chase-out animals-fierce and war will-not enter also in-land yours.

**7 Amwiicani anyu yikariwaka, ekaamwiiphiwa nnivaka muwoonaka. 8 Achu athanu a nyuwo**

Enemies-yours being-pursued-[repeatedly], they-will-be-killed with-spear you-watching [repeatedly].

People-five of you

**ekanaawerya amwiicani nsana. Nave nsana a nyuwo ekanaawerya amwiicani amiile khumi.**

will-be-able-[to defeat]-of-them enemies-a-hundred. And a-hundred of you will-be-able-[to defeat]-

of-them enemies-thousands-ten.

**Amwiicani anyu ekaamwiiphiwa nnivaka muwoonaka.**

Enemies-yours will-be-killed with-spear you-watching-[repeatedly].

**9 “Miyo kinarwa koothokoreryaani nave kinarwa keerano wi murelanesha. Kinarwa**

I will watch-over-you and I-will make that you multiply-much. I-will

**kikhwaaniherya waataana waka ni nyuwo. 10 Soolya sanyu sa eyaaka yeele hikamalaruvo**

fulfill fellowship-mine with you. Foods/crops-yours of year-past will-not-finish-up-in

**vatathani nave mukanayeeherya otakhwani wi mvahe mpuro wohelelavo sa hihano.**  
storage-place and you-will-throw-[it]-out in-the-wild to give space to-put-in new-[things].

**11 Kinarwa kimaka ni nyuwo nave nkinanariwaka ni nyuwo. 12 Nkaamukhala ni nyuwo;**

I-will dwell with you and I-will-not-be-angry-[repeatedly] with you. I-will-be-with you;

**kinarwa kikhala Muluku anyu nave nyuwo munarwa mukhala achu aka.**

I-will be God-yours and you will be people-mine.

**13 Miyo ka Apwiya Muluku anyu, kookushaleeni oYiikuputu weiwo mwaaryaanyu**

I am Lord God-yours, having-taken-you from-Egypt where you-were

**akapuro. Koothikila onyooro yoowo waari nipisi nanyu, koovahaani weeca ootaphuliweene.”**

slaves. I cut chain that was slave-collar-yours, giving-you to-walk untied/freely.”

## **Wuulumeliwa wa achu ohiiwelela**

Being-cursed for people who-disobey

**14 “Nto mwahikiiwelela, mukhooca malamulo aka, 15muthanya ikano saka,**

But if-you-do-not-obey-me, you-reject commands-mine, you-abhor laws- mine,

**munanariwano mathoriheryo aka, nave muhiniwelela malamulo aka, mmwarya waataana**

you are angry with decisions-mine, and you-do-not-obey commands-mine, you-smash fellowship-

**waka ni nyuwo, 16 vaavaa kinarwa kiweerelaani iha: kinarwa korumihelaani yoohoosha,**

mine with you, then I-will do-to-you these-things: I-will send-upon-you oppression,

**nanceeche, oviha mwiili. Seiyo inii sooruuheleeni ohoona ni ovukula okumi anyu. Mukanaala**

feebleness, hot-body. These will bring-upon-you not-seeing and reduce life/health-yours. You-will-plant

**mmacani mwanu muhiphurela echu; amwiicani ekaamulyamo sawiima sanyu.**

in-fields-yours you-not-profit [a] thing; enemies will-eat-in-it foods/crops yours.

**17 “Kinarwa koorukunuwelaani nave munarwa mvoothiwa ti amwiicani anyu,**

“I-will turn-against-you and you-will be-defeated by enemies yours,

**ekaamoolamulelaani. Mukaamuchawa muhiikariwaka.**

they-will-rule-over-you. You-will-flee you-not-being-pursued-[repeatedly].

**18 “Nari hiihaa mwahikiiwelela, kinamuluula woolakaani ni soocheka sanyu itila thanu**

“Even thus if-you-do-not-obey-me, I-will-repeat to-punish-you for offenses-yours times five-

**napiili. 19 Kinammaliha ikuru sa wiisoona wanyu. Erimu heyooovahaanru epula nave echaya**

two. I-will-finish-off strength of arrogance-yours. Sky will-not-give-you-at-all rain and soil-

**anyu enarwa yuuma, elipa ntoko muthipo. 20 Mukanuukhuwa mahaleene ntakhara imaca**

yours will dry-up, be-hard like iron. You-will-exert-yourselves for-nothing because fields-

**sanyu hikaphuriha echu nave miri sanyu hiikaimaru.**

yours will-not-produce thing and trees-yours will-not-make-fruit-at-all.

**21 “Mwatitelela okikhooca, muhinakiiwelela, kinamuluula tho woolakaani ni soocheka**

“If-you-persist to-reject-me, you-not-obeying-me, I-will-repeat also to-punish-you with/for offenses

**sanyu itila thanu napiili. 22 Kinamooruuhelaani ashinama ooluwa, yaawo enii yaaphareke**

yours times five-two. I-will-bring-upon-you animals fierce, these shall seize-[repeatedly]

**anamwane anyu, etolosheke inama sanyu. Enarwa yoomalihaani, iphiro sanyu ithatuwe**

children-yours, eliminating animals yours. They-will finish-you-off, paths-yours transformed

**itakhwa.**

to-wild-places.

**23 “Nari hiihaa mwaahirwaru wa miyo, mutitelela okikhooca, 24 miyo tho**

“Even thus if-you-do-not-come-at-all to me, you-persist to-reject-me, I too

**kinamookhoocaani, yoomi ene, kuuluule woolakani ni soocheka sanyu itila thanu napiili.**

will-reject-you, I myself, I-will-repeat to-punish-you with/for offenses-yours times five-two.

**25 Kinarwa kooruhelaani ekhoco, wunla ikuhu wa nthowa na omwarya waataana waka.**

I-will bring-upon-you war, to cry-vengeance for reason of to-smash fellowship-mine.

**Mwachawela ipooma soolipihiwa, kinarwa koorumihelaani ipahu, vaavaa munarwa mphariwa**

If-you-flee-into cities-fortified, I-will bring-upon-you plagues/devastations, then you-will be-seized

**ti amwiicani anyu. 26 Kinarwa kithowiha yoolya; athiyana khumi ekanoosha iphaawu saya**

by enemies-yours. I-will make-scarce food; women ten will-bake breads-theirs

**vamoha, yaakawela ekhaani ahima aya, nto hiyiipharu etala.**

together, they-distribute bit relatives-theirs, but not-kill-at-all hunger.

**27 “Nari hiihaa, mwahikiwelelaru, mutitelela okikhooca, 28 miyo tho, mu onanariwa**

“Even thus, if-you-not-obey-me-at all, you-persist to-reject-me, I too, in anger-

**waka, kinamookhoocaani; yoomi ene kuulula woolakaani ni soocheka sanyu itila thanu**

mine, I-will-reject-you; I myself will-repeat to-punish-you with/for offenses-yours times five-

**napiili. 29 Mukanaakhuura anamwane anyu wa nthowa na etala. 30 Kinarwa kinyaanya**

two. You-will-chew-them children-yours for reason of hunger. I-will destroy

**mapuro anyu oomwaako awaalapamo amuluku atheru, kipweshu mapuro anyu a mikucho**

places-yours of-the-mountain to-serve-there gods-false, I smash places-yours of offering

**sa irupani, kuukela miruchu anyu vamoha ni iruku sa wuuca sa amuluku anyu. Kinarwa**

of incense, I-pile-up corpses-yours along with images-rotten of gods-yours. I-will

**koorapheyaani. 31 Kinamutatusha milepe ipooma sanyu, kipweshu mapuro anyu aweela;**

vomit-you-out. I-will-transform-to ruins cities-yours, I-smash places-yours-holy/white;

**mikucho anyu hikakisivelaru. 32 Yoomi ene kinarwa kinyaanya elapo anyu, wi amwiicani**

offerings/sacrifices-yours will-not-appeal-to-me-at-all. I myself, I-will destroy land-yours, so-that enemies-

**anyu yakusha, ehaleeliheye. 33 Kinarwa kiwiikaraanimo ni mavaka, koomwaramwashaani**

yours when-they-take-it, they-will-not-know-what-to-do. I-will chase-you-out with spears, I-will-scatter-you

**wa achu akina. Elapo anyu enarwa ekhala ntakhwa. 34 Vaavaa echaya enarwa ephwanya**

among people-others. Land-yours will be wilderness. Then the-soil will find

**wiichuuwa, ntakhara nyuwo muri eelapo ya amwiicani anyu. Echaya enarwa ekhalano**

rest, because you are in-the-land of enemies-yours. The-soil will have

**miyaakha sawiichuuwa, 35 seiyo mwahavahilaanyu mmanke mwemmo.**

years of-rest, those you-did-not-give-it when-you-dwelt in-it.

**36 “Achu anyu enii ehale ehikhwile, eri ni amwiicani, kinarwa kaavaha woova wi**

“People-yours who-will be-left not-dead, while-they-are with enemies, I-will give-them fear so

**entuthuwa omora wa nikukhu. Vaavaa ekaamuchawa, yuuwa, ehiikariwaka, yaanyiheryaka sa**

they-startle at-fall of leaf. Then they-will-flee, fall-down, not-being-chased, imagining about

**ekhoco. 37 Achu ekanakhumulana mukina ni mukhwaawe. Hamuweryaru waatannya**

war. People will-trip-over-each-other, one with his/her fellow. You-will-not-be-able-at-all to-touch-

**amwiicani anyu. 38 Weiwo munarwa mukhwa veeri va amwiicani anyu nave elapo aya**

them enemies yours. There you-will die among enemies yours and land-theirs

**enamoomiryaani.**

will-swallow-you-up.

## **Wuuluula waataana**

To repeat/renew fellowship

**39 “Nave achu anyu enii ehale ehikhwile eri ni amwiicani ekaamucakanela vakhaani**

“Also people-yours who-will be-left not-dead while-they-are with enemies they-will-disappear

**vakhaani, wa nthowa na soocheka sanyu ni sa makholo anyu.**

little-by-little, by reason of offenses-yours and of ancestors-yours.

**40 “Nto, elokohe soocheka saya ni sa makholo aya, seiyo eenraaya moohiromeleya**

“But, let-them-confess/report offenses-theirs and of ancestors-theirs, those they-have-done in-unfaithfulness-

**waya ni okikhooca waya. 41 Mwa seiya, miyo tho kahaakhooca, kaakeriha mweelapo ya** theirs and to-reject-me theirs. On-account-of these, I too rejected-them, I-put-them in-land of **amwiicani aya. Yoomwi erukunuwa mirima aya yoohiroromela, yeemererya olakiwa mwa** enemies-theirs. If-they turn-around hearts-theirs the-unfaithful-ones, if-they-accept to-be-punished for **yoocheka aya, 42 hiihaa kinarwa kuupuwela waataana waka ni Yaakopo, Isaki, ni** sins-theirs, thus I-will remember fellowship-mine with Jacob, Isaac, and

**Aaparahaamu. Kinarwa kuupuwela sa elapo 43 yeeyo ethatunwe ntakhwa, ephwannye** Abraham. I-will remember about the-land that was-transformed-into wilderness, having-found **wiichuuwa, avinnyaayamo yaawo. Yeemererye olakiwa mwa yoocheka aya, wa nthowa na** rest, having-gone-out-of-it them. Let-them-accept to-be-punished for offenses-theirs, by reason of **othanya waya mathoriheryo aka ni onanariwano ikano saka.**

abhorring-theirs decisions-mine and being-angry-with laws mine.

**44 “Nari ekerihiwe mweelapo ya amwiicani aya, miyo nkaathanya, nari onanariwano**

Even when-they-have-been-put in-land of enemies-theirs, I will-not-abhor-them, nor be-angry-with-them **wi kaatoloshe khuluwi ni omwarya waataana kaapankaaka ni makholo aya. Miyo ka Apwiya** so I-destroy-them completely and smash the-fellowship I-had-made with ancestors theirs. I am Lord **Muluku aya. 45 Kinarwa kuuluula waataana ni yaawo ntoko kaapankaaka ni makholo aya,** God-theirs. I-will repeat/renew fellowship with them as I-made-it with ancestors-theirs, **yaawo kaakushalaaka oYiikuputu maloko oothene ewoonaka, wi kikhale Muluku aya.** those I-took-them-out of-Egypt, peoples all watching, so I-could-be God-theirs.

**Miyo ka Apwiya!”**

I am Lord!”

**46 Iha ikano, mathoriheryo, ni malamulo Apwiya yavanhaaya wa Moose omwaako**

These [are the] laws, decisions and commands Lord gave to Moses on-mountain **Sinai, a waataana waya ni alsarayeli.** Sinai, of fellowship-his with Israelites.



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